NEW ISSUES IN REFUGEE RESEARCH

Working Paper No. 65

Pastoral society and transnational refugees: population movements in Somaliland and eastern Ethiopia 1988 - 2000

Guido Ambroso

UNHCR Brussels

E-mail : ambroso@unhcr.org

August 2002

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CP 2500, 1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

E-mail: hqep00@unhcr.org
Web Site: www.unhcr.org

ISSN 1020-7473

Introduction

The classical definition of refugee contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention was ill-suited to the majority of African refugees, who started fleeing in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s. These refugees were by and large not the victims of state persecution, but of civil wars and the collapse of law and order. Hence the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention expanded the definition of "refugee" to include these reasons for flight.

Furthermore, the refugee-dissidents of the 1950s fled mainly as individuals or in small family groups and underwent individual refugee status determination: in-depth interviews to determine their eligibility to refugee status according to the criteria set out in the Convention. The mass refugee movements that took place in Africa made this approach impractical. As a result, refugee status was granted on a prima facie basis, that is with only a very summary interview or often simply with registration - in its most basic form just the name of the head of family and the family size.[1]

In the Somali context the implementation of this approach has proved problematic. Somalis are a rather homogeneous ethnic group from a cultural-linguistic point of view, stretching across at least four countries in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. Their main internal social differentiation is on the basis of clans and sub-clans, but even within the clan system, most clans and sub-clans are transnational.

It almost impossible to police the long porous borders in the Horn of Africa and very few people carry any ID document at all. The documents that are produced are often questionable, given the collapse of state structures in Somalia since 1991. It is therefore very difficult to distinguish between bona fide refugees from across the border and locals who are "joining the queue" in order to gain a ration card. In fact, even with lengthy individual interviews, it would be very difficult to distinguish between Ethiopian Somalis and Somali Somalis.

In 1994 there was a revealing event in which a group of Somali(land) refugees from the camps in eastern Ethiopia staged a demonstration in front of the presidential place in Hargeisa requesting the Somaliland government to lobby UNHCR and WFP to increase the food ration in the camps that had been reduced, obviously oblivious to the fact that they were not supposed to return to their country of origin if they wished to enjoy continuous refugee status, let alone ask support from their governmental authorities! Furthermore, many ethnic Somalis (either from Ethiopia or Somalia) have grown accustomed to refugee assistance since the late 1970s and developed "skills" to circumvent various registration techniques.

[1] This paper is written in a personal capacity and does not represent the views of UNHCR. It draws on the author's experience in Djibouti (1992) and Jijiga, eastern Ethiopia (1993-95) as Protection Officer and in Hargeisa, North West Somalia (1997-99) as Repatriation Officer. The term "Somaliland" will be used interchangeably with "North West Somalia" and that of "Puntland" with North East Somalia", without implying a position on the issue of recognition. Information about clan genealogies and boundaries are only indicative.

Yet the need to try to count refugees as accurately as possible and produce reliable statistics is an unavoidable reality in today's humanitarian world[2]. Much of the same argument could be made for counting IDPs and returnees, with the additional difficulty that no legal definitions of these terms have yet been formulated. This paper attempts to describe and analyse some of these issues in the context of refugee outflows and repatriation movements in the Horn of Africa and particularly between northern Somalia and eastern Ethiopia. But before we do so, we need to take a brief look at the main features of Somali society.

Somali social structure

The social structure that accompanied the prevailing pastoralist way of life, is what social anthropologists have defined as a "patrilineal segmentary opposition". In this system, lacking a hierarchical chain of authority or anything resembling the state or a judiciary, social relationships are defined in terms of kinship based on descent from a common ancestor. In Somali society, as in most pastoral societies, kinship is traced through the male line, that is patrilineal descent. The genealogies, which traditionally both Somali boys and girls have to learn by heart as part of their initiation to adulthood, define an individual's place in society as well as political relations. They are in Lewis' s apt definition "what a person's address is in Europe" and - we may add - their only ID card.[3]

Following Lewis' definition we may identify the following levels: clan-families or federations, clans, sub-clans and lineages. The bottom-line is constituted by the group that has the collective duty to obtain compensation in disputes. If the issue at stake is a murder, the group has the duty to obtain "blood money" (diya) or to seek revenge by killing a member of the other group, often sparking endless feuds. In this system, also described as "pastoral democracy", the legitimate power of chiefs and institutions is rather weak. The clan council, known as shir, and the elders, are some of the most important conflict-resolution mechanisms, but in the end fighting strength is what makes the real difference. This social system was well adapted to a nomadic-pastoralist mode of production but ill suited to the needs of a modern nation state[4]. Let us now analyse the main clan federations.

The first distinction is between clan federations with a pastoral origin and the "others". The main pastoral federations are the following:

- Dir: the main clans are the Isaq[5] (the hegemonic clan in north-west Somalia/Somaliland), the Issa (hegemonic in Djibouti, but also with a

[2] See Jeff Crisp, "Who has counted the refugees? UNHCR and the politics of refugee numbers", *New Issues in Refugee Research,* UNHCR, Geneva, 1999.
[3] I.M. Lewis *A Pastoral Democracy*, International African Institute, New York, 1961, reprint 1982, p. 2
[4] G. Prunier, "Somalia: civil war, intervention and withdrawal" *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 1996.
[5] While I.M. Lewis (*A Pastoral Democracy, op. cit.* and *Blood and Bone; the Call of Kinship in Somali Society,* Red Sea Press, 1994) treats the Isaq as a clan-family at the level of Darod or Hawiye, most Somalis, including Isaq I interviewed in Hargeisa, agree that they are genealogically part of Dir and that sheikh Isaq was a brother of Issa and (probably) of Gadabursi. However, in the Arta (Djibouti) 2000 conference, they maintained to be a clan-family directly related to the Prophet's line, claiming the same number of seats as the Darod or the Hawiye, instead of having to share them with

large presence in Ethiopia), the Gadabursi (sandwiched between the first two) and the Bimal, the only Dir clan inhabiting southern Somalia.

- Darod: it is the largest federation if we take into account its presence in Ethiopia and Kenya. The main clans are the Harti (particularly the Majertein in north-eastern Somalia, but also the Dulbahante and Warsangeli living in present "Somaliland"), the Ogaden (mainly in south-eastern Ethiopia) and the Marrahan (Siyad Barre's paternal clan).

- Hawiye: living mainly in central and southern Somalia The main clans are the Habar Gidir (Aidid's clan), the Abgal (of his rival Ali Mahdi), the Murusade, the Galjel and the Hawadle.

- Digil-Mirfle: also known as Rahanweyn they adapted to a more sedentary and agricultural life-style in the fertile regions between the rivers Juba and Wabi Shebeli in southern Somalia.

From a spatial point of view, all clan-families as well as most clans and sub-clans are oriented from the coast towards the interior and are transnational, spanning across the Somali-Ethiopian border and Somali-Kenyan. This seems to lend credence to the oral tradition reporting that clans were founded by Arabian sheikhs. It also makes it very difficult to establish the citizenship of individuals, particularly in a context where lack of proper identity documents is the norm rather than the exception.

Groups of non-nomadic origin often referred to as "minorities" include "mercantile" clans, (e.g. the Reer Hammar and the Reer Brawa) "clergy" clans (like the Shekhal and the Ashraf) or low-caste occupational groups performing culturally "impure" jobs (Gaboye/Mitgan, Tumal and Yiber[6]) and some clans of Bantu practising fishery and agriculture along the river banks. Most of these groups, without a warrior tradition and without a militia of its own have to rely on the "protection" of a pastoral clan, but can become their victims in case of conflict.

Conflict and progress in North West Somalia

In March 1978 Somalia conceded defeat at the hands of the Ethiopian army, supported by Cuba and the USSR, in the Ogaden War. This defeat ended the "pan-somali" dream, that is the hope to unify all ethnic Somali areas in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, with Somalia proper, which itself used to be divided between British Somaliland and Italian Somalia (Trusteeships under UN mandate in the 1950s) that became independent and merged in 1960.

Another consequence of the Ogaden War was that Siyad Barre's regime, which had by and large enjoyed popular support up to then, started running into political troubles

---

other *Dir*. This would seem to confirm Lewis' contention that while Somali genealogies - being rather univocal among different informers - are less "fictitious" than those in other African societies, they acquire more of a mythical character at the top of the genealogical tree where direct descent from an Arab sheikh confers politico-religious legitimacy and prestige.

[6] See further paragraph 4.3 below on these low-caste clans.

with a coup attempt by a group of Majertein/Darod officers led by Colonel Abdillahi Yussuf, who founded the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). As a result of this insecurity, Barre started relying more and more on clanship to defend his power, particularly on his paternal clan (Marrahan/Darod), maternal clan (Ogaden/Darod) and that of his wife (Dulbahante/Darod), reversing his earlier policy of "detribalisation" and fight against "clanism".

Meanwhile in Ethiopia, the Derg military junta led by Mengistu Hailemariam, started retaliating against the mainly Ogaden/Darod ethnic Somali populations who supported the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) that launched the first guerrilla operations of the Ogaden War before being joined by the regular Somali army. The repression and counter-insurgency tactics of the Derg caused a massive influx of ethnic-Somali Ethiopian refugees towards various areas of Somalia, which aggravated the already difficult economic situation Somalia was facing. The refugees, also thanks to their clan membership, were given the choice of benefiting from international assistance as refugees, or integrating in the society as Somali nationals.

The actual number of refugees soon became a bone of contention between the Somali government, claiming that there were at least one and a half million, and the international community providing aid for 700,000 but privately estimating the correct number at less than 400,000 owing to the spontaneous repatriation of many refugees with a pastoral background[7]. Siyad Barre attempted to counter these difficulties by allowing some degree of liberalisation of the economy in order to attract western support while at the same time maintaining the single party system and firm control of central power. Towards this aim, he conceded to the US Navy the utilisation of the Berbera air/naval base in 1980, formerly manned by the Soviets. This move helps to explain why the US government and aid agencies financing the UN were turning a blind eye to the fact that the surplus food sent for refugees that was flooding the country was being pocketed by Barre for his entourage and the army[8]. He also managed to attract large-scale aid from the Italian Co-operation, controlled in Somalia by the Italian Socialist Party in financially questionable “joint ventures” for development projects that seldom worked.

Italy supported Barre almost until the bitter end, thereby attracting the hostility of most opposition groups[9]. By the mid 1980s, fearing attempts and plots, Barre closed himself even more in his clan fortress which showed the first cracks in 1988 in North West Somalia when an Isaq-led secessionist group, the Somali National Movement (SNM), attacked some urban centres of former British Somaliland.

The Isaq (the hegemonic clan in former British Somaliland) inhabit the central regions of Waqooy Galbeed and Togdheer of NW Somalia. Among them, the Habar Awal, and in particular the Saad Mussa sub-clan, are the most numerous and sedentarised and have partially adopted agriculture in the western district of Gabiley. On the other hand the eastern Isaq clans such as the Habar Yonis and

[7] See M. Maren, *The Road to Hell: the Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity*, Free Press, New York,1997, and UNHCR, *The State of the World’s Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action,* Oxford University Press, 200, pp. 106-110.
[8] Maren, *The Road to Hell, op. cit.*
[9] See A. Del Boca , *Una Sconfitta dell'Intelligenza: Italia e Somalia*, Laterza, Bari, 1993..

Idagalle/Garhajis and the Habar Ja'lo and their Dulbahante and Warsangeli/Darod neighbours to the east have retained pastoralism as the main mode of production. In the western region of Awdal the Gadabursi were the pioneers of agriculture at the end of the last century while their Issa neighbours, living in the coastal areas neighbouring Djibouti on the other hand have maintained a more pastoralist life-style. Table 1 summarises the main clans in Somaliland:

Table 1: Somaliland's clans by region

Clan	Main sub-clan(s)	Region(s)	Main districts
Isaq	Habar Awal	Waqooy Galbeed	Gabiley, Hargeisa, Berbera
Isaq	Garhajis	W.Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag	Hargeisa, Salhaley, Sheikh, Burao, Erigavo
Isaq	Arab	W. Galbeed	Hargeisa, Balli Gubadley
Isaq	Habar Ja'lo	Togdheer, Sanaag	Burao, Erigavo
Isaq	Tol Ja'lo	W. Galbeed	Gabiley
Gadab-ursi	All	Awadal	Borama, Baki, part. Gabiley, Zeila, Lughaya
Issa	Mamasan, Khodahgob	Awdal	Zeila, Lughaya
Harti/ Darod	Dulbahante	Sool, Sanaag	Las Anod, Erigavo.
Harti/ Darod	Warsangeli	Sool	Erigavo, Las Korey

The relative political and numerical strength of the various clans is reflected by their number of seats in the two legislative institutions of independent "Somaliland" (see further below), the Lower House and the House of Elders (Guurti), each with 82 seats, as illustrated by Table 2.

The SNM was founded in April 1981 by a group of Isaq dissidents from Britain and the Arab states, who met in London. The aim of the movement was the independence of former British Somaliland that had united with the rest of Somalia (under Italian Trusteeship) on 1 July 1960. The reasons behind this stance included the perceived marginalisation and oppression of the northern Isaq vis-a-vis Mogadishu and the Darod in power and the dictatorial and repressive policies of General Siyad Barre who took power in a bloodless coup d'etat in October 1969. The movement was financed by Isaq businessmen in Arab states and established its operating bases in Ethiopia.

However, at the beginning the struggle received little popular support as the Isaq were traditionally more interested in business than politics; at least until 1983 when Barre prohibited the commerce and plantations of "chat" (a mildly stimulant leaf, widely chewed throughout the Horn), to the annoyance of the local population and Isaq businessmen. But the most important factor was an event that took place in northern Ethiopia. In March 1988 the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) dealt a crushing blow to the Ethiopian army in the battle of Afabet. As a result Mengistu

rushed to sign a peace agreement with Siyad Barre in order to secure the southern front and be able to concentrate on his problems with the Eritreans in the north.

Table 2: Distribution of seats in the Lower House and House of Elders by clan in 1999

Clan/sub-clan	Total no. of seats	Percentage
Habar Awal/Isaq	17	10.3
Garhajis/Isaq	23	14.0
Tol Ja'lo/Isaq	4	2.4
Habar Ja'lo/Isaq	28	17.0
Arab/Isaq	13	7.9
Ayub/Isaq	6	3.6
Gadabursi	21	12.8
Issa	9	5.5
Dulbahante/Harti/Darod	23	14.0
Warsangeli/Harti/Darod	11	6.7
Others	9	5.5
Total	164	100

Total Isaq: 55.2%

In April news broke out that the agreement included a termination of hostilities and the end of sanctuaries for armed rebel groups in their respective territories. Deprived of its rear bases, in May 1988 the SNM launched a pre-emptive strike and was able to seize Hargeisa and Burao, the main urban centres in the North West. Given that the army was unable to recapture the cities with the infantry, it employed artillery and air bombardments.

By the beginning of June the two cities and many other urban centres in the regions of Waqooy Galbeed and Togdheer, were almost raised to the ground with an estimated 30,000 victims, according to Africa Watch[10]. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were given asylum in Ethiopia and the persecution against the Isaqs continued to such an extent, that UNHCR decided to grant prima facie refugee status to all the Isaqs. The rebellion subsided until the final overthrow of Siyad Barre in 1991.

In January 1991, as the southern Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC) finally chased Siyad Barre's forces from Mogadishu (but at the same time started a new chapter of a seemingly endless civil war) the SNM liberated Hargeisa. In February its troops entered the Gadabursi dominated region of Awdal, a clan that had given low-key support to Barre's regime and clashed with Gadabursi militia, but then withdrew.
On 18 May 1991 Abdirahman Tur, chairman of the SNM, proclaimed the independence of "Somaliland", the former British Protectorate, while other Somali

[10] Africa Watch, *Somalia: a Government at War with its own People*, Human Rights Watch, New York, 1990

leaders were meeting in Djibouti. From a legal point of view, Somaliland's argument for independence was based on the fact that they had been independent for four days between 26 and 30 June 1960 (the day of unification) and that they were simply reverting to the old colonial boundaries. The self-proclaimed independence and freedom from "southern" domination did not however bring international recognition, nor instant peace and stability to "Somaliland" and factional fighting, clashes and occasional looting of humanitarian assistance, marked the period from the end of 1991 to the beginning of 1993, although on a smaller scale than in the south.

However the situation started improving in February 1993, when clan elders elected Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal as the new president instead of Tur in a reconciliation conference in Borama. Egal, the veteran politician of the British Protectorate and united Somalia, managed to achieve a new system of power sharing based not on nationalism, but on the traditional clan balancing. The SNM relinquished power peacefully (one of the rare cases in Africa of a successful liberation movement to do so), although it remained an important political, semi-tolerated opposition force. At this time that the UNHCR Office in Hargeisa started becoming operational again and other humanitarian agencies that pulled out in 1992 started moving back in.

Unfortunately the fragile peace did not last long and resentment was brewing among the Garhajis sub-clans of the Isaq (Idagalle and Habar Yonis) who felt deprived not only of political power, but also of economic opportunities by the rival Habar Awalsub-clan. As some refugees in the Aware camps conveyed to me in December 1994, the Garhajis thought that they were not adequately represented in the Borama conference and subsequently in Somaliland's political institutions, but there were also some other motives as the Garhajis feared that the Habar Awal were trying to monopolise the economy.

The casus belli became the control of the Hargeisa airport that was in the hands of Idagalle clan militia charging illegal fees and harassing passengers, particularly expatriates. The Idagalle deemed that since the governmental-backed Habar Awal were already controlling tax revenues from Berbera, they had the right to do the same in the airport that is located in their deghan (clan territory). The government – on the other hand – wanted to control the airport not only to secure revenues, but also to show to outsiders that it was in control of the situation.

The show-down came on 15 November when, after governmental troops managed to occupy the airport, Idagalle militia retaliated by shelling the chat market and other targets. The two sides exchanged several rounds of artillery fire across the dry river-bed that divides the city until the end of December, causing hundreds of casualties. This clash sent some 90,000 refugees across the border to the Aware camps, while UNHCR was preparing for voluntary repatriation. UNHCR Hargeisa had to temporarily evacuate to Borama. The conflict spread also to Burao, with he Habar Ja'lo taking sides with the governmental Habar Awal against the Habar Yonis/Garhajis, the common opponent.

At this juncture it appeared that the Mogadishu cancer had reached Hargeisa. In Burao too, the Habar Ja'lo preferred to set up their own shanty town/displaced camp in Yarowe some 10 km. to the east of Burao, than remain with the Habar Yonis in the

contested city. Instability and clashes, particularly in Burao, continued until February 1997 when a new reconciliation conference and elections confirmed Egal as President who nominated a new cabinet and redistributed the balance of power.

The House of Elders (Guurti) and the Chamber of Deputies became the main fora of governance and of settlement of disputes. A Supreme Court was also established and a forward-looking constitution (including the possibility of impeaching the president) was adopted. Peace and stability started spreading in the western regions of the country, where self-help reconstruction activities and private investment grew by the day. In the eastern regions security also improved on a whole, although the situation was more fragile and the government had a more tenuous grip on power.

From an economic point of view, livestock exports was the main source of revenues estimated at US $155 million in 1996 and 176 in 1997. The revenues were used by the government to pay civil servants and security personnel thereby keeping them away from militia and banditry. However, in January 1998 Saudi Arabia declared a ban on livestock imports from the Horn because of a few cases of Rift Valley Fever, causing economic hardship. The ban was lifted in May 1999 giving rise to a short economic boom, but was re-imposed in September 2000 for the same reason. After livestock, the second source of economic revenue was remittances from the Somaliland diaspora estimated at US $93 million in 1997[11].

Third in place were agriculture and trade. Somalilanders, and in particular Isaq, are very skilled and dynamic businessmen also thanks to their connections with Dubai and the virtual absence of taxation. In Hargeisa it is possible to buy PCs at Dubai wholesale prices. Telecommunication companies also flourished. But there are also other manifestations of a vibrant local civil society. Somaliland is a rare example in Africa of a "country" with a relative degree of freedom of press and the main daily Jamhuriya, close to the radical SNM, often runs stories critical of the government. A retired WHO official almost completed a fully equipped maternity hospital through her own fund raising efforts. A group of "returnees" from north America set up a basketball association that could be joined by all players irrespectively of clan origin.

Urbanisation and its related way of life grew and posed a further challenge to pastoralism. It is estimated that in the late 1990s the population of Hargeisa reached 250,000 inhabitants, while in the mid 1950s, according to Lewis, its population ranged between 30,000 and 40,000. Regarding Somaliland's overall population figures, the estimation by region is the following[12], to which we have to add between 300,000 and 500,000 Somalilanders living elsewhere in the Horn, in the Middle East, North America and the UK.

[11] Somaliland Republic, *Somaliland's Two Years Development Plan*, Hargeisa, 1998.
[12] The figures provided here are adapted from WHO/UNICEF estimates of 1,100,000 – 1,200,000 in 1998, while UNDP puts the population of Somalia as whole at 6.38 million (2001 Human Development Report - Somalia).

Table 3: Estimate of Somaliland's population by region

Region	Population	Percentage
Awdal	220,000	18.3
Waqooy Galbeed	340,000	28.3
Sahil	60,000	5.0
Togdheer	280,000	23.3
Sanaag	170,000	14.1
Sool	130,000	10.8
Total:	1,200,000	100

What is the secret for Somaliland's relative success in brining a minimum of peace and stability? In our opinion we can consider three factors. First, the British colonial tradition of "indirect rule", with its "minimalist" approach emphasising self-governance. Second, given its politically and geographically peripheral position vis a vis Mogadishu, it was left in a state of "benign neglect" without too many external interference. Finally, Somaliland could rely on a class of very skilled businessmen and on the political astuteness of president Egal. His recent death (3 May 2002) will put to test the solidity of Somaliland's institutions and the maturity of its people.

The 1988 influx

These camps were established after the destruction of Hargeisa, Burao and other smaller urban centres in May '88 by the Somali army in retaliation for the SNM's uprising which led to a massive influx of mostly Isaq refugees into eastern Ethiopia.

Hartasheikh A and B

Hartasheikh catered in particular for the refugees who fled the destruction of Hargeisa and, to a lesser extent, the rural centre of Gabiley. The flight followed the traditional Somali pattern of clan lines: the inhabitants of the western sections of Hargeisa and of the Gabiley district belonging to the Saad Mussa/Habar Awal and -to a lesser extent - the Arab clans of the Isaq, found sanctuary across the border in an area inhabited by the same (sub)clans.

In particular, the Jibril Aboker/Saad Mussa (from western Hargeisa and Gabiley) fled to a site called in Somali Dul'ad (Hartasheikh A, actually located in the deghan of the Abdallah Aboker/Saad Mussa), the Hussein Aboker/Saad Mussa to a neighbouring site called Bali Aley (Hartasheikh B) and the Arab/Isaq to Harshin, all located in their sub-clan territory (deghan). The Arab/Isaq were then relocated in Hartasheik B. At one point in 1988 Hartasheikh had the dubious honour of being the largest camp in the world, with over 400,000 refugees. In 1991, however, a new counting exercise brought the number down to 250,000.

The Hartasheikh camps hosted a majority of urban population (particularly the highly urbanised and commerce-oriented Saad Mussa/Habar Awal) and a minority of

agropastoralists. According to a report commissioned by SCF/UK in 1994[13] "the consensus among refugees and agency staff - and the common sense view - is that it is the better-off town-dwelling refugees who have left the camp. This would mean ... those who owned their own houses". On the other hand "a residual of mainly urban poor remain in Hartasheikh. They expressed a desire to repatriate but lack the means to return and the resources necessary to relocate and sustain themselves... The urban poor will probably prove the most difficult to repatriate".

According to the same source, the other two main groups inhabiting the Hartasheikh camps were local people from the nearby areas and Somaliland agropastoralists from the Gabiley district. Although maybe up to 60% of the camp population was made up of genuine refugees, there were also some locals who managed to get a ration card, even if on a smaller scale than in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji (see below).

Compared with the Aware camps (see below) Hartasheikh was endowed with relatively good services: a school, a clinic, as well as fresh water trucked from the boreholes (dug by UNHCR) in Jerer Valley, some 35 km away (though this was subsequently discontinued). Spontaneous and organised repatriation however reduced the number of refugees in Hartasheikh from 250,000 in 1991 to around 30,000 in 1999 and actually led to the closure of Hartasheikh B that was "consolidated" with Hartasheikh A in mid '99.

This move was fiercely resisted by local refugee leaders who – although given the choice of either repatriating or relocating a few miles to the west in Hartasheikh A – were afraid to lose their power base by being relocated with their neighbours from a different sub-sub-clan. Over the years Hartasheikh changed from a small hamlet of a few huts around a pond to a fully-fledged little town with a flourishing market that became the main centre for informal trade between Berbera port and eastern Ethiopia and will probably survive the eventual downsizing of the refugee operation.

The Aware camps: Camaboker, Rabasso and Daror

These three camps are located to the east of Hartasheikh in the deghan of some eastern Isaq sub-clans, notably the Idagalle/Garhajis (Camaboker and Rabasso) and the Habar Yonis/Garhajis and Habar Ja'lo (Daror). At the peak of the influx the three Aware camps accommodated over 120,000 refugees in total. Overall, the three camps host a larger proportion of rural and pastoral refugees than Hartasheikh, although about 40% of the mainly Idagalle refugees in Camaboker (the westernmost of the three camps) are of urban origin[14], mostly eastern Hargeisa (even though the heart of their deghan - clan area - is the city of Salahley).

On the other hand the mainly Idagalle refugees in Rabasso appear to be by and large pastoralist from surrounding areas from both sides of the border. Finally the refugees in Daror, the easternmost camp, are mainly Habar Yonis and to a lesser extent Habar

[13] Ahmed Yussuf Farah: "Going Back Home: the determinants of a large-scale return movement: integration of camp dwellers in eastern Hararge"; research paper commissioned by SCF/UK, ARRA and ODA, Addis Ababa.
[14] "Going Back Home", *op. cit.*

Ja'lo Isaq. The main areas of origin are Burao (Habar Yonis, but some also originate from Hargeisa) and the neighbouring shanty-town of Yarowe (Habar Ja'lo). However, part of the population of Burao and east Togdheer, did not manage to be accommodated in a refugee camp as it became logistically very problematic for UNHCR to operate to east of Daror and therefore further away from Jijiga, the last supply centre.

Some of the people who fled this region hence became "spontaneous refugees and returnees". During the 1988 crisis the three "Garhajis camps" hosted a refugee population of some 121,000 persons that decreased to 37,000 in September 1994 as a result of spontaneous repatriation (already noted in the quoted SCF report in 1994), as revealed by the September 1994 revalidation exercise.

The high level of spontaneous repatriation from the three camps was possibly caused by the fact that, owing to the distance from Jijiga (the last resource centre), the quality of services such as water and education was lower than in the other camps. For example the three Aware camps did not receive water from deep wells, unlike Hartasheikh, Teferi Ber and Darwanaji, but relied on surface water collected in the traditional Somali cisterns, the birkads. The supply was therefore dependent on the seasonal rains and at times of drought UNHCR was obliged to truck the water from very far afield. The events of November 1994 (the "Hargeisa airport war") however reversed this declining population trend causing a new influx. These new refugees were once again Garhajis, particularly Idagalle fleeing the counterattack of Egal's forces.

These eastern camps, further away from the main trade routes (with the exception of Daror, on a livestock route), will probably not survive the cessation of humanitarian assistance, unlike Hartasheikh, as we have seen, and the Gadabursi camps, to which we shall now turn. However their remoteness meant that they were also the last ones to be affected by repatriation, which started only in 2001. The estimated percentage of bona fide refugees was 50 to 60% like in Hartasheikh, though probably lower in Daror that, given its remote location, was kept less under control during the 1994 influx.

The 1991 influx

At the end of January 1991, after liberating Hargeisa, the victorious Isaq-led SNM proceeded west towards the Gadabursi territory, a clan that had given low-key support to Siyad Barre's regime, with whom they clashed in the city of Dilla, the first city of the mainly Gadabursi region of Awdal as one travels from Hargeisa. The clash led to the destruction of the town and the ensuing exodus of the mainly Reer Nur/Makahil/Gadabursi population to Ethiopia gave rise to the camp of Teferi Ber with some 98,000 people. Many local Farah/Nur/Yonis/Makahil, infiltrated the refugee caseload of the mainly Mahamud/ Nur/Yonis who escaped from Dilla, located only 15 km away.

The SNM then continued westwards towards Borama and a brief stand-off with the local militia - however solved after 24 hours - also sent a few thousand across the

border. This led to the creation of the Darwanaji camp, but its population was also swollen by the presence of local Ethiopian Somalis. The camp of Darwanaji, some 20 km from the provincial capital of the Awdal region of Somaliland – Borama – is also dominated by the Gadabursi, but is more mixed at the sub-clan level.

Although there is a slight majority of Jibril Yonis both local and from a few kilometres across the border in Somaliland, the coastal Mahad Asse, who fled a local war with the neighbouring Issa, are also present as well as other Makahil sub-sub-clans. The camp was relatively well serviced with a school, a clinic, and water trucked from the nearby boreholes of Lafa Issa. It is probable that, like Hartasheikh, the two camps will survive the end of refugee assistance as they became important trade centres also owing to their favourable location on trade routes from the north-western Somaliland coast to the Ethiopian interior.

Besides the Gadabursi, the two camps also hosted two substantial minority groups: Darod, particularly Absame (Jidwaq and Ogaden) returnees and low-caste Gaboye refugees. It will be remembered that these Darod clans used to be very close to Barre's regime during their time as refugees in Somalia, from where they fled in 1991 upon his down-fall upon fear of retaliation both in the south, at the hands of the Hawiye/USC and in the north-west, at the hands of the Isaq/SNM.

Regarding the Gaboye, it is worth recalling that this low-caste occupational group had also given low-key support to Siyad Barre and hence fled their home areas in Somaliland in fear of retaliation by the Isaq/SNM. The Gaboye and related minority groups hence constituted one of the few groups of bona fide refugees, together with some Gadabursi sub-clans from Dilla and from the coastal areas. Their repatriation movement and reintegration process will be further discussed below.

We have noted above how, according to several sources, including refugees, former Ethiopian ARRA officials and the quoted SCF report, the camps' population was swollen by the presence of local people during the registration exercise in 1991. Though some of them were Ethiopian Somali Darod returnees, it is clear that many locals who had never been refugees before, also managed to "join the queue".

Furthermore, during that period some beneficiaries managed to collect more than one card and some leaders who were dubbed "card-lords". Finally, the proximity of the two camps with the main areas of origin in Somaliland made it very easy for the refugees to commute and trade across the border: they could literally be refugees by day and returnees by night. Hence the terms "refugees" and repatriation became very relative concepts. Anyhow, the official caseload of the two camps declined from 215,000 at the peak of the crisis in 1991, to some 77,000 in 1994, after a revalidation exercise (see below). It is estimated that, with the exception of the first few months of 1991, at no time did the "real" refugee caseload exceed 30-40% of the total population with ration cards.

Kebre Beyah and Aisha

The remaining two camps in eastern Ethiopia are very far apart and are inhabited by different clans. The first one, Kebre Beyah, was established to cater for those Darod refugees (and some returnees) who did not manage to go to Kenya and were scared to go to Hartasheikh for fear of revenge by the Isaq. It is the closest to Jijiga and is located in the Darod area of the quarrelsome Abeskul/Jidwaq/Absame.

The local population often tried to profit from the water tankering operation from the boreholes of Jerer valley toward the Hartasheikh camps. Although the trucks did supply water not only to Kebre Beyah camps (about half way to Hartasheikh), but also to local villages, there were frequent threats and occasional acts of violence against the mainly highland Ethiopian Amhara drivers for reasons of employment.

Endless compensation claims arose as a result of children playing and falling from the back of water tankers. Once a man approached the UNHCR Jijiga office claiming that he fell from the top of a water truck and injured his testicles a few months before and hence seeking compensation! A planned pipeline to substitute the water trucking operation managed by CARE, was first marred by disputes among locals over employment and then by the fact that the contractor, of Eritrean origin, fled after the beginning of the border war in May 1998.

The Kebre Beyah camp, which kept a population more or less stable at just over 10,000 individuals, was the only predominantly Darod refugee camp in eastern Ethiopia. The main Darod sub-clans present in the camp are: Absame (Ogaden and Jidwaq), mostly returnees, Harti (Majertein and Dulbahante) and Marrahan, mainly refugees. It was subsequently discovered that also some of the Marrahan originated from a small local lineage and hence were also mainly returnees. It is estimated that the percentage of bona fide refugees is around 50%, mostly from southern Somalia and hence unlikely to repatriate in the near future. The rest was mainly made up of Ethiopian-Somali returnees.

Finally, clashes around the coastal areas between the rival Gadabursi and Issa clans in the late 1980s led to the establishment of the Aisha camp near the Djibouti border. In 1991 other Issa fleeing the coastal town of Zeila attacked by the Isaq-led SNM were also sheltered in the camp. Interviews in the camp revealed that there was also a substantial presence of local people among the card holders. Given the camp's isolation from the other camps and the distance from Jijiga, it never underwent a revalidation exercise and therefore kept the population stable at around 15,000 persons. It is estimated that over time the percentage of genuine refugees declined to 30-40%.

The 1994 revalidation exercise and the new influx

As soon as the SNM took over NW Somalia in 1991, many refugees, particularly Isaq, started trekking back home. Similarly, many Gadabursi started returning as soon as matters were settled between their clan and the SNM. As a result the refugee

population appeared much smaller than that indicated by the official numbers and the international community started reducing the food ration.

In order to clarify the confusion, in September 1994 the Ethiopian government (ARRA and the army), with logistical support from UNHCR, carried out a surprise commando operation to fix the population number once and for all. The operation was carried out simultaneously in all the camps in a very professional manner and lasted from dawn to sunset.

The army cordoned-off the camps and, together with ARRA and UNHCR as observer, proceeded to "validate" ration cards with a sticker indicating the changes in family size according to the number of people that were observed in every family tukul (tent/hut). The result was an astonishing drop in numbers from 628,000 to 184,900, one of the most successful operations in the long history of failed attempts to count Somali refugees. Or rather, to count the number of people in the camps at a given time without any infiltration from the surrounding population.

Table 4: Recapitulation of main clans & sub-clans in the camps, areas of origin

CAMP	Main clans and sub-clans	Minority clans	Main areas of origin (excluding locals)	Estim. % of genuine refugees
Hartasheikh A	Saad Mussa (Jibril Aboker)/Habar Awal/Isaq	Hawiye	Hargeisa, Gabiley	50%
Hartasheikh B	Saad Mussa (Hussein Aboker) /Habar Awal/Isaq Arab/Isaq	Hawiye	Hargeisa, Bali Gubadley	50%
Rabasso	Idagalle/Garhajis/ Isaq	N/A	Salahley, Hargeisa	50%
Camaboker	Idagalle/Garhajis/ Isaq Habar Yonis/ Garhajis/Isaq	N/A	Hargeisa, Salahley, Burao	50%
Daror	Habar Yonis/ Garhajis/Isaq Habar Jello/Isaq	N/A	Burao, Odweyne, Hargeisa,	30%
Teferi Ber	Reer Nur/Gadabursi	Gaboye, Darod	Borama, Dilla, Gabiley, Hargeisa	30%
Darwanaji	Gadabursi (various)	Gaboye, Darod	Borama, Lughaya, Hargeisa	30%
Kebre Beyah	Darod (various)	N/A	Somalia "proper"	50%
Aisha	Issa	N/A	Zeila, Lughaya	40%

What – by definition – the exercise is not able to tell, is whether the beneficiaries are "genuine" refugees from the other side of the border or locals who acquired a card and drifted in the camps. That could be done only through individual interviews and even then the result is not guaranteed. It is also possible that some refugees may find themselves legitimately out of the camp during the operation. For example, a group of southern Hawiye who, lacking the support of the local clan network, were particularly impoverished, were rearing the cattle of the majority Isaq at the time of the revalidation and had to be re-included at a later stage.

The result of this population reduction was however short-lived because in November 1994, as we have seen, the so-called "airport war" which ravaged Hargeisa and other areas inhabited mainly by Garhajis/Isaq, caused a renewed exodus to eastern Ethiopia. However this time the operation was kept more under control than those of 1988 and 1991 and "only" 90,000 new refugees were registered, including the "left-overs" from the September revalidation. The overall camp population increased to 277,000. The only camp where the influx was not so well managed, owing to its remote location, was Daror, where the population increased by 37,000, from 12,000 to 49,000.

Patterns of repatriation 1991-99

The legal basis for UNHCR's involvement in voluntary repatriation stems primarily from two sources. The first one is its statute, which calls on the High Commissioner to promote durable solutions for returnees, namely voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Voluntary repatriation is considered the most preferable of durable solutions.

The second source is from the Conclusions of UNHCR's Executive Committee which state, inter alia, that UNHCR should keep the possibility of repatriation under active review from the outset of a refugee situation, that it should establish the voluntary character of repatriation and that it should assist returnees in their reintegration. States are said to have a responsibility to create conditions conducive to repatriation. In other words, UNHCR should promote repatriation, whenever conditions permit it, verify its voluntary character and provide assistance. However this assistance should not only be confined to the repatriation phase, but should also include the initial phases of re-establishing a livelihood in the country of origin, often devastated by war. An important protection-related feature of voluntary repatriation is the freedom of choice of destination which stems from a fundamental human right, that of freedom of movement.

It is nowadays widely acknowledged that "organised" voluntary repatriation accounts for only a fraction of all repatriation movements taking place. It is therefore important to distinguish between different types of repatriation movements. First of all there is the so-called "spontaneous" repatriation, that is with no UNHCR involvement, although it would be better to call it "self-organised", since often there are hidden social networks at work[15]. This was the case in Somaliland between 1991 and 1994. By definition it is difficult to provide precise figures in this respect, but by

[15] UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees, a Humanitarian Agenda*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 149.

comparing official refugee numbers between the peak of the refugee population in 1991 and the 1994 revalidation exercise, it can be concluded that over 400,000 persons repatriated spontaneously or dispersed locally.

Secondly, there may be situations in which UNHCR may facilitate the repatriation through the provision of limited assistance, normally at the request of individual refugees, without actively promoting it. Sometimes this is called "semi-organised" or "facilitated" repatriation.

Thirdly there is a "promotion mode", when the conditions in the country of origin become conducive, UNHCR might actively encourage repatriation, organise transport, besides providing individual and community based reintegration assistance. This is often called "organised/mass repatriation", as in the case for the on-going repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland.

It should be mentioned that, particularly in the first two types of repatriation, refugees often return to a less than ideal situation in their country of origin, that may have been devastated by civil war and/or still harbour localised guerrilla groups and conflicts on its territory. In this case, described by analysts as "repatriation under duress"[16] it is hard to compare the relative weight of "push" and "pull" factors.

A case in point was the repatriation of ethnic Somali Ethiopians after the downfall of Siyad Barre's regime, (see below). Here there is no doubt that "push" factors outweighed "pull" ones. Another landmark was the repatriation of Iraqi Kurdish refugees after the Gulf War in 1991. In this case "pull" factors, that is the call of Kurdish leaders fearful that Saddam Hussein's forces might have occupied more easily their region if most of the population was in exile in Iran or Turkey, complemented "push" ones, that is the reluctance of Turkish and, to a less extent, Iranian, authorities to host them.

Until then, the prevailing approach to repatriation by UNHCR had been mainly protection-oriented (the verification of the voluntariness of the repatriation and the provision of legal safeguard through appropriate documentation), while assistance there was normally limited to a modest individual repatriation package and transport to the border. But, as the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, and later of former Yugoslavia exemplified, this kind of limited assistance was no longer sufficient in the context of war-torn societies that underwent massive destruction.

In other words, in order to make the repatriation "sustainable", there was a clear need to initiate reintegration and reconstruction projects even though this gives rise to questions about mandates, inter-agency division of labour, the continuum/contiguum" debate. This was precisely the case of the repatriation to Somaliland, a territory devastated by civil war, as we have seen.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Returning to Ethiopia

The UNHCR Sub-Office in Jijiga (the current capital of the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia) was established to manage the camps that were set up after the massive refugee influx from North West Somalia of May 1988. It was briefly evacuated in May 1991 during the transition between Mengistu's regime and the establishment of the Tigrean-led EPRDF interim government. The approximately 3.2 million ethnic Somalis in eastern Ethiopia[17] are mainly Absame/Darod (particularly Ogaden) and to a lesser extent Isaq, Gadabursi and Issa/Dir. A minority of the population is made up of Ethiopian Amharas who settled at the end of the 19th century following the expansion of the Abyssinian Empire under Menelik II, Oromos (the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, related to Somalis) and the military, mainly made up by Tigreans. Livestock, trade and small-scale agriculture are the main economic activities.

In 1991, after the collapse of Barre's regime in Somalia, hundreds of thousand of Ethiopian-Somali refugees undertook a reverse exodus to their mother-land after some thirteen years of exile. The repatriation took place largely as result of the events that led to the collapse of law and order in Somalia and it was a spontaneous "self-repatriation under duress", rather than an organised, assisted one. The urgency was given by the fact that most (ex)refugees were Ogaden/Darod, a clan, as we have seen, closely allied with Siyad Barre and therefore a potential target of the Hawiye/USC in the south and of the Isaq/SNM in the north-west.

Although there are no accurate records of the total number of Ethiopian-Somali returnees, it is estimated that over 600,000 repatriated between 1991 and 1993, out of whom some 500,000 were assisted by UNHCR with an individual cash grant and a six months food ration upon arrival in Ethiopia. Community-based assistance was also provided in returnee-affected area through "Food for Work" programmes and "Quick Impact" rehabilitation projects (QIPs).

The Ethiopian Government pursued an open-door policy towards the returnees (as it did towards the refugees) for whom it was relatively easy to re-obtain Ethiopian identity documents or to be reintegrated in the civil service. Furthermore, after regional elections in 1992 and the devolution of power to the new regional administrations in May 1993, most senior positions were initially taken by Ogaden returnees. This development can be explained by the fact that on the one hand the Ogaden, given their closeness to Siyad Barre in Somalia – as we have seen – were used to the exercise of power. On the other hand the Ethiopian-Somalis who stayed behind grew wary of politics after having experienced Mengistu's repression.

However, the returnees were coming to a country devastated by civil war and during the delicate transition from the Derg regime to the new EPRDF. As a result economic opportunities, already meagre under the best circumstances, were very limited indeed when the repatriation grant was exhausted. Moreover the returnees were suffering from the "dependency syndrome" developed during the decade as refugees in Somalia when they were "doped" with food assistance[18]. This prompted many to "join the

[17] Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: "The 1994 Population Census: results for the Somali Region, Summary Report", Addis Ababa 1998.
[18] See Maren, *The Road to Hell, op. cit*. (1997, in particular chapter 5 aptly titled "Crazy with Food").

queue" of the refugees who were fleeing from Somalia at the same time and therefore to swell the numbers of the refugees camps, as we shall see, and to turn up at the UNHCR Jijiga office to claim more assistance. From the governmental side, assistance to returnees was managed by the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), a branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The process of repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland

As in all organised repatriations, refugees volunteering to return to Somaliland were registered in the camps in Ethiopia and signed (or thumb-printed) a Voluntary Repatriation Departure Form (VRDF) attesting the voluntariness of their repatriation. Although normally the legal basis for the repatriation programme should have been a Tripartite Agreement (among UNHCR, the country of origin and the country of asylum), this was not possible because of Somaliland's non-recognised status.

As a result, separate bilateral agreements were signed between UNHCR and the Ethiopian government on the one hand, and between UNHCR and the Somaliland authorities on the other. An information campaign and a fact-finding mission by refugee elders to verify conditions in the areas of origin, also took place. UNHCR's counterparts in this operation were the ARRA on the Ethiopian side and the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (MRRR) on the Somaliland side.

Once the UNHCR Sub-Office in Jijiga collected enough expressions of interest through signed VRDFs in a camp, it would send a master list to UNHCR Hargeisa containing names, VRDF number and -–most importantly – clan and sub-clan. UNHCR Hargeisa then submitted the master list to MRRR for clearance.

The clearance was invariably carried out on the basis of the stated clan or sub-clan membership, rather than on the basis of names, since there was no national census and names were largely irrelevant since many, maybe most, refugees had changed their names when seeking asylum. The clans and sub-clans considered by MRRR as qualifying automatically for Somaliland citizenship were: Isaq (all sub-clans), Gadabursi (all sub-clans), Issa (all sub-clans)[19], Dulbahante and Warsangeli/Harti/Darod, Gaboye, Tumal, Yiber

Prior to departure, refugees in the camps received an individual repatriation package in exchange for the ration card consisting of: nine months of food ration per person (150 kg. of wheat, 5 litres of cooking oil, 10 kg. of pulses); US $30 per person, irrespective of age (rounded to 200 Ethiopian birr) as travel/repatriation allowance; plastic sheets, jerrycans and blankets according to family size. The monetary equivalent of an individual repatriation package was estimated in 1997 at around US $130 per person.

Furthermore, refugees were also transported by truck and escorted to selected destinations in Somaliland by UNHCR and MRRR personnel. The convoys usually

[19] The decision to consider all Issa and Gadabursi as Somalilanders was dictated more by pragmatic considerations, i.e. the difficulty in ascertaining their sub-clan to determine their nationality because, as we have seen, in reality many Gadabursi originate from Ethiopia and most Issa from Ethiopia and Djibouti. Regarding the Issa, there are however some misgivings given their close relation with Djibouti.

consisted of a majority of locally-rented trucks and minibuses (because of clan monopoly UNHCR had to change trucking companies in different deghans (clan areas) and about a dozen UN/CARE blue trucks. Upon departure the UNHCR team counted the physical presence on the trucks

Plans to start the repatriation of Somalis in the camps in eastern Ethiopia were initially drawn in 1993 when things started improving after the Borama reconciliation conference. By October 1994 UNHCR was ready to start a "pilot project", but the eruption of the Hargeisa "airport war" in November froze these plans.

After the progressive return to normalcy in 1996 UNHCR finally launched the "pilot project" in February 1997, completing the repatriation of 10,125 refugees by the end of July. In November, under pressure from the donor community, feeling that the "official" numbers were still not reflecting the situation on the ground, UNHCR and ARRA embarked on a new revalidation exercise. Even though this operation lasted several days (a opposed to the '94 one) and several people were observed crossing the border from Somaliland, the numbers dropped from some 277,000 to 242,000, including the 10,125 who had repatriated during the "pilot project" (thereby with a net reduction of some 25,000).

It is at this stage that UNHCR launched the "enhanced" repatriation. The programme had to overcome initial resistances from both sides. On the Ethiopian side, ARRA was afraid of losing jobs of people involved in the camp management and was also very nervous about having to deal with a non-recognised entity like Somaliland. However, after the pilot phase and UNHCR lobbying, their co-operation has been generally good and, as the political relation with Somaliland improved (partly as a result of the 1998-2000 "border war" with Eritrea), the repatriation operation flowed more smoothly.

On the Somaliland side there was the fear of the impact of reduced food aid in the camps (part of the food was "repatriating" from Ethiopia to Somaliland) on an economy already battered by the livestock ban of January 1998, which caused a temporary halt in the operation. There was also some horse trading involved as the MRRR often made its consent for the start of repatriation convoys subject to an increase of the "incentives" for the police and civilian personnel escorting the convoys and to the implementation of "pet projects", which often involved exhausting negotiations.

But in the end, the repatriation operation managed to re-start and by the end of 2001 the UNHCR teams in Jijiga and Hargeisa together with their respective counterparts managed to achieve the considerable result of closing two and a half camps (Teferi Ber and Darwanaji, plus Hartasheikh B) and almost closing a third one (Daror). The fluctuations in the population figures are summarized in the table below.

The realities of repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland

The repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland presented some specific aspects. First we should remark that there are a number of "southern" Somalis estimated at around

15,000 for whom the situation in their areas of origin is not yet conducive to repatriation. Secondly, for those able to repatriate (mostly to Somaliland), there was a difference between the "official" number of returnees (i.e. those who surrendered their ration card in exchange for the repatriation package and have signed a VRDF) and the "actual" figures (those who physically boarded on the trucks and crossed the border).

This occurrence can be explained by three factors: 1) the presence of local Ethiopian-Somalis in the camps (including some returnees, i.e. former refugees in Somalia) who surrender their ration card, receive the their package, but do not cross the border; 2) the presence of multiple card holders (who cash one card and stay on with the other); 3) split families, with some members who repatriated spontaneously and others who stay in the camp with the ration card waiting for the opportunity to receive the repatriation package. In other words, while refugees might repatriate spontaneously, ration cards don't: they either remain with a family member or they are sold. This is in line with what happened in Somalia in the 1980s with Ethiopian-Somali refugees and is also related to the mainly pastoral-nomadic background of the refugees.

Table 5. Fluctuations in camp population figures

Camp	1991-94 (1988 & 1991 in-fluxes)	Sept. 1994. (revalid-ation exercise)	1995-97 (Nov. 94 influx)	Dec 1997 (pilot volrep and Nov. revalid.)	Dec 1998 (enhan'd volrep)	Dec 2001 (enhan'd volrep)
Hartasheikh A & B	250,926	43,845	53,760	51,317	31,372	11.642
Darwanaji	117,069	36,855	40,601	39,762	26,596	-
Teferi Ber	98,624	41,301	43,818	45,665	29,769	-
Camaboker	66,615	17,231	36,120	28,065	28,065	19,849
Rabasso	24,181	8,025	28,381	16,818	16,818	9,811
Daror	31,833	12,261	49,355	34,150	34,150	24
Kebri Beyah	12,584	10,100	10,455	11,097	11,097	11,634
Aisha	26,694	15,282	15,282	15,282	15,282	13,982
Total	628,526	184,900	277,762	242,156	193,149	66,942

As a result, even if with notable differences from camp to camp, the overall physical presence in the repatriation convoys from Ethiopia to Somaliland was about 40% in the 1997-98 period. Another important aspect of the operation was the concentration of the movement in the urban areas, and in particular Hargeisa, which accounted for 55% of all "actual" returnees and has received a total of over 10,000 returnees during 1998.

This phenomenon is summarized in the following two tables ("actual" numbers refer to people physically present in the convoys, while "official" to the number of people listed in the ration cards surrendered in exchange for the repatriation package):

In concluding this section we would like to stress two points. First, that UNHCR has been quite successful under the prevailing circumstances to pursue its repatriation policy, the only available option to break the dependency syndrome, by bringing on board both the Ethiopian and Somaliland authorities as well as the refugees themselves. While some donors think that the process was far too slow, they should be reminded that the security situation on the Somaliland side was not really conducive to such a complex operation until the beginning of 1997 (after Egal's second term) which is exactly when the programme finally started.

Table 6: 1997-98 repatriation statistics and percentage of "actual" returnees by camp (18/02/1997-14/11/1998; convoys 1 to 68)

Camp	Official	Actual	% of "official" over total	% of "actual" over total	% of "actual" by camp
Hartasheikh	24,984	13,060	42.3%	52.4%	52.3%
Teferi Ber	18,604	5,201	31.4%	22.1%	27.9%
Darwanaji	15,544	5,303	26.3%	22.5%	34.1%

Table 7: 1997-98 repatriation statistics and percentage of "actual" returnees by destination (18/02/1997-14/11/1998; convoys 1 to 68)

Destination	Official	Actual	% of "official" over total	% of "actuals" over total	% of "actuals" by destination
Hargeisa	24,424	13,019	41.4%	55.3%	53.3%
Gabiley	5,198	3,019	8.8%	12.8%	58.1%
Dilla/Baki	7,383	1,126	12.6%	4.8%	15.2%
Borama	22,049	6,368	37.3%	27.0%	28.9%

One may object that a mass spontaneous repatriation actually took place between 1991 and 1994, but there is a world of difference between the security situation for local people and for a complex operation mounted by international staff (see for example the extortions to which expatriates were subjected in the Hargeisa airport). Moreover, UNHCR had to overcome the initial reluctance of both Ethiopian and Somaliland officials, complicated by the (then) lack of official relations between the two sides, and the absorption capacity was severely strained by the livestock embargo that affected Somaliland's economy since 1998.

Secondly, a recent report by the US Committee for Refugees, while encouraging UNHCR to pursue its repatriation policy, states that the programme "has suffered from duplication, fraud and corruption that persist today"[20]. In our discussion on "repatriation realties" above we have highlighted how locals infiltrated the refugees

[20]US Committee for Refugees: "Welcome Home to Nothing", Immigration and Refugee Services of America, (2001), page 6.

and that some level of multiple registration did take place. It is likely that this was tolerated if not encouraged by the Ethiopian administration of the time, as one official confided to me (he specified that there were truckloads of locals shipped to the registration points).

However, we should also stress that these occurrences were taking place during the phases of mass influx in a context of fin de regime (1988) and actual collapse of Mengistu's dictatorship (February 1991), moreover with the bad example provided by food aid in Somalia in the 1980s. Since the EPRDF take-over (May 1991) and the overhaul of ARRA in 1993, there may have been leaks, but no widespread or systematic corruption to our knowledge. We may recall the spectacular success in reducing the population figures of the September 1994 revalidation and that the November 1994 influx was kept much better under control than the previous ones. Moreover, after initial reluctance, ARRA has been cooperative in the repatriation exercise.

What is persisting today and the counting exercise cannot solve, is the presence of locals. Given the extreme difficulty in differentiating them from genuine refugees, the only practical option to work towards the closure of the camps was to extend the repatriation package to all card-holders (in exchange for the card). Hence the programme may be described as partially a "repatriation" and partially a "buy-back-the-card" exercise. The operation should be concluded by 2003 with the repatriation of the remaining "Somalilander" refugees and dispersal of local Ethiopian "infiltrees", while continued protection and care and maintenance assistance in two camps is envisaged for the estimated 15,000 "southern" Somali refugees still unable to repatriate owing to the unresolved security situation in their areas of origin.

Patterns of reintegration

Just as the pattern of flight followed largely clan lines (given that - as we have stressed - most clans are transnational), so did the pattern of return. The majority of Habar Awal/Isaq who found refuge in the Hartasheikh camp returned to the region of Waqooyi Galbeed (Hargeisa and Gabiley) where they are the majority and likewise most Gadabursi returned to the ancestral Awadal region (Borama and Dilla). Even Hargeisa, squarely located in the Isaq territory, is divided along sub-clan lines that shaped the pattern of reintegration in this urban area. Hence the Habar Awal (Saad Mussa and Issa Mussa) occupy the western and northern part, while the Garhajis (Idagalle and Habar Yonis) the eastern part and the Arab/Isaq the southern one. However, as a cosmopolitan capital, there are also non-Isaq clans scattered throughout the city, such as Gadabursi, Darod and low-caste Gaboye.

Regarding the actual impact on the absorption capacity of the reintegration areas, we should underline that "official" figures do not convey the true picture. First, most of the impact was actually borne during the time of spontaneous repatriation (1991-94). Secondly, during the "organised" phase only 40% of the approximately 60,000 refugees who officially repatriated in 1997-98 were actually seen on the convoys (see tables 7 & 8). Also "official" destinations, as indicated in the VRDFs, did not give an accurate picture: Borama and Dilla (the main areas of origin of "refugees" in

Darwanaji and Teferi Ber) received theoretically 37% and 12% of all returnees during the period under consideration, but in real terms they received only 27% and 5%.

Conversely, Hargeisa and Gabiley received "officially" 41% and 9% of the returnees while "actually" the percentages were 55% and 13%. We should however still bear in mind that the greatest impact of all was during the spontaneous or self-repatriation phase. These differences were not caused - as commonly assumed during the period under consideration (1997-99) - by an "urbanisation" of refugees in the camps, i.e. refugees of rural or pastoral origin who got used to easy access to social services in the camps and perceive greater job opportunities in urban areas and as a result decide not to repatriate to their ancestral areas in the bush.

To be sure, we cannot exclude that this phenomenon played some role in this period and maybe a greater role subsequently in other camps, such as the Aware camps[21]. But the view commonly held by many members of the international community and many "Hargeisawis" (Hargeisa dwellers) that this people were illegitimately returning to Hargeisa instead of the countryside was not supported by evidence.

First we can recall how a 1994 survey conducted in the camps by a Somali anthropologist graduated from the LSE concluded that "many urban poor remain in Hartasheikh…"[22]. Second, an unpublished "Social Assessment of Somali Returnees in Awadal and Waqooyi Galbeed Regions of NW Somalia" conducted in 1998 on a 10% sample of the 11,000 returnees who repatriated during the 1997 pilot phase, found that only 2.2% of the returnees interviewed in Hargeisa were from a pastoral background before the war[23].

Third, we should recall how it was precisely urban centres such as Hargeisa and that were mostly hit during the war. Fourth, from table 7 we can note that some 3,000 out of the 5,000 "official" returnees to Gabiley, a small town with less than 10,000 inhabitants that would normally qualify as a rural area, actually repatriated there, a proportion that is even higher than that for Hargeisa. In fact we may assume that most refugees who had some assets, such as land or housing (whether in urban or rural areas) to go back to, had already "self-repatriated", while only the poorest were left behind, for whom UNHCR's repatriation assistance was desperately needed to attempt to re-build their lives in the country of origin.

Finally we should stress that organised repatriation was not the only population movement at play. What affluent Hargeisawis perceived - not without a touch of class bias - as "refugees" congesting slum areas in Hargeisa, included a large proportion of local rural-urban migrants as well as destitute people from both

[21] Refugees in the Aware camps (Camaboker, Rabasso and Daror) mainly originate from Burao and the rural areas between Burao and Hargeisa, such as Salahley and Odweyne However there was also a substantial minority from Hargeisa. Repatriation from these camps started only after the period under consideration.

[22] "Going Back Home", *op. cit.*, see above for the full quote.

[23] S. Yurasko: "A Social Assessment of Somali Returnees in Awdal and Waqooyi Gelbeed Regions in NW Somalia", unpublished research paper, UNHCR Hargeisa, 1998. In spite of some methodological limitations in establishing the sampling frame, the substantial size of the survey (200 family questionnaires representing about 10% of the population under study, i.e. the 11,000 returnees of the 1997 "pilot repatriation") make the findings broadly reliable.

"southern" Somalia and eastern Ethiopia. Why then the huge difference between "official" and "actual" returnees to Borama and Dilla? The two main reasons were the causes of flight and distance between the camp and the area of origin.

First, while the little town of Dilla did suffer heavy damage as a result of the SNM's incursion in the Gadabursi area of Awadal, the city of Borama was held by the SNM for only about 24 hours and did not suffer any damage. Yet the caseload originating from this city was still granted prima facie refugee status, no doubt because the assumption was that the enmity between the Isaq-led SNM and the Gadabursi would last and provide grounds for a "well-founded fear of persecution". However, at least since the 1993 Borama conference, the two clans found a modus vivendi and people started repatriating spontaneously.

Secondly, the distance between Borama and the Darwanaji camp was only some 20 km and between Dilla and Teferi Ber even less, some 15 km. Given the highly mobile nature of Somalis and the porous border it was hence possible to be "part-time refugees" and "part-time returnees". This contrasts with Hartasheikh that is almost 100 km from Hargeisa and for whose residents hence it was much more complicated to travel back and forth between the camp and the area of destination. In sum, there was a higher percentage of refugees with a weak claim in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji as compared with Hartasheikh and moreover they were much closer to their areas of origin.

Two important exceptions should be noted. In Darwanaji there was also a number of Mahad Asse/Gadabursi who fled clashes with the Issa and originating from the coastal areas much further afield than Borama. Second, there were, both in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji, at least a couple of thousand of Gaboye and other low-caste clans originally from Hargeisa who chose these camps for reasons that will be analysed below. They were definitely genuine refugees and "actual" returnees.

Human security and coping mechanisms

After the end of the Cold War, the concept of "human security/insecurity" with its four components, namely physical, social/ psychological, legal and material, was introduced in international relations discourse in addition to the classical concept of security based on the notion of balance of power. This concept can provide a useful analytical framework for examining the reintegration of returnees, defined as "the process which enables formerly displaced persons … to enjoy a progressively greater degree of physical, social and material security and the erosion of … of any observable distinctions which set returnees apart from their compatriots"[24].

In terms of physical security, we can safely say that returnees in Somaliland were not subject to any punishment, arrest or attack on account of their former refugee status. Their physical security was largely similar to that of all other residents of Somaliland, not least because so many of its people had at some point in time experienced one form or another of displacement. The transnational clan networks, never broken even

[24] See UNHCR *The State of the World's Refugees: A Humanitarian Agenda, op. cit*, chapter 1 and chapter 4.

during the exile, ensured that social capital remained almost intact and that social and psychological security was largely good. This was however mitigated in the urban areas by the perception highlighted above that these were mostly "reer badiye" (people from the bush) illegitimately congesting the cities, mainly Hargeisa.

Membership of the autochthonous Somaliland clans, the main criteria for granting clearance to repatriate and ultimately citizenship, ensured that legal security, in terms of the traditional Somali xeer (traditional law, based on the concepts of compensation or retribution), was also good. However, members of non-Somalilander "noble" clans (e.g. Majertein) who may have been granted clearance to repatriate because of marriage with a local, or members of local low-caste clans (e.g. Gaboye) only enjoyed the lesser de facto status of "protected" persons, similar to that of Christian or Jewish minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

If the picture for physical, social and legal security was generally good, regarding material security it was much bleaker, if we define it in terms of self-sufficiency.

First we should recall that, at least since colonial times, Somalia never really attained self-sufficiency. Second, as mentioned above, the chances are that the last candidates for UNHCR-assisted repatriation are the most destitute, as most people with assets to go back to had already self-repatriated.

Thirdly, the level of destruction sustained by Somaliland was high by any standard and given that it is still an unrecognised country, it could not benefit from the traditional development-oriented financial instruments. It was precisely with this in mind that UNHCR designed what some observers thought was a rather generous repatriation package (see above). But these packages were a send-off assistance and hence finite by definition.

What were therefore the socio-economic conditions of returnees and the coping mechanisms that have been used to overcome the constraints towards reintegration? To answer some of these questions, in 1998 UNHCR commissioned a survey[25] on the returnees of the 1997 "pilot phase" to an American anthropologist trained at the LSE and who had spent one year in the Rabasso refugee camp in Ethiopia. The following is a summary of the main findings.

Out of the three reintegration areas considered by the study, namely Hargeisa (mostly returnees from Hartasheik); Gabiley (also from Hartasheikh and - to a lesser extent Teferi Ber) combined with Dilla (Teferi Ber), and Borama (Darwanaji and Teferi Ber), returnees in Hargeisa fared the worst. In spatial terms, many were crowding emerging slum areas such as Sheikh Nur (also known as Kililka Shanad) and State House[26].
Economically, the average income reported was US $668 per year, or 1.83 per day, the lowest of the reintegration areas. Furthermore, Hargeisa returnees reported by far the highest percentages of people relying entirely or partially on assistance from relatives and charity, i.e. complete and partial unemployment (33.2%). The most frequent economic activities reported (typically a combination of more than one in a

[25] See footnote 23 above.
[26] See above for an explanation of this trend.

family) included: porter, mason, vegetable seller and other small-scale market activities.

The contrast with Gabiley and Dilla, two neighbouring villages in a rural area, was marked: the reported average income was US $906, i.e. over 26% higher, while only 12% of the sample relied entirely or partially on family assistance and charity, that is they were totally or partially unemployed. The main economic activities were market-oriented ones, manual labour and agro-pastoralism (20%).

Finally Borama, a town of approximately 50-60,000 (in contrast with Hargeisa with 200-250,000 inhabitants) fell somewhere in between: the average income was US $713 and the percentage of total and partial unemployment was 17.3%. Surprisingly, 21% of the respondents stated they were agro-pastoralists, but this can be explained with the fact that Borama is a small-sized town with an osmotic relation with the surrounding rural areas that sociologists once described as "cities of peasants" where urban and rural activities are often combined. The relatively worse status of Hargeisa returnees was further confirmed by the fact that most of the respondents there said that the most important item of the grant.

Table 8: Average income of returnees and total and partial unemployment[27]

Reintegration area	Average income per year (US$)	Percentage relying entirely on assistance/charity[28]	Percentage relying mainly on assistance/charity
Hargeisa	668	15.2%	18%
Dilla/Gabiley	906	4.0%	8%
Borama	713	5.3%	12%

What were the reasons for the less successful reintegration in Hargeisa than in the other areas? We may identify the following factors, some of which suggested by the survey:

- Heavy amount of credit taken in the camps: there was a lower rate of multiple card holders in Hartasheikh (the camp were most "Hargeisawis" fled) as compared to the others and the single standard assistance ration is enough just for bare survival;

- Lower returnee numbers and less spatial congestion in the Gabiley/Dilla and Borama reintegration areas and hence less competition than in Hargeisa;

- Fewer urban poor refugees at the time of flight;

[27] S. Yurasko, "A Social Assessment of Somali Returnees…", *op. cit.*

[28] Assistance from relatives, not from the international community, given that individual assistance was discontinued after return (only community-based assistance was provided, see below).

- Closer proximity to the camps and rural areas that allowed returnees to maintain an osmotic relationship with both.

Two further features of the plight of returnees can be highlighted. The first is that overall 18% of the sample was relying on children under 18 as their main income earner. This disturbing trend means that often children were denied any type of formal education (the study emphasised that the main problem was not access, but the informal fees charged in most schools, since the government is barely able to pay teachers ridiculously low salaries; the same argument applies to health facilities). Secondly, 28% of the sample was relying on (adult) females as their main breadwinner and 22% were female-headed households. Significantly, these household did economically better than those with an adult male.

This may look surprising, but unfortunately many Somali men, even if partially employed or unemployed, spend most of their time and a good proportion of the family income in chat, the mildly stimulant leaf, widely chewed in the Horn and in Yemen. Recognising the difficulties in achieving reintegration in a context so deeply affected by years of war and neglect, UNHCR launched a QIPs programme with hundreds of projects implemented since 1994.

These projects (not including individual assistance/handouts) have been defined as "small-scale initiatives that can be implemented modest cost, with considerable speed and with the participation of the local community"[29] or graphically as "emergency development". They typically include the rehabilitation or reconstruction of a school or a health centre, the repair of a bridge or a road or the installation of a water pump.

While an analysis of UNHCR's QIPs programme in Somaliland is beyond the scope of this paper, we can highlight a few issues. First, as recognised in the case of the Mozambican repatriation, there is a fundamental tension between speed and sustainability of these projects that appear to be quite successful in meeting their immediate objectives, but less effective in their long-term impact[30]. This is particularly obvious in case like Somaliland where the authorities of an already extremely poor country further hit buy the livestock ban are hardly in a position to meet maintenance and recurrent cost of educational, health or water facilities. Moreover, local authorities often favoured particular QIPs, not on the basis of national priorities, but of (sub)clan interests.

Secondly, in order to overcome some of these obstacles, there is a need for a high level of inter-organisation joint planning and an efficient division of labour, not always obvious in post-conflict situations. Finally, there is not always a wide consensus on whether QIPs implementation should be correlated with rate of "assisted/official" repatriation or of "self/spontaneous" returns or simply with the level of destruction in various parts of the country.

In order to respond to some of these issues, UNHCR, UNDP and the Somaliland government held in July 1999 a three-days Repatriation and Reintegration Workshop with the participation of other international organisations and NGOs as well as line

[29] UNHCR: *The State of the World's Refugees,* 1999, *op. cit.,* p. 173).
[30] *Ibid.*

ministries and regional authorities. The results were presented in a two volume Plan of Action containing a list of specific project proposals[31].

In conclusion we may agree with the preliminary findings of research in refugee camps in Kenya that Somalis use social networks, mobility and diversified investment to overcome the endemic insecurity of the region[32]. Social networks were mobilised both at the time of flight (the vast majority of refugees settled in their clan areas across the border) and of return (e.g. reliance on charity from relatives once the repatriation package was exhausted). Mobility and diversified investment were two sides of the same coin: staggered repatriation (some family members "self-repatriating" while others remaining in the camp) allowed families to prepare the ground for repatriation while at the same time retaining a ration card enabling access to assistance and services as a safety net.

In this sense we also agree with the authors of a book on repatriation[33] that repatriation may end the refugee cycle, but may also start a new cycle of insecurity, particularly in a region such as the Horn, endemically prone to natural and man-made disasters, and where "self-sufficiency" has never really been attained, at least since colonial times. Hence the notion of "returning home" in a post-conflict context is not the recreation of an ideal past, but adaptation to a transformed environment (in the case of Somaliland even a new "state"!) that may require more "construction" and "creativity" that "reconstruction" and "rehabilitation"[34]. For this task the social capital of Somalis will still be useful as well as innovative approaches linking the initial phases of return assistance to sustainable development.

Case study: the low-caste Gaboye returnees in Somaliland

If reintegration, defined as "the erosion of …any observable distinctions which set returnees apart from their compatriots", is difficult to attain for Somalis returnees in general, it is all the more so for the Gaboye whose social distance from "noble" Somalis appeared unbridgeable even before flight. These low-caste clans, also known as sab, are considered impure by other Somalis and marriage with them is culturally (though not religiously) forbidden. Other forms of social interaction are restricted. Most clans live in North West Somalia and in eastern Ethiopia, but some are also found in southern Somalia.

Although the term Gaboye is now often used to describe all three clans, according to Burton[35] who visited the region in 1855, and my informers, they are three distinct clans: Gaboye (also known as Mitgan, although the term is now considered derogatory), the Tumal and the Yiber. The origin of their impurity is shrouded in

[31] See Somaliland Republic, UNDP and UNHCR: *Plan of Action for Repatriation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration,* Hargeisa, Somaliland, 1999.
[32] C. Horst, "A nomadic heritage: understanding ways of coping with insecurity", chapter 2 of an unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2002 - work-in-progress.
[33] R. Black and K. Koser (eds), The End of the Refugee Cycle? Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction", Berghan Books, Oxford 1998.
[34] L. Hammond: "Examining the discourse of repatriation: towards a more proactive theory of return migration", in Black and Koser, *op. cit.*
[35] Sir R. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa*, Dover, New York, 1856, 1987

legend. According to one story, two brothers called Mohammed Gorgate (Madiban) and Mahmud Gorgate descendants of Hawiye, were starving in the desert and ate a dead animal, in contrast with the Muslim sharia precepts.

Once they arrived to safety in the city, Mahmud threw-up, while Mohammed retained the food, becoming impure. Other genealogists argue that they originate from before the migration of Arab sheikhs who gave rise to the various Somali clans. Other clues to the origin of their impurity are to be found in the etymology of the word Gaboye, which refers to the quiver holding arrows. In fact Burton reported in the mid 19th century that they were called "archers" by the Arabs and employed poisoned arrows, again in contrast with the sharia law, prescribing ritual slaughter. The nowadays-disused term Midgan refers to leather tannery. The word Tumal on the other hand means blacksmiths.

If we consider that the Gaboye are also engaged in hairdressing, shoemaking and pottery and that the Yiber were jesters and sorcerers, we come to the conclusion that these can be also considered occupational groups engaged in trades considered impure by the majority. In this sense they are quite close to the Roma of western and central Europe and in fact in Djibouti they are often referred to as "Les Gitanes". Furthermore, the link between metallurgy (also traditionally practised by some Roma-related groups) and stigma and sorcery is deeply ingrained in many African and European cultures and can be traced as far back as Greek mythology[36]. The Gaboye are divided into the following sub-clans: Mussa Diriye (North West Somalia), Madiban (North East Somalia), Hawle (Jijiga) and Wardere (Ogaden). The Tumal are divided into Ali (North East Somalia) and Osman (North West Somalia).

Although they are nowadays few in numbers, the Yiber, claiming Israelite ancestry, used to be the most powerful of these clans. Some time in the 12th century, most of North West Somalia used to be ruled by Yiber king practising Judaism called Burbael, known by the Muslims as Mohammed Hanif. In Muslim oral tradition he was considered cruel and practising the jus primae noctis. This state of affairs was terminated by a Muslim sheikh called Yussuf Khounein, nicknamed Aw Barkhadle ("who brought rain") who, after long travels, arrived near Hargeisa. He challenged Burbael to prove his magic powers by splitting in two a mountain, which he did. He then asked Burbael to walk into the gorge and closed the mountain killing him. Thus the Yiber were usurped but in compensation were given the right to claim diya (blood money) in perpetuity.

As a result still nowadays, when there is a newly born son or a marriage, the Yiber come to ask for charity in exchange. This is seldom refused because the Yiber are feared for their power of sorcery or evil eye. This applies particularly to women and Yiber are reported to often wait for the father's absence before asking for alms. Given that the Yiber consider themselves to be of Israelite origin, as their name implies, the similarity of their position to that of the Falasha or Beta Israel in highland Abyssinia

[36] Robert Graves in his classical book on Greek mythology (*Greek Myths*, Penguin, London, 1955, 1992) wrote that the Greek Smith-god Hephestos (Vulcanus for the Latins) was lame and ugly and something of an outcast in the Pantheon of the gods. He further stressed the link between the emergence of metallurgy in the Bronze Age, magic and the fact that smithing groups were often held in quasi-captivity to prevent them from spreading the knowledge to enemy tribes. I am grateful to Mr. P. Papaphilippou for having drawn my attention to this analogy.

is striking. Both engage in similar jobs considered to be "impure" by the majority and to possess evil-eye powers ("budah" in Amharic) and are treated as pariah groups. As one informer put it: "We are the Falasha of Somali".

Referring to the Yiber, Lewis[37] points out that possessing magical powers is consistent with their marginal status in Somali society and their difficulty to defend themselves with force owing to their small numbers. But in contrast to the Falasha, the Yiber have lost any knowledge of Judaism and practise Islam. None of the low-caste clans pay the diya independently, but together with the "noble" clans, such as Isaq, or the Absame/Darod, with whom they hold a protected status. Consistently with his policy of modernisation and abolition of tribalism, Siyad Barre tried to emancipate these pariah clans and some of their members held important offices during his regime, including the military and a Gaboye was appointed Minister of Defence. It should therefore be no surprise that they supported him during the civil war.

Hence, when the Isaq-led SNM took over Hargeisa in 1991, they fled to Ethiopia, mostly to Teferi Ber and Darwanaji instead of Hartasheikh because the latter camp was also in Isaq territory.

Again, the parallel with the Roma of former Yugoslavia and in particular with the Ashkelija of Kosovo springs to mind. Also in the Balkans' context, a stigmatised occupational group sided with a modernising dictatorship during civil war (or was at least perceived doing so) and many fled fearing retaliation after the overthrow of the regime by a nationalistic movement (the KLA). But here is where the parallel ends.

To the credit of Somalilanders it must be said that, out of the some 2,000 Gaboye returnees from Teferi Ber and Darwanaji who repatriated in 1997-99 (mostly to Hargeisa), none has been observed or reported having suffered retaliation or persecution on account of their past. Also encouraging was the fact that – in the Gaboye's own words – they have been able to regain possession of up to 90% of their landed property. Hence we may argue that reintegration has proceeded well, if we define it as the recreation of conditions prior to exodus.

Yet it should not be understated that if active persecution did not take place, the social distance from "noble" Somalis of a pastoral background remains great and forms of discrimination persist. Marrying a Gaboye remains by and large an unbreakable cultural taboo. Secondly, although their traditional occupations and trades place them among the most productive sectors of the society, they also become a sort of "socio-economic ghetto" as it restricts their social mobility. For example, no jobs in the public sector/civil service are normally available to them and agriculture and cattle are also restricted. In their main neighbourhood in Hargeisa, Dami (next to Sheikh Nur, one of the main returnee areas), Gaboye women reported to have been often the object of discrimination when queuing up at water points. Even more worrying is the "vicious cycle of education".

We have already seen above how many returnees resort to child labour to make ends meet or because they are unable to pay the informal tuition fees. In the case of the Gaboye there is also an internal tendency to send kids to work in the traditional

[37] *A Pastoral Democracy, op. cit.,* pp. 264-265.

professions at an early age reinforced by the acts of harassment by children of "majority" clans that have been reported by the few Gaboye returnees who did attempt to send their kids to school. Finally, in terms of political representation, only one Gaboye was sitting in the House of Elders (later augmented by one MP in the Lower House) out of a total of 164 seats.

The following tables are the result of a questionnaire for the Repatriation and Reintegration Workshop which were published in the resulting Plan of Action[38]. Although the questionnaire was self-administered by Gaboye community leaders themselves, rather than on the basis of a random sample and hence has no scientific validity, in our opinion in provides a broadly accurate snapshot of their socio-economic conditions relating to reintegration.

[38] See note 31. The questionnaires was designed by the author who was a member of the Workshop's Task Force.

Table 9: Estimates of minority groups population and main activities by region:

Region	Population	Main urban centres	Main activities (families)
Awdal	350 fam (families) 2,100 inds*. (individuals)	Borama (160 fams.)	45 shoemakers; 30 hairdressers; 65 blacksmiths; 10 pottery/women; 10 butchers; 110 rural areas; 100 jobless
Sahil	267 fam 1,602 inds *	Berbera (210 fams.) Sheikh (20 fams.)	45 hairdressers; 40 shoemakers; 30 blacksmiths; 15 butchers; 10 pottery/women; 20 other business; 30 rural areas; 50 jobless
Togdheer	593 fams 3,558 inds *	Yarowe (290 fams.) Burao (130 fams.) Odweyne (73 fams.)	Yarowe: 80 hairdressers; 70 shoe-makers; 60 blacksmiths, Burao: 40 hairdressers; 30 shoemakers; 20 blacksmiths; Odweyne: 20 hairdressers; 15 shoe-makers; 20 blacksmiths
Sanaag	158 fam 948 inds *	Erigavo: 128 fams.	28 hairdressers; 30 shoemakers; 20 blacksmiths; 30 rural areas.
Sool	229 fam 1,374 inds	Las Anod (all)	40 hairdressers; 70 shoemakers; 35 blacksmiths; 14 butchers; 10 tanners; 20 rural areas
W. Galbeed (excl. Hargeisa)	460 fam 2,760 inds *	Gabiley (160 fams.)	20 hairdressers; 40 shoemakers; 50 blacksmiths; 5 butchers; 5 pottery; 40 rural areas.
Hargeisa	1,182 fam 7,082 inds *	City and surround'g areas	300 hairdressers; 295 shoemakers; 165 blacksmiths; 50 pottery/women; 53 tanners

** Note: the number of individuals is calculated on the basis of family size 6, suggested by the minority groups themselves. Total: approximately 20,000 individuals.*

Table 10: Main areas of return of minority groups:

Region	Main areas of return
W. Galbeed (incl. Hargeisa)	Hargeisa city (Halwadag/Dami; Gan Libah); rural areas (Gabiley)
Awdal	Borama and surroundings; rural areas
Togdheer	Mainly Yarowe, Burao and Odweyne. Also rural areas.
Sahil	Mostly Berbera, few Sheikh; none in rural areas.
Sanaag	Few displaced in the war; practically no returnees
Sool	Few displaced by the war, practically no returnees.

Table 11: Problems and constraints specifically faced by minority groups:

Sector	Problem/constraints
Access to education	The destruction caused by the war caused the loss of working tools and centres. As a result, children of minority families are sent to work instead of school. As well, schools are distant from areas inhabited by minority groups.
Access to water	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders, but in addition water points are further away from areas inhabited by minorities as no water activities took place in their areas (e.g. Dami in Hargeisa and Jama – Laye, Berbera)
Access to health facilities	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders, but in addition health facilities are further away from areas inhabited by minority groups as no MCHs rehabilitated in their areas. For example, before the war there used to be a mobile health clinic in Dami, but now not anymore. In addition other areas benefit from private clinics/ pharmacies, but not areas inhabited by minority groups, as they are not engaged in these activities.
Access to judicial process (courts, trials, etc.)	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders.
Access to land/property (urban)	Although most land was lost during the civil war, we regained possession of about 90% of our land thanks to the intervention by the government.
Access to rural land	Same problems shared with other Somalilanders, but in addition no water activities implemented in rural areas inhabited by minorities.
Access to employment/ business	Minority groups have no access to governmental jobs (from minister to clerk) and INGO/ UN agencies jobs (from programme assistant to watchman). In other business areas too they do not get equal opportunities.
Access to other people (social and cultural relations)	Because of cultural prejudice, marriage between members of minority groups and other “noble” Somalis is discouraged.