

studi somali

16

FOLK SONGS FROM SOMALIA

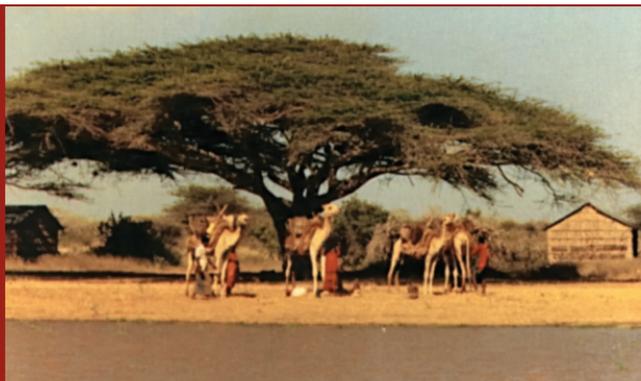
collected and translated by

AXMED CARTAN XAANGE

edited by

ANNARITA PUGLIELLI

Università degli Studi Roma Tre
Centro Studi Somali



Roma TrE-Press

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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 Ministero 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 *Qamuuska 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

THE NEW SOMALI ALPHABET

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:

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

CONSONANT SOUNDS

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

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

THE GLOTTAL STOP (HAMZA – ARABIC) /ʔ/

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*ʔ ‘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 – Xareedo¹ 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-nuur². 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 ‘Shssh!’ 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 payed 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 from her mother and grand-mother. 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; milking 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 reflects 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

*geesiyow!
gargaar ayaannu kuu wadnaaye
naga guddoon
guul Eebbe idin siiye
naga guddoon
toban wiiloo taabbagala
Eebbahay ku sii
wiil iyo waalid
guul ku waara
naga guddoon...*

brave man!
present beneficent to you we brought
the gift from us take
may Allah bless you both
the gift take from us
may Allah bless you
with ten sons strong
may parents and children all be
victorious everafter
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
waa wiil
Bareeraan dabowadaa
wa gabar...*

Wacays the boy
I'm bringing out
Bareer the girl
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 convalescence³. 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

*adaa Dhamacow i dhuubay
dhafaorrada igaga yaalla
dhibaatiyo cudur ma eego
kolkaad dhalataad dhawaaqday
dhudday dhaxan bayga duushay
dhulkiibaa ii iftiimay...*

Dhamac⁴ darling mine
for your sake much've I suffered in life
sunken already're temples mine
sickness and suffering untold
for your sake willingly I bear
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:

<i>hobeeya hobeeya</i>	hey hey baby
<i>maxaa kugu dhacay dhiblaawe?</i>	why cry darling mine?
<i>maxaa dhiidhida kuu leh?</i>	why so capricious be?
<i>ma dhiishi baan la buuxin?</i>	hasn't the milk vessel ⁵ been filled up?
<i>ma naaskii baa gabloolay?</i>	had mine breast dried up all?
<i>gablood godol ka weydey?</i>	a drop of milk giving you no more?
<i>ma geeli baa arooray?</i>	had the milk camels gone
<i>aroroo oon ku raagey?</i>	to water ponds far away?
<i>ma odaygii baa socdaalay?</i>	has daddy on journey gone away?
<i>socdaaloo socod ku raagey?</i>	tarrying to you to return?
<i>ma giiraa geedo weydey?</i>	haven't the goats found grass fresh
	to feed on?

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:

<i>hobeeya hobeeya</i>	hey hey baby
<i>dhallaamadu waa dhashaane</i>	many a child is born and dies
<i>dhashaaniinoo dhintaane</i>	
<i>ha dhimanoo laguma dhababao</i>	may you live long darling mine
	may evil eyes never on you be casted
<i>dhul iyo dhagax haw dhexaynin</i>	beneath the cold earth
<i>dhadhaab culus laguma saaro</i>	may you never lie lifeless
<i>dharaar habartaa ma oydo</i>	stones heavy may they never place
	onto your grave fresh
<i>dhallaamada kaama weydo</i>	over your demise cruel
	may your mother never cry
<i>dushiyo laabta dallaalin...</i>	in her heart and spine ⁶
	your absence may she never feel...

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:

<i>hobeeya hobeeya</i>	hey hey baby
<i>ha waayin wardheere aabbe</i>	may there always by your side be
	a father who among men has a name

*ha waayin waxsiiso hooyo
ha waayin walaalo dhawra ah
ha waayin labadii awoowe
ha waayin labadii ayeeyo
ha waayin intii wax kuu ah...*

a mother kind who feeds you
brothers several supporting you
grannies the two
grand-fathers the two
all those you are related to...

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*

hey hey baby
you are darling mine
as fresh as the *dixi* grasses
that at Gaaroodi place grows tall
as lovely as Dalyo in tidal floods
as ample as *digwayn* to the brims full
as slender as the *Dureeme* stocks
that at a *Cali-kablow*
in the wind sways...

*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 maalaa madow
baddiyo moolkaa madow leh
madowga ceeb ha isku moodin...*

hey hey baby
rich is the black man
the mighty deep sea is black too
ashamed never be darling mine
of your colour black...

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'iyoo shaal leh
adoo gaydhaystay timaha
adoo geel dhalay la jooga*

hey hey baby
on fate depend all in life
luck and Allah's wish
lucky is he who sees you one day
in two go'¹³ and shawl attired
with hair in gorgeous colours coiffured¹⁴
lactating camels in the forest herding

adoo cad ku taagan

on a foal white galloping by...¹⁵

*adoo xalxaleetiyaaya
adooxeebaha maaraya
xariir ku mardaadiyaaya
ninkii ku arkaa ayaan leh...*

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:

*hobeeya hobeeya
haddaad gaadhoo gabowdo
haddii guulle Alla yeelo
haddaad geeleena raacdo
haddii guuto u timaaddo
rasaastu hadday gariirto
hadday raacadadu rucleyso
haddii meel la isku gaaro*

hey hey baby
should mighty Allah grants
that you in long years live
should you the camels take out to graze
should enemy the herd attacked
should bullets deadly whistled around
should men rushed the herd to retrieve
should forces all last clashed
in battle bloody
but once you would die darling mine
be brave then the camel defend...

*mar uu baad go 'i lahayde
guntoo geela ha ka roorin...*

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
haddaad gaadhoo gabowdo
haddii guulle Alla yeelo
haddii geeriyi ku deyso
haddaad guur taawinayso
kollaba goombaar ha guursan
gobtaaday kaa rartaayoo*

hey hey baby
should mighty Allah grants
that you in long years live
if death spares you
that you may one day marry wished
slovenly woman marry never my son
for she would remove you away
from noble people to you related
servants against you she would set;
she whose mother had cursed
and spinster with age advanced
she whose clan you know not
beware darling mine
for such women never fall in love...

*guntaaday kugu dirtaaye;
miday hooyadeed habaartay
haweeny horay u joogtey
midaan haybteed la garanin
hubsoo hooyo ha guursan...*

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:

*gaboobe gyaal jirora
gar weyne ka soo baxyowa
cirradu gaasheysayowa
Garduur iyo Godanka Yeyle
Nugaal godan gawyaheeda
guddoonka ka jeediyowa
garta u gabangaabsadowa
gundhada geedka u marowa
guntiga lowyaha geshowa
gartii raagtaba ridowa...*

in many years may you live
hairy beard and mane may you grow

in Garduur¹⁶ and the valley of Wolves¹⁷
around the Nugaal¹⁸ valleys wide
affairs of the clan may you wisely preside
in the shade of the assembly tree
place of honour being yours by right
around the knees the loin cloth to tie¹⁹
with wisdom justice dispensing
litigations old among men
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:

*hobeeya hobeeya
haddaan heestaada qaado
haddaan qaadoo qandiciyo
haddaan qalqallooc u diido
haddaan qoladiinna sheego
habeenkaa igu dumaaya
haleelaa iga gudaysa
halaa iga gaagaxaaya*

*hurdaa iga baaqanaysa
intii xumi way xanaaqi
kasyari kabahay ka roori
dhowaantii way dhaqaaqi
ishoodiyo cawrigooda
caloosha-kakuunahooda
dhunkaal baan kaaga deyrey...*

hey hey baby
should I your song start to sing
with love's warmth and fervour
straight from mine heart's depth
who your clan is should I others tell
on me night would fall
before the end of the song I come to
milch camels mine would go stray
milking sessions they would miss
all night long sleepless I would stay
people envious anger would be with us
fools from their shoes would run away
relatives would from us retreat
for envious of us they are all
malice towards us they conceal
with *dhunkaal*²⁰ venom deadly
forever I would protect you darling mine
from the evils of this world...

Song 14 – The mother's solace

In this song the mother states that her son is her solace:

*hobeeya hobeeya
haddii lay doorransiiyo
adiyo Daarood²¹ dhammaanti
adiyo duubiga Shirshoore²²*

hey hey baby
offered should I be
all the men of Daarood tribe great
of the Shirshoore clans as well

*adiyo deebblaha la maalo
adiyo doonyaha la fuulo
dugsiiye adaan ku doortay...*

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 Fiidooy ku keenay*

Fariid baa dhalan lahaaye

*ragga faalali lahaaye
wan baa fooraari lahaaye...*

hey hey baby
Fiido²³ what bright you forth
out of my belly
Fariid²⁴ 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
dhibley gabar waa dhibley
dhibaad 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

*ninkii ma-dharaaranteeda;
habaar-qabe guursatoya
hangool²⁵ jabay dhacyeeya
gambada haab-haabatoya
libaax hawd²⁶ ugu-gashoya...*

«my man hungry stays» she would cry out;
to a cursed man may she wed
who with a broken *hangool* beats her
that she her kerchief snatches quick
into the *hawd* desert to run away
in hungry lion's den herself
to find in the end...

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:

*hobeeya hobeeya
Cambaro-kaahaay korkaaga
korkaaga cad ee wanaagsan
indhaha kuliga madowle
kulayl cudur kaama daaro...*

hey hey baby
Cambara-kaaha²⁷ darling mine
brilliant and beautiful your body is
with eyes like beads black
may disease never destroy
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 staple 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:

*ihiyey ih²⁸
gabadhii xilataa
aakhiray welweshaa
adduunkay walhataa
«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:

*ihiyey ih
gacaloygacalo
gacantay midigey
waa ku faaninayaa
faanku waa kugu 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

*fuleygiina ha guursan:
 ninka geesi ha guursan
 marka geela la qaado
 gudub buu ka ordaa
 gaashaankuu babiyaa
 guutaduu hor maraa
 goob xun baa la dhigaayoo
 gablan buu ku dhigaa;
 ninka gaaban ha guursan
 marka geelu cadhoobo
 gondohuu ka dhayaa
 garbasaarka ma gaaree;
 ninka dheerna ha guursan
 marka gaajo timaaddo
 guriguu isgoglaa
 go'ayey ku yiraa
 waana baahi darteed
 waana been quwideed;
 fuleygiina ha guursan
 meel faciis ka teguu
 faylaweyn yahayoo
 foolxumuu la rorgaa...*

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*²⁹ 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
 inveterate a liar often he proves to be
 hence such a man marry never;
 behind the men the coward himself hides
 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
 kolka waan habaroobey
 waan hiraanhirayaa
 hooyaday wax ma dhaamo
 waan horaad-balaqoobey...*

dear me!
 pretty left me behind
 an old woman already I am...
 laboured is my breath with age
 as infirm as mother mine am I
 once the high breasts mine had fallen low...

Song 21 – Stay at home should no man come along

In this grain-pounding 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-weyrixayaay
 geel ma kaala baxaa
 geel haddaan kugu waayo*

dear me!
 enviable darling mine
 your hand in marriage shall I give away
 camels numerous as dowry to get
 should your price be beneath
 such camels for me to fetch

*iyo geenyo irmaan
iyo goodir la fuulo
gurigiinna iska joog
gabar baad ka ahaan
hooyadaa u adeeg
gablan geeri ku dhawr..*

or a foal lactating
or a steed strong for riding fit
then at home forever
maiden darling you would be
mother yours to serve
in spinsterhood ending your days...

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
gacaloy gacalo
afar kaaga digaa
kaaga dayriyayaa
kaaga diin-dhigayaa:*

dear me!
enviable darling mine
of four things I'm warning you
advice essential giving you beforehand
beware of these in all times:

*habarlaawe nin haaya
habar weyn nin lahaa
habartiis nimay joogto
hablo kay la dhasheen;*

a man with orphans in his care
a man with a senior wife
a man with several sisters
such men marry never;

*habarlaawe koryaa
habar weyn la furyaa
hablo guursade aa
hooggu waa habartiis
aan geesna kaaga harayn...*

among them in case you wished to choose
orphans may grow up in time
senior wife divorced may she be
sisters may in marriage be given away
but his mother in mind you
a disaster always hanging around you...

4. WORK SONG IN THE *BURAAANBUR* 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 image³⁰.

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:

<i>adoo so guureyoo, galan-galcooyin qaba</i>	when after journey arduous you are tired and exhausted
<i>adoo sida geela dhalay, godol lehoo irmaan</i>	when you are in lactation like the she-camels
<i>adoo sida awr gurgura, gibilsanoo wax sida</i>	in breeding time when you are laden with loads heavy like burden camel obedient
<i>reer aan gacalkaa ahayn, gees lagaaga furay;</i>	you are told foreigners unfriendly to live with;
<i>arigu wuxuu dooni inaad, soo dabbaalataa</i>	managing the goat needs of you
<i>awrku wuxuu dooni inaad, dabar ku soo xidhaa</i>	tying up securely the burden camel needs of you
<i>aqalku wuxuu dooni inaad, shay ku soo dartaayoo soo dugaalisaa</i>	new article to add to it the hut needs of you cosy a bit to make the home
<i>maqashu waxay dooni inaad soo dareerisaa</i>	baby goats herding needs of you
<i>ninku daryeel kaa helaayoo meelo kuu diraa</i>	comforting the husband needs of you
<i>hangool ku yadhiyoo hawsha kugu dilaa</i>	his wishes to attend to a hooked stick he may ask you to fetch
<i>misana adigoon wax dhimin, aabi kugu dilaa</i>	to beat you with for mistakes minor you make or for no cause at all
<i>aniga hay dudin, dantaa baa ku haysatee...³¹</i>	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 family³².

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 sung 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 north-eastern Somalia.

¹⁰ The natural reservoir of Harodigeed in northern Somalia, north of the Wardheer town.

¹¹ *Enteropogon macrostachus* (A. Rich) Benth, out of which Somali pastoral women fabricate grass mats.

¹² Cali – a personal male name; *Kablow* – 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ [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’].

¹⁶ A flood-water reservoir in northwest Somalia between the towns of Awaare and Wardheer.

¹⁷ The valley of wolves – also a reservoir in the northwest Somalia near the Buuhoodle water wells.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ *Panicum turgidum* Forsk.; *Commifora erlangeriana*.

²¹ A major Somali tribe.

²² A clan of the Daarood.

²³ Female name, meaning ‘she who is born in the evening’.

²⁴ Male name, ‘the nice, lovable one’.

²⁵ 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*.

²⁶ The highland area in the northwest Somalia.

²⁷ Female name, literally it means ‘bright embergris, the precious one as the embergris, the brilliant one as the dawn lights’.

²⁸ 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!’.

²⁹ The Scabies disease which often attacks the Somali camels.

³⁰ For further information on the buraanbur genre see song 84.

³¹ This song was collected from Miss Sacdiya Maxamed Muuse of the Academy of Sciences and Arts, Mogadishu, 29.10.85.

³² For further information on Somali folktales see Axmed Cartan Xaange, *Sheeko-xariirooyinka 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*¹ 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 garaacyey
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;

*Saylac laga keenyey
wada sin-simaney
si yaab aqalka loo saaryey...*

from Saylac too, it comes
beauty and splendid thing
that fitted well the hut...

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
docadalooley
wan loo diley dugaag gurayey*

*tukuhu daanyo-daanyeyey
ninkeedi dabayl raacyey
jiifloo huruddoy
daah aan jirin jiiddoy
jabtoy jalawdu waa roobey;
kaalin-daraney
adaan kayd u sii dhigan...*

she who in her home *kebed* has not
her hut hollow-sided remains
beasts wild would feast
on her meat supplies
crows in and out her hut would fly
winds cold her man would kill
you, wretched lazy woman
who *kebed* that exists not pretends to pull
the rains soon would fall
drenched and miserable you then be...

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
xaamuq badaney
maxaan kaga xil-beelaayey?
kaga xil-beelaayey
xarigga beegiyo
masaydoo xaddillaatayey;
dhabarka kama loodoy
luquntu jabaney
aday lumiyeyey lulatoy;
baranbaraa xagatay
buul xun bay dhextiil
bilista yaa ii xil qarín
xariggu waa go 'ayey...*

troublesome are thou *kebed* to make
unwieldy indeed is thy work
criticism severe how shall I avoid?

the ropes to straighten I must
the seam to tighten:
painful my back already is
the neck with toil I broke, too
the *kebed* is the cause of my illness all;
cockroaches gnawed it all
for so long in the hut neglected it laid
women's criticism how shall I avoid
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 hoorkayga 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

*Faadumoo gaana iyo
gacal dhan baan ogaa
ee miyaan garanaayey
inuu kaa guraaran yahay...*

Faadumo and other weavers friends
were help to help
I knew not you needed help, though...

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
buul-shareeraay
ma maantaan bahday helay

ninkii tol yar baa tawaawacee
duftii toban ma loo helay...*

o *kebed* mine
spotted like the leopard wild
so well the hut it fitted
relatives mine helped me the *kebed* to make
he who relatives many has not
in the work to help
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

baarqab waa seedoo

coarse is young camel's meat

sariba maynee
sagaal-jir wan noo qala
koronkor cuni maynoo
kariba maynee
karuur geel ma la hayaa?

for us to chew it
for us slaughter instead a ram nine-year-old
on millet meals feed us not
for it soon cooks not
camel's milk curdled offer us instead...

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
waqaan suuqa lagu dhigin
soddon lagugu baayicin
«yaa sameeyey?» lagu oran...

you grass of my creation
that he refuses poor men possessing you
may you never on the market
for sale be placed
nor at thirty be valued⁵
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
godagle godaglow godadle
godadle
xiisaalow godadle
kii garrey gubayow godadle

kii gafuur diblow godadle
kii gar ceesaanlow godadle
gabar yar uu qabay
ayuu way i gabtay yiriyey...

dear me!
aunt mine darling
man of many holes⁶ he is
with women many often he flirts
for mercurial his manners are
many a woman destroyed he
ugly muzzle of a bull he has
goatee ridiculous he grows
«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
eaddo qorqode waa qayliyaa

dear me!
aunt mine darling
*qorqode*⁷ always shouts at you

oo waa qalaxtamaa
 oo sida dawacaduu dabalulaa
 oo sida shabeelkuu shuuriyaa
 oo sida halyeyguu hununiyaa
 oo sida dhurwaaguu dhederbiyaa
 oo sida libaaxuu labaliqaa;

naa rida qaloo qari buu i yiri

naa aabbahaa qadi buu i yiri
 naa deriska guulguul buu i yiri

naa hooyadaa eri buu i yiri...

a fellow hard to please he is
 like the jackal his tail he wags
 like the leopard he snarls wild
 like the wolf he sniffs about for food
 like the hyena he limps around
 like the lion he swallows
 mouthfuls large;
 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 me⁸

neighbours inquisitive frighten
 off he tells me
 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*⁹ 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*¹⁰ 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:

dhega-adag dhallaanka u bax
dhiidhii buroy ii bax

bayey bulloy ii bax
buroy aadanaay ii bax;
ma anaa luloo leefay
mase kii lissaa laacay
ma adaa labeen diidey
ma fayoobidoo ogiye
ma furkaa lagaa nuugey...

hard-hearted *haan* you are
for the hungry children
the butter bring forth
vessel mine beloved
vessel mine by all admired
a drop of milk did I rock and lick
did the milker much of the milk drink
or the cream you refuse to yield
unfit you are I know
through the lid¹¹ did someone
in secret suck¹² you somehow...

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:

haan yahay
ku garan waayey
waa gorofaan xooleeyey

oo guri ka soo qaaday
gacalkayna ima siinin

gacantayna kuma tolanin;
geeljire ku qooraansey
geed dheer lagaa soo lul...

haan mine darling
no longer understand you I
discarded old thing it was
for reuse repaired it I
from junkyard retrieving;
not a gift gorgeous it was
from loving relatives mine
nor with my own hands did I make;
may camel herders¹³ into you stare
may you on a tall tree be hanged¹⁴...

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:

<i>haan yahay dhigdhigo dhabar yar</i>	tiny vessel mine
<i>waagii dharaarowye</i>	the dawn on us, already broke
<i>oday dhagar qabaa yimide</i>	vicious old mine is here as well
<i>waa layna dhibayaaye</i>	urging us him with butter to feed
<i>sow maad dhanaanaatid...</i>	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:

<i>haantu iyadoo doora</i>	fine once was <i>haan</i> mine
<i>oo doobi laga caadsho</i>	bowlful of butter it then yielded
<i>bay dooro doob aragtay</i>	bachelor's private parts ¹⁵ unseemly
<i>oo dooro-doorowdey...</i>	one day the <i>haan</i> beheld
	worthless 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].

⁹ Euphorbia.

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 time 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 them, rather than throwing it away; this is the point referred 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 relatives¹) 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 boqol iyo
siddeetan habeen
oo sidkaa yahay
sabool sugi waa*

anse kugu simay...

*hobey hoo haa²
for 380 long nights
of your bearing period³*

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 geed lagu xiryey

xarigga loo gaabi

guga xigana goofaadhi-weyn

maraqqa googoyso

guga xigana uur gulun-gulcoy

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 removing⁴
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

goojo-lahudeeca
guga xigana gaban-loolisyey
gaawe la buuxi...

the arching of the tail⁵ soon follows suit
sixth year a bowlful of milk sweet
for the kids it ought to yield⁶...

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-eekey...

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

yaa tolleyoo
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
horaadkaagiyo
horaadka 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 view⁸...

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

Suubey biyaha
saysayro oo
sararaha biyee...

hoobeyow haa
back to the barren Sool I'll drive you soon
where no water there would be
for you for 30 days or more⁹
Suub¹⁰ 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 confidant to its owner's family dispute:

*hobeyow haa
markii dhaalkii
dabka saarraa
daaha loo rogey
yaan anna isdeley...*

*hobeyow haa
the meal in the cooking pot
which I much longed for
was to me denied
likewise I had denied
my services to you...*

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

gool iyo irmaan
qaalin garab weyn
guduud iyo mayr*

*maysu kala guray
anna galabtaas
gaajiyo harraad
geed ma kula dhacay...*

*hobeyow haa
in the evening late
at the end of the watering day
from the wells
satisfied the camels left
multi-coloured animals impressive they
are:if red and brown
of all hue
at the end of the day I fell
with hunger and exhaustion acute
under the shade of a lonely tree...*

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:

*helleeloy iyo helleeloy
helleeyaalaya helleeyoy
sidii dayrinka geeloo
dal dheer iyo daran ka timidoo
nirguhu soo dabagaleenoo*

*helleeloy iyo helleeloy¹¹
helleeyaalaya helleeyoy
as the beautiful camel
from the salt-licks¹² distant driven
young calves their mothers following suit*

*raggu dabatuur ka yahayey
darkii Caynabo la tubayoo*

wadaamaha loo dardaray

waxaasaa daawasho leh...

rear-guard the men keeping in case of raid
to the Caynabo¹³ wells
for watering brought
where with skin-buckets
in quick succession
water precious the men drew
from depth far in the shaft
no happier sight I see
in the world around me...

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:

*waxa goorta gudey
waa garanayaa
waa rag iyo geel
waa garanayaa
waa gabar aan curan
waa garanayaa
waa geesi wiil
waa garanayaa
waa gaari wacan
waa garanayaa
waa goon libaax...*

the travellers so late at night
who they are I know:
men and their camels it is
who they are I know:
a girl who hasn't given birth to a child it is
who they are I know:
a brave herdsman it is
who they are I know:
a nomad's clever wife it is
who they are I know:
a lion on the hunt it is...

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:

*hobeyow haa
geeridaydana
guryo ba'ay iyo
gablan laga qaad
geerida haween*

hobeyow haa
demise mine brings forth
destruction of home and sonlessness

wife's demise remarriage brings forth

*guud la firo iyo
guursi laga qaad
geeridaadana
gaawa maran iyo
gaajo 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
burqe wiil 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 songs¹⁴:

<i>nabad-same</i>	o peaceful he-camel mine
<i>nin labo dumara leh</i>	no peace ever comes to him
<i>nabadi uma soo gelin</i>	who two wives has
<i>adigana nin labadaa raray</i>	when he who has two of your type
<i>libini way u dhowdahay...</i>	prosperity would be his to achieve...

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:

<i>haddaan dheelli kuu raro</i>	dear camel mine
	improperly should I load you
<i>iyu dhoomo-laalaad</i>	the vessels hanging loose
<i>igu dhuubis baad tahay</i>	to me you were not truly born
<i>oo waadan ii dhalan...</i>	but from elsewhere you came to me
	among my herds yourself to hide...

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:

<i>gurgur saab liyo</i>	o camel mine
	onto you I load my chattels movable all
<i>haan gadaan weyn</i>	water vessels huge
	utensils numerous as well
<i>la-gurguurtow...</i>	you lift up all these
	lightly unloading on your way...

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:

*labo galab-carrawtiin iyo
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...

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:

*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 often 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*¹⁵ and *marari*¹⁶
for the desert *meygaag*¹⁷ to munch
these pastures rich the camel craves for...

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:

Jeellow jug waa jibin

*jigjigeeye waa roob
oo jalooli waa dhagax
jiilaal-mooge waa beled
oo Jaxiima waa naar
janno waa dhul jirridiis
waa loo wada janfiicaa
wax jiraaya moogiye...*

Jeellow¹⁸ camel mine
mighty is the meteorite
that across the heavens races
the rains thunder down as well
hard is the stone granite
droughts severe the cities affect not
Jaxiima a fearsome hell is called
beneath the earth paradise is said to be
there to go all men aspire
what in the end happens
not I could tell...

3. CATTLE-HERDING AND WATERING WORK SONGS

Same as the other species of the domestic animals the cowherd¹⁹ 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:

*hobeyow haa
maanta xiiqnaye*

caawa xeradii

*xulaan-xuliddaa
xil ma nagu tahay?...*

hobeyow haa
exhausted we are for today
watering you from wells deep
when tonight in the pen secured you are
refuse us told you
the best of you to milk
for our reward well-earned?...

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:

hobeyow haa
Caarre caagyo

caws biciid daaq
anna caagoo
caano geel dhamay
oo car ugu go'ay...

hobeyow haa
Caarre²⁰ my beloved cow
lean and weak had grown
droughts severe due to
on oryx-grass meagre feeding
wasted and feeble I, too, had grown
on camel milk sour subsisting...

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:

hobeyow haa
kuwa badarkiyo
bunka tiirsaday
kuuma baahnee
Beylow ha u badan...

hobeyow haa
he who coffee-beans hoards
needs you not as wealth
o Beylow²¹ beloved cow mine
for such a person breed never...

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:

hillaac bilig yiri

aan bahdaa jirin

the lightning flashes
that distant rains herald
falling on land
where your clans live not

haw bukoonoo
beerka haw lulin...

no use longing there to go
be stirring your heart in vain...

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:

horaad-kaagii
habeen iyo subax
halaaqoon jirey
hilowgi i qaad...

your fore-teats
that day and night
with milk bulges forth
much do I long for...

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 or 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
sagaga-xanyoy
caano-subagey
sanuunta udgoon
waa na saaqdaye
maadigaa sida? ...*

virgin ewe pretty you are
milk rich in fats
mutton sweet-scented
that our senses pervade
is it you that bestows
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 xeeey
Xayey Laamey
xagaa lama dhalo
ragga xididiyo
naaga lama xiro
ragga lama xilo
ilmahaagana
aroor dheer iyo
abaar lama dhigo...*

hey hey²³ Laamey²⁴
ewe mine beloved
in the *xagaa* severe breed never
men must not new brides bring
women must not with men secretly flirt

in the desolate desert
far away from the waterponds
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:

xeeyoy xeeey

xeeyoy xeeey

*waa dhurwaa jarar
waa shabeel dhaca
waa dawaco dharab
hadduu soo dhaco*

*dhexda kugu maro
dhegta ku qabsado*

*kaama dheeriyoo
kaama dhiiraniyoo
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:

*Golxo gabaydaye
Galaalo cidaye
ma gu' baw da' ay?
ma gal baa waran?*

*mase gurigay
gabdho maaliyo
gabno ku ogtahay?...*

Golxo²⁵ with urgency bleats loud
Galaalo²⁶ as well
the approach of the *gu*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
dooxo Golol iyo deex ha lay dhigo»;*

Deylo²⁸ to me says:
«I much long for
the fertile Golol²⁹ plains
the coastal lands where
I would thrive the beast
tarry not take me there»;

saan waxaan iri
«hadda Deylo
deexi waa shilin
dooxo waa dhaxan
dalna waa Mudug
dadna ku collow»...

in reply I said:
«Tick-infested is the coast

winds violent rein the Golol plains now
Mudug³⁰ is the ideal place for you
the possession of that land, though
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:

adaa jiftide
aan jalbeebtee
Deylo-deylo
Deylo dixidii
dal-wanaagii
dureemo-caskii
laysu diidyoo
laysu dacaree...

ignorant you are, o Deylo³¹ mine
the truth let me to you reveal

the best part of your land
where the *dixi*³² grows tall
where the *dareeme*³³ is lash
forbidden we are, though
as forbidden poison deadly is
to that land to go
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:

xeeyoy xeey
inta gorod leh
Galaal baa goba
u gob ma ahee
waa u gaashaan...

hey hey
of the black-heads all
Galaal³⁴ the ram
the noblest it is
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:

*xey xeyoy
sumalkii dhalaa
sida loo socdiyo
socodyaal aqoon
saariri muddoo
saab lagu guryoo
naag xumi qashoo
hayl-hayshayoo...*

hey hey
the ram that sired you
knew not how properly to walk
may your flesh in a cage be carried away
may a woman wicked your carcass carved
improperly cutting up the meat...

Song 72 – Leading the way

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

*hoobey hobey
sumalow sarbane
naylaha duduuc
oo dooxa gee
oo damal hargeli...*

hey hey
ram pretty mine
the lambs lead on
to the valley ahead
to the pastures fresh
trees with shade cool as well...

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:

*hoobey hobey
geesayare gorod
gooruu xalay kacay
geelu bahal mood
oo misana garey...*

hey hey
little-horned black-head
when in the night before it rose
a beast of prey the camels thought it
with fright disturbed they were
the ram peaceful it was though
reassured were the animals then...

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
waxay ku daanshaysaa
caanihii Daylo
dooggaan daaqsiyey
damal harweyn huruddoy*

dixida mayracatoy...

a fat tail the lamb grew
or the Daylo's³⁵ milk rich I fed it with
healthy and plump already it is
for the fodder fresh I fed the lamb
for the *damal*'s³⁶ cool shade it
blissfully slept
for the *dixi*'³⁷ grass that in the evening
it browsed...

Song 75 – Hawlo, the capricious lamb

The shepherdess in this song is blaming Hawlo³⁸ for not moving fast enough with the mother-ewe which had gone far ahead of the kids. The singer is a young girl³⁹ 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
waxa Hawlo loo yiriba
waa hawl daraaddeede
iyo inan yar diliddeede
reeraha gudee guurey
ee aqalladii goostay*

Hawloy iga soo reebtay

*Hawloy lugta horuu dhig
waad hoombi-neysaaye...*

*hoobey hoobey Hawlo
Hawlo you are called
for capricious one you are indeed
in the mid of night last
our neighbours removed camp
all their huts and goods
onto camels strong they loaded
Hawlo because of you
I'm left behind alone
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
naa Hawlo naa Hawlo
naa Hawlo reerkeenu
waa reer geboo geelle*

*hoobey hoobey Hawlo
o Hawlo, as a woman
I would upon you impress
noble and rich a household ours is*

*waa reer gammaan faras leh
waa reer aroosyo cad leh
waa reer hadduu guuro
geenyada cad mooyane
aan garabsi lagu gaarin...*

camels numerous we own
horses fast and graceful as well
marriages lavish we often celebrate
when to pastures distant we travel
horsemen alone may overtake us
footmen could never keep pace with us...

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:

*Xaashiyey nayley
xaal gobaadey,
xeero-subageeyay
xididka loo loogyey...*

Xaashi⁴⁰ lamb mine
of noble pedigree you are
butter-milk plenty for me yield you will
for honoured guests to be slaughtered
fit you are...

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:

*edegsaadaan iri bay
soo abraareenoo
soo olkeeyeenoo
oodda soo jebiyeenoo
umal-wareereen
hooyadeen nuugtoy
hooyo kale ku xadday
loo xalaaleeyey
lama xaaleeyay
naysha naysheedey
naysha Guuleedey
Guleed dhawryey
guul la soo hoyatoy...*

when into the pen I drove
playfully the lambs flocked in
safely settling for the night
in confusion sheepish
crashing the gate in force
its mother-ewe the lamb sucks
other mothers' milk it steals, too
who mind not the pilferage petty
being kind to all mother's duty it is
the best of all lambs you are
to Guuleed⁴¹ you belong
who after you looks always
a victory great it is
that you were to us born...

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 butter⁴², 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

*naagaan loo gelin
waa guddaayoo*

*waa gambo-caddahay
oo gol dheer tahay
oo waatan galanlayn...*

you the goat with the teats
with milk swollen full
she who possesses you not
dire needs would oblige her at nights
to strangers go for food
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
saryan le'egtahay
meel bakayluhu
baarqab le'egyahay
oo quraanyadu
qaalmo le'egtahay
aan ku geeyee
mayla gaartaan?...*

goats mine darling
hurry along would you with me
I'll take you to pastures rich
where antelops are as oryx large
where rabbits are as he-camel tall
where ants are as virgin camels huge...

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:

*hadduu gamashiyo
oo gabdhaha gabo*

*garoob xoogliyo
nin garle u geli...*

when from thirst severe the goats suffer
when maidens in the watering
task failed
a divorcee healthy and strong and
a bearded man
may water from the deep wells draw
the goats' belly to fill...

Song 82 – Men and women befriended

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

*Garoy hooyoy
garoorkaagii
gambooleydiyo
garmadowdaa
isku gacalsaday...*

o Garo⁴³, mother dear mine
befriended are men and women
for your sour milk rich
that they all equally shared in...

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:

*Qaroofeyey
qaroofka orgigu
qaroon kugu leged
oo ku qaban waa
oo kaga qaaq sii...*

o Qaroofey⁴⁴ dear mine
worrisome is the he-goat
after you he runs mad
until he in the end
by the qaroon⁴⁵ tree by force possessed you
and «qaaq» in agony you cried...

Song 84 – The long trek with goats

In this *buraanbur*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:

<i>meera-dheerow hayaan</i>	trek long undertake we would
<i>miiggan baynu nahay</i>	for days and nights on the way to be
<i>maalin iyo leyl jid</i>	perils plentiful there would be:
<i>lagu miiggan yahay</i>	hot sun and fangs of beasts fearful
<i>milic qorrax leh</i>	thorn-bushes impassable
<i>mici cadaab weyn leh</i>	
<i>maylin qurac</i>	
<i>masduulaagiyo mariidow</i>	flying snakes poisonous
<i>abees wax dila</i>	
<i>waxaynu dhex moosi doonnaa</i>	these dangers and many more
<i>mashaakil badan</i> ⁴⁷ ...	wading through we would be...

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

<i>Heesaa: waadigan qolmane</i>	Singer:	lifeless you kids seem to be
<i>qawriirayale</i>		the night before, perhaps
<i>xalay ma qatanayd?</i>		hungry have you remained?
<i>Caruur: xalay waan qadoo</i>	Kids:	hungry we remained
<i>qool baan galoo</i>		the night before
<i>qumanyooyinkii</i>		for wicked women of the house
<i>way qarinayeen...</i>		in collars tight kept us all
		our mothers' milk denying they did to us...

Song 86 – Kids' driving song

When the herdsman 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:

<i>waxarow wax la sheeg</i>	kids mine!
<i>wax la yaaba la sheeg</i>	good news just came
<i>berrin buuxa la sheeg</i>	prising it is

*berrin caws leh la sheeg
meel dixi leh la sheeg
oo damallo harweyn leh
oo adiga daqaya
oo aniga dananaya
oo hooyo dararteeda leh...*

pastures fresh and plentiful
with grasses tall and green
with *dixi*⁴⁸ plant delicious
*damal*⁴⁹ 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...*

hey hey!
Capricious lambs mine
may *baqalye*⁵⁰ ferocious
devour you in two all
leaving but two of mine
alone with other two
the two it killed as well
the carcass men retrieved though
a piece of meat tender
to me as reward they gave
rotten became the meat
to eat refused I
to big bachelor the meat they gave
to eat refused he too
to big girl the meat they gave
she ate it and got ill

to her they would give
no more goat's milk fresh...

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:

*naa hoy Dayoy heedhe
Dayo walaaley heedhe
waa nala dilaayaaye
waa nala dabaayaaye
naylahayaga noo daa..*

Hey! She-jackal⁵¹ harken
mad jackal harken
in peace our lambs leave
for punished we would be
should we lose 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
duul malaykiyo
dawannadu ciye
dugaagguna durug
anna diirsaday..*

as colt mine neighs nearby
tidings blessing the angels proclaim
loudly the bells toll
the beasts of prey retreat afar
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
waa bullaale siciidoo
bari baan kuu wadaayoo
biyo wayga wallaahi...*

steed mine with the silken mane
the best in horses all
towards the east I ride alone
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:

*indhahayga maggoodow
aqligayga dhammaantiyow
arwaaxayga naftaahow
afartayda addimow
maalintaan ku arkay
sidaan kuu oggolaaday
kobtan kaa ilaaqay baad
eeranow noqotay...*

my eye-sight precious you are
my conscience complete you are
the delight of my life you are
my four limbs vital you are
from the day we met
you endeared my soul
darling mine...

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:

*nin lug ku higsadey
oo habaas cunay*

*haqdi hoosiyo
habaari la'aw...*

he who with evil intent pursues you
in cloud-dust enveloped
he would be
by your mighty hooves raised
may their curses venomous
miss you...

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:

*wuxuu sidig iyo
saarrow geel wadey
bur sifaar iyo
sedki ma intaa?*

camel-geminates⁵² of value high
herds numerous often it won in war
a punch of *sifaar*⁵³ only
it needs to survive...

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 humorous 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...*⁵⁴

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: roobow ruglow kaalay
riya-darariyow kaalay

ceesaamo giirgiiran

oo dhagax ku wada jooga
geeskooda 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.

- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ In the sixth year of its life the camel normally reaches full maturity and breeds, according to our informants.
- ⁷ A female camel's name.
- ⁸ 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 tought and stiff. These conditions appear at the close of the gestation period referred to in the song.
- ⁹ Camels usually could stay for more than a month without drinking water.
- ¹⁰ Name of a female camel.
- ¹¹ 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.
- ¹² 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.
- ¹³ A waterwell situated in the east of the town of Burco in northeast Somalia.
- ¹⁴ See also [song 38](#).
- ¹⁵ *Lepladenia Pyrotechnica* (Forks.) Decne.
- ¹⁶ *Clerodendron mijricoides* (Hochst.).
- ¹⁷ *Boscia minifolia* Chiov.
- ¹⁸ He-camel's call name.
- ¹⁹ 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.
- ²⁰ Cow's call name, one having black-white spots.
- ²¹ Name of a cow, dark-brown colours.
- ²² 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.
- ²³ The cry *xeeoy xeeoy!* 'hey hey' is often used at the start of work songs to attract the attention of the ewes, Laamey, the ewe in this song.
- ²⁴ Name of an ewe, the tall one.
- ²⁵ Name of an ewe, the crooked one.
- ²⁶ Name of an ewe, the one with half of its face black, the other white.
- ²⁷ See [note 22](#).
- ²⁸ Name of an ewe, one with black head and shoulders.
- ²⁹ Flat lands in the central regions of Somalia where goats and sheep thrive well.
- ³⁰ The geographical name of one of the central regions with Gaalkacyo as the regional capital.
- ³¹ See [note 28 to song 68](#).
- ³² *Eragrostis Papposa* (Roem & Shult) Steud.
- ³³ *Enteropogon mastrostachus* (Hochst).
- ³⁴ See [note 26 to song 67](#).
- ³⁵ See [note 28 to song 68](#).
- ³⁶ *Acacia Tortilis* (Forks.), Hayne.
- ³⁷ See [note 7 to song 7](#) (Chapter I).
- ³⁸ Call name for a lamb, the capricious one.
- ³⁹ 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 Ciise 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 originated¹ centuries ago by Somali sailors on their ancient, ocean-going sail crafts known as the Somali *dhow*s. *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:

woyaale woyaale woyaaley
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 he² 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 dhintiyi nin dhoofjira o Dhuubo³!

Dhuuboy midna sooma dheelmado... A dead man and one who went far away
neither for the night returns home...

Song 98 – The lonesome heart

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

Song 99 – A ship on the high seas

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

Song 100 – The song of the brave

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

Song 101 – The Ganaane waters

gudcur dama habeen gu'ka tegey in a dark winter's night
Ganaane ma loo arooraayey... dare they go down Ganaane⁴
water to draw...

Song 102 – The Ganaane in floods

Ganaane biyoobey geel ma maree as camels can't cross over
go'doy waa la kala gu'weyn yahayey... Ganaane in full floods
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

*belayo 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 dalandoolay 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 jirtée
baraare u geeya Beernugul...*

when sick to health she nursed me
to Beernugul⁶ regards mine please
pass on...

Song 109 – Rubbo⁷

rataab iyo raatub bayga luntaye
Rubboy mayla raadineysaa?

counting markers⁸ I lost
Rubbo, with me would you look for it?

Song 110 – Dhudi

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

should Dhudi⁹ 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-rubbo¹⁰, 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*¹¹ 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
forth¹²...

Song 114 – Life's struggle

dhaqaale adduun dhib loo aragvey
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-bulloy
ciddiinnu caweyisin dheeraa!

Caweeya-bullo¹³
how long your inmates stay awake
tonight!

Song 116 – Three days longer than a year

arayey Sahloy
samir iga idlaa
saddexdii habeen
sannad iiga badan...

o Sahlo¹⁴, darling mine
three nights that I was away
longer than a year for me it was.
Your absence I would not anymore
endure...

Song 117 – The pretty thighs

Isaga: bariiska Bumbey
bad looma qabee
biciidku ilmihiisa
bannaan ma dhigee
maxaad u bannaysay bawdada?...

He: rice from Bumbey¹⁵ costly bought
into the ocean is not thrown awa
oryx does not its calves leave
in the open place alone
the pretty thighs yours
why to us reveal?

Iyada: bagaan u banneeeyey bawdada
oo ragga laga baatalaayaa...

She: purposefully the thighs I bared
men to admire them the more
the proffered wares to procure...

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:

Wilgo Wilgo
Wilgo Hirwo
Hirwo Dhaanto...

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 than 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

Hirwoy goor habeena
baan iman...

Hirwo¹⁶ to you
at night fall I'll come...

Song 119 – Maidens to the dance would run

haddaan ka rugsiiyo
meel rawaxoy
gashaantiyo roorayaa iman...

at a lonely place
should I the dancing start
maidens pretty running would come...

Song 120 – A white lie

hadduu ballankii
dhab kaa yahay t
biyaan dooni
been ku soo sheeg
ba hurba!
ba hurba!
hurba xaaxa¹⁷!

should promises yours be true
o me to come
tell a white lie and say:
«I'll be gone for a while
water for us to fetch»...

Song 121 – Matters changed since

sakhaawe ragow
sidii ma jirtee
war hoy hala
saamo-gaamsado...

mind you mankind
matters have changed since
shorten your steps hence¹⁸...

3. *DHAANTO* DANCE SONGS

According to our informant the popular dancing song called *Dhaanto*¹⁹ has developed from the *Hurbo*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 dhawaaqo dhaantaay
wallee 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 Canab²¹, 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 xoogle waan u baah nahay;
gabdhaha barafuun ka soo uro iyo
middii maradeeda bayl ka dhigtoon
basari noqon baan u baah nahay;*

a youth strong in body as well;
of girls I prefer
she who her clothes always keeps clean
the born-lazy never to be;
she who perfumes exotic wears;
of camels I prefer

geelana boqna-weynta aan socon iyo

<i>hashii badisaan u baah nahay;</i>	the she-camel that hardly moves on because of excessive fat on its flanks;
<i>fardaha xamar booddo aarale iyo baroorka cas baan u baah nahay;</i>	of horses I prefer the pink-coloured steer that like a lion jumps the brownish steer as well;
<i>lo'dana bullo bey cad iyo bariis dharaan u baah nahay...</i>	of cattle I prefer the multi-coloured cow splendid the best breed in the herd...

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.

<i>Iyada: wax kaa maqan meelna kaa jirinoo muskeenna ku meersan maad garan?</i>	She: tell us if you could that which is from us absent yet from our fence not far off?
<i>Isaga: wax kaa maqan kaa jirinoo muskeenna ku meersan waa mawd.</i>	He: death that is indeed.
<i>Iyada: wax aan dhimanoo dhulkii ka batoon dhaqaaqaynin dhoohanaw garo?</i>	She: tell us, you mindless fellow that which never moves nor dies?
<i>Isaga: wax aan dhimanoo dhulkii ka batoon dhaqaaqaynin waa dhagax.</i>	He: that fills up all around the stones scattered about that is.
<i>Iyada: waxaad muudsatoo macaan badanoon jidiinka maraynin maad garan?</i>	She: tell us if you could that which is sweet to test yet through the tongue nor the throat passes not?
<i>Isaga: waxaad muudsatoo macaan badanoon jidiinka maraynin waa mino.</i>	He: semen that is indeed
<i>Iyada: abeeso afkeeda kala haysoo la aaminey aadanow garo?</i>	She: tell us if you could a cobra with mouth open wide to strike yet harmless and by all trusted?
<i>Isaga: abeeso afkeeda kala haysoo la aaminey waa adi...</i>	He: yourself that is, woman ²² ...

Song 126 – Join the song joyous

*quraarayohow
daawashada quba oo
qalfoofyohow qaada Dhaantada...*

vessels empty you girls all are
onlookers here we need not
Dhaanto songs joyous
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:

*ragow dumar waa shan qaybood
shantaan kala sheegi doonaa:*

*gaandheysta miyaan tilmaamaa?
Ma taan gurigeeda gufeyn karinoo
gabood fadhidaan tilmaamaa?
Garaadka miyaa dad loo simay?*

*Miyuu Gosol geed la muuq yahay?
Haddaad garan gaaridii dumar
guduudan haween ma gaaraaney?*

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 Gosol²³ 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

*sidii badda iyo biyaha webigaa
baacdheer bedenkeedu buuxaayey
Danaagoyar dawlada-naagoodey
daweylada iyo dartaa
ma u doob-duquubaa...*

like the waters of the oceans and rivers
majestic and full her breasts are
o Danaagoyar²⁴!
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
illeyn qoriyo qaniinyada iyo
ma qoonsado qoofalkii muda*

*illeyn qolo nabada oo hurudduu
habeenkii ka qaylisiyaaoo*

haweenku ku soo qamaamaan...

man in love is mad indeed
no pain he feels at all
from thorns sharp even
that his body pierced through
in the mid of night
with songs lonesome awakens he
people sleeping in peace
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
Daweylada iyo dartaa
ma u doob-duqoobaa...*

o Dahaboyar²⁵
for your sake the *Daweylo*²⁶ as well
a bachelor forever shall I remain...

Song 131 – Idiimoyar

Idiimoyar oogo-willey

ninkii ku arkaaba oon beel...

o Idiimoyar
she with the boyish body
he who beholds you
thrust spiritual quenches he...

Song 132 – The charcoal-black lips

afkuna qalin qoortoy laamey

mar ii qosol qaalidii dumarey...

she with the charcoal-black lips
her neck a slender twig
but once smile at me
o queen of womenfolk...

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 heard 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
diryaanoo dororoglee
diryaanoo dooxada ka yeer
duul maqan u yeer*

duul jiifa kici...

*haan mine darling
booming loud and clear
with roaring and rattling sound
let all hear you far and wide
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
haleelo mirootayey* *hee*²⁸

horweyn hogob daaqayey *hee*

hareeri magoolayey *hee*
haldhaa baalka hafayey *hee*

wiyilo huguguulayey *hee*

maroodi hobsheeyayey *hee*
hillaac biligleeyayey

*hibiyey hibi
haan mine darling
you are as peaceful as milch camels
at night browsing around
as admirable as camel herds
in the fertile glade grazing
as fragrant as the hareeri²⁹ blossom
as pretty as ostrich cock³⁰
its plumes spreading in dance exotic
as furious as rhinoceros herds
in the woods suddenly disturbed
as threatening as elephant milling around
as brilliant as lightning mighty
on the horizon far flashing at night*

Song 135 – Desire enormous for dancing

*hibiyey hibi
sidii koorweyn halaadoo*

*kor iyo Hawd sare ka timid
kalayl badan baan qabaa*

*sankaa qori igaga jabay
sintaa midig baan ka jabay
il baa saxar igaga dhacay
haddana waan soconayaa
shimbiro geed wada koraa
midiba cayn waw cidaa
codkiinnii kala habow
carraba waa camalladeed*

*hibiyey hibi
like camel herds with wooden
bells decorated
the distant Hawd³¹ driven from
desire enormous for dancing
I am urged on
freely breathing no longer could I
hip-bones mine have I asunder broke
sight mine is blinded as well
desire-driven I am moving on still
to roost birds may together to the nest fly
but songs diverse they all sing
likewise your voices differed all
as each land own sages it has*

illeyn lays ma cod yaqaan...

hard it is for people of all lands³²
a common tongue in their song to find...

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.

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

ninkaas waan deyi lahaa...

Song 137 – A mother's advice

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

<i>hibiyey hibi</i>	<i>hibiyey hibi</i>	
<i>hooyaday</i>	mother mine dear	
<i>waxay i tiri</i>	wise advice to me she gave	
<i>maandhaday</i>	darling mine said she	
<i>gacalisoy</i>		at home always stay
<i>guriga joog</i>		worthy wife you would be one day
<i>gaari noqo</i>		weave vessels new
<i>gocoyo tolo...</i>		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:

hibiyey hibi
waxaan aakhiro ku nacay
adoogaa iilka gee

adkeeyoo ka agdhaqaaq...

hibiyey hibi
the hereafter I loathe
for in the grave cold
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.

hibiyey hibi
wax xun waxan lahayn
bay dooniyeey
shirix-maró shabeel
bay dooniyeey
halo dhalay haleelay
dooniyeey
gabayada Dhulbahantay
dooniyeey
geelooda badan bay
dooniyeey
geesiyada la joogay
dooniyeey
gaawaha hor yaal bay
dooniyeey...

hibiyey hibi
the best of all things desires she

the spotted leopard dress desires she³³

lactating camels desires she

the Dhulbahante³⁴ poets desires she

their numerous camels desires she

their herdsmen brave desires she

camels' milking vessels desires she...

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:

ta-tam-ta-tam-ta-tam-ta-tam
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: *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*: *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
war ama wadaad noqo
oo weyso iyo kitaab sido
ama walasaqada iyo wilgada tumo...

hobeeyoy hobeeyo hobeeyoy
either you be a priest
possessing the Qoran and ablution vessel
or dance the *Wilgo* and *Walasaqo*³⁵...

Song 141 – Having no skills, a disgrace

war cilmina ha baran
cayaarna ha baran
oo meel cayuunow
waa ceeb adduunkaa...

no dancer be
nor have no skills in other things
a disgrace for a man in the world...

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
Guntan³⁶ 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 Carwo³⁷

*naa Cosob iyo Carwaan maaloo
caano baan kabenbedeyoo
cagta nabarka ugu wacan...*

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 Idil³⁸
maanta ku agmaray
caawana 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 Xareedo³⁹ 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
hadduu goojada la tiicaa
oo ilmaha loo tukubiyaa
dumarka togayadood waa
haddii meher loo taxaabaa
oo wiil loo tukubiyaa...*

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 dhaaftiyo
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;
doogaa 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 means⁴⁰;
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 lahayn
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 candhoole ah
faras cadoo cur laga gubey
naag casaan ragga cayilin...*

a white barren she-camel
a white horse branded for gland-disease⁴²
a copper-coloured woman
who her man properly feeds not...

5.4 SONGS 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*

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...

aniga wayga sanco badan yahay...

Iyaga: Eebinii suunka kaa lulaye

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...

aan suulka kuu surin

aniga wayga sanco badan yahay...

Song 162 – The massive breast

Isaga: waxa nabasta kuu galay

He: that which in your chest conceale

<i>ma nabsaa ma nayl baa</i>	is it misfortune that upon
<i>oo nabsi waa bixilahaa</i>	you had fallen
<i>bal nayli waa ciyi lahayd</i>	or is it a whole sheep-kid
<i>ee waa naaska kaa baxay</i>	hidden therein
<i>oo naasku waa cad iyo caanee</i>	misfortune may end at last
<i>bal naasku waa ciyaal-koriyee</i>	a sheep-kid's bleating may
<i>oo cawska camanka kaa baxay</i>	someone hear
<i>aan la cuninin camalkiis?...</i>	that protrudence is your breast
<i>Iyada: aan ku raaco run kuu sheegee</i>	massive
<i>saddex magac mid ii bixi:</i>	a lump of gland that milk contains
<i>sooniyoo-salaad jecel</i>	that babies sustains
<i>oo raaliyo mid ii bixi</i>	but the pastures fresh that on your
<i>saddex magaalo mid i gee:</i>	cheeks flourishing
<i>Butiyaalo iyo Qaw</i>	why no herds ever on it grazed?...
<i>Boosaaso mid i gee</i>	She: truthfully I will forever follow yo
<i>saddex maro mid ii keen:</i>	should you call me by either
<i>Dunyar-yarey</i>	three names:
<i>Dawaariishta</i>	she who fasting and prayers loves
<i>Dallahelayda ii keen...</i>	or she the obedient call me
	should you take me to either
	three cities:
	Butiyaalo and Qaw
	to Boosaaso ⁴³ take me
	should you give me either of
	three dresses:
	<i>dunyar-yarey</i>
	<i>dawaariishta</i>
	<i>dallahelayda</i> ⁴⁴ to me bring...

Song 163 – Mahad and Miido

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

Maha: <i>Miidoy xagaan</i>	Mahad: o Miido, how could I reach you?
<i>kuu soo maraa?</i>	
Miido: <i>Mahadow muskaa</i>	Miido: jump over the thorn fence
<i>ii soo jibaax</i>	
Mahad: <i>Miidoy mindhay</i>	Mahad: what, if the thorns pierce into
<i>qodaxi i jaf tiri?</i>	my flesh?
Miido: <i>Mahadow mindi jeexdaan</i>	Miido: I have a knife the thorns to extract
<i>hayaa</i>	
Mahad: <i>Miidoy mindhaan</i>	Mahad: what, if the rains soak
<i>qoyeyoo qarqaray?</i>	me through?
Miido: <i>Mahadow dab baan kuu</i>	Miido: I will kindle bon-fires
<i>shidahayaa</i>	to warm you up
Mahad: <i>Miidoy mindhuu</i>	Mahad: what, if such warmth
<i>biidna ima tarin?</i>	be not enough

Miido: *Mahadow leggaan legga
kuugu qaban...*

Miido: then in my breast I warm you up,
darling mine...

6. *BAARCADE* 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 *BAARCADE*

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
bundaaskii Xamar ka yimidow
balooleyda loogow...*

hungerless⁴⁵ one you are
a sergeant⁴⁶ from Xamar⁴⁷ far away
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

jabow Jiilaal Xuseen
janno-gale
sidaa uma jibin jirin
jabow Jiiftada ka daa...

you, accursed Jiilaal Xuseen
the blessed one (who is no more)
in this manner he never sung
the *Jiifta*⁴⁹ you ought not to sing...

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 Xaaji), 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 nomadic 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 presence 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 waiting) 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 Bombay.

¹⁶ Here *Hirwo* means the name of the girl, the pretty one, to whom the singer is addressing his song, not the title of the genre itself.

¹⁷ The phrase *ba hurba* is repeated several times by the *Hurbo* dancers at the conclusion 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 Polycarpus*; 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 *Walasaqo* 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.

⁴⁵ The imaginary spirit honoured in the *Baarcadde* songs; in the name of the spirit Bile is also honoured by his admirers.

⁴⁶ *Bundaas* – a rank given to the native colonial in the ex-Italian Somaliland, equivalent to sergeant.

⁴⁷ Ancient name for Mogadishu.

⁴⁸ It is said Bile had only a milch camel which he slaughtered to feed his followers.

⁴⁹ 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 *Jifto* 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/her¹ 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 daaqsiyo
sibir-gooye waa ani...

virgin camels by a brave man guarded
in the Sool² 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 him³ by the hyena, which the king of the forest has eaten:

dhuruqsane dharaaqsane kanow
qaar-dambe xabaalane
faro haddaad sheegtay
annan qoollanaan loo dhashiyo
ragannimaan qaatay

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

micidayda qoolaaban haddaan
qararac kuu siiyo

wallee xaarku waa quban

haddaan qoomo uuskaaga
oo kolkaana qaalinkaagii caddaa
qaanti heli maysid...

excrements much pouring out
of your bottom
when I entrails yours asunder tear
you would then demand of me
no more he-camel white...

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!
Gumasoor⁴ 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 qoordheereyaashii reer-abtigay
qaylo ku ekeeyo
boqorrada dhurwaayada haddaan
gabay ku qayraansho
shabeel iyo qareenkiis haddaan
qaylo maqshiiyo
duulkii halyeyada haddaan
subax qamaansiyo
qalbilaaweheyiow 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 Qorraxay⁵ should I travel
the loin cloth throwing⁶ 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:

*duul nabad ku seexday
kaga-seleliyow ani...*

in the dead of night
it is me who raids the camp
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:

*riyo xagaayoo
xagar daaqahaya
soo-xaabshe waa ani...*

a lock of goats that in winter time
on the *xagar*⁷ branches browsing
it is me who slaughters
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:

*sharaxlow shabeelkuba
shansho kuma dhego ridee
shalaw buu ku tuuraa...*

leopard, the spotted beast
by the legs seizes not the goat
into a trough deep it throws it into instead...

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:

*baraar banka daaqaayaan
soo balow irahdaa
baridaan la boodaayoo
biliggu waa ani...*

surprise I spring on little lambs
that peacefully graze around
their fat tails tearing fast
with the booty off I run all speed...

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 limber⁸
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 gums⁹ ...

Song 177 – The elephant

The great elephant also began his song as follows:

*ilkahaygu waa dahab
darajooyin lagu qaatiyo
boqorrada 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
caleenta guudka kaga taal
waxa gostay waa ani...*

tallest tree that no one else may reach
leaves that on topmost branches grew
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
isku soo ganaayoo
lama-gaare waa ani...*

little hole into the ground I dug out
into it I run quick
whenever danger I sensed...

Song 181 – The ant

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

*xayr naagi meel dhigatay
kaxagxagato waa ani...*

fats that woman stored away
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
anigaa filkay dhaamoo
midabkaygu waa gaaroo
madow-maahir weeyaanoo
anigiyo masciideedkaa*

*maah-maahi nagu timidoo
raggu nagu macneeyaan*

hablahay u muhiyaan...

anyone loudly may boast his worth
of my age-group I am the best
colours immaculate have I
black-brown plumes combined
of the sand-snake¹⁰ and myself
of our splendours colourful
proverbs are created of old
where for our beauty
men praise us profusely
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 songs¹¹ 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:

*naa giniyey galaas dahabaay
raggaan soo cayaar gudey
wa wada gayaankaa
naa Dayoy ilwaad-qurux
afka qalin lagu mariye
mar uun oodda soo jebi...*

listen, woman
you are as precious as guinea and gold
revellers and suitors here we are all
Dayo¹³ how pretty you are!
Lips yours are as black
as though with ink painted...

Song 184 – The bustard bird

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

*ninkan galow la leeyahay
labo galac garbaha saaroo
geel boqola sooo dhiciye
Dayoy mala dadab geleysaa?...*

this man bustard called
pairs of spears sharp carried he
hundred head camels looted he
Dayo, won't you wed me
for brave a man I am?...

Song 185 – The lion's reply to the bustard bird

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

*galow geed ku jira mooyee
geed xabag ka guro mooyee
galow geel leh lama arag...*

bustard bird under trees itself always hides
on tree guns it feeds
under-belly unseemly it has
no one ever heard of
bustard bird camels possessing...

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
gendi iyo cadhoba ha gashee
guudkaan ka fuulaayoo
dhiigaa ka gobo 'leeye
kaga-gooje waa ani...*

of camels you boasted
may the tsetse fly swarm on them
I would myself to their body attach
the last drop of blood to suck
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
koromada saraareed baan
maqaarsaarka kaga dhegi

miiddiyo baruurtoodaan
marba malabsan doonaaye
Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?...*

listen, lady into the forest deep I will go
fattened burden-camels there to hunt
onto their broad humps I would
jump and crash
with fats nectarous to feed you always
Dayo, won't you wed me
for a provider reliable I am...

Song 188 – The wild dog

In his turn the wild dog sung his song thus:

*naa magacaygu waa weeroo

soddon iyo siddeetan laxaad
ayaan habeen meel ku wada diliye
Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?...*

listen, lady
eliminator is my name¹⁴
ewes thirty and eighty in numbers
in a night at one place all I destroy
Dayo, won't you wed me
for meat you would never miss?...

Song 189 – The skunk¹⁵

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

*naa dundumooyinkaan geli
dhuusaan ku bow siin

malab baa ka tawlabine
Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?...*

listen, lady
into holes deep in anthills I go
with fart mighty mine into them
bombarding
honey plentiful for you collect I would
Dayo, won't you wed me?...

Song 190 – The hyena

Next the hyena began his song as follows:

<i>naa Cumaroo duud-carro leh sida</i>	listen, lady Cumar ¹⁶ with the strength heavy quarries to carry
<i>iyo Dayoo baraar layn</i>	Dayo that sheep-kids snatches quick
<i>waa isla-doonasho ilaahe</i>	a blessing by Allah it would be
<i>Dayoy mayla dadab geleysaa?...</i>	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:

<i>dabagaalle qoodheedow</i>	squirrel, with the testicles large
<i>qumanow qardhaaso-caddow</i>	with the talisman against evil
<i>adigaan ku qaayibayoo</i>	I admire you more than all the others
<i>adigaan kuu dadab gelaayaa...</i>	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.

⁷ *Commiphora ellenbeckii* Engl.

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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ A tiny, harmless snake with reddish colour that often buries itself in the sand.

¹¹ 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.

¹² See [Chapter IV, section 5](#).

¹³ Short form for *dawaco*, 'jackal'.

¹⁴ *Weer* in Somali means 'eliminator', as it has the habit of killing off a whole flock of goats, but to eat only one carcass.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ A proper male name from Arabic; here it is used as a panegyric name that the hyena is calling himself.

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Tooxyar Maxamed Cali, of *Laas-aanood*, tape 3.10.76.

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