Ahmed Cartan Xaange was one of the most important exponents of the humanities in Somalia. He took an Art degree at the University of Moscow and in the '80s he was Chief of the Language and Literature Division of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences in Mogadishu, as well as Vice-President of the same Academy. From 1991 he spent some years in a refugee camp in Kenya and then he moved to Dire Daba (Ethiopia), where he died in the August 1996.

This book presents a collection of folk songs belonging to the nomadic society of the central and north-eastern Somalia. The 191 songs contained in this volume range over a great variety of song types (nursery songs, work songs, entertainment songs) and witness an important aspect of Somali oral literature. They were recorded and translated by Ahmed Cartan Xaange, who grew up in the pastoral community in the north-eastern part of the country. With this collection the author aimed at preserving a valuable patrimony of the Somali people, for the benefit of both Somali and foreign readers.
FOLK SONGS FROM SOMALIA
collected and translated by
AXMED CARTAN XAANGE

edited by
ANNARITA PUGLIELLI

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FOREWORD

With this volume of *Studi Somali* we intend to start a new trend for what we consider by now an ‘old tradition’. The old tradition goes back to 1981 when the first three volumes of Studi Somali came out as the result of the research activities on Somali language and culture conducted at the Somali National University and at the Academy of Arts, Sciences and Literature in Mogadishu, since 1978 under the auspices of the Cooperation projects of the Italian Ministro degli Affari Esteri. Between 1981 and 1991, 9 volumes of *Studi Somali* were published, under the auspices of MAE.

Over the years, even when because of the civil war the situation did not allow any longer to continue with field work in Somalia, the researchers involved in the original project continued this tradition of studies and six more volumes of Studi Somali have been published; all of them were published as books with a traditional publishing house.

As we said at the beginning, the present volume – *Studi Somali* 16 – starts a new trend characterized by the fact that our series will be published by Roma TrE-Press, i.e. the e-press of the Università degli Studi Roma Tre.

The reasons that determined this choice are several, the main being that the books printed with Roma TrE-Press are available on the internet and can be downloaded free of charge. This means that every interested person including Somalis, in Somalia or abroad, will have free access to our publications. People interested in having the paper volume will be able to have it by means of the print-on-demand modality.

We opted for this modality for the publication in 2012 of the *Qaamuuska Af-Soomaaliga* (edited by Annarita Puglielli and Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur), and the results seem to be more than satisfactory.

Our hope is that this modality will produce a much wider diffusion for our works than a printed book.

*Studi Somali* 16 presents a Collection of Somali Folk Songs collected by Axmed Cartan Xaange and entrusted to me for publication.
It includes 191 songs divided into five sections: in each section there is a general description and a number of subsections based on the content of the songs in English. Then for each song there is the Somali text and its ‘English Translation’. We have kept the book exactly as Xaange gave it to us, in complete respect of his choices.

In the English version of the songs the author has kept on purpose the word order of the original Somali poetic text; this results in a different word order with respect to the standard grammatical order of the English language. As a consequence, rather than translations the English texts are somehow interpretations of the original texts.

It often happens that there is not a one to one correspondence between Somali and English verses, therefore if one verse in one language – say Somali – corresponds to more than one verse in the other, we have left empty lines in order to keep the alignment between the two texts.

Only very few editor’s comments have been added, and only when strictly necessary.

Rome
May 2, 2014

Annarita Puglielli
The Editor
INTRODUCTION

Whenever people choose to entertain themselves, or wish to record their historical experience, they go back to the source of their folkloric wealth and draw inspiration therefrom. Hence, the folklore of a given people has to be thoroughly studied, so as to gain an understanding of their philosophy of life, their world outlook.

Somalia is extraordinarily rich in folklore literature in the form of tales, poems, proverbs, work songs, etc., which are stored in the memory of the older generation, especially among the rural community. Much of the important, national patrimony had already been lost as the older generation passed with their experience and memory unrecorded. Only in recent years after the adoption of a system of writing for the Somali language it became possible for researchers to collect and record material on this rich literature, in order to preserve what is left of it for posterity.

In our present modest work we shall confine ourselves to the discussion of one important aspect of Somali oral literature – the Folk Songs – which reflect the limitless inner life of man in his diverse emotional moods.

The songs we included in this work belong to the nomadic society living in the central and north-eastern Somalia, namely the Mudug, Nugaal, Sanaag, the eastern region. This part of the country is inhabited by a pristine community which lives close to Nature, where the ancient customs and tradition are still preserved in their purity. The popular songs created over the centuries by this pastoral people reveal their social ideals and the rigid rules of conduct that regulated the life of the individual.

For the last twenty years or so the present author had been collecting material on Somali oral literature mainly from this part of the country, where he was born and grew up. The result of our activity in this field was the publication in 1988 by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies of Uppsala, Sweden, of my book entitled Folktales from Somalia. The present work is a sequel to that earlier publication.

The 191 songs included in this collection are generally classified
in the following principal genres:

Part I  Nursery songs
Part II  Work songs concerning home-making
Part III Work songs concerning livestock management
Part IV  Entertainment songs concerning humans
Part V  Entertainment songs concerning the lower animals

As could be seen from the list of contents, each of these categories has its own sub-division in accordance with the specific topic with which the given song is concerned. Not included in our present work are the spiritual and the modern lyric (Heello) songs, which are treated in another manuscript we sent for publication elsewhere.

In translating the Somali texts into English we tried to render the meaning as closely as possible to the spirit of the original, though it is unavoidable that a certain percentage of the original is lost through translation into a foreign language. In transcribing personal, topographical, botanical Somali names mentioned in the texts of the songs, such as, for example, Xamar (Mogadishu), Dhamac, Gaaroodi, we conformed to the phonetic rules of the Somali language in accordance with the new alphabet, a sample of which is listed immediately after this introduction to the book.

Our main aim in collecting and recording the folk songs included in this rather pioneering work is to preserve this valuable patrimony of the Somali people not only for the benefit of the Somali reader, but also for the interested readers in the outside world. Should we have succeeded in this respect, however small a measure it may be, we feel that our efforts were not in vain.

Mogadishu, Somalia
September 10, 1991

Axmed Cartan Xaange
The Author
Vowel sounds

There are twenty basic vowel sounds in the new Somali alphabet, of which ten are back and ten are fronted vowels. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Phonetic description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 a</td>
<td>short, back vowel</td>
<td>bar ‘teach’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 e</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>dheh ‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 i</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>dir ‘send’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 o</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>tol ‘sew’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 u</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>luq ‘leg’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 a</td>
<td>short, front vowel</td>
<td>cab ‘drink’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 e</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>deg ‘alight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 i</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>rid ‘put in’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 o</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>rog ‘turn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 u</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>gub ‘burn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 aa</td>
<td>long, back vowel</td>
<td>baal ‘side’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 ee</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>beer ‘garden’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 ii</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>liin ‘lime’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 oo</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>soor ‘food’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 uu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>tuur ‘throw’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 aa</td>
<td>long, front vowel</td>
<td>raad ‘footprint’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 ee</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>geel ‘camels’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 ii</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>wiil ‘boy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 oo</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>doog ‘green grass’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 uu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>guud ‘top’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Consonant Sounds

A minimum of twenty consonant sounds are distinguished in the common Somali dialect, which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Phonetic description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 b</td>
<td>voiced labial plosive</td>
<td>beer ‘garden’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 t</td>
<td>unvoiced labial plosive</td>
<td>tus ‘show’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 j</td>
<td>voiced palato-alveolar affricate</td>
<td>jiid ‘pull’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x</td>
<td>unvoiced pharyngal fricative</td>
<td>xig ‘dwarf sisal’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 kh</td>
<td>unvoiced velar fricative</td>
<td>khalaaas ‘finish’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 d</td>
<td>voiced dental plosive</td>
<td>dab ‘fire’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 r</td>
<td>alveolar rolled lingual</td>
<td>roob ‘rain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 s</td>
<td>unvoiced alveolar fricative</td>
<td>sug ‘wait’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 dh</td>
<td>voiced post-alveolar plosive</td>
<td>dheer ‘tall’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 sh</td>
<td>unvoiced palato-alveolar fricative</td>
<td>shid ‘light’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 c</td>
<td>voiced pharyngal plosive</td>
<td>caano ‘milk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 g</td>
<td>voiced velar plosive</td>
<td>gee ‘take’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 f</td>
<td>unvoiced labio-dental fricative</td>
<td>fur ‘open’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 q</td>
<td>(Arabic غ), uvular plosive</td>
<td>qaad ‘take’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 k</td>
<td>unvoiced velar plosive</td>
<td>keen ‘bring’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 l</td>
<td>alveolar lateral</td>
<td>lug ‘leg’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 m</td>
<td>labio-nasal</td>
<td>mid ‘one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 n</td>
<td>alveolar nasal</td>
<td>san ‘nose’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 w</td>
<td>bi-labial glide</td>
<td>kuwan ‘these’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 h</td>
<td>unvoiced glottal fricative</td>
<td>hal ‘one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 y</td>
<td>palatal glide</td>
<td>yeel ‘do’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The glottal stop (hamza — Arabic) /’/

The hamza does not stand alone as an independent phonetic sound, but it is placed over a vowel to show the glottalization or sudden escape of air in the human glottis, when pronouncing vowels, e.g. la’ ‘without’.
CHAPTER I

SOMALI NURSERY SONGS

The oral literature concerning with the Somali children are mainly divided into two genres which are:

a) nursery songs called hobeeya hobeeya
b) folktales for children

Although these two genres differ in form, they have the same objective which is to entertain or beguile the child while it is on the mother’s lap or in the cradle and also at a later stage when it acquires the rudiments of speech.

The Somali society is mainly a pastoral one whose economic lifestyle is based on animal husbandry which they have practised for centuries past. Their oral literature therefore reflects the life of this pastoral people in all its divers aspects. The nursery songs and the children’s stories are important mediums that tell us much of the Somali pastoralist’s life and his perception of the world around him. The following examples of nursery songs describe this rural cultural environment in which the songs are created and the special characteristics by which this environment differs from all the other world cultures.

1. THE NURSERY SONGS (HOBEeya HOBEeya)

One of Nature’s gifts to man is the power of speech that makes him able to express his emotions in a verbal message or in a song with measured strings of words or sounds. In this situation the hearer would understand the meaning of such messages if there exists a common language between the singer and the hearer. A human baby in its formative stages of growth that has not yet acquired the language of its society does not have the ability of understanding such verbal messages. It could, however, hear its mother’s song as soon as it gain consciousness.

The present writer who grew up among the pastoral community in the north-eastern part of the country vividly recalls how his
grand-mother – Xareedo\textsuperscript{1} was her name – sung to him the *hobeeya hobeeya*, rocking the baby in her warm gentle arms. I was the second of ten children born to my mother, and being the first-born of six brothers they called me Axmed-nuur.\textsuperscript{2} Siciido – the first-born daughter – did not receive the excessive care and fondling that everyone in the family gave me from the day I appeared among them. In my sixtyfive years of life the sweet memory of my happy childhood in an idyllic setting has remained in my consciousness.

The Somali mother, much like her sister elsewhere in the world, sings to her little baby, and such babies are called *hobeeya hobeeya* or *huwaaya huwaaya* in the dialect of the southern regions of the country. These strings of words have no particular meaning in themselves but they serve only as non-sense syllables of the song that follows. Roughly translated, it means ‘Hey! Hey!’ or ‘Shshsh!’ by which the mother wishes to attract the baby’s attention, often when it cries before she sings for it.

1.1 THE CONTENTS OF THE SOMALI NURSERY SONGS

In her baby songs mother introduces diverse subjects or images drawn from Somali pastoral life, as we shall see in the songs recorded here. Her primary motivation, especially when the baby is still too young, may be:

1) to express her maternal love to her child
2) to soothe and beguile the child
3) to quieten the crying baby
4) to dull the baby to sleep
5) to warn the baby of the dangers of the outside world, etc.

The Somali mother who may be illiterate herself describes all these topics in her baby songs which may continue throughout the period of the child’s dependence on its mother, until about the age of five.

1.2 THE NURSERY SONGS AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF SOMALI ORAL POETRY

The nursery songs are an important part of the Somali oral poetry as they play a significant role in the caring for and educating the children, so that they become useful members of the society when they grow up. We shall discuss here the types of children’s songs
among the pastoralists and how they are employed by mothers in the bringing-up of their babies.

The responsibility of bringing up a baby in a Somali nomad family falls mainly upon the mother’s shoulders, since she is the backbone of the family life. The father also has a role to play in this task, though his is not as dominant as that of the mother. The Somali mother could never be fully repaid for her selfless duty towards her children. It is a pity that the Somali society in general does not often appreciate the mother’s sacrifices for the members of her family and for the nation as a whole. One main reason for this is that the country was for a long time under colonial domination and the Somalis had not the possibility of improving their social lives. Another cause for the inferior status of women in our society is that the Somali male, being tradition-bound, is generally inclined to subjugate and oppress their women, keeping them in a subservient position. This lower status of the Somali women is reflected by the Somali usage of paying fifty camels to the relatives of a murdered woman, while hundred is the amount paid in the case of a man.

The majority of the Somalis are pastoralists, as we pointed out earlier, and the mother’s domestic duties are vital for the survival of the family. Our present brief discussion would therefore be mainly concerned with the role of the rural Somali mother who still maintains the social usages she had inherited form her mother and grandmother. These usages are based upon an ancient set of socio-cultural values and a code of behaviour. In due time she would transmit these time-honoured ancient values over to her children, and in their turn they would do the same. In this way the generation of Somalis succeed one another, and they transmit their cultural heritage that makes them apart from all other people on the African continent.

The young generation of today forgot much of the cultural values of their forefathers, mainly due to the considerable foreign influence affecting Somali society in recent years. The young Somali mother living in the urban areas knows almost nothing about the ancient cultural values of her people. She has been subjected to the foreign cultural values diffused in the mass media in the form of films, books, etc., which have the aim of culturally up-rooting the Somali family.

Luckily, her sister living in the rural community still retains the
basic elements of the Somali traditional values. The rural mother participates in the management of her family affairs, playing a dominant role in such vital occupations as herding the livestock, loading the articles of the mobile family hut onto the pack camel when the pastoral family removes to new pasture lands and unloading the same and reconstructing it in the new site; miling the lactating animals and feeding the members of the family with the milk; churning the extra milk to produce butter from it; fabricating all the articles of the mobile hut; preparing the meat dishes whenever an animal is slaughtered for food and feeding the family with it; preserving for future use the extra meat, say a camel which could not be consumed at once, etc. In addition to all these domestic tasks the mother has the great responsibility of bearing and bringing up her children. This natural function of the mother causes her untold suffering and sacrifices which the Somali men do not always appreciate. A little toothless smile she sees on her baby’s face may, however, make the mother forget all the enormous suffering she has gone through in bearing and raising her child. For the springs of her love are indeed inexhaustible and that tiny innocent smile recharges her heart with kindness, with mercy.

The nursery songs the Somali mother sings to her baby reflect the enormous love and tenderness which only she is capable to bestow. It is a pity that the urban mothers of today have generally forgotten the social role of these ancient songs for children, for one seldom hears an urban mother singing to hobeeya hobeeya nowadays. For they have lost touch, due to the reason stated earlier, with the Somali traditions in which the nursery songs are embedded.

In rare occasions, however, you may hear in the slum quarters of Mogadishu an elderly grand-mother reciting the hobeeya hobeeya with the heart-rending melody, and you then realize that this ancient popular art is still alive even among the Somali womenfolk in the urban centres. Since there was in the last few years a considerable influx of the rural population into the cities, pastoral mothers may have been reviving the hobeeya hobeeya in the urban areas like Mogadishu. This is a welcome trend for it rejuvenates the ancient art of cradle songs in the Somali cities.
2. THE TYPES OF CHILDREN’S SONGS

The children’s songs recited by the Somali mothers could be divided into the following two categories:

a) songs for baby-boys
b) songs for baby-daughters

As we have stated earlier the cradle songs reflect the mother’s selfless love of her child and her fervent hope that the baby may grow up to be a useful person to the parents and to the society as a whole. In analysing the songs, however, one feels that the Somali mother tends to give more of her love to her baby-boy, than to the baby-daughter. We shall record here as an illustration the following nursery songs.

2.1 WEDDING SONGS

The married life of a Somali family begins when the couple are officially wed and they are declared as husband and wife. There is a series of rituals in connection with the traditional Somali marriages, which are outside the scope of our present discussion. Before you produce a son you should get his mother, the Somali say. We shall, therefore, start with the quotation of a song sung by a group of women who lead the bride into her new home on the wedding night or soon after it. In the song the singers are foretelling the arrival of a son, not a daughter, in the new family:

Song 1 – Take the gift from us

geesiyoow! brave man!
gargaar ayaanmu kuu wadnaaye present beneficient to you we brought
naga guddoon the gift from us take
guul Eebbe idin siiye may Allah bless you both
naga guddoon the gift take from us
toban wiiloo taabbagala may Allah bless you
Eebbahay ku sii with ten sons strong
wiil iyo waalid may parents and children all be
guul ku waara victorious everafter
naga guddoon... the gift from us take...

2.2 THE SONG OF A PREGNANT WOMAN

When the delivery time approaches an expectant Somali mother
becomes very much excited as she is in a crucial moment of her life, a moment when she is about to bring out a new life into the world. In such a moment the woman may sing softly to herself in this vein:

**Song 2 – Wacays**

- Wacays baan soo wadaa  
  Wacays the boy
- waa wiil  
  I’m bringing out
- Bareerraan dabowadaa  
  Bareer the girl
- wa gabar...  
  after him forth’d come...

Let us suppose that a baby boy is born to the mother and that the mother had safely completed the period of convalescence. The conclusion of this confinement period, when the husband is not allowed by tradition to have sexual relations with his wife, is also significant.

The man sleeps elsewhere for female relatives stay at nights with the mother and child in her hut until the end of the seclusion period. At the end of this period the wife takes bath for the first time since the delivery and rearranges the beddings in the hut. Noticing these activities the husband would know that all is well again and may resume his sexual relations with his wife. The wife recommences her domestic duties which other women did for her during the confinement. Looking after the newborn son would take much of the mother’s time in this period of her life and singing to the child is a part of her task.

**2.2.1 Nursery songs for baby boys**

In these songs the mother expresses her infinite love for her newly-born son who made her forget the great suffering she had gone through during pregnancy:

**Song 3 – Dhamac**

- aada Dhamacow i dhuubay  
  Dhamac^4_ darling mine
- dhafoorrada igaga yaalla  
  for your sake much’ve I suffered in life
- dhibaatiyo cudur ma eego  
  sunken already’re temples mine
- kolkaad dhalataad dhawaagday  
  sickness and suffering untold
- dhudday dhaxan bayga duushay  
  for your sake willingly I bear
- dhulkiibaa ii iftiimay...  
  when with a cry you were born
  joy enormous warmed me
  brilliant was the whole world for me...
Song 4 – Why capricious be?

In this song the mother asks her baby son why he is crying so miserably and rending her heart:

hobeeya hobeeya
maxaa kugu dhacay dhiblaawe?
ma dhiishi baan la buuxin?
gabloolood godol ka weydey?
ma odaygii baal socdaalay?
ma giiraa geedo weydey?

hey hey baby
why cry darling mine?
why so capricious be?
a drop of milk giving you no more?
had mine breast dried up all?

Song 5 – Long may you live

It is the mother’s highest hope that her son grows up to be a strong and brave man; in this song she expresses such hope:

hobeeya hobeeya
dhallaamadu waa dhashaane
dhashaaniinoo dhintaaane
ha dhimanoo laguma dhababao
dhul iyo dhagax haw dheexynin
dhadhaab culus laguma saaro
dharaar habartaan ma ooyo
dhallaamada kaama weydo
dushiyo laabta dallaalin...

hey hey baby
many a child is born and dies
may you live long darling mine
may evil eyes never on you be casted
beneath the cold earth
may you never lie lifeless
stones heavy may they never place
onto your grave fresh
over your demise cruel
may your mother never cry
in her heart and spine

Song 6 – Bereft of parents may you never be

In this song the mother expresses fervent hopes that her son may never be bereft of his kind mother, his respected father, brothers and all his close relatives who would support him in his growing period and in his future life:

hobeeya hobeeya
ha waayin wardheere aabbe

hey hey baby
may there always by your side be
a father who among men has a name
Song 7 – As admirable as the green valley

In this song the mother compares her baby boy with the beauty of the countryside, the tidal rivers, the green valleys where the livestock peacefully graze, the water reservoirs filled up by the torrential rains:

**hobeeya hobeeya**

* Dixida⁷ Gaaroodiyow⁸

* Dalyoo⁹ soo noqotayowa¹⁰

* Digweynoo¹¹ buuxsantowa

* Dureemaha Cali-kablowa¹²...

---

Song 8 – Black is beauty

In this song the mother tells her baby that the black colour is beautiful and that all things that have this colour are the best objects; hence the child should never be ashamed of his black skin:

**hobeeya hobeeya**

* ninkii maalaal madow

* baddiyo moolkaa madow leh

* madowga ceeb ha isku moodin...

---

Song 9 – Galloping on a white foal

In this song the mother expresses her great desire of seeing one day her grown-up son as a brave and elegant young man:

**hobeeya hobeeya**

* wax waliba waa ayaane

* ayaan iyo amar Ilaahe

* adoo laba go ’iyo shaal leh

* adoo gaydhastay timaha

* adoo geel dhalay la jooga

---
Song 10 – **The camels defend**

The mother’s desire that her son be a brave man when he grows up and defend his livestock is fervently expressed in this song:

*adoo cad ku taagan* on a foal white galloping by...

*adoo xalxaleetyaaya* adooxeebaha maaraaya

*xariir ku mardaadiyaaya* ninkii ku arkaa ayaan leh...

**hobeeya hobeeya** hey hey baby
**haddaad gaadhoo gabowdo** should mighty Allah grants
**haddii guulle Alla yeelo** that you in long years live
**haddaad geeleena raacdo** should you the camels take out to graze
**haddii guuto u timaaddo** should enemy the herd attacked
**rasaastu hadday gariirto** should bullets deadly whistled around
**hadday raacdadu ruceyso** should men rushed the herd to retrieve
**haddii meel la isku gaaro** should forces all last clashed

*mar uu baad go’i lahayde* but once you would die darling mine
*guntoo geela ha ka roorin...* be brave then the camel defend...

Song 11 – **Marry the high-born girl**

In this song the mother advises her son to marry a noble-born girl when he grows up, and not to marry a lazy woman who would give him nothing but trouble:

**hobeeya hobeeya** hey hey baby
**haddaad gaadhoo gabowdo** should mighty Allah grants
**haddii guulle Alla yeelo** that you in long years live
**haddii geeriyi ku deyso** if death spares you
**haddaad guur taawinaysyo** that you may one day marry wished
**kollaba goomboar ha guursan** slovenly woman marry never my son
**gobtaaday kaa rartaayoo** for she would remove you away

*guntaaday kugu dirtaaye;* from noble people to you related
**miday hooyadeed habaartay** servants against you she would set;
**haweeney horay u joogtey** she whose mother had cursed
**midaan haybleed la garanin** and spinster with age advanced
**hubsoo hooyo ha guursan...** she whose clan you know not

Beware darling mine

**Song 12 – The leader of men**

In this song the mother wishes her son to grow up to be a wise
man who would lead his community when he reaches a mature age:

\[\text{gaboobe guyaal jirora} \quad \text{in many years may you live}\\ 
\text{gar weyne ka soo baxyowa} \quad \text{hairy beard and mane may you grow}\\ 
\text{cirradu gaasheysayowa} \quad \text{in Garduur}^{16} \text{ and the valley of Wolves}^{17}\\ 
\text{Garduur iyo Godanka Yeyle} \quad \text{around the Nugaal}^{18} \text{ valleys wide}\\ 
\text{Nugaal godan gawyahaeda} \quad \text{affairs of the clan may you wisely preside}\\ 
\text{guddoonka ka jeediyowa} \quad \text{in the shade of the assembly tree}\\ 
\text{gardhada geedka u marowa} \quad \text{place of honour being yours by right}\\ 
\text{guntiga lowyaha geshowa} \quad \text{around the knees the loin cloth to tie}\\ 
\text{gartii raagtaba ridowa...} \quad \text{with wisdom justice dispensing}\\ 
\text{litigations old among men} \quad \text{settling amicably...}

Song 13 – Indescribable in song
In this song the mother tells her son that he is so beautiful and precious that it would be impossible for her to describe him in her songs:

\[\text{hobeeya hobeeya} \quad \text{hey hey baby}\\ 
\text{haddaan heestaada qaado} \quad \text{should I your song start to sing}\\ 
\text{haddaan qaadoo qandiciyo} \quad \text{with love’s warmth and fervour}\\ 
\text{haddaan qalgallooc u diido} \quad \text{straight from mine heart’s depth}\\ 
\text{haddaan qoladinna sheego} \quad \text{who your clan is should I others tell}\\ 
\text{habeenkaa igu dumaaya} \quad \text{on me night would fall}\\ 
\text{haleelaa iga gudaysa} \quad \text{before the end of the song I come to}\\ 
\text{halaa iga gaagaxaaya} \quad \text{milch camels mine would go stray}\\ 
\text{hurdaa iga baaqanaysa} \quad \text{milking sessions they would miss}\\ 
\text{intii xumi way xanaaqi} \quad \text{all night long sleepless I would stay}\\ 
\text{kasyari kabahay ka roori} \quad \text{people envious anger would be with us}\\ 
\text{dhowaantii way dhagaaqi} \quad \text{fools from their shoes would run away}\\ 
\text{ishoodiyo cavrigooda} \quad \text{relatives would from us retreat}\\ 
\text{caloosha-kakuunahooda} \quad \text{for envious of us they are all}\\ 
\text{dhunkaal baan kaaga deyrey...} \quad \text{with dhunkaal}^{20} \text{ venom deadly}\\ 
\text{habeenkaa igu dumaaya} \quad \text{forever I would protect you darling mine}\\ 
\text{haleelaa iga gudaysa} \quad \text{from the evils of this world...}

Song 14 – The mother’s solace
In this song the mother states that her son is her solace:

\[\text{hobeeya hobeeya} \quad \text{hey hey baby}\\ 
\text{haddii lay doorransiiyo} \quad \text{offered should I be}\\ 
\text{adiyo Daarood}^{21} \text{ dhammaanti} \quad \text{all the men of Daarood tribe great}\\ 
\text{adiyo duubiga Shirshoore}^{22} \quad \text{of the Shirshoore clans as well} \]
adiyo deeblaha la maalo  
adiyo doonyaha la fuulo 
dugsiiye adaan ku doortay...

do of the camels they milk 
of the boats they sail on the seas 
all this riches should I be offered 
I prefer you darling mine 
for the solace of my soul you are...

2.2.2 Nursery songs for baby girls

A close investigation of the nursery songs for girls seems to indicate that songs for boys are greater in number than those for girls and one reason for this seems to be that Somali parents, mainly in the pastoral community, prefer having more sons than daughters in their family. It is a part of the ancient traditions of this society to regard a boy to be more useful to them than a girl in performing such strenuous tasks as herding the camels, watering the livestock at the waterponds, defending the animals from looters, etc. An old Somali saying declares that: a son is your righthand, a daughter is a mattress for an enemy. As an illustration we shall record here nursery songs for girls sung by their mothers.

Song 15 – Fariid I preferred to Fiido the daughter

In this song the mother tells her baby daughter that she would have been much happier if a boy had been born to her instead of a girl:

hobeeya hobeeya  
maxaa Fiido ku keenay
Fariid baa dhalan lahaaye
raggaa faalali lahaaye
wan baa fooraari lahaaye...

hey hey baby  
Fiido\textsuperscript{23} what bright you forth 
out of my belly 
Fariid\textsuperscript{24} the son should have been born 
to me instead 
the men the event should have celebrated 
fat rams should have been feasted on...

Song 16 – Troublesome a daughter is

In this song the mother explains the difficulties involved in raising a daughter whose dependence on the parents continues even after she is married and establishes her own family; with a piercing humour the mother scolds her crying daughter thus:

hobeeya hobeeya  
dhibaal gaab waa dhibley
dhbaad soo-doonadkeeda
dhibteediyo dhigo-jacladeeda

hey hey baby  
troublesome a daughter always is indeed 
for trousseau more often she comes back 
for the camel-loads with her to take away
Song 17 – Nature’s gift precious

The mother’s scolding words addressed to her daughter as indicated in the preceding examples should not be taken as an expression of hatred on the part of the mother; these critical words are more of a humorous nature. In this song on the contrary the mother showers words of praise onto the daughter:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hobeeya hobeeya} & \quad \text{hey hey baby} \\
\text{Cambaro-kaahaay korkaaga} & \quad \text{Cambara-kaaha}^{27} \text{ darling mine} \\
\text{korkaaga cad ee wanaagsan} & \quad \text{brilliant and beauteous your body is} \\
\text{indhaha kuliga madowle} & \quad \text{with eyes like beads black} \\
\text{kulayl cudur kaama daaro…} & \quad \text{may disease never destroy} \\
\end{align*}
\]

nature’s gift precious to you…

3. Work songs for girls

The preceding three songs are examples of songs for baby girls still in the cradle or in the mother’s lap. As the girl grows up and is about five years old she is introduced to the domestic work of running the family home. Among the pastoral society a girl or a boy of that age is considered to be an active member of the family and specific duties, such as minding goat kids, running errands for the grown-ups, are assigned to him or her. The songs sung by the mother to her daughter at this stage are concerned mainly with the domestic work which the girl has to carry out around home; for she is already a potential mother and has to be trained for that role.

Social life begins with the family unit composed chiefly of the spouses and their children. Feeding the family is mainly the duty of the wife. The majority of the Somalis are pastoralists whose economic life is based on livestock products such as milk, butter, meat, etc.

In some of the agricultural regions of the country food grains are
grown such as maize, sorghum, wheat, etc. These cereals form the stable food items for the farming community as well as a part of the pastoral population during the dry season when animal products are scarce. The dried grains are pounded into flour by the women with pestle and mortar and then cooked into millet meal, porridge or baked into pancakes.

Pounding grains for food is solely the task of the women who created a considerable amount of nursery songs concerning with this and other domestic duties around the home. In addition to this the women singers may express certain criticism in their song against their society including their husband, the other wife or wives a man may have, etc. We shall record here as an illustration examples of labour-oriented nursery songs sung by mothers to their daughters.

Song 18 – With men never flirt
In this grain-pounding song the mother warns her daughter of the dishonour that falls upon a girl who loses her modesty before marriage:

```plaintext
ihiyey ihi
gabadhii xilataa
aakhiray welweshaa
addiunkay walthataa
«yay habaaray?» dhahdaa;
yaa habaari lahaa
waa habeen la dhashee
waa hid loo qoraye...
```

dear me!
she who her modesty loses
in the hereafter laments she
should with men flirts in this world
«accursed why am I?» asks she
nobody had accursed her
at birth ill-fated she was...

Song 19 – The right man to marry
In this pestle and mortar song the mother advises her young daughter to choose the right man to marry when she comes of age:

```plaintext
ihiyey ihi
gacaloygacalo
gacantay midigey
waa ku faaninayaa
faanku waa kuu yaal
fayahaad ku siddaa
afar kaaga digaa
kaaga dayrinayaa
kaaga diindhigayaa:
ninka geesi ha guursan
ninka gaaban ha guursan
ninka dheerna ha guursan...
```

dear me!
darling mine
right hand mine you are
to your praise I’m singing loud
for praiseworthy you really are
for all over you carry grace
of your things I’m warning you
advice essential giving you beforehand
beware of these in all times:
a brave man marry never
neither a shorty
nor a tall one
A coward avoid as well
when the camels are looted
the brave man his weapons grabs first
into battle bloody his men he leads
in front of them all he rushes on
the first to fall on the awesome field it is he
leaving you a widow with broken heart
hence such a man marry not
when *cadho* the camel afflicts all
their legs only a shorty could treat
for higher up the animals’ tall body
unable to reach he is
hence such a man marry never;
when hunger severe comes around
in the hut the tall man lays prostrate
«to death I’m starving!» woefully cries he
the will he hasn’t hunger to resist
in disgrace exists he forever
hence such a man marry never...

**Song 20 – A spinster’s lament**

In this song a girl who failed to find a man to marry her laments thus:

**ihiyey ihi**
**harayey harayey**
**kolkaa waan habaroohey**
**waan hiraanhirayaa**
**hooyaday wax ma dhaamo**
**waan horaad-balaqoobey...**

**Song 21 – Stay at home should no man come along**

In this grain-pouding song the mother advises her daughter to stay at home should she find no man to marry her and to wait for her luck:

**ihiyey ihi**
**gabno-woeixiyaaay**
**geel ma kaala baxaa**
**geel haddaan kugu waayo**

**32**
Song 22 – The four men not to marry

In this song which also belongs to the grain pounding work songs the mother warns her daughter not to marry a man who lives with his own mother, for mothers-in-law are often the cause of broken homes:

|ihiyey ihi| dear me!
|gacaloy gacalo| enviable darling mine
|afar kaaga digaa| of four things I'm warning you
|kaaga dayriyayaa| advice essential giving you beforehand
|kaaga diin-dhigayaa:| beware of these in all times:

|habarlaawe nin haaya| a man with orphans in his care
|habar weyn nin lahaa| a man with a senior wife
|habartiis nimay joogto| a man with several sisters
|hablo kay la dhasheen;| such men marry never;

|habarlaawe koryaa| among them in case you wished to choose
|habar weyn la furryaa| orphans may grow up in time
|hablo gaursade aa| senior wife divorced may she be
|hooggw waa habartiis| sisters may in marriage be given away
|aan geesna kaaga harayn...| but his mother in mind you
| | a disaster always hanging around you...

4. WORK SONG IN THE BURAANBUR GENRE

The preceding work songs were composed in the one-line short verses typical of this particular genre of Somali poetry. The following work song is composed in a different poetic genre called buraanbur employed solely by the Somali women and because of this it is known as the feminine genre. The buraanbur line of verse is longer than the line of the nursery song which contains only one hemstitch, whereas the buraanbur line has two hemstitches each having its own subject or a poetic image.
Song 23 – The duties of a young wife

In this *buraanbur* work song the mother is describing the difficult domestic work which her daughter has to carry out in her own household when she is married, emphasizing that the young wife would have to stand on her own in the management of her domestic affairs without relying on other women, not even on her own mother:

*adoo so guureyoo, galan-galcooyin qaba* when after journey arduous
*adoo sida geela dhalay, godol lehoo irmaan* you are tired and exhausted when you are in lactation like the she-camels in breeding time
*adoo sida awr gurgura, gibilsanoo wax sida* when you are laden with loads heavy like burden camel obedient
*reer aan gacalkaa ahayn, gees lagaaga furay;* you are told foreigners unfriendly to live with;
*arigu wuxuu dooni inaad, soo dabbaalataa* managing the goat needs of you
*awrku wuxuu dooni inaad, dabar ku soo xidhaa* tying up securely the burden camel needs of you
*aqalku wuxuu dooni inaad, shay ku soo dartaayoo soo dugaalisaay* new article to add to it the hut needs of you
*maqashu waxay dooni inaad soo dareerisaay* cosy a bit to make the home baby goats herding needs of you
*ninku daryeel kaa helaayoo meelo kuu diraa* comforting the husband needs of you his wishes to attend to
*hangool ku yadhiyoo hawsha kugu dilaa* a hooked stick he may ask you to fetch
*misana adigoon wax dhimin, aabi kugu dilaa* to beat you with for mistakes minor you make or for no cause at all
*aniga hay dudin, dantaa baa ku haysatee...*31 supremacy his to assert solely blame me not woman he would say for your fate feminine is so decreed...

As we have seen in the preceding examples the nursery songs play an important role in the education of children in the pastoral society as the mother discusses in her songs all aspects of the customs and traditions on which the life of the community is based. The mother is the chief educator of her child whose character she has
to form at an early stage of its life in accordance with the norms of her society. She advises her son to be a brave man, to marry into a noble family, to be a wise leader of men, etc. She warns her daughter to safeguard her feminine modesty in her maidenhood, to stay at the parental home should no man come along to ask for her hand in marriage, etc. The elders of the community also take part in the instruction of the children by imparting them the ideals of their pastoral society by means of story-telling which is a practical school of life for the young person in a Somali pastoral family.

Having been instructed in the ancient customs and traditions of their community the children grow up to be its full members with the rights and obligations prescribed in the unwritten laws of their people. The young men and women, the yesterday’s children, are now ready to participate in the productive labour of the community based on animal husbandry. If in the childhood days it was the mother who sang cradle songs to her baby, the grown-up sons and daughter would now sing themselves songs concerning productive labour, such as herding the animals, building the mobile hut of the pastoral family, etc. They would sing recreational songs to entertain themselves in the spare time in the dancing square, chiefly in the rain seasons when the encampment stays in one place for a long time and the young people have less to do. These songs would be the subject of the following chapters of the present work.

1 The name means she who is as clear and sweet as rain water drawn from a pool cooled by the gentle breeze.
2 Axmed the bringer of light and happiness into the family.
3 In the case of a rural mother this may not be more than a fortnight, after which the mother resumes her normal duties. In the urban centres forty days is the convalescence period after the delivery, during which the couple may enjoy their sexual relations.
4 The boy’s name, from Dhamac – live embers, he who warms up with joy.
5 In which the mother keeps the baby milk.
6 On which the Somali mother carries her baby.
7 Eragrostis Papposa (Roem & Schult) Steud.
8 The Hawd or plateau land in northwestern Somalia where camels thrive well.
9 A valley in the Nugaal basin, north of the provincial town of Laascaanood in northeastern Somalia.
10 The natural reservoir of Harodigeed in northern Somalia, north of the Wardheer town.
Enteropogon macrostachus (A. Rich) Benth, out of which Somali pastoral women fabricate grass mats.

Cali – a personal male name; Kabloo – means ‘shoeless’, hence ‘Cali the shoeless’, which is here used as a qualifier of the name Dureemaha that grows well in a place called Cali the shoeless.

The typical Somali nomad’s dress consisting of two white cotton sheets, one worn as a loin cloth, the other as covering for the upper part of the body.

Young, unmarried nomads condition their bushy hair with wet earth, ashes and other materials which give the hair a redish colour that stays for a long period.

[Editor’s comment: The last part of this song is left untranslated in the original manuscript. For the sake of clarity, the relevant translation is provided here: ‘gracefully walking through the beach/showing off stylish silk clothes/lucky is he who sees you’].

A flood-water reservoir in northwest Somalia between the towns of Awaare and Wardheer.

The valley of wolves – also a reservoir in the northwest Somalia near the Buuhoodle water wells.

The Nugaal valley, a dried river-bed running from the Golis mountain range in northern Somalia to the south, emptying into the Indian Ocean at the city of Eyl.

Somali elders have a special sitting pose in which they put their shawls or upper garment over the back while seated on the ground and then tie up together the ends of the shawl around the bended knees. A person could sit for hours in this fashion without getting tired.

Panicum turgidum Forsk.; Commifora erlangeriana.

A major Somali tribe.

A clan of the Daarood.

Female name, meaning ‘she who is born in the evening’.

Male name, ‘the nice, lovable one’.

A wooden hook with which pastoral men pull down thorn branches when building stockades for the livestock; a cruel husband may beat his wife with an hangool.

The highland area in the northwest Somalia.

Female name, literally it means ‘bright embergris, the precious one as the embergris, the brilliant one as the dawn lights’.

This is an exclamation, a groan indicative of pain caused by hard work, pounding grains in this case; in the beguiling nursery songs hobeeya hobeeya (hey hey baby) was the initial phrase for every such songs, but in the labour-oriented songs ihiyey ihi is the introductory phrase, the translation of which is nearly ‘oh, dear me!’.

The Scabies disease which often attacks the Somali camels.

For further information on the buraanbur genre see song 84.

This song was collected from Miss Sacdiya Maxamed Muuse of the Academy of Sciences and Arts, Mogadishu, 29.10.85.

For further information on Somali folktales see Axmed Cartan Xaange, Sheeko-xa-xirroofinka Somaaliyeed (Folk Tales from Somalia), Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, Sweden, 1988, as well as A. Puglielli (ed.), Sheekooyiin. Favole somale raccolte da Axmed Cartan Xaange (Somali tales collected by Axmed Cartan Xaange), English translation by Axmed Cartan Xaange, Italian translation by Mara Frascarelli, L’Harmattan Italia, Torino, 1998.
CHAPTER II

DOMESTIC WORK SONGS BY WOMEN

1. WORK SONGS CONCERNING WITH THE MAKING OF HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES

Social life always begins with the establishment of the family unit composing of the spouses and their children. In the extended Somali family the parents and other relatives of the spouses may also be included in the family members.

The pastoral Somalis live in small huts constructed of wooden poles, curved sticks bent and stuck into the ground and then tied together with ropes. This wooden frame is then covered up with roofing material made of hides and grass mats. When the ground is rough the floor space is lined with soft dried grasses and the bedding made of fibre mats, calf-skins, etc. are laid on the floor. No such grass lining is needed when the ground is sandy and soft. In the daytime the bedding is folded up and stuck against the walls so as to clear the floor space for diurnal activities.

1.1 WOMEN’S ROLE IN THE PASTORAL SOMALI SOCIETY

Man is a home-maker, it is said. In the pastoral Somali society, however, this great social responsibility falls upon the women. The moveable Somali hut called *aqal* is the principal shelter for the family and the whole structure is loaded on a pack camel when the family moves to new pasture lands. All the items in the *aqal*, except the main support pillars, are entirely the work of the women who utilize as the construction material the branches and fibre trees and plants available from the bush. For instance, the fibre from the *argeed*, *caw*, *qabo* and other Somali plants are utilized for making the vessels for storing liquids, such as water, milk, clarified ghee, etc.; whereas ropes and lines are made from the *xaskul* (sisal) and other fibres.

Somali women in the rural areas cooperate among themselves in various domestic works as the fabrication of household articles like the *kebed*, a woven fibre mat, the *raar*, a grass mat, etc. The *kebed* has various uses such as roofing for the hut, as a partition screen inside the
hut or at the doorway. The *raar* is chiefly used as roof-covering for the hut, or as a sleeping mat. In making these and other household articles (sowing, embroidery, etc.) several women usually cooperate among themselves so as to pool together their labour and to shorten the time required to fabricate a given article.

1.2 **Making the *kebed***

The *kebed* is the most highly priced in the Somali hut. Usually a group of about six women take part in the weaving of a *kebed* and the whole process may take a month or so to complete.

The women go into the bush to collect the necessary material required for making the *kebed*. The *galool, qurac, qararro, qansax* are some of the trees by which the best fibre is produced. The fine fibre tissue is ground while it is freshly cut and then combined into fine thread with a pointed metallic needle.

The fine thread is next dyed in various colours before weaving it into the *kebed*. From the park, roots or leaves of such local trees and plants as the *qaroon, sarmaan, xagar*, fast dyes are produced by the women through simple chemical processes like fermentation which turns the ingredients into a liquid compound in the required colours. The fibre thread is put into this herbal preparation contained in a large vessel and kept for about two or three days, after which period the material is taken out and dried in the sun.

1.3 **The *kebed* Work Songs**

While the women are engaged in weaving the *kebed* they sing lively work songs to ease the physical labour as well as to entertain themselves. In the following lines the woman sings in praise of her *kebed*:

**Song 24 – From tallest trees comes the fibre**

```
geedka geedka ugu dheer
laga garaacayey
 galool muray mullaaxdiisey
Awdal laga keenay
alalag dheerey
IL bari lagaga soo ururyey
geesi geel keeniyo
gaari xirataa;
```

from tallest trees comes the fibre
from *galool*² park the *kebed* is made
from Awdal³ it comes
with ululations ceremonious
from the east⁴ many come
my *kebed* to admire
brave man with camels could buy it
wise wife her home with *kebed* decorates;
A young housewife who has no kebed in her home and does not know how to make it is said to be basari ‘neglectful, slovenly’. The household effects and the livestock of such a woman would always be a ready prey for the wild beasts and no man would consider her to be the right woman to marry. Such a woman is criticized in the following lines of a work song:

Song 25 – Her hut hollow-sided remains

naag aan daah xiraney she who in her home kebed has not
docadalooley her hut hollow-sided remains
wan loo diley dugaag gurayey beasts wild would feast

The extremely hard work involved in fabricating the kebed and how meticulous the women-weavers are in this undertaking is described in the following song:

Song 26 – The ropes to straighten I must

xaabsatoy kebedey troublesome are thou kebed to make
xaamuq badaney unwieldy indeed is thy work
maxaan kaga xil-beelaayey criticism severe how shall I avoid?
kaga xil-beelaayey the ropes to straighten I must
xarigga beegiyo the seam to tighten:
dharka kama loodoy painful my back already is
luquntu jabaney the neck with toil I broke, too
aday lumiyeyey lulaatoy; the kebed is the cause of my illness all;
baranbaraa xagatey cockroaches gnawed it all
buul xun bay dhextiil for so long in the hut neglected it laid
bilista yaa ii xil qarin women’s criticism how shall I avoid
xariggu waa go’ayey... for the kebed ropes mine are badly cut...
In the following songs a woman describes her need of other women’s help in making the *kebed*:

**Song 27 – Has the pattern gone wrong**

*ma habaabay*

*ma hilin gudubsan baan ku imid*

*maxay hoorayga laalaada*

*uga hurdaan?...*

has the pattern gone wrong

have I in the design mistaken

why the women don’t give me a hand

my blight taking no notice of?...

A friend replies to the singer of the above song:

**Song 28 – Weavers friends**

*Faadumo gaana iyo*

*Faadumo and other weavers friends*

*gacal dhan baan ogaa*

*were help to help*

*ee miyan garanaayey*

*I knew not you needed help, though...*

*inuu kaa guraaran yahay...*

Her friends came to give her a hand and with satisfaction she appreciated their assistance in the following song:

**Song 29 – So well the hut it fitted**

*barabara-shabeelley*

*o kebed mine*

*buul-shareeraay*

*spotted like the leopard wild*

*ma maantaan bahday helay*

*so well the hut it fitted*

*ninkii tol yar baa tawaawacee*

*relatives mine helped me the *kebed* to make*

*duftii toban ma loo helay...*

*he who relatives many has not*

*much laments that one always*

*bundles ten each of us had woven*

*in no time the *kebed* completed we...*

When the *kebed* is finally completed the owner invites those women who assisted her in its making and she prepares a feast for them. In the following song the guests mentioned the special delicacies they expected their hostess to feed them with:

**Song 30 – Camel’s milk offer us**

*baargab waa seedoo*

*coarse is young camel’s meat*
1.4 The making of the raar (grass-mat) and its work songs

The raar is a grass-mat made from special type of grass that grows wild in the flat lands during the rain season. It is the second important article after the kebed and it is used in various ways, such as roof-covering for the portable nomad’s hut, as bedding, etc. Like the kebed a good deal of labour is sung by women-weavers in making the raar, particularly in collecting and in the preparation of the necessary grasses in sufficient quantities, drying it in the sun, weaving it with fine strings of ropes which are dyed in various colours, etc. When the hut is transported on pack-camel the raar, or the kebed, is the first article to be put on, its soft side being next to the skin of the animal.

The pastoral women produce extraordinarily beautiful raars and they are proud of possessing such fine articles in their homes. Unlike the kebed the raar is usually the creation of only one woman who works on her own measurements, colour patterns, etc. The result is that no two raars are exactly the same in all aspects due to different styles of workmanship.

The raars also have special work songs chanted by the women when engaged in making it. We take as an illustration the following song in which the weaver addresses her raar:

Song 31 – Grass of my creation

*cawsyohow sabool-diid* you grass of my creation
*waqaan suuqa lagu dhigin* that he refuses poor men possessing you
*soddon lagugu baayicin* may you never on the market
«yaa sameeyey?» lagu oran... nor at thirty be valued
*«yaa sameeyey?» lagu oran...* may they never ask you
*«who the woman is* that so beautifully made it»...
2. **Work Songs Critical of Polygamous Men**

Somali women often use their singing talent as an effective medium for the expression of their views on important social issues as the relationship between the men and women in their pastoral community. The grain-pounding sessions in which women cooperate provide the rural womenfolk, as we have stated earlier, with suitable occasions for composing songs concerning with the affairs of their community. In the pestle and mortar song that follows, the woman-singer warns her friend to beware of polygamous men who deceive and break the hearts and homes of credulous women:

**Song 32 – With women many he flirts**

```
  ihiyey ihi                      dear me!
godagle godaglow godadle       aunt mine darling
  godadle                        man of many holes
xiisaalow godadle              with women many often he flirts
  kii garrey gubayow godadle    for mercurial his manners are
kii gafuur diblow godadle       many a woman destroyed he
kii gar ceesaanlow godadle      ugly muzzle of a bull he has
  gabar yar uu qabay            goatee ridiculous he grows
ayuu way i gabtay yiriyey...    «she neglected me!» often he cries
                              of his young wife he complains...
```

3. **Work Songs Critical of Niggardly Husbands**

Many songs have been created by Somali housewives complaining of their husbands who interfere with them in running the household affairs such as the distribution of food, daily expenses – matters which are the concern of the wives in the traditional Somali society. In the following grain-pounding song the wife complains of her husband’s niggardly habits:

**Song 33 – A fellow hard to please**

```
ihiyey ihi                      dear me!
eeddoq qorqode waa qayliyaa    aunt mine darling
  qorqode                        gqarde always shouts at you
  always shouts at you
```

42
oo waa qalaxtamaa
a fellow hard to please he is

oo sida dawacaduu dabalulaa
like the jackal his tail he wags

oo sida shabeelkuu shuuriyaa
like the leopard he snarls wild

oo sida halyeyguu hununiyaa
like the wolf he sniffs about for food

oo sida dhurwaaguu dhederbiyaa
like the hyena he limps around

oo sida libaaxuu labaliqaa;
like the lion he swallows
mouthfuls large;

naa rida qaloo qari buu i yiri
slaughter the goat quick he tells me
hid all the meat he tells me
the entrails are as delicious
as camel’s fat hump he tells me

naa aabbahaa qadi buu i yiri
neighbours inquisitive frighten

naa deriska guulguul buu i yiri
off he tells me

naa hooyadaa eri buu i yiri...
your mother chase away he tells me

4. WORK SONGS CONCERNING WITH MILK CHURNING

4.1 MAKING THE HAAN VESSEL

The liquid containers used by the Somali nomads are mostly manufactured by the Somali women of this society. The haan is the largest vessel in the mobile nomad’s hut and it is used primarily for storing water and milk.

The haan is made of fibre from certain plants available in the countryside such as the qabo which is a short plant, an evergreen growing wild mostly in the highland. It has thorny branches and milky juice in its slender stems.

The plant is burnt first with light bonfire so as to destroy the long thorns and the harmful milky juice and to make the plant accessible. When the burnt qabo branches cool down the women cut them down with an ax and collect them. The next stage is to slice the stems with a metal awl (mudac in Somali) into fine, soft filaments. Using again the mudac the moistured filaments are then sewn in the haan.

The argeeg is another local tubular plant which also grows wild in the low flat lands. Thin roots of the plants are simply pulled up from the ground with the hands and collected in sufficient quantities. With a metallic awl the strong soft skin of the roots are made into fine threads, same as the qabo branches. These fine filaments are then sewn into the haan. A strong pack-camel can carry four large haans each containing about 40 litres of water or milk.
A smaller *haan* with a capacity of about 10 or 15 litres is usually used by the pastoral Somali women for churning milk so as to produce butter.

4.2 **TYPES OF THE HAAN SONGS**

The *haan* songs recited by women in the parts of the country we have indicated are usually of two categories:

a) songs recited when the woman is churning milk in the *haan* so as to extract butter, and 

b) songs recited when women use an empty *haan* as a percussion instrument, like a drum.

The songs in type a) are work songs, while those in type b) are entertainment or recreational songs (see Chapter IV).

The domestic work in the nomadic family, such as building the mobile hut, preparation of meals, milking the animals, looking after the children, etc. is performed by the women. The men tend the camels and water them at the waterponds in the dry season, explore the countryside for grazing and water for the herds and to ensure their security.

In the rainy seasons when the animals breed and produce plenty of milk for the people, the women churn extra milk so as to produce butter from it. Butter is an important food item for the nomads and it is used as sauce for the grain meals like rice and sorghum.

The milk-churner woman sits on the ground with the legs stretched, keeping beside her or between the legs the *haan* full of fresh milk from the goats or cattle, the *haan* being kept in its netlike frame made of sticks and skin strings. She places the *haan* on a small piece of old clothes so as to keep the vessel a little above the ground, facing it topwards herself. The milk churner then begins shaking and rocking the *haan* gently in a back and forth motion, holding it firmly with both hands by the circular handle of the *haan* frame.

After many hours of such operation the milk ferments and tiny white-blue balls of butter begin to swim inside the *haan*. The woman skims off these little balls with a ladle, continuing the process until sufficient quantity is produced. The fat-free milk is called *ciir* and is often thrown away in years of plenty. The butter balls are fried in light fires for a few minutes and the clarified butter or ghee is then obtained. This is the chief source, beside meat, of fat supply for the
pastoral community in Somalia.

The milk churning operation is an arduous labour for the housewife and she sings to the *haan*, to herself in fact, so as to ease for herself the toil of the long hours of rocking the full *haan* back and forth. As an illustration we shall record here few examples of the popular *haan* work songs.

**Song 34 – The butter bring forth**

In this song the woman criticizes the *haan* vessel for not producing the butter sooner and she suspects that someone had perhaps interfered with the vessel in her absence:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dhega-adag dhaallaanka u bax} & \quad \text{hard-hearted *haan* you are}\n\\
\text{dhiidhii buroy ii bax} & \quad \text{for the hungry children}\n\\
\text{bayey bullooy ii bax} & \quad \text{the butter bring forth}\n\\
\text{buroy aadanaay ii bax;} & \quad \text{vessel mine beloved}\n\\
\text{ma anaa luloo leefay} & \quad \text{vessel mine by all admired}\n\\
\text{mase kii lissaa laacay} & \quad \text{a drop of milk did I rock and lick}\n\\
\text{ma aadaa labeen diidey} & \quad \text{did the milker much of the milk drink}\n\\
\text{ma fayoobidoo ogiye} & \quad \text{or the cream you refuse to yield}\n\\
\text{ma furkaa lagaa nuugey...} & \quad \text{unfit you are I know}\n\\
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 35 – Not a gift gorgeous**

In the following song the woman explains how she obtained the *haan* she is using, how the vessel was discarded by another woman before and how the singer rehabilitated and put the old vessel to use again. The *haan* being an old thing is not producing much butter as a new vessel would, and the woman is criticizing the old *haan* for failing her:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{haan yahay} & \quad \text{haan mine darling}\n\\
\text{ku garan waayey} & \quad \text{no longer understand you I}\n\\
\text{waa gorof aan xooleeyey} & \quad \text{discarded old thing it was}\n\\
\text{oo guri ka soo qaaday} & \quad \text{for reuse repaired it I}\n\\
\text{gacalkayna ima siinin} & \quad \text{from junkyard retrieving;}\n\\
\text{gacantayna kuma tolanin;} & \quad \text{not a gift gorgeous it was}\n\\
\text{geeljire ku qooraanseey} & \quad \text{from loving relatives mine}\n\\
\text{geed dheer lagaa soo lul...} & \quad \text{nor with my own hands did I make;}\n\\
\end{align*}
\]

11. through the lid
12. somehow...
13. may camel herders
14. may you on a tall tree be hanged
Song 36 – The dawn on us broke

In this song the woman-singer is addressing the *haan*, demanding of it to produce the butter quickly, because her old man is already pressing her to feed him with fresh butter:

- *haan yahay dhigdhigo dhabar yar* tiny vessel mine
- *waagii dharaarowye* the dawn on us, already broke
- *oday dhagar qabaa yimide* vicious old mine is here as well
- *waa layna dhibayaaye* urging us him with butter to feed
- *sow maad dhanaanaatid...* why tarry the milk sour to turn...

Song 37 – A bowlful of the butter

The singer in this comic song complains of a mischievous young bachelor who had exposed his unseemly genitals to the *haan* which then failed to yield much butter as the woman expected from it:

- *haantu iyadoo doora* fine once was *haan* mine
- *oo doobi laga caadsho* bowlful of butter it then yielded
- *bay dooro doob aragtay* bachelor’s private parts\(^{15}\) unseemly
- *oo dooro-doorowdey...* one day the *haan* beheld
  - worthlessness a vessel it turned since...

---

1. *Galool* ‘Acacia Bussai’; *qurac* ‘Acacia tortilis’; *qararro* ‘Sterculia rhynchocapa’; *qansax* ‘Acacia reficiens Wawra’.
2. See note 1.
3. The ancient city of Saylac on the Red Sea; a thread from there was made in the *kebed*.
4. The eastern society of Somalia.
5. Not to be valued at the small price of thirty schillings, but more than that.
6. Concubines; by tradition the Somalis are polygamous society where a man may take more than one wife and the women generally feel unhappy about it.
7. The *qorqode* is a popular character in Somali oral literature and his niggardly habits are the topic of many songs and stories created by women.
8. [Editor’s comment: According to our informant, the text at lines 12-13 of the English version does not correspond to the translation of the corresponding Somali text; rather, they could be thought of as an extension of the meaning of the previous lines. Furthermore, the following line of the Somali version (line 10, *naa aabbahaa qadi buu i yiri* ‘you do not let your father see (the meat), he told me’) is left untranslated in the manuscript].
10. Asparagus.
11. The lid of the *haan* has a small hole called *furka* in the middle through which the
pressure in the *haan* is released, to avoid it exploiting while being rocked back and forth. When the woman agitates the milk she from time to open opens up the *furka* by removing the small piece of cloth that blocks it and pours a drop of the milk onto her palm and licks it to test whether or not the milk had fermented. This line of the song refers to this testing of the milk by the churner.

12 The milk churner believes that should the milk in the *haan* be sucked through the opening in the lid, the milk would not ferment properly, hence would yield no butter. This line in the song refers to this point.

13 The reference is to the habit of the Somali women disliking the men to interfere with their domestic work, such as cooking, milking the animals, etc. They consider the men to be spoilers and never-do-wells in such activities and they should be kept out of the women’s domain, especially when they churn milk in the *haan*.

14 When an *haan* is out of use and to be discarded the women hang it on a tall tree out of respect for the old vessel that served then, rather than throwing it away; this is the point refered to in the song.

15 See note 12 above.
CHAPTER III

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT SONGS

The majority of the Somali people are pastoralists whose economic life is based on animal husbandry, chiefly camels, cattle, goats and sheep. The animals produce the basic food item for the people, such as meat, milk, butter, as well as trade goods like hides and skins.

Managing the animals is a fulltime job in which all the members of the pastoral family, including old-enough children, are engaged. The typical pastoral family may own 15-20 camels and 50-100 goats and sheep. The main tasks involved in managing the animals are as follows:

a) driving the animals daily to and from the pasture lands;
b) minding the animals while grazing;
c) taking the animals to the waterponds for watering, especially in the dry seasons;
d) ensuring the security of the animals and protecting them from looters, as well as from the wild beasts which pose a constant threat to the herds;
e) constructing the stockade in which the animals are kept for security at night;
f) milking the lactating animals at least twice a day;
g) slaughtering the animals when necessary and apportioning the meat amongst the family members;
h) preparing the animal hides and skins for sale, etc.

The division of these and other related tasks amongst the members of the family is based on age-old traditions in which the men (father, his sons or male relatives) would manage the camels, scouting for new pasture lands, do the fighting for the limited grazing and water resources, etc. The women would manage the cattle, goats and sheep and do the domestic work such as constructing the mobile hut of the family, cooking, raising the children, etc.

In connection with these livestock management activities a considerable amount of oral poetry had been created by pastoral poets and poetesses over the centuries the Somalis existed as a race. This rich oral poetry, which became the common heritage of the people,
is chiefly in the form of work songs, the central theme of which is human labour, the efforts of man to survive on earth. As an illustration we shall record here examples of livestock management songs composed by the Somali pastoralists.

1. Work Songs Concerning Grazing and Watering Camels

Song 38 – The gestation period of a camel

In this song the herdsman addresses his camel and tells it how he patiently waited during the long period of its gestation, expecting that his camel would give birth in the end and produce the life-giving milk to sustain him and its calf:

```
hobey hoo haa
saddex bogol iyo
siddeetan habeen
oo sidkaa yahay
sabool sugi waa
anse kugu simay...
```

```
hobey hoo haa
for 380 long nights
of your bearing period
a man of meager means
that long could not wait
but I patiently tended you that long...
```

Song 39 – The growing stages of a camel

In this poem by an unknown poet composed in the serious gabay genre of Somali oral poetry the various growing stages of a camel are described until the full maturity of the animal:

```
gugey dhalato geeb lagu xirrey
xarigga loo gaabi
guga xigana goofadhi-weyn
maraga googyso
guga xigana uur gulun-gulcay
geelasha hormeera
guga xigana gaaleemo-weyn
dhogorta qaar goyso
guga xigana awr-garabsatoy
```

```
first year of birth capricious
is the camel calf
to a tree it is tied to train
to such restraint violently it desists
cutting the tether off itself
second year the weaning time it is
the last drop of milk from the mother
it tries to suck out
off the teats the muffle removing
third year ahead of the herd
playfully frolics the calf
fourth year the fur of youth off it sheds
fifth year with the stud sire
company frequent it keeps
```
Song 40 – The camel-herder’s complaint

In this watering song the herdsman tells his camel that he cannot sing for it with a beautiful voice while watering the beast, because he is hungry and weak as his she-camel did not produce for him the nourishing milk he needs:

hoobey hoohey hoo haa
caanahaagoon
calooshay tegin
yaa codwaagiyo
ciidan xumada leh...

hoobey hoohey hoo haa
as nourishing milk yours
have not of late filled
in my stomach empty
unable I’m in the end
with a voice sweet
for you to sing...

Song 41 – The camel’s high value

Of the domestic animals the pastoralist possesses, he values the camel above all the other species. The camel produces more of the basic food items, such as milk and meat for the herdsman, than the other types of domestic animals. It is also the chief transport means for the nomadic community. This watering song describes the vital role of the camel in the life of the rural society:

hoobey hoo haa
jurmi iyo seed
jiir iyo caddiin
jinow iyo xoor
Jaawo ka-eekay...

hoobey hoo haa
fillets and ligaments strong
steak and fat rich
milk sour-sweet
all these Jaawo7 bestows to man free...

Song 42 – Cooperation amongst the camel-herders

Cooperation amongst the herdsmen in watering and grazing their camels, as well as safeguarding the herds, is essential in the harsh conditions of nomadic life. Slaughtering a camel is a task that requires more than a man, as described in this watering song:

hoobey hoo haa
hadday taal iyo
hadday tuban tahay

hoobey hoo haa
when camel’s carcass for cutting up lies
or the beast around the well for watering crowds

51
yaa toleyoo
looma kala tago...

all in such tasks a hand should give
for in common ownership camels
are held...

Song 43 – The end of a camel’s gestation period

The Somali herdsman from childhood is taught the characteristic behaviour of his domestic animals, such as when they are hungry, thirsty, happy and contented, etc. In this watering song the herdsman addresses his beloved camel, telling it that he sees signs that tell him that its gestation period is over and soon the camel will be calving and it would supply him with vital milk:

hobeyow haa
horradaakagayo
horradaakha hablood
wax la huurshaba
hareer laga arag...

hobeyow haa
frontal teats yours
as those of a maiden virgin
no matter how from views concealed
are suddenly seen in the end
bursting forth to full view...

Song 44 – At the waterpond

After watering the camels are driven to the pastures in the plateau area known as Sool. This area contains the dense forest which is ideal for camel grazing as the animals feed on the green leaves and tender shoots on the tree tops.

The Sool is often waterless in the dry season and the camels are driven to the waterponds situated in the low lands for watering. The trek to and from the waterwells often covers several hundred miles.

In the following song the herdsman orders his camel while at the wells to fill up its belly with water, for he would be driving it back to the Sool where there is no water to drink:

hoobeyow haa
Sool baad tegiye
soddon baad qadiye

hoobeyow haa
back to the barren Sool I’ll drive you soon
where no water there would be
for you for 30 days or more
Suub take your fill now
while at the wells...

Song 45 – The camel-herder’s complaint about his wife

In this song the herdsman complains to his camel, that his wife
did not feed him lately; and because of his being discontented with his wife, he refuses to water his camels which suffered much as a result. The camel is here personified and is a confident to its owner’s family dispute:

```
hobeyow haa
markii dhaalkii
dabka saarraa
daaha loo rogey
yaan anna isdedey...
```

---

Song 46 – Watering camels – an arduous task

Watering and tending a large herd of camels is an arduous job which requires considerable manpower. In this song the herdsman describes how hungry and exhausted he is at the end of the day, having watered his numerous herds alone at the waterwells:

```
hobeyow haa
geelu galabtii
goolum yoo irmaan
qaalin garab weyn
gudduud iyo mayr
maysu kala guray
anna galabaas
gaaqiiyo harraad
geed ma kula dhacay...
```

---

Song 47 – The joy of the camel herder

The happiest moment in the life of the Somali herdsman is when he sees his animals prospering, when they multiply in number, giving him and his family sufficient milk and meat for the pastoralists’ basic food items. In the following dance song, the baarcadde, the happy man admires his flourishing camel herds:

```
helleelooy iyo helleelooy
helleeyaalaaya helleeyoy
sidi dairinka geeloo
dal dheer iyo daran ka timido
nirguhu soo dabagaleenoo
```

---

53
Death is the end. 

Song 48 – The night trek
The herdsman often travels with his camels so as to take his animals to distant pasture lands. It is convenient to do the long trek at night to avoid the heat of the tropical sun. There are certain difficulties, however, involved in night travelling such as losing directions to the new place, some of the camels may go astray in the darkness of the night, wild beasts like lions may attack the herd, etc. The following song describes these ever-present dangers which only a brave herdsman could face:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{waxa goorta gudey} & \quad \text{the travellers so late at night} \\
\text{waa garanayaa} & \quad \text{who they are I know:} \\
\text{waa rag iyo geel} & \quad \text{men and their camels it is} \\
\text{waa garanayaa} & \quad \text{who they are I know:} \\
\text{waa gabar aan curan} & \quad \text{a girl who hasn’t given birth to a child it is} \\
\text{waa garanayaa} & \quad \text{who they are I know:} \\
\text{waa geesi wiil} & \quad \text{a brave herdsman it is} \\
\text{waa garanayaa} & \quad \text{who they are I know:} \\
\text{waa gaari wacan} & \quad \text{a nomad’s clever wife it is} \\
\text{waa garanayaa} & \quad \text{who they are I know:} \\
\text{waa goon libaax...} & \quad \text{a lion on the hunt it is...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 49 – A camel’s demise
In this camel-watering song the owner is addressing his milch camel, telling it that its demise is more tragic to him than the demise of his wife who could easily be replaced by his remarrying and getting a new wife for himself:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hobeyow haa} & \quad \text{demise mine brings forth} \\
\text{geeridaydana} & \quad \text{destruction of home and sonlessness} \\
\text{guryo ba’ay iyo} & \quad \text{wife’s demise remarriage brings forth} \\
\text{gablan laga qaad} & \\
\text{geerida haween} & 
\end{align*}
\]
guud la firo iyo
geeridaadana
gaawa maran iyo
gaa jo laga qaad...
new locks on an old head growing again
your demise, o camel mine!
empty vessels and hunger
painful brings forth...

Song 50 – Getting a woman
The cameleer in this song warns his beast that, once he gets married, a young lad spends much of his energy in frequent loving-making and he would be of no use for the camel; it could rely only on grown-up men for its welfare:

hobeyow haa
burqee wil ihi
buul hadduu galo
oo basari kudo
kuuma soo baxo...

hobeyow haa
a lad youthful and strong
once he a woman for himself finds
indulge in sex excessive
his energy he waists all
of much use to you
he would no longer be...

2. Work songs concerning the loading of the burden camels

In the preceding section we have listed several work songs concerning the main tasks in managing camels, such as grazing, watering and safeguarding the animal. There are, however, numerous work songs concerning other tasks done about the camel, such as loading and leading the pack camel which is the chief transport means for the Somali pastoralists. Since this is a task for the men it is them who compose and sing the loading camel songs called Salsal in Somali, meaning ‘praise sing for the burden beast’. The Salsal songs are composed of short one-line verses which are easily remembered by reciters. We shall give here some examples of this type of loading songs common amongst the Somali nomadic community.

Song 51 – The problems of having two wives
When the nomad is loading the articles of his mobile hut on his pack camel he addresses this song to the beast, explaining to it his problems in having two wives. In this way the beast is personified and the man entrusts, as a close friend with his family, secrets which
the husband is not willing to discuss with his family, his own wives. This intimacy between a man and his beast of burden, whose lives are interdependent, is often revealed in many Somali popular work songs:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nabad-same} & \quad \text{o peaceful he-camel mine} \\
\text{nin labo dumara leh} & \quad \text{no peace ever comes to him} \\
\text{nabadi uma soo gelin} & \quad \text{who two wives has} \\
\text{adigana nin labadaa raray} & \quad \text{when he who has two of your type} \\
\text{libini way u dhowdahay...} & \quad \text{prosperity would be his to achieve...}
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 52 – Loading a camel properly**

In this song the man promises to his beast that he would put the load on it properly, so that it may not fall off and hurt the animal when it rises up with the heavy load:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{haddaan dheelli kuu raro} & \quad \text{dear camel mine} \\
\text{iyo dhoomo-laalaad} & \quad \text{improperly should I load you} \\
\text{igu dhuabis baad tahay} & \quad \text{the vessels hanging loose} \\
\text{oo waadan ii dhalan...} & \quad \text{to me you were not truly born} \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 53 – Camel-power**

A grown-up pack camel may carry up to half a ton of load, covering 30-40 miles a day. In the following song the cameleer describes the loading capacity of his burden beast:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{gurgur saab liyo} & \quad \text{o camel mine} \\
\text{haan gadaan weyn} & \quad \text{onto you I load my chattels movable all} \\
\text{utensils numerous as well} & \quad \text{water vessels huge} \\
\text{la-gurguurtow...} & \quad \text{you lift up all these} \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 54 – The camel’s endurance**

Often the nomad leads his loaded burden camel over a long distance to reach the new campsite where the fresh pasture are available for his herds, or he leads it to the waterponds. In this *Salsal* song the cameleer is soothing his beast as it carries the great burden on its broad back, telling it that their destination is closeby, and so the animal has to be patient a bit more and to cover the short distance that still remains:
Song 55 – The suffering of both man and beast

In the following loading song the cameleer tells his beast that they both suffer much: the camel suffers under the heavy load and the owner suffers from fatigue in leading it on the long trek on foot:

\[
\text{labo galab-carrawiin iyo} \\
\text{guure maraa inoo haray...}
\]

two more evening’s trek

a night’s journey more

is all that for us remains

our destination to arrive

upload on patiently sooner there to reach...

...  a night’s journey more

is all that for us remains

our destination to arrive

upload on patiently sooner there to reach...

\[
sida caynku kuu gubey baa \\
cagtu ii dalooshaa...
\]

as the belly-strap hurts you much

tired feet mine equally hurt me...

Song 56 – Avoiding the merciless tropical sun

To avoid the burning heat of the tropical sun the cameleer of ten leads his burden camel in the cool hours of the morning. In this Salsal song the owner urges the beast to quicken the pace in order to arrive their destination before the merciless sun scorches them in the desert waste:

\[
sow qaboonadu \\
qunyar-socod iyo \\
qaayo kuuma leh...
\]

come, quicken the pace

while the day is young and cool

for the long trek

for both of us

the easier to be...

Song 57 – The mutual understanding of man and beast

The camel-driver knows well the animal instinct of his beast, such as when it is thirsty, tired under the heavy load, or it needs feeding. When in such situations the animal gives signs to indicate its desire to its driver. For instance, when exhausted from a long trek the beast may simply stand still and refuse to move on, in spite of the cameleer’s urging. In the following song the cameleer understands how hungry his animal is and promises to take it to rich pastures:

\[
moroh iyo maraar ruug \\
meygaag abaareed buu \\
micida u lisaayaa...
\]

the mighty fangs sharpens the camel

for the last moroh\textsuperscript{15} and maraari\textsuperscript{16}

for the desert meygaag\textsuperscript{17} to munch

these pastures rich the camel craves for...

\textsuperscript{15} moroh: powerful fangs of a camel \\
\textsuperscript{16} maraari: a weapon used by cameleers \\
\textsuperscript{17} meygaag: a type of grass eaten by camels
Song 58 – The hereafter

In this song the cameleer tells his beast that all men would die sooner or later and that he has no idea of what happens to people after death:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Jeellow jug waa jibin} & \quad \text{Jeellow}^{18} \text{ camel mine} \\
& \quad \text{mighty is the meteorite} \\
& \quad \text{that across the heavens races} \\
\text{jigjigee eye waa roob} & \quad \text{the rains thunder down as well} \\
\text{oo jalooli waa dhagax} & \quad \text{hard is the stone granite} \\
\text{jiilaal-mooge waa beled} & \quad \text{droughts severe the cities affect not} \\
\text{oo Jaxiima waa naar} & \quad \text{Jaxiima a fearsome hell is called} \\
\text{janno waa dhul jirriddiis} & \quad \text{beneath the earth paradise is said to be} \\
\text{waa loo wada janficaa} & \quad \text{there to go all men aspire} \\
\text{wax jiraaya moogiye...} & \quad \text{what in the end happens} \\
& \quad \text{not I could tell...}
\end{align*}
\]

3. Cattle-herding and watering work songs

Same as the other species of the domestic animals the cowherd\(^{19}\) has special songs for his cattle, which he chants on particular occasions such as when grazing, driving or watering the animals. We shall record here as an illustration some examples of these cattle work songs.

Song 59 – The cowherd’s reward

In the following song the herdsmen are telling the cattle that they are exhausted by the hard work of watering the numerous herds at the deep waterwells that day. As a reward the men are asking the animals whether or not they have deserved milking the most productive cows among the herd:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hobeyow haa} & \quad \text{hobeyow haa} \\
\text{maanta xiqnaye} & \quad \text{exhausted we are for today} \\
\text{caawa xeradii} & \quad \text{watering you from wells deep} \\
\text{xulaan-xuliddaa} & \quad \text{when tonight in the pen secured you are} \\
\text{xil ma nagu tahay?...} & \quad \text{refuse us told you} \\
& \quad \text{the best of you to milk} \\
& \quad \text{for our reward well-earned?...}
\end{align*}
\]
Song 60 – The cowherd’s choice

In the following song the cowherd describes how during the dry season when his cow produced little amount of milk for him he was obliged to live on camel milk instead, so as to survive the severe drought. Camel milk made him sick, the singer complains. In the rainy season, when the cows yield plenty of milk the cowherd rejoices again in taking his fill of it:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hobeyow haa} & \quad \text{Caarre caagyo}
\text{caans biciid daaq} & \quad \text{anna caagoo}
\text{caano geel dhamay} & \quad \text{oo car ugu go’ay}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
hobeyow haa & \quad \text{Caarre}^{20} \text{ my beloved cow}
droughts severe due to & \quad \text{on oryx-grass meagre feeding}
\text{lean and weak had grown} & \quad \text{wasted and feeble I, too, had grown}
on camel milk sour subsisting... & \quad \text{on camel milk sour subsisting...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 61 – Cattle breeding preferred to camel

In the following song the cowherd warns his animal that the farmer who prefers raising crops in his field, than breeding cattle, is not interested in the welfare of the cow:

\[
\begin{align*}
hobeyow haa & \quad \text{hobeyow haa}
\text{kuwa badarkiyo} & \quad \text{he who coffee-beans hoards}
bunka tiirsaday & \quad \text{needs you not as wealth}
kuumaa baahnnee & \quad \text{o Beylow}^{21} \text{ beloved cow mine}
\text{Beylow ha u badan...} & \quad \text{for such a person breed never...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 62 – Cow instincts

Through animal instinct, such as frequent bellowing, the Somali cowherd understands the desire of his animals at any given time; for instance, when a cow needs to suckle its calf, or it is hungry. In the following song the cow senses that rain is falling in a far off place in the land, as it sees lightning flashes. The cowherd warns his cow that it is no use longing for being taken to where the rain is, as it is a foreign territory out of bound to them:

\[
\begin{align*}
hillaac bilig yiri & \quad \text{the lightning flashes}
aan bahdaa jirin & \quad \text{that distant rains herald}
\text{falling on land} & \quad \text{where your clans live not}
\end{align*}
\]
Song 63 – Praise to a cow

In this song the cattle-herder sings the praise of his best cow that yields him much milk, which sustains his life:

\[
\begin{align*}
  haw bukoonoo & \quad \text{no use longing there to go} \\
  beerka haw lulin... & \quad \text{be stirring your heart in vain...}
\end{align*}
\]

4. SHEEP-HERDING WORK SONGS

4.1 Work Songs for Ewes

Same as the other types of the domestic animals raised by the Somali pastoralists, there are special work songs concerning the management of sheep, chanted on such occasions as when grazing and watering the animals.

The black-headed Somali sheep plays an important part in the economic life of the pastoralist community, for it supplies the people with basic food items, such as meat, fats, etc. In some regions of the country, where sheep thrive best, the animals also produce milk for the people in considerable amounts. The Somali sheep is above all famous for its fat tail from which clarified ghee is obtained, as well as its being a delicacy among the men.

The sheep work songs, composed and sung mostly by the pastoral women, are in the form of short verses of three of four lines, easily remembered by reciters.

Both the ewes and rams, as well as the lambs, have special songs concerning their management. We shall record as illustrations some examples of these sheep work songs, common among the nomadic society in Somalia.

Song 64 – High expectation from a virgin ewe

In this song the shepherdess addresses her virgin ewe, stating that she already foresees the much milk and fats the animal would be producing for its owner when it grows up and breeds. At the same
time the woman asks the young sheep whether or not it is going to be a useful animal from which there would be much benefits for its owner:

$sabeen$ $ugubey$
$virgin$ $ewe$ $pretty$ $you$ $are$
$sagaga-xanyoy$
$milk$ $rich$ $in$ $fats$
$caano-subagey$
$mutton$ $sweet-scented$
$sanuunta$ $udgoon$
$that$ $our$ $senses$ $pervade$
waa $na$ $saaqdaye$
is $it$ $you$ $that$ $bestows$
$maadigaa$ $sida$...
benefits $all$ $these$ $to$ $man$...

Song 65 – The proper breeding period
In the following song the shepherdess warns her ewes that the severe dry season $xagaa^{22}$ is not the proper period for breeding and that the $gu$’, the rainy season that precedes the hard $xagaa$, is for them the right breeding period; but the $gu$’ is still far in the future. Should the ewes permit the ram to mount them during the $xagaa$, they would give birth before the $gu$’ rains come and the mothers would have no sufficient milk in the udder to nurse their young lambs:

$xeeyoy$ $xeey$
$Laamey$
$xagaa$ $lama$ $dhalo$
$xagaa$ $severe$ $breed$ $never$
$naaga$ $lama$ $xiro$
$men$ $must$ $not$ $new$ $brides$ $bring$
$ilmahaagana$
$women$ $must$ $not$ $with$ $men$ $secretely$ $flirt$
aroor$$dheer$ iyo
$in$ $the$ $desolate$ $desert$
$abaar$ $lama$ $dhigo$
your$ $lambs$ $never$ $leave$...

Song 66 – Warning the flock of danger
The wild beasts, such as lions, hyenas, leopards, jackals and other predators that live in the same ecology with the domestic animals, pose a constant threat to these animals kept by the Somali pastoralists. In the following song the shepherdess warns her sheep that many of these dangerous beasts are around and could attack the flock at any moment. Should this happens she would be unable to protect the herd, for she, too, is afraid of these terrible predators. The shep-herder, therefore, urges her charge to move fast for the safety of their stockade as the night approaches:
waa dhwaa jarar
waa shabeel dhaca
waa dawaco dharab
hadduu soo dhaco

dhaxda kugu maro
dhegta ku qabsado

kaama dheeriyo
kaama dhiirraniyo
kaama dhigi karo...

hyenas dangerous
leopards that jump high
jackals wicked
all are here around
should they suddenly
upon you sprung
seizing you by the belly
tearing off your vitals all
taller than you I’m not
braver than you neither I am
unable I would then be retrieving you
from the beasts’ might jaws...

Song 67 – The animal instinct
The sheep-herder by long experience, acquired by close observation, understands the instinctive actions of her animals, such as the bleating of the sheep, when in need of suckling their lambs, the antics of the ram when mounting the ewes, etc. In the following song the shepherdess guesses what might be the meaning of her sheep’s bleatings:

Golixo gabaydaye
Galaalo cidaye
ma gu’ baw da’ay?
ma gal baa waran?
mase gurigay
gabdho maaliyo
gabno ku ogtahay?...

Golixo \textsuperscript{25} with urgency bleats loud
Galaalo \textsuperscript{26} as well
the approach of the gu \textsuperscript{27} season
with waterponds full to the brim
do the ewes herald these?
or lambs that suckling need
or milk maids deft-fingered
back home did the ewes recall?...

Song 68 – A dialogue with Deylo
Since the life of the Somali pastoralist depends on the animals, he keeps there is a profound intimate relationship between the herdsman and his/her flock. An example of this intimacy between man and beast is illustrated in the following song in which an ewe is personified and holds a dialogue with its owner, expressing its desire to be taken to the part of the country where fresh pastures are available:

Deylo waxay tiri:
«daltabyoodaye
dooyo Golol iyo deex ha lay dhigo»;

Deylo \textsuperscript{28} to me says:
«I much long for
the fertile Golol \textsuperscript{29} plains
the coastal lands where
I would thrive the beast
tarry not take me there»;
Saan waxaan iri in reply I said:
«Hadda Deyloy Tick-infested is the coast
deexi waa shilin winds violent rein the Golol plains now
dooxo waa dhaxan Mudug is the ideal place for you
dalna waa Mudug the possession of that land, though
dadna ku collow»... dispute among men is rife right now»...

Song 69 – The best grazing land
In the following song the shepherdess is telling her sheep that because of the enmity existing between her own and other clans she could not drive her flocks to the best grazing lands in the country:

Aada jiiftide ignorant you are, o Deylo mine
Aan jalbeetbee the truth let me to you reveal
Deylo-deylo the best part of your land
Deylo dixidii where the dixi grows tall
dal-wanagiidii where the dareem is lash
dureemo-caskii forbidden we are, though
Laysu diidyoo as forbidden poison deadly is
Laysu dacaree... to that land to go
Deylo-deyloy for men over it are fighting...

4.2 Work songs for rams
For the pastoralists the fat-tailed rams are highly valued for they are slaughtered for food during the lean years, or they are sold at the town markets for cash with which food and clothes are bought for the family. Same as the ewes, rams also have special work songs of which we shall record here some examples.

Song 70 – Praising the ram
In this song the shepherdess praises her ram and points out that it is more valued than all the ewes she owns:

Xeevoy xeeey hey hey
Inta gorod leh of the black-heads all
Galaal baa goba Galaal the ram
U gob ma ahee the noblest it is
Waa u gaashaan... the insurance for all it is...

Song 71 – Cursing the ram
In this driving song the singer criticizes her ram for moving on
too slowly:

\[
\begin{align*}
&xeey \ xeevoy & \text{hey hey} \\
&sumalkii \ dhalaa & \text{the ram that sired you} \\
&sida \ loo \ socdiyo & \text{knew not how properly to walk} \\
&socodyaal \ aqoon & \text{may your flesh in a cage be carried away} \\
&saariri \ muddoo & \text{may a woman wicked your carcass carved} \\
&saab \ lagu \ guryoo & \text{improperly cutting up the meat...} \\
&naag \ xumi \ gashoo & \\
&hayl-hayshayoo... & \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 72 – Leading the way**

In this song the singer asks the baby-ram to lead the way for the lambs to the valley ahead where the best pastures and shady trees are available:

\[
\begin{align*}
&hoobey \ hobey & \text{hey hey} \\
&sumalow \ sarbane & \text{ram pretty mine} \\
&naylaha \ duduuc & \text{the lambs lead on} \\
&oo \ dooxa \ gee & \text{to the valley ahead} \\
&oo \ damal \ hargeli... & \text{to the pastures fresh} \\
& & \text{trees with shade cool as well...} \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 73 – Scaring the camels**

In this song the shepherdess explains how in the night before the camels were disturbed by the ram as they mistook it for a marauding beast:

\[
\begin{align*}
&hoobey \ hobey & \text{hey hey} \\
&geesayare \ gorod & \text{little-horned black-head} \\
&gooruu \ xalay \ kacay & \text{when in the night before it rose} \\
&geelu \ bahal \ mood & \text{a beast of prey the camels thought it} \\
&oo \ misana \ garey... & \text{with fright disturbed they were} \\
& & \text{the ram peaceful it was though} \\
& & \text{reassured were the animals then...} \\
\end{align*}
\]

4.3 **Work Songs for Baby-ewes**

Since the caring for the lambs involves a set of tasks different from those connected with the ewes, there are special songs for the lambs, which are mostly composed by the women whose responsibility is raising the sheep kids.

**Song 74 – Caring for lambs**

In this song the shepherdess describes the special care that has to
be taken of the young lambs, such as letting them suck their mothers at regular hours daily, grazing and safeguarding them:

- waxay ku daboweyn tahay: a fat tail the lamb grew
- waxay ku daanshaysaa: or the Daylo’s milk rich I fed it with
- caaniihii Daylo: healthy and plump already it is
- dooggaan daaqsiiyey: for the fodder fresh I fed the lamb
- damal harweyn huruddoy: for the damal’s cool shade it
- dixida mayracatoy...: blissfully slept
- "for the dixi grass that in the evening it browsed..."

Song 75 – Hawlo, the capricious lamb

The shepherdess in this song is blaming Hawlo for not moving fast enough with the mother-ewe which had gone far ahead of the kids. The singer is a young girl who is very much afraid of being beaten by her parents for failing to drive the lambs quick enough along with the other animals, when the family removed to a new place with better pastures:

- hoobey hoobey Hawlo: Hawlo you are called
- waxa Hawlo loo yiriba: for capricious one you are indeed
- waa hawl daraaddeede: in the mid of night last
- iyo inan yar diliddeede: our neighbours removed camp
- reeraha gudee gurey: all their huts and goods
- ee aqalladii goostay: onto camels strong they loaded
- "Hawloy iga soo reebtay: Hawlo because of you"
- "Hawloy lugta horuu dhig: I’m left behind alone"
- waad hoombi-neysaaye...: Hawlo, quicken the pace please
- for limbering gets you nowhere..."

Song 76 – Hawlo, the noble

Hawlo the lamb is again addressed to in this song by the shepherdess, telling it that it is born into a rich and respectable family of which the little lamb should be proud of. Hawlo is again urged to move on fast to catch up with the rest of the livestock driven to the new pasturelands:

- hoobey hoobey Hawlo: o Hawlo, as a woman
- naa Hawlo naa Hawlo: I would upon you impress
- naa Hawlo reerkeennu: noble and rich a household ours is
- waa reer goboo geelle"
Song 77 – High hopes for a little lamb

In this song the shepherdess expresses the high hopes she placed on the little lamb that grows up to be a fine, mature ewe, that would be producing plenty of milk for its young ones, as well as rich fats when it would be slaughtered for honoured guests, those related to the singer by marriage. In the song is also described the owner’s love for the lamb and its safeguarding while it is still growing:

Song 78 – Driving home the lambs

In this song the shepherdess describes how the baby ewes obey her when in the evening she drives them home and lets them suckle their mother-ewes:
5. **GOAT-HERDING SONGS**

In the Somali pastoralist’s standard values in livestock, goats stand in the third place after the camels and cattle, and they play an important role in the rural economy; supplying the people with milk, meat, butter, fats, skins, etc. Herding goats is a fulltime job assigned mostly to the women and the young children, whose daily activities include milking the animals, churning the milk to produce butter, caring for the goat kids during breeding time, etc. Same as the other kinds of livestock numerous work songs are created by the women, concerning the management of goats. We shall record here examples of such songs as an illustration.

**Song 79 – Goats – woman’s prestige**

In the following song the shepherdess, addressing her goats, tells the animals that a woman without goats has no prestige in the society, as she would be forced to go about begging for food:

naaso-guluboy you the goat with the teats  
naagaan loo gelin with milk swollen full  
waa guddaayoo she who possesses you not  
waa gambo-caddahay dire needs would oblige her at nights  
oo gol dheer tahay to strangers go for food  
oo waatan galanlayn... with kerchief worn out on her head  
with ribs fleshless and bare  
homeless vagrant, she would forever be...

**Song 80 – To the rich pastures**

In this song the shepherdess promised her goats that she would drive them to a place where the best pastures are, where all the animals and insects have grown fat and strong; hence, the goats should obey her and run on with her as fast as they could:

meel sagaaradu goats mine darling  
saryan le’egtahay hurry along would you with me  
meel bakayluhu I’ll take you to pastures rich  
baarqab le’egyahay where antelops are as oryx large  
oo guraanyadu where rabbits are as he-camel tall  
qaalmo le’egtahay where ants are as virgin camels huge...  
aan ku geeyee...
Song 81 – *At the waterwells*

Watering the herds is one of the arduous tasks of the Somali nomad, it could only be satisfactorily carried out by the strong men and women combining their labour. In the following watering song this point is emphasized:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hadduu gamashiyo} & \quad \text{when from thirst severe the goats suffer} \\
\text{oo gabdhaha gabo} & \quad \text{when maidens in the watering task failed} \\
\text{garoob xoogliyo} & \quad \text{a divorcee healthy and strong and} \\
\text{nin garle u geli...} & \quad \text{a bearded man may water from the deep wells draw the goats’ belly to fill...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 82 – *Men and women befriended*

In the following song the economic importance of goats to the pastoral family is emphasized:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Garoy hooyoy} & \quad \text{o Garo}^{43}, \text{mother dear mine} \\
\text{garoorkaagii} & \quad \text{befriended are men and women} \\
\text{gambooleydiyo} & \quad \text{for your sour milk rich} \\
\text{garmadowdaa} & \quad \text{that they all equally shared in...} \\
\text{isku gacalsaday...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 83 – *The onset of the mating season*

The mating season of the goats is an important period in the pastoral calendar, since it heralds the breeding time of the animals, and subsequently the milk production for the people. In the following song the onset of this season is foretold by the mounting activities of the he-goat:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qaroofeyey} & \quad \text{o Qaroofey}^{44} \text{ dear mine} \\
\text{qaroofka orgigu} & \quad \text{worrisome is the he-goat} \\
\text{qaroon kugu leged} & \quad \text{after you he runs mad} \\
\text{oo ku qaban waa} & \quad \text{until he in the end} \\
\text{oo kaga qaaq sii...} & \quad \text{by the qaroon}^{45} \text{ tree by force possessed you and «qaaq» in agony you cried...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 84 – *The long trek with goats*

In this *buraanbur*\textsuperscript{46} work song the shepherdess drives on her flock of goats, telling them that the trek would be long and arduous this time for all of them and that there would be many dangers on the
way to the fresh pasturelands:

meera-dheerow hayaan  
trek long undertake we would
miiggan baynu nahay  
for days and nights on the way to be
maalin iyo leyl jid  
perils plentiful there would be:
lagu miiggan yahay  
hot sun and fangs of beasts fearful
milic qorrax leh  
thorn-bushes impassable
mici cadaab weyn leh
maylin qurac
masduulaagiyvo mariidow
abees wax dila
waxaynu dhex moosi doonnaa
mashaakil badan\textsuperscript{47}...

5.1 Work Songs for Baby-Goats

Same as the baby-ewes, baby-goats have their special songs that are sung on such occasions as when the kids are being driven into the stockade for security, or when they, being herded around the campsite, separate from their mother-goats. In the following song the singer, who may be a woman or a young girl, asks the reason why the kids look so feeble and thin; the kids reply that they were not let suck their mothers in the night before:

Song 85 – The kids’ complaint

\textit{Heesaa: waadigan qolmane}  
Singer: lifeless you kids seem to be
\textit{gawriirayale}  
the night before, perhaps
\textit{xalay ma qatanayd?}  
hungry have you remained?
\textit{Caruur: xalay waan qadoo}  
Kids: hungry we remained
\textit{gool baan galoo}  
the night before
\textit{qumanyooyinkii}  
for wicked women of the house
\textit{way qarinayeen...}  
in collars tight kept us all
our mothers’ milk denying they did to us...

Song 86 – Kids’ driving song

When the herdswoman drives the baby goats into low thickets around the campsite, she beguiles the little animals with songs praising them so that they move on quickly to the pastures ahead. The following is an example of such kids driving songs:

waxarow wax la sheeg  
kids mine!
wax la yaaba la sheeg  
good news just came
berrin buuxa la sheeg  
prising it is
pastures fresh and plentiful
with grasses tall and green
with dixi plant delectious
damal with shades cool
where you would browse at will
where I would rest from labours hard
where the mother-goats’ udder
with milk swells full for us...

Song 87 – *Baqalye*, the predator-bird

The large vultures hovering over the open countryside where sheep and goats thrive often swoops down with the terrific speed and they carry off a baby goat or a lamb. In this song the shepherdess scares the baby-goats with an imaginary attack by the dreaded vultures, telling them of the fearful things should this happen:

hoobey hoobey
waxarahayagow
*baqalye* idin laa
idin labalabee
labadayda iyo laba kale ka reeb

labadiina laa
*qurub* layga sii

qurubkiina qurun
doob weyn la sii
doobkiina diid
inan weyn la sii
inantii cuntoo
way ku cashidee
caanaha riyaha
maad ka ceshataan...

Song 88 – *Appeasing the jackal*

Baby goats and sheep kids are looked after by little children around the campsite in the daytime and they drive them into a separate pen in the evening. The goat lambs often fall victim of the predatory jackal which suddenly jumps out of the thickets and snatches a lamb. In the following song the children beseech the jackal not to attach the goat-lambs, for they would be punished by the parents for the loss of a lamb:
6. **SONGS CONCERNING HORSES**

In the Somali society, among the nomads mainly, horses were highly valued for they were used in warfare, for riding purposes on ceremonial occasions, as a precious gift to a bride’s parents, etc. A considerable amount of literature had been created concerning the usefulness of horses by generations of Somalis, a few examples of which we shall record here as an illustration.

**Song 89 – The neighing of a colt**

In the following song the horseman describes the high emotions raised in him by the graceful neighing of his young colt:

- *bilay danantoo* as colt mine neighs nearby
- *duul malaykiyo* tidings blessing the angels proclaim
- *dawannadu ciye* loudly the bells toll
- *dugaagguna durug* the beasts of prey retreat afar
- *anna diirsaday*.. profound joy my soul pervades...

**Song 90 – The importance of the horse**

In this song the horseman describes how vital is a horse for a man living in the desert areas of the world, such as in Somalia where people have to travel long distances with their livestock in search of water and pastures:

- *faraskayga bullaale* steed mine with the silken mane
- *waa bullaale siciidoo* the best in horses all
- *bari baan kuu wadaayoo* towards the east I ride alone
- *biyo wayga wallaahi...* waterless lands traversing
- *a drop of water none of us ever had on the way...

**Song 91 – The delight of my soul**

In the following song the owner describes the intense love he
has for his stallion:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{indhahayga maggoodow} & \quad \text{my eye-sight precious you are} \\
\text{aqligayga dhammaantiyow} & \quad \text{my conscience complete you are} \\
\text{arwaaxayga naftaahow} & \quad \text{the delight of my life you are} \\
\text{afartayda addimow} & \quad \text{my four limbs vital you are} \\
\text{maalintaan ku arkay} & \quad \text{from the day we met} \\
\text{siidaan kuu oggolaaday} & \quad \text{you endeared my soul} \\
\text{kobtan kaa ilaagay baad} & \quad \text{darling mine...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 92 – The pursuit

The rider is confident that his fast horse would outrun any pursuer, and that the curses of the enemy would have no effect on his beloved mount:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nin lug ku higsadey} & \quad \text{he who with evil intent pursues you} \\
\text{oo habaas cunay} & \quad \text{in cloud-dust enveloped} \\
\text{haqdi hoosiyo} & \quad \text{he would be} \\
\text{habaari la’aw...} & \quad \text{by your mighty hooves raised} \\
& \quad \text{may their curses venomous} \\
& \quad \text{miss you...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 93 – Herds numerous it looted

In this song the owner describes the great value of the horse as a war machine and how little maintenance the animal needs from man:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wuxuu sidig iyo} & \quad \text{camel-geminates}^{52} \text{ of value high} \\
\text{saarrow geel wadey} & \quad \text{herds numerous often it won in war} \\
\text{bur sifaar iyo} & \quad \text{a punch of sifaar}^{53} \text{ only} \\
\text{sedki ma intaa?} & \quad \text{it needs to survive...}
\end{align*}
\]

7. Humourous rain-songs

Popular songs are concerned not only with the expression of serious social issues as we have stated earlier in our discussion, but this form of oral poetry is used in light-hearted situations as shown by the following humourous songs. Here the women singers, while seemingly praying for rain to come, make a practical joke against elderly men with bald-heads:
Song 94 – The bald-headed old men

Haweenka: eebow roone roobey
ku raaxeeya noo keen
ku rays weyn leh noo keen
ku odayada bidaarta leh
bar naga laaya noo keen...  

Women: o Almighty Allah
send us rains blessing
that would soon cause
the goats milk much to yield
that would soon destroy
one-half
the bald-headed old men...

Song 95 – The indolent women

The men in their turn replied thus:

Ragga: Eebow roone roobey
ku rays weyn leh noo keen
ku riya dararsha noo keen
ku naagaha basaridaa
bar naga laaya noo keen...

Men: o Almighty Allah
send us rains blessing
that would soon cause
the goats milk much to yield
that would soon destroy
one-half the lazy women folk...

Song 96 – The virgin billy-goats

Carruurta: roobowo ruglow kaalay
riya-dararshow kaalay
ceesaamogiiirigan
oo dhagax ku wada jooga
geskkooda kaxumbeeye
kaxumbeeye kaxareedshe
haantayada muska saaran
ii-buuxiyow kaalay...

Children: o rain, with drops heavy come
causing the goats much milk
to yield
in the horns of billy-goats
virgin
that stand on rocks high
with bubbles aplenty causing
to fill
empty vessels ours all
that on the fence stand
with water fresh for us come
to fill...

---

1 The nomadic community is traditionally composed of extended families of the nucleus family, parents and in-laws, etc.
2 This is an initial cry uttered by the singer before reciting the actual words of this camel song.
3 According to the pastoralists’ calculations the gestation period of a camel is 380 nights – 12 months and 15 nights.
4 To prevent the calf from sucking its mother and to preserve the milk for the people, the herdsmen cover up the mother’s teats with a bandage made of fibre tissue; the firm lips of the young camel could easily tear off this muffle and suck its mother freely.
The raising of the virgin camel’s tail (goojo in Somali) when approached to in an upwards bent shape, is a sign that the animal is in gestation.

In the sixth year of its life the camel normally reaches full maturity and breeds, according to our informants.

A female camel’s name.

One of the outward signs by which the herdsman may know when a camel may calve is the swelling up of the animal’s udder and its teats becoming tough and stiff. These conditions appear at the close of the gestation period referred to in the song.

Camels usually could stay for more than a month without drinking water.

Name of a female camel.

The refrain phrase for this dance song is common among the pastoralists; the refrain is chanted by the chorus members, while the singer recites the words of the song.

Camels love feeding on a certain plant called daran (Limonium cylindrifolium, Forks. – Verdic.) which grows on flat lands and has saline leaves; the animals also lick the soil on which the plant grows.

A waterwell situated in the east of the town of Burco in northeast Somalia.

See also song 38.

Lepladenia Pyrotechnica (Forks.) Decne.

Clerodendron mijricoides (Hochst.).

Boscia minifolia Chiov.

He-camel’s call name.

Cowherds are mostly men who compose and chant the cattle songs, women are also engaged sometimes as cowherds but they are hardly composers of such songs.

Cow’s call name, one having black-white spots.

Name of a cow, dark-brown colours.

In most of the regions in Somalia inhabited by the pastoralists the dry xagaa period falls approximately in June to August, following the gu’ or the main rainy season which falls about March to May.

The cry xeeyoy xeey! ‘hey hey’ is often used at the start of work songs to attract the attention of the ewes, Laamey, the ewe in this song.

Name of an ewe, the tall one.

Name of an ewe, the crooked one.

Name of an ewe, the one with half of its face black, the other white.

See note 22.

Name of an ewe, one with black head and shoulders.

Flat lands in the central regions of Somalia where goats and sheep thrive well.

The geographical name of one of the central regions with Gaalkacyo as the regional capital.

See note 28 to song 68.

Eragrostis Papposa (Roem & Shult) Steud.

Enteropogon mastrostachus (Hochst).

See note 26 to song 67.

See note 28 to song 68.

Acacia Tortilis (Forks.), Hayne.

See note 7 to song 7 (Chapter I).

Call name for a lamb, the capricious one.

Young boys and girls start their labour in the pastoral family by minding the lambs
and they are then gradually promoted to take charge of the other domestic animals.

40 Call name of lamb, one which is as clean as a paper.

41 A personal name, the victorious one.

42 See Chapter II, section 4.

43 A goat’s call name, one that is black in the front part of the body up to the shoulders.

44 A call name of a goat, that has long, bent horns.

45 Commiphara Lughensis Chiov.

46 This is a genre in Somali oral poetry employed by women, which is usually in two-line verses with a specific melody; women use the *buraanbur* to express their views on social problems, as work songs, etc.

47 This song was composed by Mrs. Asli Sheekh Ciiise of Muqdisho, 1978.

48 See note 7 to song 7 (Chapter I).

49 Acacia Tortilis (Forks) Hayne.

50 A kind of vulture that snatches lambs and devours them on tree-tops.

51 The jackal is called *Dawaco* in Somali, or *Dayo* in a contracted form of the name, meaning ‘the crafty, cunning, lowly one’; the beast is always addressed in the feminine gender as in this song.

52 When too many male-camels are born, one camel’s baby is slaughtered for food and its mother is made to share another mother’s baby by means of the process the cameleers called *maqaarsaar* – putting the fresh skin of the slaughtered baby-camel onto a living one which the geminated mother (*sidig* in Somali) finally accept as its own.

53 Sprobolus respolianus Chiov.

54 This is a children’s playing rhyme which they sing when it rains, the grown-ups utilized its biting humour to discredit the opposite sex.
CHAPTER IV

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT SONGS

1. THE Wilgo (Wiglo) SONGS

The Wilgo, Wiglo as it is also pronounced, is one of the oldest genres in Somali popular songs and it had been originated\(^1\) centuries ago by Somali sailors on their ancient, ocean-going sail crafts known as the Somali dhows. Wilgo singing spread rapidly among the nomad community in the interior of the country.

The Wilgo songs are usually in the form of two-line verses, often sung by a soloist, or by a chorus who repeats after the singer the refrain phrases, such as:

\[
\text{woyaale woyaale woyaaley} \\
\text{woyaale kalaynu leenahayey!}
\]

These refrain phrases have no meaning in themselves; the singer, while chanting the refrain words, prepares himself mentally for the next line of verse he\(^2\) would recite. The Wilgo songs have no musical accompaniments of any sort, and the soloist simply declaims his songs.

In the long nights on the high seas the dhow crews entertain themselves with the sentimental Wilgo songs by which they expressed their hopes and desires, the hardships of their profession. Over the centuries, however, the Wilgo singing became a popular medium by which not only the sailors but any individual poetically gifted could express his views on problems that directly concern his life.

As an illustration we shall record here some of these popular songs of this genre, which are composed of two to three short verses, each containing its own theme.

1.1 Wilgo Songs Concerning the Singer’s Views on Life

Song 97 – The dead do not return

\[
nin \ dhintiyo \ nin\ dhoof\ jira \quad \text{o Dhuubo}\(^3\)!
\]
Dhuuboy midna sooma dheelmado... A dead man and one who went far away neither for the night returns home...

Song 98 – The lonesome heart

galbi tegey calool talan galay
Dhuuboy dhul tumaati dheeraa... lonesome is the heart
stirred is stomach mine
Dhuubo, how large is the land!

Song 99 – A ship on the high seas

sidii markab maanyo soo maray
wax baa iiga muuqda meel dheer... like a ship into high seas sailing out
on the horizon far objects I observed...

Song 100 – The song of the brave

macabsade codkaygiiyow
cashiiro nin caabudaan ahayey... brave is my song as I’m a man
who his relatives respects...

Song 101 – The Ganaane waters

gudcur dama habeen gu’ka tegey
Ganaane ma loo arooraayey... in a dark winter’s night
dare they go down Ganaane water to draw...

Song 102 – The Ganaane in floods

Ganaane biyoobey geel ma maree as camels can’t cross over
Ganaane in full floods
go’doy waa la kala gu’weyn yahayey... barriers between people are likewise placed...

1.2 Wilgo Songs Concerning Warfare

The Somali nomads’ economic life is based on animal husbandry, mainly camels, cattle, goats and sheep. These animals supply the people with the essentials, such as milk, meat, hides and skins, etc.

The pastoralists are always on the move with their large herds in search of pastures and water for the people and livestock, which are always in short supply in the arid countryside. Conflicts often occur amongst the nomadic clans for the possession of these limited resources.

Considerable folk songs have been created on the theme of clan...
warfare, and we shall record here as an illustration the following examples.

Song 103 – The click of the spears

jidkaan kaaga sii horreeyaaye
warmaha jalawdooda soo raacey...

ahead of you I proceed
the clicking of my spears
all you warriors follow suit...

Song 104 – The test of weapon

belaayo rag baan u baalidayoo
birtay nimay gaadhey
baan ma leheyey...

dispute with men is my calling
careless is he who my weapon tests...

Song 105 – On the war path

haddii raggu duulo
duur magallee
dagaal-ramataannu leenahayey...

when on the war path men go forth
under the mat ourselves we hide not...

Song 106 – Paws in blood

libaax laba jeeni dhig darayoo
bad weyn ka jibadayaan ahayey...

I’m a lion its paws in blood dipped
in the deep forest roaring wild...

Song 107 – The wandering lion

libaax dalandooley duur ma ceshee
Digoy dalku waysku yaallaayey...

as forests hold not lions wandering free
o Digoy⁵, the land is
but one whole for me...

1.3 Wilgo Songs Concerning Love

A major part of the Wilgo popular songs express the singer’s intense feelings of love for a woman. The following would give an example of this lyric poetry in the Wilgo style.

Song 108 – To health she nursed me

markaan bukey way i baanan jirtee
baraare u geeya Beernugul...

when sick to health she nursed me
to Beernugul⁶ regards mine please pass on...
Song 109 – Rubbo

rataab iyo raatub bayga luntaye
Rubboy mayla raadineysaa?

counting markers I lost
Rubbo, with me would you look for it?

Song 110 – Dhudi

hadday Dhudi caano ii dhiibtoy
intaan dhamo sooma dhaafeen...

should Dhudi with milk fresh feed me
I would not drink and depart
leaving the lass lonely...

Song 111 – When the camp removes

haddii reerku guuro Caasha-rubboy
rakuubka ma kuu kireynaa?

Caasha-rubbo, when the camp removes
a camel shall we hire for you to ride on?

Song 112 – In white I cannot come

anoo dharcad sooma dhuuman karee
dhurwaayo ma soo hagoogtaayey?

clothed in white to you I cannot
secretly come
in dhurwaayo I would myself
conceal instead.

Song 113 – A kick behind the hut

haddaan docda soo haraatiyo
naa «dooh-dooh» dhehoo dabar la soo
bood...

at the rear of your hut
should I give a kick as a sign secret
say «dooh-dooh» and the shackle bring
forth...

Song 114 – Life’s struggle

dhaqaale adduun dhib loo aragyey
maxaa Dhudi dhaami loo yiri...

life’s struggle perpetual, though
the frail Dhudi why compel her
from far wells water to fetch?

Song 115 – Inmates stay awake

Caweeya Caweeya-bullo
ciddiinnu caweysin dheeraa!

Caweeya-bullo
how long your inmates stay awake
tonight!
2. **Hurbo (Hirwo) Dance Songs**

After a period, mainly in the 1950s, the Wilgo singing style spread far and wide among the pastoralists in the western regions of Somalia. This singing style became a dancing song and assumed the new name of Hurbo, or Hirwo as it is also called. The various stages of development of the original Wilgo are indicated by the following verse:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Wilgo Wilgo} \\
\text{Wilgo Hirwo} \\
\text{Hirwo Dhaanto...}
\end{align*}
\]

The Hurbo style of singing differs from the Wilgo from which it developed, in that the former has hand-clapping and foot-stamping by the dancers which provided the specific rhythm of the Hurbo dancing. The Wilgo has none of these elements, as we have stated earlier, it being declaimed by a soloist.

The Hurbo songs usually consist of two short lines, much shorter that the Wilgo lines, with each verse containing its topic. The Hurbo songs are generally concerned with light-hearted topics, such as
love and marriage, popular entertainment, etc. Unlike the Wilgo the Hurbo songs are spontaneously composed by both sexes when performing the Hurbo dance. The term Hurbo is thus the name of the songs, as well as the dance, and the popular art forms are performed together at the same time. We shall record here the following examples of the Hurbo songs.

Song 118 – I’ll come at night

\[
\begin{align*}
Hirwoy goor habeena & \quad \text{Hirwo}^{16} \text{ to you} \\
baan iman... & \quad \text{at night fall I’ll come...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 119 – Maidens to the dance would run

\[
\begin{align*}
haddaan ka rugsitiyo & \quad \text{at a lonely place} \\
meel rawaxoy & \quad \text{should I the dancing start} \\
gashaantiyo roorayaa iman... & \quad \text{maidens pretty running would come...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 120 – A white lie

\[
\begin{align*}
hadduu ballankii & \quad \text{should promises yours be true} \\
dhab kaa yahay t & \quad \text{o me to come} \\
biyaan dooni & \quad \text{tell a white lie and say:} \\
been ku soo dooni & \quad \text{«I’ll be gone for a while} \\
ba hurba! & \quad \text{water for us to fetch»...} \\
ba hurba! & \\
hurba xaaxa^{17}!
\end{align*}
\]

Song 121 – Matters changed since

\[
\begin{align*}
sakhaawe ragow & \quad \text{mind you mankind} \\
sidii ma jirtee & \quad \text{matters have changed since} \\
war hoy hala & \quad \text{shorten your steps hence}^{18}... \\
saamo-gaamsado...
\end{align*}
\]

3. **Dhaanto dance songs**

According to our informant the popular dancing song called Dhaanto\textsuperscript{19} has developed from the Hurbo\textsuperscript{20}. The Dhaanto first appeared in the ‘30s of the last century as a dancing song among the
Somali pastoralists, especially the camel-herders in the western part of the country. It spread gradually in the urban centres in various parts of Somalia where the rural youth patronized it.

Same as the Hurbo, the Dhaanto songs are composed in two-line verses, each of which having its own theme. The Wilgo and Dhaanto verses could, in fact, be sung interchangeably; only their melodies vary to differentiate the two styles. A chorus group provides the energetic hand-clapping and foot-stamping as musical accompaniments for the Dhaanto dance-songs.

Like the Wilgo and the Hurbo, the Dhaanto songs express a variety of topics concerning the life of the pastoral society, such as the influence and power of camel owners, the usefulness of these animals, feuds among the various clan families, courtship and marriage, etc. As an illustration we shall record here some examples of Dhaanto songs.

Song 122 – No one would sleep

haddaan ku dhawaago dhaantaay
walle dhayal looma jiifsadoey...

should I the Dhaanto song proclaim
no one that night would sleep in peace...

Song 123 – The hereafter

In this song the singer tells his beloved that she should enjoy in this world and not to be afraid of what the religion men say about the hereafter:

aakhiro cadaabi ma jirtee Canabey
yay ku cabsiinnin culimadu...

in the hereafter no hell exists at all
o Canab, Sheikhs should frighten you hence...

Song 124 – She who perfumes exotic wears

raggana boqor caadilo wacan iyo
of men I prefer
a just ruler wise;
a man of religion

barbaar xooggle waan u baah nahay;
gabdhaaha barafuun ka soo uro iyo
a youth strong in body as well;
of girls I prefer

middii maradeeda bayl ka dhigtoon
basari noqon baan u baah nahay;
she who her clothes always keeps clean
the born-lazy never to be;

geelana bogna-weynta aan socon iyo
she who perfumes exotic wears;
of camels I prefer
Song 125 – Riddles in song

Young boys and girls while performing the Dhaanto dance song often compete in composing riddle songs, so as to test one another’s intelligence. The reply resolving the riddle should be given on the spot and at the end of the contest the audience, composed of the young and the old of both sexes, proclaims the winner in such contests, who proved his/her poetic ability in resolving the riddle put him/her by an adversary. We shall record here few examples of such poetic combat in riddles as an illustration.

Iyada: wax kaa maqan meelna kaa jirinoo muskeenna ku meersan maad garan? She: tell us if you could that which is from us absent yet from our fence not far off?

Isaga: wax kaa maqan kaa jirinoo muskeenna ku meersan waa mawd. He: death that is indeed.

Iyada: wax aan dhimanoo dhulkii ka batoon dhaqaaqaynin dhoohanaw garo? She: tell us, you mindless fellow that which never moves nor dies?

Isaga: wax aan dhimanoo dhulkii ka batoon dhaqaaqaynin waa dhaqax. He: that fills up all around the stones scattered about that is.

Iyada: waxaad muudsatoo macaan badanoon jidiinka maraynin maad garan? She: tell us if you could that which is sweet to test yet through the tongue nor the throat passes not?

Isaga: waxaad muudsatoo macaan badanoon jidiinka maraynin waa mino. He: semen that is indeed

Iyada: abeeso afkeeda kala haysoo la aaminay aadanow garo? She: tell us if you could a cobra with mouth open wide to strike yet harmless and by all trusted?

Isaga: abeeso afkeeda kala haysoo la aaminey waa adi... He: yourself that is, woman22...
Song 126 – Join the song joyous

\[\text{quraaradyow} \quad \text{daawashada quba oo} \quad \text{qalfooyow qaada Dhaantada...} \]
n
vessels empty you girls all are
onlookers here we need not
\[\text{Dhaanto} \text{ songs joyous} \quad \text{with us come to sing...} \]

In other occasions when the singers are satisfied with the dancing and singing performances of the chorus girls they praise them for their cooperation – see songs 127, 128, 130, 131 and 132.

Song 127 – The copper-coloured girl

In the following song the Dhaanto explains what he considers to be the ideal woman:

\[\text{ragow dumar waa shan qaybood} \quad \text{shantaan kala sheegi doonaa:} \]
o men mind you!
Of women five types there are
who they are I’ll tell you all:
the indolent woman shall I describe?
Who her hut cannot construct
who in the cold wind shelterless crouches?
Is intelligence to all men
in equal measure given?
Is Gosol\(^{23}\) other trees looks like?
The best of womenfolk
to know her should you wish
the copper-coloured lass excels them all...

As we pointed out earlier the Dhaanto singing is chiefly an entertainment and recreational social event among the pastoral community in the interior of Somalia and many of the dances and songs of this genre are concerned with love, they being composed mostly by the youth. We shall give here examples of the Dhaanto lyrics.

Song 128 – The queen of womenfolk

\[\text{sidii badda iyo biyaha webigaa} \quad \text{baacdheer bedenkeedu buuxaayey} \quad \text{Danaagoyer dawlad-naagooodey} \quad \text{daweylada iyo dartaa} \quad \text{ma u doob-duquubaa...} \]
like the waters of the oceans and rivers
majestic and full her breasts are
o Danaagoyer\(^{24}\)
The queen of womenfolk you are...
Song 129 – A man in love
In this song the singer describes the restless lover who always tries to attract the young girls to his passionate Dhaanto singing:

nin qooqani waa qiyaama laloo  man in love is mad indeed
illeyn qoriyo qaninayada iyo  no pain he feels at all
ma qoonsado goofalkii muda  from thorns sharp even
that his body pierced through

illeyn golo nabada oo hurudduu  in the mid of night
habeenkii ka qaylisiyaoo  with songs lonesome awakens he
people sleeping in peace

haweenku ku soo qamaamaan...  to him the women rush
solace and succour to give...

Song 130 – A bachelor forever
In these three songs the singer describes the beauty and perfection of his beloved girl in dancing and singing the Dhaanto. This kind of praise songs act as a felicitous publicity for the girl participating in the Dhaanto dancing. The female-dancers often compete for the attention of the best male dancer-singer, so as to deserve his flattery, as in this song:

Dahaboyar dawlad-naagoodey  o Dahaboyar\(^{25}\)
Daweylada iyo dartaa  for your sake the Daweylo\(^{26}\) as well
ma u doob-duqooba...  a bachelor forever shall I remain...

Song 131 – Idiimoyar

Idiimoyar oogo-willey  o Idiimoyar
ninkii ku arkaaba oon beel...  she with the boyish body
he who beholds you
thrust spiritual quenches he...

Song 132 – The charcoal-black lips

afkuna qalin qoortoy laamey  she with the charcoal-black lips
her neck a slender twig

mar ii qosol qaalidii dumarey...  but once smile at me
o queen of womenfolk...

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4. THE *HAAN* DANCE SONGS

In Chapter II, under section 4 of the present work we have discussed about the milk-churning work songs in which the *haan* vessel is used as a container for milk. Here we shall be discussing some recreational dance-songs in which the empty *haan* is used as a percussion musical instrument.

One of the very ancient folk songs performed solely by women singers among the Somali nomads is the *Haan* dance songs, also called *durbaan*, which are especially popular in the central and eastern regions of Somalia, such as the Mudug, Nugaal, Sanaag, etc.

The *Haan* dancing songs are recited by a group of women, usually young unmarried girls. In the evenings, while the domestic animals are waiting to be milked, the women – four or five in number – may start their performance just outside the family compound, so as to entertain themselves. The *Haan* singing being a feminine affair, the men take no part in it; but they are permitted, bachelors chiefly, as spectators.

Same as the other styles of Somali folk songs the *Haan* song is a medium for the woman-singer to express her personal views on the problems of her life, her hopes and desires. She expresses her feelings on questions that have a direct bearing on her life: about love and marriage, about death and hereafter, etc.

An empty *haan* is used by women as a percussion musical instrument, like a drum. A thin, wet kid skin is stretched over the mouth of the *haan* and is held tight by two women. A third woman taps lightly over the thin membrane, like a drum, producing a booming noise which is herd far and wide in the still nocturnal breeze blowing over the Somali desert. As the *haan*-drum is finely tuned, the declamation of the dance songs commences. As an illustration we shall record here examples of these recreational *Haan* songs.

**Song 133 – Booming loud and clear**

In this song the singer addresses her *haan*, commanding it to announce the singing performance of the night, calling in girls from far away encampments and to awaken the sleeping ones to come and participate in the joyous *haan* songs soon to unfold.

*hibiyey hibi*  
*hibiyey hibi*[^27]
haan yahay diryaan  haan mine darling
diryaanoo dororoglee  booming loud and clear
diryaanoo dooxada ka yeer  with roaring and rattling sound
duul maqan u yeer  let all hear you far and wide
duul jiifa kici...  all absent ones calling in
all absent ones calling in
all those in bed waking up...

Song 134 – Admirable as camel herds

In this song the singer compares her personal feelings with the impressive objects in nature that she sees around her, such as animals and plants, describing in her song the image and associations of these inspiring objects:

hibiyey hibi
hibiyey hibi
haleelo mirootayey  hee
haan mine darling
you are as peaceful as milch camels
at night browsing around

horweyn hogob daaqayey  hee
as admirable as camel herds
in the fertile glade grazing

hareeri magoolayey  hee
as fragrant as the hareeri²⁹ blossom
its plumes spreading in dance exotic

haladhaa baalka hafayey  hee
as pretty as ostrich cock³⁰

wiyilo huguguulayey  hee
as furious as rhinoceros herds
in the woods suddenly disturbed

maroodi hobsheeyayey  hee
as threatening as elephant milling around

hillaac biligleeyayey
as brilliant as lightning mighty
on the horizon far flashing at night

Song 135 – Desire enormous for dancing

hibiyey hibi
hibiyey hibi
sidii koorweyn halaadoo
like camel herds with wooden
bells decorated

kor iyo Hawd sare ka timid
the distant Hawd³¹ driven from
desire enormous for dancing
I am urged on

sankaa qori igaga jabay
freely breathing no longer could I

sintaa midig baan ka jabay
hip-bones mine have I asunder broke

il baa saxar igaga dhacay
sight mine is blinded as well

haddana waan soconayaa
desire-driven I am moving on still
to roost birds may together to the nest fly

shimbiro geed wada koraa
but songs diverse they all sing

midiba cayn waw cidaa
likewise your voices differed all

codkiinnii kala habow
as each land own sages it has

carraba waa camalladeed

Song 136 – The black girl

The haan singer in this song describes what in her views would be the best man for a woman to marry and the type of man she should not marry.

shalaawiil wuxuu i yiri hee the other day a fellow said to me
madow gabadheer madow hee «that black girl born-lazy she is»
madow waa baali dumar hee in reply said I
markaasaa waxaan ka iri hee born-lazy though I might be
inkastaan baali ahay hee low in the dust though I lie
inkastaan boorka aal hee loafers like you I despise
barbaartuna wayga belo hee decrepit old men I detest
buslow oday wayga belo hee vagabonds as well I dislike
bannaanjiif wayga belo hee a dandy polygamous
xarragatoy xilaguba hee
xantiiir aan cood lahayn hee a penniless vagrant
xabiibow igala yaab hee from such fellows may Allah save me
jilfaalow oday jilfa ah hee elders senile as well
caddey caano uga doon hee for whom goats you have to milk
cashada fiidkii u saar hee for whom in the evening supper to fix
casissow igala yaab hee from such fellows may Allah save me
nin diin loo duunyo badan hee religious and wealthy a man
digriga aakhiro yaqaan hee who is aware of what to us would happen
when in the hereafter we meet
to such a man I would instead
ninkaas waan deyi lahaa... gladly a glance give...

Song 137 – A mother’s advice

In the following song the female-singer describes the wise advice her mother gave to her young daughter:

hibiyey hibi hibi hibi
hooyaday mother mine dear
waxay i tiri wise advice to me she gave
maandhaday darling mine said she
gacalisoy

guriga joog at home always stay
gaari noqo worthy wife you would be one day
gocoyo tolo... weave vessels new

that when wed you would use...
Song 138 – The cold grave

In the following song the singer states how ephemeral human life is, as dear ones are laid in the grave and forgotten forever:

+hibiye hibi + hibiye hibi
+waxaan aakhiro ku nacay + the hereafter I loathe
+adoogaa iilka gee + for in the grave cold
+adkeeyo ka agdhaaqaq... + your father secure you lain
+ and forever there you leave...

Song 139 – The leopard dress

A pregnant woman is said to be possessed by the desire to have a certain object, this desire being known as jamasho, and when possible her man is expected to bring her the thing she fancies. The following haan song describes the objects a woman wishes to have.

+hibiye hibi + hibiye hibi
+wax xun waxan lahayn + the best of all things desires she
+dooniyey + the spotted leopard dress desires she
+shirix-maro shabeel + lactating camels desires she
+dooniyey + the Dhubaan poe...34
+halo dhalay haleelay + their numerous camels desires she
+dooniyey + their herdsmen brave desires she
+gabayada Dhubahantay + camels’ milking vessels desires she...
dooniyey
+geelooda badan bay +
doonyee
+geesiyada la joogay +
doonyee
+gaawaha hor yaaal bay +
doonyee...

5. Batar (Sacab)

So far we have been considering recreational popular dances that are more or less limited to one or two regions of the country, or performed only in the urban centres. These are dances which are widely distributed in the country as a whole, and as a result of this fact they could rightly be considered as nationwide dances. One such dance is the Batar, or Sacab as it is also known. The Batar is commonly performed in the central, eastern, northern and southern
regions of Somalia, as well as in most of the urban centres. Only in the western part of the country, where the Dhaanto and Hurbo (see sections 2 and 3 above) dances are dominant, the Batar seems to have no votaries.

The technique of performance for the Batar is almost the same as the Dhaanto, only the hand-clapping, the footwork and the chanting are synchronized to a different rhythm pattern that distinguished the Batar from the other popular dances. The Batar rhythm follows a sound composition like this:

\[
\text{ta-tam-ta-tam-ta-tam-ta-tam} \\
\text{ta-ta-tam...}
\]

This rhythm heightens the enthusiasm and cheerfulness of the dances, and as the ears get accustomed to the complex synchronization of the various actions, the beauty of the Batar dance is appreciated by the spectator, perceiving it as a definite artistic composition.

The Batar is staged on festival occasions such as when the rains come, causing the revival of life in the arid Somali bush and savanna lands, where the nomads roam about with their numerous herds in search of fodder and water for the animals. The birth of a baby-boy, which is preferred to the birth of a baby-girl among the nomadic society, and the reception of honoured guests are also opportune moments for the Batar to be performed. The dancing is initiated by the chanting, hand-clapping and foot-stamping provided by the chorus, in which both sexes participate, all the dancing movements being synchronized to the specific Batar rhythm stated above. Then a male soloist (women also participate in Batar singing and dancing) or a chorus-master opens the vocal part of the performance with the chanting formula: \text{hobeeyoy-hobeeyo-hobeeyoy}. This string of words has no meaning at all, it only gives the soloist some words ‘to hung’, whilst reflecting upon the proper words and the topic of a song with which to introduce the dance.

Then the chorus formed by the young boys and girls responds to the singer by chanting in unison words for the Batar: \text{ha-ha-ha hoobeeyoy...}, which are loudly repeated at the end of every line of a song recited by the soloist. The tempo of the hand-clapping, footwork and chanting suddenly quickens, until the cadence reaches at
quite a high pitch.

Then all of a sudden a boy and girl jump into the dancing square, making graceful steps and jumps, now facing or flanking each other while air borne. After a few minutes the dancers conclude their tour of the ring and they are replaced by another pair of dancers. The dancing continues until the small hours of the night, one pair of Batar dancers replacing another.

Large audiences often turn up at traditional dance performance to enjoy the age-old arts of their ancestors. Young boys and girls, by imitating the grown-ups, acquire the basic knowledge of the dancing art of their community. They would in turn transmit knowledge to their children. Thus, the future dancers and singers of the rural community are schooled in the dancing square of their village, a practical school of life.

A pastoral poet-singer performing in the traditional dances like the Batar often introduces in his lyric such topic as the martial valour of his ancestors and their noble birth, the customs and traditions that regulated all aspects of life among the rural society to which the singer belonged, such as the problems of war and peace among the various clans, etc. As an illustration we shall record here a few examples of Batar songs. The songs are usually composed of short lines dealing with the daily life of the pastoral community, and as the meaning of the songs would be clear from the translation we shall give no extra comments on them, unless this is called for by the nature of the given Somali text.

5.1 SONG CONCERNING THE SINGER’S GREAT DESIRE FOR DANCING

Song 140 – Choice of a profession

|hobeeyoy hobeeyo hobeeyoy| hobeeyoy hobeeyo hobeeyoy|
|war ama wadaad noqo| either you be a priest|
|oo weyso iyo kitaab sido| possessing the Qoran and ablution vessel|
|ama walasaqada iyo wilgada tumo...| or dance the Wilgo and Walasagol|

Song 141 – Having no skills, a disgrace

|war cilmina ha baran| no dancer be|
|cayaaruna ha baran| nor have no skills in other things|
|oo meel cayuugnow| a disgrace for a man in the world...|
|waa ceel adduunkaa...|
Song 142 – The insatiable dancer

cadka bawdo kama cuno
caanaha doobi kama dhamo
sacabkase waw cirweyn ahay...
of meat I eat not a hind leg
of milk I drink not a bowlful
but of dancing insatiable I am...

Song 143 – Staying out of wedlock

gu’ dambena aynu wada tumannee
Guntaney ina-adeer
guur mayska deynaa?
that in the next year
we may together dance
Guntan\textsuperscript{36} darling mine
out of wedlock shall we stay free?

Song 144 – The stud sire

sida baarqabkii
bawdkuu fadhiyi jirey
halo ugu yimaadeen
kol makugu hingaadshaa...
like a stud sire old
to whose haunt she-camels came
over you at one shall I roar...

Song 145 – The bachelor

doob gaamudaan ahay
dambar baygu gaaxaye
dab baa layga shidayaaye
dumarow hayla yaabina...
a bachelor in the prime of life I am
virginity mine preserved I for long
the desire with you to dance inflamed me
hence, o women!
Pray not be surprised with oddity mine...

Song 146 – Cosob and Carwo\textsuperscript{37}

naa Cosob iyo Carwaan maaloo
cano baan kabenbedeyoo
to satisfaction mine I drunk
Cosob and Carwo’s milk fresh
energy excessive I thus gained
all night long I then danced
hence the scars in my feet...

5.2 Songs Concerning love and marriage

Song 147 – Idil

shaalaan ku arkoodayey Idil\textsuperscript{38}
maanta ku agmaray
cawwana way kanoo imid...
yesterday I saw and fell for you
today by you I passed
and tonight to you here I came...
o Idil, darling mine!
Song 148 – The longing

hirqaadka hirka maanyaa hillaac dheer
soo-hoggaamintaadiyo
heeskaagaa hilow badan...

brightness of ocean waves from afar is seen
your companionship and song sweet
create in my heart longings much...

Song 149 – Xareedo

xalangodo Xareedo-wilwilo
xalantayey xaggaan kaa jiro
xalay dhaxani kama dhicin...

o Xareedo darling mine
the supple and shapely being
the chilly winds did not to you come
from my side last night...

Song 150 – Marriage and dancing

guur ama xil laga qaad
ama xoolo loo dhaqay
sacab ama xil laga qaad
ama xagasha loo laab...

marriage dishonour may bring
unless one has wealth
dancing dishonour may bring
unless one masterly performs it...

Song 151 – The hoary head

guga-guga dambe sidaan u lahaa
guurso sidaan u lahaa
garku habaashka may dhigay...

to myself I always said:
next season I’ll marry
a beard hoary have I already grown...

Song 152 – A man’s dignity

ragga togayadiis waa
haddii taliyow la leeyahay
geela togayadiis waa
haddii goojada la tiicaa
oo ilmaha loo tukubiyyaa
dumarka togayadood waa
haddii meher loo taxaabaa
oo wiil loo tukubiyyaa...

dignity of man is when
the respect of others he enjoys
dignity of camel is when
as gestation sign its tail it raises high
dignity of woman is when
to a man she is wed...

Song 153 – The betrothed girl

gabadha doonan deyn maynoo
iyaba waa ka doorteen...

the betrothed girl I too desire
for other men chose her too...
Song 154 – A sister’s grief

gabar gabar ka yari dhaafityo
geel yariba uugaan...
as camels lonely grieve
so does an elder sister
whose younger sister first married...

5.3 SONGS CONCERNING THE SINGER’S VIEWS ON LIFE AND THE PECULIARITIES OF NATURE

Song 155 – Things brilliant

saddex baa gabbalo ka cad
saddex baa ku geediya
saddex kala ku gudajire:
inanta gabbalo ka cad
ninka geyaa ku geediya
meherkaa ku geediya;
dooggaa gabbalo ka cad
sahankaa ku geediya
geedigaa ku gudajira;
goroyadaa gabbalo ka cad
ninka ganaa ku geediya
leebka ku gudajira...

three things are brilliant
three things aspire to attain them
three things are the means:
brilliant is a bride
a groom aspires her hand to possess
a wedding is the means;
brilliant is pasturelands
a herdsman aspires to reach there
scouting first is the means^{40};
brilliant are the plumage of an ostrich cock
a hunter aspires to obtain
a poisonous arrow is the means...

Song 156 – Things that give no warmth

toddoba laguma diirsado:
cirka aan di’in
doobka aan dilaa noqon
dhiska aan hablo lahayan
dab dareeme lagu shiday
naag xun laguma diirsado...

seven things no warmth give:
sky that rains not
a young man that not a fighter be
a home that no maidens contains
a fire with dareeme^{41} kindled...

Song 157 – Stampeding camels

geel diday dareen arag
dab la shiday daldal u olol
hadalna daaya ku idlaa...

stampeding camels must have
the presence of danger sensed
bon-fires are quickly kindled
with shut-up ends a talk...

Song 158 – Faded beauty

saddex bay quruxi ku cashiday:
in three things beauty is lost:
hal cadoo candoole ah
faras cadoo cur laga gubey
naag casaan ragga cayilin...

5.4Songs concerning social criticism

The social singer often criticizes his society, pointing out its shortcomings which he/she would wish to be corrected by the community; as an illustration we shall quote here several Batar songs of this nature, which are sometimes declaimed in a light-hearted humour.

Song 159 – Mother-in-law

sodoh daran
dumaashi dalbo leh
dab ma lala gulaalaa...

a mother-in-law vicious
a sister-in-law bow-legged
around the bon-fires
with them does one dare sit...

Song 160 – Skirts immaculate

gabdhaha googaradda qaba
oo garayskuna macawis yahay
oo habeenkii gidaya nacay...

ladies in skirts immaculate
in blouses silken
who at night move about
such ladies hate I indeed...

Song 161 – The incision

Isaga: Eebihii ku kala saray
meesha jilicsan kaa saraye
aan sambabadana loo dirin

aniga wayga sanco badan yahay...

He: the Almighty who incised
a soft part of your bod
to the lungs not extending
such incision
verily far more inventive
than I he is...

Iyaga: Eebbinii suunka kaa lulaye
aan suulka kuu surin
aniga wayga sanco badan yahay...

She: the Almighty who not onto
your neck
but betwixt the legs instead
a string leathery for you hung
verily far more inventive
than I he is...

Song 162 – The massive breast

Isaga: waxa nabasta kuu galay

He: that which in your chest conceale
ma nabsaa ma nayl baa
is it misfortune that upon
you had fallen

oo nabsi waa bixilahaa
or is it a whole sheep-kid
hidden therein

bal nayli waa ciyi lahayd
misfortune may end at last

ee waa naaska kaa baxay
a sheep-kid’s bleating may
someone hear

oo naasku waa cad iyo caanee
that protrusion is your breast
massive

bal naasku waa ciyaal-koriyee
a lump of gland that milk contains
that babies sustains

oo cawska camanka kaa baxay
but the pastures fresh that on your
cheeks flourishing

aan la cuninin camalkiis?
why no herds ever on it grazed?...

Iyada:
aan ku raaco run kuu sheegee
She: truthfully I will forever follow yo
saddex magac mid ii bixi:
should you call me by either
three names:

sooniyo-salaad jecel
she who fasting and prayers loves

oo raaliyo mid ii bixi
or she the obedient call me

saddex magaalo mid i gee:
should you take me to either
three cities:

Butiyaalo  iyo Qaw
Butiyaalo and Qaw

Boosaaso mid i gee
to Boosaaso

saddex maro mid ii keen:
should you give me either of
three dresses:

Dunyar-yarey
dunyar-yarey

Dawaariishtha
dawaariishtha

Dallahelayda ii keen...
dallahelayda to me bring...

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**Song 163 – Mahad and Miido**

In the following song Mahad expresses his ardent love for Miido.

**Maha:** *Miidoy xagaan
kuu soo maraa?*
Mahad: o Miido, how could I reach you?

**Miido:** *Mahadow muskaa
ii soo jibaax*
Miido: jump over the thorn fence

**Mahad:** *Miidoy mindhay
godaxi i jaf tiri?*
Mahad: what, if the thorns pierce into
my flesh?

**Miido:** *Mahadow mindi jeexdaan hayaa*
Miido: I have a knife the thorns to extract

**Mahad:** *Miidoy mindhaan
goyeyoo qargaray?*
Mahad: what, if the rains soak
me through?

**Miido:** *Mahadow dab baan kuu shidahayaa*
Miido: I will kindle bon-fires
to warm you up

**Mahad:** *Miidoy mindhuu
biidna ima tarin?*
Mahad: what, if such warmth
be not enough
Miido: *Mahadow leggaan legga* 
_kuungu qaban..._ Miido: then in my breast I warm you up, darling mine...

6. **BAARCADDE DANCING SONGS**

According to an ancient story there once lived a man named Bile, who used to go from one village to another to recite lyric songs about the difficulties of human life, as well as its pleasures. To provide a musical accompaniment for himself the singer used to play on a small drum he always carried with him. He went through life with song and music.

Wherever the singer went the people were attracted to by the sweet songs and the masterly drum music, and they gathered around the drummer to listen to and see him perform his art to entertain them.

The lyric songs he recited were so sweet that the people liked them and especially the young girls were so much impressed by the wonderful songs and drum beat, that they even forgot to carry their kerchiefs, shawls, scarves with which they usually covered up their heads, breasts, etc. Feminine charm did not, however, have any effect on the singer who always upheld his moral fortitude, the story says.

6.1 **THE SONGS IN THE BAARCADDE**

After a time, the great entertainer had died, leaving much sorrow among his admirers all over the land. In his memory the admirers sung the following songs:

**Song 164 – *Baahi-laawe***

*bilow baahi-laawow* hungerless⁴⁵ one you are  
*bundaaskii Xamar ka yimidow* a sergeant⁴⁶ from Xamar⁴⁷ far away  
*balooleyda loogow...* who milch camel sacrificed for our sake⁴⁸  
*... who milch camel sacrificed for our sake⁴⁸* happiness bounteous  
*upon us you bestowed...*

From this memorial song the *Baarcadde* dancing style was born, as reported by our informant. Then there came a man called Jiilaal Xuseen who was an *orgi-naagooi*, a womanizer. He always envied the late great singer for having so many beautiful young girls as admirers at
his entertainment performances. Jiilaal was bitterly jealous of these pretty girls receiving the great Bile so warmly when he was still alive, taking him into their complete confidence.

And so Jiilaal got himself a small drum similar to the one used by the diseased singer and he tried to entertain the people as did the famous Bile. When the women and the young girls crowded around Jiilaal so as to watch his performance, he would not only suddenly change the tone of his songs, but would also get himself closer every now and then to the prettiest girl in the audience and caress her cheeks and breasts.

The girl protested in the following songs:

Song 165 – Jiilaal Xuseen

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{jabow Jiilaal Xuseen} & \quad \text{you, accursed Jiilaal Xuseen} \\
\textit{janno-gale} & \quad \text{the blessed one (who is no more)} \\
\textit{sidaa uma jiibin jirin} & \quad \text{in this manner he never sung} \\
\textit{jabow Jiiftada ka daa...} & \quad \text{the Jiifto\textsuperscript{49} you ought not to sing...}
\end{align*}
\]

Jiilaal had succeeded, the story says, in inducing some of his women-fans to grant him special favours and he always danced and sung just to please his favourite ladies, not the people as a whole.

After many centuries, however, the Baarcadde, by the famous Bile, developed from the simple entertainment performance, which mainly consisted of singing to drum music, into a popular dance staged and liked in many parts of the country to this day.

---

1 Our informant, Xaaji Diiriye Faarax, better known as Xaaji baalbaal (the winged Xaa-ji), stated that the proper name of this singing style is Hees ‘a song’; the Wilgo songs recorded in this section are obtained from Xaaji baalbaal on tape dated 11.5.82. Other informants, such as Mr. Ismaaciil Xirsi Farxaan of the National Theatre Agency, stated that the Wilgo is also called Gamaanyo, a humming voice of someone about to sing.
2 The Wilgo is sung by men only, it being a men’s genre in Somali oral poetry.
3 A girl’s name, she the slender one.
4 The ancient name of the Juba River in southern Somalia. This line of the song is based on an old story which says that a young girl in love took a pitcher late in one evening to draw water from the river, pretending so after nightfall. In fact, she wanted to meet there her lover secretly. The girl’s father understood her intentions though, and he then recited this line of the Wilgo song; reminding his wayward daughter that
the Ganaane was full of dangers such as crocodiles and snakes, and because of these
dangerous beasts people dared not go down the river at night.

5 A girl’s name, she who forewarns people of dangers.
6 A girl’s name, she the tender-hearted.
7 A girl’s panegyric name, the cute one; the term is, perhaps, from the Arabic rubab, a
mandolin-like musical instrument.
8 The centre-piece in the rosary beads used by Muslims in prayers, which is fastened
at the end of the string of beads, is called raatub; each complete count of the rosary
beads ends at the raatub piece, it being a kind of count-marker for the meditator. The
singer is, in fact, trying to induce his beloved to go out with him to continue their
courtship; the beloved Rubbo (see note 7) understands her lover’s message encoded
in poetic language.

9 A girl’s name (see note 3 to song 97).
10 A girl’s name formed of the combination of two female names: the first (Caasha)
from Arabic and the second (Rubbo) from Somali, meaning ‘the pretty one’.
11 A kind of cotton-print cloth with small black-white spots, worn by the Somali no-
madic men as a shawl some centuries ago; a young man courting a girl at night does
not usually wear brightly coloured clothes; for the girl’s relatives may notice his pres-
ence and put an end to the secret courtship. So he tells his beloved that he would rather
come to her secretly, wearing the dhurwaayo cloth to hide his presence.
12 Pastoral lovers often conduct secret courtship, in this line of the song the singer is
telling his beloved that he would come to their hut under cover of darkness to continue
their courtship. He gives a kick at the rear, on the outside, of the girl’s hut late at night
as a secret sign for his beloved to wake up and go out to meet him; should the other
occupants of the hut wake up, noticing the nocturnal activity, she has to pretend that
it is their burden camel that moves around the hut and she has to go out and bind up
its legs with shackles, saying the pacifying call: ‘easy-easy!’ .The lover conveys this
hidden strategy in his song.
13 At about 6 pm the Somali nomad drives his domestic animals, camels, sheep and
goats, into the stockade constructed for them for security at night; around 9 pm the
lactating animals are milked to feed the family members with fresh milk. The period
between these hours is called caweysin, the waiting period during which the animals
are let to rest before the milking session; the singer in this line of the song wished his
beloved, Caweeya (a girl’s name formed from caweysin – she who is patient in wait-
ing) to come and meet him to continue their courtship. He complains their
caweysin period is too long for him to wait for her outside her compound in the cold night.
14 A girl’s name, she who puts people at ease.
15 A misspelling of Bombey.
16 Here Hirwo means the name of the girl, the pretty one, to whom the singer is ad-
ressing his song, not the title of the genre itself.
17 The phrase ba hurba is repeated several times by the Hurbo dancers at the conclu-
sion of each tour of the dance; a shawl is held by the chorus members over the heads
of the dancing pairs, a boy and girl, when this phrase is sung. It is an indication that
the pair had concluded their tour of the dance and a fresh pair should enter the dancing
square, the process is repeated for each pair of Hurbo dancers’ performance.
18 This song is based on a popular tale which says that a woman had amorous affair
with a man while her husband was away from home; one day the woman saw her lover
coming to her at the appointed time, not knowing that the husband had returned and was at home at that very moment. The woman then sung this song, so as to warn her friend of the changed situation, without raising the husband’s suspicion, the story says.

19 The term *Dhaanto* means the best of the dances and singing styles performed by the nomadic community. Xaaji baalbaal states that *Dhheel*, a dance song, is another name for the *Dhaanto*.

20 See section 2 above.

21 A girl’s name, she who is as sweet as grapes.
22 The female genital is the hidden meaning of the riddle.
23 A tall tree of the acacia family, common in the Somali countryside.
24 A panegyric name of a girl, she the quiet one.
25 A girl’s name, she the golden one.
26 Another name for the *Dhaanto* singing-style.
27 These are the opening formulaic phrases for the *haan* entertainment dance songs; while reciting these initial phrases the singer prepares herself mentally for the song she would introduce next.
28 While the *haan* singer utters the formula *hibiyey hibi*, the refrain *hee* is chanted by the chorus after every line of song recited by the singer; the refrain means: ‘what happens then, what are you going to say next?’.
29 A plant of the species *Terminalia Polycarpos*; it grows beautiful blooms and leaves just before the rainy season in the high lands.
30 This line of the song refers to the male ostrich which in the mating season opens up its plumed wings in a strange dancing fashion before the hen.
31 In the dry season camels are driven from the Hawd, the high plateau area where the grazing resources are available most of the year, to the low lands where the water ponds are for watering the animals once in a month. The singer compares her feelings with such thirsty camels driven to the water wells after a long spell in the waterless Hawd. The woman-singer thus expresses the great desire she has for the *haan* singing.
32 In the last lines of the song the singer is criticizing the chorus girls for failing to provide her with a unified voice, synchronized with the *haan* beat.
33 A multi-coloured cotton-print material (*maro-shabeel*) for women’s dress, popular among the Somali nomad women in the old days.
34 A major Somali tribe in the northeastern part of the country.
35 *Wilgo* and *Walasago* are two popular dancing styles; for the *Wilgo*, see section 1 above.
36 A panegyric name of a girl, she who is tidy, well dressed.
37 Call names of she-camels.
38 A girl’s name, the graceful one.
39 A girl’s name, she the clean one, as pure as rain water.
40 The Somali pastoralist sends out a scouting party before he removes his camp to a new campsite with better pastures.
41 See note 33 to song 69 (Chapter III)
42 Branding with a hot iron is a method of curing sick camels and horses used by the Somali pastoralists.
43 Butiyaalo, Qaw and Boosaaso are cities in the eastern coast of Somalia.
44 These were multi-coloured dress material used by the pastoral Somali women in the last century.
The imaginary spirit honoured in the *Baarcadde* songs; in the name of the spirit Bile is also honoured by his admirers.

*Bundaas* – a rank given to the native colonial in the ex-Italian Somaliland, equivalent to sergeant.

Ancient name for Mogadishu.

It is said Bile had only a milch camel which he slaughtered to feed his followers.

A genre in Somali oral poetry in which the poet often discusses serious topics; in this line of the song Jiilaal is criticized for mixing up the *Baarcadde* entertainment songs with the serious *Jiifto* style.
CHAPTER V
SONGS CONCERNING WILD BEASTS

1. PROVERBS OF THE BEASTS

Wild beasts such as lions, hyenas, leopards, jackals, etc. live in the same ecology with the domestic animals kept by the Somali pastoralists, posing a constant danger to their livestock. There is, therefore, a permanent struggle between man and the beasts of prey in which the man tries to protect his property from these predators living in the same environment with him.

Over the centuries pastoral poets have created a considerable amount of oral poetry concerning the habits of the wild beasts, a formidable enemy of man. As an illustration we shall record here some songs about the wild beasts, game animals, reptiles, birds, insects, etc., which are gathered together, and each animal describing his/her natural ability, hunting to impress the others.

Song 166 – The lion: king of the beasts
In this song the king of the forest, the lion, describes how powerful he is, how it is easy for him to fell down the huge camels:

qaalmo geesi soo saaroo
Soolkeer uu daaqsiyoo
sibir-gooye waa ani...

virgin camels by a brave man guarded
in the Sool peacefully grazing
their rumps easily I break...

Song 167 – Lion: the superior of beasts
In this song the lion asserts his superiority over the rest of the wild beasts and refuses to return a he-camel that was loaned to him by the hyena, which the king of the forest has eaten:

dhuruqsane dharaqsiyo kanow
qaar-dambe xabaalane
faro haddaad sheegtay
annan qoollanaan loo dhashiyo
ragannimaan qaataay
micidayda qoolaaban haddaan
qararac kuu siiyo

you, weakling lowly fellow
that diminutive hindquarters has
of tribes numerous should you boast
of noble birth and bravery I boast
the hindquarters tearful sound when you hear
of mighty fangs mine
in fear daily you would tremble
**Song 168 – The herdsmen’s song**

In this song the lion is addressed intimately as *oday garweyn*, the long-bearded elder. The herdsmen entreat the lord of the forest to show mercy and not to attack their herds:

**gumburiyouw oday garweynow**
**carrada Gumasoor ma joogoy**
**Ogaadeen baannu nahayey**
**galbeed baa guri qabow...**

**o elder, long-bearded!**
**Gumasoor** in this land lives not
**Ogadeens we are**
**habitat cool and cosy**
**is in the west lands available...**

**Song 169 – The hyena’s complaint**

Same as the lion, the hyena has its own songs describing its habits of hunting, its alliances and solidarity with its hyena clan and the other beasts. In this song the hyena complains against the lion who refused to pay back the he-camel that the hyena loaned to and was eaten by the king of the forest; stating that he would solicit the assistance of all the hyena tribes, as well as the other beasts, to regain his camel:

**war buurtaa haddaan tagoo**
**haddaan toban ka soo qaato**
**too kale haddii aan tagoo**
**toban ka soo qaato**
**Qorraxay haddii aan tagoo**
**labada qayd xooro**
**oo goordheereyaashii reer-abtigay**
**qaylo ku ekeeyo**
**boqorrada dhurwaayada haddaan**
**gabay ku qayraansho**
**shabeel iyo qareenkiis haddaan**
**qaylo maqshiyo**
**duulkii halayeeyada haddaan**
**subax qamaansiiyo**
**qalbilaaawehiyow markaas**
**yaa na qaban doona**
**oo sow qaalinkaygii caddaa**
**qaanti hari mayso...**

**ten beasts, friends mine all**
**from that mountain should I call out**
**ten others from another mountain**
**to Qorraxay should I travel**
**the loin cloth throwing in grief**
**among uncles mine long-necked raising**
**the alarm**
**to the hyena kings noble**
**lamentable songs mine should I declaim**
**to the leopards and their allies**
**should my cry for help reach them all**

**you, lion, mindless**
**who would then withstand**
**such mighty force as mine**
**he-camel white**
**I would then surely retrieve...**
Song 170 – The hyena’s ability

In this song the hyena describes his ability to snatch an animal in the middle of the night when the people are sound asleep:

\[
\begin{align*}
duul nabad ku seexday & \quad \text{in the dead of night} \\
kaga-seleliyow ani... & \quad \text{it is me who raids the camp} \\
\end{align*}
\]

from the pen a prey to snatch
as owners peacefully slept...

Song 171 – The leopard

The leopard also has its own songs describing the habits of this fearful beast as mentioned in various Somali folk songs. In this song the leopard states his hunting prowess:

\[
\begin{align*}
riyo xagaayoo & \quad \text{a lock of goats that in winter time} \\
xagar daaqahaya & \quad \text{on the xagar\textsuperscript{7} branches browsing} \\
soo-xaabshe waa ani... & \quad \text{it is me who slaughters} \\
\end{align*}
\]

them all at once...

Song 172 – Sharaxle, the leopard

The leopard is called *sharaxle*, the spotted one, as it is mentioned in this song about this splendidly coated beast:

\[
\begin{align*}
sharaxlow shabeelkuba & \quad \text{leopard, the spotted beast} \\
shansho kuma dhego ridee & \quad \text{by the legs seizes not the goat} \\
shalaw buu ku tuuraa... & \quad \text{into a trough deep it throws it into instead...}
\end{align*}
\]

Song 173 – The jackal

In the Somali oral literature the jackal is described as the craftiest of all the beasts of prey found in the Somali ecology and numerous folk songs are created about this small but harmful beast. Stealthily the jackal takes cover in the underbrush and suddenly springs up and snatches a baby goat and runs off with the prey. In packs jackals may attack goats and sheep and seizing an animal may kill and devour it in no time. The jackal describes its hunting prowess in this song:

\[
\begin{align*}
baraar banka daaqayyaam & \quad \text{surprise I spring on little lambs} \\
soo balow iraahdaa & \quad \text{that peacefully graze around} \\
baridaan la boodayyoo & \quad \text{their fat tails tearing fast} \\
biliggu waa ani... & \quad \text{with the booty off I run all speed...}
\end{align*}
\]
Song 174 – The jackal’s reply to the hyena
In this song the hyena and the jackal exchange derogatory songs pointing out each other’s defects:

*Cumarow cagalaawe*
*ceeriin qurquriye...*
*hey Cumar, the limber*^8^ *on raw flesh you always feed...*

Song 175 – The hyena’s reply to the jackal

*naag bilisa bi’iso*
*waxareheed bakhtiiso*
*ba’yey ka siiso*
*ma adaa bislaysta?...*
*goat kids peaceful*
*to a noble lady belonging*
*you cowardly snatch off*
*causing the woman cry with grief*
*the flesh of the stolen prey*
*you never cooked either...*

Song 176 – The jackal’s vanity
In this song the jackal boasts of its beauty and elegance and demands that the other beasts acknowledge it as the prettiest among them:

*naa Dayo i dheh*
*Dayo Daahir i dheh*
*dhexdu madarta i dheh*
*afku qalinka i dheh...*
*Dayo the lady immaculate call me*
*with the gums waist as slender as a reed*
*with charcoal-black gums^9^...*

Song 177 – The elephant
The great elephant also began his song as follows:

*ilkahaygu waa dahab*
*darajooyin lagu qaatiyo*
*boqorradu i daawade...*
*with gold solid my tusks are bought*
*honour to men they bestow*
*kings great with joy admire me...*

Song 178 – The rhinoceros
It was then time for the huge rhinoceros to sing her song which was as follows:

*ma billahay*
*ma baarahay*
*baruur guurtey waa ani...*
*elegant am I not*
*bundle of fat that is me...*
Song 179 – The giraffe

It was then the long-necked giraffe to present his song which was as follows:

*geed la gaari kari waayey*  
tallest tree that no one else may reach

*caleenta guudka kaga taal*  
leaves that on topmost branches grew

*waxa gostay waa ani...*  
it is me who easily reaches and feed on...

Song 180 – The rat

The rat was then called upon to sing his song which was as follows:

*god yaraan samaystaan*  
little hole into the ground I dug out

*isku soo ganayyo*  
into it I run quick

*lama-gaare waa ani...*  
whenever danger I sensed...

Song 181 – The ant

The tiny industrious ant was then called upon to sing her song:

*xayr naagi meel dhigatay*  
fats that woman stored away

*kaxagxagato waa ani...*  
stealthily from her I steal...

Song 182 – The ostrich

Finally the big, graceful bird, ostrich, came forward to sing her song which was as follows:

*nin kastaa ha faanfaano*  
anyone loudly may boast his worth

*anigaa filkay dhaaamoo*  
of my age-group I am the best

*midabkaygu waa gaarood*  
colours immaculate have I

*madow-maahir weeyaanoo*  
black-brown plumes combined

*anigiyo macciideedkaa*  
of the sand-snake and myself

*maah-maahi nagu timidoo*  
of our splendours colourful

*raggu nagu macneeyaan*  
proverbs are created of old

*hablahay u muhiyaan...*  
where for our beauty

*maah-maahi nagu timidoo*  
men praise us profusely

*raggu nagu macneeyaan*  
causing girls with jealousy to rage...


When all the animals had sung their songs about their prowess, they all went on their separate ways, each of them having understood the ability of the others, it is said.
2. **Courtship-dance songs concerning wild beasts, reptiles, birds, insects — boasting of their ability**

As we have stated in the preceding section 1, the lower animals that live in the same ecology with man are personified, and they are invested with human intelligence in Somali folk lore, especially in tales, oral poetry, popular dance, songs, etc. As an illustration we shall record here some examples of dancing songs\(^{11}\) in which the animals are contesting for the hand in marriage of Miss Dayo, the jackal. While performing the hilarious popular dance, *Sacab*\(^{12}\), each singer-suitor states his good qualities so as to deserve the favours of the beloved one.

**Song 183 – The lion**

The lion, the great king of all the wild beasts, first sung his courtship song as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
naa
ginivey
galaas
dahabaay & \quad \text{listen, woman} \\
raggaan
soo
cayaar
gudey & \quad \text{you are as precious as guinea and gold} \\
wada
gayaanka & \quad \text{revellers and suitors here we are all} \\
naa
dayoy
ilwaad-gurux & \quad \text{Dayo}\(^{13}\) how pretty you are! \\
aafka
calim
lagu
mariye & \quad \text{Lips yours are as black} \\
mar
uun
oodda
soo
febi... & \quad \text{as though with ink painted...}
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 184 – The bustard bird**

The bustard bird was the next to sing his love thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
ninkan
galow
la
leeyahay & \quad \text{this man bustard called} \\
labo
galac
garbaha
saaroo & \quad \text{pairs of spears sharp carried he} \\
geel
boqola
sooo
dhiciye & \quad \text{hundred head camels looted he} \\
Dayoy
mala
dadab
gleysaa?... & \quad \text{Dayo, won’t you wed me} \\
& \quad \text{for brave a man I am?...}
\end{align*}
\]

**Song 185 – The lion’s reply to the bustard bird**

The lion replying to the bustard bird sung his second song thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
gelow
geed
ku
jira
mooyee & \quad \text{bustard bird under trees itself always hides} \\
geed
xabag
ka
guro
mooyee & \quad \text{on tree guns it feeds} \\
gelow
geel
leh
lama
arag... & \quad \text{under-belly unseemly it has} \\
& \quad \text{no one ever heard of} \\
& \quad \text{bustard bird camels possessing...}
\end{align*}
\]
Song 186 – The camel-tick

A camel-tick, swollen up twice its normal size with the blood it sucked from the animal on which it attached itself, came forward to sing his song which was also in reply to the bustard bird:

- geelaad tilmaamayso of camels you boasted
- gendi iyo cadhoba ha gashee may the tsetse fly swarm on them
- guudkaan ka fuulaayoo I would myself to their body attach
- dhiigaa ka gobo’leeye the last drop of blood to suck
- kaga-gooje waa ani... from them all...

Song 187 – The lion to Miss Dayo

Addressing his third dance song to Miss Dayo, who is being wooed by all the male animals present, the king of the beasts sung thus:

- naa kaymahaan inoo geliyoo listen, lady into the forest deep I will go
- koromada saraareed baan fattened burden-camels there to hunt
- maqaarsarka kaga dhegi onto their broad humps I would
- miidiyo baruuroodaan jump and crash
- marba malabsan doonaaye with fats nectarous to feed you always
- Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?... Dayo, won’t you wed me

Song 188 – The wild dog

In his turn the wild dog sung his song thus:

- naa magacaygu waa weeroo listen, lady
- soddon iyo siddeetaan laxaad eliminator is my name
- ayaan habeen meel ku wada diliye ewes thirty and eighty in numbers
- Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?... in a night at one place all I destroy
- Dayo, won’t you wed me
- for meat you would never miss?...

Song 189 – The skunk

Then it was the turn of the skunk to let Dayo hear his wooing song:

- naa dundumooyinkaan geli listen, lady
- dhuusaan ku bow siin into holes deep in anthills I go
- malab baa ka tawlabine with fart mighty mine into them
- bombarding
- honey plentiful for you collect I would
- Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?... Dayo, won’t you wed me?...
Song 190 – The Hyena
Next the hyena began his song as follows:

\[ \text{naa Cumaroo duud-carro leh sida} \]
\[ \text{naa Cumaroo duud-carro leh sida} \]
\[ \text{listen, lady} \]
\[ \text{Cumar}^{16} \text{ with the strength heavy} \]
\[ \text{quarries to carry} \]
\[ \text{iyo Dayoo varaar layn} \]
\[ \text{Dayo that sheep-kids snatches quick} \]
\[ \text{waa isla-doonoasho ilahe} \]
\[ \text{a blessing by Allah it would be} \]
\[ \text{Dayoy mayla dadab geleysa?...} \]
\[ \text{the two of us to combine...} \]

Song 191 – The Jackal’s Choice
At the end of the singing contest when all her suitors sung their wooing songs, the lady-jackal made her decision in the following song, choosing somebody who did not participate in the courtship contest:

\[ \text{dabagaalle qoodheedow} \]
\[ \text{squirrel, with the testicles large} \]
\[ \text{qumanow qardhaaso-caddow} \]
\[ \text{with the talisman against evil} \]
\[ \text{adigaan ku qayibayoo} \]
\[ \text{I admire you more than all the others} \]
\[ \text{adigaan kuu dadab gelaayaa...} \]
\[ \text{would you wed me with joy?...} \]

---

1. In Somali oral poetry the lower animals are personified and invested with human intelligence, some species assuming the male gender (lion, leopard, elephant, etc.) and others (jackal, ostrich, etc.) the female gender.
2. A flat waterless land in the northeast of Somalia, where camels thrive well.
3. See the hyena’s song 169.
4. A Somali nomad clan of the Daarood tribe whose pastureland is normally in the northeastern Somalia; the singer tells the lion that his tribe are the Ogadeens, another major Somali tribe, not the Gumasoor clan, against whom the lion seems to have a grudge, and who removed their camp to the rich western lands to which the beasts should also go for hunting.
5. A town in western Somalia under Ethiopian control.
6. Among the Somali nomads it used to be the custom for a man to throw off his shawl or turban as a sign of grief in the presence of his clansmen, so as to solicit their help to redress wrongs done to the man concerned.
8. The hyena is also called dhurwaa, meaning ‘he who begets no off-spring’, ‘the accursed one’; another nickname for this animal is qaaryare, meaning ‘he with the hindquarters diminutively formed’. A folk tale states that the hyena one day jumped on the back of a huge she-camel called Caweer to kill it, and when it fell down the hyena was crushed underneath Caweer’s dead body and he cried: «Caweer! Caweer! Let me go, please! Lucky is he who frees himself from Caweer’s dead body!». At last the hyena managed to free himself, but with a broken backside, which earned him the nickname qaaryare, the limber.
Black gums are a sign of a woman’s natural beauty and Somali oral poetry frequently refers to this point; the jackal’s song here reflects to this Somali lore regarding feminine beauty.

A tiny, harmless snake with reddish colour that often buries itself in the sand.

These songs were mostly taken from *Aamina Xaaji Aadan, Suugaanta Caruurta* (Children’s Literature), Madbacadda Qaranka, Muqdisho, 1984; we are indebted to the author of this important work.

See Chapter IV, section 5.

Short form for *dawaco*, ‘jackal’.

*Weer* in Somali means ‘eliminator’, as it has the habit of killing off a whole flock of goats, but to eat only one carcass.

This is an animal common in Somalia, the size of a cat, not unlike the north American Skunk; it has a white tail-end and feeds on rats, chicken, honey, etc., it emits an offensive odor when attacking beehives to chase away the bees.

A proper male name from Arabic; here it is used as a panegyrical name that the hyena is calling himself.
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**INFORMANTS**

Mrs. Maryan Mire, of *Laas-aanood*, tape 18.4.85.
Sacdiyo Maxamed Muuse, of the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts.
Siciid Sheekh Samantar, of *ditto*.
Tooxyar Maxamed Cali, of *Laas-aanood*, tape 3.10.76.
Xaaji Diiriye Faarax (Xaaji baalbaal), tape 11.5.82.
Yuusu Ciise (badmacaanshe), of the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts.
This book presents a collection of folk songs belonging to the nomadic society of the central and north-eastern Somalia. The 191 songs contained in this volume range over a great variety of song types (nursery songs, work songs, entertainment songs) and witness an important aspect of Somali oral literature. They were recorded and translated by Axmed Cartan Xaange, who grew up in the pastoral community in the north-eastern part of the country. With this collection the author aimed at preserving a valuable patrimony of the Somali people, for the benefit of both Somali and foreign readers.