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THE GABOYE OF SOMALILAND: LEGACIES OF MARGINALITY, TRAJECTORIES OF EMANCIPATION

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A Mascia e Olga.

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INTRODUCTION

This work focuses on those of the Gaboye – a cluster of minority groups resident in several Somali territories – who live in the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland. Somaliland is a region of the former Somali Republic and corresponds to the boundaries of the British Protectorate of Somaliland (1880s-1960). The Gaboye are fewer in number than the major local genealogical groups and they suffer, in a range of forms, descent-based marginalisation that stems from their past subordination to Somali clans. The Gaboye, together with the Tumaal and the Yibir or Anaas, were a cluster of occupationally segregated groups. The Tumaal were associated with blacksmithing, the Anaas were described as wandering sorcerers and leather workers and the Gaboye used to perform a range of activities such as leather-working, shoe-making, pottery (if female), hunting and traditional healing (and circumcision). These three groups were excluded from marriage exchanges with the other Somali clans, who considered them inferior. They lived scattered among the majority clans, to whom they were linked by a set of affiliation relationships, and were forced to undertake those occupational activities the Somalis consider degrading. They could not take part in political arenas such as the councils of the clans' adult male members and, most importantly, were excluded from the blood-compensation exchanges between genealogical entities. The Gaboye, the Tumaal and the Anaas were ineligible to pay or to receive diya – blood-compensation, also known as *mag* in Somali – either as part of the groups to which they were affiliated or as autonomous diya-paying groups. Finally they were subject to rules of avoidance linked with vaguely articulated notions about their permanent condition of impurity. Today, they are organised in autonomous genealogical groups that take part in blood-compensation exchanges but continue, for the most part, to perform occupational tasks despised by the rest of the Somalilander population: they are barbers, shoe-makers, shoe-repairers and blacksmiths. The majority of them are concentrated in certain particular neighbourhoods of Hargeysa, the capital of the Republic of Somaliland.

The term Gaboye is widely used not only in Somaliland but in all Somali territories. It replaced an older one commonly employed until the early 1990s and that is used nowadays only as a term of deliberate offence. This older term was *Midgaan* and it is also found in written sources like British colonial documents and scholarly accounts of Somali society up to the 1990s. The other term that all these sources used is *Sab:* this encompassed the three main denominations of marginal groups (Gaboye, Tumaal and Yibir) but it is almost entirely absent from the lexicon of the Gaboye people met during this research. According to some of our interlocutors, the term 'Gaboye' – which means "quiver" in Somali – is as old as *Midgaan* but less denigrating. For this reason, in the mid-1990s some prominent members of the Gaboye community decided to promote its adoption in the

Somali territories. Now it has entered every sphere of social life, including public communication in the local media. We also stay with this term, although we are aware of its problematic features, the first of which is that it is often used by the Somalilanders in ordinary conversation both to mean the specific group of the Gaboye and as a broader term that also covers the Tumaal and the Yibir. Although the other minorities strongly reject such an identification, this is probably due to the fact that the Gaboye are the largest among them. A second problem is that the Gaboye 'proper' are increasingly dissatisfied with the label and prefer to identify themselves through their genealogical identities. In fact, this denomination undermines their attempt to present themselves collectively as organised clans, like any other Somalilanders.

To clarify: because of our need for one simple, quickly understood term of identification, 'Gaboye' in this work refers to the Gaboye 'proper'. In the light of the fact that the other marginal groups showed a historical trajectory and social position analogous to that of the Gaboye people, when circumstances require it we will refer to them using their specific denominations.

Our main objective is to trace ethnographically and historically the variegated manifestations of the Gaboye's subordination and to explore how it has gradually lost the attributes of a regionally acknowledged social institution. In the late colonial period and through a gradual process that we reconstruct in detail the Gaboye have adopted the basic institutions of the dominant Somalilander genealogical groups: 'traditional' leadership and blood-compensation co-contribution. Marriage segregation and the link with low-income occupational and economic sectors have largely persisted, however. Whereas the marginality of the Gaboye has retreated on some fronts, its adaptation to broader transformations on others has displayed a remarkable plasticity.

We will begin the analysis, in Part I, by outlining how British officials and the first generation of travellers and ethnographers described the Gaboye and the other Somali marginal groups. Then, we will reconstruct the period of effective British rule in Somaliland (1920-1960) and the beginning of the Gaboye's trajectory of emancipation (Part II). Moving to the ethnographic present, we will discuss the major continuities and discontinuities between the current situation of the Gaboye and their past of subordination (Part III). Viewed through the lens of history, the subordination of the Gaboye changes its contours and contents along with the transformations of Somalilander society. The Gaboye met during the fieldwork represented this process of social change in a fragmentary way: although they generally acknowledged the importance of certain events, they did not have collective narratives representing this dynamic.

As several contributions in African Studies have highlighted, scholars have often used the term 'caste' to describe the presence, in several parts of the continent, of descent-based groups attached to specific low-ranking political and economic positions, linked by patron-client

relationships to dominant groups and despised by the latter because of their alleged low status. This work dialogues critically with this scholarly tradition by documenting the steps that have brought Somalilander groups to reproduce and at the same time re-craft the Gaboye's subordination.

Inevitably, the term 'caste' invites us to consider the Indian context. Chapter 2 deals with the critiques of the application of the concept of 'caste' to African contexts. From our perspective, it is worth keeping open a conversation between Indian and African studies on the emancipatory trajectories of low-status groups. Action by the United Nations as recently as 2009 showed that this is still a live issue. The legal framework formalised by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights with the participation of the International Dalit Solidarity Network[1] for the definition of, and the struggle against, caste discrimination adopted the general category of "discrimination based on work and descent" (United Nations 2009). Since the late nineteenth century, the Indian sub-continent has been the theatre of the emancipation struggles of caste subalterns who came to adopt the denomination of Dalit. Cosimo Zene (Zene 2013) has shown that India is a particularly fecund field in which to develop and test new articulations between sociological and political perspectives on the phenomena of "subalternity" and "emancipation". Suggesting that we can think about specific cases and their milieus as part of universal questions, and advancing a crossed reading of Antonio Gramsci's and Bhimrao R. Ambedkar's contemporaneous analyses of their respective "subaltern" groups – namely the rural and industrial exploited masses of Italy and the Dalits – Zene has invited us to build-up a comprehensive understanding of specific contexts of subordination and emancipation. The three realities he takes into account are the Jewish Question examined by Karl Marx (in the article "On the Jewish Question" published in the *German-French Annals* in 1844), the Southern Question considered by Gramsci and the Dalit Question advanced by Ambedkar (Ambedkar began his activism in the 1920s). Each reality presents some specific traits of subordination and emancipation that pose universal questions affecting the 'modern' world.[2] Departing from the Jewish Question, Marx argued that political emancipation does not affect economic inequalities. The Southern Question described by Gramsci showed that processes of territorial unification, like the one that occurred in Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, further reproduced forms of territorial domination. Finally the Dalit Question shows that the achievement of legal and juridical abolition does not necessarily entail the end of social hierarchies and associated kinds of subordination. For Zene, these three realities help delimit the universal contours, the internal structuring and the intrinsic contradictions of both "subalternity" and "emancipation". On a global scale we must acknowledge the ethical and

[1] See http://idsn.org/un-2/un-principles-guidelines-on-caste/

[2] According to Zene (Zene 2013: 5-6), both Gramsci and Ambedkar produced critical views of 'modernity' by dialoguing critically with the tradition of the Enlightenment.

philosophical task of "recognising" the overall impact of the Dalits on humanity (Zene 2013: 12-13). As Anupama Rao put it, becoming a Dalit is the process of entering "into circuits of political commensuration and into the value regime of 'the human'" (Rao 2009: 264). For Rao, the Dalits' struggle to retrieve their political and human dignity has a significance for the whole of humanity.

This ethical and ontological definition of emancipation processes, and the historical anthropology of Indian castes and Dalit mobilisations, have inspired our reconstruction of the Gaboye's trajectory throughout the twentieth century. Our approach does not venture into ethics or ontology, although the analysis of the Gaboye's case has allowed us to identify some general coordinates that guide the study of processes of emancipation. Firstly, we can circumscribe these phenomena by identifying the historical circumstances that interlink the formal regulations issued by political authorities and the beliefs and practices of the groups pursuing their own emancipation and, secondly, we cannot understand processes of emancipation without taking into account the capacity of the structures of subordination to adapt to social transformations.

Part II takes emancipation as a process that unfolds at the crossroads between, on the one hand, the creative arrangements of the Gaboye to contest, subtract themselves from and subvert their dominated condition and on the other hand the interventions of the British colonial administration in Somaliland in the late 1950s that sanctioned the Gaboye groups' socio-political organisation as autonomous from that of the majority groups. 'Creativity' is an important analytical tool for identifying emancipatory processes in relation to the broader dynamics of social change, and for assembling comparative perspectives between different geographic areas and distinct social institutions. We will examine these dynamics in parallel with the end of the institution of slavery in the Somali territories (which was largely concentrated in the areas occupied by the Italians) between the last years of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century. Creativity is a major theme also in the historiography and sociology of the Dalits (Rao 2009: 1-36) and in the study of the upward social mobility of other subordinated Indian castes (Filippo Osella & Caroline Osella 2000: 255).

The other element which structures our historical reconstruction of the Gaboye's social position, and that of other subordinated groups like the Dalits, and which stems from any analytical perspective that looks *ex post* at trajectories of emancipation over several decades, is the combination between social transformations and the plasticity of social stratifications. This dialectic manifests eloquently in the structure of Rao's book on the Dalits: Rao (Rao 2009) entitled Part I "Emancipation" and Part II "The Paradox of Emancipation" in order to show that the field of investigation extends beyond the study of the configurations of subordination and the mobilisation aimed at emancipation, and their reciprocal determination. Following trajectories of emancipation

over a number of decades helps to uncover multi-faceted and dynamic contextual factors that shape the interaction between human efforts to dismantle relationships of subordination and the overall resilience of these relationships. While emancipation proceeds on one front, the ideologies and the practical knowledge that shape stratified social interactions may survive on another front or even contaminate previously extraneous social fields. This is what F. Osella and C. Osella are discussing when they write that while the caste system may be delegitimised or have lost its past political and economic contents it does survive as Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* in people's lives (Osella & Osella 2000: 251). In Part III we document ethnographically the work of adaptation that invested the configuration of the Gaboye's marginality.

DOING RESEARCH IN HARGEYSA

The research which forms the basis of this work took place in the city of Hargeysa, the capital of the Republic of Somaliland. Somaliland declared its independence from the Republic of Somalia (of which the capital is Mogadishu) in 1991 but so far no country or international institution has recognised it, although the Somalilanders have achieved an effective pacification of the area and enthusiastically taken part in the political and economic reconstruction of their country.

Hargeysa was familiar to us following ethnographic investigations carried out between 2011 and 2012 for the Masters degree dissertation. The research had taken place during the months before the elections of the local councils and was intended to analyse socio-political change after the collapse of the Somali central state institutions, with a concentration on political pluralism from the point of view of a marginal typology of political actors, the youth. The path undertaken by Somaliland as a political entity since the early 2000s is oriented towards the strengthening of representative institutions like local councils, the national parliament and the Presidency of the Republic, and towards formally conferring the leading role on political parties. These political institutions do integrate with other socio-political institutions like 'traditional' leadership: after decades of formal exclusion from the foreground of public activity, 'traditional' leaders became co-protagonists in the local political arena when they gained a leading role during the war in the north-western Somali territories against the dictator Siad Barre. Somalilander youth activists could not avoid confronting 'traditional' leaders in their struggle to become party militants and candidates. The contemporary importance of 'traditional' leaderships is a good example of the capacity of local social institutions to adapt to changing social, political and economic contexts. At the beginning of this doctoral research, we realised that statelessness and political pluralism (Markus V. Hoehne 2009; 2013; Marleen Renders 2007b; 2012; Marleen Renders & Ulf Terlinden 2010) were consolidated perspectives adopted by scholars in order to address the socio-political transformations

of Somali territories and of Somaliland in particular. This study therefore ventures into the examination of a local institution almost entirely ignored by scholars since the late colonial period: the place and role of the Gaboye in Somaliland social life, research that promises to enrich the historical representation of social change in the Somali territories.

We started by consulting the written sources available, travellers' and colonial officers' accounts, historical and ethnographic materials mostly produced during the colonial period, especially in the first part of the twentieth century (see Chapter 1). These sources depicted the Gaboye either as a disturbance in the evolutionist-styled classification of Somali society or as an anomaly relative to other dominant social principles and structures of the typically segmentary Somali society (which will be condensed in the definition of "pastoral democracy", see Ioan M. Lewis 1961); the Gaboye were considered either an interference or a contradiction in an otherwise homogeneous social panorama. Furthermore, these sources did not provide temporal coordinates that could guide the reconstruction of the transformations that affected the Gaboye's marginality. This state of the art channelled the direction taken by our ethnographic and historical research: our ambition was to investigate the de-institutionalisation and the transformation of the Gaboye's subordinated condition in the overall frame of Somalilander society.

Our first period of fieldwork, in November 2014, confirmed this analytical direction. Although we could rely on a solid network of contacts assembled during the previous research in 2011-2012, we immediately realised that a quite new apparatus of investigation was required. The issue of the Gaboye was elusive. The Somalilanders tended to overlook the importance of our topic, placing it among the already-solved problems: "In a place like Somaliland where there is so much to do in terms of material and moral advancement, let us agree on what has been accomplished" was the initial position of our interlocutors. Somaliland had achieved widespread pacification among local groups and there was no point in revisiting old social fractures at the risk of separating people. Why should we dig into bad, divisive attitudes that Somalilander society has largely abandoned?

Even the most superficial observation of the place of the Gaboye in Hargeysa, moreover, contradicted what we had learnt from written sources: we will discuss this aspect in Chapter 1. Few interlocutors could recollect the past to which the written sources referred. Daily life in Hargeysa was pushing our research in different directions, and we had to learn how to navigate the complexity of representations and social interactions without the assistance of a solid chronology. From the beginning the collection of information on the Gaboye had to follow the vaguely delineated paths and fragmentary clues that surfaced from the accounts of our interlocutors. Although intriguing, this forced us to adopt an approach that involved a degree of tension: we learnt to be dragged along by the rhythm and the orientations of people's conversations, whilst

maintaining a readiness to intercept any track that could improve our understanding of the process of social change that had involved the Gaboye.

Luckily, our knowledge of Hargeysa allowed us rather rapidly to find some people who could facilitate contact with the Gaboye community of Hargeysa. We were able to arrange an ethnographic routine based on the sharing of working, living and leisure spaces with members of the group, and we tried to spend as much time as possible in meetings and discussions with these people. We first approached, thanks to our previous contacts, one Gaboye 'traditional' leader. Within his close network of friends and relatives, we found two people who in a friendly manner guided our entry into the community. One of them in particular, who is from a well known and respected Gaboye family living in Hargeysa for decades, proved to be a crucial resource for our research. After we jointly selected a rather narrow pool of topics, he helped us to identify the more suitable interlocutors, and provided the assistance necessary to make them feel comfortable during our meetings and to translate the conversations into English. Together we arranged the best circumstances in which to approach each potential interlocutor or the best ways to investigate further the specific issues that gradually emerged from our ethnographic encounters. Interviews, conversations planned in advance and informal meetings have been equally important in the ethnographic routine we established together. Meetings with people often took place during lunch time in a restaurant or in private dwellings, in the afternoon *kat*-chewing sessions where we invited groups of (male) individuals, or during informal and un-scheduled attendance at workplaces, dwellings and public spaces.

The fieldwork lasted for about eight months, between November 2014 and August 2015. Throughout, we maintained the focus on one major question: what had happened to the institution of the Gaboye's subordination as described by colonial authors? Both oral traditions and oral history – following the distinction advanced by Jan Vansina (Vansina 1985: 12-13) – were precious tools with which to investigate the process of change that this institution has undergone since the late colonial period. Oral traditions are the inherited bodies of cosmological and practical knowledge that represent the past socio-politico-economic role and status of the Gaboye in Somali society. They consist, for example, of the dialects and jargons employed in the past, repertoires of songs or expertise able to transmit the occupational tasks exclusively practised by members of the Gaboye groups. Unfortunately, their collection would require a much longer and more extended operation than the one we undertook during this project. Circuits of transmission have been constantly shrinking over recent decades and some activities, like pottery, are disappearing because of the struggle of younger generations to escape the 'traditional' Gaboye's occupational tasks. On the other hand, oral history has played a crucial role in the building up of our analysis because it

highlighted the importance of certain events, individuals and places, and showed the path to follow if we were to understand better the Gaboye's experiences of social change from the point of view of the Gaboye themselves. The recollections of the older members of the community, men and women born between the 1930s and 1950s, prompted us to interrogate the history of the hinterland of Somaliland, and more specifically of the urban expansion of Hargeysa, in order to better understand the trajectory of the Gaboye. Part II reconstructs the historical background of their experiences of emancipation: the core objects of this historical investigation are rural-urban mobility and the linkage between the changing morphology of the socio-economic groups and the formation of urban centres in the hinterland of Somaliland during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to the initial phases of the Gaboye's settlement in Hargeysa – that even the eldest among my interlocutors were too young to have witnessed directly – many of the elderly people we met described the final years of the British Protectorate (the late 1950s) as a turning point. In that period, the aim of the British authorities' administrative policies was to manage and re-shape local socio-political institutions, and their redefinition of the urban space (including the Gaboye's neighbourhoods in Hargeysa) played a key contextual role in the reconfiguration of the Gaboye's social position. For instance, many elderly interlocutors clearly remembered the mobilisation of the urban-based Gaboye groups and the establishment of new Gaboye neighbourhoods in Hargeysa during the 1950s (Chapter 5 and 7).

Between January and February 2016, we consulted British colonial archives in London, specifically The National Archives in Kew,[3] the India Office Records at the British Library and the archive of the Royal Geographical Society. Apart from looking for any trace of the Gaboye in the catalogues throughout the decades of the British presence in the Somali territories (1880s-1960), we tried to identify the historical turning points that interlocutors pinpointed during fieldwork: the process of urban expansion, the various layers of settlement in Hargeysa, the British administrative policies on important issues like the management of land in the towns and their approach to local socio-political institutions. The results of this archival research are largely presented in Chapter 3, before the discussion of oral history, because they are essential background, illustrating the historical context. In addition to Gaboye recollections of their past, during fieldwork we used the strategy of monitoring social change through the documentation of the present day spatial presence of the Gaboye in Hargeysa, and of their occupations. In this respect, there is continuity between past and present and in order to highlight these elements we selected, with the help of local friends, a number of crews and individual workers with whom we had regular encounters. We also undertook general surveys characterised by quick narrow-targeted conversations with workers or people on the

[3] Below abbreviated as TNA.

streets. These circumstances were generally oriented at collecting data on households' history of mobility or on their economic/occupational situation.

All the names of the interlocutors we mention or we quote in this work are pseudonyms used in order to safeguard their privacy and, occasionally, their security.

OF 'MARGINS', OF 'CENTRES'

Although unplanned at the beginning, our research path has ended up drawing inspiration from Carlo Ginzburg's 'evidential paradigm', and in general from the historical studies produced by Italian microhistorians (Edward Muir & Guido Ruggiero 1991). These insightful elements coincided with the implications of studying the 'margins' from the 'margins' and with the descriptions of research as the activity of tracing greedy fragmentary clues, frequently relying on nothing more than a handful of names, rather than the patient collection and scrutiny of abundant sources.

Indeed, the objects of investigation selected by microhistorians were "marginal" (Muir & Ruggiero 1991: xiv-xv) and among themselves they debated the epistemological implications of studying the "margins": the latter can offer "exceptional", in the sense of unusual, objects of analysis relative to other sources. They can also reflect the normality of a social milieu that appears secondary to or completely absent from the bulk of the data available, inasmuch as most of the documents used by students of Europe's history (the field that microhistorians cultivated) were produced or controlled by socio-politico-economic elites (Grendi 1977; Carlo Ginzburg & Carlo Poni 1991). Moreover, the microhistorians emphasised that the study of the margins is important for illuminating both what happens at the periphery and what happens at the centre. In fact, it can help the researcher to adopt the requisite critical view of the sources by revealing the conditioning factors that structured the production of elite's sources.

The present research, indeed, targets a marginal topic in the life of the Somalis (both in the past and the present): firstly, the Gaboye have been largely ignored by other scholars and, secondly, they offer a perspective from the social periphery in relation to dominant values and groups within Somali society. As the microhistorians had already clarified, there is a circular movement that links an analytical perspective from the (social, political or economic) 'centre' and one from the 'margin'. In our analytical path, such a circularity overlaps – not by chance – with the movement between written and oral sources that features in the present research. In fact, the written sources that we will analyse in the following chapters – colonial era travellers', ethnographers' and former officers' accounts and archived official documents– come out of a politically dominant perspective, of individuals who were part of the coordinated attempt to establish and expand military and

administrative control over local groups. Furthermore, the major interest expressed in this huge variety of documents targets the locally dominant groups and values. This is particularly true for the written sources on the British Protectorate of Somaliland. Italian authors like Luigi Robecchi-Bricchetti, Massimo Colucci, Enrico Cerulli and Vinigi Grottanelli (some of their works will be mentioned below) offered a much more articulated picture of the groups living in the Somali territories, one that includes former slaves, agro-pastoral communities and groups not included in the Somali genealogical repertoires. Indeed, we cannot understand properly the differences between the British and the Italian views of the local groups in the Somali territories without reconstructing the intellectual and political milieu that shaped the perspectives of these ethnographically trained individuals (professionally or semi-professionally) and of the colonial administration's personnel. We cannot undertake this task here and we limit ourselves to acknowledging that there was also a much more concrete explanation behind these differences: the north-western Somali territories occupied by the British were a much more homogeneous social and economic milieu. The large majority of the population were in groups of nomadic pastoralists divided into segmentary genealogical structures. The written sources analysed in this work described the presence of the Gaboye and of other groups of occupational specialists affected by forms of segregation as one of the few elements of social differentiation inside the local society. Therefore, British travellers, ethnographers and colonial officers devoted most of their attention to the Somali nomadic pastoral man, the warrior, the clansman and to a minor extent the religious leader. These foreign observers, arguably, gave emphasis to the beliefs and the practices of the most numerous social subjects they interacted with and those entitled to represent the local groups towards external actors. For their part, British colonial functionaries were continuously absorbed by the challenging practical tasks of running an under-equipped and poorly financed administrative apparatus, managing the largest economic sectors and controlling internal turmoil (see Part II).

Indeed, the range of written sources discussed below evidently represent the perspective from the 'centre': that of colonial rulers writing about locally dominant groups. By contrast, the oral sources presented below were mainly collected among members of the Gaboye groups, groups that occupied a formally subordinated political position and were economically and occupationally segregated. The Gaboye's oral sources portray economic and political processes that both the majority of the Somalis and the external observers consider 'marginal' in relation to dynamics that have received more political and analytical attention, like the opposition to colonial penetration, state formation and state dissolution in the region, the transnational dislocation of the Somalis from the 1950s on and the pacification process and state building in Somaliland after 1991. Moreover, the Gaboye sources are fragmented and not integrated into formalised networks in which the

memory of the past is preserved and transmitted, even inside the Gaboye community itself (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, because oral histories describe events and processes that are integral parts of broader social transformations, we will adopt them as a complementary perspective to written sources. The reconstruction of circumscribed elements of the Gaboye past can shed new light on broader processes of social transformations and can erect comparative bridges with other areas and historical processes on and beyond the African continent.

With regard to the methodological similarities with the microhistorians' approach, we make clear that in our case – as, we suppose, in many others, although such confessions are pretty rare among scholars – many methodological choices are not really choices but the outcome of the attempt to cope with objective factors conditioning the process of data collection. The evidential paradigm, which was for microhistorians a deliberate implication of the typologies of data they looked for, was often a necessity for us. Once we adopted the perspective of the Gaboye, our choices were often conditioned by the objective reality of the sources we managed to collect and to analyse in the almost four years of the PhD project. Clues, symptoms and apparently insignificant signs (Ginzburg 1980) are what the field has usually offered to us. This research has not relied on the historical coordinates that area studies have laid down in analysing social change in the Somali territories. In fact, the Gaboye groups of Somaliland have their own turning points and trajectories of historical continuity that marked the reconfiguration of their relationships with other local groups, their political mobilisations or the economic sectors they occupy. Reconstructing this dynamic implied the patient work required in order to identify the temporal knots that manifested as bits of remembering and to reconstruct the webs of preconditions and consequences that surrounded them. We had to learn how to allow ourselves to be guided by the clues even for documenting the contemporary aspects of the Gaboye's socio-economic position: not formalised social norms, structured corpuses of symbols, organic cosmologies or the definite contours of a social institution. We had to espouse the belief, as the microhistorians did, that tiny clues can provide an analytical entry point into broader historical dynamics.

Another methodological point of contact with microhistory is the so called 'nominative approach'. For the microhistorians, tracking the individuals by name across different archives provides a way into the network of social relationships, structures and social norms in which they were inserted and thus to the reconstruction of how they activated and manipulated them (Muir & Ruggiero 1991: ix; Ginzburg & Poni 1991). We acknowledge that an important part of the ethnographic routine in the field consisted in following from mouth to mouth the thread of a narrow group of names that referred to persons, places and events. A similar procedure also characterised the investigations in the British archives. Indeed, our efforts were oriented towards reconstructing

the woven webs of relationships coming out of particular knots that played a role in important events of the Gaboye community's past, and towards people who manifested with their actions (such as moving to different areas or undertaking new economic activities) their compliance or detachment from social norms. There were also, among these individual knots – the only proof of whose existence was quite often their name – specific areas of the town of Hargeysa where crucial historical turning points took place or, conversely, where substantial continuities in the ways the Gaboye have been occupying and using them were embodied. It is along the intersections between this web of names that we have outlined the temporal coordinates marking the transformations of the Gaboye's social position in Somaliland.

THE GABOYE AND SOMALI STUDIES

Apart from microhistory, the renewed centrality of the margins is an analytical tradition that has developed solid roots even in Somali studies. Since the 1980s, scholars have begun to investigate in depth the forms of social, economic and political stratification that have featured the local groups settled in the Somali territories, and thus abandoned the tradition of representing Somali society as homogeneous and deeply egalitarian. The critical interlocutor of this new wave of research was the work of I.M. Lewis and his "updated" application of the structural-functionalist approach to the analysis of Somali society (Lidwien Kapteijns 2004). Lewis was the first anthropologist to carry out extensive fieldwork in the north-western Somali territories[4] but his contribution eventually became a hegemonic representation of the Somalis as a whole. This occurred at the expense, for example, of the data collected by Italian scholars on the groups that lived in the former Italian Somalia, like the so-called Somali-Bantu (Hoehne 2014) largely settled in the riverine areas. The repertoire of historical and ethnographic knowledge produced in Italian has remained a separate repository of sources consulted by few area specialists and so did not challenge for a long time the rather monolithic, segmentary and egalitarian representation of the Somalis that I.M. Lewis produced.

However, borrowing Kapteijns's words, from the 1980s scholars began to "deconstruct" and "contextualise": historical analysis has consolidated as an instrument fundamental to the widening of the focus on Somali society. This approach has allowed us to overcome the ubiquitous presence

[4] I.M. Lewis undertook his first fieldwork in Somaliland in 1955 thanks to a research fellowship of the Colonial Social Science Research Council (I.M. Lewis 1994: 2). This is probably related to the fact that, as colonial documents showed (see TNA, CO 535/141/8), the study of the clans and political structures of the Somalis was an important issue on the agenda of British colonial and social sciences institutions at least from the 1940s. In 1945, the Governor of the Protectorate of Somaliland had addressed the International African Institute in order to find a professional anthropologist who could finally provide the administration with detailed information on the territory's socio-political organisation. Famous anthropologists like R. Firth, S.F. Nadel and E. Evans-Pritchard were consulted and Colonial Office officials agreed to finance the survey of the "tribal organization" of the Somalis through a research grant offered by the Colonial Social Science Research Council.

of clanship as the structural element characterising the Somalis' political life and to trace the multiple facets of hierarchies and forms of subordination suffered by local groups. Numerous scholars have tackled the past and present stratifications in the south-central Somali territories, at least until the widespread eruption of violence made any ethnographic research almost impossible (Catherine Besteman 1999; Lee V. Cassanelli 1982; 1987; 1988; Francesca Declich 1995a; 1995b; 2006; Simonetta Grilli 1995; Virginia Luling 2002 [1971]). In completing these tasks they have profoundly enriched our understanding of the functioning of the genealogical structures themselves, of the local groups' relationships with different environments, of the variegated economic systems and of the plural forms of authority and political institutions. They have offered an opportune complication of the picture of social life in the Somali territories, underlining the impact on it of powerful historical forces like the processes of urbanisation, the introduction and abolition of slavery, the colonial penetrations and the subsequent consolidation of state institutions.

The Gaboye have often been mentioned but never fully investigated from a historical and ethnographic point of view (Hoehne 2014; Luling 1984). They embodied a form of social stratification that we should examine – as some authors did (Mohamed A. Eno & Omar A. Eno 2010; Hoehne 2014; Luling 1984) – in parallel with other configurations of economic exploitation, political domination and moral devaluation that featured other (and more numerous) groups in the Somali territories. But first we must organise the ethnographic and historical evidence that make the Gaboye the object of a distinct social institution. We must contextualise this institution in the social and geographical environments where the Gaboye were largely concentrated, namely the north-western Somali territories corresponding to Somaliland. This work aims to be a first step in this direction.

The full integration of the Gaboye case study into historical and anthropological repertoires opens another channel for the assimilation of Somali studies into Africanist and broader debates. First we had its original absorption into the anthropological discipline through the segmentary-lineage theory; then, its incorporation into the thematic fields raised by historical investigations like colonial penetration, slavery and its legacies, state formation and state dissolution, diaspora studies and so on. Now, the Gaboye and the relationship between ascribed status, marriage segregation, occupational segregation, political marginality and moral devaluation – which manifests itself as a set of social norms in numerous African groups – can offer a fruitful and yet unexplored comparative opportunity.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

This work is divided into three parts. The first part (Chapters 1 and 2) provides a definition of the case study of the Gaboye in relation to the scholarly contributions that have documented their past social position and to the conceptual tools that scholars continue to use or to critique in descriptions of forms of social stratification analogous to that of the Gaboye. The second part (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6) focuses on the premises and the stages of the Gaboye's process of emancipation during the colonial period. The third part (Chapters 7 and 8) deals with the plasticity of the Gaboye's marginality since the end of the colonial period.

In particular, Chapter 1 examines the colonial-era written sources on the Gaboye (from the 1850s to the 1950s) and sets them beside data collected during our fieldwork. The goal is to introduce and demonstrate the importance of the historical reconstruction presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses critically the link between the case of the marginality and emancipation of the Gaboye and the scholarly tradition that has relied on the concept of 'caste'. The latter was, and still is, commonly used in African studies to address forms of social stratification that involve ascribed status, occupational and marriage segregation and cosmologies attributing a degraded human condition to certain groups.

Chapter 3 offers the historical reconstruction, largely through archive materials, of a set of economic and demographic transformations that affected British Somaliland after 1920: the expansion of urban areas, especially Hargeysa, in the hinterland of the Protectorate. These transformations played a crucial role in the process of the emancipation of the Gaboye.

Chapter 4 presents oral sources that describe the dynamic of urban expansion and how the Gaboye took part in it. In particular, it documents the premises and the modes of the Gaboye's settlement in Hargeysa up to the 1950s.

Chapter 5 focuses on the mobilisation of the Gaboye that took place in Hargeysa in the late 1950s and which led to the establishment of the first 'traditional' leader and diya-paying group. We reconstruct both how this crucial change was related to the British administrative policies and the approaches adopted by local groups towards these social institutions.

Chapter 6 summarises the contents of Part II and explores theoretically the connections between the process of urbanisation in the hinterland of Somaliland and the Gaboye's emancipation.

Chapter 7 reconstructs the areas and the modes of the Gaboye's urban settlement from the end of the colonial period (the late 1950s). We show how the modes of inhabiting the town of Hargeysa adopted by the Gaboye, and the representations produced by local groups around them, resulted in both the resilience and the plasticity of the Gaboye's marginality.

Chapter 8 documents the present day economic situation of the Gaboye groups living in Hargeysa. We account for the stratifications internal to these groups and for the transformations and the continuities in the occupational sectors occupied by the Gaboye, women and men. We also show how pathways of transnational mobility undertaken by Gaboye youngsters are linked to the reproduction of the Gaboye's economic vulnerability.

PART I
WHO ARE THE GABOYE? STUDYING WRITTEN SOURCES AND THE SEARCH FOR CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

CHAPTER 1
DOCUMENTING THE SUBORDINATION OF THE GABOYE

1.1 WRITTEN SOURCES ON THE SUBORDINATION OF THE GABOYE

This chapter provides a preliminary definition of the Gaboye, sourced from colonial written sources and the rather thin corpus of other studies that refer to the Somali marginal groups. The first of these, *First Footsteps in East Africa: or, An Exploration of Harar* by the famous English explorer Richard F. Burton, was originally published in 1856 (Burton 1987 [1856]). Burton's aim was to explore the interior of the Horn of Africa and especially to reach the town of Harar. He departed from the port of Zeila in 1854, reached Harar after having crossed Somali territories and returned to the port of Berbera in 1855. The second source reviewed is *Seventeen Trips Through Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia* by Harald G.C. Swayne (Swayne 1903). Swayne was a British military officer who explored and hunted in the north-western Somali territories in the years following the establishment of the British Protectorate of Somaliland in the mid-1880s. During this period, another English explorer, Frank L. James, travelled from the British territory on the Somali coast in order to 'reveal' the hinterland of the Somali country to Europeans. His account, entitled *Unknown Horn of Africa*, was published in 1888 (James1888). The third source is the work of John W.C. Kirk, a British military officer who served in the Somaliland Protectorate during the first decade of the twentieth century. Having become interested in the study of the Somali language and in the marginalised minorities like the Gaboye and the Yibir-Anaas, he wrote a paper for the Journal of the Royal African Society (Kirk 1904) and a chapter of his book *A Grammar of the Somali Language: With Examples in Prose and Verse and an Account of the Yibir and Midgan Dialects* (Kirk 1905) on their dialects and traditions. We will also quote the work of a professionally trained scholar, the Italian linguist and Semitist Enrico Cerulli. He made a fundamental contribution to the ethnographic and historical documentation of both the Ethiopian and the Somali groups and served, during the fascist period, in the administrative apparatus of the Africa Orientale Italiana as the Governor of Shewa and, subsequently, of Harar. The works of Cerulli reported here derive mainly from his research during the 1910s and are extracted from a later publication (Cerulli 1959). After

Cerulli, we will shift back to British Somaliland and review some brief remarks included in the account written by the British officer, Major H.A. Rayne, who served in Somaliland between the 1910s and the early 1920s, including a period as District Commissioner of Zeila. In *Sun, Sand and Somals. Leaves from the Note-book of a District Commissioner in British Somaliland*, published in 1921 (Rayne 1921), he reported his personal experiences in Somaliland and his observations on the history and the customs of local groups. Our final source is the work of I.M. Lewis. As mentioned in the Introduction, he was the first professional anthropologist to carry out extensive fieldwork in British Somaliland (in mid 1950s) and although his analytical models have been radically criticised – indeed, often overturned – his output remains an extremely important contribution to Somali studies. This chapter, and the rest of the present work, will confine its use of I.M. Lewis' contribution to his limited but significant historical and ethnographic remarks on the particular objects of the present research. In *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy: a General Introduction to Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions* (I.M. Lewis 1957), he provides rich information about the Gaboye, demonstrating an interest in the topic which, unfortunately, received less attention in his later, more famous *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (I.M. Lewis 1961).

These authors employed the denominations of *Midgan*, *Tumal* and *Yibir* rather homogenously (and also the term *Sab* to encompass all of them) for the marginal groups they described. They also provided coherent accounts of their occupational specialisations (including the list of their tasks), their segregation, the prohibition of intermarriage to which they were subject, their political subordination and their exclusion from the blood-compensation exchanges.

The issue of the origins of the Gaboye plays a central role in all these sources but it is also the cause of many of their shortcomings. They remain, however, important tools in the identification of the transformations that affected the Gaboye's social position up to the present day. Some of the key elements in the colonial description of Gaboye subordination include hunting, the so called dialects or jargons spoken by Somali subordinated minorities, the 'customs' of the Yibir-Anaas and the specificity of minority groups' genealogical repertoires. Which of these remain today? By interrogating our ethnographic materials, the second part of the chapter illustrates the contemporary configuration of these key elements, and provides evidence for why it was crucially important for us to organise the study of the Gaboye in terms of a trajectory of social change.

1.2 THE REVIEW OF THE WRITTEN SOURCES OF COLONIAL TIMES

Colonial writers, whether scholars, travellers or colonial officers, paid little attention to the Gaboye and the other minorities, like the Tumaal and the Anaas. These groups were concentrated in the north-western part of the Somali territories, most of which area was divided between the British and the Ethiopian Empires during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The British had little interest in their Protectorate of Somaliland and, apart from the long and costly military campaigns against the rebel movement led by the dervish leader Maxamed Cabdille Xasaan between 1900 and 1920, they invested very little, administratively or economically, until the mid 1940s.

One of the most significant shortcomings of the British administration in Somaliland – complained of by their officers when the country was taken back after the brief Italian occupation (1941) – was the lack of documentation on the social, political and cultural life of the Somalis. Governors of the colony in the 1940s took the decision to find anthropologists and other trained specialists to assist their colonial officers with scientifically grounded surveys. Given the previous paucity of research it is not difficult to explain the relative lack, and the superficiality, of references to the Gaboye in the colonial archives. They were a minority scattered among the powerful Somali clans and were not a priority issue for the administration, whose main concerns were the maintenance of peace and stability and the strict control of expenditure.

A small number of references to the Gaboye can be found in books by people who visited the country or served there as officers, in some cases for long periods. The only partial exceptions are the contributions by the British military officer Kirk and of the British anthropologist I.M. Lewis. Numerous Italian travellers and scholars, on the other hand, visited Italian Somalia and published the results of their researches, notably the scholar Enrico Cerulli. This interest reflected the Italians' quite different approach to Somalia which, until 1911, was their only colony in Africa apart from Eritrea and into which, especially from the first decade of the twentieth century, they were prepared to invest considerable resources in improving the effectiveness of their occupation and administration.

However, another reason may contribute to explain why external observers such as travellers, scholars, colonial officers and their experts hired throughout the decades of the Protectorate in order to improve the British administration largely overlooked the Gaboye: the latter were a powerful disturbance in the paradigm of social organisation that had been applied to the Somalis. Adam Kuper clearly showed us how old was the influence of the so-called 'lineage theory' and of its assumptions in the minds of the observers (Kuper 1982). One of these assumptions was that the internal organisation of societies was based on kinship in homogenous structures that replicate themselves to include the entire social body, and are based on symmetry and equality. For

this reason, it is no wonder that the Gaboye were given a tiny analytical slot: that of the exception that confirms the rule. No wonder that long before the arrival of the Somalia expert, I.M. Lewis (who had been a student of E. Evans-Pritchard), the Gaboye presence was already explained by means of what Herbert S. Lewis called the "remnant model" (H.S. Lewis 1962), namely as a human stratum of aboriginal inhabitants that waves of (Somali) invaders had conquered. In fact they embodied a non-kinship based political bond, ranked stratification and socially codified division of labour. In other words, they represented an anomaly that had to be regarded as an accident of history because it denied the structural principles that sustained the social organisation of the Somali people.

Kuper (Kuper 1982) helps us to understand the obsessive desire to explain the condition of the Gaboye historically, through the remnant model. The scholars and writers active before the 1940s, like Cerulli, were influenced by the 'evolutionary version' of the lineage theory, which tried to explain lineage-based social organisation through its position in the evolution of mankind. Thus, the Gaboye anomaly could not be considered as a "structural" element of Somali society, as H.S. Lewis would try to explain later on (H.S. Lewis 1962), but as the vestiges of deeper evolutionary stages.

One of the first allusions to the marginal groups living among the Somalis is in the account by Burton (Burton 1987 [1856]). He defined the "Yebir", the "Tomal" and the "Midgan" as the "principal families" of the Somali "system of castes" which was, according to him, extremely similar to that pertaining in Yemen. For each of the three Somali groups Burton reported its Yemeni equivalent, on the basis of the same occupational specialisation. Burton described the same distribution of occupational specialisation among the three groups as is reported above. As regards the "Midgan", he wrote that the denomination means "one-hand" in Somali language, but did not report its origin; nowadays, the meaning of the term Midgaan is obscure even for the Gaboye elders and no consensus has ever been found during the fieldwork on its aetiology. He added that they were divided into three main tribes and that they were the most numerous of the castes in the Somali country. The people he talked with could not trace their genealogical origin, but some mentioned prominent ancestors from the Arabian Peninsula. According to Burton, their position was similar to that of the "Freedman amongst the Romans" and they were expelled from the "gentle blood of Somali land". The Midgan "take service under different chiefs" and were employed in different activities, including participation in warfare. They were particularly feared as archers since

they used poisoned arrows; the poison was referred to as "Waba"[5] by Burton and was said to be lethal for human beings. He concluded these brief remarks by saying that the Midgan were also different in their appearance: they were "dark and somewhat stunted" and also differentiated by their countenance and accent (Burton 1987: 24-25 [1856]). It is worth mentioning another passage of Burton's account in which he briefly alluded to the dietary habits of the "Midgan" or "servile tribes" that would distinguish them from the rest of the Somalis: "From inquiries, I have no doubt that these Midgan are actually reduced by famine at times to live on a food which human nature abhors" (Burton 1987: 132 [1856]).[6] The peculiarity of the marginalised groups' food habits is an element reported by many other authors and has also been documented in relation to numerous marginalised groups in the Ethiopian context (see Alula Pankhurst 1999).

A few decades after Burton's trip, when the British were establishing their Protectorate in Somaliland (the late 1880s), Swayne made several expeditions across the country which he documented in his *Seventeen Trips Through Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia* (Swayne 1903). He mentioned the "Tomal, the Yebir and the Midgans", defined them as "outcaste races" and stated that they were not organised in tribes. Swayne confirmed the occupational specialisation of these groups. He was particularly interested in the Midgan since they practiced hunting, and he said he had participated in several hunting parties with them. He described them as excellent trackers who trained dogs to assist them in the hunt and used poisoned arrows; they killed antelopes, from which they removed discs of skin which were used to make shields or sold at the market.[7] Swayne also confirmed the Gaboye's involvement in inter-clan warfare: they were "engaged to act as messengers, scouts and light skirmishers" (Swayne 1903: 4). According to Swayne, there was no physical difference between the Gaboye and the other Somalis, except perhaps that they were on average shorter.

A very interesting episode reported in this account offers an insight into the issue of the rules of avoidance targeting the Gaboye and the daily routine relationship between them and the other Somalis. During a hunting expedition in 1887, a fight broke out between a "Midgan" named Adan and a Somali, because the latter told the former that he could not eat together at the same dish "with respectable Somalis". Swayne reports: "The Gaboye man answered 'Who are you to talk?

[5] This is reported by numerous authors (see below) and is further confirmed by oral sources consulted during the fieldwork. The most common name of the poison is "Wabaio" and its preparation was considered an extremely precious secret, held by the Gaboye and ignored by the other Somalis.

[6] From what Burton said we cannot be sure: he does not specify what led him to believe that the Gaboye's dietary deviancy was driven by famine rather than by other social norms.

[7] Swayne described carefully how the Gaboye carried out hunting expeditions using dogs. He repeatedly joined the Gaboye settled in the vicinity of the coastal town of Bullhar (Swayne 1903: 300).

You're only a baby; you have not learned to eat at all yet; go back to your mother and drink milk.' The youth, having no more arguments left, stooped, picked up a spear which lay beside him, leant over and prodded Adan gently in the back, causing blood to flow" (Swayne 1903: 69). The other people around immediately stopped the fight. Swayne who was leading the expedition, decided that the Gaboye man was right and the offender should pay a small compensation; then he persuaded them to shake their hands.

This short episode confirms that the rules of avoidance (in this case, regarding commensality) were in place during the last part of the nineteenth century: rules that have now completely disappeared. The Gaboye man's robust response to the young man's statement seems more like the reply to a personal offence rather than to the expression of a formalised norm. However, looking carefully at Swayne's account, the words of the Gaboye did not directly question the Somali's demand but were aimed at de-legitimising the adversary's ability to enforce the social norm in question and, more generally, to claim his superiority. The Gaboye man did so by contesting the Somali man's manhood, namely his full membership of a majority clan which would give him the right to enforce norms (like the restrictions on commensality) and would mark his difference from the 'minor' members of the group, such as the women, the babies and the Gaboye.

The conclusion of this episode supports the idea that, most likely, the two persons involved did not belong to groups bonded by a formalised affiliation relationship. The resolution of the dispute (and especially the imposition of a blood-compensation) could not have been effected by Swayne if the relationship between the two men were already framed by bondage between their respective genealogical units.

Some quick allusions to the Gaboye, the Tumaal and the Yibir are also made in *The Unknown Horn of Africa* by the British explorer James (James 1888). During his expedition in the Horn of Africa, he stopped in the town of Burco (located in Somaliland) where a local traditional leader entertained him with displays of his warriors' abilities. They included some "Midgan" archers and James added: "These Midgans are one of the three pariah tribes existent throughout Somali-land. The others are the Tomal, who work in iron, and turn out bridle-bits, swords and spearheads, and the Ebir, who are tanners, and manufacture saddles, prayer-carpets and small leathern cases for the receipt of verses from the Koran" (James 1888: 70). According to James, these three groups have no "fatherland" and are the "vassals" of the other Somali tribes. This is not the only source in which the Yibir, or Ebir, are described as leather workers; however, their manufacturing abilities are associated here with a religious dimension.

James also wrote that he was present at "a parade of thirty or forty ostriches, followed by women and children armed with long sticks. These ostrich drivers were the wives and the families of the low-caste Midgans […]". The explorer was told that each ostrich was worth around 50 dollars since it was regularly plucked and its feathers sold in the coastal markets of Somaliland (James 1888: 68-69). Such an account suggests that the Gaboye were designated as the people whose job it was to capture and then to attend these wild animals, whose feathers were valuable goods. The Gaboye were subject to several restrictions regarding the ownership of livestock, especially of camels and cattle, while the possession of huge flocks was fundamental to the prestige of individuals and genealogical units. Raising ostriches, that is, wild animals which had to be captured, was an activity antithetical to pastoralism and thus, arguably, could be practiced only by people excluded from full membership of the Somali community.

The three subordinated groups of the Protectorate of Somaliland captured the interest of a British officer: Kirk wrote a grammar of the Somali language and dedicated part of his book to what he called the "dialects" of the "outcast groups" (Kirk 1905). Kirk offered a version of the classification of the internal divisions among the Somalis which can be found in the work of many subsequent scholars. He divided the Somalis into "*Gob* (gentry)" and "*Sab* (lowborn, or outcast)". The former included most of the local majority clans, while the latter were divided into the three tribes of the Midgan, the Tumal and the Yibir. Kirk added to the information already quoted that "whereas all other Somalis have recognised territories and watering-places for each tribe or sub-tribe, these three outcast tribes are a scattered people of no fixed home, who often attach themselves in small groups or families as 'abbans', or servants, to the various Somali tribes all over the country" (Kirk 1904: 91).

What is particularly important is the usage of the term "abban": indeed, several authors have reported and documented the application of this denomination to a defined role in another domain of social life of the Somalis, that of the caravan trade. The "abban" or *abaan* was a broker and a protector hired by foreign merchants who had to cross the Somali country from the coastal markets towards Ethiopian plateau (Jeremy Swift 1979; Marcel Djama 1997). Being a member of a local majority clan, he acted as the guarantor of the safety of the merchant and his goods: attacking the caravan was equivalent to attacking the *abaan*'s genealogical unit. The common element in this double usage of the word is that in both cases it indicates a relationship of tutelage between two individuals or groups, in which one of the two mediates and manages the relationship of the other with the rest of the society.

Another point of Kirk's that merits consideration here is the definition of the religious affiliations of these three groups: they all declared themselves to be Mohammedans but presented some peculiarities in their adherence to Islam. The "Midgan", for example, often consumed "haram" meat, namely that of animals not slaughtered according the Islamic ritual or of "unclean beasts". The Yibir had a reputation as sorcerers and they received some sort of payment from the members of the majority clans at marriages and whenever a baby boy was born. This payment is called "samanyo",[8] it amounted to two or three rupees and was collected by the first Yibir who visited the persons involved in these events. Kirk added that "in return for the fee the *Yibir* gives the Somali a charm, 'Makharam', consisting of a piece of his sacred tree sewed in a piece of leather" (Kirk 1904: 95). Failing this, the Yibir could launch a terrible curse.

Kirk related this practice to the story of the ancestor of the Yibir, "Mohamed Hanif", a powerful "priest" who lived at the court of a certain "Sultan Somal", ruler of the northern part of the Somali territories. The episode occurred at the time of Sheikh Isaak, a great religious figure who had come from the Arabian Peninsula and was the forefather of the largest clan confederation of Somaliland that bears his name, the Isaaq. Sheikh Isaak sent his cousin, named "Au Bakhardli" according to Kirk, to remove Mohamed Hanif. In order to persuade Au Bakhardli of his power, the latter went through a hill several times until Au Bakhardli begged God to imprison him inside it. Later on, the sons of the Yibir went to the man and asked for blood-compensation, the *diya*, for the killing of their father. Au Bakhardli asked them whether they wanted an immediate payment or preferred to be paid in the future for every newborn boy and for every marriage; they opted for the second and this is the explanation for the "samanyo" paid by the Somalis to the Yibir (Kirk 1904: 98-99).[9] The episode is still widely known nowadays among the Somalilanders and the story has been collected in several variations. Indeed, Kirk himself quoted a passage from the above-mentioned book by Burton (Burton 1987 [1856]) in which there was a very similar plot involving two sheikhs challenging a pagan magician. Kirk admitted that his source might have nuanced the nature of the figure of Mohamed Hanif as a pagan sorcerer - a detail widely accepted by the interlocutors met during the fieldwork of this research – and presented him as a Muslim priest. A Yibir, or Anaas, interviewed during the fieldwork in Hargeysa stated that there are no more than a handful of members of his group in the whole of Somaliland currently collecting payment for the birth of baby boys.[10]

[8] Kirk, who learned the Yibir dialect, also reported the Yibir word for "samanyo", "Anasnimo"; "Anas" or *Anaas* is what the Yibir call themselves.

[9] Kirk reported the literal translation of this story as it was delivered to him by a prominent Yibir in the Somalilander town of Burco.

[10] Interview with Axmed, a Yibir-Anaas elder, of the 7 March and of the 29 April 2015.

Kirk also reported several other stories he collected among Yibir and Gaboye interlocutors. They were related to "magical" practices or offered genealogical explanations of their groups and their forefathers. The British officer's account shows that he had undertaken quite an accurate investigation of the three marginalised groups living among the Somalis in the Somalilander Protectorate. For instance, he affirmed that the Midgan were divided into two great tribes, the "Musa Derio" and the "Madiban", the former living in the western part of Somaliland. He was the first writer to report precisely the internal articulations of the Midgan-Gaboye before Cerulli; furthermore, these two groups are still recognised nowadays as the largest Gaboye clans settled inside the territory of Somaliland, while other Gaboye clans live in the Somali territories of Ethiopia.

However, the most important contribution found in Kirk's works is his precious documentation of the vocabularies and the dialects spoken by the Gaboye and the Anaas. He stated that he had to win the trust of his interlocutors and that he had to give his word that what he learned would not be revealed to any Somali person. From his inquiries, Kirk developed the idea that the structure of the "languages" spoken by the Anaas and the Gaboye was identical to that of Somali language, since the same rules were applied in the syntax, conjugation of verbs, inflection of nouns and adjectives and methods of formation of derivative verbs. But they had distinct vocabularies, particularly the Anaas one, which had more words. Kirk also compared the two "dialects" with other languages spoken by neighbouring groups, such as the Oromo, but he found no significant connection: numerous words, on the contrary, had the same Somali root. This inclined him to believe to what a Gaboye interlocutor had already told him, namely that their language was a "secret code" invented by their ancestors to communicate among themselves without being understood by the Somalis (Kirk 1904: 108).

During the second decade of the twentieth century, Cerulli published a number of articles about the marginalised minorities living among the Somalis. Other Italian authors had referred briefly to the presence of "low-caste people" among the Somalis,[11] but it was Cerulli who devoted the most attention to the Gaboye in his writings. He carried out numerous surveys all over the Italian Somalia and his accounts of the Gaboye are based on sources confined to the northern part of Italian Somalia, in particular the territory bordering the British Protectorate of Somaliland.

Actually, one of Cerulli's first analyses of the social position of the Gaboye appeared in a paper in which he documented the customary law of the people living in the northern part of Italian Somalia. The study was based on data collected in the Italian town of Naples from a group of

[11] See, for example, Bottego 1895 and Colucci 1924. A more detailed account is included in Robecchi Bricchetti 1899.

Somalis belonging to the clan called Majerteen (settled largely in the northern part of Italian Somalia) who were "held there for that purpose" (Cerulli 1959: 1).[12] He provided general information on what he called the three "low castes"[13] of the Majerteen clan, namely the *Yibir*, the *Midgan* and the *Tumal*; sometimes he denominates these three groups using the Italian word "stirpe", meaning 'breed' or 'ancestry', whereas according to him the rigid marriage segregation led him to regard them as distinct populations from the Somalis (Cerulli 1959: 25). First of all, he considered the "low castes" from the point of view of Islamic Law and stated that the latter is not compatible with such distinctions since it proclaims the brotherhood of Muslims. However, the "caste division" was such a deep-rooted custom that the Somalis, after accepting Islam, justified these norms according to the parameters fixed by the religion. Cerulli reported that this was achieved by using the rules which distinguish pure meat from impure; in fact the Somalis fused these rules with the pre-Islamic system of classification (which Cerulli believed was of Cushitic origin since it was shared also by the Oromo people) of body parts forbidden for the "high caste" people, namely the head, guts and legs of the animals. He wrote: "Thence, it was stated that these parts of the animal body were defined as "dead meat" in Islam and it was - and could only be - low caste people who would eat the head, the guts and the legs of the animals. Therefore, it was concluded that low caste men (who, moreover, also eat animals which are impure for the Somalis, such as the ostrich) eating "dead meat" found themselves in a condition of ritual impurity (*nagiasa*) for their whole lifetime, which fully justified the norms limiting their juridical capacity" (Cerulli 1959: 25-26).[14] *Pace* Cerulli, this is not an explanation but the straightforward description of a situation as reported to him by a member of a majority clan: it does not give any insight into the routine deviant dietary behaviours of the Gaboye who did profess themselves to be strict followers of the Islamic religion.

According to Cerulli, "low-caste people" neither belonged to the clan nor stood as a separate clan;[15] they could put themselves under the tutelage of a "noble Somali" but all their incomes were

[12] This was first published in the Bulletin of the African Society of Italy between 1918 and 1919. I am responsible for the translations from Italian into English of the quotes below from Cerulli's contributions.

[13] "Basse caste" in the original Italian text.

[14] Original text in Italian: "Si disse quindi che anche queste parti del corpo degli animali erano 'carne morta', secondo la terminologia islamica. Ora la gente di bassa casta poteva cibarsi, anzi era l'unica a cibarsi della testa, della trippa e delle zampe degli animali. Perciò si concluse che gli uomini delle basse caste (che poi si cibano anche di animali impuri per i somali, come lo struzzo) mangiando la 'carne morta' venivano a trovarsi per tutta la vita in uno stato di impurità rituale (*nagiasa*) che giustificava quindi pienamente le norme limitative della loro capacità giuridica".

[15] Cerulli uses the Latin word "gens" which has been translated here as 'clan'. In ancient Rome, the term "gens" indicated a group of families or lineages sharing a common name, ancestors and cults. It had also been by prominent anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan.

the property of their "master".[16] Also, intermarriage was forbidden, babies born out of mixed unions belonged to the "low-caste", the son of a Somali woman and a "low-caste" man could be righteously killed, as well as his or her father, by the family of the woman. The "low-caste" people could not enter the houses of Somalis but must stand in front of them. As regards material rights, Cerulli reported that they could own sheep but not cattle, donkeys but not horses, rifles, bow and arrows but not spears and shields.

Among the three subordinated groups, the Midgan were the ones who habitually hunted wild animals, especially antelopes and gazelles. They might also hunt ostriches, but in that case they needed to borrow a horse from their master, who would require three quarters of their prey in payment. In the case of homicide, the "low-caste" people had no right to blood-compensation but, if they were under the tutelage of a Somali, the compensation was paid to the "patron".[17] Furthermore, they had their own judge, appointed from among the Yibir (who were the sorcerers and so were the most erudite), who deliberated on disputes between members of these three groups. Cerulli's opinion was that the treatment of the "low-caste" people by the Somalis was extremely severe, from some points of view even starker than that of slaves.[18] According to him, the elements of the customary law he noted stressed "the repugnance of a pastoral people that had reached a superior level of civilisation towards the remains of a people having deeply different and more barbaric customs" (Cerulli 1959: 29).[19] This idea reflected Cerulli's belief that the "low-caste" groups might have been the remnants of some sort of aboriginal groups that had been subjugated by waves of pastoralists of Cushitic origins.

Also particularly interesting are some "texts" collected by Cerulli from a man named Muhammad Hassan belonging to the Somali clan of the Ogaden and published in 1918. After referring to the occupational specialisations of the Yibir, Tumaal and Midgan, this document described the relationships between the members of the subordinated groups and those of the major clan:[20]

[16] Here Cerulli uses the Italian word "padrone" (Cerulli 1959: 27), while in almost any other passage on the Gaboye he uses "patrono". The former can be translated as "master" or "owner" and is more appropriate for the institution of slavery. Instead, the latter corresponds to "patron". Indeed, it is Cerulli himself who often qualifies the relationship of the individual Gaboye with a member of a majority clan as tutelage or clientship.

[17] Curiously, the sources consulted by Cerulli did not discuss at all the case of the killing of a Somali by a Gaboye.

[18] In order to support this statement, Cerulli examined the resolutions of cases of murder either committed or suffered by slaves and "low-caste" people. He concluded that the loss of a slave was for the Somalis a more significant event than that of a Gaboye.

[19] Original text in Italian: "[…] la ripugnanza che un popolo di pastori giunto ad un grado di civiltà superiore nutre verso i resti di un altro popolo dalle costumanze profondamente diverse e più barbare".

[20] The following lines are a portion of a text entitled "The Low Castes" which Cerulli reported both in the original Somali and in Italian translation.

> "You see a baby Midgan, weak, with no mother and no father. You take him. You feed him. –You give him a toga [garment]. He is grown up. – You buy a bow and a quiver in which arrows are stored. Then he goes on hunting. He kills an ostrich. When he brings you the ostrich, you take it. – You go on an expedition. Off you go! It is what you say to him. He follows you. You gain a lot of livestock. The livestock he has gained, you take it. – Then he wishes to marry a Midgan lady. You give him either a he-camel or a donkey or both. His wife delivers a baby. They proliferate. –They are all yours[21] until you die. –When the patron of a Yibir dies, his brother or his son takes the Yibirs. […]" (Cerulli 1959: 82).[22]

This text adopts, most likely as a rhetorical tool, a typical Gaboye-Midgan life trajectory to show the various stages which give shape to the "patron-client relationship". The inception of the situation of bondage is fictitiously depicted as the fortuitous finding of a "baby Midgan" which suggests, though it is not deliberately represented as such, that it is this sort of original debt that conditions the Gaboye's position vis-à-vis the Somali person. Indeed, what structures the relationship is the fact that the Gaboye is initially a person with no family[23] and lacking all means of survival. Therefore, each subsequent step marking the material and social existence of the Gaboye is thanks to, and mediated by, that "you" whom the speaker is addressing: the Somali person belonging to a majority clan. First, his productive role is associated with the activity of hunting, but it is through the Somali "patron" that the Gaboye obtain access to the bow and arrows he needs to practice it. The second activity mentioned in this text – the participation of the Gaboye in warfare and inter-clan clashes – is not adequately commented on or discussed elsewhere by Cerulli, but it was reported by some of the sources quoted above and would later be recounted by I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957). In Cerulli's text in particular, the Somali interlocutor refers to the practice of raiding livestock owned by other Somalis. However, the material gain derived from both these activities is controlled by the Somali "patron".

[21] Here Cerulli added in a note: "they are yours [clients]".

[22] Original text in Italian: "Tu hai visto un piccolo Midgan, senza forza, senza madre, senza padre. Tu lo prendi. Gli dai da mangiare. – Gli dai una toga. Egli è cresciuto. – Tu gli hai comprato un arco ed una faretra in cui si ripongono le frecce. Poi egli è andato a caccia. Ha ucciso uno struzzo. Quando egli ti porta lo struzzo, tu lo prendi. – Si va ad una spedizione. Avanti! Tu gli dici. Egli ti segue. Si guadagna molto bestiame. Il bestiame che egli ha guadagnato, tu te lo prendi. – Poi egli desidera di sposare una Midgan. Tu gli dai o un cammello maschio o un asino o entrambe le cose. La sua moglie partorisce un figlio. Si moltiplicano. – Tutti sono tuoi [clienti] finché tu non muoia. – Quando il patrono di Yibir muore, il suo fratello o suo figlio prende gli Yibir [sotto il suo patronato] […]".

[23] Or more radically, we might say with no kin. This is suggested by what Cerulli wrote elsewhere, namely that the Somalis commonly called the Gaboye "the people without brothers" (Cerulli 1959: 26).

The "patron" is even in charge of the Gaboye's social reproduction: first it is he who provides the animal that, according to Cerulli, represents the bride price paid by the protected Gaboye. The interlocutor explicitly clarified that the camel, possibly given by the "patron" to his Gaboye "client", is a male: the Gaboye were excluded from the ownership of livestock, and in particular of camels which the Somalis consider (especially in the northern and north-western Somali territories) the form of livestock *par excellence*. The reference to a male camel clearly specifies the impossibility for Gaboye of creating a flock and of living as pastoralists. On the contrary, the male camel (and the donkey too) is a way of transporting equipment and supplies; furthermore, if properly trained,[24] it was an excellent tool for the hunter on his expeditions. Finally, the last part of the quote clarifies that the relationship between the Gaboye and the Somali was not an individual-to-individual one but it bonded the members of a Gaboye household and the relatives of a particular Somali "patron". The text also contains an explanation of the condition of the Gaboye in general: they are that conglomerate of people intrinsically devoid of the material and social attributes which characterise the members of the majority clans. The Somali "patron" took the products of their activities because they had no kinship and no food reserve (namely livestock), but these circumstances were not accidental: as it is metaphorically portrayed in the text, they accompanied the Gaboye individual since his or her birth.

Finally, Cerulli also commented on the issue of the languages spoken by the marginalised minorities living among the Somalis. He collected considerable amounts of linguistic material, mostly in Italian Somalia, and reached conclusions similar to those formulated by Kirk. Cerulli considered it more appropriate to call these linguistic corpuses "jargon"[25] rather than "dialects" but he agreed that they were employed by the members of these subordinated groups in order to speak among themselves without being understood by the Somalis. The jargon of each "low caste" group consists largely of a lexicon related to the specific occupation associated with that group. Cerulli reported the vocabulary of numerous groups, including the "Musa Deryo of the Habar Auwal", the largest Gaboye clan settled in Somaliland. He also defined some modes of production of these jargons, including the alteration of Somali words, the usage of periphrasis to substitute Somali words and of terms imported from other languages (like Arabic) (Cerulli 1959: 112).

[24] Portions of the Gaboye's repertoire of knowledge about hunting have been collected during the fieldwork in Hargeysa. The sources were the only two elders met during the research who, in their youth, were trained and practiced regularly the hunting of wild animals, especially antelopes (the most widespread species of which in Somaliland is the Greater Kudu, *Tragelaphus Strepsiceros*), several species of gazelles and ostriches. They explained the importance of the male camel for the hunter as a mean for transporting materials and supplies and also as an instrument to attract prey (this was a hunting technique which had to be taught to the camel).

[25] "Gergo" in Italian. See Cerulli 1959: 101.

The Gaboye receive a small number of other mentions in another account, by a British officer who served as District Commissioner in the coastal town of Zeila in the Protectorate of Somaliland during the second decade of the twentieth century: *Sun, Sand and Somals. Leaves from the Note-book of a District Commissioner in British Somaliland* by Rayne (Rayne 1921). His first such reference is to an occupation rarely mentioned in other written accounts but which is an extremely important identification element for the largest Gaboye genealogical unit distributed all over the central part of the Somaliland territory, the Musse Dheriyo. It is pottery making, which he saw being practised by a Gaboye woman and whose past importance was also documented in Hargeysa during the present author's research. Rayne wrote how much he admired the ability of the old woman he saw in Zeila making "earthenware pots and water ewers" (Rayne 1921: 82-83) without the use of a wheel or a model.

The most interesting reference in Rayne's account to the marginalised groups is his description of the origins and customs of the Yibir. He introduced the chapter dedicated to them thus: "it is customary for the Midgan, who live by hunting, to attach themselves to a Somal family for protection, for which they pay by acting as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The Yibirs are much more sophisticated, and prefer, if possible, to live by their wits instead of soiling their hands by honest toils" (Rayne 1921: 117). Rayne came to know about the Yibir when his cook asked him for the loan of some money (four silver rupees) he owed to one Yibir for the birth of his baby boy. He went on to report a version (with some differences from the one collected by Kirk) of the tale quoted above about the forefather of the Yibir and the origins of the payment due to them for the birth of baby boys. Rayne explained that the payment was no longer in skins, as in the past, but in cash (usually four or six rupees) and that after the transaction the Yibir sewed together some tiny sticks and a small piece of animal skin to form a sort of amulet which was tied around the baby's arm.

The most prominent scholar to conduct research in the British Somali territories during the colonial times is I.M. Lewis. Before his first fieldwork in British Somaliland, Lewis had already published a volume which outlined a range of historical and ethnographic information collected by other authors on some groups living in the Horn of Africa, namely the Somalis, the Afar and the Saho (I.M. Lewis 1998 [1955]) and which also included data on the Gaboye and the other marginalised groups (I.M. Lewis 1998 [1955]: 51-55). Lewis' first hand ethnographic materials were collected in his *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy. A General Introduction to Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions* (I. M. Lewis 1957). This work, along with others produced in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, are also of paramount importance as historical

sources documenting not only the contemporary situation but also the transformations of the Gaboye's social position in the North-western Somali territories. Lewis wrote, like his predecessors, of three main groupings called "Midgans", "Tumaal" and "Yibir" who lived widely scattered among the Somalis and were divided in "genealogical or quasi-genealogical groups". They were despised and they practised some degrading trades as mentioned above;[26] Lewis acknowledged that they had been referred to by previous authors as a "caste". According to estimates provided to him by members of the administration, in Somaliland there were around 4,000 Midgans, 750 Tumaals and 300 Yibirs.[27] Lewis, like previous writers, mentioned the general denomination of *Sab* as applied to the three marginalised groups altogether and considered them "not separate ethnic groups but rather people of various origins who for one reason or another have been forced to adopt servile status" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 8). He added that the members of these groups did not present important physical or cultural differences from the Somalis.

Lewis offered brief but important allusions to the on-going process of social change pertaining to these groups: "Formerly the Midgans, Tumals and Yibirs, etc., were the bondsmen of Somali who were responsible for them towards other Somali and many in the interior still have this Somali protected status. There has long however been a move for enfranchisement of the sab some of whom now pay their blood-debts independently under government-recognised caaqils [a title attributed to locally appointed government agents]. This tendency is supported by the general drift of the sab from the interior to practise their trades in the towns" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 9).[28] In a later passage in the same work, in which Lewis was explaining the importance of urban migration in re-structuring the relationship between the Gaboye and the members of the Somali majority clans, he offered a description of this relationship substantially similar to that offered by Cerulli. He wrote that every Somali lineage had some Gaboye attached to them and that they did not autonomously sustain expenses for blood-compensation or other "financial liabilities"; furthermore, the Somali "patrons" mediated the relationships of the Gaboye they protected with any other Somali group or individual. As did Kirk, Lewis wrote that the "patron" was called "abbaan" in Somali language (I.M. Lewis 1957: 69).

[26] Interestingly, Lewis was the first author to attribute to the Midgan-Gaboye the activity of barbering. According to some Gaboye elders met during the fieldwork in Hargeysa, this activity began to be considered degrading by the Somalilanders living in the Protectorate towns and thence became an economic prerogative of the Gaboye. Its transformation into a business, which took place during the process of urban expansion, led to its inclusion among those despised tasks associated to the Gaboye. Indeed, it is possible that Lewis' allusion to barbering was based on observations conducted in urban environments.

[27] Lewis also reported estimates relating to Italian Somalia made by an Italian officer: the population of the three groups was of 5,000 Midgans, 1,500 Tumaals and 1,000 Yibirs.

[28] In a later passage in the same volume, Lewis will state that these changes – the autonomous payment of blood-debts and the appointment of officially recognised chiefs – had not yet occurred in the British Protectorate of Somaliland but in the northern part of the former Italian Somalia. However, even the British territory saw the development of analogous conditions (I.M. Lewis 1957: 69).

Lewis also attempted an outline of the issue of the genealogical identity of the Gaboye which had been treated somewhat ambiguously by other authors: they had usually defined the Gaboye as not organised in genealogical units like the Somalis and Cerulli also said they were called "the people without brothers". A first element of confusion relates to the general denomination "Sab" which in addition to indicating the three groups of the Midgan – Gaboye, Tumaal and Yibir – is also the name of the ancestor of the clans called Digil and Rahanweyn settled mainly in the southern regions of Somalia. However, these two clusters of groups do not have common traditions or origins, since the term Sab as used to identify the Gaboye in the northern-western part of the Somali territories does not refer to any ancestor. Whereas several aspects of the subordination of the Gaboye described by the authors quoted above are in sharp contrast with the present day situation of the Gaboye in Somaliland, Lewis' depiction of Gaboye genealogical knowledge (I.M. Lewis 1957: 75) shows substantial continuities with the data collected during the fieldwork in Hargeysa in 2015, which leads us to consider two possibilities. Firstly, at the time of Lewis' observations, the mid-1950s, the condition of the Gaboye was undergoing important transformations; this hypothesis will be examined extensively in the following chapters. But, alternatively the reports of authors before Lewis about the position of the Gaboye, their political and economic marginality and their obscure genealogical identity might have been limited by their reliance on evidence given by members of the Somali majority clans. The latter might have given a schematic picture of the Gaboye, characterising them as the paradigmatic antithesis to the Somali groups and obscuring the possibility that their marginality could vary or present different degrees according to specific cases. Importantly, the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive: both may well be true and both must be taken into account in explaining the differences between accounts from colonial times and the present situation. Lewis provided a report of the Gaboye's genealogical knowledge in which the latter seems both much more articulated than that documented by previous authors. He explained that the three subordinated groups have shorter genealogical chains than the majority clans, counting only a few generations and, of the three groups, the Midgan have the longer ones. The three names – Midgan, Tumal and Yibir – do not appear in these genealogies as corresponding to ancestors. The members of these groups also know by heart the genealogies of their "patrons". According to Lewis, the short genealogical chains of the Gaboye express their limited internal articulation in lineages and describe "the pattern of his [every Gaboye person's] social relations". However, some Midgan claim to be of Arabic descent, and more specifically of Qurayshitic origin, and to be members of the Somali majority clans. They connect the chain of their ancestors to the line of Dir and Samaale, which Lewis included in the so-called "total genealogy" incorporating all the Somali majority clans and which goes back to the family of the Prophet

Muhammad through “Caqiil Abu Talib”, the son of the uncle and father-in-law of the Prophet (I.M. Lewis 1957: 76).

Lewis reported that every Gaboye’s claim of common ancestry with the other Somalis was derided by the latter. The Somalis living in the northern-western Somali territories largely ignored the existence of a “total genealogy” linking together the Somalis living all over the Somali peninsula. They acknowledged the antithesis between Samaale and Sab as the basic distinguishing classification between local groups. The former name was usually considered a general one having different meanings but in no case being the name of a common ancestor. It was applied to all the major clans settled in the area of North-western Somali territories (such as the clan confederations of Isaaq, Darrod, the Gadabursi clan and so on). The term Sab was simply the collective denomination of the Midgan, the Tumaal and the Yibir. The expression “Aji iyo Midgo”, which means “Aji and Midgans” (Midgo is the plural of Midgan) gives the exact equivalent of this dichotomy. Aji is a general name indicating all the members of the majority clans; Lewis emphasised that it is also given in the Somali “total genealogy” as the name of a descendant of the forefather Samaale, “but in the north where the total genealogy is not known it is regarded simply as a word descriptive of noble or freeborn birth” (I.M. Lewis 1957: 76).

The elements of the genealogical organisation of the three subordinated groups reported by Lewis are still valid nowadays. The Gaboye are divided into distinct clans and genealogical chains which do not acknowledge any mutual connection; for instance, the Musse Dheriyo clan, the largest Gaboye group living among the Isaaq majority clan confederation, attribute to their forefather the status of venerated sheikh and companion to Sheikh Isaaq, the forefather of the Isaaq clan confederation. Moreover, according to I.M. Lewis’ account, some members of the clan claim that Sheikh Muse was descended from Dir. The recurring description found in numerous accounts from colonial time of the Gaboye as “having no tribes” requires caution, therefore, and is partially contradicted by the very existence of a Gaboye’s genealogical repertoire.

On the question of the origins of the three subordinated groups living among the Somalis, I.M. Lewis also promoted the investigation of the Gaboye’s physical characteristics in attempting to assess if they really were a separate group from the Somalis, as was believed by most scholars (see Cerulli). Together with Dr. K.L.G. Goldsmith (K.L.G. Goldsmith & I.M. Lewis 1958), Lewis undertook an investigation of the “serological” features of some blood samples collected among 54 members of the three groups in Hargeysa and 1,000 Somalis belonging to the majority clans. In terms of ABO, MN and Rhesus blood groups, no significant variations distinguishing the two categories of samples were found in the study. However, Lewis hoped there would subsequently be more of such analyses, using larger samples.

1.3 THE DEBATE ABOUT ORIGINS

All the authors quoted above posed questions about the origins of the so-called "low caste" groups living among the Somalis. Guided by a sort of antiquarian approach, they subordinated the explanation of the institution reproducing the segregation and the marginality of the Gaboye to the formulation of historical reconstructions that presupposed the Gaboye's aboriginal difference from the Somali majority clans. Cerulli was persuaded that the division between the two social groups reflected a distinction between corresponding evolutionary layers. These layers were the less civilised "Pre-Cushitic" and the Cushitic one: the first coincided with the "low caste" which Cerulli stated had been subjugated by waves of Cushitic invaders.

Cerulli believed that the linguistic and ethnological materials collected so far proved this hypothesis. For instance, the customary norms reported above were, he wrote, the juridical translation of the "customs" that already characterised local groups before the arrival of the Cushitic-Somalis and the consolidation of their rule. The usage of bow and arrows instead of the spear as weapons, the possession of sheep rather than other kinds of livestock and the non-possession of horses were the customary features of the Pre-Cushitic groups, according to Cerulli, all over the Horn of Africa. These features remained characteristic of them because the Cushitic invaders forbade the adoption of their customs by the conquered peoples. Other evidence adduced to sustain the 'residual' model consisted in the geographic distribution of the "low castes" in the Somali peninsula. According to Cerulli (Cerulli 1959: 98-99),[29] in the northern Somali territories (British Somaliland and the northern part of Italian Somalia) the Cushitic invasion was "thicker" and more pervasive, thence we find only the "remains" of these Pre-Cushitic groups, while, the further south we go – where the Cushitic waves arrived weakened - the more structured and widespread the Pre-Cushitic presence is. Cerulli partly 'softened' these hypotheses some years after originally publishing them and declared himself open to other possible explanations of the origins of the low castes. He wrote:[30] "[…] it is not appropriate to attribute to these pariahs scattered all over the Ethiopian plateau one common origin but, rather, a similar development and historical

[29] When speaking about the Pre-Cushitic presence in the southern Somali territories, Cerulli was not referring to the Gaboye since he was aware of their evident concentration in the northern part of the Somali peninsula. He was probably referring, though in an ambiguous way, to the greater social heterogeneity found in southern Somalia which marked a deep difference with the unchallenged dominion of the spear-armed, nomadic pastoralists of Cushitic origin in the North.

[30] I am responsible for the following translation. The original text in Italian is: "[…] a questi paria sparsi in tutto l'altopiano etiopico non conviene tanto assegnare unica origine quanto simiglianza di sviluppo e formazione storica; […] in essi si trovino oggi incrociati ed accomunati dal generale disprezzo dei liberi di alta casta: resti di popolazioni precuscitiche assoggettate, paria dei Cusciti stessi, reietti e diseredati delle tribù Cuscitiche e forse anche piccoli nuclei di stranieri successivamente venuti a contatto coi Cusciti ed assimilati non più per la loro origine ma per il loro mestiere alle basse caste già costituite".

formation; […] they [the "low castes"] have intermixed among themselves and are all together despised by the freemen of high caste: [they include] remains of subjugated pre-Cushitic peoples, pariahs of the Cushitic groups, members of the Cushitic tribes who had been rejected and deprived of membership and also, maybe, small nucleuses of foreigners who had come into contact with the Cushitic groups successively and were assimilated into the already existing low castes for their occupational skills and not for their origins" (Cerulli 1959: 113). Cerulli opened himself to more possibilities in the attempt to water down his identification of the Gaboye with the original inhabitants of the area but, in doing so, he also undermined his explanatory contribution. A similar prudence was espoused also by I.M. Lewis who defined the Midgan, the Tumal and the Yibir as groups of various origins that had been forced to adopt a servile status. Lewis did not jump to definite conclusions with regard to their origins: he reported, for instance, the double usage of the term "Sab" as applied to a clan confederation settled in the southern regions of Somalia and as a general name indicating the members of the three subordinated groups but he abstained from advancing any possible explanation and limited himself to specifying that, in order to avoid confusion, he would use the word "*sab*" to refer to the latter and the word "Sab" for the former (I.M. Lewis 1961: 14).

Herbert S. Lewis was the first scholar to propose a radical re-structuring of the analytical approach to the presence of 'caste-like' stratifications in the Horn of Africa. His critical target was exactly the 'residual model', which was based on the general description of the population process of the region as a series of "ethnic" waves of invasion. In addition to Cerulli's statements on the Somalis, H.S. Lewis mentioned the famous work of John S. Trimingham (Trimingham 1952) which reported analogous assumptions: "These points of view not only reflect the 'wave' theory of Ethiopian history, but also represent the tendency to treat all people who are not stereotypically 'Hamitic' [the term is used here to allude to the broader family to which the Cushitic groups were believed to belong by scholars] as older and more negroid" (H.S. Lewis 1962). H.S. Lewis' contribution can be framed by the debate begun during the 1960s – and continued thereafter – in which both the analytical and the political legitimacy of certain categories were contested. These categories of both human beings and language families – such as 'Hamitic' and 'Negroid' – were suspected of being ambiguously related to racial theories (Christopher Ehret 1974; Harold C. Fleming 1978).

H.S. Lewis approached the issue of the groups he called "hunting and artisan castes" by clarifying that in almost every Cushitic group settled in the Horn there are endogamous groups based on occupational specialisation. These groups had a huge variety of names and physical traits which made it impossible to credit the classifications adopted by previous authors, such as that of

"Negroid" groups. Furthermore, they spoke the languages of the majority groups with which they lived. Among the societies reviewed by H.S. Lewis (mostly the Oromo sub-divisions and the Somalis), some had only one or two while others hosted numerous "castes". Other widespread characteristics were their "ritual impurity", which manifested in rules of avoidance, and the fact that they were "disenfranchised from the political and judicial processes of their host groups" (H.S. Lewis 1962). Equally common throughout the Horn are the traditions linking the subordinated condition of these groups to the falling from a "higher estate" and, in particular, to the past violation of some dietary rules which are a widespread phenomenon in this region.[31] It is important to quote H.S. Lewis' conclusion, reached on the basis of his review of the pervasive presence of "castes" in the Horn of Africa: "Indeed, it would be accurate to say that in most Cushitic societies almost every specialist of any kind belongs to some caste. Any man who commonly engages in occupations other than herding or farming is generally a 'pariah'. Moreover every caste, regardless of its particular metier, is accorded similar treatment" (H.S. Lewis 1962).

H.S Lewis' analytical proposal was that of studying the subordination of occupational specialists as a "structural theme" of the societies of the Horn. H.S. Lewis believed that considering the "castes" as "remnant groups" could not be sustained on linguistic, physical or any other kind of evidence. Their numbers were usually extremely small inside the hosting societies but "their distribution is so even among all the Cushitic groups that another explanation must be sought" (H.S. Lewis 1962). Furthermore, they are found in a huge variety of economic and political systems, such as among sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists, under both complex and centralised monarchies and dispersed political institutions (like in the Somali case). We are thus dealing with a "structural" element of the region which, according to H.S. Lewis, had to be analysed in parallel with "the history and the distribution of occupational castes elsewhere in Africa and in Asia" (H.S. Lewis 1962).

This injunction did not inaugurate a phase of renewed, methodical investigation of the phenomenon in the Horn of Africa. Though it remained a drafted analytical proposal, H.S. Lewis' thoughts did focus opportunely on the importance of certain explanatory elements that had been overlooked under the exclusively historical models of the waves of invaders. Among these elements we find the reconstruction of the economic positions occupied by the occupationally specialised groups within, and in relationship with, local economic textures. Others are the problematisation of political marginality from the variegated political apparatuses of the different societies and the forms of cosmological or religious representation of the degraded human condition attributed to the

[31] See Ulrich Braukamper who defined them as a "Pan-Ethiopian" phenomenon permeating the religious, political and economic life of the entire region (Braukamper 1984).

"casted" groups. Notwithstanding the fact that the term "structural" is not explained further by the author, it seems important to keep in mind his appreciation of ethnographic surveys that maintain a comparative and regional approach.

Over the last few decades, the 'remnant model' has been largely discredited among scholars and the historical reconstruction of mobility routes and populating flows in the eastern Horn have radically changed (H.S. Lewis 1962; E.R. Turton 1975). An accurate investigation and mapping of the marginalised minorities of Ethiopia has been carried out in a recent collaborative study (Dena Freeman & Alula Pankhurst 2003) but H.S. Lewis' invitation to methodical documentation has not been heeded with regard to the analysis of the Gaboye's coexistence with the Somalis. In fact, in one of the more recent scholarly references to them, Ali Mumin Ahad's article (Ahad 2008) proposed grounding the explanation of the configuration of political and economic relationships between local groups distributed all over the Somali territories on a lexical archaeology of the Somali genealogical repertoire. In particular, Ahad tried to explain the historical trajectory which consisted in the acquisition of hegemonic social, economic and political position by some groups at the expense of others, including the Gaboye. According to Ahad, this trajectory is still encapsulated in the various layers of meaning attached to the repertoire of names used to refer to the distinct 'ethnic' groups and the more or less extended genealogical units into which the Somalis are divided.

His interest is focused on what he calls the "Sab/Somali dualism" as it relates to the definition of the Somali national identity. Ahad tried to explain the double usage of the term Sab, which Lewis simply stated as reported fact and which, as we have seen, identified both the three subordinated groups of the Midgan, the Tumaal and the Yibir, and a clan confederation settled in southern Somalia. The Somali word "sab" comes from the adjective *sabool* which means "poor" and which itself derives from *sabo*. The latter means "abode" or "domicile", thence the *sabool* are the people who are poor because they live in a permanent settlement; the term identifies a socio-economic condition which has received its 'negative' qualification from the point of view of the "culture characterising the livestock owners and nomadic pastoralists" (Ahad 2008: 447).[32] On the other hand, the term "Somal" could be related exactly to these livestock owners and nomadic pastoralists; Ahad quotes a possible etymological reconstruction of the word offered by Robecchi Bricchetti (Robecchi Bricchetti 1899: 372) who reported it as deriving from the word *siwulmal*, itself originated from the Arabic term *siwulmalwuasci* which means "owner of livestock". It is worth quoting Ahad's words on the Sab/Somali dualism: "Under this condition which associates 'sedentary character' and 'poverty' and which is opposed to that of 'mobility and wealth', the blacksmith artisans, the shoe-makers, the hunters (Tumaal, Midgaan, Eyle and Yibir) and the

[32] We are responsible for the translations from Italian of Ali Mumin Ahad's original text.

farmers of southern Somalia [the members of the Sab clan confederation settled in southern Somalia are largely farmers] are pooled together. As can be seen, economic conditions define the social ones. The nomadic pastoralists' (*Siwualmaal*) scorn towards economic practices which they considered ignoble for being associated with poverty (*Sabool*) was [further] reinforced by the 'ideological' support of a 'tribal colonial culture' that found politically useful the separation and subordination [already embodied and reproduced through these lexical dichotomies]" (Ahad 2008: 447-448).[33]

Indeed, Ahad's contribution tried to outline the pathways of internal social stratification that involved the groups settled in the Somali territories and that gradually might have been accumulated in the genealogical discourses elaborated by them all over the different parts of the Horn. He also described the factors and the coordinates which guided the production of these repertoires, the first of which was the long-established Arab presence in the area. The latter repeatedly renewed itself until the nineteenth century, having been originally based in the coastal towns of both the northern-western and southern Somali territories and related to the diffusion of Islam and to certain economic sectors. The spread of Islam went through a critical phase in the centuries between the thirteenth and the sixteenth with the establishment of "sultanates" in the eastern part of the Horn and their wars with Christian domains. The consolidation of Islam and of "Arabic culture" through these different channels determined the growing importance of Arabic – especially Qurayshitic – ancestry as an element of the political prestige of individuals and groups.

The second major factor was that travellers and colonial powers adopted and reinforced divisions and forms of subordination among local groups. According to Ahad, the first European travellers to arrive in the nineteenth century on the northern coast of the Somali peninsula (in the future territory of Somaliland) described Somali society as divided into a "noble" and a low "caste", the former being nomadic pastoralists of Arabic ancestry and the latter including the Gaboye, the Tumal and Yibir, namely the autochthonous inhabitants of the area. This representation was also applied to the south to distinguish the nomadic pastoralists from the groups of mixed origin which included 'indigenous' people, pastoralists, Oromos and farmers. The arrival of the colonisers contributed to the development of what Ahad called "the 'political' stratification of social components in their relationship with the colonial power" (Ahad 2008: 466).[34] This dynamic

[33] Original text in Italian: "Sotto questa condizione associativa di 'sedentarietà-povertà', contrapposta a 'mobilità-ricchezza', si raccolgono oltre agli artigiani fabbri ferrai, calzolai, cacciatori (Tumal, Midgaan, Eyle, Yibir) anche i contadini agricoltori nel meridione della Somalia. Come si vede sono soltanto le condizioni economiche che definiscono quelle sociali. Il disprezzo dei pastori nomadi (*Siwualmaal*) per pratiche economiche da loro culturalmente considerate indegne in quanto associate ad una condizione di povertà (*Sabool*) è rafforzato dal concorso 'ideologico' di una 'cultura tribale coloniale' che scopre nella separazione e subordinazione dei motivi di convenienza politica".
[34] Original text in Italian: "[…] stratificazione 'politica' delle diverse componenti sociali nel loro rapporto con il potere coloniale."

resulted, especially in southern Somalia (i.e. the Italian domain), in the un-discriminated attribution to the sedentary farmers of a "servile" origin which made them immediately available for the new forms of exploitation introduced by the Italian rulers.

The third factor was that Somali nationalism had national sovereignty as its sole objective, assuming that the Somali people had a common family tree with Arabic roots and making no effort to include those who were excluded from this genealogical umbrella. The road to the post-colonial construction of a non-inclusive Somali identity was, moreover, vigorously followed in the cultural politics adopted by the different ruling elites after independence in 1960 (Ahad 2008: 463; see also Mohamed Haji Mukhtar 1995).

Recently, Cassanelli (Cassanelli 2010) too has reflected on what I.M. Lewis had called the Somali "total genealogy". But, unlike Ahad who focused on the hegemonic forces which determined the ranking and the definition of marginalised positions within the genealogical mapping employed by the Somalis, Cassanelli stressed the inclusive dimension of the Somali genealogical repertoire and advanced the hypothesis that this repertoire might have been created with the decisive contribution of religious figures. They were using the genealogical discourse even before the arrival of European travellers to promote the absorption of the various groups dispersed all over the Somali territories into the global community of the Muslims.

This and the other studies reported above all stress the importance of genealogies in tracing the differentiated social, political and economic positions attached to various local groups in the Somali territories. But they cannot substitute for empirical investigation of the concrete configurations of the political and economic marginality suffered by groups such as the Gaboye living among the Somalis. Whenever their subordinated condition has been interrogated, the answer has been sought in the definition of broad historical frameworks corresponding to determined economic and political settings: the reconstruction of migratory flows in the Horn since the first centuries of Common Era, or the Arabic influences and the impact of colonisation over the self-representation of local groups. However, social stratification, political subordination, the division of labour and the production of cosmologies describing degraded typologies of humanity are social processes which have to be reconstructed in their concrete, or even local dimensions, and are not mere epiphenomena of meta-local historical forces such as huge migratory flows and the colonial penetration. Take for example H.S. Lewis' suggestion quoted above: in numerous societies of the Horn (among which we can include the Somalis), the so-called "low castes" were not associated simply with specific occupational tasks considered to be degrading, but to virtually every single activity other than that which the locally dominant groups asserted characterised the full, or major,

members of the society.[35] This means that, unless strongly supported by some kind of evidence (linguistic, written documents or whatever) which currently we do not have, to overlap the borders of occupationally specialised groupings with those supposedly separating 'ethnic' groups does not seem to be a convincing analytical approach. After we have collected the ethnographic documentation on the configuration of these institutionalised forms of division of labour, we can then launch regional or even more ambitious comparative bridges. But there is a difference between, on the one hand, taking into account the historical dimension of social institutions, and, on the other hand, subordinating the explanation of the origins and nature of social institutions to the history of abstracted collective subjects such as the "Cushites", the "Somalis" or the "nomadic pastoralists".

1.4 DOCUMENTING THE SUBORDINATED GROUPS' SOCIAL POSITION BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

1.4.1 DYNAMIC REPRESENTATIONS OF GABOYE'S MARGINALITY

From the start of our fieldwork, the relationship between the marginalised groups and the majority clans of Somaliland appeared to radically diverge from the scholars' accounts of colonial times.[36] The Gaboye are now organised, like the major Somali clans, in segmentary genealogical units and are fully integrated in the system of blood-compensation. They mostly live concentrated in urban contexts, especially in Hargeysa where they occupy two neighbourhoods. In contrast to Cerulli's reports, no set of norms defines them as the subjects of 'patronage' or regulates their settlements or their occupational paths. Only marriage segregation is still maintained by the majority clans. The few elements of the ethnographic repertoire on the Gaboye outlined by the scholars quoted above are hardly recognisable in the present-day social life of the marginalised groups. Apart from the important exceptions of the link with determined occupational tasks and marriage segregation, the picture offered to us by the fieldwork routine was that of a radical transformation of the symbolic and material configuration of the Gaboye's presence among the Somalis. To measure the distance between past and present, it is worth illustrating some ethnographic traces which are related to the most salient elements of the social life of the Gaboye as reported by scholars of the colonial times.

What will be the destiny of the repertoire of occupational knowledge and practices, of the corpus of poems conveying the socially formalised supports of the Gaboye's subordinated condition? These are the questions that some members of the Gaboye community ask themselves

[35] It could be farming for some Ethiopian groups, but it was nomadic pastoralism for the Somalis.
[36] One of the few sources available on the present socio-politico-economic situation of the Gaboye groups in the Somali territories is the report written by Martin Hill (Hill 2010) for the Minority Rights Group International.

and which concern their condition as a ‘minority’. We will briefly outline the implications of this question by means of a case drawn from our fieldwork experience. A very close friend of ours from Hargeysa, who is strongly committed to becoming an activist struggling for the empowerment of the Gaboye, was undertaking an online training exercise organised by an important international NGO aimed at educating people about the rights of the minority groups (in terms of language, religion and so on) and how to campaign effectively for them through local and international institutions. When we discussed the contents of the course, it became very clear to us that the people who redacted it had based their assumptions on an exclusive, unquestioned definition of what a ‘minority’ is: a group characterised by a stock of material and immaterial elements (like a language, traditions or social institutions etc.) having an intrinsic value which needs to be preserved whereas they are threatened by the homogenising pressure of the majority they live with. As should be obvious by now, the case of the Gaboye is rather different: what if the stock comprises de-valued ‘objects’ which embody the subordination suffered by the minority in the past and its resilient legacies? What if the members of the minority are in the frontline of the struggle to dismiss the repertoire of material and immaterial elements that make them a minority?

The answer to the question about the future of such a repertoire is neither easy nor definitive, at least for the members of the group who have the opportunity to wonder about it. During the fieldwork in Hargeysa, we constantly expressed profound interest and active commitment to the collection of those products, like poems and stories, that witnessed the Gaboye’s previous social and economic position in Somalilander society. This approach received ambivalent reactions, especially among the elders of the community. At times there was reticence or explicit refusal, even active attempts to circumvent our intentions by completely denigrating every written or oral source which attributed a subordinated condition to the members of the Gaboye or of any other marginalised minority in Somaliland. Few other times there were admiration and pride for the almost forgotten patrimony which was shared with us.

In commenting on the research using oral sources among slave descendants, Martin Klein stated that “caste groups” in West Africa, although often looked down on by other people, have their own traditions which praise their role in society (Klein 1989). In the cases quoted by Klein, like that of the Mande blacksmiths studied by Patrick R. McNaughton (McNaughton 1988), the occupational specialists acknowledge openly, proudly and jealously their possession of a shared heritage of knowledge or cosmological prerogatives. Slaves’ traditions, though, are fewer and much more difficult to identify because slave descendancy is not openly recognised, even where the origins of a person are generally known. Furthermore, the “atomization” of the slave community – the coercion of the slave into a condition of isolation in which it was impossible to establish any

social relationship (most importantly that of parenthood) other than with the master – "operated to prevent the emergence of a self-conscious community" (Klein 1989: 213). Indeed, the Gaboye have their own body of community-wide traditions and a heritage of cosmological and practical knowledge but their case suggests that it may not be only slaves who have forms of public reticence. Pride and jealousy are not the dominant attitudes of the Gaboye towards their traditions and these traditions, most importantly, have very limited circulation nowadays. They are not a vital part of the Gaboye community's life, especially for its younger members.

The Gaboye manifest a contradictory relationship with their heritage. The definition of 'heritage' applied by state actors, international agencies like UNESCO, NGOs, scholars and local actors in many areas of the world has been expanded to include "all natural or human tangible and intangible productions carrying special collective values" (Marie-Aude Foueré & Lotte Hughes 2015: 544). Intertwined in the processes of heritage making, however, there are always competing agendas and the political and economic interests of various stakeholders (Foueré & Hughes 2015). The first and strongest way of contesting heritage making is simply to interrupt the channels which transfer and make available the forms of heritage, tangible and intangible, that come from the past. The case of the Gaboye is a good fit with De Jong and Rowlands' words: "Restoration of material heritage can be problematic in the sense that it objectifies social relations, assuming that social relations can, like architecture, be conserved" (Ferdinand De Jong & Michael Rowlands 2007: 24). Arguably, were the the Gaboye's heritage visible, this would provide a public discourse showing the direct linkage of the present day legacies of Gaboye's marginality with the past formalised relationships of subordination.

The oscillation between pride and reticence on the part of the Gaboye people vis-à-vis their heritage it is not, arguably, only a contemporary phenomenon: that is, it is not merely an attempt by the Gaboye of today to re-shape their past in relation to their inclusion in the present economic and political life of Somaliland. The same ambiguity was also documented in some symbolic objects produced by the Gaboye in an undetermined past: the songs composed by unknown authors whose core topic is one occupational task. Such songs were integral parts of the working routine and accompanied the worker throughout the day.[37] We have collected some of them during the fieldwork which are related to the activity of hunting: according to one interlocutor, they "entertained" the worker; they described the practice and might also have a sort of didactic purpose,

[37] Within the range of the Somali poetic genres, the so-called 'work songs' occupy the distinct position of a less esteemed form and they are diffused even among the members of the majority clans (Axmed Cartan Xaange & Annarita Puglielli 2014). For a discussion on the classifications of Somali oral literature see Bogumil W. Andrzejewski 1985. For the analysis of the existence of an hierarchy of status among poetic forms that reflect the status ranking held by composers and performers of the various genres, see Axmed Cali Abokor 1993; John William Johnson 1995; Martin Orwin 2003.

explaining the steps to be taken in order to accomplish a specific task (like hunting an ostrich).[38] The song quoted below has a peculiar character: more than describing some job, it is the poetic declaration of how proud the people who practice it – in this case the Musse Dheriyo women – should be. The song was collected from one of the last pottery producers active in Hargeysa; she belongs to the Tumaal clan but learned it from women of the Musse Dheriyo clan, the largest Gaboye clan of Somaliland. The woman is originally from the area of Zeyla and moved to Hargeysa as an unmarried girl; there, she was taught by elder women the job of manufacturing clay, producing pots and other objects such as braziers (*girgire*) for both cooking food and burning incense.[39]

I swear I amass
the clay of the Dhariyoo!
The day has lowered,
lowered in the western hiding place among the acacias,
It went into a cave.
I swear I amass
the clay of the Dhariyay,
And I will not stop since you have become our mouthful.

The person who has no skill,
is scratched by hunger.
The person who has no skill,
runs away from his country.
The person who has no skill,
goes to the market to request from the others what he needs.
I swear I amass the clay
of the Dhariyaay, which I will not become so pride to leave.
Since I grow my white babies,
I will not become so pride to leave you.
I swear I fulfil all my needs.
Since I grow my children,

[38] Interview with Baydari of the 25 June 2015, near his residence in Hargeysa.
[39] The song and life story of the woman, named here Marwo, have been collected during several interviews. Especially those of the 26 July and the 4 August 2015 in her laboratory located in the town of Hargeysa.

I will not become so pride to leave you.
I swear I amass
the clay of the Dhariyoo.
In the place where weapons are strewn here and there
and the men have fought among themselves,
The women
gather the children and feed them
with what they have earned.
But it is not a light job.
I Swear I amass
the clay of the Dhariyaay.
The day I learned you [the clay],
I flew away from starvation.
The day I learned you,
the land became shining.
After I work on the clay,
after I will caress the children
And after I will make you beautiful,
I will put you under the shadow,
Hobeyo hobeeyo een![40]
I will protect you from any danger.

As anticipated above, the most salient element to emerge from the text is the reiterated exaltation of the importance of the work of manufacturing the clay and producing pots. Indeed, the anaphoric verse which opens the text, and which represents a sort of chorus, immediately specifies the correspondence between the occupation concerned and a particular genealogical group. In fact, the clay is presented as a possession or an attribute of the "Dhariyo", which term is intended interchangeably both as the "potters" in general, those who manufacture clay as a job, and the Musse Dheriyo, namely the members of the clan bearing that name (who used to live scattered among various sections of the huge clan confederation of the Isaaq). Indeed, the interlocutors met during the fieldwork confirmed that the term Dheriyo has the literal meaning of "potter" and, as a nickname, it appears attached to the name of the eponymous forefather of the clan. "Musse" was a disciple of Sheikh Isaaq and a Sheikh himself (whose cult is still practiced in Hargeysa today), but

[40] It is a musical exclamation with no meaning.

also a worker undertaking several servile tasks for the Sheikh and his religious community, including the production of pots and other clay objects. So the link between the members of the clan and a occupational specialisation (one which does not fit with a member of a majority clan, since it does not imply the ownership of livestock) is immediately acknowledged.

The first part of the song is the only one which gives any detail about the activity itself, namely that the preparation of clay and the shaping of the products was a phase of the work undertaken in the late afternoon, which was also confirmed by some other women who still produce pots in Hargeysa. The clay is prepared and then given a shape when the sun is going down; in the first part of the day the objects already shaped are put out in the sun in order to dry before being fire-baked in holes dug in the ground.[41] The following part of the text exalts the skilled person over the unskilled. It seems possible that the definition "the person who has no skill" is an indirect reference to the members of the majority clans or, from a different point of view, to the nomadic pastoralists. The constant threat of hunger and the necessity to leave one's own land, in particular, could be allusions to some characteristics of the nomadic Somalis' life and to their dependence on their herds. The manufacturing of clay goods is depicted as the only activity by which they can meet their own and their families' material needs. Here we find the most explicit mention of the 'degrading' characterisation of this occupation. In fact, the song is a sort of declaration of loyalty to the work of pottery which does not make you proud in itself but allows you to win your bread. The supposed contrasting term of comparison – i.e. the members of the majority clans – reappears in the following lines, but this time it seems to be extended to all men in general: when the men bring devastation to a land with warfare (which is another activity exalted, even in the poems of the members of the majority clans), the future of the community is preserved only by the women and their heavy work.

The last part of the song further invites us to take into account the 'continuity' that is provided by this occupation which, in fact, is "learned" – inherited – from the previous generations and projected into the future, because it allows the children to survive. The association with the children is so important that it is made explicit in the final lines; indeed, these lines suggest a parallel between the manufacturing of clay and the activity of cuddling, of taking care of a baby. The work procures the food for a mother's child but simultaneously resembles the mother's attentions towards her baby: this, arguably, deepens the emphasis on its value from the point of view of the singers of the song.

Although we cannot date the text of the song exactly, it proves that the Gaboye have been producing their own representations of their socio-economic position for decades at least. They had

[41] Interview with women producing pots and braziers (*girgire*) in their place of work,1 February 2015.

accepted the categorization of occupation like pottery producing as not honourable in itself, but they had also responded to the categorisation with autonomous products aimed at re-valuing it. Nowadays, however, large portions of the Gaboye community do not even question the historical dynamic of the valuing or the devaluing of their work. A significant proportion of the Gaboye living in Hargeysa, especially the young, have reached adulthood without being told anything about the existence of a repertoire accounting for the past formalisation of the Gaboye's subordinated condition. Blacksmiths, barbers and shoe-repairers below 30 years old often spoke of their economic marginality and the characteristics of their social milieu. They related them to their membership of a small, weak clan which has neither government-level political influence nor businesses that could provide them with jobs. Furthermore, the occupations they undertake are regarded as simply the ones they have inherited from the previous generations, the jobs that were available when they became old enough to contribute to the income of the household. These economic sectors are, for the men, barbering, shoe-making and (mostly) shoe-repairing, blacksmithing; in the past there were also the cleansing of public spaces and the managing of public toilets. For the women it is mostly small ambulant trading in the town's market. Women also work in the butchering sector and as cleaners in private houses; very few of them still practise traditional healing which was their exclusive prerogative before the massive uptake of other forms of healthcare: they do midwifery, female circumcision and the treatment of some conditions (see Chapter 8).

This category of interlocutors met during the fieldwork has no experience of a formalised institution reproducing their occupational segregation. They see their economic position as dictated by the 'trap' of the necessity to cover their basic needs and those of their families; the same trap which catches many young Somalilanders belonging to other genealogical groups. The only difference is that they are convinced that for them, unlike for the youth of the majority clans, there is no chance in Somaliland of escaping their economic position because the country does not offer them any possibility of upwards mobility (like higher education), and because they would not receive much help from relatives (especially of those who were able to move in Europe or North America), whether a job opportunity, a scholarship or any other type of material assistance.

This representation of the marginality as a 'trap' is intrinsically linked with the urban environment of Hargeysa, where it was collected during the 2014-2015 fieldwork. Our Gaboye interlocutors (both those who have spent their entire lifetime in Hargeysa and those who have recently arrived) often attributed to the settlement in the town the complete absorption of the individual or the household into one of the trades enlisted above. These economic activities were associated with skills that the Gaboye recognise as their 'traditional' prerogative from an undefined

past, but their transformation into urban businesses changed the role of these activities relative to their pre-urban mode of existence. For instance, we will see in Chapter 5 that numerous Gaboye interlocutors said that livestock was a fundamental economic resource for them in the past and that, although this assertion contradicts the evidence provided by written sources, they used to have livestock in the rural areas, before moving to the town. This is to say that the economic activities which accompanied the shift from the rural to the permanently urban life have changed into businesses and completely absorbed the livelihood of the Gaboye households, leading to their being nowadays in the 'trap' of their economic marginality.

1.4.2 HUNTING BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

One piece of evidence proving the importance of the role of the urban settlement in re-shaping the Gaboye's representation of their own economic marginality is that those other activities whose transformation into urban based business was more challenging, such as hunting, have almost entirely disappeared even from the memory of the young Gaboye.

The numerous written accounts from the earliest part of the colonial era told of the centrality of hunting to the identification of the people previously called "Midgan". The term had become a sort of synonym of hunters for the British who visited Somaliland, especially for those who came with the deliberate aim of attending hunting parties. The story of Lord Delamere is famous in Somaliland: he was a regular visitor in British Somaliland during the 1890s in order to take part in hunting expeditions, and later became one of the most prominent British settlers in the colonised Kenya. He often had Midgan-Gaboye hunters accompanying him and on one trip one of them saved his life when he was attacked by a lion, throwing himself against the animal and giving the British man the chance to reload his rifle and to drive it off (Bartle Bull 1988).

The activity of hunting is generally, however, a distant memory for the majority of the Gaboye. A middle-aged man said that he regularly went hunting with friends and claimed to be an heir of the Gaboye's tradition, but he admitted that he simply used his rifle to take antelopes, whose meat is appreciated by him and by some of his friends from the majority clans. Only three individuals met during the fieldwork claimed to have been properly trained in a range of hunting techniques by their fathers and to have been going on hunting expeditions since they were children. They were all above 65 years old and two of them are still active hunters. One of them, whom we will call Caali, said it is his main source of income: he sells the meat and other parts of the animals, mostly antelopes.[42] According to him, a lot of people still hunt but he is the only 'professional'

[42] Interview with Caali, a Gaboye elder, 2 August 2015.

hunter in the town who received a proper training and earns a regular income from it. The interlocutor was extremely cautious on this point because this activity is illegal in Somaliland and, according to him, there is no possibility of obtaining any authorisation for catching wild animals in the country; it is only possible to continue doing so because the police cannot control the immense rural and almost uninhabited territory of Somaliland. Sometimes he is also asked to provide a particular amount of the meat of a specific animal for a distributor who will sell it. Furthermore, he regularly accompanies other men, usually belonging to majority clans, on hunting expeditions in the vicinity of Hargeysa and said that he is hired by these men who know him personally and who usually bring their own weapon. The main reason for these expeditions is the meat, mostly gazelle and antelope, appreciated not only for its flavour but also because it is believed to have some detoxifying properties.

Wildlife has constantly decreased in quantity and variety during recent decades. Lions have completely disappeared, but they were hunted only for defence until the arrival of the British who did it for sport. The principal game animals were the various species of gazelles and antelopes, and ostriches. Caali affirmed that the last time he was able to kill an ostrich near Hargeysa was in 2011. Nowadays, ostriches live almost exclusively along Somaliland's coastal strip; their population is considerably smaller than in the past and they have lost much of their commercial value. As reported above, during the colonial period ostriches were particularly important for their feathers, which were sold at the coastal markets and exported abroad. Nowadays only the liquefied fat is sold but it is extremely expensive: typically 50 USD per litre (it is the *subag*, the "butter", of the *gorooyo*, the "ostrich"). According to the interlocutors consulted, it is consumed by wealthy men and is believed to be a medicine which cleans the stomach.

The three Gaboye elders who had been trained by their fathers also remembered important pieces of the old knowledge of hunting (*gabraarsi* in the Somali language). One of them, whom we call Baydari, affirmed that this activity used to be of paramount importance for the Gaboye groups: it was their main source of meat; the game meat was preserved for long periods after being cooked, treated with salt and sun-dried (a process which started during the expedition, immediately after the killing).[43] Skins and leather were other products derived from antelopes and gazelles that could be either manufactured by the Gaboye themselves or sold at the market. According to Baydari, hunting expeditions took place every five or six days, after which the members of the household consumed all of the meat. During these five or six days the most important activities carried out by men were the preparation of skins and producing leather and leather goods, especially sandals. Hunting was

[43] The basic way of preparing meat in order to preserve it for long periods is called *muqmad* and it requires first to be cut into small pieces. This preparation is still widely diffused.

thus a routine activity related to both the primary and the secondary needs of the Gaboye local groups.

On an average hunting expedition there would be three men and one camel, mainly used for transport.[44] One of the men, usually the most experienced, was entitled to be the "shooter" (*baydari* in Somali), although he would not necessarily be the only one armed with a rifle. Indeed, all the interlocutors affirmed that they used firearms for hunting: it must be remembered that, given the age of the interlocutors, these accounts must refer to the 1950s and early 1960s. However, Baydari stated that when his father first taught him how to hunt he still used a bow and arrows made by himself. As was repeatedly reported by colonial period writers, the Gaboye were particularly feared for their use of poisoned arrows. The poison is called "Wabaio" and its preparation was carefully documented in the most intense and detailed account by Gerald Hanley (Hanley 1993) who claimed to be the first European admitted to the secret so jealously kept by the Gaboye. Indeed, even the members of the majority clans were not permitted to learn about its preparation. The poison is not produced anymore and it is possible that both the details of its vegetal ingredients (the most important one is the root of a tree called *Wabai* in the Somali language, of the genus *Acokanthera*) and the method of its preparation have been forgotten.

However, Wabaio is still remembered as a crucial element of the repertoire of the Gaboye's knowledge about hunting. Indeed, the topic generates among the Gaboye, even among the youngsters who have only vaguely heard of it, that ambivalent mixture of reticence and pride mentioned above; this was due to the Wabaio's great power of killing a beast or a man quickly. An example of this ambiguous approach is offered by an interesting story linking the poison to the subordination suffered by the Gaboye. It was collected during the fieldwork and evidently had some currency among the Gaboye although unfortunately, it was not possible to trace the origins and the forms of its spread. It was collected among relatively young people, under 40 years old, and its import is that the bad treatment of the Gaboye by the Somalis is due to the British who observed the immense power of the Wabaio poison immediately upon their arrival and wanted to use it to produce some sort of weapon. The Gaboye refused steadfastly to reveal their secret, and so the British decided to punish them. They provoked the jealousy of the Somalis towards the Gaboye and their abilities, convincing the Somalis that they should despise them and deny them intermarriage. This reconstruction goes against all the historical sources quoted so far describing the subordination suffered by the Gaboye. However it is interesting because, first, it shows that the Gaboye are

[44] The following data were collected during several meetings held with Baydari and during an interview on the 25 June 2015. Another Gaboye hunter, Caali, was interviewed on the 1 and the 2 August 2015 in the Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa, and the house of one of his relatives.

currently struggling to produce their own historical discourses to explain their social marginality without resorting to the stories spread in the past, namely those which attributed some sort of misdeed, usually a dietary violation, to their own forefather. Second, it proves the centrality of Wabaio as a sort of identity-support still evoked by the Gaboye, albeit as an abstract element: Wabaio is not part of the community's daily life but it embodies their marginality (as a token of hunting) and the power of their killing abilities.

The Gaboye hunter called Baydari also described some hunting techniques, like that of confusing the senses of the prey by spreading a group of hunters over a particular area; then co-ordinating their movements to push the animals towards one shooter who had been lying in ambush since the beginning. He also described how the ostrich hunt was organised: several men usually attended, one of whom attracted the attention of the animal by whistling a particular tune which, according to the interlocutor, made the animal raise its head so that the shooter could see where it was but did not alarm it to the point of running away. Baydari also demonstrated how to prepare a trap consisting of a hole dug under a tree (*dabin* in Somali language) for catching small gazelles. The hole is covered with a sort of lid made of woven sticks; the lid also has the function of holding a twine forming a noose and of hiding it inside the hole; the other end of the twine is tied to one branch of the tree which keeps it in tension. When the gazelle puts one leg in the hole, it gets trapped by the noose, the branch is released and the leg hoisted up.[45] The Gaboye interlocutors made clear that all the animals were killed and slaughtered following Islamic ritual.

The Gaboye elders interviewed knew several hunting-related songs that they learned during expeditions when they were children. Indeed, these songs were usually sung during the treks in order to entertain the hunters (see above) but not while undertaking other routine activities. It seems that this kind of composition has a sort of 'formulaic structure' similar to that of Greek epic poetry: certain fixed verses are distributed throughout the text and other verses can vary between each execution (Orwin 2003).

1.4.3 THE GABOYE'S JARGONS

Another crucial element of accounts of the Gaboye and the other marginalised groups of the Somali territories from the colonial period was their so called 'dialects' or jargons. We have clearly outlined one datum: the Gaboye's vocabulary is currently known by a small minority of the members of the community living in Hargeysa. Most of the people met, even those belonging to the majority clans, are aware of its existence but only a few of the Gaboye elders interviewed said they

[45] Interview with Baydari, 25 June 2015.

knew any terms or expressions in these jargons. Some of the terms are found in the songs that have been collected during the fieldwork, like those describing the activity of hunting; they indicate particular species of animals or tools and are part of the Gaboye's specialised stock of knowledge. A small number of these words also have currency in the daily life of the members of these groups, but they are usually greeting formulae. In conclusion, it is possible that the relatively rich vocabularies collected by Kirk (Kirk 1905) and Cerulli (Cerulli 1959) could not be gathered today, even by a longer ethnographic survey. This task would, moreover, be even more difficult in a place like Hargeysa, even though it hosts a large concentration of members of the Gaboye groups: some interlocutors suggested that the Gaboye who still live in the rural areas were said to have preserved more of their linguistic repertoires.

A connected issue is the modification of certain sounds which according to some interlocutors were – and to a lesser extent still are – a peculiarity of the version of the Somali language spoken by the Gaboye. A Gaboye man[46] stated that the habit of using these modifications was common among the Gaboye belonging to the Musse Dheriyo clan, settled in the central part of the Somaliland territory, but it might well also occur widely among other Gaboye genealogical groups. One example he gave is the substitution of certain consonants pronounced inside common Somali words. For instance, the Somali consonant –k is replaced by –t, and –q by –c. Example phrases would be the interrogative "wa kuma?", meaning "who is there?" could be pronounced by some Gaboye as "wa tuma?" and "qalin i sii", meaning "give me the pen" becomes "calin i sii" (-c is equivalent to the –a'yin pronunciation of Arabic). Even this linguistic peculiarity of the Gaboye is no longer widespread; we realised this when we saw that a Gaboye friend of ours was shocked when he heard this way of speaking in Somali from a young man (who then turned out to be a Gaboye) of whom we were asking street directions in the town of Berbera. This episode reminded him of his school days in Hargeysa: the children belonging to the majority clans used to steal the pens of the Gaboye children, who cried "calin i sii!", which sounded very different from the usual Somali phrase and, so were heavily mocked by the others.[47]

The topic of which this discussion is simply a preliminary draft undoubtedly deserves a much more detailed documentation of its temporal and spatial distribution. Other cases could be identified beyond the substitution of consonants; indeed, the usage of modified Somali words by the Gaboye was already reported by Cerulli (Cerulli 1959: 111) who included it in the modes of production of the Gaboye's jargon. However, it is possible that the linguistic phenomenon of the

[46] Conversation of 18 July 2015 in Berbera.

[47] Indeed, oral communication is just one of the many elements that made and still makes the experience of school a crucial one for the Gaboye people. It is at school that the Gaboye children first realise that they belong to genealogical groups which have intrinsic, degrading peculiarities; it is where the difference is represented, acted and reinforced by the students in their mutual relationships.

modification of words – presented as errors of pronunciation by the Somalis – was a different phenomenon from the usage of the Gaboye's vocabularies proper, which were described by colonial period scholars as an instrument consciously employed by the Gaboye, who could speak Somali perfectly, to communicate among themselves without being understood by the Somalis.

1.4.4 THE YIBIR-ANAAS CUSTOMS IN THE PRESENT

According to writers of the colonial period, the Yibir-Anaas were one of the three main sub-divisions of the marginalised minority groups and were depicted as leather workers, but more often as 'wandering sorcerers' strictly associated with a repertoire of magical knowledge and practices. In this paragraph we will show how this association manifests currently.

The denomination 'Yibir' is not generally used by the members of this group, who prefer to call themselves Anaas, though this is ignored by the large majority of the Somalilanders. The term Yibir has nowadays become even more problematic with the spread of the idea among Somalilanders that this group has a Hebraic origin (see the article by Ben I. Aram 2003). The Somalilanders often stress the similarity between the two names as evidence of the hypothesis. The origins and the spread of this theory cannot be reconstructed here, though it seems important to note that it was not mentioned by any of the colonial period sources. Furthermore, the members of the group encountered during the fieldwork usually rejected this belief and professed themselves to be Muslims like any other Somali. As was reported by Kirk (Kirk 1904: 96), they are divided into segmentary genealogical units. During the fieldwork, on the 5th of March 2015, the inauguration was celebrated in Hargeysa of one of their 'traditional' leaders who was accorded the title of *Suldaan*, which carries the highest possible degree of prestige.

One of the most important elements attributed by scholars of the colonial period to the Yibir-Anaas were the payments they received from the members of the majority clans whenever a baby boy was born or upon the celebration of a marriage. It was called *samayo*, or *samanyo*, and it is no longer a widespread practice; many Somalilanders have barely heard of it. According to Axmed, an Anaas elder met during the fieldwork,[48] there are no more than a handful of Anaas, including himself, in all of Somaliland who still collect such payments. For instance, not a single person collects *samayo* in the town of Hargeysa, while there are a couple of Anaas in its rural outskirts. Actually, there was an Anaas elder still doing this in Hargeysa but he had died a couple of years before. Axmed explained the disappearance of this practice saying that most of the old people had died and that, in his words, "the youngsters have become too proud and consider this

[48] Interview with Axmed, a Yibir-Anaas elder, 7 March and 29 April 2015.

shameful". The issue of considering the activities carried out by the members of the marginalised minorities 'shameful', or of becoming 'too proud' for them, is also a theme in the song of the pottery producers quoted above. But in the case of these Yibir-Anaas practices another factor must be taken into account: they are currently severely condemned as against Islam by the religious figures who have been educated under the influence of Islamic traditions coming from other contexts. This contributes to the reproduction of their stigmatisation by the use of the lexicon of religious heterodoxy. However, Axmed affirmed that he continued to do what he was taught and that, for him, it was not against Islam. He lives in a rural village together with his large family; he has married numerous times and he claims to have 20 sons and daughters. Some of them moved to different towns when they got married, while others live with him and attend the livestock owned in common by the family.

The family in which a new baby is born is directed to him by his stick: he balances it on top of his hand and, after a while, he lets it fall down; the way the stick on the ground points is the one he follows in order to find the newborn. When he gets there he receives the payment and then delivers his blessing using a formula which includes words in the special jargon of the Yibir-Anaas (which they call *Yahabo Anaas*). This and their other practices – basically various forms of blesses and curses – are grounded in the *karaamo* (a Somali word), namely the power that God has given to them. Another term, *alwaal,* denotes the force which can manifest itself as a voice in the head and which tells the Anaas to go to a particular place where he might find some sort of material gain. *Alwaal* has, for instance, ordered him, and given to him the responsibility, to collect *samayo* in one area, after the previous Anaas had died. This indicates that the activity of collecting *samayo* has some sort of territorial base: the Anaas who undertake it distribute different operational areas among themselves. This model was also adopted in the past, when the Anaas who went around requesting such payments were more numerous. Indeed, over and above being linked with a specific territory, they were bound to particular genealogical units of the majority clans. The configuration of such a relationship was, arguably, not much different from the affiliation links involving the Gaboye groups mentioned above. Finally, the Anaas interlocutor reported the name of the so-called "charm" that Kirk quoted in his study and which the Anaas gave to the baby boy after he had received the blessing. It is called *makaraan*, which is very similar to the "makharam" reported by Kirk. According to the interlocutor, this denomination is composed of the Somali negation *-ma* and the word *karaan*, which means "capacity" or "efficacy", so it indicates something that blocks the efficacy of something else, in this case a curse.

Axmed said that his father had the *karaamo*, the power, and that he was informed by the *alwaal* that his first son, namely the elder himself, would also have had the *karaamo*. The

interlocutor clarified one point which had remained largely implicit in the colonial period accounts: this power is the exclusive prerogative of the Anaas, but only a tiny minority of them actually has it. The other members of the grroup carried out the occupations that characterised the Gaboye and the other marginalised groups, such as hunting, leather and metal working. Therefore the livelihood of what colonial period accounts called "the wandering sorcerers" did not exclude other sources of income for the Anaas. In fact when Axmed was a child, probably during the 1940s, his father used to move around collecting *samayo* but he also had a permanent dwelling where his household was settled and where he had been able to amass some livestock. These animals were the payments delivered by members of the majority clans. Furthermore, Axmed stated that local British officers sometimes granted him money or food as a sort of reward for his activity.

Axmed affirmed that he was told by his father when he was about ten years old that he was especially gifted, he had a power. Another crucial moment was when his father started to develop this power, arranging a meeting with an animal which revealed some secrets to them. It was a hyena (*waraabe* in the Somali language) that the interlocutor called a "friend" of his father; the man had a connection with a pack of hyenas living near their dwelling and especially with its leader. One day, the father of Axmed was ordered by the *alwaal* to take, together with his son, one sheep and to bring it to one specific place. They slaughtered it and then the hyena came and took the dead sheep away. This meeting was described by Axmed as a sort of inauguration or activation of his powers; however, he started to use them regularly only when he was a young man, nearly thirty years old.

Though *samayo* is rarely practised in Somaliland, the manifestations of the Anaas' power are still recognised by some Somalilanders. Axmed reported a case which is very famous in his region: a man refused to pay *samayo* for the birth of his baby, who died shortly afterwards and, since then almost all babies born to his genealogical unit have been girls to the point that it is near to being extinguished. In order to offer an example of his faculties, Axmed stated that he had cursed a man during a public meeting that we had attended together, few days before our interview.[49] He cursed one person who was delivering a public speech that, according to him, was not appropriate to the context and was embarrassing the audience. The curse he used is called *Il*, which means "eye" in the Somali language: it manifested openly in the speaker's fainting in the middle of his speech and falling to the ground. He was given immediate assistance and brought to a doctor who did not find any major health problem and then to a sheikh who blessed him. Axmed claimed that he had caused it and other people met during the episode also immediately attributed what they had just seen to the *Il* curse. Axmed described it as a sort of possession in which the spirit of the sorcerer enters the body of the cursed person; the possession is effected through the eyes of the two persons

[49] The details of this event will not be revealed here in order to protect the identity of the persons involved.

involved. It can cause various pathological conditions of different intensities in the body of the cursed.

The power of the Anaas and their faculty either to bless or to curse can, thus, be exerted in different circumstances. Furthermore, the issuing of the payment – *samayo* – to obtain a blessing or avoid a curse was and still is not exclusively related to the birth of a baby or marriages: it is linked to what he has called *libin*, a Somali word meaning 'achievement' or 'success'.[50] In this way, Axmed justified the fact that a few years before he visited a high ranking politician of the government of Somaliland and requested a payment from him. The politician is from the same region as Axmed and knew him; as he said, he had just been successful at the national elections and so he had to issue a "payment for the chair" (in his words) he had won, in order to receive a blessing. The Anaas man said that he promptly received a considerable amount of money (a few thousand US dollars) from the politician.

In a second example Axmed expressed even more deliberately that he exploited the fear of being cursed as a way to bargain material pay-offs from people holding public offices. Some months before our meetings, he came to know about a project financed by international donors aimed at distributing small plots of land and shelters to Somaliland citizens who fulfilled certain criteria; the location of the project was on the outskirts of an urban centre and it implied the issuing of property titles to the beneficiaries. Axmed approached some high-ranking members of the local administration directly and asked to be included in the project: his name was soon put on the list and he received the shelter. He admitted that, although he fulfilled the criteria, it was the fear of being cursed that really made the difference to his request being granted.[51] He used his ability to contact decision-makers, while other Somalilanders would have relied on other instruments, like genealogical proximity, to put a pressure on them.

The payments due to the Anaas are requested exclusively from the members of the majority clans; the Musse Dheriyo and the members of the other Gaboye clans are not asked to contribute under any circumstances. When asked why this was, Axmed replied that these groups are intermarried and that they were defeated together when the kingdom of Bucur Bacayr collapsed. Bucur Bacayr is the most commonly used denomination of Mohammed Hanif, whom Kirk reported as the forefather of the Yibir-Anaas; the interlocutor said the Gaboye were "the soldiers fighting for

[50] The interlocutor reported that there is also a payment, a smaller one, that could and can be requested from the Anaas for the blessing of a newly constructed dwelling.

[51] The elder's efforts to secure a base in the town could be related to his idea that there are more opportunities for him there. We must consider the fact reported above that the Anaas' services were provided according to a geography of affiliation with the members of the majority clans and that the Somalilander towns host people from a range of genealogical groups, including large numbers of the clan to which his group was affiliated. So, with a house in the town, he can more easily reach them and request payment for his blessings.

that kingdom", thence the payment should be requested from those who subjugated them, namely the Somalis belonging to the majority clans.

The memory of the figure of Mohammed Hanif-Bucur Bacayr is another important parameter which allows us to monitor how the representation of the marginality suffered by the Anaas and the other marginalised minorities has changed across the decades. Until the 1980s, his confrontation with the figure of Aw Barkhadle – which was already reported by Kirk - was exalted and remembered during the yearly celebration of the latter (in the site where the clash between the two men occurred, not far from Hargeysa) by the members of the majority clans in order to stress their separate origin from the minority groups.

1.4.5 THE GABOYE'S GENEALOGICAL REPERTOIRES

An important element when comparing the data collected by authors of the colonial period with those we collected in Hargeysa is the status of the Gaboye's genealogical repertoire. We have seen that what those writers called "low castes" – the Midgan-Gaboye, the Yibir-Anaas and the Tumaal – were usually described as not being organised in "tribes", unlike the rest of the Somalis. Cerulli reported the denomination "the people without brothers" which was applied to them. But we have also seen that I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957) stated that these groups did have an internal genealogical organisation, albeit characterised by shorter genealogical chains than those of the majority clans.

Even without Kirk's and I.M. Lewis' support, it does not seem credible that the Gaboye's genealogical organisation is a recent innovation, possibly related to the emancipation process that affected them in the late colonial phase. In fact, the Gaboye clans have an internal segmentary organisation based on patrilineal descent which is coherently accepted by local groups across Somaliland. The Musse Dheriyo clan, for instance, is divided into segmentary genealogical units and the latter had bonds of affiliation with determined genealogical sections of the majority clans. Thus, the links of affiliation are declined along different genealogical levels, starting from the level of the entire clan of the Musse Dheriyo: as several members of both the majority clans and of the Musse Dheriyo have admitted during the fieldwork, this clan is considered to have been affiliated in the past to the clan confederation of the Isaaq. The Musse Dheriyo are divided into two sub-clans, Haruun and Abokor who were the sons of Musse. One lineage belonging to the Haruun, the Talabacaade, and another one part of the Abokor, the Cali Abokor, were affiliated to the largest Isaaq clans – called Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle - settled in the South-western part of the portion of Somalilander territory inhabited by the Isaaq (the one containing the town of Hargeysa). More specifically, the Talabacaade and the Cali Abokor were affiliated to the most powerful

lineages (the richest in men, livestock and prestige within their clans)[52] of the Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle, namely the Abdallah Siciid for the former and the Ciise Damal and the Gabdon Damal for the latter. In the meantime, other lineages belonging to both the two sub-clans of the Musse Dheriyo, Haruun and Abokor, were affiliated to and lived with the majority genealogical groups settled in the eastern portion of the Isaaq-inhabited region (where the important town of Burco is). Furthermore, numerous Gaboye interlocutors have stressed that between the Talabacaade and the Cali Abokor there is a deep rooted tradition of intermarriage.

The picture of the distribution of the sections of the Musse Dheriyo among the genealogical units of the Isaaq can only partly be recognised nowadays in the geographical distribution of these sections: the majority clans previously maintained control over more or less specific territories, but a number of waves of urbanisation (like that of the last three decades of the colonial era and the one that involved Somaliland after the declaration of its independence in 1991) have re-shuffled their spatial distribution and caused the concentration of several, different, genealogical groups in the towns. This rural-urban mobility has been particularly significant for the Gaboye: the accounts of the interlocutors lay out a scenario in which – before the waves of urbanisation that began in the 1920s – there was a correspondence between the genealogical identity of their groups, the genealogical identity of the dominant clan to which they were affiliated and, consequently with the areas of their settlement. This distribution also showed a somewhat internally symmetrical structure for the Muse Dheriyo, with the two sub-clans of the group further divided into two halves each; the two sub-clans (Haruun and Abokor) replicated reciprocally the internal structure of their affiliations both having one half affiliated to the so-called 'western' Isaaq clans (the Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle) and the other one living with the 'eastern' ones.

So the majority clans, the genealogical sections of the Musse Dheriyo and the affiliation bonds between them showed a parallel segmentary structuring, but what was the difference in the manifestations of such links between the broader level of the Isaaq-Musse Dheriyo constituencies and that of the Gabdon Damal (part of the Ciida Galle/Isaaq)-Cali Abokor (part of the Abokor/Musse Dheriyo)? The Isaaq-Musse Dheriyo link was, arguably, loosely expressed and had even fewer significant socio-political implications. The Gaboye elders say it is simply that the various Musse Dheriyo sections used to live mainly with certain Isaaq clans and that the life paths of the two forefathers crossed; as we have seen above, Musse was a Sheikh and a companion of Sheikh Isaaq.

[52] The more powerful lineages of a given genealogical unit are called *laandheere*, meaning 'long branch' in Somali language. See I.M. Lewis 1957 and 1961.

On the other hand, if we look at the lower genealogical level, the previous configuration of the affiliation is depicted by the interlocutors as characterised by the following elements: co-residence, co-participation in warfare and association in the diya exchanges with other groups. In order to illustrate such a relationship, an example will be offered here of how it is represented. According to one Musse Dheriyo elder (whom we call here Said) who was interviewed during the fieldwork on the configuration of his family's affiliation links,[53] there was originally a relationship between the whole group of the Cali Abokor (corresponding to the third generation from the forefather Musse Dheriyo) and the lineage called Reer Gabdon belonging to the Ciida Galle clan who were their *abaan*; both were settled between the region south of Hargeysa and the Haud region of Ethiopia. The Reer Gabdon were one of the most powerful lineages inside the Ciida Galle clan in terms of their numbers of male members and livestock. Arguably, during the third decade of the twentieth century there was a clash inside the Ciida Galle lineages of the area which brought about a re-shuffle of the local Gaboye's affiliations: the Reer Gabdon (who are part of the Gabdon Damal section of the Ciida Galle) were defeated by the Reer Gulaid (who are part of the Ciise Damal) and left the area (fleeing towards the land of a neighbouring clan). The Cali Abokor (part of the Gaboye clan of the Musse Dheriyo), who were divided into four sections according to their internal genealogical structure, split up: one of these four sections – the Cabdi Cali (Abokor), which is the interlocutor's group - shifted its affiliation from the Reer Gabdon to the Reer Gulaid. Said, the interlocutor, added that the newly established affiliation of the Cabdi Cali (Abokor) with the Reer Gulaid was further re-organised by the latter: in fact the Reer Gulaid, who had won the war against the Reer Gabdon, assigned to themselves one portion of the Cabdi Cali (Abokor) as their protected Gaboye; one section of the Reer Gulaid in particular, the Ba Caambaro, established an affiliation relationship with one portion of the Cabdi Cali (Abokor). Then, two other internal genealogical fractions of the Cabdi Cali (Abokor) were assigned respectively to the two sections (the Libaan Ciise and the Xasan Ciise) allied to the Reer Gulaid and part of the same genealogical group of the Ciise Damal.

According to the counting of ancestors, the majority-lineages parts of the Ciida Galle clan which have been reported here, namely the Gabdon Damal, the Ciise Damal and their further sub-divisions, are located between the thirteenth and the sixteenth generation from the common forefather of the Isaaq clan confederation. The account of Said helps to clarify that at this level of the relationship – a level which is identified through the enunciation of groups corresponding to

[53] Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, 21 February 2015. The episode reported during this interview had been narrated to the interlocutor by his father who took part in it. Said was a newborn baby at the time of these events. He stated that he was over 90 years old. Another time reference he provided was that, according to him, it occurred few years after the defeat of the dervish movement led by Maxamed Cabdille Xassan in 1920.

specific genealogical divisions of either a Gaboye and a majority grouping - such linkages were rather different from the vaguely expressed association that joined the broad conglomerates of the Isaaq clan confederation and the Musse Dheriyo clan. In fact, the section of the Cabdi Cali (Abokor) are associated with both the Reer Gulaid in general, and with one portion of them, the Ba Caambaro, in particular. In the present day, the link with the Reer Gulaid as a whole implies co-participation in blood-compensation payments in which the amount due exceeds 49 camels or an equivalent value. The special link with the Ba Caambaro implies the co-payment of fines up to 49 camels, but it was also described by Said as an effective and exclusive political relationship managed by the local groups. This was the level where the affiliation implied mutual implications for both the subjects involved. Said emphasised two characterising elements of the affiliation: firstly co-residence, namely the right to share the same section of land for settlement and for the exploitation of water and grazing areas and secondly the maintenance of an alliance which implied the receiving of protection and the granting of military support from the Gaboye.

We do not know whether the case analysed above can justify our stating a general rule defining at what genealogical level the relationship between the Gaboye and a majority group is an exclusive political relationship. Some historical sources show that even individuals could act as 'patrons'-*abaan* of the Gaboye local groups: individuals endowed with high prestige inside their genealogical group could control the settlement and the occupational services of a nucleus of Gaboye. However, Said's account shows that specific events might play a role in the setting of the affiliation. The clash inside the Ciida Galle clan and the modification of the political balance between its internal branches caused the manipulation of the bonds of affiliation. This episode also provides a concrete example of how the segmentary genealogical structure of both the Gaboye and the other Somalis reflected the dynamic articulation of the bonds of affiliation: it was following their internal genealogical cleavages that the Cabdi Cali (Abokor), formerly united in one common affiliation, were fragmented among different *abaan*s.

Said stated that his ancestors belonging to the Cabdi Cali (Abokor) shifted to the Reer Gulaid because their former *abaan* had been defeated and had left the area. He further commented that the episode resembled what happens to a country that has been defeated in a war: "Just like after World War II, when Germany was split up between USA and URSS since it had lost the war against them".[54] The Cabdi Cali (Abokor) represented the spoils of war captured by the Reer Gulaid from the Reer Gabdon. As well as livestock, which was the most important prize from raids and clashes between local groups usually documented by both colonial and scholarly sources, the Gaboye could be an equally significant object at stake. In fact according to Said, being the *abaan* of

[54] Interview with Said, 21 February 2015.

a particular group of Gaboye was considered a mark of prestige which distinguished certain genealogical units. The existence of hierarchies of prestige and of political influence among the majority clans was already discussed by I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957; 1961). A fundamental way to picture this distinction between genealogical units was the opposition between *laandheere*, which literally means "long branch", and *laangaab*, “short branch”; the two terms use the metaphor of the “branch” to refer to the length of the line of ancestors of a given genealogical group. The parameters outlined by I.M. Lewis for classifying the allocation of prestige are: the length of the genealogical chain, hence the number of ancestors separating the living from the common forefather (who, for the majority of the Somalilanders is Sheikh Isaaq, the eponymous initiator of a clan confederation), the number of members of a group which, according to the Somalis, is explained by the length of the chain of ancestors, and the total amount of livestock owned by the group and of other economic resources, like commercial capital. According to Said, to these crucial parameters which identified the *laandheere* lineages of the clans must be added the fact that these lineages were those exerting their protection as *abaan* over a given Gaboye group.

The Gaboye elder used the image of the “spoils of war” when commenting on the episode from the point of view of the majority groups which took part in it, but he used another simile when depicting the situation from the perspective of the Gaboye lineage of the Cabdi Cali (Abokor): after the war, “we were like refugees and they welcomed us”. He insisted that the Cabdi Cali (Abokor) could not stand alone and needed the protection of some majority group, especially because of the extremely limited amount of livestock they owned and because they had only goats, sheep and no camels and at that point the Reer Gulaid agreed to replace their former ‘patrons’-*abaan*. The parameter of the quality and amount of livestock owned was important not only as the material basis on which the group could reproduce itself, but also as the crucial element in interactions with other local groups. According to Said, having only a small amount of livestock (and the fact that they did not own camels) implied that a group would be unable to participate in blood-compensation exchanges and would thus force it to accept the protection of some other genealogical unit.

This interlocutor’s account offered an explanation of the Gaboye’s asymmetric political position vis-à-vis the majority clans as being centred on the vulnerability of the Gaboye’s material base of production (namely the animals). This explanation not only contradicts Cerulli’s reference to the complete exclusion of the Gaboye from the ownership of livestock but it also completely overlooks the issue of occupational segregation and de-emphasises the Gaboye’s subordination as a socially ascribed status. We must, again, suppose that the descriptions of the Gaboye’s social position reported by scholars of the colonial period were usually based on accounts collected among

the members of the majority clans. Arguably, these accounts tended to reproduce a highly schematic picture of the Gaboye's socio-economic position which was mitigated by local heterogeneity. Moreover, the representations of the past marginalisation of the Gaboye as currently reproduced by themselves are not the result of a public, collective discourse but of fragmented processes of manipulation. All these elements must be taken into account in the analysis of oral sources like the one discussed here.

Kuper (Kuper 1982) has catalogued the many ways the scholars have looked at genealogical repertoires and the different trends that have identified and ordered the elements of the social life conditioned by them: the regulation of descent, the political organisation and the territorial attachments of the local groups. Kuper's conclusion is that the lineage model is to be analytically dismissed since the "repetitive series of descent groups" represents neither local ideologies nor the organisation of any sort of economic and political practice (Kuper 1982: 92). We do not intend to present genealogical repertoires in this section as patterns of political organisation nor as the local explanation of the reasons for the actions of individuals or groups. Nevertheless, the Gaboye's genealogical repertoires could be followed as a sort of mapping of the dependency relationships between them and the dominant genealogical units. Indeed, between I.M. Lewis's first contributions (I.M. Lewis 1957) and those of Luling (Luling 2006), it has been pointed out that the Somali genealogical repertoire defines rather accurately the genealogical identity of individuals and groups but it is not a representation of the network of political relationships among them. Rather it allows an extremely high degree of flexibility in terms of the maintenance and re-shuffling of alliances between the groups. Another factor is that the genealogies are not constantly manipulated to adapt the shifting political relationships between groups. For instance, according to I.M. Lewis, the assimilation of individuals and groups into others' patrilineal genealogies was absolutely exceptional for the Somalis. As Luling has emphasised, a Somali term employed to name descent groups is *jilib* which means 'knee', that is, one of the joints of the human body. In relation to this, we can regard the Gaboye's genealogical repertoires as accounting for the joints between the internal articulations of the Gaboye groups and the Somali majority clans, starting from the association between the Musse Dheriyo and the Isaaq down to the lower genealogical levels. Indeed, in the account quoted above the Gaboye elder used the genealogical sub-divisions of his group to describe the dynamic articulation of protection relations. This reconstruction is consistent with some brief remarks found in I.M. Lewis's contributions. He wrote that the shorter Gaboye genealogies - if compared to those of the other Somalis - "represent the small lineage groups into which they are divided in their internal relations as in marriage etc" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 75), and that they describe the pattern of the Gaboye's social relations.

During the twentieth century, what has effectively changed with regard to the social uses of the Gaboye's genealogical repertoires are the 'publication' and the 'activation' of the genealogies. 'Publication' relates here to modes of introducing oneself: according to some of the Gaboye elders interviewed, the Gaboye living in the rural areas with the majority clans during the colonial period would quite often introduce themselves with a reference to the genealogies of the groups to which they were affiliated. Nowadays, the public enunciation of one's genealogical identity as, for example, a member of the Musse Dheriyo clan, is the norm. Evidence of the genealogies' being 'active' is the capillary distribution of 'traditional' leaders among the various genealogical units of the Gaboye clans. The Gaboye 'traditional' leaders are usually recognised by titles common even among the majority clans, like that of *Suldaan*, *chief caaqil* and *caaqil*. Further evidence for 'active' is that the Gaboye genealogical units and their network of 'traditional' leaders are regularly 'activated' in the circumstance of blood-compensation transactions with other groups.

CHAPTER 2
THE ACADEMIC DEBATE AROUND 'CASTES' IN AFRICA

One concept recurs in all the literature reviewed above that deals with the Gaboye: that of 'caste'. This concept spread in Africa after its contours had been defined in the Indian context and its utility here is, as we shall show, heuristic rather than classificatory. It does not abstract a limited set of characteristics applied to particular systems of social stratification but refers to a field of analyses regarding social hierarchy in which a selection of synchronic elements (like the separation of status and power) and diachronic elements (like the 'opening up' of local social spheres of subordination) allows us to deconstruct the dynamic configuration of a formalised system of social stratification.

We will first review the origins and the spread of the term 'caste', then examine its usages in African studies and finally discuss the analytical dialogue between the Gaboye case and some contributions on the Indian context.

2.1 THE PEREGRINATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF 'CASTE' ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

The anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers (Pitt-Rivers 1971) reconstructed the genealogy of the word 'caste' and followed its long peregrinations across geographic areas and across lexical corpuses, such as that of European colonisers in South America, Africa and elsewhere, and that of the anthropologists. The most plausible etymology takes us to the Iberian Peninsula and perhaps to the gothic word "kasts" which identified "a group of animals or a brood of nestlings" (etymology quoted in Pitt-Rivers 1971: 234). Until the sixteenth century, the term indicated the species for animals and plants and the race or lineage for human beings. The Spanish and the Portuguese exported these meanings to the countries which they visited and occupied since the sixteenth century. The Portuguese applied the word to the social divisions, which classified the inhabitants of India, while the Spanish used it (as well as for animal species) to talk about both patrilineal and matrilineal lineage groups throughout South America. The term went through a continuous re-elaboration in the Spanish Empire during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, until it began to be associated with the idea of purity of descent to identify the people born out of relationships between the colonisers, the African slaves and the native populations. When the British arrived in India, they adopted the Portuguese word 'casta' to describe the Indian social stratification; this wiped out the previous layers of meaning which, like that of race or breed of men, English speakers had already borrowed from the languages of the Iberian Peninsula. Pitt-Rivers remarked the curious situation of Latin America, where the term had its own solid line of diffusion and usage from the

arrival of the Spanish. Such usage gradually declined until the word was re-introduced by social scientists in analogy with the Hindu system. Following the sociological literature in the English language, which adopted the term in the 1920s to represent race relations in the United States, the term served to explain the Latin American division between a superior group of Hispanics and an inferior one of "Indians". Pitt-Rivers called this process "the invasion of a territory where the term once existed on the ethnographical level [the Spanish introduced and applied it to clans and lineages of the native groups] by the same word which, thanks to its sojourn on the far side of the world, had 'made it' to analytical status and thereafter claimed the right to apply anywhere […]" (Pitt-Rivers 1971: 236).

One of the many places where scholars have used the term 'caste' is the broad territory, just south of the Sahara, from Senegal (Tal Tamari 1991) to Somalia: one of the areas of the world outside of Asia, and India in particular, where the analytical use of the term 'caste' is historically most widespread and deeply rooted. According to Roy Dilley (Dilley 2000), colonial officers and scholars first used it to explain the social distinction between local groups of farmers and craftsmen such as blacksmiths, bards and leatherworkers. Since then, the term has been widely used, to the extent that it was included among the categories collected by Arthur Tuden and Leonard Plotnicov of terms by which scholars classified the sub-Saharan forms of social stratification (Tuden & Plotnicov 1970). These prominent scholars discussed categories such as slavery, class, social mobility and caste through rich ethnographic accounts[55] and defended the application of the concept of 'caste' to African societies in the face of criticisms by those who argued that it should be applied exclusively to the Hindu social and religious system. According to Tuden & Plotnicov (1970: 16), the term was helpful in identifying all the social contexts showing the "*occupational specialisation of endogamous groups,* in which *membership is based on ascription,* and between which *social distance is regulated by the concept of pollution*". These three aspects were "indicative of caste" whenever they manifested "in highly salient forms" and were mutually related. A crucial element of "casteness" was occupational and economic specialisation. The latter could manifest in different degrees, as is shown in Tuden and Plotnicov's comparison between the African cases presented in the volume and the Indian context. Another element of peculiarity of the African context was that high-ranking castes did not monopolise political power always, as James H. Vaugham's analysis of the Marghi society of Nigeria showed.

[55] In the volume, the documentation around the African castes was provided by James H. Vaugham's analysis on the Marghi of Nigeria, Jacques Maquet's on Rwanda and by Pierre L. Van Den Berghe's study of the South African apartheid regime. This latter was one of that thread of studies which proposed the use of the concept of 'caste' to sociologically define the contexts of racial segregation, like the southern states of USA (See Gerald Berreman 1960). For a reconstruction of the diffusion of the category of 'caste' in the definition of race relations in the USA see also Daniel Immerwahr 2007.

A very similar approach to the issue of African castes is present also in Orlando Patterson's important work on slavery *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Patterson 1982). The author treats castes as such a well defined and globally diffused institution that he uses it as a contrastive term in the outlining of the institution of slavery which is the core topic of the study. Patterson re-elaborated the data of the Ethnographic Atlas by George P. Murdock (Murdock 1967) on the presence and distribution of castes among the indexed societies all over the world. According to the Atlas, there are 186 societies classified as presenting a "caste stratification". While reviewing the index, Patterson joined those scholars who defended a definition of casted society that did not confine it to the Indian context exclusively. In fact, he included in it those groups in which "there are one or more despised occupational groupings […], distinguished from the general population, regarded as outcastes and characterised by strict endogamy" (Patterson 1982: 48). This definition follows the one usually employed by scholars for the typology of the African castes. Patterson added that castes imply the qualifying aspect of "ritual purity and pollution as means of maintaining social distance". This is the fundamental element of his differentiation between the institutions of slavery and caste stratification.

The Ethnographic Atlas consulted by Patterson revealed a weak relationship between the institution of slavery and that of castes for the sample of human groups considered: societies having both occupational groups and slavery are more numerous than those with occupational groups but not having slaves. Beyond these figures, Patterson was interested in the review of ethnographic sources on the societies having both institutions, among which he singled out the Koreans, the Marghi studied by Vaugham and the Somalis.[56] According to him, these cases unquestionably showed the following differences between slaves and "outcaste groups": unlike the first, the second could neither intermarry nor have sexual intercourse with the rest of the society; they could not leave their status, while slaves could be manumitted or freed; they used to live segregated and were confined to determined occupational specialisations while slaves were not confined to any particular task; finally and most importantly, the slaves were the objects of several forms of contempt but were never considered polluting. These elements outline a configuration of the casted groups which served exactly Patterson's purpose of marking the peculiar characteristics of the institution of slavery, which was based on a personal relationship of domination between the master and the slave which would have been weakened if rules of avoidance and segregation had subsisted among them: the slave's existence was "only through and for his master" (Patterson 1982: 50). Then, occupational specialisation would have removed one of the most important advantages for the

[56] Patterson's major source on the Somali occupational groups was Cerulli's writings, which explains why the term he uses to identify the casted group is *Sab*.

master, that of disposing of a natally alienated person who could be employed in any activity.[57] Patterson recapitulated the difference between slavery and caste stratification as follows: "The essence of caste relations and notions of ritual pollution is that they demarcate impassable boundaries. The essence of slavery is that the slave, in his social death, lives on the margin between community and chaos, life and death, the sacred and the secular. Already dead, he […] can cross the boundaries with social and supernatural impunity" (Patterson 1982: 51).

By marking the boundary between casted group and slaves, Patterson overemphasised differences between the two which were not as sharp as he thought. For instance, Patterson's conclusions do not match with the ethnographic evidence on the mutual relationships between the Gaboye and the Somalis which himself quoted among his sources (notably, Cerulli's contributions). The relationship between the members of the occupational groups and those of the Somali majority clans was an exclusive bond of affiliation linking two determined genealogical segments; this relationship was one of personal domination. Furthermore, we have already reported that even the social life of the Gaboye was "through" their 'patrons', whereas their 'patrons' belonging to majority clans entirely managed their involvement in controversies implicating blood-compensation exchanges. Second, the issue of ritual pollution is more problematic than Patterson has it. The "outcaste groups", as Patterson called them, were associated with virtually every occupational task required by local groups (see H.S. Lewis 1962) and some of these activities implied a physical contact similar to that implicated in the practices which Patterson attributed to the slaves in numerous societies, like nursemaid. As we have seen for the Somalis, men and women belonging to Gaboye clans performed various techniques of traditional healing who treated respectively male and female patients. Among such tasks, there was also midwifery.

It is, therefore, difficult to identify what were, from Patterson's perspective, the "boundaries" that the "outcaste" could not cross. Moreover, as some of the critics of the application of the concept of 'caste' in African contexts have contended[58], it was not through complex cosmologies nor religious repertoires defining the condition of ritual pollution that the marginality suffered by specialists in numerous groups of the Horn of Africa was articulated as occupational specialisation, spatial segregation and political exclusion.

[57] Patterson reports the various forms of sexual exploitation targeting slaves in order to provide an example of the non-polluting character of slaves. Furthermore, he mentions the case of the Somali slaves who were the only group that could intermarry with both the *Sab* and the members of the majority clans.
[58] See the critical remarks by A. Pankhurst reported below.

2.2 PAST AND FUTURE TRAJECTORIES OF THE CONCEPT OF 'CASTE' WITHIN AFRICAN STUDIES

Although Tuden & Plotnicov and Patterson were aware of some of the arguments already put against such usage, it seems that they were reluctant to abandon the category because of its power to evoke the association between occupational specialisation, endogamy, status ranking and ritual pollution. Notwithstanding its analytical ambiguity - which surfaced even in Tuden & Plotnicov and Patterson's contributions - and the problematic bridge with the Indian context it implied, the term 'caste' has proved to be difficult to dismiss or to substitute. One of the problems associated with its comparative use is its level of abstraction. As Dag E. Berg accurately pointed (Berg 2015), Louis Dumont had already placed the scientific exercise of comparison not at the level of the caste system institution. Rather he placed it at the broader level of "paramount values" attached to the socio-cultural assemblages he called "civilisation" (see also Declan Quigley 1993). This surfaced in Dumont's critique of Max Weber's comparative method which associated the Jews living in Europe with the Indian Pariahs. Berg emphasises that for Dumont hierarchy was a universal phenomenon, but the "modern individualism" characterising Western civilisation or ideology had made hierarchy unconscious and at the same time had contributed to its reinvention: "Individualism encourages generalisation from particulars (individuals and groups) rather than locating particulars in relation to the relevant value that creates the social 'whole'" [Dumont 1980]. He further suggests that one should keep 'our concepts concrete' [1980, p. xvii], that is, to confine terms such as caste and race to their respective ideological contexts" (Berg 2015: 416). The starting point of Dumont's analysis is the "paramount value" of a given ideological system or civilisation; inasmuch as each one of these values "structures its distinctive set of cosmologies and hierarchies, constructive comparisons can therefore be made across distinctive paramount values" (Berg 2015: 417). So, for Dumont, comparisons are confined to the level of values, conceived as facts to be investigated, which is the one where universal phenomena such as hierarchy are articulated. For this reason, castes cannot be considered in their particular manifestations but as parts related to a determined social whole which is organised by specific structuring principles. This concrete character led Dumont to consider a mistake – originating in the paramount value of the Western ideology, namely individualism-modernity - that of abstracting and applying castes to other 'wholes' structured by different paramount values.

Pitt-Rivers (Pitt-Rivers 1971) had already tried to define to what analytical level the concept of 'caste' belongs, after the proliferation of the term among anthropologists studying societies scattered all over the world had confused its status. For the author, the problem was that "when the same word is used simultaneously at different levels the door is open to confusion" (Pitt-Rivers

1971: 233). Pitt-Rivers is among those scholars who concluded that the term 'caste' had no viable "analytical definition" between the two useless extremes constituted by Dumont, who applied it only to the Indian case, and by Berreman (Berreman 1960) who used it to denote "any traditional system of social differentiation" (Pitt-Rivers 1971: 251). Thence "we should perhaps abandon the hope of using *caste, rather than the functions of which it may be constituted*, for the purpose of cross-cultural comparison and let it rest content in a humble station at the ethnographical level where it may without contradictions – since no comparison here is demanded – be used […]" (Pitt-Rivers 1971: 251). However, having reconstructed the intricate genealogy of the term, he believed that the ethnographic context of its usage was not only India but also Latin America, where it was used from the seventeenth century to express the hierarchy of status.

With regard to African studies, the anthropologist and ethiopianist Alula Pankhurst (A. Pankhurst 1999) attributed to an article by Siegfried F. Nadel (Nadel 1954) the first academically articulated proposal that the concept of 'caste' could migrate from the Indian context to the analysis of the African groups, especially in relation to two cases, one in West Africa and one in East Africa. Despite widespread criticism, the concept has entered the field of African studies: we find it in the work of a relatively narrow circle of scholars and studies that have tackled institutionalised forms of segregation and/or the subordination of craftsmen associated with the social process of division of labour within African societies. 'Caste-like' forms of stratification contribute to the appointment of the social, economic and political parameters that define the 'belonging' (and obviously the 'not-belonging') elaborated and applied by local groups; caste divisions manifest as institutions that draw the boundaries separating full membership from incomplete membership of, or exclusion from, from the social body. Some studies of West African groups have contested the hierarchical dimension of this type of social differentiation. Rather, they have described West African castes as a matrix of internal differentiation based on innate capacities, powers and entitlements attributed to groups (McNaughton 1988; Bonnie Wright 1989; Barbara G. Hoffman 2000).

These parameters of differentiated belonging have a regional diffusion, marked by discontinuities and continuities[59], and show a spatial and historical heterogeneity which is, to say the least, extremely difficult to document and to reconstruct historically.[60] In the case of Somalia, for instance, written sources are scant or more often absent and the oral history of marginal groups, like the former slaves studied by Besteman, is subject to a vast repertoire of attitudes that include

[59] See for example the recurrence of the mythologies about prohibited food consumption addressing the marginalised minorities diffused among the Somalis as well as among numerous Ethiopian groups (A. Pankhurst 1999; Freeman & Pankhurst 2003).

[60] A perfect example of such a regional study is the volume edited by Freeman and Pankhurst (Freeman & Pankhurst 2003), in which an team of scholars offers a detailed map of occupationally marginalised groups in Ethiopia.

reticence, oblivion and the manipulation of past marginality (Besteman 1993). Therefore historical and ethnographic investigations have quite often been unable to explain the formation and the reproduction of alleged caste-like stratifications on a regional base. This regional character remained a self-evident qualification of systems of stratifications. In the case of the Gaboye and of analogous groups in the Somali territories, no ethnographic, historical or linguistic explanation has been established for their origins or their distribution in the Horn.

For these reasons, the debate on African castes has lost ground in favour of other analytical approaches which adopted different thematic and geographic scales of comparison. Between the 1950s and the 1960s, great popularity was achieved by the 'macro' frameworks which discovered – and then gave an absolute explanatory power to – some historical junctures that pooled together the entire African continent. These crucial turning points were the passage from pre-colonial to colonial forms of social, political and economic organisation of the local African groups, and then the formation of the independent states. The idea of the radical discontinuities associated with these passages led to a number of approaches that although extremely variegated could be subsumed into well defined theoretical frames: the 'state' (in its dynamic configurations, from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era), the penetration of 'capital' together with and through colonial expansion, the transformation of rural societies. Abdi I. Samatar (whose contribution will be quoted repeatedly in the following chapters; Abdi I. Samatar 1989), for instance, analysed issues in the Somali territories such as the organisation of production and distribution of economic resources in the pre-colonial period, the impact of colonial conquest – the socio-economic foundations of the colonial territories and the interventions by the colonial and the post-colonial states on the majority rural Somali population. Samatar intended to fill the gaps left by the previous generation of scholars, like the leading Somalist I.M. Lewis and deliberately affirmed that he aimed to place the analysis of Somali social life in state-of-the-art African studies, i.e., to have the Somali case dialogue with the approaches deployed by scholars like Robert Bates (Bates 1981;1984), Keith Hart (Hart 1981), Claude Meillassoux (Meillassoux 1981), who, although were divided in their affiliations – neoclassical or Marxist – investigated similar issues in different African contexts and adopted the same key-frames.

Beyond the 'macro', the 'micro' level of analysis too achieved great popularity among scholars, especially with the consolidation of a comparative reluctance among anthropologists. 'Macro' and 'micro' level can easily be made to coexist in one study since they can be used to explain each other, mutually. The linkage between each case study and broader theoretical frames and academic debates absolves the scholar from the task of documenting this connection historically. The studies that have employed the concept of 'caste' in Africa rely instead on a

'meso' level of investigation: they struggle to identify historical and ethnographic frameworks in which to explain the formation and the spread of specific institutions between regionally delimited groups. Indeed, some analyses of West African societies have critically re-discussed the category of 'caste' in the region by contrasting the ethnographic materials on local groups while also involving the Indian context in the debate (Hoffman 2000). The most ambitious comparative models based on West African societies have, again, attempted to offer explanations of the origins of caste-based social stratifications and of their geographical diffusion. Two among them have tried to explain the origins of this social phenomenon in the sub-Saharan belt stretching from West to East Africa. Tamari has argued that endogamous groups of occupational specialists may have formed as the outcome of both the interaction between similar conditions (like economic factors and symbolic representations) and similar triggering factors (one of them was kingship) that featured different and distant societies, and of the mobility of groups and symbols along this area (Tamari 2005). Another example is that of Monica L. Smith who advanced an historical-anthropological explanatory model of the emergence of caste systems departing from the analysis of South Asia and West Africa. She writes: "As a group-level response to resource shortfall, caste systems create effective entitlements to basic human needs at times of crisis through the codification of occupational specialization, mutual dependence and the 'cheap signalling' of social boundaries" (Smith 2013: 291).

These attempts to enrich the discussion on African 'castes' are paralleled by radical criticism. A. Pankhurst (A. Pankhurst 1999) offered one of the most systematic examples of this approach. He divided his objections into three classes and based them on the ethnographic evidence collected in South-West Ethiopia. Firstly, the ideological objections summarised as follows: unlike in the Indian case, the marginality suffered by the African craftsmen is not sustained by mythological nor religious explanations; no clear differentiation of status is formalised among the various marginalised groups; despite the widespread nature of notions of pollution, the opposition 'pure/impure' is not a general principle applied to the whole social body. In conclusion, A. Pankhurst sees the ideological basis of the marginality of 'occupational specialists' in Ethiopia as loosely formalised and inconstant in time and space. The second class of objections Pankhurst calls "genetic" and is, in the view of the present author, rather less convincing. It includes the author's considerations about the variety of possible historical factors and causes that might have led to occupational marginality of specific groups; given this heterogeneity of genetic elements, the Ethiopian case should be considered incompatible with the 'caste' system. The third class of objections is "structural" and deals with the mutual relationships between marginalised groups and their position vis-à-vis other local groups. The first "structural" datum arguing against the presence of castes in Ethiopia is that the marginalised groups are only a very small proportion of the society

which hosts them, while Indian castes are an all-encompassing social system. Secondly, they are bound to the dominant majorities not as unitary groups but through patron-clients relations, and thirdly they form an undifferentiated bloc, that is they are not internally organised according to a formalised stratification pattern. All these elements, according to Pankhurst, define a configuration of marginality that cannot adequately be labelled as caste-based.

Out of the Indian context, is the use of the category of 'caste' as an instrument for the analysis of socio-economic configurations really a theoretical dead end? Dilley (Dilley 2000) argued that approaching the presence of castes in any African society as the analysis of a social institution is a thorny operation. Dilley chose, therefore, to use the concept of 'caste' in a different way, a "cultorological" one, as he put it. He used it to grasp local understandings and discourses on "cultural difference", on the forms of representing the 'otherness' elaborated by circumscribed groups. Dilley stated explicitly his rejection of the category of 'caste' as an instrument for understanding social or economic structures, suggesting its use "as a discourse in Foucauldian sense […]. As a discourse, caste involves both descriptive and analytical practices, and it can be linked to the social play of power, as it is conceived locally" (Dilley 2000: 150). This approach is deliberately crafted as an escape from the debate about the appropriateness of the category of 'caste', whose relevance is completely denied by Dilley in order to pursue a "view of cultural difference from within" (Dilley 2000: 150).

As a matter of fact, the critics have not fuelled any significant debate around possible conceptual alternatives. This is proved by Freeman and Pankhurst's decision to adopt the denomination "peripheral people" in the volume they edited on the marginalised groups of occupational specialists of Ethiopia (Freeman & Pankhurst 2003). Such a denomination neither carries any intrinsic ethnographic recognisability nor facilitates the definition of its analytical weight. The absence of a viable substitute is also witnessed by the fact that Dilley (Dilley 2000) chose to continue to use the word 'caste' as a category completely disarticulated from social analysis, as a metaphoric term consciously oriented at representing the local symbolic systems that express processes of mutual 'othering' undertaken by groups inside a determined society. If we abandon the concept of 'caste', we also dismiss the opportunity to learn from the debates between the students of the various contexts where the concept has been employed. Scholars of West African societies, for instance, have already began to dialogue with what Hoffman calls "post-Dumontian approaches to theorising caste [in India]" and to underline their importance for understanding African groups (Hoffman 2000: 239). Relevant points that can be drawn from Indian studies (see Dipankar Gupta 2004) are the critical remarks against the existence of a monolithic ideology of caste accepted by all members of the society, the purity/pollution polarity as the discriminatory

element between castes, the association between high purity and high status, and the generalised consensus on the hierarchical order between castes (Hoffman 2000: 239-240).

2.3 RENEWING COMPARATIVE DIALOGUE

Although we never speak here of the Gaboye in terms of 'caste', apart from quoting written sources that do so, our perspective has been enriched by a dialogue with theoretical and ethnographic contributions that have addressed social, economic and political stratifications in the Indian subcontinent and their transformations.

Several scholars of the Indian context have tried to explain the overlaps between ascribed belonging to a specific status group, material conditions of living, levels of income, access to local, regional or national decision-making arenas and how all these factors have changed, in both colonial and postcolonial times. For instance, one important division between scholars of the Indian castes stems from the question whether the open system of stratification (class) subsumes the closed system of stratification (caste) or vice versa (Partha N. Mukherji 2012: 41). In addition, after years of scholarly neglect, several studies have addressed the evolution of the Dalit movement in India (Sebastian M. Michael 2007 [1999]; Rao 2009; Ramnarayan S. Rawat & Kusuma Satyanarayana 2016). We can access detailed reconstructions of the collective mobilisations that aimed to emancipate the Dalits from the most extreme forms of social, political and economic marginality. One line of investigation has focused on the crucial role played by prominent individuals like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: these studies present the reconstruction of intellectual genealogies and encounters (Zene 2013) that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century and which structured the descriptive and normative models of the Dalit reality adopted by these figures. As Rao said, there is a "productive power of the policies of naming" (Rao 2013: 55) that, in the analyses produced by intellectuals and activists, contributed to mould approximations, analogies and metaphors between the situation of the Dalits and other groups scattered all over the world. Marxism, for example, operated as an important interlocutor of Dalit activists and movements in India and was a repertoire activated (contrastively or not) by local people to give meaning to their social position and their mobilisations. Several scholars that addressed social change in India agreed that studying caste identities, caste-related social stratifications, subordinated castes' mobilisations and anti-caste thought in the colonial phase means to work on a critically informed definition of Indian modernity; in other words, to conceive the latter neither as the internal re-organisation of 'traditional' ideologies of social organisation nor as the passive adoption of European values (Osella & Osella 2000; Rao 2009). The studies on the Dalit movement have shown that the history of the definition of the political category of Dalit is implied in the history of the general political environment of the

Indian context, of the relationship between religion and politics, of the organisation and functioning of state institutions and the transition from colonial to postcolonial phase. The anthropological and historical reconstructions of the Dalit and other movements of subordinated castes clearly have the potential to help us understand broader contextual transformations and to demonstrate that without a clear sense of the latter we cannot really grasp the former.

In pursuing a dialogue between the literature on social transformations in the Indian context and the Gaboye, we must begin from scratch, that is from the principle which sustains the formalisation of institutionalised configurations of hierarchy in the Somali territories: the element allowing to identify these forms of hierarchy beyond their exterior and self-evident features, such as marriage segregation and occupational interdependence between ranked groups.[61] But we can do much more than that: given the availability of historical and anthropological materials on South Asia and African societies (and beyond), we can integrate the synchronic elements of social stratification with diachronic factors in order to uncover directions of social change and emancipation. In fact, the circumstances of the transformation of the institutional dimension of the Gaboye's subordination during the last four decades of colonial rule in Somaliland (1920-1960) show similar elements with some of the cases that the literature on the Indian sub-continent provides.

The first line of comparison discussed here is a preliminary effort to define the typology of social stratification we are dealing with. We ground the comparative dialogue in certain fundamental aspects of Dumont's analysis of Indian castes (Dumont 1970 [1966]),[62] namely the need to view the caste hierarchy as a systematic object holding a "relational nature" (Quigley 1993: 35) and not to focus on its internal elements, struggling to define the intrinsic properties of such building blocks. In other words, Dumont concentrated his analysis on the caste system as a whole and not on castes as isolated objects. This led him to underline the centrality of the disjunction between status and power as a pillar governing social relations in the caste system. The criticism of Dumont's mechanistic and self-concluding description of the caste system is necessary, because the Indian social reality is made up of a (conflictive) plurality of values and political and economic positions, corresponding to a range of different representations of the society itself that, in turn, shape its internal organisation (Quigley 1993). However, we cannot dismiss an important part of Dumont's contribution: his account of how certain values are socially actualised in the caste hierarchy. According to Dumont, values are not only a corpus of abstract objects which come to

[61] Furthermore, these exterior features are easy targets of the critical contributions (like that of A. Pankhurst quoted above) which identify them as only superficial and apparent similarities.
[62] Notwithstanding Dumont's opposition to the use of the caste system as a platform for comparison between the Indian context and other social systems.

exist inasmuch as a narrow group endowed with authority keeps, interprets and translates them into social action, and so influence the rest of the society. Rather values are distributed and embodied in the society's internal articulations. Although the values considered by Dumont were and are not the only ones affecting people's lives in India, he illuminates the question of how their social actualisation resulted in determined characteristics (which are not the explanatory definitive ones) of inter-caste relationships, including the discontinuities between status ranking and the distribution of political power.

The separation of status and power is also an important element in the explanation of the Gaboye's social position. The Somalis had ways of classifying inequalities in terms of power that were clearly distinguished from those that applied to ascribed status. The condition of the Gaboye had nothing to do with the unequal attribution of political pre-eminence either between local groups or between individuals inside the genealogical groups. The significance of elements like the rigid marriage segregation, the occupational specialisation and ritual pollution stems precisely from the fact that they represented the exterior codification of the presence and the maintenance of a status border separating the Gaboye from everybody else, powerful or not.

The second pathway of comparison completely detaches from Dumont's theory and follows the critical contributions which outlined his shortcomings, namely the excessive abstractness and the static character of his picture of Indian castes. The dialogue with this kind of studies of the Indian context has allowed us to single out one crucial unit of analysis in the historical trajectory of the transformation of the Gaboye's subordination: the opening up of local socio-economic arenas inhabited by both the Gaboye and the majority clans' nucleuses triggered localised negations of the institutionalised, meta-local configurations of social stratification. The 'opening up' process was conditioned by the action of an external force which modified the consolidated organisation of economic relationships between local groups.

Two contributions on these lines are Andre Beteille's study of socio-politico-economic transformations that occurred in an Indian village between the colonial and the early post-colonial decades (Beteille 1965) and the more recent account by Surinder S. Jodhka (Jodhka 2004) of how the loosening of the economic and political control by the dominant castes over the lower ones in the local arena of a village in Punjab allowed the latter "to free themselves", to assert their caste and group identity politically, economically, symbolically and ritually. According to Jodhka (Jodhka 2004: 182), the economic transformations, for example the introduction of new agricultural technologies, resulted in the alteration of economic relationships which had previously reproduced the exploitation of the lower castes. This process opened spaces used by the Dalits for the renegotiation of the relationship with the locally dominant castes: thus, they re-shaped the rural

social structure. The Dalit approach is conceptualised by Jodhka using the categories of *dissociation*, *distancing* and *autonomy* which refer to the ways used by them to evade the local caste-based dominance. "Dissociation" consisted in abandoning the 'traditional' occupations; "distancing" is described as the withdrawal from local economic networks and "autonomy" corresponded to the inauguration of autonomous institutions such as cultural and community centres. The investment in their own caste identity as "autonomous structures of social and cultural life" shows that caste nowadays in the Punjub works on the ground as an expression not of hierarchy but of power and identity (Jodhka 2004: 190). The analytical deconstruction of this historical process reveals a substantial commonality in the internal organisation of the emancipatory dynamic that interested the Gaboye urban community of Hargeysa during the last phase of the colonial era. We can trace in this dynamic Jodhka's category of *distancing* in the withdrawal of certain Gaboye groups from the the small semi-nomadic settlements where the Gaboye groups lived scattered among the Somalis. The localised weakening of the majority clans' control allowed the Gaboye to physically abandon the site where the domination was reproduced. They moved to the expanding urban areas of Hargeysa and started to live concentrated in homogeneous settlements. In consistence with the category of *autonomy*, this offered them the chance to establish a new internal socio-political organisation. The Gaboye organised a huge assembly in Hargeysa and succeeded in obtaining recognition from local British authorities of the 'traditional' institutions that had been consolidated under British rule as the legitimate forms of social organisation characterising the Somalis (i.e. various forms of 'traditional' leadership and diya-paying groups). With regard to *dissociation*, from the 'traditionally' despised occupational tasks, there was no substantial migration towards different economic sectors but the concentration of these services into an urban based market. The Gaboye of Hargeysa contested the hierarchy both at the level of the local network of political and economic relationships (between them, the majority clans and the colonial authorities) and at the level of the ideological production of the status border. The Hargeysa mobilisation consisted in the claim for a collective self-identification which refused to be based on ascribed status, namely a 'casted' identity in Dumont's lexicon, because it aimed at obtaining some of the attributes of the non-subordinated groups.

Since then, the symbolic and material supports of the status subordination have been eroded and the members of the Gaboye groups have adopted as the most common form of identification their self-attribution of political vulnerability vis-à-vis the rest of Somalilander society. The Gaboye lament the fact that they are a cluster of small groups, and so pushed to the margins of the political competition. As I.M. Lewis repeatedly underlined in his works, the issue of the 'number' or of the size of the Somali genealogical units has always been a fundamental discoursive and operational

support of definitions of the hierarchies of power among the Somalilanders and the Somalis in general. It is so even in the present day electoral competitions of the Republic of Somaliland, where the construction of electoral support, the internal life of political parties and the construction of individual political careers are imagined by the Somalilanders as subsumed by the mobilisation around their genealogical identity (Luca Ciabarri 2008a; Marleen Renders & Ulf Terlinden 2010; Luca Ciabarri & Elia Vitturini 2016). However, in considering themselves a mere numeric minority, the Gaboye can claim to be part of the political game. A game that, before the Gaboye's mobilisations, was formally protected by a status border that kept them and the other so-called 'occupational groups' out, inasmuch as it excluded them from political institutions like the clan councils, from 'traditional leadership' and from the co-contribution on a genealogical basis to blood-compensation.

PART II
THE ROUTE OF EMANCIPATION IN THE TOWN OF HARGEYSA

EMANCIPATION IN THE SOMALI TERRITORIES

The town of Hargeysa has a special place in the history of the emancipation of the Gaboye and of other marginal groups. Both local and external witnesses like I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957) described the development of this urban settlement as the first stage of a deep social turn, which gradually expanded to other areas of the north-western Somali territories. The story goes that in the late 1950s, probably after 1957, the urbanised Gaboye, who largely belonged to the clan named Musse Dheriyo, sub-clan Talabacaadde, gathered a big assembly of the adult male members of the group and appointed their first 'traditional' leader. Later, they campaigned for and achieved registration as a diya-paying group separated from the majority genealogical units to which they were affiliated. By combining written and oral sources, the next two chapters review the history of Hargeysa in order to reconstruct the context that has served as background of Gaboye's upward social mobility. Chapter 5 then offers the reconstruction and the analysis of Gaboye's mobilisation in relation to the 1950s political arena of the Somalilander Protectorate. Finally, in Chapter 6 we will recapitulate the principal elements of these historical processes and frame them within an analytical model of urbanisation.

Because the other case of social emancipation in Somali territories is that of slaves, it is worth assessing whether the better-documented history of how slaves repositioned themselves in Somali society after the abolition of slavery also aids our understanding of the trajectory of the Gaboye. This section both examines the differences between these forms of subordination and their transformations and highlights the insightful similarities that reveal the structure of these emancipation processes. The two phenomena of slavery and of the Gaboye's subordination interested two distinct areas of the Somali territories: the presence of large slave populations is almost entirely recorded in the southern regions (Cassanelli 1987), especially in the riverine areas and the Benaadir coastal towns, while the north-western regions were mainly areas of transit for the caravan routes between the Ethiopian plateau and the coastal towns of Zeyla and Berbera, where slaves were shipped to the Arabian peninsula (Richard Pankhurst 1965). The absence of substantial ex-slave populations in the north-western territories is supported only by poor sources, but it is confirmed by the present day oral history of local inhabitants. During the first thirty years of the British presence in the northern Somali coast – from the 1880s – the friendship and protection treaties signed with local Somali clan authorities were also concerned with the suppression of the

slave-trade. However, colonial records do not show any official initiative in favour of slaves.[63] The first accounts of British residents in Somaliland (Rayne 1921) witness a scant presence of ex-slaves (at least in the coastal towns) and the virtual ending of the slave trade in the Red Sea since the French conquest of the Gulf of Tajura in 1888. The latter had become the principal slave-exporting market after the Italians established their presence in Eritrea and the British on the northern Somali coast. As for the groups of marginalised craftsmen, I.M. Lewis described them as mostly concentrated in the north-western Somali territories, those largely under the British Protectorate (I.M. Lewis 1957).

One similarity between the emancipatory route of slaves and that of the Gaboye is the formal intervention of colonial rulers to modify these statuses. Within the Italian possessions the abolition of slavery, both legal and effective, was a long, gradual and contradictory process (Cassanelli 1988). Conversely, the British approach towards the Gaboye living in the Protectorate, seemingly never a centralised policy, probably consisted in local resolutions issued by town-based officials.[64] Urban communities of Gaboye were admitted to blood-compensation exchanges with the other genealogical units and registered as independent diya-paying groups and the 'traditional' leaders selected by those communities were acknowledged "stipendiary akil" (*caaqil* in Somali).[65] Such events represented the breaking of the formalised norms expressing these groups' bonded status, namely their exclusion from the fundamental institutions that operated among the majority clans.

It must be added that the abolition of slavery in Italian Somalia and the registration of Gaboye diya-paying groups in the British Protectorate took place in extremely divergent phases of the two trajectories of colonial domination: for the Italians it marked the initial stage (1904-1908) of their expansion and gave shape to their later attempts to extend control from the Benaadir coastal towns to the interior areas. Abolition presented the Italians with the twofold problem of keeping the political situation under control – facing down the discontent of the slave owners – and securing the future agricultural exploitation of the fertile areas across the rivers Jubba and Shebelle. For the British, by contrast, the emancipation of urban communities of Gaboye occurred towards the end of colonial rule (1957-1960), when a major motivation behind the decisions of Protectorate officials was the facilitation of experimental forms of native political participation.

[63] Copies of these treaties have been consulted in TNA, FO 844/1, "Various papers and documents relating to the tribes of the Somali coast". This document includes treaties of friendship with the tribes of "Habar Awal", "Habar Toljaalo", "Gadabursi" and others.
[64] See Chapter 5.
[65] Namely, individuals regularly stipended by colonial authorities charged with facilitating the relationship between the latter and the population in the political and judicial administration of the country.

If we try to locate the formal acts enacted by colonial governments within the different emancipatory routes of slaves and Gaboye, we realise that they occurred in un-similar stages of those routes. In the case of slave populations in southern Somalia, abolition inaugurated a variety of forms of reconstruction of their own position within the economic and political milieu. The options they adopted ranged widely, from the maintenance of patron-client relationships with their former masters to the flight towards distant autonomous villages and religious settlements (Cassanelli 1988). In other words, the creative[66] re-negotiation of the former slaves' collective position followed the formal abolition of the subordination relationship. For the Gaboye, at least according to the oral accounts collected in Hargeysa during this research, the official deliberation of colonial authorities was the result of a mobilisation led by town-based groups. It occurred after some Gaboye had begun the re-formulation of their own social position vis-à-vis other local groups.

A number of factors help to explain the differences between the transformations concerning these forms of subordination in the territories examined (Italian Somalia and the British Somaliland towns). These include the size of the two to-be-emancipated populations,[67] the intrinsic diversity between the two institutions of slavery and the subordination suffered by the Gaboye, the distinct role played by the two sorts of resolution inside the trajectory of colonial rule and within the emancipatory route of the two groups. For instance, the Italian resident of Afgoy cited in Cassanelli (Cassanelli 1988: 319) wrote in 1910: "The slaves liberated by us have formed a new class entirely independent of all authority…While slaves previously freed by the Somalis [the liberti of colonial writings] form with the free population a community united with respect to customary law, those newly freed by the government have no ties whatsoever". The Italians, that is, ascribed the widespread re-shuffle of social relationships between the groups they had conquered to their own administrative intervention banning slavery in Somalia. We do not have colonial records describing in detail the aftermath of the registration of the first Gaboye diya-paying groups in Somaliland. But we do know from colonial sources that this process occurred in a phase of social change, while the British were dealing with issues similar to those troubling the Italians: the un-stoppable expansion of the towns and the "de-tribalisation" of the urban-based groups which, like the ex-slaves in southern Somalia, were represented as having "no ties". However, both colonial records and the oral history collected during the fieldwork in Somaliland prove that the registration of the first Gaboye diya-paying group in Hargeysa was part of this frame of social change: the former did not

[66] Creative but conditioned by the former slaveowners who were trying to maintain the control over them, and by colonial authorities which implemented repressive policies addressing ex-slaves (Cassanelli 1987; 1988) in order to collect and control rural labour force.

[67] I.M. Lewis estimated an "occupational castes" population of the British Protectorate of 12,500 individuals out of a total population of 650,000 (I.M. Lewis 1962). Slaves in the Italian Somalia were several dozens of thousands (Cassanelli 1988; Besteman 1999).

trigger the latter. The sources reviewed below offer a picture of gradual transformations whose a major element was the growth of urban centres, like the town of Hargeysa, in the hinterland of the Protectorate. This change was obviously conditioned by the British presence, but the colonial authorities managed it carefully, avoiding administrative actions, which might drastically affect social relationships between local groups. The Gaboye's emancipatory trajectory falls into this process and presents the same gradual character. In fact, oral sources do not mention any deflection in the strategies implemented previously by the members of the group to cope with their bonded status after the constitution of the diya-paying group: the towns of the Somalilander hinterland continued to attract Gaboye members previously living among the nomadic groups, as they had reportedly been doing since the 1930s.

How then can the term emancipation be used to refer to such different social and historical contexts? In other words, why call the trajectory of the urban Gaboye in British Somaliland emancipation? Part of the answer is that the two deep re-configurations of some fundamental institutions of the social stratification among the Somalis – slavery and the subordination of marginal groups like the Gaboye – share two elements which are strictly inter-dependent. These are, firstly, the political centres' intervention (the British and Italian colonial authorities) affecting the formalised set of relationships of subordination between individuals or groups and, secondly, the creative ways adopted by the emancipated groups of establishing their new position in the broader social environment where they lived. Indeed, the abolition of slavery in southern Somalia was the catalyst of a diffused re-structuring of the socio-political-economic fabric whereas in the case of the Gaboye the official act issued by the British authorities was, it is said, the ratification of an already on-going, collectively articulated, re-negotiation of their social position. Thus, the chronological order of the two elements of political centre's intervention and creative re-positioning can be inverted because what characterises the emancipation as a delimited historical phase experienced by a social group is the relationship between these two stages. In fact, in both Somali contexts the link between the legal abrogation of subordinated status and the symbolic and practical tools deployed by the to-be-emancipated subjects in order to challenge their subordination, framed a determined historical phase: the regional-level transformation of the socially codified forms of stratification.

CHAPTER 3
THE TOWN OF HARGEYSA: THE SETTING OF THE GABOYE'S EMANCIPATION

3.1 BRITISH WRITTEN SOURCES: 1880s-1940

3.1.1 THE ORIGINS OF HARGEYSA

The Gaboye's emancipation was a consequence of the transformation of Hargeysa from a small village to the capital of the Protectorate of Somaliland in 1945. This chapter illustrates the development of the town, by combining official colonial documents and the books of memories edited by former officials.

Jama Mohamed (Jama 2002: 1180) explained the background of the negotiations between the Ethiopian Emperor Menelek II and the British emissaries, which brought to the definition of the border between the British Protectorate of Somaliland and Ethiopia in 1897. The British were eager to gain Ethiopian neutrality in their campaign for the conquest of Sudan after the Mahdist rebellion and to avoid an alliance between Ethiopia and France which would have allowed the latter to control the upper Nile. Therefore the British made considerable territorial concessions to the Emperor at expense of the Somali tribes with whom they had signed treaties of friendship and in some cases of protection since 1885.[68] In 1885 the Ethiopians had occupied the town of Harar which had just been abandoned by an Egyptian garrison. The Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of that year 1897 ratified the borders between British Somaliland and Ethiopia, defined by the so-called 'Rodd Line' (from the name of the British negotiator) which excluded the Haud region from the Somaliland Protectorate. This area was largely inhabited by Somalis (some of whom were under British protection) but was also of vital importance for the Somali clans living in the Protectorate because they used to migrate there – and partly still do – with their livestock during the rainy seasons. Furthermore, the border nominally separated towns and villages of the area which were integrated into the caravan routes network stretching up the Somali coastal towns.

The small centre of Hargeysa was a part of this network: located across the banks of a seasonal river approximately halfway along the routes between Harar and Jigjiga and the coastal towns of Berbera and Bullhar (Ralph E. Drake-Brockman 1912), it was formally maintained by the British inside the borders of the Protectorate.[69] The Italian scholar Federico Battera (Battera 1997: 21) reports a widely understood version of the origin of the toponym 'Hargeysa': it supposedly

[68] TNA, WO 106/19. "Private Secretary to Secretary of State for War. Memorandum with Map Herewith." 9th of March 1904.
[69] The 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty stopped the Ethiopian attempts to extend their control over Hargeysa. In 1885 they had already exacted a tribute of cattle from local clans (Swayne 1903: 96).

means ‘little Harar’ and this seems to indicate its ancient relationship with the town. Their link was not only due to being connected through caravan routes. In fact, Hargeysa was and still is often reported as an outgrowth of the regional pre-eminence of Harar as a religious teaching centre.[70] Battera (Battera 1997) and the British officers who visited the area (Dracke-Brockman 1912) likely relied on Swayne’s travel reports collected in *Seventeen Trips to Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia* (Swayne 1903) when they say that Hargeysa was a small religious centre built around the late 1870s in connection with the arrival of Sheikh Madar, a religious scholar educated in Harar. After his first visits to the interior of Somaliland which started in 1885, Swayne describes Hargeysa as the prototype of those permanent villages established by ‘mullahs’ of which around a dozen are to be found in the interior of northern Somaliland: “Hargeysa, a compact village of a few hundred *agal* or permanent huts, is surrounded by a high mat fence, and a square mile or two of jowari (*Holcus sorghum*) cultivation belonging to different mullahs”. Swayne wrote that Sheikh Madar (in his report written “Sheikh Mattar”) was the “chief of Hargeysa”. The town also hosted some four hundred people employed in farming and protecting the jowari fields from birds. He adds: “The town is full of blind and lame people, who are under the protection of the Sheikh Mattar and his mullahs”. The British officer also reported the presence of abundant water in the bed of the river and that he saw various kinds of livestock grazing along its banks. The town also received supplies of rice, tobacco and dates “during the trading season” (Swayne 1903: 7,96).

The attribution by Swayne of the foundation of Hargeysa to Sheikh Madar has not only been accepted by subsequent visitors like Drake-Brockman (Drake-Brockman 1912), but it is widely believed even nowadays by many of the citizens of Hargeysa. However one source complicates this historical picture and shows some connections with the oral history concerning the urban growth of Hargeysa and the settlement of Gaboye households in the town. This is the report of an expedition led by Lieutenant J.D. Fullerton in 1884 to the area between Harar and the north-western Somali coastal towns of Zeyla and Berbera, at that time still controlled by Egyptian garrisons.[71] The text describes the morphology of the territory, the state of the roads and the availability of water along the routes and of proper grounds for setting up camps. It indirectly reveals that the main purpose of the trek was to assess the environmental factors that would affect any possible British military expedition. After having reached Harar from Zeyla, Fullerton headed back to Berbera following a route passing through the village of Hargeysa, or “Hargaisa” as he wrote. These are his words: “The village consists of about 100 huts surrounded by a bush fence 4 ft high – length about 150 yards, breadth about 100 yards. It is considered neutral ground, by different tribes, all of whom have

[70] On the history of Harar in the nineteenth century, see Richard A. Caulk 1977.
[71] Royal Geographical Society, Fullerton Lieut. J.D., reference: JMS/3/116.

representatives living in it". It is difficult to explain why Fullerton did not mention the presence of cultivation nor, most importantly, that of a religious settlement and that of such prominent figure like Sheikh Madar. The picture he offers seems to presume the presence of traditional authorities and will be compared with the oral history about Hargeysa's origins that we collected.

3.1.2 WITHDRAWAL AND OCCUPATION: THE BRITISH PRESENCE IN SOMALILAND BETWEEN 1900 AND 1920

The development of the military campaign against the dervish anti-colonial movement led by the Sayyd Maxamed Cabdille Xasan (Said S. Samatar 1982) conditioned the presences of the British in Somaliland in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The main theatres of the war were the eastern portion of the Protectorate, the Ethiopian region of Ogaden and some neighbouring areas of Italian Somalia. In 1902, letters written by Kirk (see Chapter 1) during his military service in Somaliland report Hargeysa as the only British outpost in the western half of the interior of the Protectorate. No form of administration was there, except for a military officer commanding a Company of Somali levies.[72] The 1904 military report by Brigadier-General J.M. Grierson, Private Secretary of Secretary of State for War,[73] shows that the military presence in the interior, being highly expensive, was debated in London political circles and the possibility of limiting it to the coast was not excluded. Grierson defended the maintenance of a military presence in the interior, saying that the pursuit of effective control of the whole territory of the Protectorate resulted from the obligations which Britain had taken towards neighbouring powers (Ethiopia and Italy) when borders were ratified and with the Somali tribes bounded by treaties of protection. Furthermore, it was the only way to challenge the dervish menace and hence to preserve the prestige of Great Britain, which Grierson defined as the primary tool allowing them to secure colonial rule in Somaliland and in many other African regions.

Another military report dated 1904 seems to confirm Grierson's strategic analysis.[74] It records an expedition led by Captain F. Smitheman, Assistant Political Officer in the Protectorate, to stop a "tribal feud" and to punish the groups involved in a violent clash going on in the area of Hargeysa. The British officer described a climate of general unrest, with rumours circulating about the British being about to abandon the country. What alarmed the British was the increasing numbers of rifles in circulation, smuggled in through Jibuti and used in the clan fights. Smitheman

[72] See Letter of 8th December 1902, Kirk J.W.C., Papers, letters and records rel to Boer War and Somaliland, National Army Museum Templer Study Center, reference: 2010-08-2.
[73] TNA, WO 106/19.
[74] TNA, WO 106/18. "Report on the Hargaisa Expedition. Frank Smitheman. Assistant Political Officer" 2nd of December 1904.

exacted a fine in livestock, seized some rifles but was not able to apply the "exemplary" punishment of the warring factions which British authorities had planned. The report reaffirmed the necessity of enforcing control over the portion of the Protectorate hinterland inhabited by the clans formally loyal to the British and hostile to the dervish faction (namely, the western half). The overall picture offered by these sources shows that the administrative presence of the British was limited to the coastal towns of Zeyla, Berbera and Bullhar, that the eastern hinterland was controlled by clans who supported or were enrolled in the dervish army, except for the British military base in Burco, and that in the western hinterland, including Hargeysa, the British had a makeshift presence aimed exclusively at suppressing clashes between local groups (especially since firearms were circulating).

The British withdrawal to the coastal towns of Zeyla, Berbera and Bullhar occurred, finally, between 1910 and 1913. According to the historian Brock Millman (Millman 2013: 17), "protected tribes were armed and advised to defend themselves". The occupation of the interior resumed after 1913 and the campaign against Maxamed Cabdille Xasan continued until 1920, ended by the decisive victory over the dervish army and Xasan's death from influenza. The colonial administration of the country started at this date and, as Millman (Millman 2013: 17) states, Maxamed Cabdille Xasan can be considered its father since it was the military campaign against him which drove the British to enforce an effective occupation of Somaliland beyond the coast line.

After the 1913 re-occupation, the Protectorate was divided into five districts for administrative purposes and Hargeysa was one of them, together with the capital Berbera, Zeyla, Burco and Las Canood. Hargeysa appears for the first time in the published annual reports of administration of Somaliland in 1914, simply to register the occurrence of cases of smallpox in its district.[75] The growing importance of this portion of the hinterland is underlined by the fact that in 1916 British authorities collected in Hargeysa an "address of loyalty to His Majesty the King" written by "the five leading sheikhs and sultans of Somaliland".[76] The five were Sheikh Ismail Isahak, Sheikh Madar Ahmed, Haji Farah Ismail, Sultan Deria Hassan and Sultan Deria Gerad. In the document they signed, written in Arabic with an English translation, they express thanks for the return of the British, who brought back peace. After the 1910 withdrawal, "fitna" (translated as "jealousy and intrigue") and strife between the tribes had hit the country. The District Commissioner reported that he had been invited to write such a document after he had received numerous verbal declarations of support for British rule. The submission of the address occurred during the celebrations for the end of Ramadan, while "a large number of tribespeople were assembled in Hargeysa". According to the District Commissioner, the signatories were the

[75] See *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for 1914-1915. H.M. Stationery Office. London.*
[76] TNA, CO 323/701/4. "Expression of Loyalty" 1916.

community leaders of the Protectorate, at least of that part which was not backing Maxamed Cabdille Xasan. Beside Sheikh Madar, already mentioned as a crucial figure in the history of Hargeysa, the two "Sultans" (Sultan Deria Hassan and Sultan Deria Gerad) who submitted that declaration are also given important roles in the oral history of its urban expansion. They were the supreme traditional authorities of the clans of Ciida Galle and Sacaad Muse, largely occupying the District of Hargeysa. The fact that these prominent figures were in Hargeysa, together with a considerable number of members of the clans, shows that the scenario had changed remarkably from Swayne's "village of mullahs". In 1916 Hargeysa was already a privileged meeting space between colonial officers and representatives of the local traditional leadership.

Statistics of medical services dispensed in the principal settlements of the Protectorate provide further clues to Hargeysa's growing importance since the 1920s. These data obviously do not compensate the absence of estimates of the town population since, especially for the centres of the interior, most of the patients were not permanently settled in the town. However they show that Hargeysa was becoming a crucial centre in the geography of local groups, at least from a health perspective: the town played an important role during outbreaks of localised epidemics, like the smallpox mentioned above, when some of the nomadic people and the inhabitants of other villages converged there. The medical centre began to operate in Hargeysa after 1914; in 1919 an "operating theatre" was built[77] and the centre treated the second highest number of patients (3,217) after Berbera (7,415) and followed by Burco (2,608).[78] Hargeysa maintained this position in the following years, except for 1924 when Burco surpassed it.

3.1.3 THE 1920s MANAGEMENT OF LAND IN SOMALILAND TOWNS

British administration in Somaliland, and the settlement of Hargeysa had to face thorny issues: land tenure and the definition of urban land rights. In 1927, the Governor of Somaliland Kittermaster addressed Lieutenant-Colonel Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, asking if he had the right "to acquire by compulsory purchase any occupied land in a township".[79] The request arose from a concrete instance that occurred in Hargeysa, where in 1922 "land was given out in plots" and it was allocated to unspecified people to erect "arishes", namely wattle and daub structures. The space they occupied was required by the unexpected growth of the town in one direction which necessitated the extension of the main road and the building of "masonry houses". The total number

[77] TNA, CO 535/79/10. "Annual Medical and Sanitary report including population statistics, maternity and child welfare, infectious diseases, venereal disease statistics, case studies and returns of diseases and deaths for 1925".
[78] *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for 1919-1920. H.M. Stationery Office. London.*
[79] TNA, CO 535/80/1. "Letter from Governor Kittermaster to Lieutenant-General Amery, Secretary of State for Colonies" 5th of May 1927.

of "arishes" was thirty-two, divided into two blocks, and the occupants had no legal title to them. The Governor suggested to the Secretary that he could, legally, frame the expropriation as an act of public utility, in order to avoid having to recognise the right to lifetime occupation usually acknowledged in these cases (which was, as the Governor knew, the recommended policy of the Colonial Office). Each occupant would be paid compensation amounting to roughly "the original cost of the temporary building and allowing him to remove the materials of which it is composed". Furthermore, the freed space could have been leased, thus generating an income for the government. A similar "speculative investment" in the town had already occurred two years before with the purchase, demolition and reconstruction of the Hargeysa meat market. The Governor claimed proudly that the capital invested had been easily recovered in two years.[80]

The Somaliland government approach towards land tenure was a much debated issue in the communications with Colonial Office officials in London in the 1920s and the 1930s (Millman 2013: 61). The two broad principles adopted by the administration were the extreme limitation of freehold – in accordance with the local conception of collective ownership of land – and the encouragement of sedentary settlement by the Somalis. The document reported above shows that the expansion of the urban centres in the hinterland of the Protectorate, and especially at Hargeysa, was already a settled trend by the 1920s and that it stimulated intervention by the the Protectorate authorities.

The annual report for the year 1927[81] explains these first expropriations and recapitulates the regulation of land issues in the Protectorate. The territory was divided into the "proclaimed townships" and the remaining rural areas. For the latter, the government did not recognise any individual title of ownership (with minor exceptions) nor any form of collective "exclusive right" held by sections of the clans. Obviously the British were aware that "it is habit of certain sections always to graze in the same area and this in practice gives them a prescriptive title to that area"; they preferred, however, not to sanction these titles legally but to let the genealogical units manage the matter and to intervene only when clan conflicts occurred. As regarding the townships, the report says that "the Government has taken powers to expropriate land for public purposes" and that, after the payment of compensation, it has become officially "Crown land".[82] Then the document classifies the townships of the Protectorate into two classes: *a)* the "old-established towns on the coast", like Berbera,[83] and *b)*, the "recently-established towns in the interior", like Hargeysa. For type *a)*, theoretically freehold rights should have been attributed to the present owners of plots

[80] Important characteristics of the British approach to land tenure in Somaliland have been documented also in other colonial contexts. See Sara Berry 2002.
[81] *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for 1927. H.M. Stationery Office. London.*
[82] See above, TNA, CO 535/80/1.
[83] The first settlement to be registered officially as a "township" in 1911.

but no valid deeds of ownership were available, nor did the British authorities intend to produce them because disputes were not frequent. Type *b)* included the towns experiencing a recent and quick expansion. A claim to freehold had been established for five small plots in Hargeysa but in all other cases, "leases or temporary occupation licenses" were the only legal titles recognised by the government. The two distinct regimes that applied to the two classes of towns reflected both their different historical origins and the different approaches adopted by the British to governing them. Coastal towns were theoretically assimilated to the rural areas by the British, since for both of them the government would limit itself to letting local subjects manage the division of land. In the new towns, the colonial authorities claimed a more active role: they excluded freehold and issued recognised temporary titles like "leases".

Millman (Millman 2013: 61) shows that the policy oriented towards a strict control of the Somali usages of land in the new towns was mainly ascribable to the Governors of Somaliland and that it was softened by the action of the Colonial Office. However, the Somalis did not oppose it as they did for other British policies, some of which generated open rebellion, like those introducing new taxation and a new education system in the early 1920s (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 46-48). In other words, the Somalis involved in the expansion of these new towns did not behave towards the British regulations (including the expropriation of occupied plots) as they did towards major violations of their social norms.[84] About Hargeysa, it might be supposed that it was because the populating process of this settlement involved heterogeneous groups unable to coordinate a defence against British intrusiveness. We might also speculate that some of the individuals or groups involved in the urban expansion supported the British approach because the expropriation of land could be expected to facilitate the fast growth of the town. Unfortunately, the paucity of details about Hargeysa in the British sources does not help us to grasp the embeddedness of colonial and local interests during this phase. Some fragmentary but important pieces of evidence, like the British recognition of freehold over five plots in the town, seem to sketch an articulated process where some groups' land titles were acknowledged while others were expropriated. There was evidently a more intricate dynamic than the progressive sedentarisation of the nomads imagined by colonial officers (Harold B. Kittermaster 1928).

[84] The reaction of the Somalilanders to external interference which altered their relationship with grazing areas has proved to be sharply different. See the aftermath of the agreement between the British and the Ethiopians ceding the Haud region to the latter after the Second World War (Jama 2002).

3.1.4 THE FIRST WAVE OF URBANISATION IN THE INTERIOR: THE 1920s AND THE 1930s

Abdi I. Samatar has summarised the growth of Hargeysa in the 1920s and 1930s (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 52-56). He wrote about an "embryonic urbanisation" fuelled by the development of trade in the Protectorate. The structure of the pastoral economy was experiencing a deep change with the passage from the *abaan* system to what Samatar called the "*dilaal-sawaaqui*-merchant chain". The *abaan*s were the guides, interpreters and brokers (Swift 1979; Djama 1997) who guaranteed the safe passage of the caravans between the coastal towns and the interior markets and linked the pastoralists to the merchants in the ports.[85] The consolidated control of the territory achieved by the British through permanent outposts after the war against Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and the slow improvements in communication fuelled a new organisation of the livestock trade. Samatar described it as follows: "The *dilaal*s conducted livestock transactions near the main wells close to the new administrative centers of Hargeysa, Burao, and other villages. The *sawaaqui* collected the purchased herds and drove them to the coast. The new administrative centers provided a small number of emerging traders with bases close to their pastoral clients". Governor Kittermaster already commented this trend in an article about the situation of British Somaliland, written at the invitation of the African Society (Kittermaster 1928). About the expansion of the towns in the interior he said: "In such towns individual title to ground on leasehold has been given during the last two years, and it is significant of the tendency and change of outlook that a leading Somali thought good to go to the extreme length of selling twenty-five of his camels to buy a town plot" (Kittermaster 1928: 335).

The changing internal economic balance between coastal markets and the pastoral hinterland is further witnessed by the colonial sources' mentions of the closure of the Custom Post at the port of Bullhar in 1931. The issue is briefly commented on in the correspondence between colonial officers in Somaliland (the Governor, some District Commissioners and the British Consul at Harar) and the Secretary of State for the Colonies about the numerous petitions presented between mid-1920s and mid-1930s to the Protectorate government by a man called Haji Omar Farah.[86] Haji Omar Farah was expelled from the Protectorate in 1905, charged with collusion with Maxamed Cabdille Xasan. Over the following years he repeatedly approached the British authorities via petitions against them, declarations of loyalty and requests for authorisation to enter the

[85] The term *abaan* belongs also to the lexicon of the Gaboye subordination, identifying the patron in the affiliation link wherein the Gaboye were involved.

[86] TNA, CO 535/102/7 "Somali Grievances" 1934. The document provides, through the issues raised by Haji Omar Farah in the petitions and their examination carried out by British officers, a detailed sketch of some crucial aspects of British administration. Among them are the tax policy and the management of Custom fees, the management of criminal justice and of clan conflicts, the usage of repressive practices like fustigation.

Protectorate. After living for a while in Ethiopia he moved to Aden where, in 1934, he produced another petition signed by several Somalis settled there (see also Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 49). In the mid-1930s, the British thought that Haji Omar Farah was no longer a serious threat to the stability of the Protectorate, because they had received a petition by numerous Somalilander traditional leaders condemning him as a "fitna-maker". Interestingly, among the points raised by Haji Omar Farah was the accusation addressed to the British of allowing the coastal towns of Somaliland to decline, especially Bullhar. In the detailed dossier which the British produced to respond to these accusations,[87] it is stated that Bullhar was declared to be no longer a "Custom Port" on the 15th June 1931 because of the "dwindling trade". The report adds: "The traders and merchants established themselves there of their own free will and left because there was not sufficient business. Haji Farah Omar knows well that most of the trade of Bulhar has been diverted to Hargeysa, which is now bigger and more prosperous than Bulhar ever was".

Bullhar had been one of the three coastal towns, together with Zeyla and Berbera, where the British initially settled and where they confined their administrative control for the first three decades after the establishment of the Protectorate in 1885. Bullhar was not an old town compared with Zeyla and Berbera: Drake-Brockman (Drake-Brockman 1912: 40) wrote it had been founded fifty years before his visit by a lineage of the Sacaad Muse-Habar Awal, the rer Yunis Nuh, who came from Berbera after fighting with the rer Ahmed Nuh lineage. The author described it as a thriving town, with up to ten thousand individuals during the trading season and only few hundred for the rest of the year. It was attractive to the nomads because of its water supplies and excellent grazing during the rainy season. However, Bullhar did not have a harbour and the ships had to anchor half a mile or more out to sea. This could have partly explained the abandonment of the town in favour of Hargeysa. The migration of the Yunis Nuh lineage is also currently remembered by the elders of several clans as one of the population flows which contributed to the expansion of Hargeysa between the 1920s and the 1930s.

In the dossier responding to Haji Omar Farah's arguments, the British compared the commercial prosperity achieved by Hargeysa with the past of Bullhar, but it is a mere quantitative evaluation which does not examine the emergence of a qualitative change in the trade sector: the commercial community of Bullhar moved from a port base to a hinterland post. This suggests that the members of the Yunis Nuh who participated in that migration would be an excellent case study for the transition from the *abaan* system to the *dilaal-sawaaqui*-merchant chain discussed above. The foundation itself of Bullhar around the 1860s was still a manifestation of the centrality of the

[87] TNA, CO 535/102/7 "Despatch of the Governor's office in Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies" 15th of January 1934.

abaan system for the lineages settled in the coast. Indeed it originated from a fight for the control of the *abaan* services in Berbera. And as Drake-Brockman reported (Drake-Brockman 1912: 47), the Yunis Nuh acted as *abaan*s for Ogaden caravans coming from the interior both when they were in Berbera and when they established Bullhar. Therefore, the transfer to Hargeysa implied a change in the type of commercial enterprise they undertook and, allegedly, also in their relationship with the Ogaden.

As was argued by Abdi I. Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989), the development of trade in the interior culminated in the late 1930s. This upsurge and the expansion of the hinterland towns were also related to the growth of the trans-frontier trade with Ethiopia after the Italian invasion in 1935 (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 53).[88] Samatar quoted statistics from the annual colonial reports between 1920 and 1937 which show significant increases in the import of rice, sugar and dates. He outlined three factors which contributed to this trend: a higher consumption of these products by the nomadic population, a general population growth and "the emergence of population centers 'outside' the pastoral sector which significantly depended on food imports". He wrote that it was this latter factor that contributed most to the increase in those imported products (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 55).

The trade statistics for between 1935 and 1937 show a quasi-parallel growth of the total value of imports and exports in Somaliland. In 1936 the value of imports registered an increase of 36% over 1935 and that of exports of 34.7% .[89] From 1936 to 1937 the increase was respectively of 20.5% and 30%.[90] For the 1937 annual report the increase in the imports was "due to the improved export trade and to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Somaliland having been a channel of supply to the eastern provinces of that country".[91] By "improved export trade" the report means an exceptional demand from the USA for skins, which were still the bulk of Somaliland's exports (around 68%). However, it is clear that the trans-frontier commerce with Ethiopia in 1936 played a prominent role in the Protectorate's increasing trade. This also fuelled the growing importance of the hinterland Custom posts, especially Hargeysa: an importance not only due to its being an administrative centre and a government's post for the collection of Custom duties, but also (see Abdi I. Samatar above) to its transformation into a market of imported, even locally consumed, goods. For instance, the 1936 annual reports mentioned the considerable increase in imports from Ethiopia to the Land Custom Post of Hargeysa of a product which did not meet basic needs, unlike

[88] Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 47) reported an increase in the transit trade to Ethiopia from £86,554 in 1933 to £154,109 in 1937.
[89] The value of imports rose from £272,028 in 1935 to £425,235 in 1936. See *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for the Year 1937. H.M. Stationery Office. London.*
[90] In 1937, the value of imports was £535,211 and that of exports was £279,942. See *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for the Year 1937. H.M. Stationery Office. London.*
[91] *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for the Year 1937. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* P.11.

foodstuff and textile items that were the bulk of imports:[92] it was "Kat" (*Katha Edulis*). *Kat* is a plant whose fresh leaves are chewed and produce a mild stimulation; it is still widely consumed in Ethiopia, the Somali territories and Yemen.[93] During the early 1930s the yearly quantities of *kat* imported from Ethiopia were fluctuating: in 1933, the import of 575 "akaras" or bundles of *kat* was registered in Hargeysa while in 1932 the number had been 868. In 1935 it became 1,748 and in 1936 it almost doubled again to 3,435 bundles. A drastic fall in its price had probably occurred in Ethiopia after the Italian invasion, however the statistics of this trade tell us that Hargeysa was becoming a variegated, dynamic market that could absorb a highly perishable, non-basic commodity (*kat* leaves must be consumed while they are still fresh).

The 1936 annual report portrayed the past year as a transition phase for the Protectorate which had been deeply affected by the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. The District of Hargeysa was undergoing a period of unrest because local clans were worried about the grazing rights they held over the Ethiopian region of Haud, as a result of the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaties. On the other hand, the British felt optimistic about the changes since they had given a "fillip" to the trade in the District. The report described a widespread rush to Jigjiga (an Ethiopian town across the border with Somaliland) of even the smallest trader who went there and sold goods to the Italian troops at "enormous profit". In addition, "many people, who never thought of trading previously, are taking caravans over the border and doing very well".[94] During the year, Italian authorities imposed restrictions on the trade but, although seriously affected, it largely continued. Signs of the wealth thus generated were the small traders who had become rich and the "brisk demand of building plots in Hargeysa town".[95] Other towns, like Erigavo in the East, also seemed to be experiencing a similar trend.

Regarding the political situation in the District of Berbera, the 1937 annual report said that an increasing number of Somalis had sold their livestock to invest in motor-vehicles and that more than a hundred of them had stipulated contracts with the Italian transit traffic authorities. However, the trans-frontier trade had drastically declined because of the restrictions imposed by the Italians. In the District of Hargeysa, "trade, which had increased to a very large extent when the Italians first

[92] See the *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Annual Report for the Year 1933. H.M. Stationery Office. London* and *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Annual Report for the Year 1936. H.M. Stationery Office. London.*

[93] *Kat* has several deep effects on the economic and social life of Somaliland. Somalilanders spend enormous amounts of money on it every day and it is a fundamental support for social interactions. The circumstances of when it is socially accepted are important: this is during collective chewing sessions, within circles of friends, during meetings between traditional leaders and political figures. See Vitturini 2016, Cassanelli 1986.

[94] *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Annual Report for the Year 1936. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* P.28.

[95] *Colonial Office.* Ibid.

occupied Ethiopia, was reduced to nearly normal conditions".[96] Nevertheless the internal demand for foodstuffs, clothing and livestock and the circulation of money in the Protectorate (especially in the District of Burao) continued to increase. In Hergeisa, the demand for building plots remained high as much as the prices. The persistence of the same level of investment in urban real estate could also explain the slowdown on the increase of the value of imports in 1937 (20.5%, see above, down from the 36% of increase to 1936): that is, commercial capital quickly generated (as reported above, the British enthusiastically noted the swift creation of considerable fortunes from trade) was not re-invested totally in the trade, which would have happened previously, but in other economic assets like urban building plots.

In December 1937, the procedure for another expropriation of land began in Hargeysa. It addressed an area occupied by sixteen "wattle and daub structures" which were "in a dilapidated and insanitary condition" and which were interfering "with the laying out of fresh blocks of permanent buildings". In accordance with the Expropriation of Land Ordinance, a Committee composed of the Treasurer and Chief of Customs, the Director of Public Works and "a leading Somali resident of Hargeysa" was appointed in order to judge the value of the dwellings and to establish the amount of the compensation to be paid to the current occupants.[97] Unfortunately these documents do not provide details about the local individuals involved in the urban planning, but they suggest a Somali role in these British initiatives. These documents also show that Hargeysa contained various sizes and forms of dwellings. The most common "permanent house built in the main towns is the single-storied mud-brick building with a flat roof". Then, there was "a more primitive and temporary type of building" which was the "arish" or "a wattle and daub structure with a flat roof of mud laid over sticks supported by wooden beams". Quite often, behind each "arish" there were movable huts usually used by the Somali nomads: if used on trek, the British considered the latter "clean and healthy", but "when they are used as permanent and static dwellings on the outskirts of towns, slums conditions are quickly created".[98] The majority of urban population still lived in these huts in the 1940's, especially during the dry season when nomadic people also used to gather near permanent wells and the towns. According to the British, the Somalis did not build more permanent dwellings because they wished to remain "free to move away when conditions in the interior are favourable" and because they did not have the skills or the material resources to improve their housing. The mushrooming of huts raised sanitary alarm: "it is

[96] *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Annual Report for the Year 1937. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* Pp.29-30. Also quoted in Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 53).
[97] TNA, CO 535/126/20 "Expropriation of land: compensation for the removal of wattle and daub structures in Hargeysa township in order to build new permanent buildings" 1937-1938.
[98] *Colonial Office. Annual Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Year 1948. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* Pp-16-17.

undesirable for various reasons to attract more people to the townships away from their normal (and healthy) pastoral life".[99] This evaluation, formulated in 1948 when Somaliland was under the administration of the War Office, contradicted decades of official anti-nomadic rhetoric professed by British officers (see Kittermaster 1928).

The temporary-nomadic element of townships remained dominant even after the urbanisation wave of 1930s had led to the demand for plots for masonry buildings. The map produced for the report of the General Survey of the year 1947[100] shows that government facilities and other permanent buildings were sparsely distributed across the banks of the dry river which crosses Hargeysa along the East-West axis. In this map, the area of Hargeysa is represented as including a narrow rectangular approximately half a kilometre long which runs parallel to the river, on its northern bank, denominated "town". At a distance of one kilometre, on the southern bank, there were the settlements of "Dumbulok" and "Jema'a Weine" which nowadays are names of neighbourhoods of the town. Government facilities, like the District Commissioner house, his office and the hospital, were located on the northern bank within two kilometres, westwards, of the so-called "town". This means that Hargeysa did not have an urban core expanding through wider circles, but several concentrations of building connected by motor tracks and separated by empty spaces which, allegedly, were filled cyclically by more or less permanent settlements made up of what the British considered "temporary" structures. These spaces were the privileged subject of expropriations and conversion into building plots.

There was a correspondence – vividly remembered by some of the elders of local clans consulted during the fieldwork in Hargeysa – between these different modes of occupation of the space and economic and political divisions between the groups inhabiting the area: a division which was, according to these elders, reflected also by genealogical divides between the groups. The colonial documents reviewed in this section display a classification of the groups which followed the British administration's interests and concerns. First, there was a pastoral element attracted to Hargeysa by its wells that provided water for the herds during the dry season (the winter months) and, after the 1920s, by its role as a crucial commercial post where local products (mostly livestock) could be sold and imported goods could be purchased. Furthermore, Hargeysa was the administrative centre of the District. It was where British authorities could be approached and where the "stipendiary akils" of local clans – the representatives of clan sections who were registered and paid by the British to act as intermediaries with the population – resided. As a District capital, Hargeysa also hosted criminal courts: the District Court, which comprised the

[99] *Colonial Office*, ibid. p.17.
[100] *British Military Administration Somaliland Protectorate. Report on General Survey of British Somaliland 1947.*

District Commissioner and other members appointed by the Governor, judged all the criminal cases involving natives as parties, except the cases of "sedition, treason and offences punishable with death". The town also hosted an "Akils Court", a judicial institution created in 1921 to relieve the District Courts, which could "deal with the less important and contentious of tribal cases" (the amount of fines and the time of imprisonment they could inflict was limited).[101] From the 1920s, the jurisdiction of colonial courts expanded to include homicides, previously managed by the clans autonomously. The District Courts applied a "mixture of tribal custom, Mohameddan Law and Indian law"[102] and occupied most of the District Officers' time. Furthermore the towns like Hargeysa were the only places where any kind of medical services were available.[103]

The second social element found in Hargeysa was the commercial community. Its members were also involved in pastoralism, not only as buyers of the livestock brought to the market by nomads but as owners of herds themselves. Their diversified strategies of economic accumulation included the acquisition of building plots in the town. While the British always exalted the spontaneous and general process of sedentarisation and transformation of herdsmen into traders, other evidence mentioned above also suggests that particular historical events had an impact on the consolidation of trade communities in the towns of the Somaliland hinterland. For instance, the migration of members of the Yunis Nuh lineage from Bullhar was not a rural-urban one. It implied the arrival in Hargeysa of a group of people who at least from the mid-nineteenth century had hosted Arab merchants, had been involved in the livestock trade with the clans of the interior through the *abaan* system and had been living in a social environment where towns were an old-established presence, fully integrated into commercial networks. The transplant of the Yunis Nuh together with their urban-commercial background must have played a role in the trajectory of Hargeysa's urban expansion.

3.2 HARGEYSA AS THE NEW CAPITAL OF THE PROTECTORATE: 1941-1960

3.2.1 THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

During the late 1930s the echoes the European winds of war reached the Horn of Africa. Millman (Millman 2013: 109) has provided evidence that the Colonial Office was reluctant to set up proper defensive countermeasures against a possible Italian attack on Somaliland on the verge of the

[101] See *Colonial Office. Annual Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Year 1937. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* Pp.20-21.
[102] In the Protectorate, Indian codes of laws were enforced. See *Colonial Office.* Ibid. p.20.
[103] When the military administration took over the government of the Protectorate in 1941, the officers remained shocked by the absence of any real development policy and by the slightness of welfare services provided to the population, including medical ones. Somaliland is pictured in the early 1940s documents as a unique case in the Empire. See Millman 2013: 128.

Second World War. The Protectorate seemed to be regarded as the most expendable of the territories of the British Empire: not only was every request for a strengthening of the defensive apparatus refused by the Colonial Office, but active measures to facilitate the Italian occupation were also discussed in London. Even the possibility of the cession of Somaliland to the Italian Empire was initially considered in 1938. The programme for the disarmament of the Somali clans started in the same year, notwithstanding the opposition of the Governor of Somaliland, Arthur S. Lawrence. The clear intention was to undermine the military capacity of the clans and hence to block the possibility of an armed opposition to Italian forces which would have committed the British to a serious military effort in defending Somaliland. Between 1939 and 1940, with news coming from Europe about the German military successes and the British clearly implementing their policy of undermining the Protectorate's defensive capacity, Somali loyalty rapidly crumbled. In January 1940, Abdulla Ishaak known as 'Waranadeh', a religious figure from Hargeysa, was arrested for creating unrest by announcing the imminent defeat of the British against the Italians (Millman 2013: 116).

The evacuation of the civil personnel of the Protectorate to Aden had already started soon after the outbreak of war in September 1939 and it intensified when Italy declared war in June 1940. One last desperate move to defend Somaliland was to send a British Battalion (the first British troops ever to arrive in the country) which in practice only managed the final hasty phases of the evacuation. The Italian invasion began in August 1940 but the occupation lasted only until March 1941, when the British re-entered the country. Following the rapid collapse of the Italian Empire in East Africa, the territory of the Somaliland Protectorate, together with the former Italian domains, was put under the authority of a military administration which lasted until 1948 when it was returned to a civil government reporting to the Colonial Office.

The military administration adopted a completely different approach from the government of the Protectorate. During the pre-war decades, the Colonial Office policy was to exert strict control over the Protectorate's expenditure as the country was not worth any significant development effort. Therefore, most of the budget had been spent on the minimum requirement for the maintenance of the British presence, namely military control and the management of inter-clan conflicts. Under the military administration (1941-1948), the expenditure on military personnel and security was provided by the War Office, so the principal item of cost had been removed from the Protectorate's budget. During the 1940s, development became the government's priority. On this, Millman writes: "Between 1939 and 1947, the Protectorate's expenditures had increased 180%. The impact of the development plan was obvious. Expenditure on works was up 422%, services 393% and law and order 322%. Only growth in the cost of the Administration had seen modest (135%) growth"

(Millman 2013: 161). The policy of containing costs and of letting the Protectorate stagnate, seeking a balance between expenditures and locally generated revenues, ended.

Hargeysa became a major venue for, and an important addressee of, the new administrative approach when, in 1941, it had been appointed as the provisional capital of the Protectorate. The future organisation of the government was considered during the early 1940s and between 1944 and 1945 the Military Governor, Gerald T. Fisher, proposed the permanent transfer of the seat of the government from Berbera to Hargeysa. The proposal was discussed by the Colonial Office and the Treasury Chambers and the main arguments put for it were: Berbera's unfavourable climate, especially during hot season, which seriously reduced colonial officers' capacity to work efficiently; Berbera had been severely damaged by air and naval bombardment which had destroyed Government House and several other buildings; the strategic position of Hargeysa, on the road between Berbera and Ethiopia and close to the newly built road leading to Mogadishu and Kenya.[104]

Governor Fisher had strongly championed the transfer of the seat of government in a report in which he also envisaged ambitious development schemes for Hargeysa. The Colonial Office and the Treasury were, however, far more cautious; they viewed the initiative as a good way to save money because funds had already been invested under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (1940) in the strengthening of infrastructures in order to accommodate the military administration in Hargeysa temporarily. It would have required only minor works to make Hargeysa the permanent the seat of government, while Berbera would require considerable investment.[105]

In his report, Fisher enumerated the positive characteristics of Hargeysa. It was located in the "tree fringed" valley of a seasonal river, protected to the North and the South by hills. It had fairly regular annual precipitation and a "very suitable" climate for Europeans. It was close to Ethiopia, on important communication routes, and was in the western part of the Protectorate where most of the population was concentrated and where all the land suitable for agricultural development was located. Furthermore, according to Fisher the population of Hargeysa had overtaken that of Berbera in the mid-1940s. After the re-occupation the pre-existing government's facilities had been expanded, water supply had been improved and an electric power station had been built. His plan included the relocation of the scattered government buildings in the same area. Fisher also complained of the precarious conditions of present buildings, "as they are constructed of

[104] TNA, CO 535/141/7 "Seat of the Government", 1945.
[105] These different views between the government of the Protectorate and the Colonial Office reflected the mounting concerns of the latter for the skyrocketing expenditures of the first (see Millman 2013: 159). The Colonial Office estimated in only $50,000 the cost for arranging Hargeysa as the new capital. See TNA, CO 535/141/7.

plastered mudbrick, with roofs of corrugated iron sheets or flattened petrol tins"[106] and suggested the construction of a modern headquarter where facilities would be concentrated.

These sources show how deep was the impact of war and its aftermath on the different areas of the Protectorate. First, it seems evident that the economic, political and demographic pre-eminence of the hinterland, especially of Hargeysa, over Berbera and the coastal towns had been reinforced. Again Abdi I. Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 58-68) has contributed to our understanding of the broader economic developments in the Protectorate over the 1940s. In 1941, the Somalis seemed pleased to have the British back, since the Italian occupation had prompted the British blockade of the Somali ports and stopped imports and exports. Trade recovered pretty soon: exports of livestock and skins increased drastically after 1941, further fuelled by the failure of the rains in 1942-43 which made the herdsmen sell their livestock (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 59-60). In the following years, trade in the Protectorate was strongly characterised by two trends which Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 64-65) drew from the annual statistics over the 1940s and the 1950s: first, the increase in livestock exports which was "uninterrupted and unprecedented in scale"; second, the price increase, particularly until 1948, of some imported commodities like rice, millet, dates, sugar, tea and clothing. Samatar's hypothesis is that the growth of livestock exports depended on the reconfigured relations between the pastoral and trade sectors. This was demonstrated by the fact that, notwithstanding the absence of significant epidemics among the animals and the absence of devastating droughts between 1947 and 1959, the pastoralists continued to sell a large portion of their herds in order to purchase imported goods (though, the prices of the latter increased at a higher rate than did the export of livestock). Though not devastating, several droughts occurred during the 1950s, but the reports do not show the classical peaks in sales during the droughts (when pastoralists were forced to sell their animals who faced death in large numbers) and the sales' collapse after them, when the herds had to be reconstituted. These data lead to the general conclusion that pastoralism was much more deeply involved in trade, and at the same time conditioned by it during the military administration phase. According to Samatar, this interdependence could arguably have been characterised by different factors, among which was the alleged direct participation in pastoralism of some traders who reared herds exclusively with the purpose of selling them.[107] Furthermore, during the 1950s the practice of transporting water and hay

[106] TNA, CO 535/141/7, see the report of Governor Fisher "Seat of Government", p.2. The practice of using flattened tins as a building material is still widely diffused in Hargeysa, especially for protecting the lower perimeter of huts.
[107] It must be clarified that the blurred boundary between the figure of the merchant and that of the pastoralist cannot be considered a post-war phenomenon. For instance, the *abaan* system, which had organised commercial exchanges in Somaliland until the second decade of the twentieth century, presupposed that the *abaan* was entitled to authority and prestige among his genealogical unit, including in respect of his numerous herds (Djama 1997). As regards the consolidation of commercial communities in the towns of the hinterland during the 1920s-1930s, it is hard to postulate a clear economic distinction between the urban-based traders and the surrounding groups. The documents reported above

to areas affected by water shortages became established. Trucks hired, or in some cases owned, by the livestock owners were and are still largely used for this purpose.[108] Those who could afford the costs built private water catchments in the rural areas. These practices considerably reduced the impact of droughts over the herds. Several imported commodities like sugar, grains and clothes had become "a normal part of pastoral livelihood" (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 64) and their import was no longer conditioned by the unpredictability of the rainy seasons.

This changing economic scenario was in the context of the more conspicuous investments of the Protectorate government in development projects. Communications and roads were improved[109] and the importance of the towns grew significantly. The British re-occupation in 1941 and the subsequent military administration overlapped with older regional factors like the Italo-Ethiopian war in producing significant effects on crucial aspects of Somalilander society. For instance, Samatar noted that the Italian occupation of Ethiopia had already given the Somalis "a new lease on life" (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 69). Indeed, the British had not ignored the fact, reported in 1936, that "very many young men have left the country to find employment in Ethiopia, mostly as soldiers. Stock-owners are realising that their sons are no longer content to stay at home and look after the stock […]".[110] Probably, after 1941 the conspicuous presence of British military personnel entirely concentrated in the towns further reinforced this trend and influenced the economic and demographic balance between different areas of Somaliland. During the mid-1940s Hargeysa hosted 1,200 military personnel, while in the pre-war years fewer than ten Europeans were living permanently in the town.[111] This unprecedented military presence and the new administrative machine opened up new job opportunities for the Somalis and made the towns even more attractive to them.

Protagonists of this post-war urban migration were those small numbers of people who abandoned pastoralism and undertook commercial activities in the towns. Then, there were people who "had become marginal in the rural economy owing to a complex web of factors including

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suggest that the initial investments in non-pastoral economic sectors (like import/export and building plots in Hargeysa) and the necessary economic support to cope with fluctuations in the volume of trade (see above the rush to Jigjiga to sell products there after the Italian occupation) were funded by livestock sales. See the quasi-stereotypical picture promoted by the British of the leading Somali figure who sells part of his livestock to acquire a plot in Hargeysa (Kittermaster 1928). Therefore, the new element that Samatar, arguably, wanted to underline is not the confusion between the figure of the merchant and that of the pastoralist, but the configuration of the interdependence between the two roles and, in part, the fact that, unlike in the past, pastoralism was more conditioned by trade than viceversa.

[108] Some of the interviews with an elder of a Gaboye clan recorded during my research in April 2015 occurred during his visits in Hargeysa. He was hiring a truck and arranging the transport of water and hay for his herds located at a rural site.

[109] The approximate mileage of the roads in the Protectorate rose from 2,000 in 1937 (*Colonial Office. Annual Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Year 1937. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* p.16) to 2,985 in 1948 (*Colonial Office. Annual Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Year 1948. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* p.24).

[110] *Colonial Office. Annual Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Year 1936. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* p.28.

[111] TNA, CO 535/141/7, see the report of Governor Fisher "Seat of Government", p.2.

drought, a declining rural economy, the attraction of urban life, and a weakening of the precapitalist moral economic ties, and had sought relief and refuge in towns" (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 70-71). We have already explained the urban trajectory of the first category of people.[112] The second category is extremely variegated and seems in part to have been the by-product of the changes in the relationships among the pastoralists brought about by the increasing commercialisation of the pastoral sector. However, it is difficult to grasp both the quantitative and qualitative dimension of this rural-urban migration. Such a form of mobility could probably have been distributed over a long span of time, even if apparently the late 1930s-early 1940s marked a first significant abandoning of the rural-pastoral environment. What distinguishes the second category groups from the first is the absence of a calculated economic project behind the decision to settle in the town: they were groups of people captured by the centrifugal forces (like droughts) departing from the pastoral world. But we can add to them also those who were attracted by centripetal forces localised in the towns, like the individuals fascinated by town life or willing to find a job away from pastoralism.

On the one hand, we can say that those who were dispossessed of their primary subsistence resources and for some reason did not receive the support of kinship networks must be considered to have suffered a sort of expulsion from the pastoral realm. And the recalcitrant youth already mentioned in the 1936 British annual report who refused to attend to livestock and went to Ethiopia to be enrolled as soldiers seem to have been in the grip of the attractive force of non-pastoral symbolic and material universes. But for many other individuals and groups it is impossible to establish which of the two forces – expulsion or attraction - was the driving one: they felt the pressure of both. In many cases the rural-urban transition was gradual or never became permanent and was managed at the household level as a strategy to differentiate the sources of revenue.[113] Rather than a channel wherein entire blocks of population shifted unilineally, this new rural-urban connection favoured the circulation in both senses of human beings and also economic resources like livestock, grass, water, imported goods and stocks of capital.

Samatar's allusion to the "weakening of precapitalist moral economic ties" suggests the pervasiveness of the factors that militated for a reconfiguration of the rural-urban connection in the post-war years. Samatar's aim was to stress the increasing capacity of the trade sector to condition the life of the pastoralists and the diffusion of capital-oriented economic behaviour among the

[112] In relation to this process, the role of the expanded British control over the Somaliland hinterland, the new commercial importance of towns like Hargeysa at expense of coastal towns like Bullhar and the abandonment of the *abaan* system have been discussed. See above.

[113] As will be reported below, cases have been collected during this research even among the Gaboye of individuals settled in Hargeysa who maintained for decades – or never severed – an organic link with the rural world. One of the ways used by adult men in order to assure such a link was to have a wife and hence a household in each of the two socio-economic environments.

Somalilanders.[114] However, the 'weakening of moral economic ties' can be applied not only to the reconfiguration of a pre-existing moral-economic balance between "precapitalist" pastoral units of production but also to the positioning within this balance of the non-pastoral rural groups which are the object of this research, namely the Gaboye. It is legitimate to suppose that their condition of dependency and the forms of reciprocal but asymmetric exchanges with the majority clans were deeply affected by such a reconfiguration. The occupational services they provided, the tools that they produced for the pastoralists and their broadly shared exclusion from the ownership of livestock were the fundamental aspects of their economic position vis-à-vis the other Somalilanders. If, following Samatar, we recognise the post-war years as the phase which inaugurated the diffusion of capital-oriented behaviours among the Somalilanders and a consolidation of import/export trade sector, it seems appropriate to relate these developments with the Gaboye's rural-urban mobility. Neither written and oral sources facilitate the task of reconstructing this migratory process. The Gaboye consulted during the fieldwork in Hargeysa have placed their urban settlement or that of their ancestors between the 1930s and the 1940s and often have pictured the migration as the result of the quest for better job opportunities. In other words, we have never collected a narrative that reports the cutting of the moral-economic links and of the formalised subordination[115] which bound the Gaboye of Hargeysa to the majority clans. However, when contrasting the post-1930s situation of Gaboye settlements in the interior towns like Hargeysa[116] with antecedent accounts, like that of Cerulli (Cerulli 1959) which described the Gaboye as sparsely distributed among the Somali clans, we can affirm that the Gaboye urban migration must have been closely linked with the reconfiguration of their relationship with the majority clans. As stated by Samatar, as the behaviour of the pastoralists became capital-oriented and the capital penetrated pastoral sector, kinds of reciprocity that supported the daily life of rural people lost ground. This was generating forms of marginality and dispossession of the means of production. Arguably, some Gaboye who were already marginalised before - being excluded from the basic economic asset, livestock, and also from the political arenas of the majority clans - were expelled from the traditional circuits of asymmetric reciprocity with the pastoralists that had ensured their livelihoods. The Gaboye produced leather objects, especially shoes, pottery and other items; the Tumaal, whose social position allegedly was akin to that of the Gaboye, manufactured metal objects like axes, hoes and weapons such as knives and spears. It is possible that the demand for these products began

[114] When Samatar mentions the practice of transporting hay and water by truck or constructing water reservoirs, he adds that these solutions were beginning to fuel economic inequalities among the pastoralists because some of them became able to secure their herds from droughts while others stayed exposed (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 65).
[115] The pre-existing morally and economically codified form of subordination suffered by the Gaboye which presided over their relationship with the majority clans all over the north-western Somali territories has already been discussed as reported by colonial time sources, like Cerulli (Cerulli 1959).
[116] As is also confirmed by I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957: 69).

increasingly to be met by imported goods. Moving to the towns might put the Gaboye producers in contact with a more concentrated market of potential customers than in the rural areas. Town life offered also new job opportunities which other Somalilanders were not ready or willing to take. The Gaboye were for example employed by the government as 'sweepers' and garbage collectors in the towns, a practice that goes back a long time, being also recorded in the coastal towns during the first two decades of the twentieth century.[117] As regards the private sector, it is in this period that the Gaboye occupied a business niche in which they are even nowadays widely employed: that of barbering. The latter activity was despised by the members of the majority clans. The growing number of inhabitants in the interior towns like Hargeysa and the increasing percentage of Somalilanders who spent most of their lifetime in the urban areas prompted the commercialisation of barbering which in the rural areas was undertaken privately in the household.

3.2.2 POST-WAR URBANISATION

The report for the years 1950 and 1951 states that Hargeysa had around 32,000 inhabitants, out of an estimated Protectorate population of around 640,000.[118] An important issue discussed in the reports was the general situation of housing in the towns. Although under improvement, the shortage of dwellings kept rents high. Only a few houses were occupied by the owners. The most common type of dwelling was "of mud brick plastered and white-washed" but "there is now a general tendency to replace them by stone-built houses of which many have two stories, with living quarters upstairs and business premises at ground level". The housing of the "poorer classes" was still a serious problem in the early 1950s. In the towns they lived exclusively in two kinds of dwelling, the "aqal" and the "arish", which according to the British were both "unsatisfactory", especially from a sanitary perspective. The "aqal" is the nomadic hut, "a beehive shaped hut composed of semicircular wooden struts covered with mats made of grass and bark fibre". During the late 1940s and early 1950s the British authorities were worried by the rapid expansion of the towns where, because of the poor quality of these forms of housing, "slum conditions" were rapidly developing. The report stated that mud walls provided "an ideal harbourage" for various insects

[117] The presence of Gaboye "sweepers" in the Somaliland coastal towns is registered in several colonial records. See for example in Bullhar, where two sweepers registered as "midgan" were dismissed in 1931 because of the closure of the town's port. They were granted a gratuity because they had been employed since 1914 and 1915 with a salary of 15 rupees, later on increased to 17 per month (See "Non-European Staff. Pensions and Gratuities", 1931, in TNA, CO 535/94/1). Another document reports the grant of a gratuity to a "midgan" who had worked as "Sweeper. Town conservancy" in Berbera between 1911 and 1931 (See "Pensions and Gratuities to Non-European Staff. Gratuity for Abdi Ahmed", 1932, in TNA, CO 535/95/9). In the annual medical report for the year 1931, it is reported that 28 sweepers worked in the town of Berbera and that they had recently been put under the command of the local medical officer (See "Annual Medical Report. 1931", 1932, in TNA, CO 535/97/9).

[118] *Colonial Office. Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Years 1950 and 1951. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* P.18.

including mosquitoes; it added that "light and ventilation are usually lacking".[119] According to approximate estimates, not less than 26,000 individuals lived inside an aqal or an arish in Hargeysa, the overwhelming majority of the town's population.

Comparison of the 1950-1951 report with that of 1948 confirms the steady influx of people from the rural areas who settled in the town in temporary structures because they did not have the skills nor the economic resources to build more permanent houses. Meanwhile, some numerically limited but significant changes are reported: the spread of stone built two-floor buildings hosting commercial activities witnesses the growing volume of investments which the parallel sectors of urban-based business and construction were able to attract.

Urban expansion was a matter of some debate among British authorities, but until the early 1950s this did not result in any development scheme. A document of 1950 provides further insights into the situation in the towns and confirms that the British believed that the rural-urban migration introduced a number of problems.[120] The document reports how one of these problems – the issue of 'street children', particularly in Hargeysa – was analysed and how viable solutions were discussed. It includes the communications between Protectorate authorities and members of a charity organisation, the Save the Children Fund. It also includes the application for a grant under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act: the amount required was £1,583 and the denomination of the proposed scheme was "Care of Destitute Children in Somaliland Protectorate".[121] The British were especially afraid of the spread of criminal behaviour among the street youth of Hargeysa: "The destitute and homeless children tend to migrate to the towns where they are usually too young and inexperienced to find works and having no relatives, drift into a life of performing small tasks where they can in return for scraps of food, pilfering, gambling with the proceeds of their thieving and eventual indulgence in other vices".[122] Before the application was submitted, the contacts between the Governor of Somaliland Sir Gerald Reece and the Save the Children Fund had resulted, in 1950, in the survey of street children in Somaliland towns carried out by Dr. Leslie Housden, who was affiliated to the charity organisation.

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[119] *Colonial Office*, ibid.

[120] TNA, CO 859/221/1, "Annual Reports. Somaliland Protectorate" 1949-1950.

[121] The value of Colonial Development and Welfare Grants dispensed in Somaliland was £36,737 for the years 1949-50, £58,028 for 1950-51 and £93,752 for 1951-52. See *Colonial Office. Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Years 1950 and 1951. H.M. Stationery Office. London.* P.10. These grants were assigned under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Samatar explained the genesis of the Act: Great Britain needed "to cut her dollar deficits"; the new development policy implemented in the colonies was aimed at promoting their capacity to produce primary products and to purchase British goods. The second goal of this development-oriented approach was that of counteracting American anti-colonial propaganda. The total funds allocated under the Act in 1940 were £120 million. See Note 32 in Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 177.

[122] TNA, CO 859/221/1, "Application for a grant under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act".

Housden wrote a preliminary report which Governor Reece forwarded to several British officers of Somaliland in order to receive their comments: Brigadier Smith, previously Chief Administrator in Mogadishu, with long service in Somaliland, Mr. Shirley, Native Commissioner in Somaliland and employed in the Protectorate for twenty years, and Mr. Beytagh, the District Commissioner of Hargeysa. Their opinions were based on long experience rather than on demographic measurements and they indirectly sanctioned the naivety of Housden's evaluations and proposed solutions. However, this exchange of ideas, while providing important insights, shows that several aspects of the populating of the towns were a matter of concern for British officers.[123] Housden's report begins with a picture bringing together the various strands of the transformation that Somaliland society was experiencing. According to him the cessation of inter-tribal fighting which had always characterised the life of the Somalis before British rule had caused the significant increase in both human and animal population. Furthermore, the pacification had left the young Somalis without warfare: "Young men are no longer required to fight. They are left with only herding. This is strenuous and unexciting work, entailing long marches, solitary watches and monotonous and often insufficient food. Meanwhile towns have grown. Boys, who have tasted the bustle and colour, society and food of the town, are often unwilling to return to minding the stock in the interior".[124] For Housden the presence of destitute youth in the towns depended on the attraction the town exerted on young Somalis, more than on their expulsion from the rural-pastoral world.

Housden quoted other British documents. For instance, the report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pauperism stated that in 1945, the seven major towns of Somaliland hosted around 2,600 "unattached boys" who were said to be inclined to several socially dangerous behaviours such as gambling, stealing, consuming alcohol and "unnatural sexual behaviour".[125] Then, Housden recalled a portion of a 1949 report written by Mr. J.C. Leyden where he denounced, alarmingly, the presence of huge masses of people "living in squalor" on the outskirts of Berbera and Hargeysa. Many of them did not have livestock and that he did not know how they met their basic needs. As a first critical point on these sources, Housden challenged the "gloomy" picture offered by them, particularly as regards the alleged inclination of unattached youth to criminal activities. He quoted official criminal statistics published in colonial annual reports for 1948 to 1950 to show that the cases brought to the various levels of Courts in the Protectorate had decreased. The "juvenile cases"

[123] After the circulation of the memoranda, Governor Reece addressed a letter to an officer of the Colonial Office where he tried to mitigate the Somaliland officers' critics. The Governor blamed himself and the administration for not having been able to give more support to Housden during his survey and excused him by saying that the issue under concern was so complicated and obscure that even experienced officers often had contrasting opinions about it. See Letter of the 3rd May 1950 from Governor Reece to Mary Darlow, TNA, CO 859/221/1.

[124] TNA, CO 859/221/1, Dr. Leslie Housden, "Report on The Homeless Boys in British Somaliland".

[125] Housden's source is the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pauperism in British Somaliland. Hargeysa.* 1954, quoted in Dr. Leslie Housden, ibid.

represented a small minority of them, and they were also decreasing.[126] According to Housden, even the total number of the urban destitute youth was exaggerated by the British reports. He declared that he had undertaken researches of these boys between eleven o'clock and midnight in the towns of Hargeysa and Burco but that he had found only 77 and 67 of them respectively. Even admitting that there were others and that the recent unexpected but most welcome rains (those of winter 1949-1950) had caused a reduction of their number, Housden thought that his experience did not fit with the 1945 figures reporting the presence of between 1,300 and 2,500 "unattached" boys just in Burco and Hargeysa. Imam Mossa, "a hunchbacked Arab school-master", told him that he usually had 65 of these boys sleeping in his school each night. This led Housden to believe that the phenomenon involved around two hundred individuals, not thousands.

Housden also met the Gaboye: "To make quite sure I visited the homes of the Midgan tribes [the previous denomination of the Gaboye nowadays considered highly offensive], 'the poorest of the wretched people living in squalor', but no child was sleeping out there. Each gurgi (hut) was securely fastened and all slept within". It is quite interesting that although Housden had just arrived in the country, he was already convinced that the Gaboye were the poorest among the poor of the towns. That could be a widespread idea he borrowed from the British officers he met (but other pieces of evidence presented below contradict this possibility), from his Somali interpreter or maybe from the few mentions of these groups in the books of travellers and officers who had served in the country. Unfortunately Housden did not provide other information about the area of the town inhabited by the Gaboye and simply reported that their children were not part of the unattended youth. In another passage of his report, where he contested the alleged "squalor" of the poor people's dwellings, he described an unspecified settlement saying that native huts and their compounds were relatively clean. Although were no latrines, the dwellers used an open space somewhat distant from the houses. His description suggests that he was still talking about Gaboye people, but he did not specify. There was the unpleasant smell of "half-cured camel skins, smoking fires and ghee" and the widespread practice of collecting old irons: "pieces of old army lorries, bedsteads, rusty corrugated iron sheeting with holes in it, and flattened-out petrol tins are built into the compound fences". The people he was describing lived off "curing and dyeing camel skins, making mud pots and embroidering. They also are the ones who perform circumcision and attend women in child-birth". Some of these activities, such as tanning, metal manufacture, pottery making and traditional healing practices were a prerogative of the Gaboye and other occupational groups. It is curious that Housden labelled these groups merely as "the populations living on the edge of the

[126] Housden reported figures about the town of Burco, where juvenile cases were 176 out of 899 in 1948 and 71 out of 637 in 1949. Furthermore he noted that in January 1950 the Mandera prison, the principal of Somaliland, there were only 13 young boys out of 57 convicts.

towns" without clarifying if they were Midgan-Gaboye, while just having indicated that he knew them. We must presume that Housden's knowledge of local groups was still superficial, but it seems clear to us that his brief experience in Somaliland had already led him to meet Gaboye people repeatedly at the poor outskirts of the towns.

In the last part of his report, Housden advanced three possible solutions to the problem of street children. The first was in fact the usual policy of British local authorities: to return the boys to their respective tribes. According to Housden, "the Hargeysa police deport each week to their districts of origin about ten youths between the ages of ten and twenty". Even admitting that some tribes did not have the means to sustain all of their members and that boys would continue to leave the rural areas, Housden fundamentally endorsed the British approach: "Tribes must maintain their own people, either with them in the interior or by payments, if they are elsewhere". Genealogical units, through their registered representatives (the "stipendiary akils"), were deemed by the British responsible for their unattended youth. This tells us much about the organisation of the British administration in the early 1950s. The second solution was the promotion of job opportunities in the towns. Housden quoted the positive case of Boroma where some boys had been employed in the construction of a school and in the management of four public shower-baths. In Hargeysa, a group of twenty-five boys had started to manufacture items from rubbish, turning it into "tin mugs and tambourines and tumblers".[127] The third proposal was the construction of a "Home for Abandoned Boys" which should provide shelter, food and some sort of work-training for the boys who would not benefit of the first two solutions proposed.

The officers who commented on Housden's report provide other important insights into the town life in the Protectorate at the beginning of the 1950s. They also help us to understand what were, from the British point of view, the most critical aspects of the management of the post-war urban expansion and the problems they were producing. The District Commissioner of Hargeysa Beytagh[128] questioned the possibility of gaining an accurate picture of the situation from the criminal statistics of only two consecutive years (Housden's evaluations were based on the data of 1948-1949); furthermore, prison records were not significant because the magistrates usually did not send young boys to jail and the general punishment for their petty crimes was whipping. Beytagh also contested the total number of street boys in Hargeysa on the basis of his personal experience as a resident officer. He had seen numerous boys spending their days gambling in

[127] Again, Housden did not specify the clan of these boys, but both cases recall occupational tasks traditionally attached to the Gaboye. The members of the group consulted during the fieldwork insisted on the fact the workers in the public toilets were all Gaboye, at least until the collapse of the Siad Barre regime. They stated that no member of the majority clans would have performed such work. Housden's account reinforces the hypothesis of a consistent presence of Gaboye in the towns and that they were trying to adapt their skills to the urban context.

[128] TNA, CO 859/221/1, "Comments on the Report by Dr. Housden on the Homeless Boys in British Somaliland" by P.A.R. Beytagh.

groups of twenty or thirty. Quite often fights broke up among them and they inflicted each other "terrible wounds" using razor blades. His personal experience convinced him that in Hargeysa there were more the four hundred street children. Brigadier Smith[129] also criticised Housden's figures saying that "in time of drought there is usually an increase in petty crime and an increase in the number of poor persons who flock into the Townships in order to obtain food". This was the case of 1948, while exceptionally good rains were registered in 1949. Smith added that Housden did not meet many street boys out at night because most of them had a place to sleep but had to provide for food and clothing by themselves.

Beytagh's commentary also contained his own analysis of the issue; according to him, in Hargeysa there were three types of problematic youths: those who had at least one parent living in the town but not taking care of them, those who had left their households in the rural areas and the orphans. The first category fell into the fully urbanised groups, therefore the government's intervention had to help the parents to fulfil their responsibilities, including that of finding a job for their children.[130] The other two categories were to be treated following the current policy, namely that of the 'return to the tribes'. All the three officers consulted spoke about a collective responsibility of the tribes towards their unattended boys but also acknowledged that a transformation was underway. On this matter, Beytagh quoted the 1949 report of "the Somali Inspector of Schools" saying: "Collective responsibility in matters of this nature, is a cardinal point of tribal her [*xeer* in the Somali transcript, namely the set of codes and agreements between genealogical units, also used with the broad meaning of 'tradition'] in its most beneficial form, and certainly a tribe that sends its children to these towns and then abandons them there, cannot be divorced from its responsibility under Somali her, or even under proper Mohammedan custom." Her/*xeer* could not be evoked only for the settlements of diya-payments – namely as a charter for defining the amount of blood compensation – but for the general welfare of the people. Smith wrote that the return to the tribes and the responsibility of genealogical units to maintain their members had been the official policy of the administration at least since 1920, but the situation was changing: "until the people do develop a much stronger spirit of social responsibility and self-government it is thought that the return to the tribes can only be an expedient to reduce temporarily the number of undesirable boys in the towns". As Smith admited, the towns were growing and were changing: they were hosting "a class of person who is a complete townsman and is unable to live in the interior".

[129] TNA, CO 859/221/1, "Note on Dr. Housden's Report on the Homeless Boys of the Somaliland Protectorate" by R.H. Smith.
[130] One measure suggested by Beytagh was to expand the Koranic school system as a mean of controlling street children.

Shirley's memorandum confirmed the British insistence on the social and political role of the "tribes".[131] Speaking about the possibility of any government action addressing unattended boys, he said: "at first sight it would seem that we should make it clear that these boys will be de-tribalised, even if this is only for a period. We can rightly say that the tribes have failed to support them and that the government have had to take this on. This I feel sure will weed out a number at the beginning, and we should devise some scheme whereby they may become re-tribalised again, possibly on the tribe paying a contribution to the expenses of the Fund". Shirley and the other two officers were concerned about a more structured government intervention in the urban context. It was not only that the Protectorate could not afford the costs of a possible development scheme, but also the dangers of a massive social, economic and political reconfiguration of Somaliland society which a new administrative approach might accelerate. All these factors shaped the administration's opinion about urban expansion, effectively summarised by Beytagh in the conclusion of his memorandum: "[…] I fully realise the folly of making the town an attractive place to live in and thus attract more and more homeless boys to Hargeysa".

However, Beytagh admitted that the government had to deal with a "fait accompli", since the urban centres hosted a portion of population "who will never be anything but townees". The British were worried about how to manage these people who did not have the resources nor the capacity to live in the rural interior. Some sort of action was required, for instance, in order to turn the trouble-making youths into good citizens since they were going to reside indefinitely in the towns. The British concerns, arguably, were not only related to the livelihood of these urban groups but were also motivated by the fact that the expanding category of townsmen eluded the entry points of the colonial rule: the 'tribes' and their registered representatives, the "stipendiary akils", the intermediaries and the means of administration.[132] The de-tribalisation of the urban youth obliged the government to provide new economic opportunities for individuals and groups outside the tribal-pastoral world. It also attributed to the administration the undesired responsibility of direct social control of a portion of the Somaliland population's behaviours; a portion which was unrepresented in the local social institutions. It is for this reason that in those years colonial documents started to include hopes for "a spirit of social responsibility" and "self-government".[133] But according to the same officers the road toward these goals was still long, so the fundamental

[131] TNA, CO 859/221/1, "Note on Dr. Housden's Report on 'Save the Children Fund'" by E.P.S. Shirley.

[132] This statement requires an in-depth analysis which cannot be fully developed here. As it will be discussed in the next chapters, the British administrative policy was based on the 'tribes' and the 'stipendiary akils' from at least the 1920s.

[133] TNA, CO 859/221/1, "Note on Dr. Housden's Report on the Homeless Boys of the Somaliland Protectorate" by R.H. Smith.

tools of British rule, the 'tribes', could not be dismissed. On the contrary, they might have to be forced, as much as possible,[134] to take their role in the management of social change.

The British disquiet about the introduction of new forms of administration surfaced also in the following resolutions dealing with the government of the towns. The amendments to the Town Ordinance Rules in 1952 introduced new regulations that strengthened and regulated the powers of District Commissioners to expel individuals from urban areas for a period of two years, for a number of reasons including public offence and also unemployment.[135] The comments of Governor Reece on this resolution were intended as a response to some critics in the United Kingdom who blamed the incompatibility of such norms with British law: "[…] British law and legal procedure is not suitable for many of the people in our African dependencies at this stage of their development". The Governor added that the Somalis considered the Government as an enemy and did not cooperate with it. He defended the approach based on the expulsion from the towns, saying that "detribalisation and urbanisation are two of the greatest difficulties the administrator has to contend with all over Africa […]. Already places like Hargeysa and Berbera have grown much too big and they contain almost every known form of evil. On the other hand the life of the pastoral nomad in the interior is still quite a good, healthy and a moral one".[136]

The reconfiguration of the Gaboye's marginality must be contextualised in this phase. The registration of their first 'traditional' leader and diya-paying group in Hargeysa, which we have pointed out as the part of their emancipatory route, shows that the Gaboye were granted by the government a clan or 'tribal' apparatus acknowledged by the British, namely registered diya-paying groups and stipendiary akils, once they had become a significant presence in the town. Some valuable remarks about their situation in the town are in Smith's memorandum where he criticised Housden's idea of using them as a parameter of extreme poverty: "The Midgans generally do not suffer from destitution to the same extent as the 'Ajib' [Ajib is equivalent to the term 'Aji' which is still used in Somaliland but not in other Somali territories; it indicates the members of any majority clan and its meaning is unknown to the Somalilanders].[137] The reasons for this are that there is an unsatisfied demand for the kinds of work which the 'Ajib' will not usually do, but which the

[134] Again, on this point the memorandum of District Commissioner Beytagh is extremely clear: "I cannot suggest how these tribes are to be persuaded to accept their responsibilities. It will be for the District Commissioner to use all the weapons at his command to achieve this". See Beytagh, ibid., p.4.
[135] TNA, CO 1015/270, "Townships Legislation in Somaliland" 1951-1953.
[136] TNA, CO 1015/270, "Letter of the 21st February 1953 to E. Marnham".
[137] I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957: 75) reported that in the Somaliland Protectorate the basic distinction between the Gaboye and the rest of the Somali clans to whom they were affiliated was expressed as 'Aji iyo Midgo', namely 'Aji and Midgaans'. Lewis also noted that 'Aji' appears in the so-called 'total Somali genealogy' as an ancestor of 'Samaale', the mythical forefather of all the Somali clans. But, in Somaliland, the total genealogy is ignored by the local groups, hence 'Aji' is a merely "a word descriptive of noble or freeborn birth".

Midgan will do, and also because the Midgan is less fastidious over his feeding.[138] It is noticeable that in times of drought the Midgan children appear to be much fatter than those of the 'Ajib'. The Midgan quarters may be distinguished by more dirt and refuse thus giving the appearance of squalor but I think actual destitution and starvation is proportionately less amongst them".[139] We do not know how well documented Smith's evaluations are; particularly in terms of the supposed capacity of the urban Gaboye to endure adverse productive cycles of the pastoral sector better, not being directly dependent on livestock. But we know that in 1950 they were already fully integrated in the urban economy and that they were undertaking occupational tasks despised by the other Somalis. This socially and demographically consolidated presence had to be regulated by the British administration. The Gaboye mobilisation in Hargeysa during the mid-1950s accorded with the goals of the British, who were interested in institutionalising their relationship with town-based groups. For both British and Gaboye the easiest way was to apply the old-established administrative tool of 'tribe'.

3.2.3 THE URBAN-BASED ELITE

In order to enrich the picture of the post-war wave of urbanisation, it is worth focusing on the ascent of another urban-based group: the urban economic and political elite. Some of the factors that signal the importance of this group in Somaliland society have been illustrated above by the economic statistics which show the increase in the volume of imports and exports during the post-war years. Samatar has pointed out other markers linked to the post-war wave of urbanisation: the increase in business establishments in the towns and the parallel growth of both demand and supply of education facilities (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 70-72). He quoted the data provided by a 1954 report which recorded the number of licenses for "business establishments" in each of the Somaliland Districts.[140] In 1945 the town of Hargeysa hosted 53 coffee shops, 126 retail shops and 66 eating places. Burao and Berbera had more coffee shops and retail shops, but fewer eating places. The report shows also that the District of Hargeysa had a wider distribution of these kinds of business establishments within its small towns and villages than any other District of the Protectorate, where shops tended to be concentrated in the most important town.

As regards education, when the military administration took control of the government in 1941, it immediately complained of the absence of a local group of educated people who could be

[138] The idea that the Gaboye had, or to some extent were forced, to maintain deviant and repugnant alimentary habits was recorded by numerous sources. We do not know if in this document Smith intended to underline that the Gaboye had different tastes from the other Somali clans or if he was convinced that their poor living conditions drove them to a less strict allegiance to Islamic food precepts.
[139] See R.H. Smith, ibid., p.1.
[140] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pauperism in British Somaliland. Hargeysa.* 1954.

involved in the government of the Protectorate. In the "Summary of the Proposals of the Military Governor of British Somaliland for the Improvement of the Administration and the Development of Social Welfare in the Protectorate" submitted to the Colonial Office in the early 1940s, Governor Fisher wrote that the "almost complete absence of Somali subordinate officials and of government pensioners is a serious handicap to the efficient and economic administration of the Protectorate". Such a group of officers "would have been a valuable avenue of contact with local thought and opinion", instead of the present "unreliable interpreters".[141] The expansion of local education facilities was deemed to be the only way to achieve this outcome. Budget expenditures for this sector grew remarkably from 1943 until the end of the Protectorate and rose from £509 in 1935-36 to £268,115 in 1958. The number of the children enrolled also increased drastically: in 1943 there were 99 children attending (only elementary) schools; in 1959 there were 3,906 pupils in elementary, intermediate and secondary schools (the first secondary school had been opened in 1953). However, in 1958 still, only around 2% of the Protectorate's children were enrolled in schools.[142]

Education facilities were built in the major urban centres and villages of Somaliland. According to Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 72) such a development effort not only met the new administrative policy but also the increasing demand for education among the urban-based groups. The new local elite was undermining the influence of the religious figures who had mobilised discontent and protests against colonial initiatives in the 1920s like the introduction of new taxes and even the implementation of an education scheme. Starting from the 1940s, this urban-based group, defined by Samatar an "emerging petite bourgeoisie" (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 72), obtained a growing capacity to address the government and to formulate administrative priorities. Its members were traders and officers of the expanding native bureaucracy. The role of the new elite was institutionalised by the military administration when in 1946 it created an "Advisory Council", a committee composed of 28 members appointed by the Governor among leading figures from each District of the Protectorate (even religious leaders were nominated; see Millman 2013: 129).

Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 77) stated that the commercial and bureaucratic groups were the ideal categories for the government to rely on as a "collaborationist class": they were to some extent "representative" of local groups and at the same time under control, as the members of the Advisory Council were nominated by the Governor. The creation of the Council was the first step towards the introduction of forms of self-government, one which departed from the pre-war

[141] TNA, CO 535/141/7, "Summary of the Proposals of the Military Governor of British Somaliland for the Improvement of the Administration and the Development of Social Welfare in the Protectorate" 1941.
[142] These data appear in the colonial annual reports between the 1940s and 1958 quoted in Abdi I. Samatar 1989: 72-73.

approach based on the use of "stipendiary akils" as intermediaries with the population. The akil system had always been considered inefficient; akils were appointed to represent the diya-paying groups and from the government's perspective their usefulness was mainly that of establishing contacts with the genealogical units, especially during inter-clan clashes and when British authorities had to pursue some group member charged with a crime. The early 1940s British administrative approach identified in the expanding urban-based "bourgeoisie" a more suitable interlocutor. At this point, the towns of the interior were no longer just outposts of the colonial rule endowed with an administrative centrality: they had become the abode of a socio-economic elite with whom the British chose to cooperate in the government of Somaliland.

3.2.4 NEW POLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND THE WAY TO INDEPENDENCE IN THE 1950s

The appearance from the late 1940s of political movements in the Protectorate further consolidated the new role of the towns. After 1941 and during the British Military Administration, political activism had begun to take the form of associations and embryonic parties throughout the Somali territories. In his analysis of the "Modern Political Developments" in the Somali territories based on a fieldwork carried out during the mid-1950s, I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957: 95) identified three categories of modern political parties. These were, first, those who were "simply the modern political organ of a clan or groups of clans", secondly there were the pan-Somali nationalist ones who were formally against any form of clan loyalty and the third type were the parties based on territorial affiliation. Lewis described the Protectorate as underdeveloped in terms of "political consciousness" compared with southern Somalia. The only short-lived experience of a clan-based party was that created by the Ciisa Muse (a clan part of the Isaaq clan confederation). The rest of Somaliland's parties fell into the second category: the first one to be established was the Somali National Society, re-named the Somali National League in 1947. Initially it enjoyed very little support. The party had a central committee, local committees in the various Districts and a central assembly; it required registration and monthly fees from its members. Lewis added that it was "predominantly Muslim in outlook and aims" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 100) and that the main points in its programme were the unification of the Somalis, the overcoming of clan divisions, the expansion of education and the economic and political development of Somaliland in cooperation with the British authorities.

Political organisations embodied, particularly during the second half of the 1950s, the gradual widening of the fracture between the members of the elite that the British had appointed as their interlocutor in the administration and the government. As Millman states: "It was the évolué –

the long awaited interlocutors and colleagues – who constituted Somaliland's Trojan horse" (Millman 2013: 213). The turning point was the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty of 1954 which ratified the permanent cession of the Haud and the Reserved Areas to Ethiopia.[143] Demonstrations occurred all over Somaliland and in 1955 a political organisation called "The National United Front for Retaining the Reserve Area and the Haud" (widely referred to as the NUF) was created. The discontent among the Somalilanders grew and pan-Somali nationalism penetrated further into the Protectorate from southern Somalia. The leading political movement of southern Somali, the Somali Youth League, also began to expand in the Protectorate, although it gathered support mostly in the eastern regions of Somaliland. The British were also alarmed by the possibility of increased Egyptian influence in Somaliland which could further inflame anti-colonial feelings.[144]

The leadership of these political movements – especially the SNL and the NUF – conducted an international campaign for the restitution of the Haud and Reserved Areas; delegations took the question to the Colonial Office in London and to the United Nations Assembly. However, according to Lewis, popular support continued to be "fluctuating" and never manifested in unitary forms because of the competing interests of genealogical units (I.M. Lewis 1957: 110). Except for numerically tiny sections of the society, political participation remained limited and the majority of the population ignored any understanding of the party's functions. Clan apparatuses continued to mediate the support for the existing political organisations: "When for some reason or another a large clan gives support, financial or otherwise, to a particular party it probably does so because the aims of the party as presented to the clan elders happen to correspond to, or at least not to conflict with, some other private aim of the clan" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 111).

A British intelligence report[145] gives important insights into the composition of the elite which was running these political organisations. "Anti-West", pro-Egypt feelings and the relationship with that country are the key features to surface from the majority of the individual profiles included in the report. It must also be remembered that the aftermath of the Suez crisis in 1956 gave widespread prestige to the Egyptian government and to Gamal Abdel Nasser, especially among regions under the colonial rule of European countries. The document also reported that all the individuals monitored presented two clusters of characteristics, sometimes coexisting in the same person. The first centred on involvement in town-based business; some of them had become exporters of livestock to Egypt, others were running shops in the towns, one of them owned a bus company providing transport between the major towns of the Protectorate. According to the British,

[143] They were regions of vital importance for the Somalilanders (especially for pastoralists) and they could enter them by crossing the colonial border thanks to special arrangements between Ethiopia and the Protectorate's government.
[144] A detailed reconstruction of this historical phase is provided by Jama (Jama 2002).
[145] TNA, CO 1015/1936, "Biographical Notes on Leading Personalities in Somaliland" 1957-1959.

for many of these party members, political activism was strictly related to personal interests in their commercial activities. The second cluster of characteristics showed the importance of the religious background and highlighted the growing importance of a new class of religious figures who consolidated their legitimacy thanks to a solid relationship with Egypt, where they had studied and established links with religious institutions. Many of the individuals under British scrutiny were running Koranic schools. The only exceptions in this scenario marked by anti-British feelings are the leading members of the NUF, Michael Mariano[146] and Rashid Sultan Abdullahi (the son of the *Suldaan* of the Ciida Galle clan). According to the Protectorate authorities, in the late 1950s, the NUF was a moderate party campaigning for the collaboration with the government in order to prepare the country for independence.

The report also gives us an indication of how the parties functioned. Their financial resources were limited; NUF relied on membership fees, while SNL was suspected of receiving money from Egypt.[147] The British also observed closely the party called "Hizb'Allah" or "Party of God": despite the openness of its campaign promoting "Islam and Islamic culture" and aiming to abolish tribalism and *xeer* (*xeer* is the system of agreements between genealogical units but the term is also used to refer broadly to "Somali custom"), the British regarded it the one which was more strictly related to a particular clan, again the Habar Yonis. The British thought that the party originated from the Habar Yonis' desire to avoid losing their claimed political pre-eminence among the other Somaliland clans. They had been the most represented group in the native bureaucracy so far and they were afraid of being overtaken by other genealogical groups. This party collected funds from the businessmen of that clan through donations of livestock and the report described it as "built round tribal structures". As for numbers, in the late 1950s, the NUF had between two and six hundred members in the two branches of Berbera and Hargeysa and the SNL had approximately six hundred, only in Hargeysa.[148]

[146] A Somali educated in Aden, converted to Catholicism, owner of an import-export firm in Somaliland. He founded the NUF and played a leading role in the international delegations which campaigned for the restitution of the Haud region to Somaliland. His brother, Anthony Mariano, was the first and only Somali District Commissioner in charge.
[147] According to the British, one channel of supply was the free import of cement from Egypt which was sold in the Protectorate and the revenues collected by the SNL. Furthermore, the SNL mediated the distribution of free scholarships for Somalilanders which were granted by the Egyptian government at the Al-Azhar University. See "The Aims, Affiliations and Composition of the Leading Political Parties with Tribal Connections and Notes on Personalities of these Parties", p.5, 1959, in TNA, CO 1015/1936.
[148] TNA, CO 1015/1936, "The Aims, Affiliations and Composition of the Leading Political Parties with Tribal Connections and Notes on Personalities of these Parties", 1959.

3.2.5 THE FIRST REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS

A significant step in the history of political participation in the Protectorate was the introduction of the first representative institutions like the Town Councils and the country Legislative Council. Up to 1957, participation by Somalilanders in any representative institution was in the Advisory Council. Constitutional re-organisation was a priority of the administration throughout the 1950s, oriented to introducing effective forms of self-government in order to prepare the country for independence. The process was accelerated when the unification of Somaliland with the former territory of Italian Somalia – at that time under a UN Trusteeship assigned to Italy and expiring in 1960 – became the most likely post-independence scenario and what the leading political organisations in the Protectorate requested from the British administration.

The debate around the introduction of some sort of local government started in the late 1940s. The British were caught between two agendas: the first of which was the promotion self-government through the inauguration of new administrative institutions, like the Town Councils. The second concerned the preservation of the existing pillars of their rule, i.e. the capacity of the Governor (and of his delegated subordinates like the District Commissioners) to control directly both the issuance of laws and regulations and the administration of justice (through the Protectorate courts which were run by British officers) and the solidity of local institutions like 'the tribes' as fundamental supports for the social and moral control of the Somalilander population.

The debate about the introduction of local institutions for the government of the towns that included a Somali membership reflects this picture perfectly. An important step in this process was the production of a report in 1952 –the "Town Council Report"- by the Financial Secretary of the Protectorate.[149] The report was based on a survey conducted among the elders and the British officers of the towns of Berbera and Hargeysa, and on financial estimates about the costs of the operation. It also benefited from the remarks of Mr. R.S. Hudson, the Head of the African Studies Branch of Colonial Office who was visiting the country during the enquiry. Councils were to be established in mid-1953, only in the towns of Berbera and Hargeysa. They were to comprise the District Commissioners as chairman plus both elected and nominated members: in the case of Hargeysa the elected members should have been a minority, in Berbera the majority. The report quoted the opinions of British officers and elders saying that organising elections in Hargeysa was more complicated than in Berbera, hence the Somali members should have been appointed by acclamation during popular assemblies; even the risk of the influence of "tribal politics" was considerably higher in the capital. The councils were to collect revenues autonomously: mainly from trade licences, taxes on dwellings and land rents; and they were to relieve the central

[149] TNA, CO 1015/264, "Town Council Report" 1952.

government of the expenditure on maintenance of the town. The report's clear recommended was to proceed gradually and in continuity with the present situation: firstly by keeping the control of the administration largely in the hands of the District Commissioner[150] and second by framing the project as the formalisation of the functions and the composition of existing local institutions that already had Somali members. Indeed, after consulting urban population the Commissioners of Berbera and Hargeysa had already created a sort of advisory committees.

The report defined the towns of the Protectorate in these terms: "It is apparent that the towns included in the scope of the enquiry are the merest dependencies of the surrounding countryside. This is somewhat qualified in the case of Hargeysa, the administrative capital of the country, and considerably qualified in the case of Berbera, the commercial capital and the country's chief port". In connection with this analysis, the report pictured the constitution of the Town Councils as a preliminary step towards the future creation of a more suitable form of local government, namely the District Councils controlling both urban centres through town committees, "whose counterpart in the rural areas would be sub-tribal committees dealing with sub-tribal affairs […]. This system would go far to prevent an otherwise inevitable rift between town and country which are at present complementary; no town being at present (or likely to be in any foreseeable future) an industrial, self-supporting unit".[151] A rift between the town and the rural areas was emerging and it must be contained because the towns depended on the rural areas, mainly in terms of economic self-sufficiency. New administrative apparatuses were required but they had to conform to local institutions like the "tribes", so as to avoid the risk that the towns drove away huge masses of people from the only sustainable economic sector, the pastoral one.

As envisaged in the report, the Town Council began to operate on the 1st of April 1953. According to Millman (Millman 2013: 208), as an experiment oriented to the promotion of self-government, it failed because the decisions continued to be taken by British officers and their functions remained obscure. Millman (Millman 2013: 208) also calls into question the reluctance of the Somalis to cooperate with the British in the adoption of unpopular decisions.

The introduction of representative institutions at the country level occurred at a later stage. The Legislative Council convened for the first time in May 1957; the Somali members were appointed by the Advisory Council and were a minority. They were six and largely linked with the NUF, since the SNL had refused to take part in the process. The next step was to turn the Council into an elective institution, so the administration arranged the first elections in the history of the

[150] The report also proposed giving the District Commissioners or other officers the ability to over-ride the decisions of the Council when they deemed it opportune.
[151] These evaluations were heavily influenced by Hudson's remarks. See "Town Council Report", p.3, TNA, CO 1015/264.

Protectorate. Electoral regulations were issued in a government ordinance after consultation with political leading figures and a commission nominated by the in-charge Legislative Council. The draft electoral system combined procedures for appointments and elections and, interestingly, ended up reproducing the fracture between the two social environments of the Protectorate, the towns and the rural areas. Preliminary evaluations declared that it was impossible to implement a system of voting stations in the rural areas, due to the nomadic habits of the population and to the unfeasibility of satisfactory registration of voters. Therefore, two distinct electoral districts were established: one rural, in which the selection of the candidates would be by acclamation during gatherings modelled on the 'traditional' assemblies – called *shir* – managed by the genealogical units (without any voters' registration) and a different one for the townships, where voting would be by secret ballot. Millman, who accurately reconstructed the government's decisions in this period, says: "An urban 'elector' was defined as a British Protected person [a member of one of the clans covered by the Treaties of Protection signed by British representatives and the elders of some clans of the north-western Somali coast in the 1880s], or a British subject, male, 21 years old and normally resident in a Protectorate electoral district" (Millman 2013: 271). Urban electors had to be registered and had to speak, read and write English or Arabic. The criteria for being a candidate were also set out: they had to produce a deposit of 1000 shillings in order to prove that they were well-off and candidates for the urban constituencies also had to demonstrate that they had completed intermediate school.

These regulations shaped political participation in this period. According to Millman, elections in the towns resulted in "a process by which administrators voted for administrators, *évolués* for *évolués*" (those who possessed an intermediate school certificate, almost entirely employed in the administration), while in the rural constituencies, the selection of the candidates was managed by traditional elders who either were elected themselves or channelled the popular support to favoured candidates. The people's participation was, however, limited: in Hargeysa, the biggest town, only 908 persons voted and five seats on the Council remained vacant and had to be filled by importing candidates from other districts (Millman 2013: 271). Participation was also reduced by the SNL's boycott of elections, which blamed the government for what the party considered the excessively slow pace of movement towards self-government and independence.

In 1959, the Colonial Office to accelerate the preparations for independence and endorsed the option of the unification of the Protectorate and the former Italian Somalia, whose date of independence was scheduled for 1960. British officers had envisaged that Somaliland would be ready for complete autonomy only in 1965. The two main goals to achieve were the consolidation of decision-making institutions and the complete 'Somalisation' of the bureaucratic apparatus, in which Somalis were still confined to the lower ranks. The deterioration of the political climate,

embodied in the SNL hostility towards the British, convinced the colonial authorities that the only way to leave behind a supposedly moderate elite to administer the country (and not an 'anti-West' one) was to accept the scenario of the Protectorate's independence in 1960. The British concerns are summarised effectively by the words of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, A. Lennox-Boyd, quoted by Millman (Millman 2013: 273): "Given the general political atmosphere and in particular the pace of political development in Somalia we must give the Protectorate Somalis the promise of rapid developments towards self-government. Unless we do this, extreme nationalism will grow, the Egyptians will be able to exploit the situation, and the moderate Somalis will go under. The consequences for the Horn of Africa will be grave". Once again the British left the country hastily for the third time, the first being in 1910 during the war against the dervish movement, the second in 1940, before the Italian invasion. This time, for good.

Urban centres, and especially Hargeysa, had become the platforms of political participation. They hosted the offices of political parties and had become the laboratory of the British experiments aimed at introducing representative institutions involving Somali members. Literate Somalis, who were largely employed in administrative bureaucracy and were the bulk of the membership of political parties, lived in the towns. The British acknowledged the distinction between these groups and the rural population by creating separate categories of electoral districts – rural and urban – for the first election of the Legislative Council. The British monitored this fracture and continued to consider the towns as socially and economically integrated, or even 'dependant' on, the countryside. The rural-urban integration was also reflected by the importance of the genealogical units in the networks along which political participation was assembled. As has been showed above, I.M. Lewis was convinced that clans and traditional leaders were important channels of mobilisation and of financial support to the parties; some traditional leaders were actually enrolled in the party apparatus. The intelligence report "The Aims, Affiliations and Composition of the Leading Political Parties with Tribal Connections and Notes on Personalities of these Parties"[152] stated that the Somali National League (SNL) and "Hizb'Allah", for instance, drew most of their members from the Habar Yonis clan, notwithstanding their pan-Somalist claims.

Colonial documents quoted above have shown that if there was a fracture it was more a demographic one, the urban centres having become the residence of different social groups that could not be found in the rural areas: an economic elite, the protagonists of the new political platforms like the parties, a variegated class of groups without livestock. The Gaboye belonged to this last category and had carved out a niche for carrying out their occupations in the expanding towns like Hargeysa. Colonial documents also signalled that this demographic concentration was

[152] TNA, CO 1015/1936.

potentially dangerous, because it was eroding local social structures. Although the documents do not specifically refer to it, among these 'endangered' structures there was not only "tribal" solidarity and "tribal" social control over individuals, but also the institutionalised marginality of the Gaboye. In fact, the constitution of homogeneous settlements inhabited by Gaboye groups in Hargeysa marks an evident departure from accounts like that of Cerulli (Cerulli 1959) describing the Gaboye as scattered in small groups among the Somali genealogical units.

3.3 URBANISATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The connection between the emancipation of the Gaboye and their urban settlement had been already reported by I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957), but his brief reference left it as a self-evident development. In order to explore this connection further we must understand the historical phase which framed the increasing economic importance, the demographic growth and the political pre-eminence of urban centres in the hinterland of the Protectorate, particularly of Hargeysa. The history of the growth of urban centres in the interior of the Protectorate shows that rural-urban mobility is part of a "culture of migration" (Hans P. Hahn & Georg Klute 2007) which during the twentieth century has created new social and physical environments, like the town of Hargeysa. This culture of mobility sprang from a previous one which linked the rural-pastoral world through caravan routes and the *abaan* system with another class of towns, the coastal markets like Berbera; but it departed from it and was manifested in a phase of social, economic and political change.

These historical layers of rural-urban mobility of the Somalilanders are condensed in the Somali word *ilbaxnimo*. Within it, perfectly coexist the double translation of 'urbanisation' and 'civilisation'; more than describing a 'state', it conveys a vector, the detachment from a condition which, as a contrasting pole, delimits its meaning. The opposite term is the rural-pastoral world, called *miyi* in Somali. The literal meaning of *ilbaxnimo* is centred on the word *il*, meaning 'eye', and is related to the act of seeing, to the expansion of the repertoire of things which fall into one's visual field. What defines the process of 'civilisation', thus, is the passage between distinct visual experiences that coincides with the physical transition from a space containing always the same things – the rural environment – to another where one's eyes are exposed to new objects: the towns. The word *ilbaxnimo*, which can refer either to an individual or to a collective experience, deploys the Somali representation of the impact that the 'town' has in biographical and community trajectories of transformation.[153] Therefore, the waves of urbanisation in the hinterland of the

[153] The association between 'urbanisation' and 'civilisation' based on the conception of the 'town' as a space where it is possible to enrich one's stock of experiences is coherent with the Somali idea about the maturation process of the individual. The quality of the decisions taken by the individual (male) in the exercise of his role as the one responsible

Somaliland Protectorate during the last three decades of the colonial era are recognised by the Somalilanders as part of a framework of social change.

for a household and as a member of the wider genealogical units is the result of a slow process of accumulating experiences. In this sense, town life can be assumed to have a positive impact on the local ideal representation of the *cultura animi*.

CHAPTER 4
THE GABOYE'S ORAL HISTORY

The previous chapter introduced two important objects of analysis which help to understand the transformation of the Gaboye's institutionalised marginality: first, the historical reconstruction of the premises and the context of the process of urban expansion in the hinterland of the Protectorate of Somaliland and second, the ways in which social and economic relationships between local groups changed in relation to that process. In this chapter we will use oral history in order to gain another perspective on this dynamic and to relate it to the transformations of the Gaboye's marginality. The oral sources presented below will highlight the importance of the conflicts and the negotiations between local groups in shaping the process of the urban expansion of Hargeysa, and the different configurations of the settlement of Gaboye groups and individuals in the growing town between the 1920s and the 1950s.

Our interlocutors in the field, were elderly men of both local Gaboye and majority clans. The most detailed accounts were recorded during several interviews with Said, a 90+-year-old elder of the Gaboye community who divides his times between Hargeysa and its rural outskirts. Unlike the colonial documents reviewed in the previous chapter, these oral sources report that the Gaboye took part in the urban expansion of Hargeysa from its inception.

4.1 REPRESENTING THE PAST

This section is intended to outline the forms of recollecting and transmitting the past adopted by the Gaboye and observed during the fieldwork. It will also show that the representation of past migratory paths is interwoven with the moulding of the memory of past marginality.

The dominant trend in the narratives concerning the Gaboye's arrival in the town collected through interviews and conversations with the descendants of the first settlers was to emphasise that the move was made voluntarily, in order to find better incomes for their occupations. This does not match with the institutionalised marginality reported by Cerulli (Cerulli 1959) and tends to obscure the range of factors that might have conditioned the phenomenon. Indeed, it can be argued that the Gaboye formalised neither the history of their subordination nor that of their first emancipatory steps.

Besteman reflected upon privately held memories and publicly recounted history among the fugitive slave communities in southern Somalia (Besteman 1993). This double level of representation and transmission of the past is rapidly becoming thin among the Gaboye. Three interwoven factors are shaping this dynamic. The first is that the memory of the past marginality is disappearing along with those who witnessed it. The guardians of the history of marginality, namely

the oldest members of the Gaboye community, are passing away, not having been integrated in a network where the oral history can circulate. Not only is the history of the arrival in Hargeysa being refashioned, but so also is the core itself of the Gaboye's representation of their own past subordination: many of our interlocutors denied that the Gaboye were excluded from the blood-compensation exchanges and affirmed that their genealogical units used to contribute or to receive the compensation together with the majority clans to whom they were affiliated. This practice still takes place, especially in the rural areas, and may date back to the colonial era. But currently it seems to cover the whole story of the relationship between the Gaboye and the majority clans.

The second factor is the deterioration of the Gaboye urban population's material standard of living due to the fall in their income and their exclusion from the decision-making arenas of the Somalilander state: these are the core themes that represent their social position. The public debate about the marginality of the Gaboye deals only with their current positioning. Like the Gosha studied by Besteman, the Gaboye, too, have tried to de-emphasise their past subordination in order to claim for themselves "an accepted, equal Somali identity" (Besteman 1993: 578) and their legally recognised status as citizens of the Somalilander state. Moreover, recalling the Gaboye's past is today a prickly operation which causes embarrassment to the entire Somalilander public sphere. As famous sheikhs and other prominent figures (like the illustrious poet Hadraawi) often remember, the discrimination affecting the Gaboye, for instance in marriage segregation, is shameful for the Somalilanders: it is often described as explicitly violating Islamic precepts. Even the political elites, the party leaders and the traditional leaders of both the Gaboye and the majority clans discourage discussion of the past. They fear that such a debate could reactivate the divisions between the clans that marked the civil war of the 1980s.

The third factor is that the variety of Gaboye migratory patterns, especially after 1960, has contributed to the generation of disjointed layers in the oral history of mobility, each new layer absorbing the previous one. The steady influx of Gaboye households and individuals in Hargeysa throughout the postcolonial period, the massive flight from the town during the late 1980s, the diaspora after the civil war, the return and the new migration from Ethiopia, the rural areas and other Somalilander towns to Hargeysa from the late 1990s: they have all added to the accumulation of narratives from the earlier migrations. The oscillation among the Gaboye between spatial fission and condensation at the level of both genealogical units and single households over the postcolonial decades may well have obstructed the transmission of oral history.[154] It could also have facilitated the contamination between the representations of previous generations' mobility patterns and those

[154] Conversely, some experiences of migration undertaken by entire households, like the long days in refugee camps or other temporary settlements after the post-civil war mass exodus, prompted the inter-generational exchange of historical knowledge. We have recorded a case such as this.

of subsequent migratory trajectories. For example, during the fieldwork, the arrival in Hargeysa of the first Gaboye settlers was described by their descendants as the search for better job opportunities. These narratives echo the stories of the generations of urban migrants that entered the town later on, during the 1970s or within the last 15 years.

These factors have been taken into account during the fieldwork in attempting to reconstruct the premises and the configurations of the Gaboye's urban settlement. They show that this mnemonic content is inherently interwoven with sensitive issues for both individuals and an entire community: that of the past subordination and its transformations. A recurring form of representation of these issues seems to be the abstracting of stories, for example those about the first Gaboye's migratory wave into Hargeysa, from either the historical context sketched in the following paragraphs or the configuration of marginality confirmed by scholars, travellers and the eldest members of the group.

4.2 ORAL HISTORY ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF HARGEYSA

The area later occupied by Hargeysa was, until the first two decades of the twentieth century, crossed by the seasonal routes of mobility of local pastoral groups involved in the exploitation of local water sources (Hargeysa had abundant underground waters) and seasonal grazing areas. The borders of the clan territories[155] attached to different groups, the frontlines of faction wars and the routes opened up by alliances where people and livestock could circulate socially shaped the physical space. The urban expansion was the result of several conflicts between local genealogical units and of the subsequent agreements which were, according to our interlocutors, influenced by the colonial authorities.

According to the oral history, one of the most prominent actors in this historical phase was a *Suldaan* of the clan named Ciida Galle (part of the clan confederation of the Isaaq), widely known as Diriye. He was a settled resident in the area later occupied by Hargeysa long before the 1930s. His name appears in a colonial document reported in the previous chapter: he is the "Sultan Deria Hassan" who in 1916, together with other traditional leaders and religious figures, signed in Hargeysa a declaration of loyalty to the British and welcomed their return to the interior of the Protectorate after their 1910 withdrawal.[156] Following oral history, during the first decades of the twentieth century, the prestige of the *Suldaan* of the Ciida Galle was widely recognised among the Isaaq. The British officers at that time had a quite different opinion: in a letter of 1912, Major H.

[155] Called *degaan* in Somali. The claim of exclusive rights over specific portions of land was mentioned in the previous chapter. The British were aware of this Somali custom but decided not to recognise it in official regulations.
[156] See previous chapter, TNA, CO 323/701/4.

Rayne,[157] the District Commissioner of Zeila, defined the "Sultan" of Ciida Galle a "nonentity". He did not give many more details, but probably his judgement was based on a comparison with other two supreme 'traditional' leaders, endowed with the title of *Ugaas*, belonging to the extreme western clans of Isa and Gadabursi. The latter were each considered the "head" of their 'tribe' and were paid forms of respect that, according to Rayne, resembled those the Catholics render to the pope. That was not the case of the *Suldaan* of Ciida Galle whose akils, the stipendiary members of the clans who acted as representatives with the British administration, treated him as equal.

These British sources suggest that the *Suldaan* had a merely honorific title. However, his descendants continued to play leading political roles in the following decades. Rashid Sultan Abdullahi was registered by the British in 1959 among the leading political figures of the Protectorate.[158] Described as the son of the "Sultan" of "Eidagalla", he was probably the grandson of *Suldaan* Diriye; he was born in 1925, educated in government schools in the Protectorate and could speak and write English and Arabic. In the past he appeared to have been interested in communist literature, he was imprisoned for rioting in 1952 and later on he was the co-founder and Secretary General of the National United Front. The members of the family of the Ciida Galle *Suldaan*s were among that small portion of Somaliland population that had access to government schools, and that they tried to preserve a role of political leadership until the last years of the Protectorate.

The interlocutors[159] consulted during the fieldwork said that *Suldaan* Diriye's permanent abode at the beginning of the twentieth century was an area on the southern bank of the seasonal river that crosses Hargeysa from west to east. One Gaboye elder called Said stated during an interview:[160] "when there was no town, the *Suldaan* of Ciida Galle controlled this area [the area nowadays occupied by Hargeysa, especially those parts corresponding to the downtown and the southern bank of the river]. The English arrived and, since he was the ruler, they made an agreement with him. Then he fenced an area and lived there, this place is called *beerta suldaanka* [the field, the garden of the *Suldaan*] and is close to the river, where the military area is located [a military base has been there since the years of the Siad Barre regime]. He controlled the area. He

[157] TNA, CO 535/131/21.
[158] His profile is included in the intelligence report quoted above. See TNA, CO 1015/1936. Indeed, the British did not have a great opinion of him and thought he had adopted pro-West positions for opportunistic reasons. However, this document provides valuable insights into the process of investment and conversion of political influence among the leadership of genealogical units in the years when political parties were gaining an important political role.
[159] The most important source on the history of *Suldaan* Diriye is a Gaboye elder called Said whose ancestors were affiliated to the clan of the *Suldaan*; we interviewed him on 17 and 21 February, on 29 April (in his house) and 6 August (in a barbershop) 2015. Another important source who provided an account consistent with Said's is a Ciida Galle elder called Xasan who was interviewed on 29 July 2015 (in his house). He belongs to the same clan of the *Suldaan* and has a reputation as an expert on the history of the Hargeysa area and the genealogical groups settled there.
[160] Interview in his private house of 29 April 2015.

had several members of our group [Gaboye people] staying with him who used to do jobs for him. He had horses and they attended horses, someone cut his hair, they were doing different jobs […] then, they were his forces, his army. He used to order: 'go there and attack those people!'. […] He was their *abaan* and they were those living with him. The *Suldaan* was the manager of the area, he was like the current President of Somaliland, so he needed an army for the administration. […] For example, the Ogaden [a Somali clan largely settled in Ethiopia] often came here and tried to claim this area for themselves, so he needed to have a force for defence against their raids. […] The *Suldaan* allowed the Gaboye living with him to take livestock from any group, including the Ciida Galle, and said to them: 'I am responsible for that, you can take that livestock'. He did so because the *Suldaan*s could do that". The military role of the Gaboye was confirmed by many other interlocutors who referred to different parts of Somaliland and to different historical phases. The eldest members of the group quite often stressed this role as a defining element of the Gaboye's social position. When asked about the early part of his life with the members of the majority clans to whom he was affiliated, one of them immediately exclaimed: "We were lions! We were warriors!".[161] One of the few references to the Gaboye found in the colonial archives refers to a raid perpetrated by them: a 1934 intelligence document reported that some "Midgans" had undertaken a raid and looted some livestock from a man who was killed while trying to recover his goods. These Gaboye are described as "harboured by Somalis". No further clash resulted from this episode because compensation was immediately collected from the murderers and their "harbourers".[162] Also I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957: 9) has reported the involvement of the Gaboye as soldiers in clan warfare: "In the old days it was the Midgaans [the Gaboye] who were especially prised as the soldier-serfs (armed with bow and arrows) of the warring Somali clans to which they were attached. They are no longer important in this role and bows and arrows are seldom if ever used today in the north, having long since been rendered virtually obsolete by the wide currency of rifles in northern Somaliland".[163]

Therefore, before Hargeysa became a town, the area was the residence of a high ranking 'traditional' leader and already hosted a Gaboye community of a few dozen individuals. This history does not necessarily contradict the version of the original settlement in the area of an already mentioned religious figure, Sheikh Madar. In the previous chapter, it was reported that British officers (see Swayne 1903) in the early twentieth century considered him as the founder of Hargeysa; they also confirmed the presence of cultivations in the area. This theory has a large

[161] Interview with a Gaboye elder called Maxamed, 11 June 2015.
[162] TNA, CO 535/103/11, "Intelligence Report".
[163] The Gaboye were particularly feared in battle for being extremely skilled archers trained in the continuous practice of hunting and for preparing the poison called *Wabaio* which they put on the tips of their arrows.

following in the town even nowadays. It must be clarified that the majority of the interlocutors we have consulted belong to the Ciida Galle clan or to Gaboye genealogical units previously affiliated to that clan. For this reason, it is possible that they tend to stress the fact that their ancestors (the *Suldaan* and the groups genealogically related or affiliated to him) controlled the area where Sheikh Madar founded his religious settlement. These sources affirmed that the Sheikh arrived from Harar and established a religious community in the vicinity of the *Suldaan*'s location. After some time the Sheikh was attacked by a lineage part of the Ciida Galle, the Abokor Muse, who looted his livestock, probably because they saw the settlement of the religious figure from another clan as an intrusion in their territory. *Suldaan* Diriye facilitated an agreement and allocated an area to him on the northern bank of the river. He also sent some of the Gaboye living with him to the Sheikh and they became part of his following. One of them was Abdullahi Hiraab, a Tumaal blacksmith whose descendants have enjoyed particular prestige among the Tumaal of Hargeysa and currently hold traditional leadership titles. During the fieldwork they confirmed their ancestor's relationship with the Sheikh.[164]

Part of this oral history echoes the information included in a document discussed in the previous chapter, the report of the expedition led by Lieutenant J.D. Fullerton[165] that reached the area before (1884) Swayne's first visit. Fullerton's allusion to the fact that Hargeysa was deemed "neutral" ground by local genealogical units which had their representatives living there is coherent with the oral accounts collected during this research: the presence of the *Suldaan* of Ciida Galle might explain his statement; but the reference to the "neutral ground" seems more consistent with the nature of religious settlements in the Somali territories which were extraneous to the clan boundaries.

Although the nature of the proto-settlement of Hargeysa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is subject to different reconstructions, we can identify some dominant characteristics, the first of which is the presence of watering points which were of crucial importance for the local nomadic groups. Then there is the reportedly double dimension of its being a religious settlement and hotspot in the geography of clan territories and its hosting the permanent residence of a 'traditional' leader. Finally, an element overlooked by written sources but accounted by some interlocutors is the old-established presence of a small group of Gaboye in the area.

This historical information must be related to more general comments we collected about the distribution of the Gaboye among the majority clans. According to some Gaboye elders, the reason for their settlement patterns was the prestige enjoyed by the genealogical segments to which they

[164] Conversation held with Hiraab's descendant called Farah during a *kat*-chewing session on 11 February 2015 and individual interview with him on 20 May 2015.
[165] See Royal Geographical Society, Fullerton Lieut. J.D., reference: JMS/3/116.

were affiliated. We have already discussed the hierarchies of prestige among the majority clans using I.M. Lewis's lexicon (I.M. Lewis 1957; 1961) and his opposition between *laandheere* and *laangaab* lineages. Indeed, some interviews collected during the fieldwork concerning the past configuration of Gaboye's marginality – including the one with a Gaboye elder discussed in Chapter 1 – have proved that the maintenance of links of protection with members of the Gaboye community, namely the number of Gaboye providing their occupational services and living together with a specific genealogical entity, was another basic marker that defined the pre-eminence of a given group among the genealogical partitions.

The option available of relying on the Gaboye for military purposes further signals the role of the Gaboye as an appendage of political prestige inside the clan. These services could be the prerogative of entire genealogical units, that exerted their right of *abaan* collectively, or of individuals, as the case of *Suldaan* Diriye shows. Both confirm that Gaboye groups, said to be composed of a few households, tended to be concentrated around knots of power. Some cases collected during the fieldwork report small settlements of Gaboye in specific areas allocated to them by the majority clans to which they were affiliated: one was a place called Faruurta Midgaanka, some 50 kilometres south of Hargeysa. The name means "harelip of the migdaans", with harelip probably referring metaphorically to environmental features of the location. It is the place where one of the elders interviewed, Said, keeps his livestock and has built a water catchment. He told us that several Gaboye households belonging to one specific sub-clan used to live together there, since that was the clan territory, the *degaan*, of the Ciida Galle sub-clan to which they were affiliated.[166] Another example of the constitution of Gaboye's settlements due to their military role was reported during an interview[167] with Dahir, a member of a majority clan from an area close to the village of Brisle, south-west of Hargeysa, across the border in Ethiopia. According to Dahir, the village, nowadays almost entirely inhabited by Gaboye households, was founded by around twenty Gaboye households (of the clan Musse Dheriyo, sub-clan Talabacaadde) which requested and were allowed to settle there in 1956 by the *Suldaan* of the Habar Awal (a genealogical unit included in the clan confederation of the Isaaq and comprising several clans), *Suldaan* Abdullahi, to whom they were affiliated. The area was suitable for the Gaboye because it was rich in wild animals that they could hunt for their skins to produce leather objects. But it was also the border with other competing clans and the Gaboye's settlement could act as a sort of frontier outpost in the area.

The latter case, as well as that of *Suldaan* Diriye, proves that high-ranking 'traditional' leaders like the *Suldaan*s could play a role in the allocation of settlement areas to the Gaboye. The

[166] Said provided this information during the interviews of 17 and 21 February 2015.
[167] Interview with Dahir, 17 June 2015.

part of the story mentioned above concerning *Suldaan* Diriye's decision to send some Gaboye to live with Sheikh Madar reinforces the idea that the relationship of protection could be an attribute of honourable figures,[168] in this case a religious and not a 'traditional' one. This evidence supports the hypothesis that the Gaboye might be an index of the pre-eminence accorded to some individuals.

What has been stated so far about the distribution of Gaboye must be integrated with another possible explanation of their concentration in the proto-settlement of Hargeysa before it began its urban expansion: the residence of the Ciida Galle *Suldaan* was in a hotspot in the clan territory where important resources (like water) of the group were concentrated and protected. For this reason and for its situation across caravan routes, the area of Hargeysa was a meeting point; hence it can be argued that local groups used it also as a place where the periodical need for some occupational services and products, like shoes or metal tools, could be met, thank to the permanent settlement of craftsmen there.

4.3 ORAL HISTORY AND HARGEYSA'S FIRST WAVE OF EXPANSION

Some of the old members of both the majority and the Gaboye clans that we have interviewed reported that, approximately between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, members of the Nuuh Ismaciil lineage, belonging to the Isaaq clan named Sacaad Muse, requested *Suldaan* Diriye's permission to settle in the area adjacent to his residence. Said, the Gaboye elder quoted above, stated: "They sent to the *Suldaan* a number of camels, dates and offered twenty-two beautiful girls in marriage to the Ciida Galle men. The *Suldaan* allowed them, they built *dergaad* [mud constructions] and opened small shops. Initially they settled peacefully".[169] This is evidently coherent with colonial documents reviewed in the previous chapter.[170] We have already reported that the colonial authorities registered the migration of the trading community (belonging to the Yunis Nuh sub-division of the Nuuh Ismaciil lineage) from the coastal town of Bullhar to Hargeysa, due the continuing decline of that port's business. This episode was related to the crisis over these years of the system based on caravan routes and on their brokers/protectors, the *abaan*s: a crisis that resulted in a new economic role for the hinterland centres like Hargeysa where livestock was concentrated from the surrounding countryside before being transported to the port of Berbera.

[168] This story can also be seen as an example supporting I.M. Lewis' sharp judgement on the Gaboye that will be quoted in Chapter 5: they were a "chattel" and were included in the inheritable patrimony of the Somali lineage group. (I.M. Lewis 1957: 69). Indeed, the story under scrutiny reports an episode of alienation of human beings, resembling a sort of gift or tribute. This does not necessarily mean that the Gaboye were considered as 'gifts' by Sheikh Madar and, as such, absorbed into his community.
[169] Interview with Said, 6 August 2015.
[170] See in the previous chapter, TNA, CO 535/102/7.

According to the interlocutors consulted who, it must be remembered, belong to the Ciida Galle clan or to Gaboye groups formerly affiliated to them, the newly arrived groups occupied progressively larger portions of land across the banks of the river close to the *Suldaan*'s dwelling, where they built brick houses and established farms. These interlocutors depicted this phase as a rupture in the modes of usage of space that the local groups of nomadic pastoralists had so far deployed in that area. What we have represented in the previous chapter as a gradual process of transformation of the economy of the Protectorate, oral history has tended to sketch as the outcome of particular events: namely, the settlement in the area of Hargeysa of the members of a genealogical unit not involved in pastoral activity, who were interested in establishing a permanent settlement (with the evident difference embodied by the new forms of housing) and who were going to compete for resources with other local groups.

According to oral history, this migratory wave and the expansion of the farms generated fear and hostility among the Ciida Galle. Said stated: "Some Ciida Galle saw that these people who had arrived were building masonry houses and creating farms and they got scared: 'Where will our camels drink? And where will we bring them to eat grass? We don't know anything about farms'. They went to the *Suldaan* and said that they were totally against the expansion of cultivation and constructions in the area close to the river. One of them told him: 'I do not want to eat what they produce in their farms and I do not want to marry any of these Sacaad Muse girls. *Suldaan*! I told you this before [the man quoted by the interlocutor had already warned the *Suldaan* when he allowed the first migrants to settle close to the river]: they will build a town here and then where will we bring our camels to graze? To Haud? [a region located in Ethiopia and controlled by other clans]".[171] One lineage in particular, the Abokor Muse, whose members owned the largest number of camels in the clan, was afraid of losing control of the local grazing areas and watering places. They were also concerned by the growing number of Ciida Galle members starting to settle in Hargeysa, building temporary shelters in an area that nowadays is immediately South-East of the older of the two bridges in the town. This area is still known as Jamecoo Weyne, which in Somali language means "big gathering". The Abokor Muse saw in this trend a further consolidation of the Nuuh Ismaciil's plans and destroyed some houses belonging to their same clan members (Ciida Galle). In response to the growing hostility of the Ciida Galle, the Nuuh Ismaciil who belonged to the Sacaad Muse mobilised *Suldaan* Diriye Geraad, the supreme 'traditional' leader of the Habar Awal clan alliance to which they belonged.[172] This *Suldaan* obtained British support for the creation of an urban centre in the area of Hargeysa. After all, other Sacaad Muse lineages had long had

[171] Interview with Said, 6 August 2015.
[172] Sultan Diriye Geraad also appears among the signatories of the 1916 submission of loyalty addressed to the British quoted above. See TNA, CO 323/701/4.

control over the neighbouring rural territories to the west of Hargeysa. These territories were studded with "villages" which had watering places and cultivated fields.[173] Hence, the Nuuh Ismaciil were not an isolated lineage in an alien clan's domains. According to the sources consulted, the British presence in the Hargeysa area at that time was limited to a small number of officers. Therefore the Ciida Galle, with their leader *Suldaan* Diriye Hassan having changed his mind, decided to attack the new settlers and drive them away. The elders interviewed who belong to the Ciida Galle or to Gaboye clans affiliated to them have represented this phase as a battle for the control of Hargeysa. After the clash, the elders of the groups involved, along with Sheikh Madar and the British, promoted peace negotiations.

The British authorities had already indicated that they were interested not only in stopping the fighting but also in sponsoring the construction of an urban settlement in the area of Hargeysa. An agreement was finally formulated: all the parties agreed to participate in the building of the town. They defined the borders of different areas reserved for specific clans; the eastern part of the northern bank of the river was allocated to the Habar Yonis clan, who did not take part in the conflict but participated in the negotiations. In addition, they decided to delimit a central zone that was to become the city centre where all the groups involved could build.

These narratives tend to attribute pivotal importance to particular, discrete, events rather than to broader processes. The oral history collected has not helped to clarify chronological coordinates or to draw a historical line, but has outlined single episodes and the role played in them by well known figures like *Suldaan* Diriye and Sheikh Madar. However, this information can be compared with the data provided by colonial documents. The first challenge consists in the fact that no mention has been found in the colonial archives of a clash between Ciida Galle lineages and the newly arrived members of the Nuuh Ismaciil or other Sacaad Muse groups, although many other episodes of "intertribal fighting" were reported in the annual reports published all through the 1920s and 1930s. In the annual reports of the late 1920s and the 1930s, the major source of unrest in the Protectorate, and especially in the District of Hargeysa, was the raids by members of the Ogaden clan from Ethiopia against British protected clans. Looting of livestock, killings and retaliation by British Somalis were ordinary events until 1936.[174]

One possible explanation for the absence from the official record of an event that oral sources described as a huge inter-clan clash is that it might have occurred during a period when the

[173] These small settlements and Hargeysa had always been integrated in networks where human beings and livestock could circulate, even before the consolidation of a steady migratory flow towards Hargeysa. Swayne, for example, wrote that in July 1892 he found Hargeysa deserted because Sheikh Madar had gone to Haraf [a village] as was his custom in that season; better pasture were available there during that part of the year (Swayne 1903: 116).

[174] In 1932, a conference was organized in Hargeysa between delegates sent by Ethiopian and British Somalis in order to settle the claims between them. They decided that the former had to pay a sort of collective compensation because of the previous years' attacks. See *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Annual Report for the Year 1933. H.M. Stationary Office.*

British had an extremely loose administrative presence in the interior. For instance, between 1915 and 1920 (the post-1920 annual reports are quite accurate in describing "inter-tribal" fights that occurred every year in the Protectorate and they never mention the conflict described by oral sources) the British control was in effect limited to the coastal towns and all their military effort was devoted to the war against the dervish movement in the eastern regions of the Protectorate. It is possible that a local conflict, albeit an important one in which the future of the urban expansion of Hargeysa was at stake, did not attract much attention from the colonial authorities and did not figure in the colonial records simply for that reason.

Indeed, one reference to an inter-clan fight showing important similarities with that accounted by the elders interviewed has been found in a colonial document during this research. The clans involved were allegedly those indicated by the oral sources but the clash reported occurred in 1947: it was a conflict between Habar Garhajis and Habar Awal, the two federations of allied clans comprising respectively the Ciida Galle and the Sacaad Muse. The reference is a brief allusion included in the report of a general survey conducted in the Protectorate in 1947: "The riots in Hargeysa of the 26th-28th November, caused by fighting between Habr Awal and Habr Garhajis (Habr Yunis and Eidagalla), resulted in December in a startlingly clear line separating these two groups, roughly North East and South West, […] The good rains on November 27th from Gudubi to Awareh probably helped to draw off many herdsmen from the fray since water and grazing must be the first loyalty of those who depend for life on stock".[175] The major contrasting point between this source and the account of the elders who recalled this episode is in the timing: they pre-date the clash to the Second World War, because the fight was motivated by the incipient urban development of the area of Hargeysa and took place when urbanisation was still a 'project'. In 1947, Hargeysa had been recognised as the capital of the Protectorate two years before, and, as the sources quoted in the previous chapter report, probably had a population of around 30,000 inhabitants. But other important points are common to both incidents, for example the fact that the

[175] See *British Military Administration Somaliland Protectorate. Report on General Survey of British Somaliland 1947.* P.11. The same episode is also mentioned in the annual report of the Military Administration for 1947. See TNA, CO 537/3508, pp.1-2. The causes of the clash are roughly defined as "minor quarrels". However, the gravity of the event presented in the report suggests either that the British did not fully understand the multiple implications of the fight or that it was a fresh outbreak, caused by a trivial *casus belli*, of long-lasting hostility between the groups involved. The report stated that "About 40 persons were killed, and there would undoubtedly have been much heavier casualties if the police had not shown the utmost staunchness. Rifles, revolvers, hand-grenades, and an automatic weapon were used by the rioters. The Military Governor broadcast to the town and district on the 19th December. He announced certain measures he had decided to take for the prevention of the recrudescence of the disturbance, and for the better administration of the Township of Hargeysa, *inter alia*, he demanded, as a preliminary measure of security, the surrender of 100 rifles, 12 revolvers, an automatic weapon, besides a number of hand-grenades, from the tribes concerned in the disturbances. The result of this broadcast does not belong to the period under review, but it may here be said that the orders issued were effective." These words sound more like a war bulletin rather than the report of a dispute arising from "minor quarrels".

fight resulted in a division of the town into clan-homogeneous areas. Though Hargeysa is now inhabited by members of all the Somalilander clans, these clan divisions are still clearly visible.

Another aspect underlined by the interlocutors is the British support for the 'project' of urban expansion of Hargeysa that cornered the Ciida Galle and prompted their violent opposition to it. We have offered several examples in the previous chapter proving the British benevolence towards urban development in the Protectorate, at least until the late 1930s. Beside the enthusiastic general statements of Governor Kittermaster in 1928 (Kittermaster 1928) about the growing investments of the Somalis in the real estate sector, the most relevant evidence consists in the land expropriation campaigns carried out in the towns from 1927. The first case occurred in Hargeysa and the Governor justified the measure as necessary to sustain the on-going expansion of the town.[176] The decision reflected the intention to support a specific category of urban settlers – willing to build "masonry houses" – at the expense of the previous occupants who lived in temporary structures.

We must regard oral and written sources as complementary. They are intrinsically fragmentary and to some extent contradictory on the issues of the changing usages of space and the morphology of social groups of settlers in the area of Hargeysa. The oral history collected among prestigious figures of specific clans and discussed in this chapter is challenged by members of other genealogical groups consulted during informal conversations and who, for instance, question the early dating of the presence of the Ciida Galle *Suldaan* in the area. It seems difficult to believe that Hargeysa expanded as the sudden outcome of a specific inter-clan clash and the subsequent negotiations. On the other hand, the migration flows that brought members of different genealogical units to the area, groups which established economic activities that had been marginal in the area, like farming and commerce, might have generated hostility and episodic conflicts. One of these points of conflict was the 1947 "riots" in Hargeysa. They occurred in the middle of that phase which we have defined in the last chapter as a 'second wave of urbanisation' in the Protectorate. The British Military Administration had launched significant development projects and the building of infrastructures in the town, and the volume of business activity increased massively after 1941. While the result of the 1947 fight was a 'division' of the town into clan territories – thence the introduction of borders limiting the settlement and the construction of buildings – it is legitimate to think that among its causes there was an imbalance in the capacity or willingness of local groups to benefit from these transformations. And this is clearly registered by oral history which witnesses the Ciida Galle fear of losing control over watering points and grazing areas.

[176] See TNA, CO 535/80/1. Quoted in the previous chapter.

4.4. THE GABOYE'S SETTLEMENT IN THE TOWN DURING COLONIAL TIMES

The representation of the urban expansion of Hargeysa included in oral history shows the way local groups organise the historical knowledge of some major social changes that occurred roughly during the last four decades of the colonial era (1920-1960). This representation gives centrality to genealogical cleavages between the different waves of settlers as the factor explaining the differentiation of economic activities and hence of the usages of physical space (and the resources included in it) deployed by the groups. This is a fundamental part of our understanding of the transformation of the institution marginalising the Gaboye, because it depicts its context. In order to reconstruct in detail the role played by the Gaboye in the urban expansion of Hargeysa, we have to review the different layers and zones of their settlement in the area.

The Gaboye participated at all stages of this sequence. The oldest frame of their presence in Hargeysa is related to the settlement of the Ciida Galle *Suldaan*. A small group of Gaboye were living permanently with the *Suldaan* and were under his protection. During several interviews with Gaboye and members of other marginalised groups like the Tumaal, the area known as Jameecoo Weyne (meaning 'big gathering' and derived from an Arabic word absorbed into Somali language) has been appointed as the place where their ancestors lived. The area was next to the *Suldaan*'s residence and already hosted wattle and daub structures before the 1940s. For instance, some of the descendants of Abdullahi Hiraab, the blacksmith who became part of the following of Sheikh Madar, inherited a dwelling from him, lived and exercised their work of blacksmiths there until the 1970s.[177] Even members of the Ciida Galle clan built temporary structures in Jameecoo Weyne and they were targeted by the Abokor Muse lineage during the period of the mounting hostility between pastoralists and the new settlers. It is difficult to assess how far back the process of populating of this area goes. Some sources have said it is where Sheikh Madar established his religious community. It hosted a mosque and a religious school until, after being attacked by local groups, the Sheikh moved to the area on the northern bank of the river where his *maqaam* – the sanctuary - still is. There is also good evidence for the presence of dwellings owned by members of the Gaboye from the time of Sheikh Madar.

Later on, a remarkable number of Gaboye arrived when the urbanisation was an established trend in which different clans took part, including the Sacaad Muse, the Ciida Galle and others whose territory was more distant. This trend was well documented at least from the 1940s (but was probably present before that), and it is during this phase that the memories of the interlocutors consulted place the establishment of concentrations of Gaboye in other areas of Hargeysa. The

[177] Interview with Cabdikadir, a descendant of Abdullahi Hiraab, 9 May 2015.

Gaboye who arrived in this phase were affiliated to the local branches of both the Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle and belonged largely to the sub-clan named Talabacaadde, part of the Musse Dheriyo clan.

According to two of the elders interviewed – Said and Xasan, belonging respectively to a Gaboye clan and to the Ciida Galle – the growth of the urban centre created a "chance" for the Gaboye: they "escaped" (the Somali verb is *carar*) from their 'patrons' and settled in the town in specific areas where they tended to concentrate.[178] The interlocutors depicted the urban environment as a desirable and viable destination for their migration. The stories presenting specific cases of "escape" from rural areas towards the town are extremely hard to find, first because the people who had such experiences during the last decades of the colonial period have almost all passed away; second, because these stories tend to be forgotten or kept secretly, being directly related to the past subordination of the Gaboye. During an interview, a Gaboye elder whom we call Cabdi remembered with extreme pain the moment when he fled from the members of the majority clans he was living with.[179] He said: "One day, when I was very young, like seventeen or eighteen years old, one man [belonging to the majority clan to whom he was affiliated] came to me, grabbed my hair and pulled my head and said: 'Go and kill that man!' [the interlocutor meant that the member of the majority clan gave him some general information and where to find a man he wanted dead as a revenge]. I was shocked; shortly afterwards, when I was left alone to attend some animals, I took the chance and ran away to Hargeysa, alone". There, thank to a relative, Cabdi was able to start doing minor jobs in a British compound in the Shacaab area (in the western part of the town, where most of the British officers' quarters were located). He rapidly gained the favour of the British officers because he proved more reliable than other Somali workers and obtained a regular job in the compound as a sweeper and assistant cook.

Said commented on the escapes to the town as follows:[180] "After the agreement that ended the conflict between Sacaad Muse and Ciida Galle the town began to grow rapidly and the British increased their military presence. A large number of Sacaad Muse moved to the town and started to live there permanently. Many arrived from the villages of Dumboluk and Haraf and their neighbouring areas [these villages are located in an area west of Hargeysa controlled by Sacaad Muse groups]. A large number of Talabacaadde living with them took the chance and escaped to the

[178] Interview with Said, 6 August 2015, Hargeysa. Interview with Xasan, 29 July 2015.
[179] Interview with Cabdi, a Gaboye elder and sheikh, 17 May 2015. He was a lovable person who sadly passed away a few weeks after our pleasant meetings. During our conversations he repeatedly stressed that he was forced to tell me the truth because he was a religious figure, actively involved in the group preserving the memory of Sheikh Musse Dheriyo, the forefather of the Gaboye clan bearing his name. He probably wanted to underline indirectly how difficult it was to hear personal accounts like the one he shared with me about the past oppression of the Gaboye and their attempts to escape from it.
[180] Interview with Said of 6 August 2015.

town. They thought they could do their jobs there and that nobody could tell anything to them, whereas the British were there. Previously, during the conflict, the Sacaad Muse and the Talabacaadde had fought together but when the war was over everybody wanted to go to the town and nobody was interested in the issues of the rural areas like the *abaan* relationship". The prominent Ciida Galle elder called Xasan made similar observations:[181] "After the conflict between Habar Awal and Habar Garxajis [the two clan confederations that include respectively the Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle], each group started to settle together in one place. The Sacaad Muse concentrated in Laba Nuh [the name of an area corresponding to a present day neighbourhood of Hargeysa], the Ciida Galle in Jameecoo Weyne [see above; it was an old Ciida Galle settlement] […] Also the Gaboye, who were living with both the Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle, escaped and started to live together in one village." These interlocutors emphasised that one of the reasons for the Gaboye's migration to the town was their decreasing importance for the majority clans and thus the weakening of their control over them. The interlocutors' explanations of the passage from the phase marked by the conflicts between local clans for the control of Hargeysa, when the Gaboye genealogical units were reported as internally divided into opposing factions according to their linkages of affiliation with the clashing clans, to the subsequent phase of the establishment of homogeneous settlements in the town, when the Gaboye genealogical units started to live together, were that the Gaboye were no longer strategically important as "soldiers" and that the stronger British presence in the town meant that the former 'patrons' could not control the Gaboye there as they used to do in the rural areas.

In contrast, other accounts collected among Gaboye individuals who do not belong to the first generation of urban settlers have offered the picture of the Gaboye's rural-urban migration as a gradual process based on maintaining a solid link with the original rural area, on the persistence of the relationship with the members of the majority clans and at the same time on the splitting up of the Gaboye households, some of the members thereof temporarily settling in the town. This migration was usually depicted as motivated by the autonomous intention to diversify economic resources independently from the protectors' wishes or settlement choices. Two of these cases have been collected from Cumar and Cusman – two Talabacaadde individuals who are the leaders of one crew of shoemakers and had worked together for decades in the central market of Hargeysa – whose ancestors were affiliated to the Reer Samatar lineage of the Sacaad Muse clan.[182] They were born in the 1950s in the village of Haraf, a few kilometres west of Hargeysa. Haraf was a small settlement hosting water points controlled by the Reer Samatar lineage who used to have considerable numbers

[181] Interview with Xasan of 29 July 2015.
[182] Interview with Cumar and Cusman, 6 February 2015.

of cattle (one of the few examples in Somaliland). Large portions of the Talabacaadde lineage of the Gaboye clan of Musse Dheriyo were living with them. They practiced their traditional jobs, including hunting.[183] These sources have reported that in the late 1950s and the early 1960s the Gaboye living in Haraf owned small amounts of livestock, only sheep and goats. This information presents a partial rupture with the belief widely held among scholars (see Chapter 1) that the Gaboye were excluded from the possession of livestock. Cumar and Cusman specified that only the ownership of camels was forbidden to them and emphasised the difference in the size of their flocks from those of the majority clans. Cumar stated: "We were born in Haraf. Our families had livestock there […]. When we were children we started to come to Hargeysa with our fathers every day and to learn our job [that of shoemakers] from them. This was our education; we were *caawye* [assistants or apprentice]. […] We never attended livestock. Our younger brothers and sisters, some of the women and the elders, remained in the rural area and attended livestock. They stayed together with the Reer Samatar. Our fathers sent our families some money, sugar, clothes, things that were not available in the rural areas. […] Their wives were in the rural areas, [when we grew up] we married our wives in the town and we never lived in the rural areas". The two men interviewed became their fathers' assistants in the second half of the 1960s and stated that by those years their fathers had already obtained control of a plot of land in the town (thanks to a programme of re-location conducted by the colonial authorities in the late 1950s which addressed the Gaboye of Hargeysa).

From their words it seems that between their generation and that of their fathers a crucial change occurred: the two shoemakers married their wives, established their own households and have spent their entire working life in Hargeysa whereas their fathers had limited themselves to establishing a foothold in the town, occupying a plot and a working space which was subsequently left to their children. But the foundation and basis of the fathers' households continued to be in the rural area surrounding the village of Haraf. In fact, they had been able also to raise some livestock[184] which was kept there and attended by the rest of the family. Cumar and Cusman reported that they maintained a strong relationship over previous decades with the portion of the family that remained in the rural, but that recently the circulation of material resources between the two branches had been interrupted due to the dwindling income of their work in the town. Only the exchange of information and participation in the payment of diya still united them.

[183] A Gaboye elder born in Haraf, called Cabdiaziz, reported a story about the origins of the village. He told me that a Talabacaade hunter was tracking an ostrich in the area and saw it drinking there; he later reported what he had seen and the Sacaad Muse together with other Talabacaade started to settle in the area. Interview of 28 July 2015.

[184] Unfortunately we were not able to obtain more details about the process of the initial establishment of the flock.

This reconstruction of two similar family histories shows that the process of the Gaboye's coming into the town may have been a gradual process, the consolidation of the basic necessities of settlement: a working space and a dwelling. These cases are rather different from that of "escape" and show that the Gaboye's rural-urban migration during the last two decades of the Protectorate was not only uni-lineal but could also follow the bi-direction networks connecting the centre of Hargeysa with the surrounding countryside and villages.

Combining all the sources reviewed so far, we can outline the different factors that, arguably, were related to the process of the Gaboye's urban settlement. The evidence shows that this settlement could be either disjointed or related to the urban settlement of the local groups belonging to the majority clans. On the one hand, some of the elders interviewed have tended to picture the Gaboye's migration as the exploitation of a "chance" offered by the mere existence of the town, as a sort of safe heaven, to "escape". The towns exercised a constant attraction to different categories of rural people and their expansion acted as a powerful force restructuring the social and economic relationships between local groups. On the other hand, some Gaboye households were affiliated with and shared the residence of subjects, like the *Suldaan* of Ciida Galle and Sheikh Madar, whose presence in the area of the proto-settlement of Hargeysa is documented from at least the 1880s. When the urban expansion of Hargeysa started (after 1920), most of the Gaboye settlers who began to arrive did not come from distant places. Almost all of them belonged to genealogical units (especially the Talabacaadde lineage) bound by links of affiliation to the local lineages of the two majority clans of Ciida Galle and Sacaad Muse, namely the groups who were competing for control of the area of Hargeysa and who, over the last three decades of the British Protectorate (1930-1960) and after an intermittent stream of conflicts, tried to play a role in the changing economic and demographic configuration of Hargeysa. Rural-urban mobility did not always coincide with "escapes" from protectors: the cases reported above in which urban settlement was a gradual process over several generations show that some Gaboye had not severed their relationships with the majority clans. Moreover, there is one element that oral histories on the initial phases of Gaboye's urban settlement did not help to clarify: that until the second half of the 1950s there were no diya-paying groups and 'traditional' representatives belonging to Gaboye clans registered by the British. Although the oral sources do not provide clear chronological coordinates, the documents quoted on the issue of urban 'destitute youth' have shown that in late 1940s Hargeysa there were easily identifiable Gaboye's 'neighbourhoods' hosting numerous households and not exclusively (nor largely) 'un-attended' boys. These elements of the urban Gaboye community had to maintain relationships with their protectors, at least with regard to the blood-compensation exchanges. Such a persisting linkage suggests that the process of urban settlement did not always coincide with an

abrupt breaking of the affiliation but with the weakening of the majority clans' control over the settlement of the members of the Gaboye groups.

CHAPTER 5
THE FIRST GOBOYE 'TRADITIONAL' LEADER AND DIYA-PAYING GROUP IN HARGEYSA

5.1 THE BRITISH APPROACH TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

The emancipatory path of the Gaboye is marked by the centrality of a historical event which took place in Hargeysa: the constitution of the first Gaboye diya-paying group and the appointment of their first 'traditional' leader. If so much attention has been devoted in the previous sections to the history of Hargeysa it is also because the town was the physical context of this major change. All the elements which were described as characterising the last two decades of the colonial era are equally crucial in the understanding of the transformation of the Gaboye's position in Somalilander society: the new British administrative approach, the growth of urban areas in the hinterland, the new relationship between the rural and the urban socio-economic spaces.

The colonial authorities conceived their administrative action as 'conservative' and they regarded some of the transformations that the Protectorate was undergoing as potentially destructive (see the threat of a "de-tribalisation" of urban-based groups). We have devoted more attention to the British approach to the issue of the administration of the towns and, in outlining the history of Hargeysa, we have contrasted the perspective of colonial documents with that of the interlocutors consulted during the fieldwork. The constitution of the first Gaboye diya-paying group and 'traditional' leader in Hargeysa will be reconstructed differently, exclusively through oral sources because no explicit reference to it has been found in the colonial documents. This can be explained by the fact that the British registration of these new Gaboye institutions was not the expression of a centralised policy formulated by the Protectorate authorities towards the Gaboye. It was said to coincide with an initiative taken by local officers in the town and motivated by the peculiarity of the context of Hargeysa where large settlements of Gaboye had already been established in the last two decades of the colonial period. However, it is worth examining what probably were the premises and the broader framework of this British policy. Throughout the last three decades of the colonial era, the British were debating the reconfiguration of their administrative apparatus in the Protectorate and had to deal with the overlap between two issues: the management of the new towns like Hargeysa (and the demographic, social and economic aspects related to their expansion) and the future role played by 'traditional' institutions, namely the genealogical units or "tribes" and their associated forms of leadership, like the "stipendiary akils" and the prestigious figures of the clans. Here, in order to better understand the process of the appointment of the first Gaboye

'traditional' representative in Hargeysa, the British policy towards the second issue will be reviewed.

5.2 'TRADITIONAL' FORMS OF AUTHORITY

5.2.1 BRITISH POLICIES AND 'TRADITIONAL' LEADERSHIP

The fact that the Protectorate ranked low in importance within the British Empire was reflected by the Somaliland administration's significantly departing from the principle of *indirect rule* applied elsewhere. Right to the end of colonial rule the Protectorate authorities maintained their monopoly over legislative, executive and, largely, judiciary powers. Although it seems paradoxical, this policy was combined with the deployment of a limited administrative machine, to be maintained as cheaply as possible. For instance, quite often in the colonial documents British officers address the Colonial Office requesting more personnel and lamenting the few dozen officers' inability to fulfil all their duties. Until the 1940s the only administrative goals were the control of inter-clan conflicts and the maintenance of an acceptable level of efficiency in the trade sector. The installation of a well organised structure based on the co-option of local authorities into the administrative apparatus would have required a deeper knowledge of the Somali people, in addition to strategic planning and more investment. The peculiarity of Somaliland within the British Empire in terms of the low levels of development investments and more specifically of the setting up of a "Native Administration" began to emerge in the 1930s but was deliberately challenged only during the years of the Military Administration, after 1941. The opinion expressed by Millman in his history of the British administration in Somaliland is extremely sharp on this point: *indirect rule* was not possible in Somaliland simply because there were no local authorities to involve in the government apparatus. The only two forms of authority were the *Suldaan*s (or "Sultans", as the word was transliterated by the British officers), but they acted intermittently as spokesmen of the clans, and the *caaqil*s ("akils" for the British), who were regarded by the Somalis as agents of the government and not as their representatives (Millman 2013: 33). The individuals who were registered as bearing these titles received a salary from the British. They were officially associated with entire clans in the case of the *Suldaan*s, and with smaller genealogical entities for the akils.

The institution of the akil had been inherited by the British from the short period of Egyptian domination in the north-western Somali territories, between the 1870s and the 1880s. Governor Kittermaster, who was required by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to describe the "tribal organisation" of the Somalis, commented on the creation of akils as follows: "The Egyptian Government deliberately aimed at weakening whatever power these chiefs [he is referring to the

"Sultans" and similar forms of 'traditional' leadership] might have by the appointment of Akils for each section of a tribe. These Akils acted as Government agents between the Government and the section without any reference to the chief".[185] The system continued to operate during the British rule but, in one case found in the colonial archives, a Sultan was also registered by the British authorities as a stipendiary akil in Zeyla in the late 1890s.[186] This suggests that in the early phase of their presence, the British adopted a more pragmatic approach that also permitted the overlapping of the role of akil, that of government agent, with the titles of 'traditional' leadership. However, they remained distinct roles in the following decades. What the British called "chiefs", like the *Suldaan*s, were considered a weak institution by them. Governor Kittermaster reported that "the only occasions on which they come to the fore are when the tribe as a whole wish to put forward to Government some proposal which they know will not be favourably received (such as abolition of all taxation) […]".[187] According to the Governor they were largely concerned with the organisation of raids, but they might have been taken into account in a future scheme of self-government. Not much different was the opinion expressed by I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1961) who depicted them as "symbols" of the political unity of the clans, trusted to represent the latter externally and to mediate its internal disputes.

In 1928, Governor Kittermaster described the akils as "not a natural product of the evolution of tribal society. They are mostly selected by the tribesmen and approved by the Government as instruments of communication between their sections and the Government" (Kittermaster 1928: 334). The Governor's words show that the British were aware that the akils were not, nor could be used as, a "native" institution: they were clearly intermediaries. Later on, I.M. Lewis reiterated analogous observations: "they have no power or authority attached to this artificially created role, although there are of course many Local Authorities and *caaqils* who are respected and whose words are listened to because they are forceful characters" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 33). The only legitimacy accorded to these roles came from the government, and if they had some among their fellow clansmen, it was thanks to the respect they had gained for their personal attributes.

According to Governor Kittermaster, in 1930, there were 283 akils in Somaliland; the District of Hargeysa was the one hosting the largest number of them (79), followed by Burao and Zeila. Here is the list of genealogical units used by the Governor to classify the Somalilanders with the number of their akils: Habr Awal (60), Habr Yunis (51), Habr Toljaala (29), Aidagalla (20),

[185] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 24th of November 1930. P. 1.
[186] TNA, CO 535/83/9. The document reported an agreement with the Sultan of Zeila who was also a "stipendiary akil" in 1894. It defined the concession to him of the right to build and to manage the slaughterhouse and the meat market of the town.
[187] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 24th of November 1930. P. 2.

Arab (7), Dolbahanta (29), Warsangeli (12), Gadabursi (40) and Esa (29).[188] There was approximately one akil every 1000 persons, but probably the ratio was lower, and the Governor received continuous requests for the appointment of additional akils; as soon as a group obtained wealth or "standing demands", it advanced such claims because felt that was not adequately represented by the ones in charge. Kittermaster also provided an example in order to explain at what genealogical level akils were appointed: The Habar Awal alliance is divided into two clans, the Saad Musa and Esa Musa; the Esa Musa are divided into two groups, one of which are the Mohamed Esa, that again is composed of many groups. One of them is the Derian and they had an akil but he belonged to one of the numerous section of such a group (which the Governor calls *rer*, using the Somali language). Now, all the other partitions (*rer*) of the Derian lamented that they were ill represented and wanted their own akil. Being officially recognised as government functionaries, the akils were divided into different grades, first, second and third, corresponding to different salaries, which were between 10 and 30 rupees *per mensem*.

5.2.2 "OFFICIAL" AND PRAGMATIC USES OF THE AKILS IN THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

The Protectorate authorities made different usages of the akils: they were a channel for approaching genealogical units when circumstances required, for example during inter-clan fights or when the government wanted to arrest someone suspected of a crime who was being "harboured" by his relatives.

In the answers to Haji Omar Farah's complaints to the colonial authorities mentioned in the previous chapter,[189] it is reported that a campaign took place in 1932 aimed at capturing a man accused of a murder and summoned for trial. One akil actively helped the Somali Camel Corps force sent for the purpose, helping to identify the men hiding the accused and the places where he might have been. The conduct of the akils was monitored by British authorities, as witnessed by the fact that the District Officer of Burao (the local authority in charge in the district where this event took place) asked the British military officer who had led the expedition for an assessment of the role played by the akil in the capture. The akil deserved "some credit" because "he assisted in the bringing of pressure" to the lineage hosting the fugitive and, when the akil finally had the chance to meet the latter, he "dallied with him and thus detained him until his arrest was effected". During the

[188] Six akils were reported under the entry "Oddments". They probably belonged to minority clans, but as far as we know from other colonial documents and oral sources, they were not Gaboye, nor part of any other similar group. See TNA, CO 535/92/1, ibid., p. 5.
[189] See TNA, CO 535/102/7.

following trial, a different akil conducted the defence of the accused.[190] Another, related, incident reported in the same document provides evidence that the akils could act as the executors of British officers' decisions; the afore-mentioned akil led a group of policemen in the seizure of some livestock from the lineage hosting the fugitive: the collection of the fine for failing to pay the compensation due for the murder of a member of another lineage.

The same document reports different cases of collaboration between the akils and British officers. In the late 1920s, Hargeysa was troubled by turmoil between lineages caused by the breaking of engagement agreements. There was a massive clash in the town involving around 3,000 people (with one person killed and numerous wounded), so local officers were particularly careful to identify the first signs and immediately to stop this kind of dispute. An akil of the Ciida Galle clan issued an official "complaint" to the district officer of Hargeysa, reporting that a young boy of his constituency (in the document it is stated that he was "his own akil") was running after a girl who was already engaged to another man. The issue was extremely serious (especially because this case occurred only few weeks after the massive clash mentioned above), as the akil himself underlined: "unless the Court punishes this boy hotly he will not leave this woman alone and if there is tribal fitna [strife] over it and anybody gets hurt, the tribe will have to pay. He has nothing".[191] The boy was sentenced by the District Officer to 12 lashes, as recommended by the akil. This case reveals some aspects of the role of the akil vis-à-vis both the administration and the people: he acted as an informant, reporting to the authorities on threats to stability, and monitored the properties of the members of his own constituency, in the light of his involvement in the blood-compensation negotiations and in the collection of fines imposed on the lineages by the British authorities.

Another case in the colonial archives shows a different task required of the akils. In 1934, the District Officer of Hargeysa, E.N. Park, sent one of the akils of the Habar Awal to Jigjiga (a town in Ethiopian territory) to spy on the activities of a man, Mohamed Warsama, who was suspected of being an Ethiopian agent trying to get the British protected Somalis holding grazing rights in Ethiopian territory to declare themselves Ethiopian citizens. The akil acted as a real secret agent: he approached the man, pretended to be hostile to the British rule, then went back to Hargeysa and wrote a complete report about every single word, deed or meeting Mohamed Warsama had been part of during his stay in Jigjiga.[192]

[190] See TNA, CO 535/102/7. "Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 15th of January 1934. P. 19. The accused was found guilty during the trial and sentenced to death.
[191] See TNA, CO 535/102/7. "Complaint of Akil […]". P. 3.
[192] See TNA, CO 535/101/3. "Political Activities of Certain Somalis".

The British administration made also some attempts to formalise the role of the akils in the government apparatus. In 1921, the akils were involved in the administration of justice with the introduction of the Akil's Courts, subordinate courts located in every district charged with dealing with minor cases: "An 'Akils'' Court consists of five akils or government headmen who are appointed in rotation by the Governor from month to month. Their powers are restricted to cases in which the subject matter in dispute does not exceed Rs.60 or two camels or eighteen sheep".[193] Another reason for the creation of these courts was relieve the District Courts' caseload. The Akils' Courts were intended to deal with what the British used informally to call "tribal cases", officially termed "political cases" – disputes between individuals and genealogical units to be solved through customary law – where the compensation required was limited in scale. Their verdicts were exclusively limited to the application of the "tribal law" and "custom", not Islamic law nor the so-called "coded law" applied in the Protectorate – the ordinances of the Governor and the modified versions of legal corpuses applied in the Indian domains (like the Indian Penal Code) – that were respectively enforced by the Islamic Courts and the District or Protectorate Courts. The Akils' Courts were amended in 1935 and were permitted to impose a term of imprisonment of up to six months in cases where the fines they had imposed were not paid.[194] The Akils' Courts were again reformed in 1939, renamed District Subordinate Civil Courts and entrusted with cases up to 1,000 rupees in value (Millman 2013: 35). They became the object of more structured critique and reform attempts during the time of the British Military Administration in the 1940s. However, according to Millman, the creation of new "native subordinate courts" became a "fiasco": the Somalis involved reproduced the same approach in their judgements based on the application of "custom" which had been consolidated in the previous decades and so were not inclined to go against the interests of their clans (Millman 2013: 129).

The general reconfiguration of 'traditional authority' in Somaliland was already a matter of concern for British Officers in the 1920s. In 1930, Governor Kittermaster advanced some proposals on the matter and outlined the problematic aspects of the present system. He acknowledged the unavoidability of the agenda of *indirect rule,* and at the same time the fact that any attempt to establish an administration had to take into account the "tribal aspect". The most important manifestations of this "tribal aspect" were, first, the cohesion and coalescence of the Somalis on a "tribal" basis when faced by an external strain, notwithstanding "their individualism and fierce family vendettas". Secondly: "the way in which collective responsibility for the acts of individuals

[193] See *Colonial Office. Somaliland. Report for 1921. H.M. Stationary Office. London.* P. 7.
[194] TNA, CO 535/111/2. "The Akils' Courts Amendment Ordinance".

is recognised by the Somalis".[195] The collective responsibility of the liabilities was expressed not only in the payment of blood-compensation (*diya*), but also in many different circumstances: for example, if some police officer was punished for neglect of duty with a fine taken from his salary, his "Dia group [diya-paying group]" would pay the fine. The collective responsibility was also accepted by the Somalis in those cases – the Governor specifies that they were rare – in which the government extracted payment from the local groups by force. This usually occurred when a group refused to pay the blood-compensation owed to another one and the colonial authorities had to intervene to prevent an escalation of violence. The government forces used to make surprise attacks and to seize the "most conveniently situated" livestock of the group involved in the dispute, because they could not pursue the herds of the individual directly responsible. The individuals who suffered the loss from the government seizure were partially reimbursed by their fellow clansmen and, in general, accepted it "fatalistically".

This analysis led the Governor to write the following conclusive statement: "Indeed in this country our whole system of administration may be said to rest on the recognition of vicarious payments".[196] This judgement summarises the self-representation of the British approach deployed during the first ten years of their effective rule in Somaliland (which can be regarded as having started in 1920): first, the tendency to preserve and, at best, to manage the fundamental supports of social organisation of the Somalis, like the clans and the "vicarious payments"; second, the active commitment to the widespread pacification of the local groups which the British and the Governor himself considered their most influential innovation in the Protectorate.

In order to improve the administration, Kittermaster intended to effect a rationalisation and a coordination of the local institutions identified. The fundamental unit was to be the "Dia group" which would appoint a "headman". The number of members of each of these groups would vary, as it currently did, according to the wealth owned by its members. The number of akils would be drastically reduced (in the case of Haba Awal, for instance, they would be reduced from sixty to five) and each akil would represent an undefined number of "Dia groups". It was hoped that, together with his headmen, each akil would become "truly representative" and "will gain increased authority"; later, in a more distant future, they would form a council chaired by a "Sultan" whose authority would be accepted by the entire section.[197]

[195] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 24th of November 1930. P. 8.
[196] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 24th of November 1930. P. 9.
[197] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 24th of November 1930. P. 12.

On the current characteristics of the administration – or how "it reacts on the native organisation under present circumstances", as the Governor wrote – he also stressed the problem that all the administrative work was concentrated in the towns, namely the Districts stations like Hargeysa. The number of British officers deployed in the Protectorate was too low to allow them to travel in the country and establish a direct contact with the population; furthermore, the akils spent most of the year in these stations, "instead of being with their people and looking after them on the spot".

5.2.3 THE DEBATE AROUND 'NATIVE ADMINISTRATION' AFTER 1941

In 1945, Governor Fisher contacted the International African Institute looking for an expert, hopefully a professional anthropologist, who could study the local forms of authority and formulate suggestions about the most suitable form of "Native Administration".[198] In 1950, the government of Somaliland promulgated a new regulation of "native authorities" which was supposed to be the preliminary stage of the implementation of effective forms of self-government. The draft followed the model of similar regulations applied in other African domains; the Kenyan case provided the fundamental pattern.

The annual report for the years 1950 and 1951 explains that under this Ordinance "the Governor has appointed certain Akils to be local authorities with the duty of maintaining order and the power to make certain orders relating to local administration".[199] The akils were no longer merely agents of the government but had obtained an active administrative role. Their activity of monitoring possible offences by individuals against the Protectorate regulations and threats to peace was officially recognised. Now they could also intervene directly: they could impose terms of imprisonment in order to prevent the commission of an offence, arrest a person suspected of a "cognizable offence triable by any court" or already subject to a warrant of arrest issued by another authority, forbid any conduct or activity, like an assembly, which they might consider subversive, and seize livestock if they received information about the presence of looted livestock in the area of

[198] See TNA, CO 535/141/8. The Governor's appeal to the International African Institute triggered an intense exchange of information among functionaries of the Colonial Office. In 1945, the famous anthropologist Raymond Firth took on the task of finding a scholar to carry out the fieldwork in Somaliland; his first choices were S.F. Nadel and E. Evans-Pritchard, but the former had obtained a post in the Military Administration of Tripolitania while the second had just returned to Cambridge University after serving in Cyrenaica. At the same time, the functionaries of the Colonial Office agreed that the best way to finance a survey of the "tribal organization" of the Somalis would have been a research grant offered by the Colonial Social Science Research Council. Later on, it would be through a research fellowship of the same institution that I.M. Lewis would undertake his first fieldwork in Somaliland (I.M. Lewis 1994: 2); this happened only in 1955, after other surveys of the tribal structure of the Somalis had been already carried out. However, this episode shows that the investigation of the clan and political structures of the Somalis was high on the agenda of British social sciences institutions.

[199] *Colonial Office. Report on the Somaliland Protectorate for the Years 1950 and 1951. H.M. Stationary Office. London.* P. 37.

their jurisdiction. Furthermore they could issue orders to the population on a range of matters: the control of farming practices, the management of public water resources, the cutting of trees, the spread of human and animal diseases and the destruction of locusts.[200] The annual report also clarified that "The term 'local authority' has a particular meaning in Somaliland, differing from that which obtains elsewhere. A local authority is the title conferred to a person or a number of persons of whom one is appointed head, whose jurisdiction may extend over a tribe or an area, as specified by the Governor". Indeed, the Governor retained wide powers, since he nominated, dismissed and was entitled to define the jurisdiction of each local authority which might be limited to particular genealogical units, to determined territories or both. In addition, the District Commissioners maintained the power to control, confirm and abolish the resolutions of the local authorities.

In this phase, the debate between the officials of the Colonial Office and British officers in the Protectorate was livelier than ever. They discussed the possibility of building up a new administrative apparatus based on the new system of "native authority" defined by the 1950 Ordinance. Local British officers were more cautious than the Colonial Office about the solidity of the "tribal basis" as a pillar of the administrative set-up. Among their proposals was the establishment of District Councils (the same issue would be still on the table some years later, when the project of launching town councils was discussed) rather than that of Tribal Councils. In a 1950 letter addressed to the Colonial Office, Governor Reece analysed the present situation and renewed this proposal.[201] He stated that the tribes moved across large distances and lived intermixed all over the territory of the Protectorate; this made it difficult to use the "tribal" structure as such for administrative purposes. The Somalis were not so "simple, primitive and unchanged" as people might think in London; one could meet everywhere in Somaliland a seaman from Cardiff or an ex-soldier from Burma who knew "world affairs" and, generally, internal communications had drastically improved. At the same time, the Somalis themselves recognised that the system based on the akils and the Akils' Courts was inefficient and corrupted. It would not be as simple to implant an entire new apparatus of "native authorities" as was believed by the Colonial Office, which was eager to put Somaliland finally in line with the general imperial policy of *indirect rule*.

Another important step was the survey and report produced by R.S. Hudson in 1952,[202] which finally clarified that if the Somalis were to have some form of authority, it must be identified not in the chiefs or the akils but in the clan assemblies, the *shir*s. According to Hudson, at the

[200] See TNA, CO 535/152/2. "Draft of the Ordinance".
[201] See TNA, CO 535/152/2. "Letter of the 5th of March 1950".
[202] His visit and some of his remarks have been already mentioned as quoted in the memorandum about the introduction of Town Councils. See the "Town Council Report" in TNA, CO 1015/264. The report discussed here is entitled "Some Preliminary Notes on Problems Relating to the Constitutional Development of the Somaliland Protectorate – March 1952", by R.S. Hudson, in TNA, CO 1015/560.

lowest level there was the *jilib shir*, namely the assembly comprising usually between one and two hundred adult men genealogically related. They shared common interests and common decisions and deliberated, for example, the collection of wealth for the payment of social obligation. The next level of *shir* was what Hudson called "sub-tribes and Dia groups [diya-paying groups]". These groups probably included between 600 and 4,000 men, with around 1,000 adult males taking part in the assemblies. Again, decisions were taken through open and public debate, but "the elders sometimes adjourn to discuss matters which have been fully debated by all and then refer back to the *shir*s, suggesting the decision and asking for its confirmation". The issues discussed in these gatherings usually were "raiding neighbouring communities, defence, migration, payment of blood money and for any other purpose designed to protect the community, but not for any constructive purpose".[203]

Hudson stated that above this level there was no "effective indigenous institution": the clans can be identified through their names but they were dispersed over vast territories and did not mobilise for common action. They used to do that in the past during the wars or for defence and they were led by the *Suldaan*s; their unity had been broken during Egyptian rule and at the time of the dervish movement wars in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The *jilib* and "sub-tribe" *shirs*, however, even with their members dispersed, used to gather and, for example, appoint delegations to the British. Hudson stated that "Somalis recognise only the authority of their *shir*s"; not that of the akils, and not just because they acted as government agents. He mentioned the recent experiment of the re-organisation of "native authorities" (the Ordinance of 1950, see above) which had given the akils the powers that 'traditional' authorities had received in other African domains; Hudson reported the firm opposition of the Somalis and quoted a minute of the Hargeysa District Council of the 26th of February 1952 in which this resolution was denounced as against the Somali custom: "[…] Akils were the peoples' representatives or agents and should not be given executive powers which had always been vested in the tribal *shir* collectively. If individuals were given power the whole of their influence was thereby destroyed as they were no longer the tribesmen's representatives but more like Ilaloes (tribal police)[204] or policemen. The most effective manner of enforcing decisions of the 'Shirs' of the District Council was by individual Akils working with Ilaloes.[205] The Akils themselves should not have powers".[206]

[203] TNA, CO 1015/560, ibid., pp. 3-4.
[204] The *Illalo* police was a force composed of members of the clans who were kept scattered among the people. They did not wear uniforms and were particularly appreciated by the British officers for their knowledge and for their close relationship of the rural groups. See Millman 2013: 131.
[205] Cases of this sort have been reported above when discussing examples of the usages of the akils by the British authorities. For instance, the akils cooperated with the Somali Camel Corps or the Ilaloes during the expeditions aimed at collecting fines from genealogical units.
[206] TNA, CO 1015/560, ibid., pp. 6-7.

Hudson also agreed with the opinion expressed in this period by many other British officers that the "tribal system" was falling apart. He wrote this in his report,[207] and seems to recall the words of the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Shirley, who had intervened in the 1950 debate about the introduction of the new "native authorities" regulation saying that "tribal organisation is dying out and it is too late to attempt to bolster it up".[208] These judgements were motivated by the fact that the British did not see any form of regular mobilisation of entire clan groups, except for extemporary opposition to specific government resolutions. These views, circulating over much of the 1940s and 1950s, reflected the British authorities' views as to why their attempts to produce a new system of "native authority" and to integrate it into the administration substantially failed.

As Hudson also noted during his survey, the opposition to the 1950 Ordinance was widespread and the akils who had been appointed under the new regulation neither used nor tried to use their new powers. In 1951, even the Governor had to admit this but remained optimistic and said the discontent resulted from the malicious propaganda of habitual government opponents. Among them there were the "mullahs", who were afraid of losing their control over the people, surprisingly (from the Governor's point of view) the Somali Youth League political party and a number of disgruntled ex-government servants who had been dismissed for ineptitude or dishonesty. In a letter addressed to the Colonial Office, the Governor wrote that "these people have invented the most astounding lies which they are disseminating", such as the idea that in the future people would be able to move in search of grazing only with government permission, that the government would register pregnant women and even occasions of sexual intercourse and that more taxes would be introduced.[209] Other clues suggest that Somali opposition was also motivated by less bogus arguments, like the one included in the minute quoted by Hudson and reported above: the authority of the akils was perceived by the Somalilanders as emanating from the government; they could not be endowed of powers that had been held, albeit under the intrusive control of the government, by clan institutions like the *shir*s. A case quoted by Millman shows the refusal of the Somalilanders to conform to the new scheme (Millman 2013: 207). A man vested with the title of "local authority" came across a gathering of people under his jurisdiction (i.e. people belonging to his genealogical group) in Hargeysa; there seemed the real possibility of a clash between them and members of the Sacaad Muse clan in the town, so he exercised his powers under the 1950 Ordinance and repeatedly ordered the men to disperse. They responded by threatening him with

[207] TNA, CO 1015/560, ibid., p. 13.
[208] TNA, CO 535/152/2, "Mr. Lambert, 20/02/1950".
[209] See TNA, CO 535/152/3. "Letter to C.E. Lambert of the 29th of January 1951". In order to delegitimise the opposition to the Ordinance, Governor Reece manifestly contradicted himself when he said that these lies could circulate only thank to the ignorance of the Somalis. While, few months before (see above), he had written in a letter that the Somalis were not so "primitive" as people might think and that they were well informed about internal and "world" affairs. See TNA, CO 535/152/2.

sticks and forcing him to find refuge with the police, who arrested some of them. The promulgation of the "Local Authorities Ordinance" of 1950 had been conceived as the first step towards the introduction of a real form of self-government. New representative institutions were created during 1950s: the Advisory Councils first, then Local and Legislative Councils, finally the Executive Council. These bodies were motivated by the intention to give a representative role to the "educated" elite, which could operate as more reliable and more efficient interlocutors of the administration than the *Suldaan*s and the akils. This elite was to have been a cooperative leadership, supported by an administrative apparatus that also included the reformed 'traditional' authorities. But this plan was never realised: the reform of 'traditional' authorities did not work and the akils continued to be only a channel of communication with the population. Furthermore, also the relationship between the British and the urban-based "educated" elite deteriorated rapidly and drastically, especially after 1954.

The sources quoted above show a variety of administrative approaches between the 1920s and the 1960s unified by few, recurrent, theoretical principles which the British officers declared they were following, leading to *indirect rule* which was later combined with *self-government*. The sources also give a glimpse of the Somalilanders' reactions to these policies, albeit from the perspective of the British. On the issue of 'traditional' leaders and of akils, they show one point relevant to an improved understanding of the Gaboye's mobilisation in Hargeysa during the 1950s. The Somalilanders both accepted the institution of the akils and were able to adapt it to some features of their social organisation and to their conceptions of their own relationship with the colonial government. But they were also capable of opposing some of the changes that the British tried to introduce, including ensuring the government's failure to change the akils' system into one of 'traditional' authority co-opted into the administrative machine (see the 1950 Ordinance on Local Authorities).

The Somalilanders did not accept these changes to a balance which they had helped to create. We have discussed the pressing demands for the appointment of new akils reported by Governor Kittermaster in 1930: having an akil nominated from its ranks gave prestige to a genealogical unit. In the light of the fact that the government intervened directly in the disputes between local groups through military expeditions, punishing, arresting, forcibly extracting blood-compensations and seizing livestock, the possibility of using a regular channel of communication and an intermediary with the Protectorate authorities was extremely convenient. It can be argued that the Gaboye groups of Hargeysa reproduced the general approach of the other Somalilander groups when they asked the British to recognise their first akil. They were not only struggling to

reproduce in their urban community the clan institutions of the majority clans, but also to become an active part of that administrative system co-constructed by local groups and British functionaries.

5.3 THE DIYA-PAYING GROUPS

5.3.1 BRITISH ADMINISTRATIVE APPROACHES TO THE DIYA-PAYING GROUPS

Another institution which deserves to be briefly reviewed here in order to understand the constituents of the Gaboye's emancipation in Hargeysa during the 1950s is that of the diya-paying groups. Their relevance was repeatedly acknowledged by the British authorities who regarded them as the most stable community units formed and maintained by the Somalis. Kittermaster provided interesting comments in 1930: "These groups for paying and receiving Dias [*diya*] are formed by the people themselves without reference to the government and as wealth increases the groups tend to get smaller and more numerous. Already they far outnumber the groups to which Akils are appointed".[210] The diya-paying groups were dynamic, they were created and managed autonomously and were to some extent disjointed from the institution of the akil which was subject to the official ratification of the Protectorate authorities. Hudson has explained that diya-paying groups had their own assemblies, the *shir*s, wherein common goals and decisions were formulated. Though separated by around thirty years, both Kittermaster and Hudson were convinced that the diya-paying groups were one of the few clearly defined social institutions of the Somalis, also indicated by their both suggesting that they be relied on as the basis of the re-organisation of the administration. Kittermaster emphasised their variety and their role in ensuring that even a widely dispersed people fulfilled their payment obligations, while Hudson stressed the strength of the assemblies.

I.M. Lewis formulated analogous conclusions after his first fieldwork in Somaliland in the mid-1950s. He stated that, at the level of the diya-paying groups, the internal obligations of the members and their external solidarity are very clearly defined. The codification of these relationships is called *xeer* in Somali language. An accurate definition of it is reported by Rodolfo Sacco (Sacco 1985: 21) who considered it a type of customary law belonging to one of the two sub-divisions of this category of legal systems: not a fixed set of rules enforced by a determined and permanent body but a set of flexible norms applied by dynamic and un-specialised social bodies which pursue the mediation and the preservation of peace rather than the application of a social norm. Sacco also emphasised that, unlike almost all other African customary law systems, the *xeer*

[210] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24th of November 1930". P. 7.

has no religious nature: the circumstances and the figures through which it is reproduced are not religious. Similarly, I.M. Lewis had translated the term *xeer* as "customary procedure founded upon agreement or contract" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 30). Indeed, the Somalilander groups share merely the set of offences and injuries that require compensation. It is actually the *xeer* which defines both the amount payable for each kind of offence and injury between two genealogical entities, and the constitution of the specific groups – identified through their position in the genealogical tree – that are bound to apply that specific agreement. The formulation of the *xeer* changes according to the circumstances which determine the coalescence or the separation of the genealogical units involved in a dispute (Jama 2007).

As I.M. Lewis remembered, during a clash involving entire clans, "temporary *xeer* arrangements are made binding all the members of each clan against those of the other". But it is for the diya-paying groups that "*xeer* is more explicitly formulated and more strictly enforced" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 30). These groups Lewis described as "a few closely related collateral lineages united for mutual support by the terms of a common agreement (*xeer*). They have no formal leader, no permanent council and are rarely, if ever, territorial groups". But they are united by the payment and the receiving of blood-compensation. Between distinct diya-paying groups, the management of disputes is undertaken either through arbitration or open conflict. Lewis also adds that the inter-diya-paying groups' *xeer*s were registered and kept in the District Offices for administrative purposes; the Somalis did not keep written copies of them in Arabic as other groups used to do in North Africa.

This description of the diya-paying groups explains why the British believed that they were the most solid entry-point for their administrative control over the population. They seemed to them a fairly stable form of association, while all the other institutions such as the 'traditional' chiefs (like the *Suldaan*s) and the clans seemed inconstant, weak and obscure. The British monitored the numbers of these groups: according to Governor Kittermaster, there were 308 in 1930. In 1944, Major J.A. Hunt recorded the genealogies and the diya-paying groups of all the British protected Somali clans.[211] He counted 415 diya-paying groups, with the Esa clan having the highest number of 100 diya-paying groups; but this clan was largely settled outside the borders of the Protectorate. They were followed by the Sacaad Muse clan, part of the Habar Awal alliance, which had 50 of such units. The Habar Yunis and Habar Toljaala (which are reported as being divided into two sub-divisions each) had, respectively, 66 and 50 diya-paying groups. Finally, a comparable number of

[211] The number of diya-paying group for each clan was recorded during the survey of the Somalilander genealogical units conducted by Major J.A. Hunt; see *Genealogies of the Tribes of British Somaliland and Mijertein. General Survey British Somaliland. 1943-1944. John A. Hunt*. These features are also discussed and confronted with other demographic estimates in *Military Government Somaliland Protectorate. Report on General Survey of British Somaliland 1944*. Pp. 7-8.

these units (48) is attributed to the Dolbahanta clan. The other clans enlisted had a significantly smaller number.

In Hunt's report, these numbers are accompanied by the approximate figures of both human and animal populations (the state of animal husbandry was one of the most important objects of the surveys conducted by Major Hunt during the 1940s) for each division. Attempting to calculate the ratio between the livestock owned (classified in the report in terms of species: camels, sheep, goats, cattle, horses and donkeys) and the number of diya-paying groups, we can see that the Sacaad Muse, who were supposed to be one of the biggest groups in the list with 100,000 individuals, were the ones having the least animals per diya-paying groups (7,500), while four out of the twelve genealogical units listed in the table had between 16,400 and 17,800 animals per diya-paying group. These figures suggest that the Sacaad Muse disposed of more diversified forms of wealth (outside livestock) that conditioned the splitting up and the constitution of new diya-paying groups inside that clan. This hypothesis is also confirmed by their being one of the few groups in the Protectorate who practiced agriculture (in the small, western, part of Somaliland suitable for this activity) and their being more deeply involved in the urban expansion of Hargeysa (where new concentrations of wealth had resulted from the real estate and the commercial sector).

The report described these measurements as subject to gross errors, mostly because of the Somali hostility towards counting. It is interesting to note that the surveyors considered the total number of diya-paying groups (415) collected by Hunt as the datum which was closest to a reality on the ground; in fact, it was also used as an instrument for the estimation of the total population of the Protectorate. The survey had shown that the diya-paying groups usually had between 300 and 3,000 male members. Given the common belief that in Somaliland males and females were equal in number, and assuming an average of 800 men and 1,600 individuals for each group (these considerations are based on the fact the composition of some groups was exactly known by the British), the total population amounted to around 664,000 in the mid-1940s.[212]

Even accepting that the number of diya-paying groups was highly uncertain, the shift from 308 in 1930 to 415 in 1944 strongly supports the idea of a substantial increase. I.M. Lewis ascribed 360 diya-paying groups to the Isaaq clan confederation (I.M. Lewis 1961: 6), which in 1944 had only 209. Such a trend can be related to different factors like the impact of British administrative policies and the demographic growth in the country. The changes occurring over the same period – such as expanded trade, more urban-based forms of wealth and the increased capacity of some Somalilanders, including some livestock owners, to be less affected by cyclical crises – also played

[212] These estimates show how speculative and approximate was the knowledge of the demography of the Somaliland Protectorate on the side of the British.

a role. As Governor Kittermaster stressed, the formation of new concentrations of wealth was among the causes of the splitting up of the diya-paying groups.

5.3.2 THE CHANGING CONFIGURATION OF DIYA-PAYING GROUPS

This was a semi-officially recognised institution: the Protectorate government monitored it and, as Lewis pointed out (I.M. Lewis 1957: 30), some *xeer*s were filed in the District offices. The active preservation of the practice of blood-compensation witnessed by the colonial sources coincides with what we have called the 'conservative' approach of the British administration. The diya-paying groups and the "vicarious" payments that they managed left the British with the task of controlling the malfunctioning of these structures, for example whenever a group refused to pay the compensation. In these circumstances, the colonial authorities deployed the Protectorate forces, namely the Somali Camel Corps. As Millman writes, "in this case, the Administration acted something like a ruling clan, or a *dia*-paying group" (Millman 2013: 57), because, beside the collection of the due amount, the expedition collected also a full compensation if a soldier was killed and a varying amount of livestock or rifles as a fine for having caused the deployment of the force.

Some disturbances affected the maintenance of this balance. Governor Kittermaster noted already in 1930 the growing incapacity of the Somalis to solve their disputes: "No one, who has not worked with the Somalis would believe how incapable they are (or possibly how incapable we have made them) of settling the most trivial disputes among themselves nor from what insignificant causes may spring in a moment a tribal fight of alarming proportions".[213] The Governor had in mind the recent violent clash in Hargeysa involving around 3,000 persons and caused by the breaking of an engagement agreement. However, his words seem to contradict the account of the fairly regular working of the system of blood-compensation that he prized in the same document. This kind of alarmed assessment can be found in the documents produced throughout the last three decades of the colonial phase, denouncing the deterioration of the "tribal" organisation or the so-called process of "de-tribalisation" of the Somalis. Interestingly, the later of Kittermaster's quotes reported above also included a sort of admission of responsibility on the part of colonial rule: the Governor probably intended to 'blame' the latter for the pulverisation of the clan structures. Numerous British officers stated that the pacification of the Protectorate allowed a higher rate of mobility of the local groups; it allowed them periodically to disperse around the country looking for new grazing areas

[213] TNA, CO 535/92/1. "Letter from the Governor of Somaliland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24th of November 1930". P. 14.

without the threat of a massive reaction by other groups. This might have turned the clans into merely nominal associations.

Another factor mentioned in the colonial documents is Egyptian rule (see again Governor Kittermaster quoted above). During this brief phase, local chiefs and their authority, which emanated from huge clan groups, suffered a first attack in the creation of a parallel system of intermediaries representing local groups, the akils. As Hudson wrote in his memorandum, the long period of wars against the dervish movement was also deemed co-responsible for the crisis, perhaps irreversible, of "tribal units".[214] On this matter, I.M. Lewis wrote that the figure of Maxamed Cabdille Xasan, the so called "Mad Mullah", embodied a form of administration that can be framed as "tyranny", "in which all authority was ultimately vested in the rigid government of a small party led by one exceptional person" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 33). In this system, the clan apparatuses, like the assemblies and the 'traditional' leaders, were not entirely ignored but likely often bypassed in the decision-making process. Finally, there was another charge that the British attributed to themselves: that of having eroded the structures and inclination of the Somalis to mediate disputes. The intrusiveness of the Protectorate authorities' Somali Camel Corps campaigns aimed at extracting blood-compensations by force sidelined those figures entitled to mediate, especially the *Suldaan*s who were a sort of extreme-need channel of mediation.

These reconstructions of the disintegration of the clans and of clan authorities, and the role played in it by British rule were already current in the middle of the colonial phase. Scholars like I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957), and Millman after him, seem largely to have accepted them. Millman in particular has pushed too far the implications of these arguments and has adopted uncritically the opinions of British colonial officers. His belief that the Somalilanders were already, by the 1920s, entirely dependent on the British for the resolution of their disputes is not consistent with the sources that he himself has used and have been quoted here. They were subject to change, but the local ways and platforms to solve disputes were still operational, as Governor Kittermaster in 1930 and Hudson in 1952 clearly stated. The British were not the last bastion preventing the Somalilanders from slaughtering each other, as Millman writes (Millman 2013: 17-18). However the transformations that occurred during their rule – including the effects of the regulations and administrative policies they implemented, but also the urban expansion in the hinterland of the Protectorate and the growth of the trade sector – produced the conditions for the new social and political relationships between local groups that the Somalilanders co-produced and integrated into their social institutions.

[214] See TNA, CO 1015/560, "Some Preliminary Notes on Problems Relating to the Constitutional Development of the Somaliland Protectorate – March 1952", by R.S. Hudson, p. 4.

If we apply this perspective to the issue of diya-paying groups, we can complicate the scenario presented by the sources named above. Two elements have surfaced: first, the British always looked to the diya-paying groups as the last solid Somali institution to be relied on in rationalising 'traditional' social organisation. Second, the British gave more importance to the diya-paying groups, at the expense of other social groupings. Millman himself sustains this possibility: "[…] In so effectively assuming the notary function, previewed by the Egyptians, the British had inadvertently tipped the balance in Somali society away from the clans and toward the *dia*-paying group as the basic social building block. A clan, of course, existed in part to moderate disagreements, and to provide the basis for common action. The *dia*-paying group existed to facilitate disagreements by providing for more effective collective assessment, and had no external implication" (Millman 2013: 23). It is indeed plausible that the "notary function" – i.e. the administrative routine based on the written registration of the *xeer*s, on the active maintenance of blood-compensation transactions through the practice of forced extraction and on other forms of management – might make the diya-paying groups the social institution that was more convenient to activate for both the Somalilanders and the British during reciprocal interactions.

Beside these direct effects of administrative policies, no less important were the indirect effects of the British presence, such as the expansion of urban areas in the hinterland and other economic changes that took effect in the Protectorate from the 1920s. The growing quantity of forms of wealth alternative to livestock produced new economic stratifications that pushed local groups to establish circumscribed associations around these concentrations of economic resources. Such associations, whose skeleton was provided by the unity in the payment of diya, were capable of organising assemblies regularly to discuss issues of common interest, including some outwith the matter of blood-compensations. The approximate but important figures quoted above offer the evidence of this process: livestock population was subject to drastic cyclical reduction due to droughts; but a constant increase in the number of diya-paying groups is registered from 1930. So a continuously expanding livestock population was not the main reason existing groups split up. Other forms of capital were involved, like the resources generated by the trade sector, by the commercial activities proliferating in the towns (shops, restaurants, coffee houses) and by real estate investments. This was probably particularly true for specific areas of the Protectorate and can explain the peculiarity of the Sacaad Muse clan with its relatively low amount of livestock per diya-paying group relative to other genealogical units.

The growing importance of the institution of the diya-paying groups cannot be framed as the Somalilanders losing – at the hands of the colonial rulers – their abilities and institutions appointed to preserve social relationships. Rather, they reveal the Somalilanders' capacity to adapt to the

circumstances determined by the presence of a foreign administration. The trajectory of the changing relevance of the diya-paying groups in Somaliland is not only, and arguably not much, the story of the crisis of the practice of conflict mediation. It is the story of a range of different changes like urbanisation and incipient social stratification strongly conditioned – or we might say even triggered – by the British presence. More specifically, it is the story of how the Somalilanders took part in them. Indeed, the management of disputes, often caused by blood-compensation, was a major concern for the British; we might say that it absorbed almost all the resources and the time of the administrators until the first development schemes and self-government programs were launched by the Military Administration in the 1940s. For this reason, the issue of maintaining peace and stability occupies large portions of the colonial documents. But this does not prove that the Somalilanders did not have any other goal, interest or drive outside that of having disputes and managing blood-compensation payments. The case of the so-called "destitute" youth of Hargeysa, whose most alarming characteristic for the British was that they were "de-tribalised", informs us about the lenses with which the British looked at the phenomenon, and about the countermeasures they took. But it does not tell us how important clan attachment, or its abandonment, was for these urban youth; it does not fill the space of the articulated motivations behind the decision to move and to settle in the town, or of the social networks they created in that environment.

The case of the Gaboye shows that the resolution of disputes related to blood-compensations was not the only priority of the Somalilanders in setting up their 'associations'. The establishment of the first Gaboye independent diya-paying group bears witness to their willingness and their capacity to 'use' – consistently with the formulations elaborated by Michel De Certeau (De Certeau 1984) – an institutional framework available at the time with the aim of challenging another institution, that of their subordination. There was much more at stake in this struggle than the possibility of taking part in blood-compensation exchanges. This kind of mobilisation was a 'creative' form of re-negotiation of the subordinated condition that we have labelled as one of the two elements of an emancipatory process. Of course the Gaboye case was exceptional (we have seen that the most common circumstance related to the creation of a new diya-paying group was the splitting up of existing groups), but it shows the capacity of local groups to manipulate social institutions and to turn one of them against another.

The analytical thread inaugurated by Terence O. Ranger has opened an exceptionally useful area of debate and a platform of dialogue between Africanists, centred on the idea of the "invention of tradition" (Ranger 1983; 1993). This field of exchange of ethnographic, historical and theoretical contributions allows us to reflect on the continuities and discontinuities of certain central dimensions of African societies – such as customary law, ethnicity, gender and so on – in relation

to the colonial encounter. Although the Protectorate of Somaliland represented a relatively peculiar case in the African panorama, one where colonial intervention was ill-financed and short-sighted, the coordinates set by Ranger's contribution are extremely important in this case too. The legal regulations on the forms of 'traditional' leadership, on the local platforms employed to solve disputes and on the parameters for the division of local groups (like diya-paying groups) for administrative purposes were conceived by the British as attempts to institutionalise local 'traditional' apparatuses. In the re-discussion of his own argument through dialogue with other authors (Ranger 1993), Ranger praised Steven Feierman's analysis of peasant's political discourse in Shambaai, Tanzania (Feierman 1990), for showing how 'creativity' and plural approaches to local 'traditions' have always coexisted with continuities and "long-term durations". It was thanks to this attitude of dealing with plurality in creative ways that conquered populations coped with attempts by the colonial rulers to impose a static, artificial assemblage of 'traditional' institutions. In the Protectorate, the Somalilanders responded by expanding the already plural character and possible usages of their pre-colonial social and political institutions in the ways we have seen in the case of diya-paying groups.

Following this argument, Ranger's proposal of replacing the locution "invention of tradition" with "imagined traditions" is particularly useful to introduce the analysis of the Gaboye's mobilisation that occurred in Hargeysa during the 1950s: "Some traditions in colonial Africa really *were* invented, by a single colonial officer for a single occasion. But customary law and ethnicity and religion and language were *imagined*, by many different people and over a long time. These multiple imaginations were in tension with each other and in constant contestation to define the meaning of what had been imagined – to imagine it further" (Ranger 1993: 81). Indeed, the case illustrated in the following sections is a specimen of both creativity and the re-imagination of 'traditions' (the local forms of leadership and the diya-paying groups): the Gaboye community of Hargeysa re-imagined some 'traditional' institutions operating in the Somali territories in tension both with the British rulers (and the ways they tried to use these institutions for their own purposes) and with the members of the local majority clans that had institutionally excluded the Gaboye from them.[215]

[215] On the limits of the concepts elaborated by Ranger see Thomas Spear who defined traditions, customs and ethnicities as historical processes in which the past heritage is reconstituted to meet the needs of the present (Spear 2003).

5.4 THE GABOYE'S MOBILISATION IN HARGEYSA

5.4.1 THE REVIEW OF ORAL HISTORY

The review of colonial documents (and scholarly contributions) offered above was intended to sketch the premises underlying, from the perspective of colonial authorities, the recognition of the first Gaboye's clan institution in Hargeysa. The review of the internal contradictions and the conflicting views among colonial officers – sometimes even among different texts of the same officer – found in these documents has the effect of shifting the analytical gaze from the perspective of the colonial administrator with its peculiar biases. We have contested some possible implications of that overlapping, like the idea of the amputation of 'traditional' apparatuses operated by the colonial rule that left the Somalilanders prey to their supposed negative attitudes (individualism, inclination to violence).

This does not contradict the fact that the British played a crucial role in re-shaping the fundamental institutions of the Somalilander groups. Two cases have received more attention because of their utility in the understanding of the trajectory of the Gaboye, the first of which is the consolidation of the institution of the akils throughout the colonial decades. Though they were not considered by the Somalilanders as a clan authority, their importance as government agents was acknowledged, accepted and actively used by them. The second is the consolidation of the diya-paying groups as one basic unit defining the coalescence and the splitting up of Somalilander groups. The analytical path undertaken in the rest of this chapter is aimed at reconstructing the position of the Gaboye vis-à-vis the British authorities and the rest of Somalilander society over the last decades of the Protectorate. The temporal and practical limits of this research project are the reason for concentrating the attention on colonial sources and ethnographic data collected among the Gaboye community of Hargeysa. Other data are missing: the perspectives of the non-Gaboye Somalilander groups on the transformations that social institutions were undergoing during the same period are not presented here.[216] Another object of necessary further research is the pre-colonial antecedent to this long phase of social change: the recurring idea among the British officers that the clans were in the past more centralised and organic structures cannot be grounded yet on detailed historical reconstructions. Research (Trimingham 1952; Braukamper 1977; Cassanelli 1982) about different areas of the Somali territories and different historical layers, like that of the so-called Muslim sultanates of the Middle Ages located in the north-western part of the Somali territories, provide important instruments in the understanding of the mutation of local socio-political institutions. They show remarkable differences with the socio-political institutions of the

[216] I.M. Lewis has provided an in depth analysis and rich ethnographic account of the functioning of the diya-paying groups in Somaliland (I.M. Lewis 1961).

Somalilanders during the Protectorate and pose thorny interrogatives about the presence and the diffusion of centralised political institutions in the Somali territories through the ages. However, further investigation is needed in order to outline meaningful historical and geographic connections between these political forms.

Nevertheless, some important elements of the context of the final part of the Protectorate have been outlined. With regard to the Gaboye, the concrete goal of the constitution of their first diya-paying group was their participation to the blood-compensation exchanges. However, this turn is also an example of the capacity to use an institution, that of the diya-paying group, which was not entirely emanated, co-opted and controlled by the Protectorate government, nor an unsullied remnant of Somali society that had survived the transformations introduced during the British rule.

The memory of the mobilisation of the Gaboye of Hargeysa during the 1950s has not been constructed as a core mnemonic object, preserved by formalised narrative structures nor integrated into community-wide circuits in which the memory of the past is transmitted and distributed. It is affected by those forms of erosion and manipulation that we have already seen in relation to other mnemonic contents, like the Gaboye's urban settlement in Hargeysa. The story of the mobilisation in Hargeysa also shares the same fate of the memory of the past subordination itself: both these topics have not become public themes and still exist only as a fragmented, often painful, remembering by a few elders. We were able to investigate this event because, since the inception of the present research, we had access to the descendants of one of the protagonists involved, and because one of these descendants assisted us in most of the meetings and interviews organised during the fieldwork itself. His presence provided the opportunity, sometimes spontaneously, to explore the personal remembering of the elders interviewed about the events that occurred in Hargeysa.

The accounts collected revealed some recurring core themes. The culminating moment of the mobilisation was the gathering of a huge assembly of the adult male members of the Gaboye community of Hargeysa, an assembly described by the interlocutors using the word *shir,* the general Somali term for any sort of gathering of a genealogical unit. The participants belonged largely to the lineage called Talabacaadde, which is part of the Gaboye clan of Musse Dheriyo. The latter is the largest Gaboye clan in Somaliland, whose members, internally divided into further genealogical sub-divisions, were affiliated to various clans part of the Isaaq clan confederation. More specifically, the members of the Talabacaade lineage were mostly affiliated to the two clans of the Sacaad Muse and the Ciida Galle which, as we saw, were strongly connected to the area of Hargeysa and the history of the town.

The assembly reportedly took place one morning in an open space, under some trees and close to the building known as "hangar" (see Chapter 7) in the city centre. The exact date is uncertain and oral sources stated that it occurred during the very last years of Protectorate. However, we know from I.M. Lewis that the Gaboye did not have any appointed 'traditional' leader nor diya-paying group during the time of his first fieldwork in Somaliland and his first publication on that subject (I.M. Lewis 1957), namely between 1955 and 1957. The atmosphere during the day of the assembly was tense, since the elders interviewed stated that many of the Gaboye who attended were heavily armed, some even with bow and arrows. To this description of the general climate, the conversations usually added comment on the proud exaltation of the number of the participants. Nobody could do anything to stop the meeting; indeed, one of Gaboye elders interviewed who attended that day reported that the members of the majority clans were deeply shocked by the size of the gathering and contacted the British authorities in an attempt to stop it.[217] But they did it secretly because they were afraid and could not oppose it directly.

After the assembly, a delegation of Gaboye who had taken part went the British authorities to ask for ratification of the decisions that had been reached, namely the appointment of one of them as their representative – who had to be registered as an akil/*caaqil* – and the constitution of an independent diya-paying group. The details of this meeting are not clear: some sources said it occurred on the same day, because of the enthusiasm generated by the Gaboye's show of strength, others that the negotiations took place over the following days. It was not possible even to ascertain which British office received their requests. All the interlocutors consulted agreed that the representatives of the majority clans also addressed the British and expressed their opposition to the Gaboye's having an akil/*caaqil* and standing autonomously in the blood compensation exchanges. Finally, it is widely acknowledged that the British undertook an investigation of the capacity of the would-be diya-paying group to afford the standard blood-compensation paid for the murder of a man, namely 100 camels or an amount of other animals or money which had an equivalent value. The British ascertained that the group had the capacity to afford the compensation and registered the leader appointed during the assembly as the akil/*caaqil* representing that group.

5.4.2 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE GABOYE'S MOBILISATION IN HARGEYSA

The organisation of the gathering had been facilitated by some prominent figures of the Talabacaade lineage who had prepared it in discussions between them. According to some

[217] Interview with Cabdi, a Gaboye elder and a sheikh affiliated to the sanctuary of Sheikh Musse Dheriyo in Hargeysa, 17 May 2015.

interlocutors, this narrow group of persons might have had consultations before the assembly with British authorities; the latter were informed about their intentions and gave unofficial support. The project they had defined was that of obtaining from the British the recognition of the institutionalised apparatuses that the majority clans had. They planned to gather the members of the group and to persuade them to sponsor the idea. This mode of mobilisation follows the pattern described by Hudson in his memorandum and quoted above: a group of elders discusses important matters and refers back to the *shir* in which all the adult men take part, suggesting solutions and asking for confirmation.

One of the most prominent figures in this phase was a Gaboye sheikh, a religious man who exhorted the people to unite and to organise themselves. His name was Adan Maxamud Ubaxle and he was living in Hargeysa. Said, a Gaboye elder already quoted above, mentioned a well known speech to the Talabacaade delivered by the Sheikh in front of a crowd: he classified the various genealogical sub-divisions of the lineage and exposed the negative characters that were a peculiarity of each one of them, such as pride, arrogance, jealousy and the inclination to make use of deceptions. The only way to overcome these weaknesses was that of uniting and of appointing a common leader.[218] According to the interlocutor, the sheikh took part in the assembly and actively tried to convince the audience.

Another protagonist was a well known member of the Talabacaade lineage who was previously affiliated to the branch of the Sacaad Muse coming from the western outskirts of Hargeysa, where the villages of Haraf and Dabolek were located. His role was important because he was especially active in the struggle to arrange the assembly and he was appointed by the people during the gathering as their representative with the British authorities. Later on, he would be the one acknowledged as akil/*caaqil*, reportedly the first Gaboye akil/*caaqil* to be registered in the Protectorate. The family of this man already enjoyed a prominent position among the Talabacaade living in the rural areas: they had cattle and took part in the caravans which travelled mostly between Bullhar and Ethiopian towns like Harrar and Jigjiga.[219] From the oral sources collected it seems that the male members of his household, at least starting with his father, had lost some of the elements characterising the subordinated condition of the Gaboye: most interestingly, they never performed any of the occupational tasks traditionally attached to the Gaboye. The productive activities of the household were herding and selling livestock, and it was this economic positioning that conditioned the process of penetration in the urban area of Hargeysa (which is recorded as

[218] Interview with Said, 29 April 2015.
[219] The story of the family of the first Musse Dheriyo akil/*caaqil* was collected through numerous interlocutors, but mostly through one direct descendant whom we call Aadan here. Of particular relevance is the interview of 14 July 2015.

starting as far back as the early 1940s). Following a pattern that we have already seen, part of the family remained in the rural areas close to the villages of Haraf and Dabolek to attend the animals while a foothold was secured in the town with the construction of mud huts (*dergaad* in Somali) in the area called "Fuckin'" (see Chapter 7). Their presence in the town was gradually consolidated: the children of the first akil/*caaqil* and those of his brothers were born and grew up in Hargeysa. An important part of their business was selling cattle to the British, but the gradual splitting up of the family into different households – when its members married and had children – coincided with the expansion of the range of business activities in the town: the members of the different branches became owners of barbershops, of public showers and of a car spare parts shop. At the same time, the household of the first akil/*caaqil* was able to collect enough resources to build a brick house in "Fuckin'", probably one of a handful of such constructions in the area during the colonial period.

Inside the extended family, the next generation after the akil/*caaqil* and of his brothers saw a first wave of transnational migrations. These young people generally moved to Aden and one of them opened a carpentry materials business there; some of his descendants currently live in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. Even the nephew of the akil/*caaqil*, who inherited the title and held it until his death in 1993, spent part of his youth in the early 1960s in Aden with his cousin. Indeed, the family's trajectory of settlement and economic dispersion across the generations first headed to the Arabic peninsula. Migration across the Gulf of Aden was a common pattern among Somalilanders from the 1950s (see Ciabarri 2011a). Such a migratory pattern, again, reflects a peculiar positioning of this family inside the Gaboye community which, according to the descendant of the first akil/*caaqil*, was generally involved in transnational migrations only later on, especially after 1991 and the collapse of the Siad Barre regime.[220] The accounts of this family's positioning echo some of I.M. Lewis' remarks in 1957 about isolated cases of the opening up the majority clans' political spaces to members of Gaboye groups (I.M. Lewis 1957: 28). These sources suggest that, before the 1950s, there might already have been a sort of Gaboye elite which partially integrated in the socio-political structure of the majority clans.

Other evidence collected suggests the existence of pre-emancipation forms of internal stratification and pre-eminence inside the Gaboye local groups. Again, a crucial marker is the possession of livestock and the non-involvement in the despised 'traditional' tasks. Khadar, a middle-aged Gaboye man interviewed in Hargeysa,[221] said his father, who was from Goseyga, a settlement in the Haud region, owned a considerable amount of livestock, accumulated simply by expanding the flock he had inherited. Furthermore, Khadar stated that his father had numerous

[220] Interview with Aadan, a descendant of the akil, 3 August 2015.
[221] Interview with Khadar and a group of shoemakers, 9 July 2015.

camels: this is a unique case collected during the fieldwork; all the other Gaboye consulted, even if they denied that they were forbidden to own livestock in the past, always agreed that the Gaboye were not allowed to have camels. Khadar explained the economic situation of his ancestors saying that they were very active and never created trouble for other people. Another marker of pre-eminence accounted by him is that his father had two wives. Khadar was born from the second marriage and spent the first part of his life with his mother and sisters; they were living in an area South of Hargeysa called Salaxley, located between the town and the border with Ethiopia, which is largely inhabited by sections of the Ciida Galle clan; the father used to move between his habitual dwelling in the Haud and their settlement. The local groups of Ciida Galle were nomadic pastoralists, his mother was born in one of the numerous (according to his remembering, "hundreds") affiliated households belonging to the Musse Dheriyo clan that were living with them. They had some livestock too and, interestingly, neither he nor his mother or sisters ever practised any of the Gaboye's 'traditional' tasks, whereas other Gaboye settled in the same area were shoemakers, metal workers or traditional healers, and did not have livestock. Khadar stated that in 1986 he moved to Hargeysa because a drought killed almost all the household's flock. It was at that time that he learned and for the first time started to practice the job of shoemaker. This case is also an example of an eccentric economic position of a Gaboye household and of its headman. This datum must be understood alongside that fact that the interlocutor's father (before the 1950s) was considered a prominent figure, an elder, by the members of his genealogical unit.

Unfortunately, the sources just quoted do not reveal directly whether there was a causal link between these two elements. In other words, they do not clarify whether a peculiar economic position marked by the ownership of livestock caused the acquisition of a distinguished role inside the local group of Gaboye of which he was part or some sort of pre-eminence – acknowledged by the local community and arguably derived from personal attributes combined with advanced age – could determine partial forms of integration into the economic and political structures of the majority clans (whose concrete manifestation could be, indeed, the ownership of livestock itself). Without more accurate historical data of the pre-emancipation period,[222] both these perspectives appear too mechanistic and abstracted from the institution formalising the segregation and subordination of the Gaboye. The latter oral sources show that the Gaboye local groups had forms of economic internal stratification; they recognised the prestige of some of their members, the faculty to mediate and to act as a sort of representatives and, in doing so, they were, arguably, following the pattern of the majority clans' internal organisation. These conclusions depart from the

[222] Which are extremely difficult to collect for the reasons exposed above. The combination of oblivion and reticence is most common approach to the past of the Gaboye in Somaliland.

scholarly contributions that have been reviewed in Chapter 1: the scholars completely overlooked these elements and focused on the relationship between the members of the Gaboye groups as an economically and politically uniform block vis-à-vis the rest of the Somalis.

The peculiar position of the future akil/*caaqil* who led the Hargeysa mobilisation in relative to the genealogical unit to which he was affiliated also explains – and conversely is explained by – the fact that his commitment to the cause of improving the condition of the Gaboye had started before the organisation of the assembly in the town. In this pre-emancipation phase, the future akil/*caaqil* started consultations with the prominent figures of the majority clans and, among them, with the *Suldaan* of Habar Awal, the clan alliance to which the Sacaad Muse clan belonged. It seems that during the negotiations he met firm opposition to the suggestion that the Gaboye in general, and the Talabacaade lineage in this particular case, could form a separated blood-compensation group. This possibility was in fact the only concrete change at stake since the Gaboye did not demand the severance of all political links or alliances with the majority clans (nor did they do so in the immediate aftermath of the Hargeysa assembly).

In the mid-1950s, arguably, there was an openness on the part of the *Suldaan* to the claims of the Gaboye thanks, according to one of his descendants, to the mediation of the future akil/*caaqil* in person. The object was the management of the Gaboye's settlement in the village of Brisle. We have already mentioned the case of this village located south west of Hargeysa (Chapter 4), across the border in Ethiopian territory. Brisle was founded by some Gaboye households who were allowed to settle there because the *Suldaan* of Habar Awal regarded it as a sort of frontier post, close to the territory of competing genealogical units. Here is offered a different – though not conflicting – perspective which stresses the pressure from the Gaboye side to obtain control of that piece of land and to establish a homogeneous settlement. As was reported above from other sources, the village was established in 1956; this is consistent with the possibility that the future akil/*caaqil* played a role in it. One of his descendants stated that the latter asked the *Suldaan* to allow the settlement with the intention that possession would be consolidated (it must be also taken into account that the Gaboye of Brisle belonged to the Talabacaade lineage, the same of the future akil/*caaqil*) over an area which would become a sort of Gaboye "clan land", on the model of the other genealogical units of Somaliland that claimed the exclusive control over specific portions of territory. This operation would also include the British: Brisle could have been used as an argument to convince them of the legitimacy of the Gaboye requests for the future recognition of institutions like clan representatives and diya-paying groups.[223] Although the British did not officially

[223] This was an opinion that Aadan, a descendant of the akil, grounded on his remembering and expressed during the interview of 14 July 2015.

acknowledge the existence of "clan territories", the ability to exhibit exclusive control over a portion of land allowed the Gaboye, specifically the Talabacaade lineage, to present themselves as a genealogical unit like the others, deserving the same kind of recognition.

These forms of mobilisation paved the way for the organisation of the assembly in Hargeysa and the institutionalisation of the community organisation that followed it. The assembly was a groundbreaking step because it was the first time that large portions of an entire lineage (the Talabacaade) – which had been divided into links of affiliations with different majority clans – plus the isolated members of other Gaboye genealogical units belonging to the Musse Dheriyo clan living in Hargeysa organised a *shir* and formulated the intention to establish clan institutions.

The impact of these events is evidenced by the fact that they were related to the inauguration of these institutions even among Gaboye groups living in other areas of the Protectorate. The descendants of the first akil/*caaqil* appointed in Hargeysa said that he had had contacts with members of other sub-divisions of the Musse Dheriyo clan. Some of them supported him during the mobilisation in Hargeysa, as is proved by the account we collected from Khadar, the man quoted above. His father was from the Haud and already enjoyed a sort of pre-eminence in the Musse Dheriyo section to which he belonged before the 1950s.[224] He took part in the assembly and supported the appointment of the future akil/*caaqil* as the representative of the Talabacaade; at the same time he was recognised as the leader of his genealogical unit and later on he was granted the title of "chief akil/*caaqil*" by the entire community of the Musse Dheriyo in Somaliland and the Haud. The title of "chief *caaqil*", which is still common among the Somalilander genealogical units, identifies an *caaqil* of superior rank who coordinates the functions and the actions of a defined number of *caaqil*s belonging to one specific genealogical unit. The man from the Haud did not obtain official registration of his title from the Protectorate authorities and he always recognised the superior prestige of the leader appointed in Hargeysa and of his descendants, who would take the appellation of *Suldaan* starting from 1964.

These reports further confirm the significance of what took place in Hargeysa. Firstly, they show that these events resulted in a partial definition of the hierarchy of prestige among the leaders, or proto-leaders, of the Gaboye groups of Somaliland. The legitimacy of the leadership attributed to one of the organisers of the Hargeysa assembly, the future akil/*caaqil*, derived from the legitimacy held by the assembly itself thanks to its being the first time such a comprehensive Gaboye *shir* had occurred. Secondly, the events coincided with the gathering of a clan organisation of not just one lineage, but significant portions of the Gaboye clan of Musse Dheriyo – the largest Gaboye

[224] Interview with Khadar and a group of shoemakers, 9 July 2015.

genealogical unit in Somaliland – which was distributed over wide areas. The case of the elder from the Haud who saw his prestige acknowledged by leaders from other genealogical units during the assembly explains how this happened, namely through the recognition of the existing proto-leaders outside the circumscribed groups that had granted to them localised forms of pre-eminence and representative functions.

If the Hargeysa events were so important to the extent of being framed as the crucial steps in the process of the Gaboye's emancipation, we must not underestimate the role played by Hargeysa itself as their setting. We have examined, broadly, some of the reasons which might explain why the mobilisation occurred in that town: Hargeysa was the capital of the Protectorate and was the base of the top-ranking British authorities in the country. During the 1950s its political centrality was accentuated by the British policies of constitutional development which created new representative bodies. The town was also the place where the new political parties were more active and where the members of the various elites – the 'traditional', political, bureaucratic and economic ones – resided. Second, but no less important, Hargeysa hosted the largest concentration of Gaboye in the entire Protectorate. It had for some decades attracted households and individuals from all over the north-western Somali territories, especially those who did not have livestock and were looking for the opportunity to offer their goods and services in a larger, concentrated market. This had resulted in the consolidation of settlements where the Gaboye had already been able to settle together and to develop a potential platform of mobilisation. Furthermore, the population of Gaboye in the rural areas surrounding Hargeysa was arguably the largest in Somaliland. The oral sources consulted reported that the Gaboye affiliated to the local majority clans of Ciida Galle and Sacaad Muse were a large proportion of the Gaboye in Somaliland. Numerous groups were affiliated to the Habar Yonis clan in the eastern part of the Protectorate, but other majority clans like the Habar Jeeclo, the Cisa Muse (part of the Habar Awal alliance with the Sacaad Muse and located in the coastal area of Berbera) and the western clan of Gadabursi had far fewer Gaboye living with them.

The fact that Hargeysa was the setting of the 1950s mobilisation also had implications for the link between the Gaboye, especially the Mussse Dheriyo clan, and the town. In the following decades, the 'traditional' leadership of that group maintained its main residence in Hargeysa and became even more strictly involved in the political and administrative life of the town. In 1976, a descendant of the first akil/*caaqil* holding the title of *Suldaan* (though the 'traditional' titles had been formally abolished during the Siad Barre regime) was appointed by the central government to membership of the council of five prominent men which was part of the local administrative apparatus. Moreover, the town continued to attract Gaboye from the rural areas all over the north-western Somali territories who arrived in order to make a living there; new neighbourhoods were

created, entirely inhabited by Gaboye. Indeed, the Gaboye community of Somaliland has continued to be increasingly concentrated – demographically, economically and politically – in the urban areas, especially Hargeysa. There is thus a continuity between, on the one hand, the circumstances – a considerable Gaboye population, the importance of the urban market for their services and goods, the presence of a Gaboye elite campaigning for the mobilisation – that in the late 1950s had made that town the most favourable context for the first massive mobilisation and, on the other hand, the successive consolidation of those same trends.

It is extremely difficult to define at what speed these new institutions spread and were accepted across the north-western Somali territories. The process was probably discontinuous and geographically irregular. The case of the chief *caaqil* from the Haud region shows that personal relationships with the protagonists of the Hargeysa mobilisation was a crucial factor in the meta-local formalisation of institutions among the dispersed Gaboye groups. At the same time the Gaboye elite in Hargeysa maintained a prominent position in the context of Somaliland. Indeed, like the *Suldaan*s of the majority clans, the Gaboye 'traditional' leaders did not have clearly defined powers or authority over particular genealogical units, but they embodied the internal structuring of the Musse Dheriyo clan. The descendants of the first akil/*caaqil* still, today, enjoy formalised forms of leadership inside and outside the Gaboye community of Hargeysa. The title of akil/*caaqil* was converted into that of *Suldaan* of the Musse Dheriyo in 1964 by the authorities of the Republic of Somalia and it passed first to one of the sons of his brother, then to the latter's grandson. After the collapse of the Siad Barre regime and the inauguration of an independent government in Somaliland, the Ministry of the Interior in newly born Republic of Somaliland issued a document on the 10th of September 1996 in which they reported the names and the recognised titles of some members of the Gaboye clan of Musse Dheriyo. The descendant of the assembly's organiser was registered as the only one *Suldaan* for that clan, while other individuals had obtained the title of "chief akil/*caaqil*" or akil/*caaqil*. The document outlines the scheme of 'traditional' authority of the Musse Dheriyo as related to the internal genealogical organisation of that Gaboye clan. It quotes as the legitimising source of this information a text written by a British officer who mapped the structure of the group (unfortunately neither the name of the officer, "Mr. I.G. Geghill", nor such a document have been found in the colonial archives). The line of descendents of the first akil/*caaqil* of the Gaboye in Somaliland still asserts that it holds a distinguished position of prestige inside the Musse Dheriyo clan; during the last ten years, the current *Suldaan* has tried to claim for himself a higher degree of legitimacy than the other members of the clan who have been able to obtain titles of 'traditional' authority.

The continuity of inheritance of the title since the time of the Protectorate gives a temporal legitimacy to the descendants of the promoter of the Hargeysa gathering in the 1950s. This shows also that official sanction by the political authorities outside the clan is regarded as an indirect but crucial form of validation of the titles of the 'traditional' leadership. In part, such a consideration is also valid for the 'traditional' leaders of every Somalilander genealogical group. The only legitimacy that the akils had during the Protectorate time was that of acting as agents of and intermediaries with the government; this also applied to some extent to the *Suldaan*s, who were regarded by the British as their representatives and who acted occasionally as the spokespersons of broad associations of clans. The importance of external political apparatuses in the legitimisation of the titles is equally evident in the present Republic of Somaliland, especially because of the proliferation of 'traditional' leaders during the years of the consolidation of state institutions. Even in present day Somaliland, as much as in the colonial time, the crisis of the 'traditional' system of authority and of the title holders' legitimacy among the people is a highly debated issue. Indeed, recognition by the government of Somaliland, and their granting of a salary, are often the only formalised legitimisation held by many of these leaders, since the party of people who supported their appointment is extremely small and their constituencies do not recognise them as having any significant impact on their own members' lives. The fundamental parameters which classify the effective political weight of these title holders are their personal qualities and skills (especially those of mediating conflicts and of advocating for the interests of the group vis-à-vis the government or other groups) and the antiquity of the title. This is equally true for the Gaboye, with the addition that the institutionalisation of the eldest line of 'traditional' leaders is related to their official registration by the British during the 1950s. This implies that for the Gaboye, the internal distribution of political pre-eminence is inherently shaped by the participation of an external source of authority and legitimisation, namely the colonial power.

We must report that some of the participants refused to fully accept the resolutions made during the assembly. As the Gaboye elder named Said (quoted repeatedly in the previous chapters) revealed, the members of at least one Talabacaade extended family, to which the same interlocutor belong, refused to enter into the newly constituted diya-paying group and decided to share the contribution or the payment of future blood-compensation with the Ciida Galle lineage to which they were affiliated. Said remembers that his father objected to the advocators of the proposal that the new diya-paying group could not afford to sustain the contributions,[225] namely the standard compensation fixed by Islamic law of one hundred camels for the homicide of a man. The interlocutor said that his group already shared the blood compensation with the majority clans

[225] Interview with Said of 27 April 2015.

before the assembly and that they continue to do so even today. After the end of the colonial period, they started to take part also in the diya transactions involving the genealogical unit of the Musse Dheriyo to which they belong; in fact, they are called "those who pay two diyas". This case also confirms the partial integration of local groups of Gaboye into the majority clans they were living with. It also shows that these forms of integration penetrated the debate inside the assembly but did not produce fractures or open conflicts among the Gaboye.

One last remark needs to be made about the relevance of the assembly as described by the oral sources consulted. Commenting on the registration of their 'traditional' leader and diya-paying group, several interlocutors also expressed more general judgements about the impact of the event. For instance, one of them declared that the meeting was a manifestation of "our struggle", meaning that of the Gaboye as a whole, and that it conveyed the following message to the members of the majority clan: "we are like you!". Despite the general reticence to comment and to transmit the past, the words of these interlocutors prove that the mobilisation was framed under some sort of collective narrative that questioned the very institution of the Gaboye's subordination.

5.5 WAYS OF ABANDONING SUBORDINATION PRE-EMANCIPATION

5.5.1 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF MINORITY GROUPS IN SOMALILAND

I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957: 58) described some typologies of adoption or absorption into the Somaliland genealogical units of individuals and groups recognised as belonging to other groups. This contribution helps us to visualise a *continuum* of forms of selective inclusion or exclusion from social groups. The definition of this *continuum* helps us to contextualise the subordination suffered by the Gaboye as a group and to understand the isolated cases of departure from this institution, especially those whose traces have been found in the oral sources partially discussed above.

The starting point in Lewis' analysis of the relationship between locally dominant groups and minorities is the category of hospitality. The guest, either an individual or a group, is attributed the protected status of *magan* which implies the provision of food, protection and anything else that it may be required. Furthermore, the hosting group has the duty to collect the blood-compensation in the event of the murder of the guest. If a small group lives permanently in an area controlled by a different genealogical unit or it does not have a solid relationship with the rest of its original unit, an agreement of the kind already discussed, the *xeer*, is normally agreed with the host. Lewis quoted different examples of small groups living among the Jibril Abokor lineage of the Sacaad Muse clan, located west of Hargeysa. Portions of other clans lived with them, people belonging to the Isaaq confederation and even a small group still present today – the Akishu – who Lewis said is of Oromo

origin. Lewis stated that although they had limited contacts with the Jibril Abokor in their daily life they intermarried with them freely and were not subject to any sort of formalised duty or dependency towards them. In the event of an external threat they would join the Jibril Abokor in the fight, but they had independent diya-paying groups and akils registered by the British authorities. They were considered as "slightly inferior" by the local dominant lineage, as were all individuals or groups who were from another place originally and were not part of a numerous and powerful genealogical unit.

According to Lewis, in extremely rare cases these kinds of groups could undertake a complete assimilation into the locally dominant lineage through being fictitiously absorbed into the latter's genealogical tree. Among the few such cases reported by the author, one occurred in 1946 in which one section of the Akishu successfully requested "to be naturalised into their protectors' lineage" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 61). Lewis explained subsequently that the request originated in the Akishu group's inability to pay the four blood-compensations due after a clash that some of them had had with the members of another local dominant section (I.M. Lewis 1961: 190). He reported that the other Akishu firmly opposed the change of genealogical identity and that this was one of the few examples of "true" *sheegad*. This latter term is derived from the Somali verb *sheeg*, meaning "to say", and identifies the act of "pretending, claiming to belong to a lineage to which one does not belong by birth" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 61). Lewis also affirmed that when comparing the pastoralists of Somaliland with other segmentary societies the rarity of cases of full genealogical assimilation – notwithstanding the large number of minorities living with more numerous groups – was surprising. He attributed it to the fact that political relations between local groups could be framed not necessarily through the idiom of genealogy but also through the definition of "contracts", sometimes further framed as uterine (not patrilineal) genealogical relationships. This left the groups free to maintain their genealogical identity without manipulating their genealogical chains whenever they established, for instance, political alliances (I.M. Lewis 1961: 192).

Lewis reports two terms used by the Somalilanders to distinguish between "the small groups of uncertain origin and inferior in numbers" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 63) and the local dominant unit: the first are called *gun* and the latter *gob*. The term *gun* means "bottom", it has a derogatory connotation and is used with the explicit aim of offending someone. *Gob* is a general term which designates an object deserving admiration and honour, and can also refer to the actions of an individual. In reference to the articulations of a given genealogical unit the two terms distinguish the weaker and less numerous lineages from the stronger ones. In fact, *gun* could refer not only to the genealogically unrelated minorities living with a dominant lineage, but also to the less numerous and less powerful portions birth-members of a genealogical unit. In other words, the *gun/gob*

opposition was sometimes used as equivalent to that between *laangaab* and *laandheere* sections of the same unit. We have seen above that these two denominations distinguish between the larger sub-groups endowed with political pre-eminence from the rest of a genealogical unit. Finally, as Lewis clarified (I.M. Lewis 1957: 64), the terms *gun* and *gob* are in no sense related to the opposing terms used in Somaliland to designate the distinction between the Gaboye – and the other subordinated minorities like the Tumaal and the Yibir – from the rest of the population.[226]

Another case discussed by Lewis is that of the foreign communities living in Somaliland for some centuries. They comprised Arabians, Persians and – later – Indians and Pakistanis who arrived during the British administration. The author mentions the institution of the *abaan* which we have repeatedly met so far, but he does not relate it to the context of the caravan expeditions across Somaliland. The *abaan* was a "protector or agent" hired by members of these foreign communities from among the members of a respected local lineage in order to safeguard their properties and to guarantee protection in the event of troubles with other genealogical units. In this way the foreigner became a *magan* of that lineage and the salary he paid to the *abaan* absolved him from contributing to the blood-compensation of that group.

Can the category of hospitality and protection illuminate some aspects of the social position of the Gaboye? Can we explore the latter using this repertoire of terminologies and more-or-less formalised relationships that organised the co-residence of dominant local lineages and small groups not genealogically related to them? Furthermore, can we find points of connection between the pre-emancipation processes of abandoning subordination on the part of localised Gaboye groups and the absorption by some groups of non-genealogically-linked guests? The elements reviewed through Lewis's account contribute to an outline of a sort of phenomenology of 'not-belonging' and, indeed, it is Lewis himself who linked the condition of the Gaboye living among the Somaliland pastoralists to the that of the *magan*s: "There is no formal treaty binding the *sab* [a collective denomination for the subordinated groups like the Gaboye] to their *abban*s [as we have seen, this is the common term used to indicate the 'patrons' belonging to the majority clans to which the Gaboye groups were affiliated]. For they are chattels, part of the inheritable patrimony of the *Samaale* [collective term which in Somaliland, though not referred to any common ancestor, indicated all the members of the major clans] lineage to whom they are attached. Thus the *sab* are the lowest, most dependent, and least independent of *magan*s" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 69).

[226] We have seen in Chapter 1 that this distinction was translated into the terminological opposition between *Aji* and *Midgaan*, with the first term being of unknown meaning and indicating the members of the majority clans. Another dichotomy was that between *Soomaali* and *Sab* (I.M. Lewis 1957: 64) which nowadays seems to have disappeared from the lexicon of marginality.

In this passage, Lewis' association of the term *magan* with the condition of the Gaboye appears an ambiguous metaphor. In fact, it is not documented among the Somalilanders and is based on some superficial similarities: the fact that the Gaboye were scattered in small groups living with dominant lineages with which they had no genealogical relationship, the role played by the protectors in mediating their relations with external groups, especially concerning blood-compensation and the recurrence of the term *abaan* to identify the 'patrons' for both the foreign communities and the Gaboye. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the Gaboye's subordination such as the rigid prohibition of intermarriage and the occupational segregation were not documented by Lewis for the groups of *magan*s quoted above (like the Akishu). Just one more element should be remembered here in order to show that the Gaboye were the object of a distinct institution: it is the mobilisation of Hargeysa and the circumstances of the recognition of their first 'traditional' leader and diya-paying group. Many of the groups of *magan*s quoted by Lewis had their own akil and diya-paying groups in the 1950s and where they did not it was because they were too small and it was more convenient to share these institutions with their local dominant lineages. In other words, no process of emancipation was ever documented for such kinds of groups.

It is, therefore, only if we view the relationship as an asymmetric political alliance – a link of protection which formalises the prerogative of an individual or group to mediate another group's interactions with the rest of the society – that the Gaboye can be regarded as similar to the 'guests', at one end of the *continuum* illustrating the different degrees of 'not-belonging' to the majority clans. The differences between the institution of hospitality and that of the Gaboye's subordination are easily documentable. Therefore, Lewis used the metaphor of *magan* for the occupationally segregated groups probably because he was interested in underlining the common elements between them. Indeed, they both embodied the cast – like the sculptor's mold – from which the socially codified parameters defining membership to the Somaliland clans, i.e. genealogical identity, co-participation in blood-compensation transactions, the sharing of the same territory, were cast.

Indeed, investigating and contrasting the particular modes of subversion of these two institutions – the hospitality and the Gaboye's subordination – can offer us more tools with which to understand both their differences and similarities. Whereas Lewis documented and discussed cases of *magan*s who had left their status, we do not have adequate scholarly contributions about similar trajectories involving specific Gaboye groups. We have reported above several cases of circumscribed Gaboye groups showing more or less remarkable departures from the paradigm of their institutionalised marginality. These other typologies of "leaving" the subordinated condition are inherently different from the outcome of the Hargeysa mobilisation that we described above: they relate to specific genealogical units or individuals and their related households; they consist in

absorption, to different degrees, into the genealogical units of the people to whom they were affiliated; finally, they clearly mark the difference from the constitution of the first Gaboye diya-paying group and the appointment of a 'traditional' leader that occurred in Hargeysa since they did not question the institutionalised subordination of the Gaboye as a group. Such kinds of pre-emancipation transformations have been even more difficult to investigate. They are more elusive than the process of emancipation itself and are sometimes used to produce a representation of the past which smoothes over the configuration of the Gaboye's institutionalised subordination.

5.5.2 THE FULL ASSIMILATION

The different degrees of absorption of the Gaboye varied according to the specific circumstances of their relationships with the groups involved; but they can be broadly classified into two categories. The first is the full assimilation of the Gaboye unit, a genealogical segment, within the genealogical chain of the majority clan to which it was affiliated and the second is the maintenance of a distinct genealogical identity and, contemporarily, the Gaboye group's inclusion in some of the dominant group's clan institutions, like the blood-compensation exchanges and the adult male councils (marriage segregation was probably never questioned in these cases). The first category presents similarities with the cases of assimilation of other non-Gaboye minorities discussed by I.M. Lewis. It was extremely rare and only few examples have been collected during the fieldwork. The circumstances and the assimilation itself are not openly discussed by the groups involved and survive only as stories recalled among the people. These rumours circulate and are often used to attack the members of a specific genealogical unit, attributing some sort of wrong-doing committed by its members to the fact that their origins are not clear.

One case was collected during an interview with a Sacaad Muse man met in Hargeysa,[227] who mentioned a section of his clan that was originally part of the Talabacaade lineage of the Musse Dheriyo clan. Portions of the Jibril Abokor lineage (a lineage settled in the area west of Hargeysa) were fighting against some sections of the Gadabursi clan. The role played in the clash by the Gaboye who were affiliated to them was so decisive that they decided to completely integrate them inside their ranks. These events occurred long before the 1950s and resulted in the complete assimilation of the group within the Jibril Abokor genealogy. Nowadays they own farms and cattle. This anecdote is widely known but recalling it in public means openly offending the group involved.

[227] Interview with Dahir, 17 June 2015.

One example of the public usages of stories of this kind was collected during the fieldwork of 2015. A prominent member of a majority clan publicly attacked a man belonging to his same group who had made embarrassing declarations about the government of Somaliland. The prominent figure subtly alluded to the fact that the confused origins of the man's sub-group should have led the audience to downgrade the importance of his words (and should have led the government to cease considering him a spokesperson of his clan). No specific allusion was made to the particular historical circumstances of absorption, but the delegitimising intent behind the act of vaguely recalling of such an event was quite evident to everybody in the town.

The cases of full assimilation of circumscribed Gaboye groups further prove one thing that I.M. Lewis had already clearly explained: the manipulation of genealogical identity was not a function of the shifting or the consolidation of political alliances. The sanctioning of the absorption was not caused by any sort of modification of the political relationship between the groups. Even if the manipulation temporally followed a contingent event, like co-participation in an inter-clan fight, the latter was not the direct cause of the alteration of the relationship between the groups involved. In the case reported above, the modified genealogy sanctioned a much more radical transformation of the group which changed the way in which it belonged to the community.

These considerations lead us to reflect on the capacity of the concept of 'caste', as defined by Dumont (Dumont 1970 [1966]), to enlighten one crucial element of the Gaboye's institutionalised subordination: in the caste system there is a disjunction between status and power; it implies a hierarchy of status which is independent from the political balance between the internal articulations of the society. The isolated cases of assimilation of Gaboye groups inside the majority clans further prove the separation between the hierarchy of status from the distribution of power. In the case reported above, the status upgrade was not the consequence of the Gaboye group's acquisition of political and military pre-eminence vis-à-vis the Jibril Abokor to whom they were affiliated. To this, it must be added that upward mobility in the hierarchy of status was an exceptional event, as was the manipulation of genealogical identity in general. The exceptional nature of the act of manipulating genealogies is signalled by the fact reported by I.M. Lewis that the Somalilanders generally commented on these episodes with scornful amusement. Such an attitude is, arguably, related to the intention to distance oneself from an act which is considered inherently subversive. The sources presented so far have shown that whereas the subversive alteration of genealogical repertoires might occur for either of the groups of *magan*s, like the Akishu, and the Gaboye but with completely different premises and implications. The Akishu already had their diya-paying groups and the assimilation resulted only in the fusion of their blood-compensation apparatuses with those of the local dominant lineage; on the other hand the Talabacaade section did

not have diya-paying groups before the assimilation. The Akishu, like many other small groups across the Somali territories, were considered weak political actors and "slightly inferior" by the surrounding groups inasmuch as specific circumstances forced them to live isolated from the rest of their group, divided into small subgroups and depending on the protection of an alien dominant lineage, whereas the Gaboye's subordination was an integral part of their collective identity.

In order to understand more deeply what happened to the Gaboye section assimilated into the Jibril Abokor lineage, it might be useful to examine, in parallel, the assimilation with an institution which presents superficial similarities: the manumission of slaves. In particular, one typology of manumission among those described by Patterson (Patterson 1982: 234) is evoked here, the one he calls "political manumission". Political manumission occurred whenever the state or an "agent of the community" gave the former slave recognition as a full-fledged member of the community (even if the slave was not directly owned by the state itself). This kind of manumission was usually related to "exceptional acts of valour" undertaken by slaves during warfare: at times of extreme military danger for the community, freedom was handed to slaves who had been able to kill enemies. It is the relationship between the military sacrifice of the subjugated[228] for the benefit of the community to which they were attached and the formal abandonment of their subordinated status that links the case of the slaves with that of the Gaboye group mentioned above. But the general definition (and the functioning) of manumission provided by Patterson departs from the example of the Gaboye's assimilation. Patterson saw manumission as an example of the gift exchange theorised by Marcel Mauss: it has a "symbolic component" which "synthesizes the ideological and utilitarian components as counterpoised elements in a single ritual process"; thence, the ritual mediates between every single interaction and the total system of exchanges of one society, so that "each subprocess of prestation is given social and moral significance" (Patterson 1982: 212). Indeed, it is extremely difficult to see in the acquisition of a new genealogical identity for the Gaboye group quoted above as having a social and moral significance. We have seen that such episodes were regarded as subversive and violating certain socially and morally codified set of relationships by the people not directly involved in them. The social definition of the institution of slavery included options like the "political manumission" under circumstances like desperate military situations. Under analogous circumstances, the Gaboye groups could gain an equally complete abandonment of their subordinated condition but this was framed as against the moral order: what had moral significance for the Somalilanders was the clear-cut status border separating the Gaboye from the rest of society. The formalisation of this moral content was based on a

[228] It must be also remembered that military service was for the Gaboye an integral part of their institutionalised subordination.

hierarchy of status which did not depend on the contingencies of political relationships and alliances between local groups; otherwise it could not have both shown itself as such and preserved some sort meaning for the Somalilanders.

The usage of this contrast here is not a purely academic exercise but an attempt to analyse a specific, poorly documented form of social stratification in the Somali territories, one that is still extremely precarious in its conceptual definition. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the academic debate about the tools to conceptualise this kind of social institution, like the concept of 'caste', is, although vital, a marginal one within African studies. Contrasting the case of the Gaboye's subordination with other fields of analysis, like the much more developed one of slavery, is not an anachronistic effort to categorise the forms of subordination in the African contexts, but to promote the mutual understanding of these social institutions in terms of their continuities and discontinuities. An analytical lexicon emerges from the comparison with social institutions like slavery and hospitality which illuminates the functioning of the Gaboye's institutionalised subordination. The Somalilanders distinguished the classification of social groups based on status from that based on politico-military pre-eminence; these differentiated positions were managed through the organisation of asymmetric relationships of segregation in the first case and protection (like the tutelage in the blood-compensation exchanges) in the second; the mapping of the social articulations based either on status or political pre-eminence was guaranteed by the preservation and, at the same time, the extemporary manipulation of genealogical repertoires. The latter depicted the relative distance, the centrality and the various forms of marginality of each group.

Without controlled comparisons things can get confused and the circumstances of specific events might obscure the process of social definition of roles and relationships. For instance, the Gaboye were defined inside the same sentence by I.M. Lewis both as *magan*s and as a human "chattel", a term which is related to the lexicon of slavery. A description like this does not help us to understand if and how the subordination of the Gaboye was institutionalised. Here, the comparison between the subordination suffered by the Gaboye on the one hand, and slavery (in Patterson's terms) on the other, has helped to reveal the analytical importance of the relationship between a specific event consisting in the formal but circumscribed abrogation of the subordinated condition for a defined portion of the subjugated group and the encompassing social and moral system which gives meaning to that event.

5.5.3 THE CHANGING 'MORAL ECONOMY' OF THE GABOYE'S SUBORDINATION

As we saw above, there was also a second category of absorption, the 'incomplete' one, which offers far more numerous examples and was witnessed by I.M. Lewis himself. He reported that the

Gaboye living with the majority clans usually had livestock, "but are very seldom as rich in stock as the average poor Somali. Most of the wealth of those in the interior is in sheep and goats" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 9). In another passage, he added: "Nowadays with the wider opportunities opened to the *sab* [see above] to amass wealth and to earn respect in Government service or private business any men of substance still attached as *sab* to a Samaale group are normally allowed to speak at councils" (I.M. Lewis 1957: 28). This scant but precious information provided by Lewis describes the situation during his first fieldwork in Somaliland in the mid-1950s and confirms what oral sources reported above have revealed: the transformation of the Gaboye's subordination included different manifestations and different stages.

The ownership of livestock among Gaboye households was documented during the fieldwork through the witness of several interlocutors, and from the fact that pastoralism completely excluded for some Gaboye households any other occupational task 'traditionally' attached to them. We must relate their participation to the clan councils to the evidence of the presence of an internal elite inside the local groups of Gaboye that could reproduce the model of the majority clans and of the prestige figures, the elders. The presence of a Gaboye elite also manifested in the activism of individual members of the Talabacaade lineage which resulted in the mobilisation of Hargeysa. The interlocutors consulted spoke of negotiations between these members and top ranking 'traditional' leaders of the majority clans such as the *Suldaan* of Habar Awal. This is evidence of the Gaboye's participation in the political life of local groups. Finally, we have seen that some Gaboye units had been admitted to participation in blood-compensations transactions with the genealogical units to which they were attached even before the Hargeysa mobilisation of the 1950s.

If we compare Lewis' statements and the oral sources presented here with the picture outlined by previous scholarly contributions, like that of Cerulli who outlined the rigid occupational segregation and the exclusion from political and blood-compensation structures of the Gaboye, we see evident variations. Firstly, it seems likely that partial or even complete assimilation of isolated Gaboye groups within the genealogical units of their 'patrons' might have occurred even before the wave of urbanisation in the hinterland of Somaliland started. Secondly, the historical period characterised by the consolidation of the British rule and the expansion of urban centres like Hargeysa opened a phase of more widespread change in the set of mutual expectations and obligations between the Gaboye and the dominant groups. I.M. Lewis has briefly commented on this process as follows: "Today, however, *sab* [see above] are increasingly finding work in the towns, and many have left their traditional protectors to seek urban employment. […] At the same time, with this partial emancipation which the development of townships and urban industry, however minimal, is fostering, there is a movement among the *sab* to set up their own independent

dia-paying groups on an equal footing with Somali" (I.M. Lewis 1994: 127). Lewis goes on to say that the previous bonds of affiliation persisted, however, even in the towns and were reflected in unspecified "urban patterns of commerce"; he added that the members of the majority clans continued to "patronize" the Gaboye attached to them in the urban environment too. Unfortunately, Lewis did not provide any concrete evidence of these statements, except for the fact the whenever a dispute occurred in the town, the Gaboye tended to split up among themselves and to side with their 'patrons'. On the contrary, the existence of some sort of control over the Gaboye's work activities in the town was not confirmed by our interlocutors. They have always stressed that they managed autonomously every aspect of their working activities. The distribution of the Gaboye's working spaces in the various neighbourhoods of Hargeysa in part still reflects today the existence of the old bonds of affiliation with the specific genealogical units which, broadly, live in those particular areas and this pattern seems also to have been reproduced by the Gaboye who arrived during the post-colonial decades, but they have explained it by saying that, as soon as they arrived in the town, they would seek a job or training among people who knew them or a relative.

The absence of an in depth analysis of the supposed control of the majority clans over the urban communities of Gaboye is, admittedly, a challenging gap in the historical reconstruction of this phase. However, even Lewis' contribution confirmed that the 'moral economy' of the Gaboye's subordination had gone through significant transformations before the 1950s mobilisation in Hargeysa. The economic dimension of these transformations is of paramount importance: Edward P. Thompson, who decisively contributed to the formulation and spread of the notion of 'moral economy', reminded us that it included an ideology, made up of values and customary practices, which ensured the distribution of determined economic roles and defined the mutual relationships between certain socio-economic groups. Values on their own do not make 'moral economies' (Thompson 1991: 340).

Changes in the economic texture like the growth of the proportion of livestock sales going through the towns' markets and the general consolidation of the commercial sector, which influenced the economic role of the members of the occupationally segregated groups (like the Gaboye), must be understood if we are to define the transformation of the 'moral economy' of the Gaboye's subordination. However, the formalisation of the Gaboye's social position as a 'moral' discourse also deserves analytical attention. To this end, it is particularly useful to rely on the clarification offered by Marc Edelman (Edelman 2012: 55) of the two interrelated meanings which the adjective 'moral' had within the notion of 'moral economy' formulated by Thompson: "The first is 'moral' in relation to 'mores' or customs, with both understood as historical products thoroughly interwoven in a social fabric. […] The second meaning of 'moral' relates to a principled stance vis-

à-vis society, the world and especially the common good, with the latter defined both in terms of customary rights *and* utopian aspirations". The tension between these two meanings is reflected in the tension between 1) the "customary" morality of the status border separating the Gaboye – which excluded the possibility of their full assimilation inside the genealogical units of their 'patrons' – and 2) the manifestation of "principled stances" which made (and continue to make) Somalilander society reflect on the treatment of the Gaboye in relation to the distribution of rights and duties and to the (utopian?) possibility to improve their social position. Differently from the case of the "English crowd in the eighteenth century" analysed by Thompson, the Gaboye did not consider the 'moral economy' through which they were bonded to the other socio-economic components of the society as a model to preserve against incipient transformations, like the liberalisation of the grain market against which Thompson's crowd rose up (Thompson 1971).[229] On the contrary, the Gaboye gradually came to view the consolidation of the British presence and the economic transformations related to it as an opportunity either to question or to escape and finally to organise a collective mobilisation against the 'moral economy' of their subordination.

Before the step of collective mobilisation, the 'moral' representation of the Gaboye's subordination already had its internal articulations, its tensions between contrasting appropriations of the customary repertoire. Indeed, the ideological supports of the institution reveal an uneasy coexistence with other socially codified values of the Somalilander groups which had previously emerged in Cerulli's contributions (Cerulli 1959: 25): the treatment of the Gaboye showed and still shows some evident contradictions with Islamic precepts. Many aspects of their institutionalised subordination were hard to justify from the point of view of Islamic law, like the prohibition of intermarriage and the fact that for the murder of a Gaboye man the standard blood-price paid was half of that due for the homicide of a member of a majority clan. In present-day Somaliland, some of the most vigorous disapproval towards the persisting forms of marginality of the Gaboye is shaped by religious discourses or directly sustained by religious figures. A prominent 'traditional' leader of the Musse Dheriyo (who was ascribed the title of *Suldaan*) in Hargeysa is also acknowledged as a religious figure and runs two madrasas in the town (see Chapter 8). His frequent interventions in public are often oriented at denouncing as un-Islamic the attitude of the Somalilanders towards the Gaboye.

Among the cases showing from the Gaboye's point of view the 'immorality' of their treatment were those of mixed marriages between Gaboye individuals and members of the majority clans. The issue remains largely obscure, given the absence of any quantitative evaluation of the

[229] After all, according to the author, the crowd produced a rupture with the 'moral economy' which they were trying to defend inasmuch as they openly rebelled and violated the principle affirmed by the "paternalist model" which firmly excluded rebellion itself (Thompson 1971: 98).

phenomenon. Mustafe, one Gaboye young man living in Hargeysa, reported during an interview a case occurred few years before the fieldwork that had become pretty famous in Somaliland.[230] A girl from Borama belonging to a local majority clan fell in love with a Gaboye boy from the same town. Notwithstanding the opposition of her family, the two got married and, soon after, they moved to Hargeysa in order to escape from the hostility and the threats of the girl's family. Soon afterwards she got pregnant and in the following months she was visited by her mother, who came with the intention of assisting her daughter during the final phase of the pregnancy and after the delivery, since the couple did not have close relatives in Hargeysa. In the account of Mustafe, who directly met the protagonists of this story, the tragedy began after the birth of the baby who died few days later. Mustafe spoke to the mother of the girl and in that meeting, during which he saw her in a shocked and confused state, he developed the terrible suspicion that the woman could be implicated in the death of the baby. His suspicions were partially confirmed by what happened immediately after this: the girl was contacted by her relatives in Borama and told to come to the town since they had changed their mind, they had decided to approve her marriage and to give her their material support. As soon as the girl arrived in Borama, she was forced to marry one of her cousins. The second marriage was described by Mustafe as an act violating every set of norms acknowledged by the Somalilanders; he exclaimed: "It is against Islam! It is against tradition! It is against our culture!".[231] Even ignoring its most repugnant parts which reported facts that could not be verified during the fieldwork, this account was intended to stress the "immorality" of the behaviour of the relatives of the girl, from the point of view of all the formally legitimised bodies organising the life of the community.

The decrying of an unequal application to the Gaboye of the community's values and customs has not only appeared in present-day Somaliland. Among the issues and the goals formulated during the Hargeysa mobilisation there was the will to overcome what was represented as an illegitimate disablement: the Gaboye lacked the forms of internal organisation which all the other genealogical groups of Somaliland had. But this kind of opposition was arguably widespread among the Gaboye long before the 1950s. Cabdi, one of the Gaboye elders interviewed during the fieldwork, recalled a story regarding his grandfather which had made him famous among his clansmen.[232] The British had just arrived in the town of Burco and established their administration; they were immediately informed by some members of the local majority clans that, regarding the issues related to the payment of blood-compensation, the diya for the murder of a Gaboye man was half of that for a male member of the majority clans, namely the same of a non-Gaboye woman

[230] Interview with Mustafe, 16 December 2014.
[231] Mustafe could speak in English fluently and these words were referred directly in English.
[232] Interview with Cabdi, 19 May 2015.

(whose standard amount was fifty camels). Then, the grandfather of Cabdi went to the office of the highest British officer (allegedly, the District Commissioner of Burco), he took his clothes off in front of him until he was naked and exclaimed: "Am I a man or a woman?". This gesture was not depicted by Cabdi as part of an articulated opposition of the local groups of Gaboye to their distinct treatment in blood-compensation transactions, but rather as a spontaneous protest based on the perception of the incoherence of that treatment with the general customs of the community. According to Cabdi, the decision to put such a grievance to the British turned out to be successful because the officer issued an order stating that diya should be the same for both Gaboye and the members of the other clans. What happened next in the District of Burco has not been investigated during this research, but it is important to emphasise here that the public formulations of a 'moral' criticism – based on the rooted customs of the Somalilander groups and addressing the pillars of the institutionalised subordination of the Gaboye – were already there before the 1950s (on the basis of the information provided by Cabdi, this episode reportedly took place between 1910 and 1920). We can add that such formulations, arguably, saw the British playing the role of receptive interlocutors and, to some extent, of actors restoring a moral balance (through the deliberation about diya-payments in Burco or through the registration of the first Gaboye akil/*caaqil* in Hargeysa) supposedly incompatible with the condition of the Gaboye.

The various forms of integration into the majority clans, the formalisations of the critique of the morality of the Gaboye's subordination and the economic transformations in the Protectorate of Somaliland culminated in the late 1950s with the recognition of the first Gaboye akil/*caaqil* and diya-paying group in Hargeysa. If we ask what Edelman argues was the core question in Thompson's *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd* (Thompson 1971) – "when do grievances or distress result in collective action?" (Edelman 2012: 58) – we understand the rift between the isolated forms of assimilation of Gaboye groups and the emancipation that occurred in Hargeysa. The grievances of the Gaboye turned into collective action in relation to a tension between different patterns of socio-economic relationship. These transformations, including the rural-urban mobility and the constitution of homogeneous settlements in the towns, secured the infrastructure for new, more coordinated articulations of the moral critique of their institutionalised subordination, a moral critique that, like the revolt of Thompson's crowd, was both in continuity with the customs and partially in contradiction with the 'moral economy' itself.

CHAPTER 6

THE HISTORY OF THE TRASFORMATIONS OF THE GABOYE'S SUBORDINATION DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Throughout Part II Hargeysa, and indirectly other hinterland towns of Somaliland, have been the co-objects of analysis. The historical context in which we position the urban expansion of Hargeysa saw several significant political and economic transformations which not only contributed to the urbanisation wave itself but also deeply affected the re-configuration of the Gaboye's social position. Therefore, in concluding Part II, it is worth recapitulating the information reported in the previous chapters and relating the case of the Gaboye's emancipation to a broader analytical frame that intertwines urbanisation and social change. As was made clear above, different types of towns have corresponded to different historical layers of urbanisation in Somaliland. But how did the typologies of the Somalilander urbanisation compare with other similar processes that occurred in colonial Africa?

We cannot examine here the pre-nineteenth century history – encompassing the era of the so-called "Islamic principalities" which waxed and waned during their continuous wars with the Ethiopian empire up to the eighteenth century, and which extended their control over huge portions of the present day Somaliland (Braukamper 1977). The old-established towns of the Somali coast were the heritage of that fundamental social institution found all along the East African coast, the caravan routes (R. Pankhurst 1965; Mordechai Abir 1968). They continued to be crucial places – through the *abaan* system – along the channel linking the interior of the Horn of Africa to the Indian Ocean until the second decade of the twentieth century. As in other areas of East Africa (Gideon S. Were & Derek A. Wilson 1984; Kefa M. Otiso 2004), the hinterland of Somaliland was dotted with small centres which were part of the caravan network and were also political (and/or religious) nodes for local groups (Were & Wilson 1984), as the case of Hargeysa shows. These centres were the focus of colonial penetration from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and it is at this point that the case of Somaliland becomes evidently distinct from those of other parts of East Africa. For instance, unlike in British East Africa, two factors slowed the penetration of the hinterland: the absence of any perceived pressing economic or political reason to do so and, later, the consolidation of the dervish movement's strong military opposition .

A new phase of urbanisation began in Somaliland only in the 1920s, and it involved a strip of land between the northern Somali coast and the border agreed in 1897 that separated the Ethiopian Empire and the British Protectorate of Somaliland. However, this urbanisation process remained unique in East Africa since it remained largely a side-effect of colonial penetration. In

fact, the British did not formulate policies for the economic exploitation of urban development schemes. They established a slim administrative apparatus, trying to minimise the Protectorate government's costs and to maximise livestock exports. The twentieth century waves of urbanisation were, thus, related simply to the administrative centres established by the colonial rulers after the dervish war and were by-products of the re-configuration of commercial networks. The unquestioned dominance of livestock production strictly dictated these networks, although it must be noted that the modes of livestock production changed with the expansion of the commercial herds. The configuration of the processes of urbanisation in Somaliland is the result of the combination of the colonial approach and the local groups' attempts to adapt to it.

The representation of urbanisation offered in the previous chapters is dangerously close to those scholarly analyses of African towns that Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch has criticised as biased by an "an ideological predisposition" (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 10). She outlined how historians and anthropologists up to the 1980s tended to emphasise the economic, and especially the commercial, factors in examining the passage from a deeper stratum corresponding to certain characteristics of the African towns, to the modernity which culminated with capitalism and the industrial development of the towns. The distinction was made between towns' previous nature as political/religious centres and their later, economic, functions after the arrival of the Europeans. This analytical approach equated "urbanisation" and "westernization": they were "inextricably intertwined as regards their practical implications in Africa as aspects of a single process of change" (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 9). Indeed, the representation of the expansion of Hargeysa offered in the previous chapters, from being a religious settlement and the residence of prominent figures of the local genealogical units, to an administrative post and then a centre for the collection of livestock to be shipped to the Somaliland ports, reproduces the picture of a colonial-driven impulse to urbanisation. But the old-established towns, namely the coastal ones like Berbera in the north-western part of the Somali territories, had already taken on an eminently economic function for the pastoral producers before the arrival of the British. Therefore, rather than a new stage of urban development, the colonial era marked the appearance in Somaliland of a new class of towns, born out of the conflation of interests between colonial rule and local groups.

Hargeysa was the capital of an administrative district from the 1920s: it hosted medical facilities, the District Court and the Akil's Court and so was the centre for the local administration of justice. Hargeysa also became a crucial commercial post for both the trade of livestock and the trans-frontier commerce with Ethiopia. The consolidation of British administrative control and the deep changes in the livestock trade and generally in the commercial sector re-shaped the economic

positioning of this area vis-à-vis the north-western part of the Horn and resulted in a considerable wave of urbanisation.

The aftermath of the Second World War saw a second wave of urbanisation, larger and longer-lasting, which was sanctioned by the British authorities and shifted the seat of government from Berbera to Hargeysa in 1945. The proportion of the population permanently settled in urban areas in the interior of the Protectorate increased. The relationship between towns like Hargeysa and the rural-pastoral areas changed because of the growing commercialisation of the pastoral sector and the improvement of the urban-based administrative apparatus. Between the late 1940s and the early 1950s the towns hosted a growing socio-political elite made up of rich merchants and Somali bureaucrats, and a constantly growing stratum of individuals and groups attracted by job opportunities or deprived of their living in the rural areas. The sources quoted above show that this second category of urban dwellers was largely absorbed into a new, eminently urban, form of marginality which we can interpret from the type of 'housing' they occupied, their occupational tasks and other phenomena which began to manifest in the towns, like that of the 'unattended boys'.

Unlike what occurred in many other African contexts, like the exemplary case of Zambia described by James Ferguson (Ferguson 1999), the consolidation of colonial rule in Somaliland did not initiate any entirely new economic sectors that were distinct from the pre-colonial modes of production and that accompanied the birth and expansion of urban centres (except perhaps the case of agricultural development in some specific regions of the Protectorate investigated by Abdi I. Samatar; see Abdi I. Samatar 1989). A concrete manifestation of the difference between the Somaliland case and that studied by Ferguson is the fact that the expanding towns of the 1940s and 50s did not host occupational sectors capable of absorbing huge masses of rural people. Indeed, a transfer of population did occur but none of the sources reviewed indicated a widespread depopulation of rural areas.

This is not to say that there was only little social change in the last three decades of the Protectorate era (1930-1960), nor that the impact of colonial rule was negligible: quite the opposite. The wave of urbanisation that took place in the hinterland of Somaliland, including the settlement of the Gaboye in Hargeysa, can be explained by the possibility offered by the circumstance of colonial rule to more strictly link the pastoral groups to (a new class of) urban centres. The latter had already shown in the 1930s some of the characteristics that, again, Coquery-Vidrovitch ascribed to the pre-colonial African towns, in particular those which hosted politically and militarily dominant groups. In criticising the contributions which labelled them as "economically passive centers for parasitic social groups" which extracted the surpluses produced by other groups, she emphasised that those urban elites were also a "dynamic force". They gathered around them various

typologies of “active people” who fulfilled their needs, like “slaves and servants, merchants and craftsmen, moneylenders, householders, canvassers, bricklayers” (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 12); therefore this ruling class was closely involved in the activation of marketplaces and economic networks. The idea of the towns as “parasitic” in respect of productive forces was also sustained by British officers in Somaliland who believed that with their expansion the towns drained labour resources from the only sustainable economic sector in the country, pastoralism.

From the start of the growth of the hinterland Somalilander towns in the in the 1920s, these urban centres continued to attract elite members of the local groups, such as religious figures and representatives of the local genealogical units, as they had done in the past and as is also suggested by the sources describing the nature of the original settlement of Hargeysa. However, they immediately became the residence of the growing group of Somalilanders who turned to commercial activities and which developed those urban economic networks outlined by Coquery-Vidovitch. For instance, they gave a very significant stimulus to construction activities and to the establishment of retail shops, in contrast with the scant interest displayed by the British in the economic development of the Protectorate.

6.1 THE MANAGEMENT OF FOOD SURPLUSES AND THE WAVE OF URBANISATION IN THE SOMALILAND HINTERLAND

The analysis of urbanisation in Somaliland also has a broader impact on our understanding of the phenomenon of the Gaboye’s subordination. Akin L. Mabogunje (Mabogunje 1968) advanced a theory of urbanisation in Africa which outlines some important aspects of the growing importance achieved by towns in some areas of the continent and in different historical phases. The premise of his analysis is that specific economic systems produced correlated systems of cities, but that there are some conditions which must be fulfilled if urbanisation is to occur: the availability of a food production surplus, the presence of a “power class” able to exert control over the food producers, to distribute the surplus among the non-producers groups, namely the specialists like craftsmen and the presence of a class of merchants that guarantees the supply of raw materials. Specialisation and the division of labour alone do not start processes of urbanisation. What is interesting in this theory for the case of the Gaboye is the centrality it gives to the relationship between food producing groups and the rest of the community, and the explanation of how the functional specialisation of social groups is determined and managed.

Therefore, if we apply Mabogunje’s model to the Somalilander context during the colonial time, we can identify some of the author’s parameters: the availability of a food surplus derived from pastoralism and the existence of groups of non-producers and of the traders. One fundamental

element of the model, however, is missing: the power class capable of enforcing the redistribution of the productive surplus. There were of course concentrations of power around figures of prestige and groups endowed with political pre-eminence who influenced the lives of neighbouring groups. However, whether or not the Somalis were a "pastoral democracy" when the British arrived in Somaliland, there was not a class that had the will and the material capacity to undertake a systematic extraction of the food surplus and to distribute it among other non-producing groupings. The producers, the pastoralists, were the only socio-economic category (with their more or less defined forms of political pre-eminence) who could be said to have the capacity to control the accumulation and the allocation of food surplus. There were of course forms of coerced appropriation of livestock, namely the lootings that accompanied clashes between genealogical units, but they always consisted in transactions of surpluses involving groups of pastoralists between whom the raiding and defensive alliances were dynamic.

What role then for the non-producers? First, we must remember that they were needed, unavoidably, because, being traders or craftsmen, they provided fundamental goods and services which the pastoralists-producers did not provide for themselves. The role of the trader was fused with that of the pastoral producer: this was possible because, unlike the producers taken into account by Mabogunje who were farmers, the Somali pastoralists shared with the traders the basic feature of mobility which allowed them to take part in both activities. The nomadic pastoralists shaped socio-economic networks through the establishment of mobility routes and their capacity to keep these routes open; they assured the connections between the different nodes of the networks, like the coastal towns of Somaliland and the Ethiopian plateau, which also benefited both the trading caravans and foreign traders. The figure of the *abaan* perfectly embodied the fusion of these two roles, as we have seen: the *abaan* was a broker belonging to a local genealogical unit, usually a prominent member, who owned a considerable amount of livestock (Djama 1997). He invested his knowledge of the social and geographical environment and the opportunity afforded him by his membership of an organised group of producers (physical access to collectively-controlled portions of land, the ability to act as an acknowledged negotiator with local groups) to take part in and to profit from commercial enterprises launched by individuals from outside the community (such as the Arab traders).

The second class of non-producers were the craftsmen or, as is now evident, the Gaboye. We have devoted ample discussion to the institution of the Gaboye's subordination, many of the features of which outlined above presented one common theme, that of segregation. The Somalis consider the Gaboye and the other subordinated minorities as not to belong to any of the major clan confederations of the Somali territories. Their skilled practices were related to the reproduction of

the majority groups – like 'traditional' healing and midwifery – and to the manufacture of fundamental tools for the pastoralists, like shoes and other leather objects, pottery, axes, knives and other weapons; these practices are stigmatised and forbidden as occupations to the members of any other genealogical unit. Intermarriage between them and the majority clans is strictly prohibited. All these elements lead, firstly, to the establishment of a permanent association between certain skilled tasks and specific groups and, secondly to the maintenance of a border separating them and upholding the discrimination against them, in the double meaning of the word: "singled out" and "treated as inferior".

The institutionalised forms of segregation clearly showed the oppressive control that the class of producers exerted over the non-producing craftsmen. In concrete terms, the former groups managed the population size of the latter groups and defined their distribution among the local groups. Different factors, including the prestige of the 'patrons', conditioned this distribution: the evidence presented above has suggested that a Gaboye group was an appendix of political pre-eminence attached to individuals or genealogical units. Their settlement was, therefore, not homogenous and reflected the balance of political weight in and between groups of pastoral producers.

Another manifestation of the oppressive control was the exclusion of the Gaboye from decision-making arenas and from blood-compensation constituencies. These institutions of the genealogical units were entitled to manage one form of circulation of livestock surpluses: the *diya* payment itself was a channel through which the surpluses were moved between different groups in order to avoid clan clashes and to avoid more dangerous risks to the integrity of the producers and their means of production. The exclusion of the Gaboye was a token of the producers' ability to reject the non-producers from the institutions through which they alone administered part of the surplus they generated. Finally, the Gaboye were kept largely dependent for their reproduction on allocations of food from the producers; we can state on the basis of the descriptions included in accounts such as that of Burton (Burton 1984 [1854]) quoted in Chapter 1 that in some cases the share of the surplus allocated to the class of craftsmen as a payment for their services was maintained at the minimum level, barely sufficient to assure their reproduction.

We do not, clearly, intend to present here a functionalist explanation of the institution of subordination suffered by the Gaboye, nor an account of its origins but to offer one perspective on the relationship between the Gaboye and the majority clans which will help us to understand the transformations they were involved in during the final part of the colonial period. In fact, if we regard Mabogunje's parameters not as the necessary premises, nor as the stages of development of an urban system, but as the incipient characteristics of a new typology of urban centres, the case of

the Somaliland urbanisation also coincides with a transformation of the direction of flow of the food surplus and the uses to which it was put. The configuration of the relationship between food producers and non-producer groups – which, arguably, was unquestioned while the caravans remained the most important mode of commercial exchange in the area – gradually changed from the third decade of the twentieth century. The rise of a new typology of urban centres in the Protectorate hinterland was closely related to the consolidation of British rule and to the deployment of administrative control over areas previously ignored by the colonisers. The installation of these permanent posts triggered some transformations that bring the case of Somaliland close to the model of urbanisation outlined by Mabogunje (Mabogunje 1968). The waves of urbanisation that started in the 1930s paralleled the diversion of an increasing portion of the food surplus towards economic sectors other than pastoralism. The specific features of the typology of towns that appeared after the British defeat of the dervish movement explain the establishment of a 'new' set of rural-urban relationships. We can consider it new if it is compared with the relationship that local groups had with the other, much older class of towns, the ports of the north-western Somali coast. During the 1920s and the 1930s the importance of the trade season migrations towards the coastal towns rapidly declined, and in parallel the politico-economic pre-eminence of the interior centres, like Hargeysa, became clear. The towns had become the places where 'traditional' authorities concentrated as it was possible for them to act there as intermediaries with the British officers. Furthermore, these centres became the nodes of a commercial system oriented towards the export of livestock: collection points for animals from the surrounding countryside for onward transferral to the ports.

This new scenario implied the opening up of possible new usages of the surplus generated by pastoral producers, namely an expansion of the commercial part of it. The increasing commercialisation of livestock was probably also made easier by the reduction of clan clashes – especially after the British consolidated their control in the 1920s – that in the past had caused a constant erosion of the pastoral producers' surplus, and by the British support for the export of livestock and its derived products like hides and skins. The hinterland towns also attracted new forms of investment documented in the colonial period sources: real estate and plots of land, retail shops, coffee houses and restaurants, various types of business including transport and import/export firms. The newly born towns were the by-product of the re-configuration of the physical space for administrative purposes, but they were immediately characterised by new economic relationships. Significant portions of food surplus began to be managed there.

These transformations did not follow Mabogunje's model. For instance, during the Protectorate, no "power class" directly intervened to alter the way in which food surpluses were

managed, nor were the changes deliberately prompted by the British: reportedly they viewed with alarm, especially during the 1940s, the expansion of the towns because they firmly believed that the Protectorate's economic present, and future, was in livestock; no other sources of surplus accumulation were available. The three main elements of the British contribution were the establishment of posts providing limited administrative functions, the slow improvement of internal communications and transports and, finally, the opening up of solid external markets for Somaliland's livestock, like that of Aden with the huge British garrison which required constant supplies of large quantities of meat. Indeed, the Somalilanders did most of the work once they started to exploit and to develop new ways of using the food surpluses. An example of this is the rapid respond of some inhabitants of Hargeysa to new trade opportunities: between 1935 and 1936 they rushed across the Ethiopian border to sell goods to the Italian forces which had just invaded the country and were not adequately supplied.

If, as the colonial sources were still saying in the early 1950s, the Protectorate's towns remained "dependencies" of the rural areas it was because the economic sector that employed the large majority of the population was still pastoralism. The reproduction of the Somalilander groups remained dependent on livestock but other forms of investing the food production surpluses had been consolidated in the meantime. The hinterland towns increasingly hosted and attracted a varied range of groups that generated surpluses outside that economic sector and became a sort of spatial consolidation of these internal articulations of Somaliland society. Beside the commercial elite, made up of individuals strongly connected with pastoral production but investing in other sectors, there was that class of craftsmen, the Gaboye, that in the rural areas was largely excluded from the ownership of livestock.

At this point of our argument it is possible to link the transformations in the usages of food production surpluses to the process of the Gaboye's emancipation. There is historical evidence showing the localised loosening of the oppressive control of the majority clans over portions of the Gaboye community, at least during the last three decades of the colonial period (1930-1960). This evidence is: the reports of witnesses to the Gaboye households owning livestock, confirmed also by I.M. Lewis (I.M. Lewis 1957: 28); the urban migration and the establishment of homogeneous settlements in Hargeysa; the fact that the Gaboye provided their services and goods in specific working spaces located in the towns; and, finally, the mobilisation that occurred in Hargeysa in the 1950s.

Some of these factors also suggest that the enforcement of the exclusion of the Gaboye from the pastoral surplus was no longer a priority for the members of the majority clans, at least for those living in the rural areas around Hargeysa. This change was connected with the commercial sector's

growth and its transformations, especially during the 1930s and 1940s. The urbanisation wave in the hinterland of Somaliland made it easier for the food producers to have access to trade centres where they could convert their food surpluses into goods, services and investments. The oral sources describing the original expansion of Hargeysa quoted above regarded that process as being related to a conflict between genealogical units that embodied respectively two distinct assemblages of 'space usages/economic activities' (the clusters of space usages and economic interests associated to a specific group): the 'urban settlement/trade and agriculture' assemblage represented by the Sacaad Muse and the 'rural/cyclic nomadic pastoralism' one, represented by the Ciida Galle. These narratives tell us that their confrontation was open and violent: they confirm that the local groups actively shaped and channelled these transformations on the basis of their conflicting economic interests and thus that the urban expansion was not a trend in which, homogeneously, every Somalilander took part as a machine-like reaction to the circumstances of the consolidation of the colonial rule. However, we know that the 'urban' assemblage prevailed in the area of Hargeysa and that the Sacaad Muse were not the only group to take advantage of the new opportunities opened up by that victory to convert food surpluses. The proximity of the growing town to the clans' territories – with their watering points, seasonal settlements and migration routes – which had been the reason why some groups opposed its expansion, paradoxically facilitated the process of their integration with it. And even the local Gaboye profited from that proximity and took a large share in the continuous increase of population in Hargeysa between 1930 and 1960. It can be argued that they were attracted by the fact that the town represented the possibility of abandoning the oppressive control by the majority clans over the distribution of food surpluses on which they depended in the rural areas. In addition to the cases of real escapes from the oppression suffered among the majority clans, we have reported above rural-urban migrations undertaken by Gaboye individuals into the urban environment. In these cases, the migrants maintained a permanent link with their place of origin in the rural area, where they usually left part of their family. This second pattern implied that the members of the genealogical unit to which they were affiliated were aware of and had approved these migratory trajectories. Both the Gaboye and the majority clans played an active role in the abandonment of the rural oppressive dependency and the solidity of the asymmetric reciprocity that they had maintained with the Gaboye had, therefore, been eroded.

The Gaboye recognised in the town the opportunity to turn their occupations into businesses, no longer dependent on the distributions of food surpluses by the members of the genealogical units to which they were affiliated. Indeed, the members of the majority clans, namely the food producers or ex-food producers, and their adoption of more variegated forms of management of the circulation and the conversion of food surpluses (which entered into commercial exchanges and other forms of

investment) gave a fundamental contribution to the creation of the towns. The commercialisation of the goods and services provided by the Gaboye could be pursued by them only in the urban environment, where these circuits were active.

PART III

THE LEGACIES OF THE GABOYE'S INSTITUTIONALISED MARGINALITY

In the three chapters of Part II, we have reconstructed the elements of the radical transformations of the Gaboye's position during the colonial period. We have made links between the social, economic and political context of British rule in Somaliland and particular significant events, the role played by specific individuals and the importance of certain geographical areas in this emancipation process. In the next two chapters we outline the elements of continuity in the Gaboye's presence in the urban context of Hargeysa from the last years of the colonial period. The analytical path will maintain the same chronological progression, from the late 1950s and the Gaboye's mobilisation in Hargeysa onwards, but the focus will be the continuing power of some elements reproducing the marginality of the Gaboye groups in Somalilander society. The two parameters that constitute marginality examined here will be the spatial characteristics of the settlements (Chapter 7) and the economic–occupational position of the Gaboye in the urban area of Hargeysa (Chapter 8).

CHAPTER 7

THE GABOYE IN HARGEYSA BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

7.1 CHANGING PATTERNS OF THE GABOYE'S SETTLEMENT IN HARGEYSA

We will now provide a brief outline of the spatial distribution of the Gaboye's settlements in Hargeysa until the late 1950s. Then we will refer to a programme of resettlement implemented by British authorities at approximately the same time as the emancipatory mobilisation of the 1950s but not directly related to it; a huge proportion of the Gaboye living in Hargeysa were involved. The re–location programme mediated the re–organisation and the preservation of that spatial segregation which had already structured the establishment of the first settlement of Gaboye in Hargeysa. In this we see both a continuity and a significant discontinuity.

The area called Jameecoo Weyne was said to host a Gaboye and a Tumaal presence; a presence probably related to its vicinity to the residence of *Suldaan* Diriye, the 'traditional' leader who played an important role in the first urban expansion of Hargeysa. But Jameecoo Weyne cannot be considered a Gaboye neighbourhood, because members of Ciida Galle clan also used to live there. Another area mentioned by some interlocutors was approximately where the central prison of Hargeysa is now located. Arguably, the most important settlement of Gaboye was located close to the area nowadays corresponding to the city centre, just behind Khayriya square and the

main market of the town.[233] Almost all the Gaboye over 60 years old hailing from Hargeysa met during the fieldwork said they were born in that settlement. The area is currently known with the name of "Fuckin": originally because at a certain time several prostitutes went to live there. According to one Gaboye elder,[234] this happened after the Gaboye had been already removed from the area by the re-settlement programme in the late 1950s. He stated that when the Gaboye were living there, that zone did not have a real name; it was simply known as *Cafaadda Midganka*, which means "the village of the Midgans". However, even the Gaboye interlocutors almost exclusively used the denomination "Fuckin" to refer to their settlement in the area. It hosted numerous households but unfortunately it is extremely difficult to have an idea of its size. The British never attempted an accurate census of the population of the Protectorate or of Hargeysa, which according to the officers' impressions might have had around 30,000 inhabitants in the 1940s. It is interesting to note that all the inhabitants of Hargeysa met during the fieldwork who belong to the majority clans and spent their childhood in the town in the 1950s affirmed that the Gaboye were one of the largest groups. A man consulted during an informal conversation reported as an example that whenever some game required a division into two teams, the children belonging the different majority clans had to join together in one team if they were to have the same numbers as the 'Gaboye team'.

The Gaboye performed their occupational tasks close to their homes but working spaces were also created in other areas of Hargeysa. The largest one, where dozens of blacksmiths and shoemakers were concentrated, is located beside the central police station (which was there even in the late colonial period), in the city centre, close to the northern bank of the river. The area is nowadays occupied by a building some 25 metres long divided into two large rooms, known in Hargeysa as the "hangar". Its construction was started by the first civil government of the Republic of Somalia (1960-1969) and completed during the time of the dictator Siad Barre and it still hosts around fifteen metal workers. Until 2012 when a fire destroyed the roof, dozens of blacksmiths used to have working spaces there. During the years of the Protectorate the area was an empty space; members of the Gaboye and Tumaal clans occupied it and started to perform their jobs. The British erected a fence to define the space. The workers were exclusively blacksmiths and shoemakers and were divided into independent working units composed of a leader, who was recognised as the official occupant of the working slot, and a handful of assistants-apprentices (*caawye* in the Somali language) who were often his sons. Nowadays, the group of the workers in the hangar has a sort of

[233] Finding the traces of these different layers of settlement in the current urban panorama is almost impossible because of the quality of the building materials employed and because of the massive destruction that the town suffered from the Somali National Army in 1988, by order of the dictator Siad Barre who was fighting a local movement of resistance, the Somali National Movement.

[234] Interview with Cali, a Gaboye elder, 1 August 2015.

representative, a senior blacksmith who is a descendant of Abdullahi Hiraab (a Tumaal who was part of Sheikh Madar's community) and is the most important source of this information.[235] According to him there is a substantial continuity in the present organisation of the "hangar" and the working spaces antecedent to it. After the construction of the facility, the workers divided the internal space among themselves (they were around thirty, plus the assistants); local authorities issued some sort of legal titles authorising the occupation of each slot and the latter were handed on by the previous occupants to their descendants. Therefore, until the space was abandoned recently, the people working there belonged to the families of the men who first occupied the area during the Protectorate. The fact that the Gaboye's urban settlements were also workplaces was also witnessed in Dr. Housden's report about the "destitute youth" quoted in Chapter 4:[236] he described the smell of camel skins and the piles of metal objects in what he considered (or he was advised to look as) as a "poor" neighbourhood of Hargeysa, which was actually a settlement of Gaboye.

In contrast to the 1950s re–location programme examined here, the establishment of a neighbourhood homogenously inhabited by the Gaboye had not been the result of urban planning decisions by colonial authorities. It consisted, rather, in the gradual occupation by Gaboye individuals and households of interstitial spaces between the disarticulated settlements that characterised Hargeysa during the decades of its urban expansion (since the 1920s). Important elements which militate against the idea of an official urban policy behind the establishment of the first settlement of Gaboye in Hargeysa (in the area that will be known later on as "Fuckin'") are the fact that there was plenty of free space and that the appearance of what British colonial sources called "slum conditions" around the towns – settlements of temporary dwellings – was a cyclical, spontaneous phenomenon which also involved other groups than the Gaboye. Texts of the colonial period like Cerulli's suggest that the rules of avoidance between the Gaboye and the members of the majority clans could determine the spatial segregation of housing in the semi–nomadic settlements, but the circumstances just outlined justified the absence of any urgent or general measure regarding the Gaboye's presence in the expanding settlement of Hargeysa. The Gaboye and the Tumaal living in Jameecoo Weyne, for instance, were affiliated to certain sections of that clan and had their workplaces there (mostly they were metal workers).[237] One interlocutor affirmed that these Gaboye occupied a separate space inside that neighbourhood, or village, and their presence proves that there was no deliberate programme aimed at concentrating the entire Gaboye community of Hargeysa in the same area. This presence of Gaboye in Jameecoo Weyne has been recorded up to the 1970s.

[235] Interview with Cabdikadir, a descendant of Abdullahi Hiraab, 9 May 2015.
[236] See TNA, CO 859/221/1.
[237] Interview with Cabdikadir, a descendant of one of the first Tumaal settled in the area of Hargeysa, 9 May 2015.

This is not to say that the Gaboye could settle freely wherever they wished in the town. At the micro level of the neighbourhoods, the Gaboye's settlements were probably managed together with other local inhabitants; it is also possible that local groups exerted stricter forms of control in the initial phase of the urban expansion of Hargeysa, when the flow of Gaboye migrants was extremely limited. However, in the absence of strong evidence of a massive coordinated effort by local groups and colonial authorities to concentrate the Gaboye of Hargeysa in one place, it seems possible that the Gaboye arriving in the town chose where they settled with a significant degree of autonomy. This explains the rapid establishment of a homogenous neighbourhood of Gaboye; there, they could enter immediately into a network of support: they could find relatives who could offer them initial material help and, most importantly, mediate their admission into the occupational spaces in the town. Either they had to learn a job (in which case they also had to find a teacher) or they had to negotiate the location of their activity with the people who had already established working crews and had distributed working spaces among themselves.

In the late 1950s, shortly before the independence of Somaliland, the local authorities of the town ordered the removal from the city centre of the Gaboye households and their dwellings, especially those in the area also known as 'Fuckin'. This event is of crucial importance in the history of the Gaboye's presence in Hargeysa as it gave it the spatial configuration that it maintains nowadays. Unfortunately no direct reference to it has been found during the investigation in the colonial archives and the following account is based on the common elements outlined by the interlocutors consulted during the fieldwork. The archive sources quoted in the previous chapters showed that the urban expansion of Hargeysa was accompanied by several campaigns of land expropriation that resulted in the division of parcels of land. Expropriations usually involved very particular areas and we have seen that they started as early as 1927 (see Chapter 3). No evidence has been found in the archives that the people involved belonged to some Gaboye group. However, the documents tell us other important details that are also found in the Gaboye's oral histories of the 1950s re–location. Both insist that the motivations behind expropriations were to clear space for the increasingly needed building plots and, more specifically, to construct masonry houses to replace the temporary dwellings. The second element in common between these sources is their mention of an active role played by certain 'prominent' members of the local population in the decision–making and in the active management of the expropriation process.

With regard to the first point in common between the 1950s re–location programme and previous campaigns of land expropriation, numerous oral sources consulted during the fieldwork – people who personally witnessed the re–location, or their direct descendants – stated that the official motivation conveyed to them by local colonial authorities was that Fuckin' was an obstacle

to the construction of the "modern" city centre that Hargeysa deserved as the capital of the Protectorate. They were told that two things in particular were unacceptable; firstly the vast sweep of mud structures (usually called *dergaad* by the Somalilander interlocutors) near the small but expanding central urban nucleus of Hargeysa and secondly, that a considerable portion of the residents in the neighbourhood conducted their work in the vicinity of their own dwellings and the local authorities and the other inhabitants regarded some of these activities, particularly the production of hides and skins, as a nuisance. Indeed, one of the Gaboye interlocutors consulted who spent his childhood in this area remembered that the air was full of the unpleasant smell of hides left for long periods in a liquid mixture of water and leaves as part of the leather–making process.[238]

The interlocutors consulted largely agreed that the local British authorities conducting the expropriation said that the occupants could stay if they could replace their current housing with a masonry building.[239] Otherwise, the occupants would have to leave their dwelling and to receive an amount of money as a compensation. Oral sources also agreed in general that only a few Gaboye households could afford to build a brick dwelling: the exact number is uncertain but, arguably, they could be counted on one hand. The Gaboye people who did so at this time were the small number who had managed to abandon their 'traditional' activities and establish a presence in other commercial sectors, especially that of retail shops. Among them, there was the household of the first Gaboye 'traditional' leader, the man who obtained the title of *caaqil* after he had played an important role in the mobilisation of the Gaboye described in Chapter 5.

From a different point of view the 1950s re–location differed significantly from previous ones because it affected an entire neighbourhood and not few dozen households like in the 1920s. According to the oral sources, hundreds of households were involved and the programme was a joint effort between some prominent members of local majority clans and British officials. It also established an area outside the urban perimeter where the Gaboye who were not able to remain could establish their new dwellings. The documentation of the modes of urban administration during the colonial period is, luckily, a flourishing field in African studies. The fact that the development of the urban space was fundamentally important for the expansion and implementation of particular administrative policies is widely confirmed in ethnographic studies. As Otiso has shown for the case of colonial Kenya, the exclusion of local populations from legal ownership of land was a much–used way of keeping the places and the modes of settlement in highly sensitive physical spaces under control (Otiso 2004). In Somaliland, unlike in Kenya, there was no need to

[238] Interview with a Gaboye elder called Caali, 1 August 2015.

[239] As we have seen in Chapter 3, the distinction between temporary buildings, like huts and "wattle and daub" structures, and masonry houses is a recurring theme in the colonial documents. The document quoted above (TNA 535/126/20) about the 1937 land expropriation in Hargeysa explicitly referred to these forms of dwelling as "dilapidated", "insanitary" and obstacles to the construction of permanent buildings.

implement and defend a racial segregation which reserved particular urban areas to the white settlers. The restrictive policy on land ownership in the rural areas of the Protectorate of Somaliland was aimed at preventing conflicts between groups and individuals on land issues which were generally left to local, flexible forms of negotiations. But in the towns (especially the ones which were beginning to develop in the late 1920s), land tenure policies had to face different issues. In order first to promote and then to manage the process of urban settlement, the government reserved the right to expropriate land in the areas officially recognised as "townships" (like Hargeysa) and to declare it "Crown Land". Along with the expropriation campaigns of the late 1920s, the government also began, on occasion, to recognise local inhabitants' freehold titles to land plots. Under this initial policy of not recognising the ownership of land until it was expropriated by the administration, the occupation of particular areas in or near the "townships" could be legally tolerated. But, in the meantime, the government maintained the legal instruments to remove the occupants and to allocate permanently those same areas to whomever it wished, whenever it wished.

Indeed, in the late 1950s the Gaboye were the undesired occupants of an area valuable for the development of Hargeysa, close to its expanding urban core, and had to be removed. It is important to emphasise that several Gaboye interlocutors consulted about the re–location were convinced that certain prominent members of the majority clans numerically dominant in the town were complicit in it, as is outlined in the next paragraph.

One datum has conditioned the reconstruction of this historical phase: the tragic events of Hargeysa's recent history have almost erased the material traces of these various layers of settlement in the town. The town was almost entirely destroyed by the air and artillery bombing ordered by the dictator Siad Barre in 1988, when he was convinced that the town was completely hostile to him and had become a base for the SNM resistance movement (Africa Watch 1990). Therefore, the downtown area shows only scant traces of how it changed after the Gaboye had been removed in the late 1950s. At least one of the houses built by a Gaboye household is still there and, according to my interlocutors, the current owners are the descendants of those who built it: they reside in the USA and have rented it to a non–Gaboye family.

Hargeysa was damaged not only by the destruction, but then after 1991 also by the rushed wave of reconstruction which, especially over the last 15 years, completely re–shaped the urban panorama. This is particularly true for the area also known as Fuckin'; local inhabitants have regarded it as the city centre for decades because it is located in the immediate vicinity of the main square, Khayriyada, and the most important market in the town. This area was one of the first to attract investment by the building sector after the pacification of Somaliland. In addition to private

houses, it now hosts numerous multi–storeyed office buildings for import–export firms, local NGOs and other companies including the new telecommunication companies that have flourished recently, providing mobile phone and financial services such as the management of remittances from the Somalilander diaspora and the local system of mobile phone virtual payments. Furthermore, the area where the Gaboye's settlement was located has recently seen the expansion of all manner of retail shops, restaurants and cafeterias. Indeed, this part of the town is one of the most evident manifestations of what Ciabarri has called "diasporic landscape" (Ciabarri 2011a): an urban texture presenting architectural styles and typologies of building structured by the historical process of transnational extroversion of the local society. A diasporic landscape is revealed by both its material aspects – which are shaped by the availability of financial resources and by the requirements of the transnational economic networks – and by its symbolic dimension, which is centred on the idea of transnational migration as the major way to wellbeing.

7.2 THE STORY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF DAMI

In the account of Caali, one Gaboye elder interviewed, the 1950s re–location presented some further differences from the previous campaigns of land expropriation. Some of the Gaboye occupants of the area which would be known later as Fuckin' also received particular offers of money to abandon their plots from individual members of the majority clans. According to Caali, many Gaboye accepted; those who did not and who were not able to construct a masonry building (replacing their original dwelling) received monetary compensation from the British authorities.[240] The elder interviewed stated that a man he remembered as belonging to the Sacaad Muse clan offered his father, with whom he was living in a hut, a sum of money to leave the dwelling and the plot of land which his household occupied. The transaction had nothing to do with any affiliation or bondage link between the two, since the father of Caali had arrived in Hargeysa from a distant place in the Haud region and his family was affiliated to another Isaaq clan. It was a real estate transaction, although the seller was simply the occupant and not the legal owner of the plot.

The sum paid was 400 shillings and it allowed his father to buy 30 female sheep and goats plus two camels; Caali considered the exchange profitable since his family, like the others living in the same area, had already been granted the right by colonial authorities to occupy another plot and dwell on it. The fact that he believed that investing the cash in a small herd of animals was a suitable thing to do is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, some at least of the Gaboye living in

[240] Interview with Caali, 1 August 2015. Other interlocutors reported coherent, though less detailed, accounts.

Hargeysa suffered at this time no major restriction on their ownership of livestock[241], and secondly that the Gaboye did not consider themselves confined to the specific economic sectors 'traditionally' attached to them, even in a case like this in which the protagonist was permanently settled in an urban environment. Unlike the accounts found in colonial documents on land expropriation campaigns, we have here a more direct and invasive role played by locally dominant subjects, i.e. individuals with the material resources to invest in the construction of masonry buildings. Moreover, in Caali's words the entire episode loses the clear–cut contours of a land expropriation campaign (which, as we have seen, was originally a regulated instrument employed by colonial authorities in the "townships") and got confused with a sort of massive real estate investment operation sponsored and sustained by colonial authorities themselves. This datum is explained by the deep transformations of the urban context of Hargeysa where numerous members of the economic and commercial elites, and ambitious political leaders, had concentrated. Furthermore, the re–location occurred in the very last years before independence (1960), that is in a phase when local prominent figures had achieved a more significant influence in the administrative apparatus of the Protectorate.

Several oral sources agreed on the general description of how the re–location was effected. The British arrived with the sort of big trucks generally used to transport soil and stones, and told to the inhabitants that they had to get their belongings and themselves onto the vehicles because the area where they lived was to become the "new city centre" or the "new market" of Hargeysa.[242] The first place established for the resettlement was the area around where Radio Hargeysa now is, but the Gaboye immediately protested to the local authorities that the area was too far from the market. Finally an area was decided on approximately 1.5 kilometres North–East of Fuckin' and given to the Gaboye households. Then, the local authorities gathered a number of trucks, escorted by the Somali police; the Gaboye were simply collected on the vehicles with the belongings and working tools they decided to bring, and brought to the new area of settlement. The group involved in the re–location was mainly Gaboye belonging to the clan of the Musse Dheriyo, but there were also households and individuals belonging to other sub–divisions such as the Madhibaan, a Gaboye genealogical group largely affiliated to the majority clans dominant in the eastern regions of Somaliland. As the trucks unloaded people and stuff in the new location, individuals and households independently organised among themselves the subdivision and occupation of the space, which was entirely empty and outside the town boundary. For instance, the members of the Madhibaan group decided to concentrate themselves in one specific portion of land. Other family

[241] Caali underlined the fact that his father bought female sheep, thus showing that the animals were not for immediate consumption but that he could enlarge his flock.
[242] Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, 29 April 2015.

groups acted in a similar way and occupied neighbouring spaces. Thus, it is possible nowadays to see some blocks which are entirely inhabited by the descendants of two brothers.

The new settlement is reported in the colonial maps as inhabited by members of the Gaboye clans from the late 1950s.[243] It was and is known as "Dami" or "Daami" whose meaning is controversial. Two of the various explanations collected in Hargeysa among both Gaboye and non–Gaboye individuals will be reported here, but generally most of the people met knew nothing of the origins of the name. The first is that "Dami" could be the combination of the first syllables of two words, *Daanta Midgaanka*, meaning "the village" or "the neighbourhood" of the *Midgaan*s (the old derogatory name of the Gaboye); the second, which seems more plausible, says that the area was already known as "Dami" before the Gaboye's settlement and that the name refers to a particular characteristic of the local soil. The latter is red and particularly rich in salt: the herders brought their animals there and made them ingest the soil to ensure their diet included biometals.[244] Another highly hypothetical evidence of this second etymology can be found in the previously mentioned *Seventeen Trips Through Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia* by Swayne, who wrote "The country immediately north of Hargeysa is called the Damel Plain, a vast plateau of rolling ground covered with gravel or red earth" (Swayne 1903: 52). We do not know exactly what Somali word Swayne transliterated as "Damel", however it sounds relatively close to "Dami" and presents a strict association with the presence of red soil. In this case too, as well as in that of the Gaboye's mobilisation in Hargeysa, no document has been found in the colonial archives and the sources employed in the reconstruction of the event are exclusively oral.

Dami is nowadays completely integrated into the urban texture of Hargeysa. It is located North–East of the downtown and its southern border is placed across the slopes of the hills which surround the river valley where Hargeysa has originally developed. It extends northwards over the plateau which dominates Hargeysa and which has been one of the expanding fronts of the town for decades. No numerical estimates of the current population of Dami are available, and we do not have data on the fluctuations of the population in relative to important stages of the neighbourhood's existence (such as its establishment in the late 1950s, its maximum expansion before the civil war reached Hargeysa in the late 1980s and its re–population by the original inhabitants from the late 1990s). We can only speculate on the basis of Dami's extension and of the

[243] In a map of Hargeysa dated 1960 that has been consulted in the archive of the Royal Geographical Society in London, the area corresponding to Dami is identified as occupied by "mud huts" belonging to "Midgan". See "Town Plan Somali Republic: Hargeysa." Series: SSD Y921. Royal Geographical Society.

[244] The importance of this practice and the presence of these kinds of soils in the vicinity of the northern bank of the river which crosses Hargeysa is documented also in the report of the 1944 general survey of the Protectorate. Dami is located on the hills just north of the river. See *Military Government Somaliland Protectorate. Report on General Survey of British Somaliland 1944*, p.7: "Salt is essential to stock. In the West it is obtained from Jerer or Fafan valleys, or from the salt licks just N. of the Borama Hargeysa watershed […]".

forms of housing contained in it, inasmuch as they influence the population density. According to very approximate estimates produced during the fieldwork, Dami has not less than 4,000 land plots, so on the reasonable assumption of an average number of five occupants for each plot, a cautious estimate will be not less than 18,000 inhabitants. The population of Dami is not only Gaboye and members of the other marginalised minorities spread throughout the Somali territories. Indeed, entire sections of the neighbourhood are currently inhabited by Ethiopian migrants, largely Oromo, who left their country for political or economic reasons and who are in competition with the Gaboye in many of their 'traditional' occupational sectors (see next Chapter).

Another smaller settlement was established by members of the marginalised minorities approximately at the same time as Dami. Its name is currently Hawl Wadaag which in the Somali language can be translated as "working together" or "sharing the work". This denomination derives from the spatial re–organisation of the neighbourhood and the construction of its first infrastructure (such as roads) in the mid–1970s, during the Siad Barre regime: this programme was framed under a Socialist–inspired project that exalted the rhetoric of collective co–operation of the people for their own welfare. Hawl Wadaag is nowadays considerably smaller than Dami: it consists of a settlement which has developed along the northern and the southern sides of one road running from West to East for less than 300 metres. According to rough estimates carried out during the daily visits in the neighbourhood and conversations with residents, Hawl Wadaag may host not less than 3,000 persons, most of whom belong to the Gaboye clan called Musse Dheriyo.

It seems plausible to consider Dami and Hawl Wadaag the largest concentration of Gaboye in the entire Somali territories. Although the Gaboye of Somaliland have benefited from international re–settlement programmes since the early 1990s civil war and despite the effect of the widespread phenomenon of transnational youth mobility on the Gaboye community of Hargeysa, it seems hard to believe that this community is smaller than in the pre–war years. In fact, the pacification of Somaliland and its rapid economic transformation have made Hargeysa an attractive place for the Somalilanders in general, Gaboye included, to move to. The meetings held during the fieldwork have shown that a substantial proportion of those Gaboye individuals met in Hargeysa who are below 40 years old have moved to the town in the last 10 years, not only from the rural areas but also from other Somalilander towns such as Burco and Borama. Given that the population of Hargeysa itself has grown remarkably since the late 1990s[245] and the other factors mentioned

[245] UN HABITAT estimates of 2005 and the more recent Population Estimation Survey 2014 lead the present author to believe that the population permanently living in Hargeysa is between 550,000 and 600,000.
See https://unhabitat.org/books/hargeisa-first-steps-towards-strategic-urban-planning/
and http://somalia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Population-Estimation-Survey-of-Somalia-PESS-2013-2014.pdf

above, it seems likely that the local Gaboye community has grown, albeit at much slower pace than the rest of the town.

The allocation of land which determined the establishment of Dami also initiated the tendency to maximise the benefits of land occupation that the members of the Gaboye community of Hargeysa would adopt also in the following decades. For instance, in the late 1950s the tiny number of people who could satisfy the condition imposed by colonial authorities of building brick houses also secured a presence in the newly constituted village of Dami: their families split up, some going to Dami so that they did not miss the chance of occupying a new plot with the authorisation of local administration. Other Gaboye who were not directly affected by the re–location sold the plots they had occupied and joined their fellow clansmen in Dami. Similar attempts to capitalise on the plots legally owned and to look for the opportunity of being granted land plots by state authorities are still widespread today among the Gaboye community of Hargeysa.

7.2.1 MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE GABOYE'S SETTLEMENTS IN HARGEYSA

Dami has been part of the history of the urban presence of the Gaboye in Hargeysa throughout the post–colonial decades. The landmarks in the history of the neighbourhood are also important coordinates in our understanding of the Gaboye's past. According to some Gaboye interlocutors, one crucial step in this trajectory coincides with the period from the late 1960s to the mid–1970s. It was in those years that the official integration of Dami into the urban space began: it entailed the definition and registration of land plots[246] and the construction of a network of roads which radically changed the appearance of the area. The lattice–like road layout is still partly visible nowadays, with the major street that cuts the neighbourhood along the North–South axis and links Dami to the downtown. If taken southwards, it leads to the area of the National Theatre and the building of the former National Museum of Hargeysa.

The importance of this phase is remembered only by some Gaboye elders. One of them in particular stressed the fact that in the mid–1970s, the Gaboye, and especially the Musse Dheriyo, had a representative on the city council of five men appointed by the Siad Barre regime to rule

[246] All the Gaboye interviewed who have lived in Dami since this period (at least) affirmed that they were recognised as owners of the land plots which they occupied. Unfortunately, no document proving this has been consulted during the fieldwork; in many cases they were destroyed during the civil war. Indeed, the legal dispositions on property of land were rather confused under the socialist regime of Siad Barre (1969-1991). Formally, the state was the owner of all the land, but the regulations issued in 1973 contradictorily acknowledged the existence of freehold. The law was successively modified in the direction of framing even personal rights over land plots as state concessions which left a large degree of independence of use (except for alienation) to the beneficiaries (see Sacco 1985: 177-181).

Hargeysa.[247] The highest government officer in the region was Bile Rafle Guleed – who later on will have important ministerial appointments – and he launched these new regulatory campaigns. It was this structure of the local administration that according to some interlocutors determined the issuing of regulations and planning in Dami. A remarkable consequence of this policy was another re–location programme affecting the Gaboye population of Hargeysa. In fact, it was the need to construct roads that crossed each other that necessitated the removal of numerous dwellings which had been established since the late 1950s, when the Gaboye expelled from the city centre had moved there. At that time, the occupation of the area had been self–managed by the settlers who divided the space among themselves thus, according to the interlocutors, various types of housing were amassed and there was no empty space between the plots. The people whose dwellings were located where the street had to be built were granted the chance to settle in an area identified by local authorities around 200–300 metres North of Dami, and to receive titles of legal occupation. The area is still easily identifiable today, given the strong concentration of members of the Gaboye clans. Its name is 'Qob Dameer', which means "the donkey's hoof", and is probably related to some geographical features of the area. According to its residents, around 300 *qoys*, i.e. households, live there and belong almost entirely to the Musse Dheriyo clan. The residents affirm that they were allowed to settle in Qob Dameer after they had to leave their former dwellings in Dami in the mid–1970s, when the government was constructing new roads. The neighbourhood is located in the extreme North–eastern part of Hargeysa; it is separated from Dami by a large road running from West to East and by a strip of houses belonging to members of the majority clans. Qob Dameer's borders are also marked by two cemeteries of Hargeysa which have not been used for decades.[248]

Qob Dameer has some peculiarities relative to Dami and Hawl Wadaag which are recognisable on a preliminary observation: dwellings are loosely distributed over portions of land that have irregular shapes. Roads used by the few cars that reach there are simply the larger spaces between the dwellings. Qob Dameer is almost entirely lacking any kind of shops, it does not have any school nor a mosque, which was something striking even for the Gaboye with whom we visited it during the fieldwork. In the neighbourhood there is only a small shop placed in a structure made of iron sheets and sticks; it is ran by a lady and sells rice and other food items. Differently, Dami and Hawl Wadaag have numerous shops of any kind: general mini–markets selling different sorts of food like rice, vegetables, biscuits and beverages; there are also *kat* shops and barbers' shops. These activities are particularly concentrated along the main roads cutting the two neighbourhoods. Dami also has a police station and several mosques. This neighbourhood has also been experiencing a

[247] Interview with Said, 29 April 2015.
[248] The following observations are based on informal conversations and interviews carried out with the residents of the neighbourhood of Qob Dameer between June and July 2015.

rapid expansion of religious facilities over the last years. Thank to the activism of certain individuals who are part of the local community but have access to international financial resources, Dami is experiencing the spread of both mosques and institutions of religious education, i.e. madrasas. The latter are attended by most of the local children, especially those of primary school age.

The three neighbourhoods of Hargeysa in which the Gaboye are largely concentrated also contain some of the working spaces where they and the members of other minority groups are employed. Some members of the Tumaal clan have maintained their working spaces in Dami where they manufacture metal objects. They are the sons of a Tumaal man who was among the people removed from the downtown in the late 1950s; currently they own and occupy four grouped plots where they both work and dwell with their households. Like many other residents of Dami, they left their dwellings during the civil war and went back only in 1998.[249] The trade 'traditionally' associated with the members of the marginalised minorities practised inside Dami, Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer is metal working, especially the manufacture of aluminium objects used to cook like braziers (*girgire*) and spoons. These items are collected and brought to shops and other sellers in the downtown market at the end of each working day. Metal working requires the organisation and setting up of a space and proper tools; thus, it cannot be established just anywhere in the town because it implies the capacity to pay for adequate spaces: the rent to the owner of the area and the daily taxes due to the municipality.[250] Other trades practiced by the Gaboye, especially shoe–making and repairing, are not carried out inside the neighbourhoods like Dami: they are logistically more flexible than metal working and at the same time necessitate a more direct contact with potential customers and so they must be practiced in strategic spots such as near important downtown crossroads in or around the main markets. This situation has been consolidating after the 1990s; in fact, according to the interlocutors consulted, during the Siad Barre time working inside the settlement was legally forbidden and all the work activities were carried out in specific spaces (like the "hangar") in the downtown.

Another important element underlined by the residents of the various neighbourhoods is the quality of the housing throughout these areas. Many interlocutors said that the poor, generally degraded conditions of dwellings in their neighbourhoods was an example of the marginality suffered by the Gaboye. There are three main categories of housing found in Hargeysa, the first of which is the masonry buildings which can be divided into numerous sub–categories reflecting their size (not only of the building itself but also of the entire area occupied by the residence and

[249] Interview with the members of a Tumaal household in Dami, 23 July 2015, Hargeysa.
[250] Such taxes are due from any kind of street worker, including shoe-repairers, sitting in the downtown or around the town's markets. It is collected by a council officer on a daily basis.

delimited by a wall fence), quality of building materials and the organisation of internal spaces. The second category is one typology of temporary construction which is, arguably, the contemporary equivalent of the *dergaad*, i.e. the "arishes" or "wattle and daub structures" reported in the colonial documents: iron or aluminium sheets on a skeleton of wooden planks, and for this kind of dwelling too there can be differences in terms of the size and of the internal comfort. The third type is the tent, known as *aqal* or *buul* in the Somali language, the directly descendant of the tents of the nomads: it is constructed employing a specific technique and using various materials such as wooden sticks and rags.

According to the residents interviewed, the distribution of these types of housing is an evident marker of the present day situation of the Gaboye in Somaliland. They affirm that the neighbourhoods inhabited by them present a higher density of iron sheet constructions and tents than in other areas of the town. This datum is also in part confirmed by immediate experience, but it requires further comments. Dami has a more variegated situation and it has the higher number of masonry buildings than Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer. Only a few of these structures pre–date the civil war, having survived the shelling of Dami in 1988. But there are also some new structures throughout the neighbourhood, built by the members of the Gaboye diaspora. Some of them are inhabited by local relatives and witness the persistence of the link that the expatriated Gaboye have maintained with their place of origin through sections of their families. Some others of these buildings were constructed by new owners who do not have a deep–rooted relationship with Dami. They are investors attracted by the wild oscillations of the real estate prices in this part of the town: all through the 2000s the value of land sharply increased with the result that in the 2010s the sale of land plots has become a major source for financing transnational migratory paths of young Gaboye (see Chapter 8).

Iron sheet dwellings and tents are particularly common in Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer, for various reasons. In the case of iron sheet structures, is partly that their occupants are poor, but also that hundreds of them were built during a development project financed by international agencies and NGOs in the late 2000s and given to local residents. Before the civil war the job of constructing these structures was largely done by members of the Gaboye groups. Nowadays only a few of them are involved, the others having been replaced by members of the majority clans from southern Somalia and by Ethiopian migrants. The work, basically that of a carpenter, is locally called *nijaar*, which implies the possession of both metal and wood working skills. According to one carpenter, there are no more than one or two Gaboye masters of Hargeysa who have young apprentices learning this job. They can build brick houses too but they specialise in working with iron sheets and wooden planks, which the same workers also use in making the roofs of masonry



1 Gaboye carpenter working in Hawl Wadaag.

houses. Iron sheet dwellings are usually of two standard sizes: 8 x 6 metres (generally divided into two separated spaces and hosting two households) and 4 x 6 metres. The carpenter charges respectively $US 400 and 250 for his and his assistants' work, which takes 3 or 4 days, including pouring the cement for the base–slab.[251]

In the case of the tents or *buul*,[252] many of them are rented from the absent owners. Their occupants might be Gaboye people recently arrived from other parts of the Somali territories, or descendants of the first Dami settlers who have lost their land because of the subdivisions of plots over successive generations, or, finally, Oromo migrants, for whom they are the most common residence. The huts can be constructed both on empty plots and where other buildings are also present, in which latter case the owner collects rent. *Buul*s can be of various dimensions: in general they are internally divided into two spaces and adapted to host an entire household comprising two adults and several children. The average rent of this kind of *buul* is between $US 6 and 10 per month.

Indeed, it is evident that Dami has not experienced as thorough a re–construction since the civil war as other areas of the town. It looks different from other equally old–established parts of Hargeysa (it was established in the late 1950s). In some ways, like the mixture of different forms of housing, it rather resembles other peripheral areas of the town which have become the frontline of its recent urban expansion. Ciabarri has described in detail the meanings that the inhabitants of Hargeysa "read" in their daily experience of the urban space and of its transformations. He describes Hargeysa's urban panorama, which had been almost completely destroyed in 1988 and then reconstructed, as a "symbol", a "synonym" and a commentary of the post–conflict reconstruction which started after the pacification of Somaliland (Ciabarri 2011b). It also embodies the structural characteristics of this process such as the crucial role of remittances and the dominant position of the private sector (telecommunications, import/export) vis–à–vis the new state apparatuses of the independent Republic of Somaliland (Ciabarri 2011a; 2011b). But the Gaboye community of Hargeysa does not find these elements in their experience of the areas of the town

[251] Conversations with two Gaboye carpenters. 15 June 2015, Hawl Wadaag.
[252] The construction of this kind of dwelling was 'traditionally' part of women's abilities and duties.

where they live. Rather, they stress the discontinuity between these areas and the rest when they see the abundance of iron sheet constructions and nomadic tents in their neighbourhoods.

These visible aspects of the urban space are both selected elements experienced on a daily basis by the Hargeysa inhabitants and normative schemes, shared by both the members of the Gaboye community and the rest of the society, which describe how urban space should appear externally. A major factor structuring people's perceptions of their surroundings is what Ciabarri (Ciabarri 2011a) has called the "extroversion of Somalilander society". Extroversion is a characteristic which local society has adopted since the late colonial phase: first, it manifested as the migration towards the Gulf country in the 1950s in correspondence with the oil boom; successively, as the consolidation of transnational commercial networks with those same countries along the axis of the export of livestock and the import of goods not available in Somalia; then, since the late 1970s, when the era of military and political instability began and generated more or less localised flows of forced migrations in and around the Somali territories. Finally, we have the present day scenario of extroversion in which all the previous layers coexist: the transnational migration of young workers (mostly to Europe); the prosperous commercial networks linking Far Eastern countries (where cheap goods are produced) and Dubai with Somaliland which is both a local market and an entry point of these goods into other African countries; the forced migrations caused by continuing, widespread violence and extreme natural events like droughts.



2 View of Dami from the hill marking its western border. In the foreground we see an iron sheet construction and a brick house on the right. The shapes of several tents are visible, partially covered by trees.

The fact that extroversion is such a deep rooted phenomenon in Somaliland and the Somali territories has made it a normative order. One of its acknowledged manifestations is the flow of money coming from the diaspora which takes the form of funds allocated by the relatives to individual households or of coordinated investments having an impact on specific areas (such as the construction of roads, mosques, schools and so on). Exclusion from this order is a powerful push behind the contemporary individual paths of transnational mobility which are attempts to go from being passive spectators to taking an active part in the order. This explains why the young Gaboye of Hargeysa are particularly involved in transnational migration. The normative order is also the guideline in the production of contemporary representations of social and economic marginality itself. In the case study analysed here, the configuration of the Gaboye's urban presence in Hargeysa is so eccentric that both the Gaboye and the non-Gaboye do not need to refer to the past institutionalised subordination to explain the difference of the Gaboye from other groups of Somalilander society. Rather, the proof is in the self-evident reality of the Hargeysa urban landscape.



3 Huts in Hawl Wadaag. The line of stones marks the border between plots.

7.2.2 THE IMPACT OF THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH ON THE GABOYE'S URBAN PRESENCE

A crucial stage in the history of the presence of the Gaboye in Hargeysa coincided with the tragic civil war that erupted in large parts of the territory of the Republic of Somalia in the late 1980s. The reconstruction of the role played by the Gaboye in this phase is still an extremely delicate task today: it takes people back to the radically polarised period when local groups supported or opposed the Siad Barre regime. During the 1980s the opposition in the area corresponding to present–day Somaliland grew in response to the brutal repression exercised by the regime and its attempts to introduce predatory extractions on local economic activities (Ciabarri 2010a), one of the most important of which was the measures affecting local traders who had established solid commercial networks in the Gulf countries and

were active both in the export of livestock and the import of goods. After the establishment of an opposition movement in 1982, the Somali National Movement, numerous prominent members of the clans of the Isaaq clan confederation – including businessmen, former members of government institutions and 'traditional' leaders – got involved in the military confrontation with the regime which came to a head in the second half of the 1980s. At the same time, the pro–government block consolidated around the politico–military apparatus of the regime in the North–western region of the former Republic of Somalia. On the eve of the explosion of the military confrontation in 1988, this block included members of the Ogaden clan who had arrived from Ethiopia: they had consolidated their presence in the area corresponding to Somaliland after Siad Barre was defeated (1978) in his attempt to conquer the Ethiopian region inhabited by Ogaden. As the opposition consolidated among the numerically dominant clan confederation of the Isaaq (Daniel Compagnon 1990) in the North-west, the regime tried to co–opt, politically and militarily, the genealogical groups of the region not belonging to that grouping by bringing them into the state apparatus and the local allocation of resources. As it is reported by Ciabarri (Ciabarri 2010a), this is what happened to the Gadabursi clan of Awdal region.

Evidence of a similar dynamic can also be found in the case of the Gaboye and the other marginalised minorities. The study of the relationship between these minorities and the Siad Barre regime deserves a more detailed investigation and analysis than the one which has been undertaken during this research. Here, we must report that it is still widely believed by the Somalilanders that the Gaboye received substantial benefits from the government throughout the years of the regime. The most important element of this is that they obtained important political positions: we have already reported the inclusion of a descendant of the first Gaboye 'traditional' leader and a *Suldaan* himself in the city council of Hargeysa nominated by the regime. The most relevant case at the national level was that of Maxamed Cali Samatar, a member of the Tumaal group and one of the most prominent figures of the regime. He had supported Siad Barre since the coup in 1969 and was assigned of top ranking positions such as that of Vice–President and Minister of the Defence (1971-1990) and Prime Minister (1986-1989). He was the highest military figure of the regime after the dictator and acted as President during the months between May 1986 and January 1987 when Siad Barre was in a coma after a car accident (Mukhtar 2003: 154–155). The central position of Samatar in the regime did not pass unnoticed among many Somalis when the opposition to the regime was gathering force. How widespread and substantial was the impact of the regime's policies over the material conditions and the discriminations suffered by the Gaboye cannot be said once for all here. M.A. Eno and O.A. Eno (M.A. Eno & O.A. Eno 2010) have reflected briefly on this point: they have stated that the Gaboye undoubtedly benefited from their unprecedented inclusion in State

institutions under Siad Barre and this distinguished them from other Somali marginalised groups, such as the "Bantu" of southern Somalia. However, the authors emphasise convincingly that the inclusion of hand–picked individuals did not correspond to any sort of widespread social and economic gain for the groups they belonged to. Moreover, this operation allowed the regime to absolve itself from taking any serious measure against the social exclusion of the minorities. From this point of view, the Siad Barre period did not coincide with any substantial change in the material conditions of the Gaboye groups, nor in the forms of discrimination they suffered in their daily life.

The laws of the Republic of Somalia and the anti–tribalism legislation promoted by Siad Barre publicly reiterated the impossibility of any deliberate defence of the symbolic and material subordination of the Gaboye. In this research we have not given centrality to the promulgation of legal norms by the Somali state after 1960 or to its role in marking the de-institutionalisation of the Gaboye's marginality, because we have attributed this responsibility to the historical process that culminated in the Hargeysa mobilisation of the 1950s. However, we cannot ignore the discontinuity between the different instruments of social regulation that formalised the condition of the Gaboye. As Sacco put it, the Somali customary law or *xeer* "regulated in an anti-egalitarian way the issues of [juridical] capacity and social positioning, it contrasted the freeman with the freedman and the slave, the original member of the group with the client, and it divided the population into castes according to everyone's ethnic origin and economic function"[253] (Sacco 1985: 23). On the other hand, the very first Constitution of the Somali Republic (1961) rejected any form of individual discrimination based on belonging to ascribed groups. Theoretically, a more radical step in this direction was what Sacco (Sacco 1985) called Siad Barre's "anti–consuetudinary" legislation, namely the set of rules approved in 1970 immediately after the dictator captured power (Law No.67, so–called of "social protection"): these rules formally suppressed any form of collective right (for instance, over land) held by genealogical groups, the collective payment of blood–compensation, the titles of 'traditional' leadership and any other structure attached to the genealogical groups.

These juridical acts aimed at undermining "tribalism" represented the official censure of Gaboye's subordination by the state authorities and applied to large portions of the Somali territories. Nevertheless, the persistence of social organisation and the active contribution of Siad Barre himself – who kept control of the state apparatus through a form of clientelism based on the activation of genealogical groups – meant that genealogical attachments persisted as a fundamental form of political mobilisation for the Somalis, in new configurations. Public manifestations of

[253] Original text in Italian: "regolava in modo antiegualitario i problemi di capacità e di posizione sociale, contrapponendo il libero al liberto e allo schiavo, il membro originario del gruppo al cliente, e suddividendo la popolazione in caste, secondo l'origine etnica e la funzione economica di ciascuno."

contempt towards the Gaboye thus had continuing currency among the members of the majority clans in the 1970s and the 1980s. A prominent poet known as "Qasim" belonging to one of the North–western majority clans produced an early document of open opposition to Siad Barre's government. In one of his poems which contains the evidence of the past institutionalised subordination imposed on the Gaboye, he accused the dictator of allocating high ranking positions in the government – thus the responsibility to lead the people – to members of the marginalised groups instead of the "elders".[254] In referring to the Gaboye he used many of the offensive names that were common in the past and repeatedly stated that he would prefer to die than be ruled by those who should be subordinated.

Most of the Gaboye who lived under Siad Barre admit to being convinced of the greater economic prosperity of the Gaboye groups during that period, but they ascribed this to the commercial policies that drastically limited the importation of the goods they produced, such as shoes and metal objects in daily use like spoons, cooking pots, knives, axes and so on. All the elements reported so far are surely linked to – but cannot exhaustively explain – the most controversial point in the relationship between the marginalised minorities and the regime, the direct participation of members of the Gaboye clans in military operations alongside the National Army inside the North–western Somali territories in the late 1980s. This campaign culminated in 1988 with indiscriminate massacres of civilian population and the complete destruction of Hargeysa, after SNM fighters had tried to penetrate the town. It is more or less certain that a militia composed of few hundred men belonging to the Musse Deriyo clan was established as soon as the clash in Hargeysa erupted in late May–June 1988. Prominent members of that group and especially the local 'traditional' leader, who was also part of the local government, coordinated its action with the National Army. They were called the "Shiish Wanaag", which means "the good shooters" and echoed the shooting ability traditionally attributed to the Gaboye hunters.[255] It seems plausible that the Gaboye pro–regime mobilisation was predominantly an urban phenomenon, firstly because in the North–western Somali territories the presence of the regime was initially concentrated in the towns and between 1988 and 1991 it was limited to them and, secondly, Hargeysa was the base of the Gaboye elite made up of owners of retail shops and individuals integrated into the state apparatus. It was probably this numerically small elite that championed the local group's mobilisation to defend the regime.

[254] The English translation and the analysis of the poem were undertaken thanks to two Gaboye young men on the 10th of August 2015, one of whom is a secondary school teacher of Somali language.
[255] This information come from informal conversations with both former SNM fighters and Gaboye who witnessed this phase.

As soon as open conflict broke out in Hargeysa between the Somali National Movement and the National Army, after days of lootings, repressive operations and unjustified killings by the soldiers, the army tried to exploit further the connotation of the conflict as one between Isaaq members and pro–government groups. Civilians and criminals were armed and allowed to loot the members of the Isaaq clans (Africa Watch 1990). On the other hand, evidence collected during the fieldwork shows that the Gaboye living in other towns and in the rural areas did not rush to support the National Army ranks. Xusseen, one Gaboye who was living in the town of Burco when the open confrontation between SNM and National Army started,[256] was captured by SNM fighters who informed him that the Gaboye were fighting beside the government in Hargeysa, thus he had to be considered an enemy. For this reason, together with other Gaboye and Tumaal, he was held hostage and forced to offer his skills – he was a car mechanic – to the guerrillas. Xusseen reported that during his captivity SNM fighters confirmed an episode that he had already heard, and that is also remembered by other Gaboye interlocutors consulted during the fieldwork: as soon as they entered Hargeysa in 1988, some members of SNM (especially belonging to one specific clan of the Isaaq confederation whose members living in Hargeysa were particularly hostile towards the Gaboye) killed several men in Dami; they were, arguably, the members of the religious group entitled to preserve and manage the cult of Sheikh Musse, the forefather of the Musse Dheriyo clan.[257] After six months, Xusseen was released by SNM and joined his wife and children who had been able to escape to Mogadishu.

Said, a Gaboye elder we have already quoted,[258] stated that he offered help to the SNM fighters he encountered during the war. At that time he was living in the rural areas South of Hargeysa and one day Silaniyo himself – a prominent figure of SNM and the current President of the Republic of Somaliland – and other men asked for his hospitality. Said slaughtered two of his best goats and welcomed them: from that moment on, he was considered by SNM a friend to the point that it was thanks to his intercession that some Gaboye prisoners were saved from execution; all this despite the fighters' knowing that some of his sons were in the pro–government militia. These sources suggest that the Hargeysa battlefield was one where the Gaboye's mobilisation beside the National Army had a concrete manifestation. The brutality of the clash and of the National Army's operations in the town triggered the polarisation of local groups around the two warring factions even in other neighbouring areas. However, this did not exclude the possibility that

[256] Interview with Xusseen, 1 July 2015.
[257] Africa Watch reported several cases of indiscriminate killings of civilians committed by SNM fighters. But Africa Watch considered them the result of the action of local groups and not reflecting the policy of the movement (Africa Watch 1990: 195).
[258] Interview with Said, 27 April 2015.

the inhabitants of other areas chose, independently from their genealogical belonging, whether and how to play a role in the clash.

The reconstruction of the forms of their involvement into the civil war helps us to understand how the conflict and its aftermath have affected the configuration of the Gaboye's presence inside the urban context of Hargeysa. Indeed, in the mid–1988, after dozens of thousand victims and the majority of the town's population had already fled towards the Ethiopian refugee camps, the National Army extended bombing to the neighbourhoods inhabited by the Gaboye. At this point, prominent members of the local community gathered and decided to leave the town *en masse*. According to Aadan, a Gaboye man who was a child in 1988 and whose father had a government position,[259] the decision to abandon the town was taken independently by the Gaboye living in Dami, Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer; they went on foot to a place about 30 kilometres from Hargeysa and stayed there for over a month. Aadan said that he spent this period separated from his father who had to remain in Hargeysa, especially in the area where military facilities were concentrated which is known as Shacaab. He confirmed what also other sources (Africa Watch 1990) reported, namely that any civil servant found outside the government-controlled part of town was regarded as an enemy and liable to be shot. Between late 1988 and early 1991, some Gaboye formerly living in Dami were allowed to move into that part of the town; they occupied military compounds, public facilities and even the buildings of the University of Hargeysa. Others left Hargeysa, mostly heading for Mogadishu.

In 1991 the ousting of the dictator Siad Barre from the capital and the definitive victory of the opposition all over Somalia resulted in the return of the SNM fighters who rapidly conquered the North–western part of the Somali Republic and declared the independence of the Republic of Somaliland. At this point many of the Gaboye who had stayed there and those who had fled to the South also abandoned Somalia. The main routes taken were those leading to the Ethiopian towns across the border with Somaliland such as Dire Dawa and the refugee camps of Aw Barre and Darwanaje. For the Gaboye who had remained in the North–western territories, the directions and the timing of this migration were the same as those used by other local groups who were afraid of retaliation by the SNM and the Isaaq fighters for having been associated with the government side during the clashes (Ciabarri 2008b; Guido Ambroso 2002). It is in this phase that programmes of international re–settlements helped thousands of Gaboye to move legally, mostly to the USA, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand.

The years between 1996 and 1997 marked another crucial turn: the President of Somaliland Maxamed Ibrahim Cigaal made public steps towards a complete integration of the Gaboye and the

[259] Interview with Aadan, 3 August 2015.

other marginalised minority groups in the pacification process of Somaliland. Furthermore, in these years international agencies such as UNHCR and local authorities of the refugee camps launched repatriation programmes aimed at closing the camps opened after 1991 (Ciabarri 2008b). At this point large parts of the former Gaboye population of Hargeysa started to return to the town, around 2,000 of them coming from Darwanaje refugee camp between 1997 and 1999 according to Ambroso (Ambroso 2002: 34). A few isolated Gaboye had already returned shortly after 1991. Khalid, one Gaboye elder who worked as a 'traditional' healer, said that he first left Hargeysa with his family headed to Borama at the beginning of 1991, then went to the refugee camp of Aw Barre, across the Ethiopian border.[260] He spent less than a year there and returned to Hargeysa: in the camp he was not able to work and had to feed his family exclusively from humanitarian help. In the town he hoped to resume his activity and earn some regular income as had before the war. On arriving in Hargeysa in 1992, Khalid received the support of a member of the genealogical unit to which his ancestors were affiliated: this 'protector' guaranteed his security and assured him that he would not fall victim to revenge. Furthermore, as his plot had been occupied he had not a place to stay, the 'protector' allowed him to live in one room in a military compound. According to Khalid, he did not make any material payoff in exchange of this help.[261]

For all the interlocutors consulted, the crucial factor allowing them to return was the public declarations made by the Somalilander authorities' expressions of their will to end the enmity of the civil war; especially by the the restitution of plots of land and other properties in the town to the Gaboye original owners. Indeed, all the interlocutors consulted during the fieldwork stated that their plots in Dami, Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer had been occupied and/or looted shortly after 1991 by members of the majority clans. Dami had been deeply affected by the National Army shelling and numerous dwellings had been completely destroyed; temporary structures such as iron sheet constructions had been dismantled. Some of the occupants had been SNM fighters during the civil war but most of them were originally from rural areas or other parts of the North–western Somali territories and simply seized the opportunity presented by the collapse of the central government to grab valuable plots of land near the downtown area in the largest town of the region. Quite often, when the Gaboye returned to their plots in Hargeysa, they had been occupied for six or seven years which, as they wished to resume permanent residence in their plots, could prove difficult. For example, one of the interlocutors interviewed, who decided to take back the possession of his plot in Dami in 1998, found it occupied by a fence where a member of a majority clan had gathered his

[260] Interview with a Khalid, 9 June 2015.
[261] For an analogous example of return to the town mediated by politically or economically dominant individuals, see Ciabarri 2008: 82. Both cases show that the expansion of social ties of 'patronage' through acts of solidarity increased the prestige of the 'patron'.

camels.[262] Occupations could be also the result of the mobilisation of entire genealogical units which took possession of huge portions of land.

The large majority of land disputes originated by occupations[263] had a relatively easy solution because President Cigaal and 'traditional' leaders of the groups involved managed the process from the top. The occupants who were ready to abandon Gaboye's property were granted the chance to settle legally in an area nowadays known as "Killilka" to the north–east of Dami. The new political leadership's general policy was to return all properties to to people settled in Dami, Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer so, in general, local state apparatuses actively intervened to support the claims of the returnees. The Gaboye who presented to the new local authorities of Hargeysa any sort of legal document proving their previous occupation of a plot of land, or neighbours' personal witnesses, were registered as owners of that plot. The procedure implied that after the matter was in the hands of the local authorities, the police would intervene to facilitate the removal of the occupants if they refused to leave. Only a few cases resulted in the violent reaction of the occupant or were brought to the court.

Accounts collected during the fieldwork among Gaboye interlocutors stressed one element: in the large majority of the cases, there was no legal dispute because the problem was not that of assessing the real 'ownership' of land plots but that of enforcing the restitution of the occupied land: sources consulted reported gunfire between the police and occupants and open threats or even attempts to kill the persons who were claiming the ownership of a given plot. Weapons were still widely held and among the occupants there were people who had fought the dictator and the National Army or who had suffered human and material losses from them. The government of Somaliland needed to consolidate the pacification of the country and this included decisively ending all acts of revenge and hostility between the local groups previously loyal to either side in the civil war. State institutions and their resources were extremely limited in the late 1990s and the newborn Republic of Somaliland had just gone through internal turmoil between local groups in Hargeysa, competing for the control of the political and economic reconstruction of the country. For these reasons, in some cases the removal of occupants could not be enforced and the Gaboye owners have not taken over their properties. The data collected during the fieldwork suggest that these cases are a minority but no accurate estimate is available.

The two following examples will help to understand some of the circumstances which have determined these unresolved cases. Zahra, a middle–aged Gaboye lady reported that when her household and the rest of her family (her father, mother and the households of her brothers and

[262] Interview with the members of a Tumaal household in Dami, 23 July 2015.
[263] See also Ambroso whose Gaboye sources reported of 90% of positive conclusion for land occupation cases (Ambroso 2002: 34). It is a percentage confirmed also by data collected during this research.

sisters) decided to go back to their land plots in Qob Dameer, they found them occupied by several households belonging to the same genealogical group.[264] The latter had coordinated their action, were heavily armed and violently repulsed every attempt by Zahra's relatives and by the police to remove them. Their removal would have involved a large number of casualties and would have created social unrest, so the authorities did not enforce it. Another Gaboye person reported that one plot located in Dami, belonging to one of his relatives was occupied by members of a majority clan (one of several critical cases of land occupation targeting Gaboye people directly related to the legacies of the civil war).[265] They made sure that the Gaboye man knew that he could not come back and claim his plot because if he did he would be killed on the spot. The interlocutor added that this was because the man had played a prominent role in the Gaboye militia during the civil war. In these circumstances, we can understand both the new Somalilander authorities' promise that the Gaboye would get back their plots and, at the same time, the impossibility of enacting this policy brutally whenever it met with more decisive resistance.

The case of the Gaboye's returning to Hargeysa is an example of the connection between land property, citizenship and the plurality of forms of authority in Africa (Sara Berry 2002; Christian Lund 2011). Inclusive citizenship was and still is a pillar of the Somalilander elite's attempt to legitimise the independence project vis–à–vis foreign countries and international agencies. Indeed, the Republic of Somaliland has still not been officially recognised by any international actor; its definition as a multi–clan state (and not as the by–product of a clan–based secession), the successful pacification and the introduction of a multi–party system are the strong arguments employed by the Somalilander political leaders to champion the cause of international recognition. Therefore, the recognition of land property in Hargeysa was intended by the new state leadership as the legal equivalent of citizenship recognition for the Gaboye people in the new state. According to Thomas Sikor and Christian Lund (Sikor & Lund 2009; Lund 2011), the specificity of the "postcolonial" and "African" relationship between landed property and citizenship consists, firstly, in the existence of multiple normative orders which deliberate on ownership claims and secondly in the fact that national citizenship is not the only factor defining membership of a community (and thus, for instance, of access to land). Lund (Lund 2011) speaks of "layered" forms of belonging which condition the possibility and the modalities of access to land. Consequently, this leads him to emphasise that the management of land tenure is always a pertinent field in which to

[264] Interview with Zahra, 8 July 2015, Qob Dameer.
[265] Conversation with Gaboye elders during a *kat*-chewing session held on 4 February 2015 in a private house located in Hawl Wadaag.

intercept state functions or state "qualities" which, again, in postcolonial and especially African contexts are attached to multiple and plural institutions.[266]

As regards Somaliland in the late 1990s, the returning of land plots to their Gaboye owners must be framed as the effort to build up state institutions in the region. This decision and its enforcement were anticipated by negotiations between state and traditional leadership that predetermined its consequences. An example of this was the allocation of a settlement area in Hargeysa to the members of the majority clans who had occupied the Gaboye's neighbourhoods after 1991. Only a minority of cases resulted in intervention by the police to force the removal of the occupants of the Gaboye's plots. Both the decision and its enforcement were legally framed as the exercise of state authority, but they came into being only after negotiations involving various representative institutions of those people, like 'traditional' leaders, had mediated their implications.

From the point of view of the Gaboye, the restitution coincided with the authorisation of their inclusion into the newly established political community of the Republic of Somaliland. After granting property rights to the Gaboye in Hargeysa, civil and political rights immediately followed, with the participation in elections (local, parliamentary and presidential) held in the country from 2002 to the present day (Mark Bradbury 2008) both as voters and as candidates. Therefore, this stage secured the existence of one level of the institutionalised political life of the Somalilanders in which the marginality of the Gaboye had no currency. This overlapping between the allocation of citizenship and of property rights to the Gaboye in the present day Somaliland leads us to seek elsewhere the forms of their marginality – or of their 'layered belonging' as Lund (Lund 2011) would call it – in the urban milieu of Hargeysa.

7.2.3 NEW CATEGORIES OF THE URBAN GABOYE'S MARGINALITY

One recent episode is important in tracing the dynamic forms of the Gaboye's marginality within the historical trajectory of their presence in Hargeysa. Between 2008 and 2010, Dami and Hawl Wadaag were involved in a huge project financed by UNHCR and ran by NRC–Norwegian Refugee Council for the provision of iron sheet shelters and water sanitation to "vulnerable" groups in Hargeysa. This project was officially framed as addressing Internally Displaced People, namely those individuals and households of Somali citizenship settled in a given area because they had been forcibly removed from their place of origin. Several IDP camps are currently situated at the outskirts of Hargeysa, which at one point hosted several thousand people, especially during the

[266] The recognition of property has been studied also as an important object of the competition between plural forms of authority that have arisen in post-socialist contexts. The construction of state authority after the collapse of such regimes has always implied an intervention in the distribution of property rights over land (Katherine Verdery 1996).

peaks of violence in southern Somalia (such as immediately after the 2009 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia) or at times of natural events such as droughts.[267] Indeed, numerous Gaboye who own land plots in Dami and Hawl Wadaag have benefited from the project. According to one Gaboye man who took part in it, when the project ended in 2010, 1,300 so–called "temporary shelters" (the denomination is explained by the fact that they were intended for IDPs and not for residents) had been constructed and allocated to local inhabitants. Therefore, the Gaboye who benefited from it were included in a category ready–made for including vulnerable people, that of IDPs. The inclusion of a significant portion of the Gaboye community in this project was probably facilitated by the activism of some of its prominent members who were able to convince donors and local authorities that the Gaboye deserved such help. According to my conversations with residents of these neighbourhoods, the Gaboye beneficiaries did not put questions or advance complaints; rather, they tried in large numbers to be included and to get an iron sheet shelter constructed on their plot. Two big metal plates calling Dami and Hawl Wadaag "IDP camps" still stand at the entrance of these neighbourhoods and remind to the people the nature of the project implemented there.[268]



4 The plate fixed to a "temporary shelter" in Hawl Wadaag.

[267] On IDPs in the Somali territories see Anna Lindley 2013.

[268] The provision of "shelters" to vulnerable groups is one of the core missions that the NRC – the Norwegian Refugee Council – has undertaken since the beginning of its activities in Somaliland in 2004. In fact, the project implemented in Dami and Hawl Wadaag did not exclusively target IDPs but was open to other beneficiaries such as large and low income households or mono-parental families. But in 2009, the NRC distributed a total number of 340 "temporary shelters" in three different sites of Hargeysa: this was, presumably, the official explanation of the participation of people who evidently were not IDPs. However, reports produced during the project show that Dami was considered an IDP settlement (NRC-Norwegian Refugee Council 2009). Beside "temporary shelters", the project also resulted in the construction of latrines and of several classrooms in the neighbourhoods.



5 The board installed inside Hawl Wadaag in order to inform about the project carried out by an international organisation.

The re–labelling has left traces outside the Gaboye community of Hargeysa (more than inside it): several international NGOs, including some very important ones which cooperated in the project, have named Dami and Hawl Wadaag "IDPs camps" (see Figure 5) while in fact they are among the oldest neighbourhoods of Hargeysa; their nucleus of settlers (and their descendants) is composed of people who can legitimately be considered among the first inhabitants of the town. Even nowadays, these NGOs often refer respectively to Dami and Hawl Wadaag as "Dami A" and "Dami B". In parallel with the project, a sort of representative body for the inhabitants of the two settlements was established: two "committees" elected by the inhabitants entitled to mediate the contacts between them and external actors such as NGOs and local authorities. This procedure reproduced exactly the one implemented by international agencies in the refugee camps or in the real IDP camps in Hargeysa.

This episode is extremely important for our understanding of the plasticity and, at the same time, the persistence of the Gaboye's marginality. The urban groups of Gaboye smoothly slipped into the category of 'IDP', one which is supposed to have clear identification parameters which blatantly could not be fulfilled by the Gaboye beneficiaries of the temporary shelters project in Hargeysa. This episode shows that the forms of external intervention targeting determined groupings can be manipulated at different levels in their hierarchy of implementation; in general, the subjects involved in it might struggle to obtain the control and to channel the stream of resources. Numerous studies, including some based in the Somali territories, have shown how the borders of the group of beneficiaries are kept porous by local groups, how attempts to circumscribe and control the beneficiaries are challenged by local actors who, conversely, try to distribute the

impacts of external interventions over wider geographic, social and economic environments. See, for example, the distribution of humanitarian help outside the physical spaces and beyond the identified recipients during the refugee crises that occurred in the Somali territories from the late 1970s and after the Ogaden war (Cindy Horst 2006; Ciabarri 2008b). The episode reported here shows not only that the concrete processes providing humanitarian help are manipulated, but also that the categories created purposely for abstracting particular elements from local contexts can be turned into porous boxes that adhere to local forms of marginality.

What is more important than the reconstruction of how this was practically possible – i.e. which of the subjects involved was aware of the manipulation – is the emphasis to be placed on one point: that the application of the IDP category lends substance to the judgements by the local groups that give continuity to the plasticity of Gaboye's marginality. These judgements are grounded on the relevant characteristics – equally identified by both the Gaboye and members of other groups – of the Gaboye's presence within the urban context of Hargeysa: the economic vulnerability and the material poverty of the Gaboye's living conditions. These factors are referred to by the local groups as evidence of the Gaboye's peculiarity and the case just reported can be considered an additional manifestation of that. The acceptance of their collective integration in the network of international humanitarian help and of the material resources it provided in the ways reported above coincided with the Gaboye's renunciation of the theoretical right to, and their practical exercise of, collective self–representation vis–à–vis the rest of the society. The subjects that implemented the project have re-labelled the Gaboye groups of Hargeysa as IDPs, a category disarticulated from their historical and social position, and the most significant element of continuity that the local groups (Gaboye and others) draw from the usage of this category is the fact that – as the humanitarian intervention further certified – they live in some of the poorest neighbourhoods of Hargeysa.

7.3 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF DAMI: URBAN SPACES AND THE REPRESENTATION OF MARGINALITY

Another piece of evidence of the importance of Dami as an appendix of the representation of the Gaboye community which the population of Hargeysa generally produces is its bad reputation as a 'deviant' place. Dami is widely considered an urban incubator of various activities which are interchangeably defined as against Islam, the laws of the Somalilander state and the community customs or *dhaqaan*, as they are called in the Somali language. Among these deviant practices are robbery on the streets, especially at night (thefts in private houses or retail shops are a rare phenomenon not only in Dami but everywhere in Hargeysa) and the abuse of alcohol and other, especially *kat* and glue.

7.3.1 THE ABUSE OF FORBIDDEN SUBSTANCES

What many Somalilanders mean by *kat* abuse needs to be clarified (see also Cassanelli 1986): *kat* is a plant mostly imported from Ethiopia whose fresh leaves are chewed for several hours; it produces a mild physical and psychic stimulation which can be intensified by prolonged chewing sessions or by the frequency of the sessions. *Kat* is consumed regularly by a huge portion of the Somalilander population, ostensibly only by men, but probably also by numbers of women. The economic scale of the *kat* business, though approximate, are impressive: according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Somaliland, not less than 400,000 USD are spent every day in Somaliland on its import and domestic consumption.[269] Indeed, *kat* is chewed without any social and economic distinction by the Somalilanders, but the context and modalities of the chewing sessions classify the typology of consumer. Educated persons with a respectable job are expected to chew only after noon and inside the private spaces of family or of friends crews. People tend, thus, to enter into networks of co–chewers and chewing houses where they spend most of their free time (these contexts are often important economic and political forums). People who chew all the day and in public – on the town's streets and in the chewing rooms usually attached to the *kat* shops – are considered to be behaving improperly, people who do not care about their public image and sometimes are depicted as the 'real' *kat*-addicted, those who have lost control of their habit. Indeed, many of the Somalilanders from other neighbourhoods with whom we had informal conversations pictured Dami as a place where this second way of consuming *kat* is dominant and most evident.

Another reason for this judgement is the daily experience that Hargeysa inhabitants have of numerous Gaboye workers: they see them chewing continuously while they work on the streets of the town. This was also observed during the present research: almost all the shoemakers, the shoe-repairers and the blacksmiths who sit on the ground in different areas of the town observed during the fieldwork chewed throughout their working hours. They explained that they did so precisely to endure the physical strain of their long working day and that they do not have any rest day (except for maybe two in one year or when they are seriously sick). They said that *kat* gives them the energy to face their challenging routine even if at the same time it drains a huge proportion – sometimes most of – their daily income.[270]

[269] Source: article on somalilandinformer.com. URL http://www.somalilandinformer.com/somaliland/somaliland-minister-appeals-to-ban-qat-khat-import-use/. Other journalistic investigations have estimated the yearly volume of the *kat* business at more than 500 millions USD.

[270] The members of two groups of shoe-makers repeatedly visited during the fieldwork expressed these opinions during several informal conversations.

Ismaciil, one Gaboye young man met during the fieldwork, had found a way to afford the high costs of this habit.[271] He said that in the past he procured and delivered *kat* to some ladies belonging to the majority clans; he had a tight network of women whom he supplied on a regular basis, especially during the night. According to Ismaciil, numerous women from wealthy families are regular consumers and have similar sources of supply, but we found no evidence that other Gaboye were involved in this trade. It can be argued that these women, who are normally excluded from the socially accepted sphere of *kat* consumption, relied on the help of a Gaboye man for access to the plant and to preserve a secret sphere of usage separated from that of the socially admitted consumers. The practice of using *kat* is, as we have seen, a 'morally' porous one and the fact that Dami and the Gaboye are placed on the defined margins of its social acceptance is reflected in this case: it shows that some members of one class of intrinsic 'immoral' consumers, the women, chose to collude with a member of another group which is generally labelled as belonging to the 'immoral' periphery of that practice. On the other hand, for Ismaciil, this 'morally' marginal position turned out to be a material resource to be exploited. The Gaboye man could grant access to the practice to those formally excluded because he was relieved from the burden of being part of a socially accepted and formalised sphere of consumption. And, obviously, he could get a material benefit out of that.

With regard to glue sniffing and alcohol usage, the boundary is much clearer; alcohol in particular is unanimously and explicitly considered illegal, from the points of view of both Islam and Somaliland's laws. Using alcohol is not publicly justifiable in any form, although it is widely believed that prominent political figures in the country consume it. The use of alcohol is associated with people who have spent part of their life abroad (like some of the local political elite) or who are recent returnees, namely the diaspora members who came back in order to establish business activities, work in the NGO sector or take part in party politics. While discussing with people from Hargeysa not living in Dami, they often insisted that not only is alcohol widely and regularly consumed in that neighbourhood, but also that one of the most important markets in the town was there. Monitoring such practices both in Dami and elsewhere in the town is, for the reasons stated above, extremely difficult, but no evidence was found during the fieldwork of a more widespread use of alcoholic drinks among the Gaboye community of Hargeysa. Indeed, most of the Gaboye met shared the contempt for the practice expressed by other Somalilanders.

What did emerge during the fieldwork is that one of the few alcohol dealers of Hargeysa is based in Dami: he illegally imports and sells alcoholic beverages in the country. Whisky is rarely smuggled: gin is the most commonly used beverage. He pays truck drivers to transport the

[271] Interview with Ismaciil, 10 June 2015.

merchandise and organises three trips every week. He is not in competition with the other dealers (they are probably no more than five in total) because the market is relatively large and they are very few. Even for alcohol, consumption crosses all economic strata. Those who can afford it buy different qualities of gin, whose price can vary between $US 15 and 30 for a half-litre bottle; the dealers have also a home delivery service for customers who require absolute discretion. Poor people may drink pure alcohol simply mixed with water; they buy it in the few pharmacies which have a license to sell it. In this way, procuring enough alcohol to get completely intoxicated can cost as little as 30,000 Somaliland Shillings, currently a little over $US 4. In Dami, alcohol is sold at the back of an ordinary retail shop, but there are other similar places all over the town which are well known by all the inhabitants of Hargeysa, including in very central areas, even near police stations.[272] In fact, some interlocutors reported that police officers have an ambivalent approach to the issue: occasionally they confiscate alcohol and arrest the dealers, but some of them are regularly bribed and are themselves consumers.

What makes the difference in the association of Dami with alcohol abuse is the night–time. Even the neighbourhood's residents reported that it completely changes at night, mostly because of youth gangs who roam around drinking alcoholic beverages. These gangs fight among themselves, rob people on the streets and assault girls; this makes their alcohol abuse much more evident and more alarming than that of wealthy and the prominent people who drink inside their homes. Alcohol is thus linked to another element of the common representation of Dami which is criminality. Indeed, all the Somalilanders met during the fieldwork believed that the phenomenon had grown significantly all over the town: even certain central areas were said to be extremely dangerous at night because of young boys who attack people with knives and steal mobile phones. The police seem incapable of managing the situation, but so do the 'traditional' authorities of the genealogical units: they would normally be responsible for managing the compensation for physical damages but they refuse to acknowledge the members of these youth gangs as part of their constituencies and to collect the diya for the injuries they inflict on members of other genealogical units.

7.3.2 YOUTH GANGS AND VIOLENCE IN DAMI

During informal conversations, the inhabitants of Hargeysa repeatedly reported the presence of youth gangs as a constitutive characteristic of Dami. One event related to this phenomenon occurred during the fieldwork, on the night of 18 June 2015. It was a massive clash between groups of adolescents and young men mostly 15 - 25 years old and supposedly divided according to their clan belonging. A party of boys belonging to the majority clan of the Ciisa Muse (part of the Habar

[272] The main source of these data is Ibraahim, a Gaboye alcohol dealer, interviewed on 9 August 2015.

Awal alliance) planned a coordinated ambush on the youth gangs of Dami, mostly boys belonging to the Musse Dheriyo clan. The Ciisa Muse in Hargeysa live largely concentrated in a neighbourhood located across the western border of Dami, which is clearly defined by a road. The hostility between Ciisa Muse and Musse Dheriyo is a sort of 'traditional' *topos* in the history of the urban expansion of Hargeysa. Some Gaboye elders reported the famous sentence pronounced by a prominent figure of the Ciida Galle clan at the time of the removal of the Gaboye from the city centre and their settlement in Dami: "Do not put together the two 'Muse'!". He meant that the two clans of the Ciisa Muse, who had already started to arrive in Hargeysa and settled in the late 1950s in the northern part of the town, and the Gaboye clan of the Musse Dheriyo could not be neighbours because they were both inclined to resort to open fighting in case of a dispute. The present day hostility between the two groups is attributed also to this explanatory frame and manifests itself in the form of the clashes among youth gangs based in their respective neighbourhoods.

According to the inhabitants of Dami consulted during informal conversations,[273] the youth of these two settlements constantly oscillate between violent hostility and the sharing of leisure activities. One of the factors in the establishment of youth gangs in these areas of the town is the organisation of football matches in the open grounds. Playing football is one of the favourite hobbies for the young boys of Hargeysa and, during the last few years, in several parts of the town private investors have built well equipped playgrounds with synthetic grass which many groups of boys rent for a game of football. Although Dami has no such facilities there are, as elsewhere, stable groups who gather regularly to play and organise intense matches among themselves.

A few years ago Naasir, a middle-aged man belonging to a majority clan and living close to Dami, tried to establish an organised football team in the neighbourhood.[274] During the time of the Siad Barre regime, he grew up near Dami and made friends among the teenagers of the Gaboye community and spent a lot of time with them, especially playing football. At that time Naasir was regarded as in Hargeysa an excellent player and wanted to share his passion for football with the local youths whom he saw playing regularly. He collected numerous boys and formed several teams differentiated by age classes and collected funds among the town's businessman to buy equipment such as balls and proper sport clothes. He organised regular training and coaching sessions but found he could not afford enough time off work (Naasir is a professional cameraman, specialising in marriage videos).

The daily football never stopped, however, and the groups of boys continued to organise matches; some of the interlocutors consulted stated that quite often these games are the major cause

[273] As well as in various conversations, the issue surfaced during an interview with Aadan, a Gaboye man already quoted above who resides in Dami, on 19 June 2015.
[274] Interview with Naasir of 26 November 2014.

of clashes among the youth: they end up in open fights, either because of the game itself or when other issues are catalyzed by the sporting contest.[275] The boys of Dami frequently organise games against groups of Ciisa Muse boys which, though they do not always end in violence, contribute to the nature of the groups as settlement-based and genealogical membership-based and to the structuring of the relationship between the groups.

The fight that occurred in June 2015 was said to have had several causes but was shaped by this routinised interaction. The *casus belli* which circulated in the following days was that some Musse Dheriyo boys had attacked and robbed a Ciisa Muse young man. The youth gangs of the Ciisa Muse neighbourhood decided to organise a large-scale attack on the Musse Dheriyo youth of Dami, targeting them in the places which they knew were their usual meeting points: privately owned 'video centres' where people gather to watch TV, movies or to play videogames and some *kat* selling stands. According to the evidence collected among the residents of Dami, a ferocious battle started all over the neighbourhood and the boys involved faced each other using their bare hands, knives, axes and sticks. The Gaboye youth, being on its own territory, was able to regroup rapidly and to mount a strong defence. Finally, after few hours of clashes, the police and the army arrived in force and intervened brutally: the officers started shooting at every group of boys and arrested every boy they could catch.

The final bulletin of the night fight was collected during the fieldwork thanks to some prominent members of the Gaboye community of Hargeysa who were among the present author's major collaborators. These men had participated in a meeting summoned by the Minister of Interior, Cali Mohamed Waran Cadde, on the morning after the clash: numerous 'traditional' authorities, like *caaqil*s, and members of political parties belonging to the two genealogical units involved were invited to hear the report of the previous night's events by the general commissioner of the police and the furious Minister. Around 60 Gaboye boys and 40 Ciisa Muse were in custody, and there were dozens of wounded boys; it was a lucky chance that nobody had died, although two boys shot by the police were in a serious condition. According to the witnesses gathered there, the Minister was overcome by rage and exclaimed that he wanted to see hundreds of boys in jail: the police were invited to arrest every young man below 25 years old caught on the streets during the night.

His anger was also due to the fact that such massive social unrest across an entire neighbourhood of Hargeysa and lasting for several hours handed the opposing political parties and individuals a big stick with which to beat the government. Indeed, what troubled the Minister the most had been the quick intervention, on social media and in public, of a famous member of a

[275] On the basis of personal experience, a major source of clashes during football matches is the absence of referees or a person who takes responsibility for enforcing the rules of the game.

Gaboye clan who had resigned in the past months from a government position and had become a fervent opponent of the ruling elite. He denounced the brutality of the police intervention which, according to him, was motivated only by the fact that the target was the Gaboye: the government would not have behaved in such a violent way if another clan was involved, he claimed. Some residents we met during those days – and members of Gaboye clans living abroad – also expressed this opinion.[276] In the 'groups' on Facebook frequented by numerous members of clans such as the Musse Dheriyo living in different parts of Europe and North America, some people used the Arabic term *cunsuriyad* to comment the police intervention. This is usually translated as 'racism' and, according to a Gaboye resident of Dami, it accurately expressed the profound hate for the Gaboye that had motivated the police officers' decision to shoot. This belief circulated despite the fact that in numerous other cases involving members of the majority clans – some occurred during the fieldwork – people were injured or killed in the context of massive police or military operations to stop inter-clan disputes.

So the event had been immediately incorporated into various frameworks which were used by both the inhabitants of the town and political actors to explain what happened. One widely held narrative stressed the overflowing violence in the town and the fact that Dami perfectly embodied this trend; as indicated by the conversations in the coffee shops we frequented in those days, the neighbourhood was believed to be the base of large youth gangs which were out of the police's control. The approach of the state authorities oscillated between indifference and brutality whenever there was a serious outbreak of violence. At the same time, the association between Dami and violence was reproduced when it was exploited in the public debate to renew the fracture between the pro-government faction and the opposition; in fact, the latter used the issue of the 'Gaboye's marginality' to delegitimise the government action as confused and divisive. On its side, the government and especially the Minister of Interior strongly insisted on the need for repression: in Dami, the atmosphere remained extremely tense and the police maintained a constant, large presence which was completely unusual according to the residents.

As happens usually in Somaliland whenever there is a widespread outbreak of violence between the local groups, the management of the consequences of the conflict is primarily the duty of the 'traditional' leaders of the genealogical units involved. And that was also the case for the Dami 'battle'. In the following days, the *caaqil*s of the Gaboye clans living in Hargeysa (they were mostly Musse Dheriyo) and those of the Ciisa Muse gathered regularly in the house of one of them in Dami. Their priority was to stop any further explosion of violence between the groups involved,

[276] Some residents of Dami consulted in June 2015 stated that this kind of clashes used to happen even under Siad Barre but the police were better trained and knew how to deal with similar situations. The officers did not use guns and usually dispersed the groups with sticks.

so they maintained a regular presence among the members of their constituencies, each one of whom they knew personally (differently from the *Suldaan*s), and were able quickly to contact the families of the boys who might have been involved in the clash. They advised them to keep their children at home as long as possible and also tried to identify the more violent elements, those responsible for organising the 'battle'.

The *caaqil*s of both sides also agreed that there would be no blood-compensation for the physical damage suffered by those who participated: there were too many involved and the genealogical units' collective responsibility was acknowledged, to some extent, to be reciprocal. It was decided that each side would contribute to the medical expenses for its own injured youth. This approach was chosen by the *caaqil*s in order to avoid implicating the diya–paying groups in the stream of violence and hostility which is deeply rooted in the habits of the youth of both neighbourhoods; this routine is subject to fresh outbreaks and those who participate in it are so numerous that it was wise to keep the network of blood–compensation separate, otherwise it would collapse under the weight of constant activation and the consequent heavy demands made on the members of the diya-paying groups. Furthermore, in this way 'traditional' authorities made it publicly clear that the clash could not be dealt with as a fight between Ciisa Muse and Musse Dheriyo. Indeed, the aftermath of the event shows that the members of the Gaboye clans in Hargeysa have a fully developed apparatus of 'traditional' authority which allows them to undertake negotiations with other genealogical units. Even for the Gaboye, the *caaqil*s have evolved into a localised network of representatives attached to diya-paying groups that are primarily concerned with the management of blood-compensation transactions but that can quickly be mobilised to act on behalf of the local groups in dealing with any sort of threat to their security.

It would be a mistake to consider this a new phenomenon: the situation outlined here and the response to it shown by local groups present strong similarities with the picture drawn by the British officers between the 1940s and the 1950s, when commenting on the alarming effects of the rapid growth of the Protectorate's towns. In particular, the case of the so called "destitute youth" of Hargeysa reveals one line of continuity: these young men were inclined to take up various criminal activities and presented, according to the British, the dangerous characteristic of being "de-tribalised", of not being under the control of the social institutions (such as the diya-paying groups) which the British mobilised to maintain peace and stability. In the colonial period, as today, whenever the institutions of local groups abdicate their role of managing these localised forms of violence, the intervention of other political bodies appears extemporary and limited in its range of action. In the case of the British, this was the result of their deliberate administrative policy; the authorities of the Somalilander state try to compensate for the shortcomings in their control of youth

gangs with brutal reactions to the peaks of violence. After stopping the clash the police arrested dozens of young men and used the available legal instruments to keep them in jail. Indeed, the Minister of Interior wanted to use the power given to him by the State of Emergency Law to detain citizens for a maximum of one year in the case of a threat to the security of the country. For their part, the *caaqil*s of both genealogical units cooperated primarily to prevent the continuation of the conflict in the short term. In the following days they also assisted the police's attempts to isolate the most dangerous elements and tried to identify those who had been unjustly arrested. This episode has shown that the Gaboye groups living in Dami have social institutions which work efficiently: perhaps not in preventing the clashes but at least in managing their consequences, in impeding their overflow into other social groups than the youth gangs and in cooperating with the Somalilander state authorities.

The case of the 'battle' of Dami revealed some of the supports which sustain the widely held representation of the neighbourhood as one of the most 'violent' areas of Hargeysa. This representation is not totally denied by the residents of Dami, but they say the violence had well defined characteristics which prevent its extension as a general attribute of the Gaboye community: violence is confined to night-time and is related to the presence of huge youth gangs. The social institutions which equate the Gaboye groups with the majority genealogical units are not enough to blur the solidity of the border marking the difference between Dami and the rest of the town in the representation of many inhabitants of Hargeysa. Such a border is reinforced in many ways: on the one hand, episodes like that of June 2015 consolidate the idea of a neighbourhood where violence is an integral part of local life. On the other hand, many Gaboye contributed to other people's perception that Dami is peculiar: they immediately and publicly condemned the government, accusing the police of using repressive methods which would not have been used in any other neighbourhood of Hargeysa under similar circumstances. Some of these critics were politically active in the opposition party; as some of the residents met in those days confirmed, their aim was that of "politicising"[277] the episode and using it as an example of the discrimination against the Gaboye's in order to delegitimise the government and the ruling elite both internally and in the eyes of the numerous international actors (like NGOs and UN agencies) based in Hargeysa.

7.3.3 DEVIANT SEXUALITY

In addition to the practices quoted so far – alcohol abuse, criminality and widespread violence – that can be framed as deviant from the point of view of various formalised corpuses of social norms, there was another that was frequently attributed to Dami, and by extension to the urban community

[277] A term used by a resident of Dami during a conversation held in June 2015.

of the Gaboye: sexual promiscuity. This topic surfaced in several conversations with residents of other neighbourhoods of Hargeysa; a young man met in a coffee shop[278] articulated the issue, claiming not only that prostitution is widespread in Dami but also that for the neighbourhood's men and women, both, it is usual to have sexual intercourse outside marriage. He said that he based his opinions on the fact that when men wanted prostitutes they went to Dami and that it was common to hear rumours in the town about cases of domestic violence happening in the neighbourhood, related to adultery.

A broad analysis of the contemporary sexual behaviours of the Somalilanders is not available, so it is difficult to assess whether these phenomena are peculiar to Dami. The public sphere gives the religious figures the only legitimate platform on which to discuss sex publicly and from this point of view, the issue is pretty clear: sex is permitted only within the framework of marriage. For this reason, it is difficult to collect explicit accounts about 'deviant' sexual behaviours, but evidence collected during the fieldwork suggests that illicit sexual practices are relatively common, especially sex among unmarried youth and adultery. Prostitution is an even more obscure phenomenon, though every inhabitant of Hargeysa would admit its presence in the town.

Sexual deviancy is not a prerogative of Dami, nor of the Gaboye community. In the last years, new possibilities have allowed the people to create discreet and easily manageable spheres of interaction between men and women potentially leading to sentimental and also sexual relationships: they are offered by the social media, and Facebook in particular. The use of Facebook is extremely common and appreciated among the urban youth of Hargeysa. It is used for a range of purposes by the Somalilanders, including sharing news and comments on the social and political life of the country; it is also used as a political campaigning tool by candidates before elections, by party activists and supporters, but also other political actors like 'traditional' leaders (see Vitturini 2016).

With regard to the issue discussed here, Facebook offers the possibility not only to meet and to interact with a huge number of people, but also to keep under control of whether and to what extent these connections are to be made public. This fits perfectly with a context wherein the physical public spaces where men and women can interact are under a constant social pressure oriented at strictly controlling interactions that can lead to sentimental links. One evident example of this is the parties organised in some restaurants in Hargeysa. Some of the biggest restaurants in the town (one in particular, located in the western part of the town), which have huge fenced

[278] Informal conversation with a young man belonging to a majority clan, held at Imperial Hotel on the 7th of January 2015.

gardens, organise more or less regularly parties with music. One needs to buy a ticket days in advance. These parties were a huge success among both boys and girls of the town, hundreds of whom participated (often saving or borrowing the money for the ticket). Finally, the prominent religious figures in the town targeted their disapproval on the parties (including during Friday prayer) and these criticisms were endorsed by members of the government and local authorities which imposed bans and restrictions on them. The same remarks are made every year about the new year's eve parties which are organised by groups of boys and girls in the halls of the biggest restaurants of the town rented for this purpose. The core of the disapproval is precisely that this kind of situation facilitates encounters between boys and girls and physical contact between them.

In contrast to such spaces, Facebook offers discreet opportunities for dating and even for arranging future encounters without spoiling one's public image. The use of such discreet spheres of interaction with the aim of meeting a boy or a girl in the real world requires both regular access to Facebook and the ability to spend hours chatting. This is an important element of discrimination: the possession of a laptop, a smartphone, and an internet connection or mobile internet. Although cheap technological items are common in Somaliland – a decent laptop can be got for $US 200 – the large majority of the country's youth have access to the social media only through the internet cafés, so their presence on Facebook is more unstable.

Once the mutual knowledge has been sufficiently developed virtually, it is important to have a car – if we adopt the perspective of a young man – in order to reach the place of the appointment or to pick up the partner. Indeed, the list of the trendy restaurants and the hotels of the town appreciated by the youth as meeting places is continuously updated. The youngsters can spend several hours in such spaces where the interactions between boys and girls are protected by the fact that they sit together in groups; apparently, there are no one-to-one conversations which might attract the attention of other people. The availability of a car allows visiting several of these places during the same night, which is usually on Thursday and Friday. For this purpose, it is fundamental that at least one of the members of a group of friends has free access to a car; the rest of the expenses, including gasoline, will be shared by the group. The car allows them to roam around the town but it is also fundamental in facilitating one-to-one meetings. It hides the passengers and protects their identities, since all the vehicles in Hargeysa have darkened windows in order to protect the cabin from the powerful sun, and it allows them to move quickly across town, far from one's neighbourhood where one can be easily recognised, to hidden places where a couple can spend time in intimacy.

Sexual deviancy from an Islamic point of view seems to be common in the town of Hargeysa. The fieldwork in the town has revealed that pre-marital and extramarital sexual

relationships are widespread, especially among young men between 25 and 30; it is more difficult to judge for other age groups. We have enough clues to outline a picture of sexual deviancy which makes it hard to believe that the Gaboye community of Hargeysa has the monopoly of 'immoral' sexual practices. Instead, what we have seen is that some of the town's youth have access to spheres of interaction that can lead to sexual intercourse while preserving the public image of the individuals involved. The maintenance of these spheres is conditioned by the availability of some instruments such as the access to an internet connection and to 'social networks', and the possibility of using a car. These instruments are much rarer among the inhabitants of Dami than in other parts of the town. This difficulty in protecting spheres of intimacy contributes to their exposure to the judgements of moral deviancy. The frictions between the publicly formulated moralities of sexual behaviours based on Islam and the lived experiences of sexuality have been ethnographically documented in different contexts (Andrew K.-T. Yip 2009; Anouka van Eerdewijk 2009; Suzanne Brenner 2011). The case illustrated here shows that it is not only gender, but also local social and economic factors that condition the possibilities, the representations and modalities of compliance with or deviancy from public morality.

7.4 URBAN SEGREGATION AND ECONOMIC MARGINALITY

In the last section of this chapter we will integrate what has been stated so far with some considerations suggested by a conversation during the fieldwork with Mustafe, a Gaboye young man of under 30 years old.[279] His words can, arguably, summarise one fundamental dimension of the urban presence of the Gaboye of Hargeysa. The topic of conversation was the most evident contemporary manifestations of the marginality suffered by the minority groups like the Gaboye. Mustafe was analysing the issue from his point of view, namely that of a person from a relatively privileged family who was striving towards a well-qualified job and an important political position: some of his ancestors had been able to secure a solid economic position in the town since the late colonial period, especially in the sector of retail shopping, and he had several relatives abroad (in the UK, Gulf countries and elsewhere) who had supported him. Thank to his talent and his strong commitment, he had managed to become a respected political militant in one of the three national parties of Somaliland and to act regularly as a public advocate for the minority groups issue inside civil society organisations.

Mustafe claimed that the Gaboye groups were intrinsically different from all the other groups of Somaliland because, unlike them, "we are from the town". Then he added that the

[279] Informal conversation with Mustafe held on 24 December 2014 at the Deero Mall Restaurant, Hargeysa.

Gaboye clans do not have a *degaan*. In a wider sense, *degaan* are the territories where the genealogical groups were and partly still are largely settled. More specifically, it is that stretch of rural land whose resources – grazing areas and water points – are controlled by the members of a particular genealogical group, the sort of clan territories that are internally divided according to the subdivisions of the clans. The reconstruction of the various stages of the Gaboye's history in the area of Hargeysa presented in the previous chapters will have made clear why the Gaboye groups are considered to be without a *degaan*. However, Mustafe's statement was not intended to accentuate salient moments of the Gaboye's history in Somaliland, like their rural-urban migrations. Rather, he wanted to offer a representation of the present day political marginality of the Gaboye. Indeed, he described how the support for the political parties in the country and the genealogical identities were related; and discussed how the members of the clans who do not belong to the numerically dominant Isaaq confederation struggle to get access to the decision-making arenas of the Somalilander state. He acknowledged that genealogical groups are not rigid blocks of consensus which mobilise during elections, but offer flexible networks exploited by members of the 'traditional', political and economic elites to solidify and target political support (see also Ciabarri 2008a; Renders & Terlinden 2010; Hoehne 2013). But he also affirmed that certain attributes of the clan groups are effective weapons that may be used to put pressure on the government and obtain payoffs from it, such as positions in the state apparatus or the channelling of development resources.

Then Mustafe offered an example. From the last months of 2014, numerous members of the Gadabursi clan, largely living in the western part of Somaliland and not belonging to the Isaaq confederation, started to express open discontent against the President, his cabinet and also the leadership of national parties, lamenting the low level of government interest in their region and the absence of members of their clan from the most influential positions in the national parties' leadership. Thus, one prominent 'traditional' leader of that clan resurrected the civil war divisions and declared himself ready to fight for the separation of the Awdal region, largely inhabited by Gadabursi, from Somaliland and for its reunification with the Somali capital Mogadishu. According to Mustafe, this campaign could be interpreted as some sort of protest by the Gadabursi against the Isaaq confederation's dominion over the political life and the state apparatus of Somaliland. And, inasmuch as it affirmed the unity between one clan and one portion of territory, the campaign constituted a serious threat to the integrity of Somaliland that the government could not ignore. Now, the Gadabursi did not mobilise unanimously around this initiative: the reality of how the construction of political consensus in Somaliland works means that unanimous collective activation around a 'traditional' leader or a politician is not possible. However, Mustafe emphasised that the

capacity to claim an ancestral bondage between one genealogical group and a given portion of land conferred on a political actor the influence needed if he is to be included in negotiations with the central authorities of the state.

Looking at other dimensions of the lack of a *degaan* we see, for example, that it is not in itself a significant marker of the Gaboye's economic position vis-à-vis other Somalilander groups. Material wealth is nowadays largely concentrated in urban areas: the most important stocks of economic capital are held by telecommunication firms, import/export companies and real estate owners; the towns are the physical spaces where most of the financial resources coming from the diaspora or international actors are invested and turned into infrastructure, development projects and jobs, and the richest people reside in the towns, especially in Hargeysa. The rural *degaan*s host economically marginal groups who live off their livestock or attend the flocks of rich urban relatives who have invested in livestock (Swift 1979; Ciabarri 2010a).

The relationship between urban people and the rural-pastoral world (in general called *miyi* in Somali) also manifests as an "identity and symbolic investment" (Ciabarri 2010a: 184).[280] This characterisation refers to the fact that under the Siad Barre regime the repertoire of oral culture centred on nomadic pastoralism had been the object of state cultural policies which transformed it into a set of symbols of national identity (Ali Jimale Ahmed 1995). According to Ciabarri, from the final part of the Siad Barre regime (the 1980s) and civil war onwards the rural-pastoral world has become a support for an identity which ascribes importance to idealised elements of the past, in deliberate contrast to the social and political collapse of the late 1980s -1990s. Among these elements, there is the central political role played by 'traditional' leaders who secured a real pacification of Somaliland after 1991. Ciabarri called this support of identity an "identity of the crisis" (Ciabarri 2010a: 183-186).[281] The rural areas and the clan territories are regarded as founding elements of the social institution of 'traditional' leadership. Therefore, it is no accident that among the symptoms of the erosion of 'traditional' leaders'' legitimacy, the Somalilanders stress their growing distancing from the rural-pastoral world. The factors which characterise this trend are the proliferation of *Suldaan*s (and other figures of prestige), the increasing capacity of politicians and members of the government to control their actions and the concentration of 'traditional' leaders in the towns (especially in Hargeysa), which are often distant from the areas where the members of their genealogical groups live (Joakim Gundel 2006; Hoehne 2006; 2013). The scandal of the 'urbanisation' of 'traditional' leaders was also denounced by one *Suldaan* interviewed during a fieldwork research we carried out in 2012 in Somaliland (Vitturini 2016): he

[280] In the original Italian text: "un forte investimento simbolico ed identitario".
[281] In the original Italian text: "identità della crisi".

blamed the new habit of organising the installation or crowning of 'traditional' leaders in the big hotels of Hargeysa instead of (as the 'tradition' prescribes) at the rural village (*tuulo*) that is in, and which identifies, the *degaan*.[282]

In conclusion, we must take into account that the *degaan* is a distinctive attribute of the Somalilander genealogical groups. And we must relate this to the goals of the Gaboye's mobilisation of Hargeysa in the 1950s: they struggled to get the recognition for the same social institutions held by other genealogical groups. Both these elements suggest that the use of the *degaan* as a political weapon and its economic function as the repository of livestock capital are just partial manifestations of the broader implications of its absence for the social position of the Gaboye groups: being "from the town" implies that the Gaboye clans exhibit a crippled collective identity vis-à-vis the other genealogical groups of Somaliland. This crippled identity was further confirmed in the late 1990s by the linking of the granting of property rights in Hargeysa to the Gaboye and their being involved in the new Somalilander political community.

Sikor and Lund (Sikor & Lund 2009) are right to remind us that we need to undertake two linked tasks: firstly to clarify the distinctions between, and identify the connections between, access to and property in a resource; secondly to clarify the distinctions between, and identify the connections between, power and authority in the social management of resources. Access is the ability effectively to exploit, property is the right recognised by an institution to the resource. Power consists in the actual relations between subjects on the ground while authority is the legitimised body which legitimises claims. In the case of the Gaboye community of Hargeysa, power and authority generally agreed on the certification of the rights held by the members of the group over a number of plots of land located in the town. The local authorities created after the pacification of Somaliland were, moreover, usually able to make property and access overlap in relation to these resources. As the two authors suggested in general terms, this dynamic in Hargeysa coincided with the process of the consolidation of the new local authorities and of state formation which started after Somaliland's declaration of independence in 1991. We must add that this dynamic of access and property recognition also involved the reproduction and the re-definition of the different social position held by the Gaboye, and that this emerged not from the forms of control established by the people over a particular resource but from the social meanings attached to the resources at stake. In fact, plots of land in Dami are not perceived purely as resources to address in terms of access or property by the inhabitants of Hargeysa. The plots are near the commercial core of the town, but they are not treated as valuable commodities. This is demonstrated by the fact that although Dami is

[282] See also I.M. Lewis 1961: 211. He wrote that "ideally", the place should coincide with that where the first *Suldaan* of each hereditary line was acclaimed.

an extremely vital real estate market, it has not attracted significant investments from anyone other than the Gaboye diaspora.

The social meanings attached to land plots in Dami are a by-product and a manifestation of the historical trajectory of 'marginal inclusion' of the Gaboye in Hargeysa. This 'marginal inclusion' is defined, firstly, by the Gaboye's eccentric (and 'excessive') way of 'being from the town' which distinguishes them from the other Somalilander genealogical groups and secondly, by 'how' they have inhabited and how they now inhabit the town. In Hargeysa they occupy degraded spaces (incompatible with the urban landscape that witnesses the post-civil war prosperity) which support new external categorizations of their marginality, such as that of IDPs or of morally deviant people. In this chapter we have seen how a crucial element of historical continuity, the Gaboye's urban presence, has offered the stage for the reproduction, through renewed categorizations, of the Gaboye's marginality.

CHAPTER 8

WORKING IN THE TOWN

8.1 THE CONTEMPORARY OUTLINE OF THE GABOYE'S OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS

We have looked at the most important turning points in the emancipation trajectory of the Gaboye of Hargeisa and we have reconstructed how material elements and representations of the Gaboye's presence in Hargeysa are interlinked in the reproduction of their marginality. In this chapter, concluding our itinerary, we will target the dynamic trajectory of continuity and transformation consisting of the economics of Gaboye's marginality and the association with occupational sectors despised by the rest of Somalilander society.

In the tragic absence of quantitative data, the approximate figures reported by Ambroso in 2002 are extremely important: they capture the demographic and occupational situation of members of the Somalilander minorities in the period between the return from the Ethiopian refugee camps in the late 1990s and their settlement in Somaliland (Ambroso 2002).[283] Ambroso estimated a population of around 20,000 Gaboye individuals in Somaliland and presented tables describing their regional distribution in the country: Hargeysa and its surrounding region had the largest number of Gaboye. In the town alone there were 1,182 households and more than 7,000 individuals (Ambroso wrote that his Gaboye interlocutors suggested an average number of six members in each nucleus), while the surrounding region had another 460 households and 2,760 individuals. Togdheer region, east of Hargeysa (where the second largest town of Somaliland, Burco, is situated), had almost 600 Gaboye households; the western region of Awdal had 350 households, while the remaining 650 were distributed between the coastal region of Saxil and the eastern regions of Sool and Sanaag.[284]

These figures are not incompatible with those advanced in the previous chapter, roughly establishing the present population of the Gaboye neighbourhoods of Hargeysa at more than 20,000 individuals. This is because after the year 2000 the town attracted Gaboye groups not only from other regions of Somaliland but also from Somali territories outside the country; especially from the Ethiopian region across the border where certain Gaboye clans such as the Hawle and the Reer Wardheere – and some sections of the Musse Dheriyo – are settled. The interviews and the surveys conducted in Hargeysa during this research revealed that a considerable proportion of the Gaboye

[283] These data are the result of a questionnaire that was self-administered by Gaboye community leaders. Thus they do not, as Ambroso admits, have scientific value, but they offer a broad picture.
[284] Though not explicitly clarified, it seems that Ambroso included in his tables not only the members of the Gaboye clans *strictu sensu*, but also the individuals belonging to the Tumaal and the Anaas (or Yibir) groups.

residents have arrived within the last 10 years. Thus we are safe in supposing that the town's Gaboye population may have doubled after Ambroso collected his data in the early 2000s.

His report also noted the occupational affiliations for each geographic cluster of Gaboye in Somaliland. For Hargeysa, he recorded "300 hairdressers; 295 shoemakers; 165 blacksmiths; 50 pottery/women; 53 tanners" (Ambroso 2002: 32). Other regions of Somaliland showed a similar spread of occupations – plus others such as butchery and rural based activities (arguably pastoralism) – though distributed in different ratios. This was the picture of the economic situation of the Gaboye community in the immediate aftermath of the return to Somaliland following their displacement by civil war. Ambroso also reported some of the major constraints outlined by the members of the minority groups consulted during the survey: beside access to water and to education, they complained of their exclusion from the civil service in the Somalilander state, from jobs in the International NGOs and UN agencies based in Hargeysa and from other business sectors.

Throughout the fieldwork we carried out in Hargeysa between 2014 and 2015, a sample of around 165 individuals belonging to the Gaboye clan of the Musse Dheriyo, to other Gaboye clans, to the Tumaal and to the Anaas (or Yibir) groups were interviewed or consulted in informal conversations about their occupational situation (this number also includes a small number of individuals we did not directly address, such as close relatives of the interlocutors whose occupational situation has been mentioned to us during such meetings). The large majority of the individuals consulted were males (125 out of 165): being a man accompanied by other men has given to us an easier access to the male members of the Gaboye community. Furthermore, the working spaces controlled by men are in general more numerous and more accessible to a foreign researcher: men usually sit working in public spaces for hours, while women can be mobile or work in enclosed private spaces. Furthermore, the proportion of women who have a regular job is lower than that of the men. According to the Labour Force Survey Somaliland 2012 (LFS 2012), 37% of the inactive persons of between 15 and 64 years residing in the urban contexts of Hargeysa, Burco and Borama are men and 63% women. 84.8% of the women consulted aged between 25 and 34, and 73.3% of those between 35 and 54 said "household duties" were the main reason for their occupational inactivity (LFS 2012: 29-30). These figures have only a partial relevance in the case of the Gaboye community of Hargeysa: arguably, Gaboye women are significantly more "active" than other groups, mainly because for many Gaboye urban households, the men's income alone would not cover the costs of food and shelter. Notwithstanding these statistical biases, the women's sample presented below reveals some salient elements of the occupational situation of the Gaboye women in Hargeysa.

Of the 125 men consulted, 21 are shoemakers or shoe-repairers, 35 are blacksmiths, 13 barbers, 12 car mechanics; 6 are blacksmiths but are employed in pottery workshops; at least 3 men and their households attend their own livestock in rural areas surrounding Hargeysa but have close relatives working and living in Hargeysa. Two Gaboye men met during the fieldwork are carpenters (see previous chapter); one is an expert in certain healing practices 'traditionally' undertaken by the Gaboye (including male circumcision) and one old man is a hunter (see Chapter 1) but also ran a small business selling metal objects. Only two men work in other kinds of private business: one is an employee of Dahabshiil, the largest remittance (and also telecommunication) company in the Somali territories, and the other is the co-owner of a small firm importing electronic items (such as cheap mobile phones, electric plugs, torches and toys) from China and the attached shop selling them (the shop is located in the downtown area, in one of the most central streets of Hargeysa).

8.2 NEW SOURCES OF INCOME AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRATIFICATION IN THE GABOYE COMMUNITY OF HARGEYSA

Before delving into the situation of these categories of Gaboye workers, we analyse some other occupations that, although quantitatively marginal, play an important social and economic role in the Gaboye community of Hargeysa. For instance, NGOs and international agencies are an important professional sector, especially for young, highly educated, Somalilanders living in the towns. Apart from extremely successful careers in the political parties, it is arguably the sector offering the most attractive prospects of professional and financial advancement. There are local and international NGOs operating in Somaliland: the former are founded and managed by Somalilander citizens, are involved by the latter in the implementation of projects (through the establishment of partnerships), are smaller and in general offer lower salaries. Four Gaboye individuals met during the fieldwork were involved in such organisations. A middle aged man and a lady who are close relatives were part of a local NGO founded by a Gaboye man resident in Europe, who is himself a close relative of both. This organisation was implementing a project in Dami funded and co-managed by an important European NGO. Two other young men had founded an NGO in 2003 which is still active and has worked with international NGOs like CESVI and Save the Children. The founders belong to the first generation of Gaboye who completed their higher education in Somaliland after the civil war and represented an early example of entrepreneurship in the humanitarian sector by Gaboye individuals who did not undertake the occupations dominant in their community.

These cases of grassroots activism are part of a broader trend in Somaliland which has seen the remarkable expansion of similar organisations. Their establishment requires the initial collection

of a certain amount of money: around $US 2,000 for the registration procedure at the Ministry of National Planning, plus the rent and the setting up of an office. Then, the establishment of partnerships with international organisations which receive the bulk of the donors' funds. In the cases of local NGOs launched by Gaboye individuals, the initial investment had been made in part by contributions from Gaboye living abroad: as we have seen, in one case the foundation itself was the individual initiative of a Gaboye who went abroad in the early 1990s; in others, funds were collected through communication platforms where genealogically related and transnationally dislocated members of the Gaboye clans are in regular contact. Material help has also been offered by other subjects: when some Gaboye young men established an NGO which is no longer active, the municipality of Hargeysa contributed the office and the furniture and it has been documented that the huge remittance company Dahabshiil also offered financial contributions to these organisations.[285] Beside this grassroots entrepreneurial dimension of the humanitarian sector related to local NGOs, there is that of qualified job positions in international NGOs and agencies. Only one young man interviewed during the fieldwork, who had already been the co-founder of a local NGO, held such a position, in the Hargeysa field office of a prestigious United Nations agency.[286]

Another source of employment that must be taken into account is the state apparatus of the Republic of Somaliland. Around 11 Gaboye individuals met in Hargeysa, all males, work in state institutions at different levels. The one at the lowest level is a driver at the Ministry of Interior. Of those individuals who hold a degree (mostly in development studies, business administration or law) and occupy more qualified positions, two work at an intermediate grade in other ministries, one young man met in Hargeysa had just been hired by the Somaliland Central Bank when we met in early 2015, one was temporarily working as a legal advisor for a Ministry and another one works with the office of the Attorney General as a prosecutor at the Hargeysa Court. A number of men hold positions to which they were formally nominated by members of the government. One example is a middle-aged man who has two barbershops in Hargeysa and is a member of the National Judicial Commission: this body has 10 seats occupied by members of the Parliament, high ranking figures of the judicial and ministerial apparatuses and 3 members nominated by the government, of whom the Gaboye man is one. The Commission hires, monitors and rewards the judges of state courts and even has the power to fire them. The Gaboye 'traditional' leaders demanded of the government that at least one Gaboye man would sit on this important body in order to keep a check on whether members of the minorities suffered any unjust treatment in the courts. Another Gaboye man was hired by the National Electoral Commission, which manages the

[285] Informal conversations with several former members.
[286] Interview with Cabdirxamaan, 4 December 2014.

preparation and implementation of the country's elections. The presence on it of members of all the genealogical groups is important in relation to procedures such as the registration of voters, which are contested and manipulated by local groups (Ciabarri 2008a) and need to be completed before elections. A Gaboye young man who had been an unsuccessful candidate at the 2012 local council elections was appointed District Commissioner in one of the six administrative sub-divisions of the town of Hargeysa. According to a Gaboye 'traditional' leader interviewed, this was a sort of compensation requested of the ruling party by the Gaboye leadership for not having one single member of a minority group elected to the Hargeysa city council.[287] In 2015, a Gaboye man belonging to a prominent family with a deep-rooted commercial presence in Hargeysa was appointed to a very important position in the administration of the University of Hargeysa. In the previous government, a Gaboye man was the Vice-Minister of Health but there are very few cases of members of the minorities being appointed to high ranking positions in the ministries. Finally, a case of another kind is that of Maxamed Cali Weji, a very famous radio presenter working at Radio Hargeysa who is a Tumaal. He has a good reputation as a wise expert in the Somali oral culture, in stories, poems and proverbs. He is one of the last examples in the Somali territories of the once widespread presence of members of the minority groups in various forms of artistic entertainment. From the late colonial period, members of the minority groups played a crucial role in the renewal of artistic forms, especially musical genres and drama performances. During the Siad Barre regime, most entertainers were salaried, integrated and controlled by state apparatuses and they lived concentrated in one neighbourhood of Mogadishu.

Three Gaboye men living in Hargeysa declared that religious activism is their most important daily activity. One was extremely old and was one of the voluntary group of men managing the sanctuary and cult of Sheikh Musse, the forefather of the Musse Dheriyo.[288] The other two are among the religious figures that local residents called "the new sheikhs": individuals who promote a vision of Islam in open contrast to the Sufi groups widely established throughout the Somali territories and condemn the cult of the figures of saints which manifests in the maintenance of a sanctuary and yearly celebrations of the saint.[289] Many interlocutors consulted also called these

[287] Interview with a Gaboye 'traditional' leader, 24 November 2014.
[288] Interview with Cali, 17 May 2015.
[289] See I.M. Lewis 1998; Renders 2007a; Hussein M. Adam 2008. On the public debates between religious platforms of collective identification see also Jan Abbink 2011. Although in a different context, Ethiopia, he has outlined the pertinent tendency of the growing public space being conquered by religious mobilisations which play a constantly expanding role in shaping local political orders and in conditioning state institutions. During the present research, evidence has been collected of the mounting tension at the local level of the Dami neighbourhood between the followers of the different approaches to Islam. This clash is also reflected at the level of the state institutions and political parties of Somaliland since it implies the reconfiguration of the forms of building political consensus in the country. On the diffusion of Islamic discourses and teachings in Africa as manifestations of renewed muslim public spheres which address a plurality of local social and political issues, see also Abdulkader Tayob 2012.

"new" religious figures "wahhabi", because of their supposed adherence to the version of Islam largely dominant in Saudi Arabia. Their association with Gulf countries also has more mundane manifestations in the physical and social urban landscape of Hargeysa, for example over the last five years they have built and currently manage several religious facilities in Dami. These facilities are mosques and madrasas, institutions providing primary level education for the children of the neighbourhood, and are financed through Somalilander brokers who raise funds in the Gulf countries.[290] Religious education[291] services have become widespread across Hargeysa and operate without any form of control by the government of Somaliland. In the early 2010s, the latter attempted to launch an investigation and assessment of the curricula and the teachings implemented in these institutions; some were closed but this remained a one-off action. In Dami, religious education, which is completely free,[292] is in many cases the only form of schooling attended by the children.

The cases collected during the fieldwork show that such religious activism – which receives constant financial support – also acts as an individual's career pathway leading to economic stability and to the extremely rapid acquisition of pre-eminence within the local community. Indeed, the individuals involved have grown up in families which initially channelled them towards one of the more common trades among the Gaboye. For one of them, the crucial moment had been his participation in the daily life of a mosque-madrasa facility, under the guidance of the local leading religious figure. Thereafter, from adolescence, he acquired roles of increasing responsibility in the management of the madrasa: administrative assistant, teaching assistant, teacher and finally principal.[293] This kind of religious career involved learning how to establish and manage a religious education institution and facilitated his entry into transnational networks where funds are collected and allocated. The two ends of this network are the donors physically based in the Gulf countries and the local recipients; in between there are various levels of brokers, mostly Somalilanders, who are the by-product of the long-established migratory and commercial links between the northern-western Somali territories and the Arabian peninsula. Indeed, the more prestigious a Somalilander

[290] The continually renewed link between the north-western Somali territories and the Gulf countries (especially Saudi Arabia and the Emirates) since the last part of the colonial period has led to a significant migratory flow from the Somali territories and the rapid consolidation of commercial relationships. Especially from the 1970s, Somali traders exported livestock to the Gulf countries and, including through remittance channels, imported other goods into the Somali territories (Vali Jamal 1992; Ciabarri 2011a).

[291] For an overview of religious education in the Somali territories, see Mohamed-Rashid S. Hassan & Salada Robleh 2004.

[292] The current government of Somaliland guided by President Silaniyo has formally made public schools completely free of charge, whereas in the past the parents of the children contributed monthly to the salary of the teacher. However, according to several interlocutors met during the fieldwork, the salaries paid by the government to the teachers are so low that, unless they receive extra payment informally negotiated with the parents, they do not fulfil all their duties: they leave the class whenever they want and go to another job.

[293] Interview with Jamaac, 2 December 2014.

religious figure is, the more direct are his contacts with the donors. Although the individuals met during the fieldwork are considered young and relatively inexperienced as religious activists, they administered tens of thousands of US $ which were converted into real estate investments, always aimed at expanding religious facilities. In Dami, new plots were bought and new construction projects were launched during the fieldwork.[294]

These individuals are committed to maintaining a public image of integrity and sobriety: apart from a rather expensive off-road vehicle (a powerful marker of prestige in Hargeysa) that one of them started to use at one point, there is no evidence of their making regular private purchases. One of them still lived in a mixed iron sheet-masonry house with the household of his brother in Dami. In this way, he acquired huge prestige inside the Gaboye urban community and decided to convert it into a title of 'traditional' leadership. Thanks to his religious activism, he gathered the required support among some elders of his genealogical group and organised an instalment ceremony in one of the restaurants in the town where he was appointed *Suldaan*. Furthermore, in 2015 he secured his religious prestige by attending courses in Islamic Law at one of the private universities of Hargeysa: this would confer on him the status of religious scholar.

The religious institutions can be a way out of the 'trap' of the marginal economic niche occupied by the Gaboye. They had done so for people other than the prestigious figures mentioned so far. For instance, a Gaboye man met during the fieldwork moved from being dependent on one of the most common Gaboye's occupations, barbering, to being involved in the activities of a madrasa. He acquired literacy and a renewed public image, legitimised by devotion, which allowed him to obtain a prestigious position by government decree. Religious careers disarm the 'trap' of economic marginality by providing a socially acknowledged form of education and public visibility. These are resources that can be re-invested by individuals in other economic and political domains of social life. By disarming the trap, religious careers allow certain individuals to activate a chain of "alchemic" transmutations – to use Bourdieu's phrase (Bourdieu 1977: 192) – through which they convert and re-invest the capital they have obtained from such a career in other forms of public prestige which further expand their potential sources of material income.

As Asef Bayat has shown, Islamic social movements, although presenting meta-locally discoursive and symbolic homogeneities, must be understood as plural phenomena – or better as processes – framed inside historical conjunctures. Social movements are animated by individuals with their own "interests", concerns and perspectives. Furthermore, the individuals themselves can have distinct "fields of interests" (on the basis of their personal affiliations, or their economic, political and moral concerns) which determine articulated forms of personal adherence to, or

[294] We collected these data from direct observations and informal conversations with several local residents.

divergence from, the movement. Thus, when people choose to take part in religious activism of the type considered here, they bring with them their socio-economic position and their biographies: both of which structure how they "imagine" the commonality between their beliefs and practices and the broader "social movement" they are part of. In other words, participation is always structured by an 'interested' imagination (Bayat 2005). This is also true for the religious activists of Dami mentioned here who, for instance, are effecting the integration of various 'fields of interests': the need to spread the 'correct' form of Islam against local 'corruptions' (an argument widely used by religious activists in Hargeysa), the use of religious affiliation and the resources it mobilises as ways of improving the condition of the Gaboye living in the neighbourhood, and their own individual emancipation from the economic 'trap' of occupational segregation.

A form of 'interested' imagination also characterises the way another group of Gaboye individuals act in certain formalised social roles: the 'traditional' leaders. We have met ten members of marginalised minorities who claimed to hold titles of 'traditional' leadership: six were *Suldaan*, three *Caaqil* and one *Boqor*. They belonged to the two largest Gaboye clans of Somaliland - the Musse Dheriyo and the Madhibaan – and also to the Tumaal and Anaas (or Yibir) groups, but there will clearly be many more all around Somaliland. The proportions between these three categories of leadership clearly represents the broadly dominant trend in Somaliland, the proliferation of title holders. It is a trend which both violates the customs of the various genealogical groups – determining the modalities of attribution of the titles – and does not reflect any grassroots legitimation of these individuals by their supposed constituencies. This phenomenon affords the titles supposedly endowed a higher level of prestige, such as that of *Suldaan* (for this reason the phenomenon is called "*Suldaan* barar" meaning "*Suldaan* bloating").

The *Suldaan*s and analogous figures (like the *Ugaas* and the *Garaad*) had already been described in British colonial sources as having ambiguous prerogatives and powers. They usually represented broad genealogical groups and, arguably, numbered no more than a dozen in the last two decades of the Protectorate of Somaliland. They were asked to take action in the case of the widespread disputes across the boundaries of local groups or to advance petitions and carry out negotiations with the colonial government with regard to the implementation of particular administrative schemes.[295] The role of these highly prestigious figures currently presents analogous characteristics: they have no defined prerogatives in relation the people they are supposed to represent, but in addition to preserving peace and intervening to prevent escalations of violence, they are still expected to negotiate with the country's political authorities in order to obtain welfare for the members of their constituencies. Throughout the post-civil war years – which marked the

[295] See also I.M. Lewis 1961.

peak of the social legitimisation of the 'elders' and the 'traditional' leaders, inasmuch as they had been able to bring about a broad pacification of the northern-western Somali territories (unlike southern Somalia) – what has determined the exponential growth of the number of title holders is the claims by particular individuals that they are able to mount a better defence of the interests of particular groups, or to ensure more effective 'traditional' representation of increasingly smaller genealogical groups.[296] The *caaqil* has evolved in a different way, from being a government agent during the Protectorate into the manager of the system of clan contributions at the level of the diya-paying groups. He registers the individuals eligible to contribute for collective payments, carries out the negotiations to fix the amount due and collects the money for blood compensation. The increase in the number of *caaqil*s is linked to the exigencies of the circumscribed genealogical groups, thus this role is much less attractive for ambitious individuals: the latter prefer titles of higher prestige, supposedly facilitating public visibility vis-à-vis the population and state authorities but at the same time leaving them free from specific, routine tasks.

The issue of the number of 'traditional' leaders is one point of similarity between the Gaboye groups and the majority clans; another is the existence of mutual claims of pre-eminence among these figures and the attribution of different degrees of legitimisation by the people belonging to their clans. There are different parameters for defining these hierarchies of prestige. One of the *Suldaan*s met during the fieldwork is a descendant of the first Gaboye 'traditional' leader appointed in Hargeysa in the late 1950s and he claims to have better credentials than the others, all of whom have been appointed in the last ten years. The *Boqor*, a title theoretically of maximum prestige, is a Musse Dheriyo man who in the late 1990s was registered in the Ministry of Interior of Somaliland as a *caaqil*. He creatively assembled the basis of his leadership through an extreme operation of 'imagination of the tradition' (Ranger 1993): he declared himself the "king" (the most common translation of *Boqor* offered by the Somalilanders) of the Gaboye of all Somali territories and chose to adopt a unique appearance distinguishing him from any other 'traditional leader' of Somaliland. He goes around in public wearing a sort of crown made of ostrich feathers and holding a symbolic bow, quiver and arrows, the tokens, as he publicly states, of the customs of the Gaboye people. This curious appearance – which as we have personally experienced is often met with jokes by the people passing him on the streets – confers on the *Boqor* a type of recognisability in Hargeysa but little legitimacy in the eyes of the local people, Gaboye or others. Rather, the man has used it to target the external actors of the humanitarian sector, especially those specialised in the

[296] For detailed analyses of the important role played by 'elders' and 'traditional' leaders in the recent history of Somaliland see also Ahmed Y. Farah & I.M. Lewis 1997; Renders 2007b; 2012. Unfortunately, scholars have so far paid scarce attention to the transformation of these institutions over the decades of the Siad Barre regime, when any clan-based institution was formally banned but the existence of 'mediators' and 'peace keepers' in inter-group disputes (especially in peripheral areas such as the northern-western Somali territories) was acknowledged.

study and the defence of marginalised minorities. Indeed, the *Boqor* has established contacts with such organisations: when we first met in December 2014,[297] he had just returned to Hargeysa from Geneva, where he had attended the "Seventh Session of the Forum on Minority Issues", organised by the United Nations Human Rights Council, as the chief representative of all the Gaboye peoples living in the Somali territories. This demonstration of his ability to interact with humanitarian actors was a powerful credential of influence vis-à-vis his own constituency.[298]

Another parameter of legitimacy which has been stressed by the *Suldaan* descended from the first Gaboye 'traditional' leader is that, unlike the other leaders of his clan, his title is registered by the Somalilander state authorities.[299] In the light of this unstoppable proliferation beyond any form of customary management, the state authorities have become important supporters of the 'traditional' leaders' legitimacy: the Somalilander state authorities have inherited the role of registering the title holders and granting them a salary (plus, occasionally, other benefits like a car). As has been correctly emphasised by Hoehne (Hoehne 2013), the consolidation of this role has given the state a crucial influence on the 'traditional' leaders both at the national and at the local level. On the other hand, the manifestation of this influence is contributing to the undermining of the 'traditional' leaders' legitimacy in the eyes of their constituencies.

From the point of view of the Gaboye 'traditional' leaders met during the fieldwork, the importance of their relationship with high ranking members of state institutions – wished for or cultivated – consists in their ability to negotiate with the political elite access to material benefits for themselves and the allocation of jobs in the state apparatus and of state-channelled investments (in infrastructures, development funds and projects). It is in this relationship that much of the public role played Gaboye 'traditional' leaders is determined. This might explain what happened among the Gaboye 'traditional' leaders based in Hargeysa during the early months of 2015. It was a period that saw the fragmentation of old political alliances and the gestation of new ones in the Somalilander political arena: government members, prominent figures of the national parties and blocks of consensus were in ferment. This situation was fuelled by several factors: the approaching deadline of the government mandate, the fact that Parliament's mandate had already expired and thus the necessity to organise new elections and the concomitant steep decline in the leadership capacities of the President of the Republic (and, according to rumours, also in his personal health) which prompted competition to succeed him. Clan-based blocks of political support were being re-

[297] Interview of 6 December 2014.
[298] Throughout the first half of 2015 he modified his approach substantially and also tried to push his claim of 'traditional' leadership in the internal political arena of Somaliland. He adopted a strong position vis-à-vis the government. We collected these pieces of information through direct observation, interviews and informal conversations with several members of both Gaboye and other groups in the café-shops.
[299] He re-affirmed this datum during numerous informal meetings and conversations.

shuffled by this political turmoil both inside and outside the ruling party. The most important Gaboye 'traditional' leaders immediately rushed to announce their position on the government at a public press conference. The Musse Dheriyo leaders were divided: some restated their support for the current government but one began an aggressive campaign of attacks: he accused the ruling group of not having helped the Somalilander minorities in any way and invited the members of his group to support the strongest opposition party. This episode demonstrated the importance of the position that a 'traditional' leader assumes in relation to the government as a crucial element in the definition of his public image: it allows him to show the people either his closeness to the government and his ability to negotiate pay-offs or, conversely, to mobilise discontent against it. This contradistinction structures the arena for the competition for prestige between the 'traditional' leaders.

The argument presented so far leads us to consider these figures as political entrepreneurs struggling to assemble individual careers as leaders and mediators among the members of their genealogical groups and political institutions. Such political entrepreneurship has deep roots in Somaliland: British colonial documents referred to the profiles and the activities of individuals who tried to present themselves as representatives of their genealogical groups vis-à-vis the Protectorate authorities and to advance petitions and complaints against them. In some cases they were 'playing on several tables', receiving support from external political entities such as the Ethiopian Empire. A brief description of these kinds of political actor is offered, curiously, in an Italian magazine article published soon after the Italian conquest of Somaliland in 1940: "The most important figure [the author is describing the various forms of leadership of the Somalilanders] among the Isak is the so-called *Siassi*, namely the political man: a smart profiteer who manoeuvred ably between the Authorities and his people and exploited the trust of both for his own personal benefit, sometimes for the benefit of his clients. The *Siassi* disciplined the conduct of client tribes, inspired their behaviours, sometimes favourable sometimes hostile to the government […]" (Africa Italiana 1940: 28).[300] The term *Siassi* corresponds nowadays to the Somali word of Arabic origin *siyaasi* which, curiously, identifies the 'politician' involved in party politics and state decision-making arenas. But in this passage the term identifies individual careers which flourished in the gap between the overarching colonial institutions and local groups and which seem to correspond with the role played by some of the recently inaugurated 'traditional' leaders of Somaliland. Also the Gaboye 'traditional' leaders have entered this deep rooted line of continuity and assumed these forms of

[300] Original text in Italian: "Il personaggio più importante tra gli Isak era il così detto *Siassi*, cioè l'uomo politico: scaltro affarista che, per sapersi abilmente barcamenare tra le Autorità e la sua gente sfruttava la fiducia degli uni e degli altri a suo personale beneficio, e talora anche a profitto dei suoi clienti. Il *Siassi* disciplinava la linea di condotta delle tribù clienti, ne ispirava gli atteggiamenti, a volte favorevoli a volte ostili al Governo […]."

political entrepreneurship. In other words, they have adopted the same ways of 'imagining' certain supposed 'traditional' institutions as the other Somalilanders (Ranger 1993). But what are the differences? As shown by Hoehne (Hoehne 2013), the 'traditional' leaders of the majority clans do not enjoy – simply because they hold titles – widespread legitimacy among their constituencies. They compensate for this either by deploying conspicuous economic resources, thus maintaining a clientele or by obtaining the support of powerful members of state institutions, or both. The Gaboye 'traditional' leaders met during the current fieldwork did not have a daily routine which put them at the centre of a network of meetings between other prestigious figures and the members of the genealogical groups they are supposed to represent. They do not have sufficient personal resources to host the daily *kat*-chewing sessions by which other prominent men (not only 'traditional' leaders, but also politicians and businessmen; see Hoehne 2013) maintain regular contacts with a large number of persons, nor can they provide the other forms of material help that would secure client-style bonds. At the same time, they have no strong ties with the national political elite, as it is shown by the paltry allocation of job positions of any rank in the state apparatus. This prevents them gathering around themselves those groups of supporters who would bear public witness to their prestige.

The review of the situation of Gaboye workers in the humanitarian sector, state apparatuses, religious activism and 'traditional' leadership refers to 29 individuals, all males, but this must not be read as a statistically valid number in relation to the sample of Gaboye consulted during the fieldwork. While it is probable that they represent the majority of the Gaboye of Hargeysa involved in their respective sectors, there are far more than 136 Gaboye working as barbers, shoe-repairers, blacksmiths, domestic workers and so on. The most relevant quantitative datum we can obtain from these figures is that the proportion of Gaboye earning their livelihood outside their 'traditional' trades is extremely low: in particular, their absence from the retail sector and their scant presence in both the state apparatuses and the humanitarian sector are elements distinguishing them from any other Somalilander grouping. Furthermore, the almost complete absence of Gaboye women from the humanitarian sector and civil service must be emphasised. On the other hand, certain social roles do operate for some as individual pathways of escape from economic marginality. The individuals mentioned are creatively assembling personal careers by manipulating symbolic and material resources. They move along and across different social roles not as empty boxes to be filled, but as plural fields of action in reciprocal communication. For instance, we have seen how religious activism can be converted into 'traditional' leadership, and the latter into visibility in the humanitarian sector.

8.3 SHOE-WORKING, BARBERING AND BLACKSMITHING IN HARGEYSA: PAST AND PRESENT

The forms of entrepreneurship reviewed above were not present in the picture captured by Ambroso (Ambroso 2002) shortly after the Gaboye's return to Somaliland. Nevertheless, all the sources mentioned so far show that Gaboye men and women were and still are employed largely in certain economic sectors in which Somalilanders from other genealogical group are not found. In a scale measuring continuities and discontinuities in the configuration of the Gaboye's presence in the urban context of Hargeysa, the configuration of their economic position shows an extremely high rate of continuity (compared, for example, with the formalisation of the Gaboye's integration into the political arenas of the country). The biographies collected during the fieldwork show the existence of a boundary which has stopped almost all of the Gaboye moving into other occupations. On the other hand, these biographies show the 'mobility' of the Gaboye workers between the various jobs 'traditionally' attached to them. How has this boundary changed between the late colonial period and today?

The most common trades carried out by Gaboye men in Hargeysa are shoe-making (especially shoe-repairing), barbering and blacksmithing. Between the colonial era and the 1980s, there were other economic activities that provided an income to numerous Gaboye in the town. Some colonial documents show that from the second decade of the twentieth century, the Protectorate's townships already had wage-earning sweepers and maintenance workers who belonged to Gaboye clans. It is likely that dozens of them were employed in the biggest urban centres like Berbera and Hargeysa. Another important activity largely controlled by members of the Gaboye clans was the management of public toilets in the downtown of Hargeysa. There are still many public toilets, used mostly by the people who work in the city centre. They cost a few cents (US) to use so, with a steady supply of customers, it is a profitable activity. We have not met any individual who ran public toilets in the past, but several interlocutors told us that the members of the majority clans "captured" this activity from the Gaboye after the civil war and their escape from the country. As was the case in the past when these concessions were a Gaboye's monopoly, the members of the majority clans who currently run the business despise the work of cleaning restrooms and attending to the customers' other needs, such as providing a regular supply of water. They hire workers from among the groups available for such work at the lowest possible rate of pay: not usually the Gaboye anymore but Ethiopian migrants, largely Oromos.

Other major transformations have also affected the trades that are still dominant among the Gaboye.[301] In general, the Gaboye interviewed remembered the pre-civil war years as a period of better economic conditions because there were fewer imported goods and thus less competition for their products and services. Neither was there a foreign labour force competing for their jobs. The interlocutors consulted also reported the massive loss of valuable physical spaces once controlled by Gaboye workers as a consequence of the civil war. Two examples are the "hangar" and an area inside the biggest market of Hargeysa. The "hangar" is the large downtown building which was constructed during the 1960s in order to host blacksmiths and shoe-makers who already had working spaces in the area; its roof had been destroyed by fire few years ago. After the war, one half of the building was occupied and taken away from the people who worked there. Another example is what some interlocutors called "the line of the barbers", one street in the main market of Hargeysa, both sides of which were occupied by barber shops owned by Gaboye men. The allocation of these spaces to the Gaboye dated from the late colonial period. They are now occupied by other retail shops selling cooking tools and small furniture items; the owners of these shops occupied the street after the mass escape of Gaboye from the town in the early 1990s.

Beside the loss of working spaces, interlocutors lamented the disruption of the overall organisation of the economic sectors they were employed in. Two shoe-makers above 65 years old living in Hargeysa stated that under the Siad Barre regime they were organised in a sort of association or cooperative.[302] They had an administrative board with an elected chairman which controlled a common budget. Every shoe-maker handed over part of his daily income in order to meet the expenses of both raw materials (like leather) and the more expensive machinery that the members took turns to use. According to the interlocutors, almost all shoe-makers active in the town were part of this organisation and worked near each other in the "hangar" and the surrounding area. Access to proper machines allowed them to produce different types of shoes, including boots. This, together with the absence of imported cheap shoes, meant that before the civil war the shoemakers of Hargeysa had a significant and stable demand for their goods, which were also exported to Ogaden, the neighbouring Ethiopian region largely inhabited by Somali groups.

Nowadays, however, the only shoes that the two shoe-makers (and the others working in the town) can make are leather sandals which they sew by hand. Furthermore, they have more expenses to cover: beside the raw materials (camel and cattle leather) which they now buy in small amounts, they have to pay rent for a (private) work space inside the main market of Hargeysa. The sandals they can produce have a very limited market and must be sold at a very cheap price, below US$ 5.

[301] The following considerations are based on both extemporary and regular visits to Gaboye working individually and in groups, in different parts of Hargeysa. The meetings took place between January and August 2015.
[302] Interview with Cumar and Cusman, 6 February 2015.

According to the interlocutors, the only customers they have are rural people (*reer miyi*) who, during their cyclical visits to Hargeysa for purposes related to their livestock (selling animals, buying water or grass to bring to their flocks), purchase quantities of sandals for their entire families. These customers still appreciate them for their sturdiness (and especially for the strength of camel leather soles), while the 'townies' prefer imported shoes which, despite being made of plastic parts held together with glue and subject to rapid deterioration, have a 'modern' design. For these reasons, only a minority of the Gaboye work in shoemaking: most of them earn their living doing repairs like sewing or gluing shoes that have fallen apart. The pay for this varies according to the labour and materials require: usually between 1,000 and 10,000 Somaliland shillings (7,000 Somaliland shillings = US$ 1).

Most of the shoe-makers and shoe-repairers operate individually. There are 'crews' of various sorts, but less than half of the individuals met during the fieldwork work in them. The blacksmiths are in a similar situation: just one large group of men shared a working space. Cooperation generally takes a flexible form: its most solid basis is the preservation of control over the particular physical space where the productive activity is carried out. Many of the current shoe-workers' and blacksmiths' workplaces were re-arranged after the civil war. The Gaboye workers



6 Hand-made sandals produced by a crew of shoe-makers in the central market of Hargeysa.

had to make new arrangements in order to maintain strategic locations for their activities: for shoe-workers and blacksmiths, this has in numerous cases meant applying to rent sections of the space in front of shops.

What makes a particular working location strategic? This might be a matter not just of its proximity to the commercial cores of the town and thus its accessibility for customers, but also of the genealogical geography of the town. Indeed, the members of two of the crews of shoe-workers regularly visited during the fieldwork stated that their physical position had been chosen because of its proximity to neighbourhoods and areas of the town largely inhabited by members of the majority clans related to them. The relationship was described in terms either of the common geographical origins of the workers and the supposed majority of the residents or of – as some of the eldest interlocutors put it – the past existence of an *abaan* link with the latter.[303]



7 A shoe-maker cutting the sandal's sole out of a camel leather layer.

The possibility of maintaining a mutual genealogical recognisability between the Gaboye and their customers was a factor that some crews deliberately decided to preserve. This spatial link is reproduced also by the young apprentices who, in approaching the members of the crews in order to learn the job, tend to address their relatives. Indeed, this is a form of organising the commercial space of Hargeysa which, arguably, has become even stronger in the aftermath of the civil war, when several Gaboye had to abandon their previous working posts.

The internal organisation of crews can also be based on the sharing of certain expenses, such as for raw materials (leather for shoe-workers and mostly aluminium for blacksmiths), rent and the daily urban taxes. For instance, the members of one small crew of three shoe-workers occupying a space in the downtown are organised as follows: they share the rent of the working space (2,000 SL shillings each per day) and of one room nearby where they lock up their tools and materials at night (1,000 SL shillings each per day). They take one day each in paying the local taxes owed to the Hargeysa

[303] It is important to stress that these Gaboye interlocutors strongly denied that there was today any other type of continuing legacy of the *abaan* relationship.

municipality: 1,000 SL shillings for garbage collection and 1,000 SL shillings as a sort of commercial tax.

In cases of huge orders for their products, the members negotiate among themselves the distribution of the workload and the income. Among the shoe-workers, although the majority of jobs are short and done individually, it is the arrival of huge orders that pushes them to take on apprentices who will gradually become workers able to take on their own jobs and shares of collective orders, and contribute to common expenses. It is more common to find crews of workers among the blacksmiths; indeed, for the manufacture of some products like the metal braziers (*girgire*), the sub-division of the production procedure among co-workers underpins the whole process. The crews may also have some form of informal mutual support: for instance, the members of a group of blacksmiths said that if one of them was sick and unable to work, they clubbed together to give him his average daily income.



8 Production of metal braziers in Qob Dameer.

The crews usually have one or two leaders: they are the eldest workers and usually are those who first occupied the working space. The most important element qualifying them is their level of expertise in the job: they have the wider knowledge and the better skills, so they are consulted by other workers. The two leaders of a shoemaking crew regularly visited during the fieldwork were those who had defined the design of the model of sandals they produce and transmitted it to the other members. The leaders of a crew also control the size of the group and mediate the entry of apprentices: they approve or deny the attachment of new apprentices to the individual members of the crew. The crews of shoe-workers or blacksmiths can be of different sizes, but those having the characteristics listed above have between three and eight members.

All the Gaboye working in the shoe sector and as blacksmiths complained of the constant shrinking of their income. They claimed that their income can barely meet the basic needs of their families and that they cannot afford to miss a single day (usually the only days of rest are the *Ciid*, the celebration of the end of Ramadan, and the Birthday of the Prophet). None of them said they could save, apart – for many of them – from their participation in the system of collective saving which is also extremely common among the other Somalilanders (called *hagbad*). It is organised by

a person (quite often a woman) who assembles a group of contributors by invitation (there can be up to twenty persons involved); he or she collects a small sum of money daily (usually less than US$ 1) from every participant and after a pre-agreed number of days one of the participants receives all the money collected; another one will receive the same amount after the next period and so on until, at last, the organiser who has physically collected and distributed the money receives his/her share (this is income because he/she did not hand over the daily sum). One of the shoe-makers declared that it is only through this system that he is able occasionally to deduct money (the equivalent of less than US$ 75) from his daily income. The sum he receives approximately every three and a half months allows him to meet unexpected or larger bills for such things as new working tools.[304]

Another crucial activity which has been a feature of the urban presence of the Gaboye since its beginning is barbering, and it was described by the Gaboye interlocutors met during the fieldwork as a sector under attack. Barbershops are widely spread throughout the town, especially in the busiest neighbourhoods like the downtown and the northern-western quarter (Xer Awr and Jigjiga-Yar). Almost all of them occupy either small rooms (less than 10 square metres) on the ground floor of masonry buildings or temporary iron-sheet buildings along major roads, constructed by the same technique employed to build dwellings described in the previous chapter. Furniture like chairs and mirrors are extremely old. The prices for hair cuts and shaves are not fixed, but the average amount paid seems to be between US$ 2 and 3 which is considered the price to be expected. If the customer gives more, that is described as a sort of voluntary tip. In numerous barbershops there is more than one barber cutting hair; usually these employees are either apprentices or fully trained barbers who are saving to open their own shop, in which case the usual arrangement with the owner is that they hand over half of each customer's payment and keep the rest.

The barbers complained of the competition from foreign workers and of members of the majority clans beginning over the last few years to open salons with proper furniture, materials imported from abroad (through Dubai) and (since they would never personally do such a job) hired barbers. The Gaboye interlocutors said that these kinds of shops are attracting more and more customers because they are better equipped and offer a cleaner, more comfortable environment. We have visited two such shops and at least one of them was remarkably different from any other barbershop in Hargeysa. According to an employee, it had required the investment of at least US$ 10,000. It occupied two large rooms, furniture was freshly imported from Dubai (haircutting chairs

[304] The interlocutor, Mawliid, is part of a crew working in the downtown. He provided this piece of information during an informal conversation on 15 July 2015 at his workplace.

coasting around US$ 700 each) and beside the hairdressing, it offered a vast array of products and beauty treatments for men. The fees for haircutting were significantly higher than other shops, two or three times more, but according to barbers interviewed it was these kinds of activities that were eroding the Gaboye barbers' customer base.

For the Gaboye interlocutors the main issue is that the owners of these 'fancy' shops prefer to hire Ethiopian barbers rather than locals; they visit or contact individuals in the training schools in Ethiopia where barbers learn their job. Furthermore, even Ethiopians themselves have started to open and run barber shops; one barber reported that his Ethiopian employee told him that after working for several years in Hargeysa he decided – although he had initially planned a short stay in Somaliland before attempting to migrate to Gulf countries – to invest his savings in his own shop.[305]

The Gaboye barbers stressed that they cannot compete with the new shops because they do not have the capital to invest in improving the quality of their service. This was also confirmed by Libaan, a Gaboye man who runs a successful barbershop in the downtown area.[306] During the fieldwork he accepted the offer from some members of a majority clan who knew him (they were all from the same town, Burco) the post of manager of their recently opened barbershop. They had invested a considerable sum in setting up the shop and wanted an experienced barber to run the business; they paid him a fixed monthly salary plus a share of each customer's fee. Libaan also decided to retain ownership of his previous shop, with his employees managing it. The arrangement made Libaan much better off than most Gaboye barbers in Hargeysa. His income is higher than that of a mid-ranking ministerial official and allows him to have a decent dwelling, to feed his large family adequately and to pay for a private boarding school for his two children above six years old.

In this case – as in a similar one met during the fieldwork – the owners of the new shop did not have any publicly visible involvement in it. They maintained contacts only with the manager who handed over the takings and who was given the power to hire and fire the other employees. Interestingly, Libaan said he immediately fired the Ethiopian barbers previously working there and hired Gaboye ones: for him, they took precedence over the foreigners who were stealing Gaboye jobs all over Hargeysa.

8.4 THE DYNAMIC PICTURE OF THE GABOYE WOMEN'S TRADES IN HARGEYSA

Forty women are included in the sample of Gaboye individuals considered in this chapter. The most striking element if we compare the sample produced during the fieldwork with Ambroso's report (Ambroso 2002) is the disruption of the pottery production sector in Hargeysa, which was the only

[305] Informal conversation with an Ethiopian barber, 16 May 2015, in a Hargeysa café-shop.
[306] Interview with Libaan, 11 August 2015.

one explicitly related to Gaboye women. Ambroso reported 50 women working in pottery, while only 2 workshops were found during the fieldwork. Two women work in each, supported by several men who perform auxiliary tasks such as the purchasing and transport of raw materials (different types of soils), the blending of different soils and water in order to obtain the clay, the preparation of ovens and the transport of items. These men also manufactured metal objects like the supports of clay braziers.



9 A Gaboye potter moulding a clay brazier.

According to the interlocutors consulted, there are only two workshops left in Hargeysa and their low incomes do not allow them to improve their productive capabilities. They are located respectively at the margins of the neighbourhoods of Hawl Wadaag and Qob Dameer. They have both benefited from a project implemented by the NGO ADRA between 2008 and 2010. The project was intended to have a double impact: first, it provided an iron sheet construction, the tools and knowledge the women needed to produce clay cooking braziers (*girgire*). Second, this model of brazier was supposed to replace the metal ones which are widely used by the Somalilanders. Metal braziers waste more heat and consume an extremely large quantity of charcoal, thus contributing to deforestation in Somaliland (a ruinous trend with several consequences such as soil erosion which was addressed as long ago as the British Protectorate). Pottery products are slightly more expensive than locally made metal braziers which cost between US$ 2 and 5. Although these potters produce items that could have a big market, such as cooking braziers, their complaint is the impossibility of saving money to invest in their productive capacities. They sell to certain shops around ten items per day: this means that clay braziers have a narrow circulation in the town and a restricted pool of potential customers.

Other sorts of objects, mostly other types of braziers, are produced in these workshops but have an even more limited commercial distribution in the town. They are hand-shaped braziers of different dimensions used to burn incense crystals and *cunsi* (see below). Most braziers of this sort sold in the shops of Hargeysa are factory-made and imported from southern Somalia.

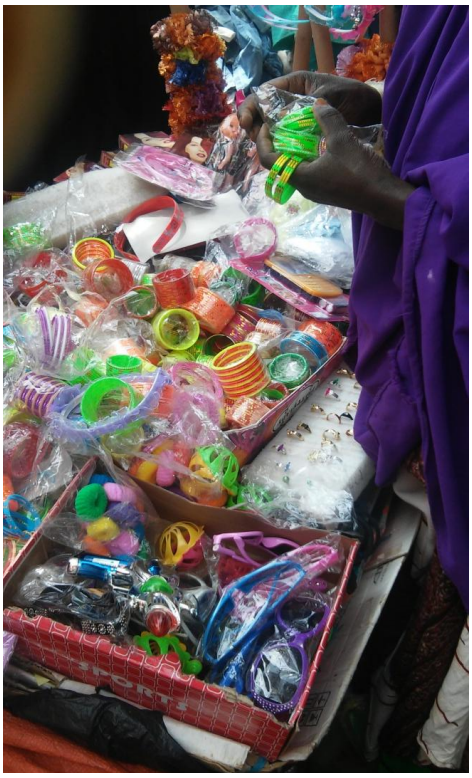
One important sector which was almost entirely monopolised by Gaboye women in the pre civil war years was butchery. According to Ayaan and Amina, two middle-aged sisters born in a rural area near Hargeysa, when they were children, being trained by their mother, butchery skills and the practice of 'traditional' healing (including midwifery and female circumcision) were both transmitted by Gaboye women.[307] Ayaan and Amina said that during the Siad Barre regime, a huge number of Gaboye women used to work at the town's slaughterhouse, where they either held a concession or served others who did, in allocated sections where they brought the animals bought at the market. They slaughtered and butchered goats and sheep, sold the meat at the meat market and kept the skins. At that time the whole process was managed by the government (including the number of animals that could be killed every day) who taxed both the purchase of animals and the slaughtering. According to Ayaan and Amina, the number of Gaboye women working in this sector has decreased and those who are left are mostly employed as servants. Their role is mainly in the processing of meat and especially the cutting of meat for *xeedho*, a preparation usually made for marriages. They work from early morning until late afternoon for a little over US$ 3 per day.

Four Gaboye women interviewed during the fieldwork work as ambulant sellers inside the biggest market of Hargeysa,[308] carrying their merchandise in baskets. One important item they sell they also produce: *cunsi*. The latter is a solid preparation made up with leaves and flowers cooked together with sugar; when it is burnt with charcoal it releases a strong aromatic smell. It is prepared by melting sugar to form a sort of caramel to which it is added perfume essences and different flowers. When it cools off it solidifies and is cut into pieces and wrapped, ready to be sold. This work is usually done at night so that it can be sold the following morning. One type of *cunsi* is usually burnt in the room where husband and wife are about to have sexual intercourse, especially during their first night together after the wedding. It can be very expensive: the *cunsi* disk which lasts usually for around one month costs around US$ 12. According to Khadra, one of the women consulted, the production and selling of *cunsi* became increasingly popular among Gaboye women after the civil war. Before 1988 there was only one small group of Gaboye women doing this in Hargeysa, but the sharp increase of ambulant sellers of vegetables and thence of the competition among them over the last twenty years have driven Gaboye women to monopolise the market of *cunsi*.

The ambulant *cunsi* sellers are also known for selling bracelets, necklaces and small toys. The latter become their main offering in the days before *Ciid* celebration, at the end of Ramadan, when parents usually give gifts to their children. The ambulant sellers consulted said they consider

[307] Interview with Ayaan and Amina, 1 March 2015.
[308] Interview with Khadra and three Gaboye ambulant sellers, 26 February 2015.

themselves the lowest income-earner among Gaboye women. They make between 5 and US$ 10 per day but their margin of profit is extremely low: the cost of raw materials of *cunsi*, (flowers, leaves and essences) is more than half of their income; for other items like small toys, the profit margin is 1/7. They claimed to be the majority of the Gaboye women working in the retail sector and to have started their activity without any help.



10 A Gaboye woman selling toys in the central market of Hargeysa during the last days of Ramadan.

On the other hand, the women who are not ambulant are those who have received some support (from their families and from relatives abroad) in the form of the initial capital employed to launch their economic activities. The next higher level is shopkeepers, mostly concentrated in the central market of Hargeysa: women who have rented a space, in a temporary structure or a masonry building, in the main market of Hargeysa. According to four of them interviewed during the fieldwork, there are around 10 Gaboye women running such shops in the central market of Hargeysa alone.[309] The rent for such a space might be US$ 200 per month, and according to them only one Gaboye woman can afford this alone. The others form partnerships with women of majority clans. These women's business is deeply entrenched within the occupations common in the Gaboye community. Some of the products sold in these shops, for example, are produced locally by Gaboye or members of other minorities like the Tumaal: various types of cooking braziers (*girgire*) and metal pots (*disti*) forged by local blacksmiths. They also directly import raw materials like camel leather from southern Somalia for the shoe-makers, and finished and part-finished goods like 'traditional' stools and clay braziers. The organisation of the cargoes is based on well-established links with local suppliers, whom the traders must first have met personally. After this first contact orders, shipping and payments are arranged by phone, and the cargo travels by truck from Mogadishu to Hargeysa.

From Ethiopia the women import mostly cattle leather which is also used to make sandals in Somaliland. Unlike for camel leather, the traders have to personally go to Addis Ababa every time they want to buy; they have no regular link to local suppliers there. The group of Gaboye women interviewed stated that they have made an arrangement among themselves: every time they need a

[309] Interview with four Gaboye shop owners, 16 February 2015.

leather supply from Ethiopia, two of them travel together to Addis, buy the merchandise and send the shipment by truck; all the expenses (including the accommodation of the two travelling traders) are shared among the group. The Gaboye shop owners interviewed said that they organise a collective shipment every month and they each import leather averaging US$ 1,500 in value. They stated that they are the only leather suppliers to all the shoe-makers of the northern-western Somali territories and that they have been occupying this business niche over the last fifteen years since it had not been taken by majority-clan traders.

Another commercial activity which necessitates travelling to Ethiopia is the trade in second hand clothes. Two Gaboye women consulted during an informal conversation held in Dami declared that they carried out this activity in the past, but it is also common among women from all groups in Somaliland. The country imports huge amounts of second hand clothes (and shoes) via the ports of Gulf countries (especially Dubai) which are either sold locally or exported to Ethiopia. Given their extremely low cost, even poor women can gradually accumulate such clothes until they have enough to cross the border and sell them in the Ethiopian towns or in smaller centres located between Harar and Wajaale. The women met said that they used to rent space for their merchandise on one of the trucks which takes this route every day; then they crossed the border without passing through customs and stay in Ethiopia long enough to sell the clothes. The most common reason why they stopped doing this is that whenever the Ethiopian police officers found the merchandise, they confiscated it on a charge of smuggling, causing considerable financial loss.

We will devote a brief section here to other activities undertaken by Gaboye women met in Hargeysa – not more than 10 - which have deep roots in the 'traditional' skills inherited from previous generations. First, according to one of them, whom we will call Fowzia, a very small number of women in Hargeysa still practise 'traditional' healing and midwifery: women, known as *umuliso* which literally means 'midwife'. The widespread uptake of modern medicine in urban areas has reduced the demand for 'traditional' healers' services, and thus their income, despite the frequently extremely poor-quality medical treatment – medicines, nursing expertise and equipment – both in the public and in the numerous private facilities.[310] But female circumcision (*gudniin* in Somali), which is still common in the Somali territories, persists as a substantial part of these women's activities.[311] Fowzia was also employed in a medical centre recently built in Dami where, together with other medical personnel, she offered assistance to local women before and during

[310] The 'traditional' knowledge of Gaboye healers, both men and women, covered numerous treatments applied to a range of conditions like high fever, superficial infections, infertility and many more.

[311] Discussions and campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation have a long tradition in the Somali territories (Edna Adan Ismail 1984). Although prestigious figures like Edna Aadan Ismaciil are strongly committed to stigmatising this practice in Somaliland, eradication has not yet been possible. See also Abdi A. Gele, Bente P. Bo & Johanne Sundby 2013.

childbirth.[312] She continued simultaneously to provide her services privately and to obtain a considerable income out of it: home delivered services like female circumcisions and midwifery – which are the most expensive - cost between US$ 50 and 100. At the time of our meeting, the lady was training one of her granddaughters in her profession.

A group of 7-8 Gaboye women well known in Hargeysa practised another activity which has deep historical roots: the dances and chants which provide entertainment during celebrations, especially parts of marriage celebrations. The fieldwork also documented the recurrent presence of the group of dancers during ceremonies organised by public authorities (like the return of the President of Somaliland to Hargeysa after official trips). Hiring these kinds of groups for a marriage can cost up to US$ 1,000, depending on the wealth of the customer. The Gaboye groups are in demand because they perform specific chants and dances inherited from their ancestors and they can make a regular income from it.

Finally, domestic labour is a common activity among both Gaboye women and others, including Oromo: anyone who has arrived in Hargeysa recently and urgently needs to supplement their husband's income. According to numerous residents of Hargeysa who have been consulted on this issue, it is a common and long-established practice for people who require help in their domestic tasks, like washing clothes, to visit the poorer areas of the town to hire a daily worker. Some Gaboye women met in Dami said during informal conversations they do this kind of work several times a week: they are approached by men who come by car and take them to their dwellings. They usually work for a whole day and their income is variable: the women met in Dami said they are paid around US$ 4 or 5, whereas others met in a former IDP camp at the outskirt of Hargeysa – nowadays occupied by homeless people and households of mixed origin – reported a daily income of just over US$ 1 (sometimes they are also given a meal). In the sample of 40 Gaboye women considered here, 10 were counted as daily domestic workers (NB, not a statistically reliable number). The information offered by these women strongly suggests that daily domestic work is the major source of income for many Gaboye women during the months immediately after their arrival in Hargeysa.

8.5 TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY

The ownership of real estate is an important element in our understanding of the situation of the Gaboye households in Hargeysa. The re-location programme of the late 1950s provided the Gaboye community of Hargeysa with widely distributed plots of land. These were passed down the

[312] Interview with Fowzia, 15 February 2015.

generations and in the late 1990s were returned to the Gaboye who had abandoned the town after the civil war. Since then, the formalised ownership of land has become an important source of revenue for numerous Gaboye households alongside their work income: most of the plots in Dami contain between 1 and 5 dwellings whose occupants pay a rent and the owner might or might not live on the plot himself. The tenants are in large part Gaboye recently arrived from other areas of Somaliland or the Ethiopian territories, Ethiopian migrants (largely Oromos) and Gaboye individuals or households whose ancestors lived in Hargeysa from decades ago but who are landless. This last category of tenants is in part the by-product of the natural atomisation over time of the original properties created during the re-location programmes of the late 1950s and of more immediate processes: in particular the increasingly common practice of transnational mobility involving young Gaboye.

Notwithstanding the solid pacification achieved in large parts of the territories of the Republic of Somaliland, a constant flow of young people under 30 tries to reach Europe through Libya and the Mediterranean Sea. Over the last few years and especially after 2011, a growing number of young Gaboye have migrated. We have already alluded to the variety and the significance of the "cultures of migration" (Hahn & Klute 2007) which have characterised the Somali territories since the late colonial period. Transnational mobility has had economic dimensions, then, after the eruption of the Somali civil war in the late 1980s, it has configured as massive forced migration. It has manifested both as individual trajectories (although structured by social and economic patterns of mobility) and as collective forced migrations resulting in the establishment of refugee camps in Somali territory or in the neighbouring countries. As Ciabarri's characterisation of Somali society as "extroverted" illustrates (Ciabarri 2011a), transnational mobility and its legacies have shaped the economic environment, the urban landscape of centres like Hargeysa and the political arenas in the Somali territories (the pacification and the state-building process behind the independence of Somaliland are historically related to the different forms of transnational dislocation of the local groups). Among the manifestations of the prolonged and articulated migratory phenomena that have involved the Somali territories (Horst 2006) we must count the establishment of international commercial networks, the impact of remittances (Jamal 1992; Peter Little 2003; Lindley 2009; Neil Carrier & Emma Lochery 2013), the spread of the capacity of individuals and local socio-political institutions to optimise their relationship with external humanitarian interventions (Ciabarri 2008b) and the plural trajectories of 'returning' (Nauja Kleist 2008; Adele Galipo 2016; Valeria Saggiomo 2016) to the local context that grew among the variegated Somali diasporas in northern Europe and North America.

These historical layers of mobility and the pervasive presence of their manifestations in the context of the Somali territories have also contributed to the crafting of imaginative processes which associate wellbeing with transnational migration and which are currently adopted by the Somalilander youth. The comprehension of transnational mobility should go beyond the reconstruction of the economic drives to take into account other dimensions of the motivations and translocal relations of the migrants (Abdoulaye Kane & Todd H. Leedy 2013). However, the aim of this section is not to reconstruct the symbolic and material context of the Somalilander youth's migratory choices, but to report how they contribute to the reproduction of the economic vulnerability affecting the Gaboye living in Hargeysa.

The research paper edited by Nimo-Ilhan Ali for the Rift Valley Institute and published after the fieldwork of the present research is an extremely insightful – and the most up-to-date currently available – outline of youth transnational migration from the Somali territories (Ali N.I.-RVI 2016). The quantitative figures offered, the contextual premises and the explanations of the functioning and consequences of this migratory phenomenon are absolutely consistent with the data collected during numerous informal conversations carried out in Hargeysa in 2015. Youth transnational migration is widely referred to in Somaliland by the term *tahriib*, derived from Arabic and meaning "trafficking" or "smuggling" (Ali-RVI 2016: 12). The data presented in the RVI paper, based on a sample of 180 households, show that the large majority of the youth undertaking *tahriib* are under 25 and take the so-called Central Mediterranean Route to Europe from the Horn: through Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea. These young people belong to households of a wide range of socio-economic situations.[313] The RVI paper reports that 20% of the households sampled for the study are classified as "poor", since they earned less than the US$ 188[314] per month required to meet basic needs (not only food, but also electricity and transportation) of a family of six-to-seven members, 43% had an income between one and three times the minimum and the rest more than that.

As is acknowledged in the report, these income data must be considered partial because the monthly incomes used did not take into account other important socio-economic resources like familial support networks and remittances. Another factor, which makes income a less significant part of the story, relates to the most common form of meeting the costs of these migration paths. According to our interlocutors and to the sources consulted by the RVI study, either the entire journey from the gathering of the migrants in Hargeysa to their final destination before the boat trip

[313] The report uses instruments created by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit-Somalia to assess the economic position of households in relation to the basic monthly expenses required to live in towns of the Somali territories like Hargeysa. See Ali-RVI 2016: 17-18.

[314] A calculation specifically referring to the town of Hargeysa.

in Libya, or long segments of it, are managed in a co-ordinated way by the human traffickers dispersed along the route. The latter have realised that the best way to attract more young individuals is that of delayed payment. At a certain point in the trip, usually before the boat passage in Libya and/or more than once along the journey, the migrants are kept hostage, threatened by the traffickers (known in Somaliland by the term *magafe*) and forced to request that a given amount of money is sent by their families back home. This means the young people can leave even if they do not have the initial capital to invest. *Tahriib* is considered to be easier and shorter than it was before 2011 and, because of this integrated management, it has relatively stable costs. The inhabitants of the two neighbourhoods of Dami and Hawl Wadaag consulted during the fieldwork reported that the average price is equivalent to US$ 7,000. All the parents of young Gaboye who have left declared that they did not know their sons' and daughters' intentions.[315]

This way of organising the journey and the so called "leave now-pay later" scheme (Ali-RVI 2016: 23) have attracted a huge number of young Gaboye, to the point that the Gaboye are convinced that they are suffering this plague more than any other genealogical group in Somaliland. Indeed, the Gaboye households of Hargeysa seem a pertinent example of the datum registered by the RVI report itself that the socio-economic situation of the migrants' households is a tricky parameter to measure and to use in the understanding of the *tahriib*. One factor pointed out by the Gaboye interlocutors during the fieldwork in order to show how little youth migratory paths are affected by the family's monthly income was the extremely dynamic picture of the real estate market in Dami and Hawl Wadaag. Indeed, their legally owned land plots were the most important things the Gaboye households sold when they were asked to ransom the life of their children kept hostage by traffickers along their journey to Europe. Until few years ago, the value of land in Dami was growing constantly: an average sized plot (around 140 square metres) had on occasion exceeded US$ 15,000, while during the fieldwork prices varied between US$ 7,000 and 10,000. After 2011, the increase in the number of plots for sale, and the fact that the owners have to collect money within a few days in order to pay the ransom on their relatives, have produced these 'anomalous' oscillations in the real estate market of Dami.

These transactions are managed by brokers, called *dilaal*, who mediate most of the commercial exchanges in Somaliland (including livestock, see Ciabarri 2010a) and are usually

[315] It seems important to emphasise further that these elements of *tahriib* explained during the fieldwork are substantially confirmed by the RVI report. Beside the average cost and the fact that relatives often ignore the real intentions of their children to leave, other elements are confirmed: the large predominance of young men over girls among the migrants and the approximate size of the phenomenon in Somaliland. On this last point, the RVI report quotes different sources like UN agencies and the EU agency Frontex showing that the number of Somalis reaching Europe through Libya has constantly increased since 2011 (it was 12,430 individuals in 2015). It is extremely difficult to separate the migrants originally from Somaliland from those coming from other Somali territories. Indeed, the Somalilander migrants often omit their true origin and claim they come from war affected territories.

specialised in specific merchandise and geographic areas. For example, there is only one *dilaal* who is a Gaboye himself and manages most of the real estate transactions in Dami. Both sellers and buyers know that they have to address him. According to our interlocutors, the bulk of the people who have recently bought land plots in Dami are Gaboye individuals who have gone abroad, especially to North America and the United Kingdom, since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime. The Gaboye, like many other members of the Somalilander diaspora, value highly the purchase of land in Hargeysa as a way of investing the savings accumulated after many years of work in Europe or North America. This process extends the perception of what Ciabarri (Ciabarri 2011a) called the "diasporic landscape" even to the 'Gaboye's neighbourhoods' of Hargeysa.

The RVI study quoted above reports that 39% of the sampled households have relied on relatives (either locally or abroad) to raise the ransom for their children. The study also stresses that in many cases, notwithstanding the powerful obligations between relatives, this form of help is insufficient and the households have to search for other sources of funds. Among them, 17% sold their land. The Gaboye consulted during the fieldwork told a different story: that forms of familial help currently occupy a negligible part of the payments for the young Gaboye's ransoms. Both local and diaspora Gaboye communities are incapable of meeting the constant and onerous expenses of individual migratory paths. Therefore, sales of private land plots represent the bulk of *tahriib* financing. Some Gaboye households are able to sell just a portion of their plots and to stay living on the rest. Others lose the only form of economic capital they have, namely the land and the dwelling that in many cases they had simply inherited from their ancestors. These dispossessed households then have to rent some kind of shelter, which further erodes their monthly income; in most cases they can only afford a *buul*, a hut made of sticks and rags, at a rent of between US$ 6 and 10 per month.

Another option adopted by some dispossessed Gaboye households met during the fieldwork was to join certain sizeable settlements outside the urban area of Hargeysa where mixed landless groups are concentrating. At the extreme eastern edge of Hargeysa, near the town's largest cemetery, there are two camps that were created around six years ago and which initially hosted IDPs - Somalia citizens who were escaping from the conflict in the southern Somali territories. A survey we carried out in one of the camps showed that the current occupants are mostly Ethiopian (especially Oromo) migrants and Somalilander citizens, among them numerous Gaboye households.[316] The camps have representative bodies, a committee and chairman elected by the settlers, and are registered by the municipality of Hargeysa. According to the chairman interviewed

[316] Around 750 households live in the largest of the two.

during the fieldwork and several other settlers,[317] the camps attract various categories of people of Hargeysa who do not have a house or cannot pay rent. They simply arrive, build a *buul* and establish contacts with the representative body. Some of these people have other temporary shelters in the town, usually physically closer to their source of income (the camps are several kilometres from the urban area) and maintain an intermittent presence in the camps.[318] In the short term, the settlers hoped to attract the attention of UN agencies or international NGOs based in Hargeysa in order to receive material assistance like water or food. In the long term, their declared aim was to ask the local authorities for land plots on the outskirts of Hargeysa. The progressive agglomeration of landless groups in these 'peri-urban' camps was a sort of spontaneous grassroots consolidation of a collective negotiating platform assembled by politically and economically marginal individuals and households otherwise lacking all channels of communication with local and regional political elites. Indeed, some of those included in this type of 'expulsion' from the urban area are descendants of those Gaboye who experienced the re-settlement to Dami during the 1950s but this time the removal is not the result of a top-down administrative policy but is an extreme tactic activated in response to the loss of a fundamental economic resource – those same land plots in the neighbourhoods of Hargeysa largely inhabited by the Gaboye – and which includes the opening of negotiations with the political authorities.

8.6 CONTINUITIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE GABOYE'S OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

The crucial point underlined by the Gaboye interlocutors consulted while discussing their economic situation in relation to the jobs, skills and sources of income listed above is that they are excluded from the pathways of upward social and economic mobility. The accounts of the Gaboye interlocutors support the use of the image of the 'trap' in describing most young people's entry into economic life. When Gaboye adolescents are able to contribute to the income of the household and are called to start their productive life, the path is predetermined and passes through the apprenticeship with the father, mother, uncle, aunt or some distant relative. Either as a barber, a shoe-maker or a healer, these people are ready to transmit their skills and to introduce the young individual into productive life. No significant investment of material resources is required of any of the parties involved – the apprentice, the immediate kinsmen, the master – in mediating the young person's entry into their economically active life.

[317] We visited the camp on 23 June 2015. Conversations with settlers of the camp were undertaken on this and various other occasions.

[318] In response to the needs of this kind of settler, some of them have established a service of private surveillance: for a very small amount of money, they keep an eye on the *buul* and other properties left by the people who come and go from the camps while they are absent.

This kind of path can be contrasted with the decision – frequently taken and much respected by young Somalilanders – to postpone the start of paid work and go into higher education. Indeed, in Somaliland there is a programme of scholarships reserved to members of marginalised groups like the Gaboye which offer a few dozen places in different universities of Hargeysa, both private and public, financed by the state and by private companies. In the opinion collected during an informal conversation with a Gaboye man who has participated, some young Gaboye who had been admitted abandoned the university after a short time, partly because they could not afford the additional costs like daily transport, learning materials and proper clothing, partly because the prospect of being economically inactive for some years without the guarantee of a solid occupational position after graduation felt like too much of a risk, especially when they could immediately acquire a skill and soon contribute to the family income.

Here is the point. Access to sources of income beyond the 'traditional' Gaboye occupational spheres is mediated by the conversion of resources that the Gaboye interviewed declared they do not have: economic capital to invest (in improving productive capacities); time, i.e. the possibility of postponing the beginning of a regular source of income; social networks, namely the opportunity to access occupational spheres and sources of revenue patrolled by the political and economic elites of the country. As regards this last element, we have seen in this chapter that the Gaboye urban community of Hargeysa has established typologies of elite (like religious activists and 'traditional' leaders) whose members, however, are not able to distribute material pay-outs widely among the members of their groups. The Gaboye elites cannot mediate the contacts with subjects external to the community like prominent figures in the state apparatuses. Furthermore, there are no significant concentrations of wealth and business activities capable of absorbing the Gaboye labour force outside their 'traditional' occupations.

Inevitably, this brings us back to the debate on the approaches which structure the academic analysis of socio-economic change in the Somali territories and which have been elaborated from the late colonial period on and are, as Ciabarri clarified (Ciabarri 2010b), divided by two competing interpretations of the same 'double system' representation of social change. I.M. Lewis believed and wrote repeatedly (see I.M. Lewis 1962) that the social organisation based on the clans and their institutions shaped all the major transformations in Somali society from the late colonial period onwards, such as the expansion of the towns, the growing economic importance of the trade sector, the build-up of state apparatuses and so on. On the other hand, Abdi I. Samatar (Abdi I. Samatar 1989) tried to show that the elites that originated from the economic and political transformations of the colonial period had subsequently acquired control of genealogical groups which they have, since then, been manipulating and mobilising for their own ends. The dual system advanced by both these

‘analytical families’ presupposes the parallel existence of the two principles structuring socio-economic change: 1) genealogical groups with their socio-political institutions and 2) the socio-economic – or class – stratifications crafted by the transformations that occurred in the Somali territories across the decades. Ciabarri further commented on this analytical opposition that, indeed, in the study of social and economic life in the Somali territories the core themes stressed by both positions should not be underestimated: respectively “continuity” (of the relevance of genealogical groups in organising social life) and “inequality” (meant as the emergence of elites out of processes of the accumulation of material resources that work as the engine of socio-political change). They must be preserved as analytical axes since they illuminate social phenomena observed in the Somali territories. The economic transformations that involved the Gaboye urban community of Hargeysa illustrated in this chapter represent an interesting object of reflection that this academic debate has not considered so far.

One of the few contributions to have addressed the contemporary transformations of the occupational segregation associated with ascribed status among Africans is that of Cheikh A. Babou (Babou 2008). He researched Senegalese female hair braiders (who in Senegal come from endogamic low status groups) in the USA and argued that in this sphere two factors are becoming agents of change that “make(s) notions of ‘caste’ and customs irrelevant”: the economic wellbeing ensured by this work and the fact that the activity is carried out in a distant spatial and cultural environment, for American customers (Babou 2008: 15). Babou shows not only that “high caste” women have entered the business in the USA, but also that even gender roles are being re-fashioned because Senegalese male migrants and husbands cannot compete with the income generated in hair braiding. The effects of this economic success can also be seen in Senegal, but it is especially among migrants that Babou finds a consensus that “caste-like” divisions are “things of the past that should be rejected, at least in the diaspora” (Babou 2008: 17).

Things seem more complicated in the case of the Gaboye’s occupational tasks in Somaliland. We will rely on the terminology elaborated by Igor Kopytoff (Kopytoff 1986) in attempting to conceptualise their transformations. The distinction between commodities and singular things advanced by Kopytoff is intended to show the differences in terms of what and how things are exchanged in a given society. Indeed, commodities can be exchanged in discrete transactions for an infinite range of quantity and quality of other items on the base of a value conventionally established as equivalent. Singular things are the product of acts of discrimination that can be either framed under culturally shared meanings or performed by individual human beings; these acts subtract singular things from the homogenous spheres of exchange where other items circulate. The sources quoted in the previous chapters suggest that the Gaboye’s social

position was institutionalised and was based, at least until the final stage of colonial era, on the convergence of genealogical belonging and a socio-politico-economically subordinated condition. The 'discrimination' of the Gaboye's economic activities was maintained through socially codified norms which segregated them occupationally and which forbade, or at least heavily restricted, their access to a core economic resource, i.e. livestock. In other words, their occupational skills and the products of their work were associated with one economic sphere whose exchanges with the surrounding economic milieu (with the actors and items part of it, i.e. herdsmen and livestock chiefly) were not acts of exchange based exclusively on parameters defining equivalent value, but were subject to social norms controlling and restricting the bi-univocal flows of goods and occupational services between them (see Chapter 6).

The 'singular' character of the Gaboye's services was not a fixed and homogenously applied institution. Already in the first half of the twentieth century it had its nuanced deployments and exceptions, as is shown by the cases of Gaboye households owning livestock. However, from the late colonial period and through the early post-colonial decades, in correspondence with the consolidation of Gaboye settlements in the expanding urban centres like Hargeysa, some fundamental transformations occurred. Two dynamics converged in this period: firstly, the Gaboye started to perform their occupational tasks inside urban markets. These urban-based communities began to develop forms of internal economic stratification – in compliance with the axis of "inequality" as part of the process of social change – whereas their integration in the urban markets reduced the material dependence of Gaboye individuals and households on the nomadic pastoralists they had lived with in the rural areas. In the towns, their products and services could be exchanged in a monetised economic sphere and they had access to a vast array of items available thanks to the expanding trading sector. For these reasons, in the first phase of urban settlement the impact of social norms reproducing the singular character of their occupational sectors, like the restrictions on the exchanges with pastoralists, did not necessarily prevent the Gaboye from accumulating material resources that they might use to expand or to diversify their economic activities; it is in this period that some Gaboye individuals became owners of retail shops in Hargeysa.

The second dynamic – which pertains to the axis of 'continuity' – was the Gaboye's mobilisation and the request to the colonial authorities that they grant them the socio-political institutions which characterised all other Somalilander genealogical groups.

In the post-colonial decades, and especially under the Siad Barre regime, the balance determined by these transformations became more deeply anchored. The singular character of the Gaboye's occupational sectors was no longer integrated into the institutions of genealogical groups because the Gaboye had consolidated an autonomous internal socio-political organisation based on

'traditional' leadership and on blood-compensation exchanges. The occupational segregation – which in the past had been framed under codified forms of socio-political dependency on members of the majority clans – turned into a monopoly on the part of the Gaboye groups over certain economic sectors. At least in the urban areas, there was no institutionalised confluence between genealogical identity, political subordination and occupational segregation. However, the monopoly over certain economic sectors involved occupational tasks that continued to have a singular character because they were undertaken entirely by Gaboye workers and continued to be despised by the members of the majority clans. Under the Siad Barre government, which sought to maintain control over the trade sector and over the organisation of manufacturing (see the shoe-makers cooperative mentioned in this chapter), this monopoly was quite productive (see the availability of machinery reported by the shoe-makers quoted above) and occupied a section of the home market protected from competition from imports.

Therefore, if we look at the period between the last part of the colonial era and the Siad Barre regime, we can trace the axis of historical "continuity" in two ways. Firstly the Gaboye urban communities struggled to obtain the recognition of their internal organisation from the colonial authorities that the majority genealogical groups already enjoyed. Secondly, the social norms implicated in the genealogical belonging of local groups, such as the persistence of marriage segregation of the Gaboye groups and the majority clans' scorn for trades like shoe-making and blacksmithing, were preserved. At the same time, we can trace the axis of "inequality" in the evidence showing how the urban settlement, the entrance into urban markets and the substantial reconfiguration of the Gaboye's economic position profoundly altered the capacity of the genealogical groups to enforce the institution of the Gaboye's marginality.

The post civil war period was characterised by further radical transformations: the north-western Somali territories became a *de facto* independent political subject, the Republic of Somaliland. The Gaboye have been socially and politically re-integrated into Somaliland only in the late 1990s. The Gaboye interlocutors stressed that one of the consequences of the post civil war scenario was the drastic shrinking of their share of the market in the goods and services they offered. Over the last two decades, their economic position has declined: they lost control of important working and commercial spaces in the towns like Hargeysa and they suffered the continued growth of international trade and the consequent spread in the urban markets of Somaliland of items like shoes, crockery and cutlery imported cheaply from the Far East. They have been affected over the last 10 years specifically by the constant stream of migrants from Ethiopia, mostly Oromo but recently also Amhara, who originally intend to pass through Somaliland on the way to the Gulf countries but who are often forced to stay for long periods and so take whatever job

they can get in order to meet their basic needs and save money to continue the trip. Some of them remain for years and establish commercial activities in Somaliland. This influx of a foreign labour force has meant the occupation of the labour market by new, economically vulnerable, people who do not share local assumptions about the separate nature of certain occupations. Thus, Ethiopian migrants are available for previously separated occupations like barbering.

Indeed, some businessmen and businesswomen belonging to the majority genealogical groups have begun to consider the occupational sectors occupied by the Gaboye as attractive areas of economic investment. The spread of non-Gaboye investors in sectors like barbering is evidence of a sort of splitting up: on the one hand, we see the continuity in the singularisation of certain economic sectors regarded as occupational careers (which members of the majority clans do not take up); on the other, we see evidence of the incipient commoditisation of the same economic sectors regarded as investment opportunities. When the businessman or businesswoman from a majority clan has invested in a firm and has hired the employees, the only elements mediating the relationship with them are the job contracts. This relationship is thus imagined by both parties as a commoditised exchange of comparable values: the work and the management of the activity in exchange for part of the income. This is demonstrated by the case reported above of the Gaboye worker hired to run a barbershop by some members of a majority clan. The arrangement between them was substantially analogous to the one the Gaboye barber himself had established with his own employees in the other shop he owns in the downtown, where he used to work. He considered both agreements part of a homogenous sphere where mutually convertible values can be exchanged and where investments, occupational services and the shares of income are allocated.

However, the free circulation of investments has not affected the rigid reproduction of the discrimination-singularisation of the Gaboye's occupational careers that continue to be unavailable to any Somalilander belonging to a majority clan. The combination of commoditisation and forces of singularisation is further proved precisely by the fact that the category of investors discussed here prefers to hire foreign labourers rather than Gaboye. The explanation that Ethiopian workers are cheaper does seem sufficient: arguably, this choice is intended also to exhibit in public a purely commoditised relationship between owners and workers in the enterprise. The owners intend to avoid any possible evocation of the forms of socio-political dominance that the members of the majority clans exerted over the Gaboye groups in the past. They defend the idea that the occupational sectors so far monopolised by Gaboye workers have a double dimension: that of areas of investment and that of occupational careers. However, in exalting the full commoditisation of the former (only), they contribute to the preservation of the singularisation of the latter. Now that the singular character of occupational careers is not integrated into the socially codified support of the

Gaboye's institutionalised marginality (like discourses on permanent ritual impurity and formalised political subordination), it is the distinction between investments and occupations that has the effect of supporting the separation between a commoditised sphere of exchange and singular things.

The historical and ethnographic reconstruction offered here of the Gaboye's economic position in Somalilander society seems consistent with some remarks by Jane I. Guyer (Guyer 2004) on the systems of monetary exchange that interconnected Equatorial and West African groups during the colonial period. She wrote: "The capacity to define, institutionalise, take advantage of, technically control, and symbolically represent conversions is the heart of the extensive regional transaction system" (Guyer 2004: 39). These factors constitute what Guyer calls an "ideology of transformations" which regulates conversions and structures the geographies of exchanges. In relation to the case of the Gaboye, Guyer's reference to the "thresholds" is also particularly pertinent, namely the socially validated points of conversion between different goods and services that are exchanged among groups, inasmuch as they exhibit the characteristic of asymmetry. According to Guyer, it was the spread of many currencies before the colonial era that contributed to the consolidation of "nonequivalent exchange" as a "familiar institution" in West and Equatorial Africa (Guyer 2004: 47). With regard to the Gaboye's occupational sectors, asymmetry was implicated during the colonial era in the socially and politically institutionalised subordination suffered by these groups. The postcolonial decades were characterised not only by the erosion of the formalised socio-political control exerted by dominant groups over economic exchanges with the Gaboye, but also by the resilience of the symbolic devaluation (or singularisation) of the Gaboye's occupational sectors: the border separating them from the rest of the economic sphere continued to be considered a threshold that impeded the circulation of investments and of labour force. Finally, the post civil war years opened a phase of transformation in the geography of exchange localised in the urban context of Hargeysa which consisted in the consolidation of new forms of circulation of the labour force and investments.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that "continuity" and "inequality" are not only the competing guidelines in the analysis of social change in the Somali territories. If we consider them not only objectively but also as expressions of a "theory of practice" (Bourdieu 1977), they turn out to be strategic principles that the Somalilanders carefully apply in their daily socio-economic life. We have shown here that the ways to achieve socio-economic welfare are conditioned by the dynamic forms of belonging to a given genealogical group, thence "continuity" and "inequality" are the embodied guidelines of strategies carefully assembled by individuals and groups; they are the evidence of operations of re-producing the historically inherited forms of economic exchange and of re-adapting them to dynamic political and economic scenarios. Ideologies of transformations –

which define what is a commodity and what is a singular thing, and how exchanges involving them are symbolically, politically and technically managed – and geographies of exchange are the historical deployment of this process.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The dissertation has tried to account for the trajectory of the emancipation of the Gaboye groups of Somaliland from the colonial era to the present day and the plasticity of their ways of being at the 'margins' of political institutions and of economic and social networks. We have taken into account the changing historical context, the attempts of the Gaboye to cope with it and the reactions of the other Somalilanders. In so doing, we have examined a number of elements of the social, political and economic life of the north–western Somali territories: the process of urbanisation and the significant demographic and economic changes it triggered in the region after 1920; the transformations of Somali 'traditional' institutions such as the co-contribution to blood compensation and genealogical groups' leadership during the colonial times; the numerous modes of inhabiting urban areas in the post-colonial and post-civil war period; the history of the Gaboye's urban-based businesses, which we have analysed both as a group of occupational tasks and as the object of social representations; the link between contemporary forms of transnational migration and the reproduction of economic vulnerability. The systematic observation of these analytical sites from the point of view of the Gaboye groups had not previously been undertaken by scholars.

These elements are grouped into three main analytical (and also chronological) axes that structure the process of social change and the Gaboye's emancipation. Firstly, we have reconstructed the dynamic interaction between external forces triggering socio-economic change (colonial penetration after 1920) in the hinterland of Somaliland and local groups' responses to them. Secondly, we have reconstructed the process of the Gaboye's emancipation as a combination of creative forms of participation in these changes, like rural-urban mobility and urban-based mobilisation, that exploited the functioning of the colonial administrative machine (whose impact peaked, according to Gaboye oral history, with the official recognition of the first Gaboye 'traditional' leader and diya-paying group). As a preliminary observation, we can frame the early stages of the Gaboye's emancipation – especially the motivations and the goals of the Gaboye's mobilisation in the 1950s in Hargeysa – as the imitation of the dominant groups' internal organisation. However, this is only one dimension of the process. A definition of this dynamic as a sort of Somali version of Mysore N. Srinivas' concept of "sanskritization" – which framed the Dalit and lower castes' struggles for social mobility as the imitation of rituals and practices of the dominant castes – is not exhaustive, for the same reasons given by Rawat and Satyanarayana for criticising the application of the "sanskritisation" model to Dalit history: it prevents us from seeing the Dalits' autonomy and the variety of means by which they have struggled to overcome their condition. In particular, Rawat and Satyanarayana have argued that "Dalit groups used the colonial

state and its institutional framework to articulate their rights" (Rawat & Satyanarayana 2016: 11). Indeed, the Gaboye community of Hargeysa, like the Dalits, mobilised to enter the confrontation between local groups and colonial rulers on the reproduction, the re–crafting and the practical adjustments of the socio-political institutions that mediated their mutual relationships and the achievement of their respective goals. During the latter part of the Protectorate, the Gaboye exploited the institutional framework co-produced by colonial rulers and local groups in order to obtain recognition by the colonial authorities of their internal organisation that rejected the past institutionalised configuration of their subordination. The third axis deals with the continuities between the past institutionalised subordination and the resilience of the marginality of the Gaboye through the reconstruction of the patterns of inhabiting Hargeysa, their economic position and the social representations produced by local groups around them.

The historical approach we adopted has shown that the type of marginality endured by the Gaboye has to be understood as a conceptually mobile social phenomenon. If we change the point of observation we see how alternative conceptual tools grasp features previously unclear. When observed through the lenses of the concept of 'caste' (Chapter 2), we see in the Gaboye's past subordination a socially formalised system of values which distinguished status and power as principles of social stratification, with status defined by the integration of genealogical identity and discourses on ritual impurity, marriage and occupational segregation, and exclusion from the main socio-political institutions. But the lenses of 'caste' turned out also to be useful in capturing how this form of social stratification changed when local groups were penetrated by external political and economic forces. Indeed, in Part II we have reconstructed how a status border caught among changing economic and political forces was re-crafted by local groups.

Other tools allowed us to grasp the transformation of the Gaboye's marginality: we have seen that while it was losing its contours as a regionally formalised institution (after the crucial moment of the Hargeysa mobilisation documented in Chapter 5), it was able – plastically – to persist as a set of social meanings, an "ideology of transformation" and a geography of economic exchanges that have continued to discriminate and singularise the resources (like urban land) and the occupational sectors associated with the Gaboye people living in Hargeysa (see Chapters 7 and 8).

The conceptual mobility of the Gaboye's marginality is also shown by its problematic relationship with other possible analytical categorizations which we have not discussed in detail. Many of the scholars quoted in Chapter 1, for instance, employed the denomination 'patron–client' relationships to describe the social position of the members of the Gaboye groups vis-à-vis the members of the majority clans. In the definition of patron–client relationship elaborated by Shmuel

N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, however, there is a distinction between the "clientelistic modes" of distribution of resources and those based on ranked ascriptive groups (Eisenstadt & Roniger 1980: 59). Although the Gaboye are an ascriptive group and thus theoretically excluded from the "clientelistic mode", the definition of this mode offered by Eisenstadt and Roniger seems dangerously consistent with the case of the Gaboye, especially in their core assumption that the fully fledged cases of patron-client relationships become evident when "they are a part or a manifestation of the central mode of regulation of the flow of resources and processes of interpersonal and institutional exchange and interaction in a society or a section thereof" (Eisenstadt & Roniger 1980: 49). As we have repeatedly shown, a fundamental element of the past institutionalised marginality suffered by the Gaboye was exactly the oppressive control exerted by the members of the majority clans (see Chapter 6) on the Gaboye individuals' and households' economic activities and on their access to resources like livestock. Eisenstadt and Roniger did partially acknowledge that the parameters they outlined in defining the specificity of pure patron-client relations are not 'distinctive' of these relations: they had to admit, for instance, that patron-client relations can also manifest as accessory and secondary effects of other types of relationships inside hierarchised societies, like those based on ascribed belonging to ranked groups. And on this point they quoted the study by Jan Breman illustrating patron-client links in Gujarat that, in fact, are structured by the Hindu caste hierarchy (Breman 1974).

It is not by chance that the attempts to find conceptual definitions of the Gaboye's marginality pull us back, again, to the Indian context, which has inspired contributions that show how problematic is the usage of de-historicised and exclusive conceptual categorizations in explaining the relationship between the presence of ascribed groupings and the forms of controlling the flow of resources. For instance, we cannot avoid contrasting what Eisenstadt and Roniger said about clientelism and ascribed groups with what Gyan Prakash wrote in his study of bonded labour in the rural region of Bihar in India (Prakash 1990). He completely overturned their assumption on the relationship between economic patronage and ascribed belonging, stating "Castes and rajas were real insofar as these were the historical forms in which social relations appeared" (Prakash 1990: 79). According to Prakash, the narratives of the subordinated groups, centred on their ancestors, define their ritual pollution and their "outcaste" condition as the result of a circumscribed historical event and not as an ascribed condition of the group. In this way, such narratives recall the process of social incorporation into a local system of exploitation and dependency which is all but accessory and secondary in relation to the mutual interactions between ranked ascribed groups.

Other conceptual boxes, too, that seem to fit with the kind of marginality suffered by the Gaboye groups of Somaliland prove to be problematic on closer inspection. We can see

immediately, for instance, that the case of the Gaboye people is an example of Fabio Viti's premise (Viti 2009) of the overlapping between "belonging" and "depending" in African societies. Their political subordination and economic marginality are intrinsic to their genealogically defined form of belonging. In line with Viti, this is only one of several types of relationship of dependency that cut across Somali society and that define differentiated forms of belonging for individuals and groups in it. For Viti, the "slave" was the figure of extreme dependency because he or she was brutally severed from the network of bonds and multiple dependencies, and so he or she experienced the definitive cleavage of "depending" from "belonging". In relation to this analytical representation of "dependency", the mixed characteristics of the past institutionalised marginality of the Gaboye and of its present day configuration do not allow us to find for it a position along the sequence of forms of personal dependency. If we decide to adopt Viti's classification of forms of dependency, which feature should we select as the qualifying attribute of the Gaboye's dependency? The fact that each Gaboye person had a genealogical identity that determined his exclusion from the socio-political institutions of the majority clans should lead us to consider the Gaboye's marginality a type of "ordinary dependency", in Viti's lexicon, which included both the relationships between the members of a family and the patron-client relations of dependency. On the other hand, some elements documented in the previous chapters such as the coercive control of economic resources, the military mobilisation and the management of the spatial distribution of the Gaboye's nucleuses among the majority groups suggest that we place their case among the "accentuated" forms of dependency, that is in a category in which Viti included the forms of dependency implying coercion, those established through the artificial removal of previous bonds and the creation of new ones, like slavery itself (Viti 2013).

The problem is not so much that of testing the logical coherence of the systems of classification applied to different types of dependency, nor that of establishing whether on the one hand personal dependencies are configured as a continuum or on the other they ultimately imply unbridgeable gaps like the one which, according to Viti, separates slavery from other forms of dependency. Once we have demonstrated the overlap between "depending" and "belonging" for the Gaboye, it seems difficult to specify conceptually the position of their marginality in relation to other forms of dependency. Indeed, this conceptual mobility is also a manifestation of the historical plasticity of the Gaboye's marginality. As Prakash has demonstrated with his study, the historical reconstruction of forms of bonded labour leads us to re-discuss the *apriori* foundational role played by the Hindu caste system in determining socio-politico-economic stratifications.

The historical ethnography of the Gaboye is not only the means by which to assess what factors have contributed to the transformation of certain forms of personal dependency in the

Somali territories, but it also reminds us that it is in the reconstruction of historical processes of social change and emancipation that we find structurally similar processes of transformation and a basis on which to contrast different social contexts. As we have seen, the transformation of the Gaboye's social position and some forms of caste-based mobilisation in India present an analogous dynamic structure (see Chapter 2). The reconstruction of the Hargeysa mobilisation that occurred in the 1950s (Chapter 5) invites us to explore the possible comparisons that arise from the observation of the overlapping between "depending" and "belonging" as a dynamic and contested principle. In fact, that event represented the apex of the process of the local erosion of the supports of the Gaboye's personal dependency (directly related to the economic and demographic transformations that took place under the Protectorate) and resulted in the collective claim for a full form of "belonging" to the society through the registration of a 'traditional' leader and a diya-paying group. Thus, in relation to the Gaboye's marginality, the most useful aspect of the concept of caste or of other conceptual tools like the opposition between commoditisation and singularisation forces (Chapter 8) is that they may help us to understand the stages of the past, to reconstruct their rhythms and to highlight the contradictions that structure different processes of social change and emancipation.

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INTERVIEWS

24/11/2014. Interview with a Gaboye 'traditional' leader, at Fish and Steak Restaurant.

26/11/2014. Interview with Naasir, a man belonging to a majority clan and living close to Dami, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

02/12/2014. Interview with Jamaac, a Gaboye religious leader, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

04/12/2014. Interview with Cabdiraxmaan, a Gaboye young man, at Fish and Steak Restaurant, Hargeysa.

06/12/2014. Interview with Gaboye 'traditional' leader (*Boqor*), at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

16/12/2014. Interview with Mustafe, a Gaboye young man, at Fish and Steak Restaurant, Hargeysa.

01/02/2015. Interview with three women producing clay pottery in their place of work located, Hargeysa.

04/02/2015. *Kat*-chewing session with Gaboye elders held in a private house, Hargeysa.

06/02/2015. Interview with Cumar and Cusman, two Gaboye shoemakers, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

11/02/2015. *Kat*-chewing session with one Tumaal elder (called Farah) and three Gaboye elders belonging to the Musse Dheriyo clan held in a private house, Hargeysa.

15/02/2015. Interview with Fowzia at the Dami Medical Centre, Hargeysa.

16/02/2015. Interview with four Gaboye shop owners held in the central market of Hargeysa.

17/02/2015. Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

21/02/2015. Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

26/02/2015. Interview with Khadra and three Gaboye ambulant sellers, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

01/03/2015. Interview with Ayaan and Amina at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

07/03/2015. Interview with Axmed, a Yibir-Anaas elder, at Imperial Hotel, Hargeysa.

27/04/2015. Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, at Hahwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

29/04/2015. Interview with Axmed, a Yibir-Anaas elder, at Imperial Hotel, Hargeysa.

29/04/2015. Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, in his house, Hargeysa.

09/05/2015. Interview with Cabdikadir, descending from one of the first Tumaal settled in the area of Hargeysa named Abdullahi Hiraab, at Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

17/05/2015. Interview with Cabdi, a Gaboye elder and a sheikh affiliated to the sanctuary of Sheikh Musse Dheriyo in Hargeysa, at Haraaf Restaurant, Hargeysa.

19/05/2015. Interview with Cabdi, a Gaboye elder and a sheikh affiliated to the sanctuary of Sheikh Musse Dheriyo in Hargeysa, during a *kat*-chewing session in a private house, Hargeysa.

20/05/2015. Interview with Farah, a Tumaal elder descending from Abdullahi Hiraab, at Imperial Hotel, Hargeysa.

09/06/2015. Interview with Khalid, a Gaboye traditional healer, at Dalxiis Restaurant, Hargeysa.

10/06/2015. Interview with Ismaciil, a Gaboye young man, at Fish and Steak Restaurant, Hargeysa.

11/06/2015. Interview with Maxamed, a Gaboye elder, at Fish and Steak Restaurant, Hargeysa.

17/06/2015. Interview with Dahir, an elder belonging to the majority clan of the Sacaad Muse, at Imperial Hotel, Hargeysa.

19/06/2015. Interview with Aadan, a descendant of the first Gaboye *caaqil*, at Fish and Steak Restaurant, Hargeysa.

23/06/2015. Survey in an IDP camp in the eastern periphery of Hargeysa and interview with its chairman.

25/06/2015. Interview with Baydari, a Gaboye elder, near his residence in Hargeysa.

01/07/2015. Interview with Xusseen at Dalxiis Restaurant, Hargeysa.

08/07/2015. Interview with Zahra, a Gaboye lady, in a private house, Hargeysa.

09/07/2015. Interview with Khadar and a group of shoemakers in a barbershop, Hargeysa.

14/07/2015. Interview with Aadan, a descendant of the first Gaboye *caaqil*, at Hana Restaurant, Hargeysa.

23/07/2015. Interview with the members of a Tumaal household, Hargeysa.

26/07/2015. Interview with Marwo, a potter, in her laboratory, Hargeysa.

28/07/2015. Interview with Cabdiaziz, a Gaboye elder, in Dalxiis Restaurant, Hargeysa.

29/07/2015. Interview with Xasan, an elder of the majority clan called Ciida Galle, in his house, Hargeysa.

01/08/2015. Interview with Caali, a Gaboye elder who still practices hunting, in Hadhwanaag Restaurant, Hargeysa.

02/08/2015. Interview with Caali, a Gaboye elder who still practices hunting, in the house of one of his relatives, Hargeysa.

03/08/2015. Interview with Aadan, a descendant of the first Gaboye *caaqil*, at Fish and Steak Restaurant, Hargeysa.

04/08/2015. Interview with Marwo, a potter, in her laboratory located in Hargeysa.

06/08/2015. Interview with Said, a Gaboye elder, in a barbershop, Hargeysa.

09/08/2015. Interview with Ibraahim, a Gaboye alcohol dealer, Hargeysa.

11/08/2015. Interview with Libaan, a Gaboye barber, in his salon, Hargeysa.

"The belonging you seek is not behind you, it is ahead."

Maz Kanata to Rey, from the movie Star Wars VII-The Force Awakens.