

## Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment



*Somali nomad, symbol of the country's  
predominantly pastoral life*

**SOMALI NATIONALS ARE CULTURALLY**, linguistically, and religiously homogeneous people, sparsely scattered in a harsh dry land. There are, however, distinctions of some importance between sections of the population, related in part to variations in their means of livelihood and modes of adaptation to the environment. In the early 1980s roughly 60 percent of an estimated population of more than 4 million were still nomadic pastoralists or seminomadic herders, subject to the vicissitudes of an arid climate. From 20 to 25 percent were cultivators, most living on or between the country's two major rivers, the Juba and the Sha-beelle. The remainder were town dwellers, by far the greatest number living in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu.

Although ethnic Somalis—95 percent of the population—shared a common culture, they were divided into descent groups of varying inclusiveness and size, all based on descent from a male ancestor through males. These ranged from the clan-family (of which there were six) to its constituent units, the clans, and then to the groups—lineages—that made up the clans. Lineages were in turn further segmented and differed in size and genealogical depth. Among the sedentary interriverine Somalis, however, descent gave way in part to territory as a framework for social, political, and economic organization.

Membership in clans and lineages set the stage for the allocation of rights and obligations of individuals. The principle of descent, however, was modified (if rarely overridden) by the principle of contract: contracts or treaties bound specified descent groups (and their individual members) together for war and peace and, above all, for the payment of compensation in cases of homicide and injury.

The social order of the Somalis was marked by competition and often by armed conflict between segments (clans and lineages), even between those of the same clan-family or clan. Within each unit, relations among Somali males were characterized by democracy and equality, although those considered better warriors, wiser dispute-settlers, or more able speakers might carry greater weight in council. In any case every man had to earn his prestige. There were however, exceptions to the characteristic democracy and equality. The pastoral Somalis looked down on the sedentary ones, and both looked down on the non-Somali clients of the sedentary Somalis and the members of despised occupational groups (a very small proportion of the population).

This segmented order, with relatively minor modifications, was carried into the independence period. In a very poor country, competition for power and wealth often took the form of shifting alliances and conflicts between greater and lesser clan and lineage segments and led to what, in the modern context, many Somalis

saw as corruption. At the same time, other divisions emerged between these educated urban dwellers who commanded a foreign language and the ordinary rural Somali.

Soon after the military coup in October 1969, the self-proclaimed socialist government directed an attack on the traditional system. In principle, clans and lineages were given short shrift, women were encouraged to participate in government and to go to school, and low status groups were to be considered equals. The distance that had developed between educated English- or Italian-speaking Somalis and the rest of the population was in part bridged by the institution of a script for Somali and the establishment of Somali as the official language.

The government of Siad Barre had insisted that socialism was compatible with Islam, the religion of the overwhelming majority of Somalis. If the Somalis have not always conformed to what some would consider orthodox Islam, their identity has been bound up with being Muslim. With few, if any, exceptions the leaders of the regime were Muslims and had not attacked religion. They did not hesitate, however, to institute reforms that incurred the displeasure of conservative Muslim leaders. Despite government support for significant change, clan and lineage remained important in the early 1980s, even if the ways in which they affected daily life had been altered. There were indications that members of the regime, to the highest levels, were not unaffected by kinship considerations, and the Somalis certainly perceived this to be the case.

The workings of the lineage system were predicated on the solidarity of the segments of the same order vis-à-vis one another and the relative equality of the members of each segment. The growth of the state and the emergence of differences of wealth and access to other resources in the still important private sector have given rise to an incipient stratification that may override lineage solidarity as it diminishes equality.

### **Physical Setting**

Africa's easternmost country, Somalia has a land area of 637,540 square kilometers, roughly comparable to that of the state of Texas. Somalia is the cap of a geographic region commonly referred to as the Horn of Africa, which includes Ethiopia and Djibouti.

The terrain consist largely of plateau surfaces and plains. In the north, however, rugged, east-west trending mountain ranges lie at varying distances from the Gulf of Aden coast. Temperatures are hot throughout the year, exceptions occurring at higher elevations in the north. Rainfall is sparse, and most of Somalia has a harsh semiarid to arid environment suitable only for the nomadic pastoralism characteristic of well over half the population. Only in lim-

ited areas of moderate rainfall in the northwest and particularly in the southwest, where the country's two perennial rivers are found, is agriculture practiced to any extent (see Agriculture and Pastoralism, ch. 3).

The local geology suggests the presence of valuable mineral deposits. As of 1981, however, only a few significant sites had been located, and mineral production played a very minor role in the economy (see Mining, ch. 3).

The country's long coastline (2,960 kilometers) has been of importance chiefly as it has permitted trade with the Middle East and the remainder of East Africa. The exploitation of the shore and the continental shelf for fishing and other purposes had barely begun by the early 1980s (see Fisheries, ch. 3; Ports and shipping, ch. 3).

### **Climate**

Climate is the overriding factor influencing much of Somali life. For the large nomadic population, the time of arrival and sufficiency of rainfall are major determinants in whether grazing will be adequate for their livestock and the enjoyment of relative prosperity, or whether pasturage and water will be in short supply, animals lost, and existence grim. Under conditions of drought, such as occurred during 1974 and early 1975, the situation can become disastrous. There are some indications that the climate has worsened in the last century and that the increase in the human and animal populations have put a great burden on water and vegetation.

Although less prominent in parts of the northern highlands and the southwestern coastal area of the Juba and Shabeelle rivers, four seasons are observable: two wet and two dry. These are determined by the northeast and southwest monsoonal winds and the transitional lulls between them that result in alternating periods of moisture and aridity. During the main periods of monsoonal air flow, winds blow parallel to the coast depositing little rainfall. In the first of these periods, from late December or early January, when the northeast monsoon is dominant, hot, dry, and dusty winds are prevalent. This season, known locally as the *jilal*, lasts until about March and is the harshest time of year for the nomadic groups.

Beginning in March or April and extending into May and sometimes June, during which the monsoonal winds change direction, a transitional period known as *gu* brings the country's heaviest, although still comparatively meager, rains. The third season, *hagaa*, begins in June as the southwest monsoon becomes ascendant. By July pastures and vegetation begin to dry up, and dust blown by the strong winds is everywhere. The *hagaa* season continues through August and is the hottest period of the year in the north

along the Gulf of Aden. Along the southwest coast, however, cooling breezes from the Indian Ocean make the period comparatively pleasant; showers also occur during this time in the coastal areas. The second wet season, called *dayr* by the Somalis, is shorter, but its intermittent rains during the lull between the southwest and northeast monsoons (mostly in October and November) account in some areas for about 30 percent of the local annual rainfall.

Most of the country receives under 500 millimeters of rain annually, and a large area encompassing the northeastern and much of the northern parts receives as little as 50 to 150 millimeters. Certain higher areas in the north, however, record more than 500 millimeters a year. The southwest receives an average of 330 to 500 millimeters; some coastal spots average about 500 millimeters (see fig. 4). Generally rainfall takes the form of showers or localized rains and is characterized by an extreme degree of variability.

Mean daily maximum temperatures throughout the country range from 30°C to 40°C, except at higher elevations and along the Indian Ocean coast. Mean daily minimum temperatures usually vary from roughly 20°C to more than 30°C. The northern part of the country has the greatest temperature extremes, readings ranging from below freezing in the highlands in December to more than 45°C in July in the coastal plain skirting the Gulf of Aden. The region's relative humidity ranges from roughly 40 percent in midafternoon to 85 percent at night, varying somewhat with the season. During the colder months from December to February, visibility at higher elevations is often restricted by fog.

The southern part of the country exhibits less extreme temperatures, which range from about 20°C to 40°C; the hottest season occurs from February through April. Coastal readings are usually from five to ten degrees cooler than those inland. There is little variation in the coastal zone's relative humidity, which usually remains about 70 percent even during the dry seasons.

### **Terrain, Vegetation, and Drainage**

Somalia is, physiographically, a land of limited contrast. In the north, parallel to the Gulf of Aden coast is a maritime plain varying in width from roughly twelve kilometers in the west to as little as two or three kilometers in the east. Scrub-covered, semiarid, and generally drab, this plain, known as the *guban* (burnt land) because of its heat and dryness during much of the year, is crossed by broad, shallow watercourses that are beds of dry sand except in the rainy seasons. When the rains arrive, however, the vegetation—a subdesert association of low bushes and grass clumps—is quickly renewed, and for a time the *guban* provides some grazing for nomad livestock.

Inland from the gulf coast, the plain rises to the precipitous north-facing cliffs of dissected highlands. These form rugged

mountain ranges that extend from the northwestern border with Ethiopia eastward to the tip of the Horn where they end in sheer cliffs at Caseyr. The general elevation along the crest of these mountains averages about 1,800 meters above sea level south of the port town of Berbera, and eastward from that area it continues at between 1,800 and 2,100 meters almost to Caseyr. The country's highest point, Shimbir Berris, which rises to over 2,400 meters, is located near the town of Ceerigaabo.

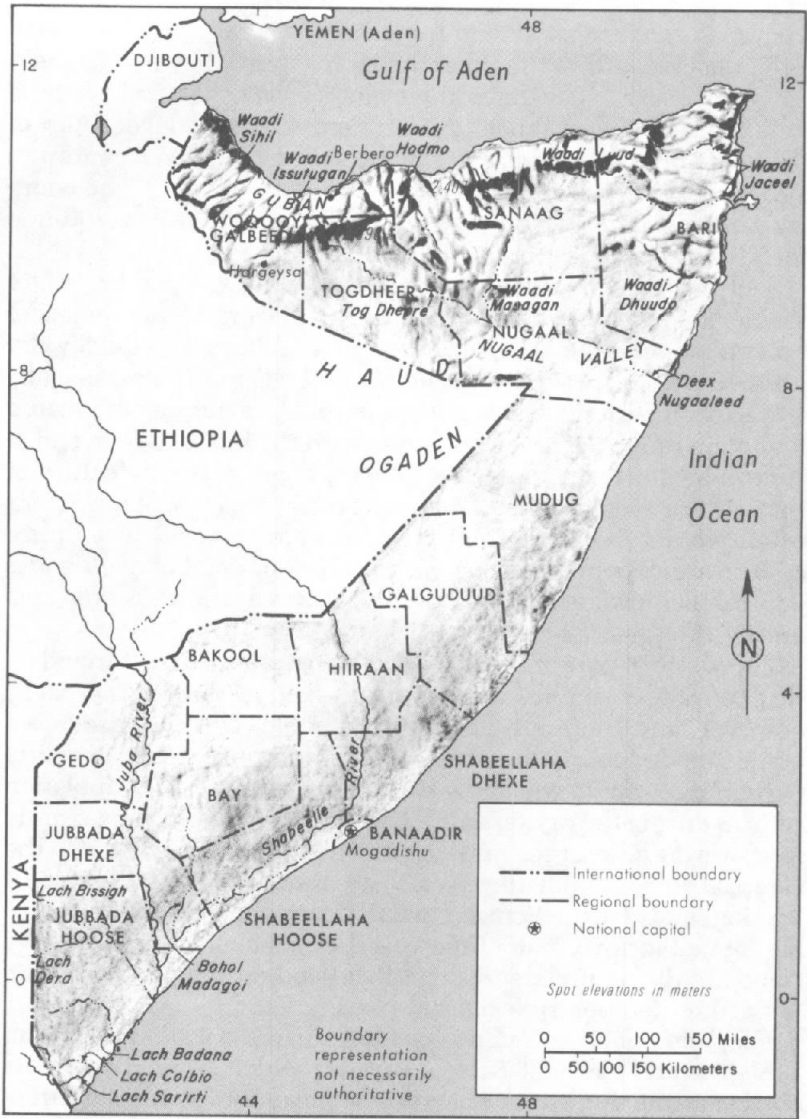
Southward the mountains descend, often in scarped ledges, to an elevated plateau devoid of perennial rivers. This region of broken mountain terrain, shallow plateau valleys, and usually dry watercourses is known to the Somalis as the Ogo. In its especially arid eastern part, the plateau, interspersed by a number of isolated mountain ranges, gradually slopes toward the Indian Ocean and in central Somalia constitutes the Mudug Plain. A major feature of this eastern section is the long and broad Nugaal Valley with its extensive net of intermittent seasonal watercourses. The entire eastern area's population consists mainly of pastoral nomads and is in a zone of low and erratic rainfall. It was a major disaster area during the great drought of 1974 and early 1975.

The western part of the Ogo plateau region is characterized by shallow valleys and dry watercourses. Annual rainfall is greater, however, and there are flat areas of arable land that provide a home for dryland cultivators. Most important, it is an area of permanent wells to which the predominantly nomadic population returns during the dry seasons. The western plateau slopes gently southward and merges imperceptibly into a zone known as the Haud, a broad, undulating area that constitutes some of the best grazing lands for the Somali nomads despite the lack of appreciable rainfall for over half of the year. Enhancing the value of the Haud are the natural depressions that flood during periods of rain to become temporary lakes and ponds.

The Haud zone continues for more than sixty kilometers into Ethiopia, and the vast Somali Plateau, which lies between the northern Somali mountains and the highlands of southeast Ethiopia, extends south and eastward through Ethiopia into central and southwest Somalia. The portion of the Haud lying within Ethiopia was the subject of an agreement made during the colonial era permitting nomads from British Somaliland to pasture their herds there. Since Somali independence in 1960 it has been the subject of Somali claims and of considerable strife (see *War in the Ogaden*, ch. 1).

Southwestern Somalia is dominated by the country's only two permanent rivers, the Juba and the Shabeelle. These rivers, which originate in the Ethiopian highlands, flow in a generally southerly direction, cutting wide valleys in the Somali Plateau as

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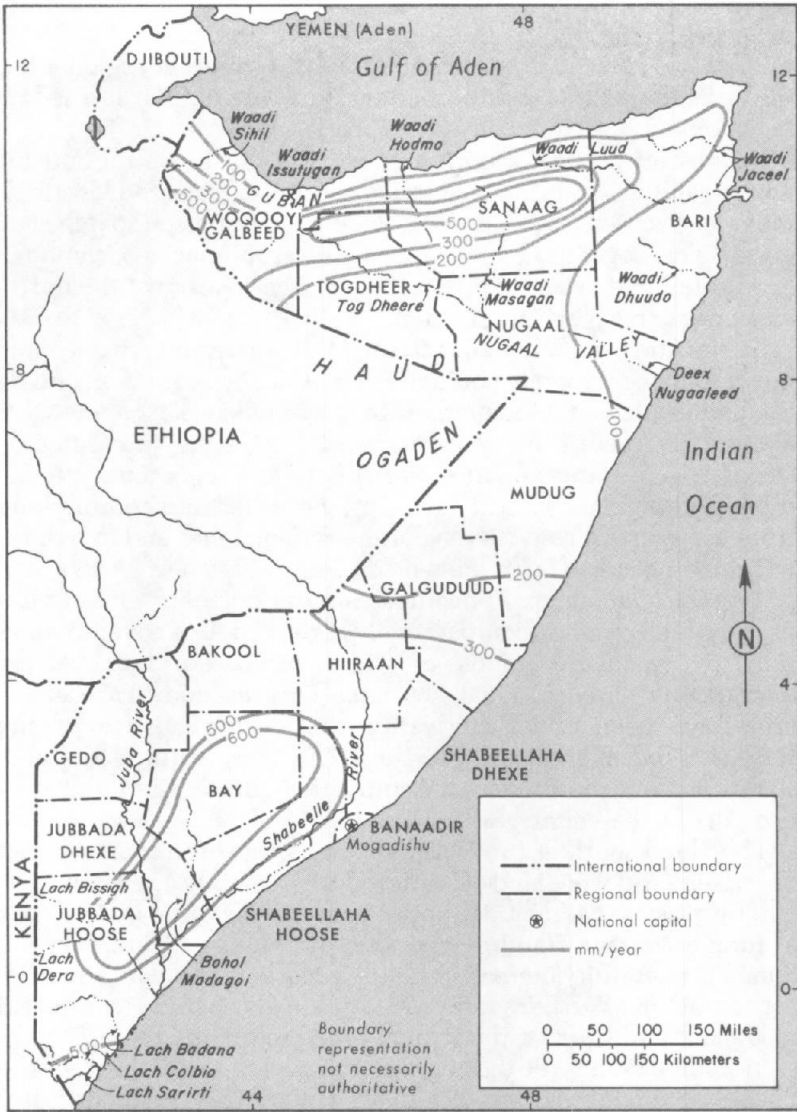


*Figure 4. Terrain, Drainage, and Rainfall*

the latter descends toward the sea; the plateau's elevation falls off rapidly in this area. A succeeding large coastal zone, which includes the lower reaches of the rivers and extends from the Mudug Plain to the Kenyan border, averages 180 meters above sea level.

The Juba River enters the Indian Ocean at Kismaayo. Although the Shabeelle River at one time apparently also reached the sea near Marka, its course changed in prehistoric times, and it now





turns southwestward near Balcad (about twenty miles north of Mogadishu) and follows a path parallel to the coast for more than eighty-five kilometers. The river is perennial only to a point southwest of Mogadishu; thereafter it consists of swampy areas and dry reaches and is finally lost in the sand east of Jilib, not far from the Juba River. During flood seasons in about April to May (the *gu* rainy period) and October to November (*dayr* rains), the Shabeelle River may be full to a point near Jilib and occasionally may

even break through to the Juba River farther south. Favorable rainfall and soil conditions make this entire riverine region a fertile agricultural area and the center of the country's largest sedentary population.

In most of northern, northeastern, and north-central Somalia where rainfall is low, the vegetation consists of scattered low trees, including various acacias, and widely interspersed patches of grass. This vegetation deteriorates into a subdesert association of low bushes and grass clumps in the highly arid areas of the northeast and along the Gulf of Aden.

As elevations and rainfall increase in the maritime ranges of the north, the vegetation becomes denser. Aloes are common, and on the higher plateau areas of the Ogo are woodlands. At a few spots above 1,500 meters the remnants of juniper forests—protected by the state—and areas of the *candelabra euphobia* occur. In the more arid highlands of the northeast, boswellia and commiphora trees are sources, respectively, of the frankincense and myrrh for which Somalia has been known since ancient times.

A broad plateau area encompassing the northern city of Hargeysa, which receives comparatively high rainfall, is covered naturally by woodland (much of which has been degraded by overgrazing) and occasionally by extensive grassland. Parts of this area have been under cultivation since the 1930s, producing sorghum and maize (corn); in the 1970s it constituted the only significant region of sedentary cultivation outside the southwestern part of the country.

The Haud south of the Hargeysa area is covered mostly by an open, semiarid woodland of scattered trees, mainly acacias, underlain by grasses that include species especially favored by livestock as forage. As the Haud merges into the Mudug Plain in central Somalia, the aridity increases and the vegetation displays a subdesert character. Farther southward it gradually changes to semiarid woodland and grass as the annual precipitation increases.

In comparison with these areas, the region encompassing the Shabeelle and Juba rivers is relatively well watered and constitutes the most promising arable zone in the country. The lowland between the rivers supports rich pasturage. The region's natural vegetation is arid to subarid savanna, open woodland, and thickets and underlying grasses that frequently are abundant. In places there are areas of grassland, and in the far southwestern part near the Kenyan border some dry evergreen forests are found.

Along the Indian Ocean from Mereeg southwestward to near Kismaayo lies a stretch of fixed coastal sand dunes. This area is covered with scattered scrub and grass clumps where rainfall is sufficient. Overgrazing, particularly in the area between Mogadishu and Kismaayo, has resulted in the destruction of the protective

vegetation cover and the gradual movement of the dunes inland. Since the early 1970s efforts have been made to stabilize these dunes by replanting (see Forestry, ch. 3).

Minor vegetation includes that found in swamps into which the Shabeelle River empties most of the year and in other large swamp areas in the lower course of the Juba River. Mangrove forests are also seen at points along the coast, particularly from Kismaayo to near the Kenyan border. Uncontrolled exploitation appears to have caused some damage to forests in that area. Other mangrove forests are located near Mogadishu and at a number of spots along the northeastern and northern coasts.

### **Population and Settlement Patterns**

The first nationwide population census was carried out in February 1975. It included a complete enumeration in all urban and settled rural areas and a sample enumeration of the nomadic population. In the latter case the sampling units were chiefly watering points. Preliminary results of that census were made public in a document—Three Year Plan 1979–81—issued by the Ministry of Planning. The estimates for 1980, based on those results, are somewhat larger than those of the United Nations (UN) and the United States Bureau of the Census, which are based on extrapolations from earlier and more fragmentary sampling. Moreover Somali officials have suggested that the 1975 census undercounted the nomadic population substantially, in part because the census took place at the time of the worst drought in Somalia's recorded history and many people were moving in search of food and water.

The total population furnished by the 1975 census was 3.72 million. Assuming an annual growth rate of 2.5 percent (estimates range between 2.3 and 2.7 percent) and using the 1975 census results as a base, the 1980 population may be estimated at a little more than 4.2 million and the 1981 population at more than 4.3 million. Not included are substantial numbers of refugees who have fled from the Ogaden in Ethiopia to Somalia beginning in the mid-1970s (see Refugees, this ch.).

The Ministry of Planning's report of preliminary census data distinguishes three main categories—nomads, settled farmers, and persons in nonagricultural occupations. Settled farmers were defined as those in permanent settlements outside the national, regional, and district capitals, but some of these are in fact pastoralists, and others may be craftsmen and small traders. Those living in the various capitals were defined as nonagricultural regardless of their occupations. In 1975 nomads constituted nearly 59 percent of the population, settled persons nearly 22 percent, and nonagricultural persons more than 19 percent (see table 2, Appendix).

If Somali officials are correct in assuming that roughly 700,000 persons (probably all nomads) were not counted in 1975 and these

are added to the totals, then the proportions of the categories shift. The total population in that year becomes 4.4 million, a little more than 65 percent of which were nomads; settled farmers were then somewhat more than 18 percent of the total, and nonagricultural persons more than 16 percent. At a 2.5 percent annual rate of increase, the estimated population in 1980 becomes nearly 5 million, and in 1981 more than 5.1 million. Of the population categorized as nomads, about 30 percent have been considered seminomadic, because of their relatively permanent settlements and shorter range of seasonal migration.

Various segments of the population apparently increase at somewhat different rates. The fully nomadic population was said to be growing less than 2 percent a year and the seminomadic, fully settled rural, and urban populations (in that order) at higher rates—well over 2.5 percent in the case of the urban population. These differential rates of growth coupled with increasing urbanization and the efforts, even if of limited success, to settle nomads as cultivators or fishermen are likely to diminish gradually the proportion of nomads in the population.

The results of the 1975 census published as of 1981 do not provide a picture of the age and sex structure of the population, but a number of considerations and various estimates suggest a large base of young people. More than 45 percent of the total is under fifteen years of age, and only about 2 percent are over sixty-five. Those between fifteen and sixty-five were estimated to constitute about 53 percent of the population. Sample surveys in the 1960s and 1970s indicated that there were more males than females in the nomadic population and fewer in the urban areas. Whether that pattern has persisted as urbanization has increased is not known.

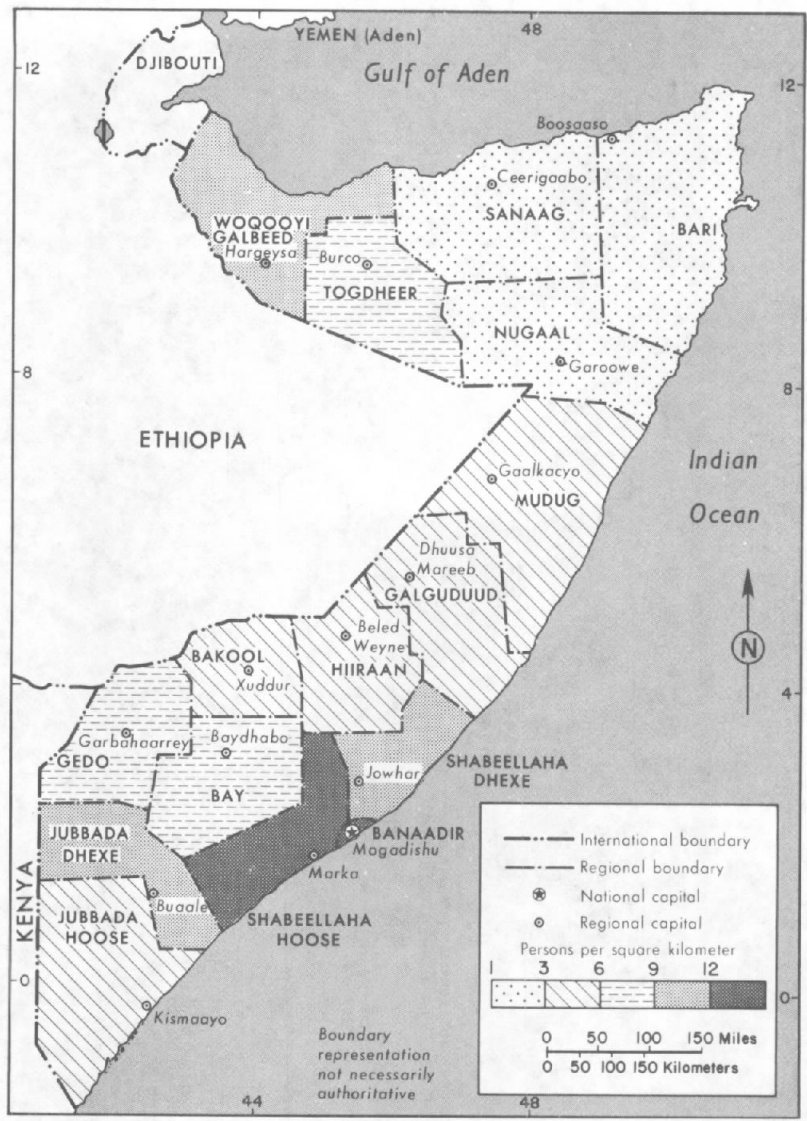
The estimated average density in 1981, assuming an indigenous population of 4.3 million, was not quite seven persons per square kilometer. Densities varied markedly, however. Moreover given the propensity of nomads to move seasonally, the densities in the areas ordinarily used by them change over the year. The areas of greatest rural density were the settled zones adjacent to the Juba and the Shabeelle rivers, a few spots between them, and several small areas in the northern highlands. Most of the least densely populated zones (fewer than six persons per square kilometer) were found in northeastern and central Somalia, but there were some very sparsely populated areas between the two rivers and in the far southwest adjacent to the Kenyan border (see fig. 5).

The nomadic and seminomadic segments of the population ordinarily engage in cyclical migrations related to alternation of the wet and dry seasons. Such movements result in periodic changes in settlement patterns, particularly in the largely nomadic north-



*The Somali nomad is unburdened by personal possessions; he carries his own bowl for food and water, a staff for his herding activities, and a headrest for sleeping at night.  
Courtesy WORLD BANK PHOTO*

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Source: Based on information from Somalia, State Planning Commission, *Three Year Plan, 1979-1981*, Mogadishu, 1979, Table 19-2.

**Figure 5. Population Density by Region, 1975**

ern and northeastern parts of the country. During the dry season the nomads of the Ogo highlands and plateau areas in the north and the Nugaal Valley in the northeast are generally concentrated in villages or large encampments at permanent wells or other reliable sources of water. When the rains come, however, they

scatter with their herds throughout the vast expanse of the Haud where they form a pattern of dispersed small encampments during the wet season, or as long as animal forage and water hold out. When these resources are depleted, the area becomes relatively empty again, and reconcentration in the the home villages or settlements occurs. In most cases the fully adult men and women and their children remain with the sheep, goats, burden camels, and occasionally, cattle. The grazing camels are herded at some distance by boys and young, unmarried men.

A nomadic population also inhabits the southwestern part of the country between the Juba River and the Kenyan border. Little information was available on their migratory patterns or dispersal.

The country's best arable lands lie along the Juba and Shabeelle rivers and in the interriverine area, and the major portion of the sedentary rural population resides there in fixed agricultural villages and settlements. Nomads are also found in this area, but many pastoralists engage part time in farming, and the range of seasonal migration is more restricted. After the spring rains have begun, the herders move from the river edge into the interior. They return to the rivers in the dry season (*hagaa*) but move again to the interior in October and November if the second rainy season (*dayr*) permits. They then retreat to the rivers until the next spring rains. Some ebb and flow of population does occur with the seasons, but the overriding pattern is established by the sedentary population. In the mid-1970s this pattern was further reinforced by the settling of over 100,000 nomads from the drought-stricken north and northeast in sedentary agricultural occupations in the southwest.

The locations of many towns appear to have been determined largely by trade factors. The present-day major ports, extending from Kismaayo and Mogadishu in the southwest to Berbera and Seylac in the far northwest, were founded around the eighth to the tenth century A.D. by Arab and Persian immigrants. They became points for conducting trade with the interior, a function they continued to perform in the 1970s, although some towns, such as Seylac, have declined because of the diminution of the dhow trade. Unlike many other coastal areas of the continent, important fishing ports failed to develop despite the rather substantial fish resources of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. This appears to reflect the centuries-old Somali aversion to eating fish and the lack of any sizable inland market. Some of the towns south of Mogadishu have long been sites of non-Somali fishing communities, however. The fisheries' potential and the need to expand food production, coupled with the problem of finding occupations for nomads ruined by the 1974-75 drought, have resulted in government encouragement and assistance to nomad

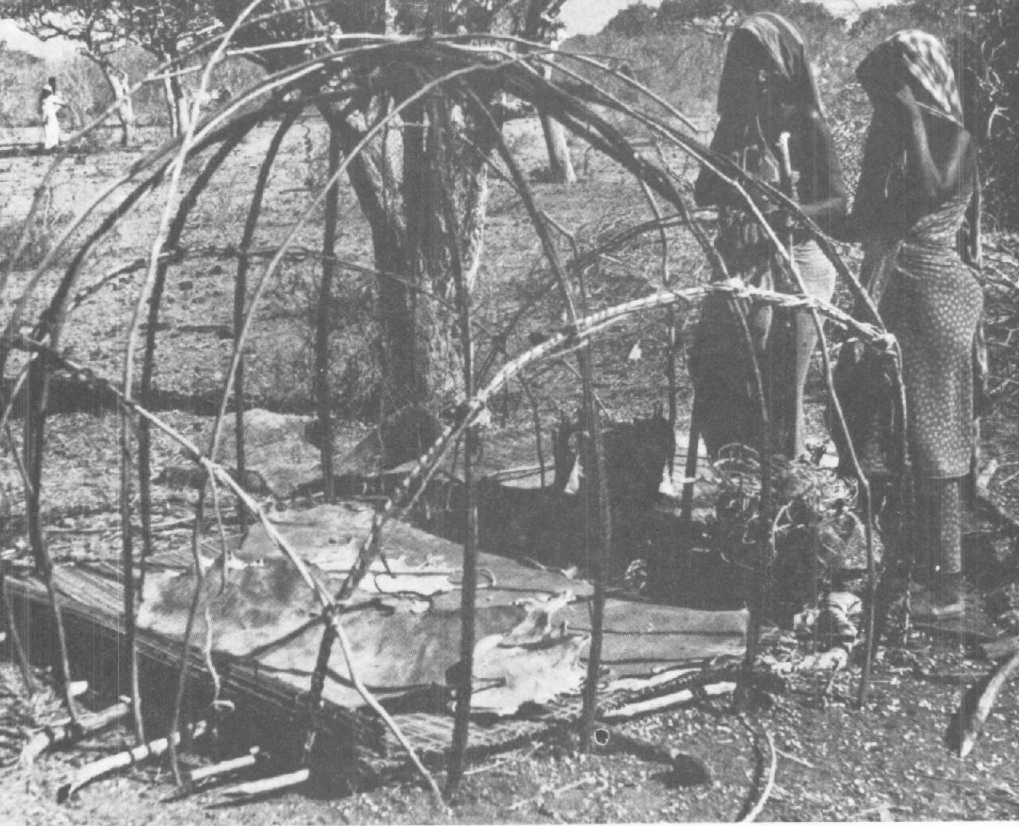
families to settle permanently in fishing villages; some 15,000 nomads were reported established in such villages in late 1975.

Present-day inland towns in sparsely populated areas owe their location to their development as trading centers at caravan crossing points or at regular stopping places along caravan routes. In some cases the ready availability of water throughout the year led to the growth of substantial settlements providing market and service facilities for nomadic populations, such as Gaalkacyo, an oasis in the Mudug Plain having permanent wells.

Town and village distribution in the agricultural areas of the Juba and Shabeelle rivers is related in part to the development of market centers by the sedentary population. But a considerable number of such towns and villages owe their origin to the founding of agricultural religious communities (*jamaha*) by various Islamic brotherhoods during the nineteenth century; an example is the large town of Baardheere, which evolved from a *jamaha* founded in 1819 (see Religious Life, this ch.). Hargeysa, the largest town in northern Somalia, also started as a religious community in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its growth into the country's second largest city was stimulated mainly, however, by its selection in 1942 as the administrative center for the then-British Somaliland.

After the establishment of a number of new regions (sixteen as of 1981, including Mogadishu) and districts (second order administrative areas—sixty-nine as of 1981), the government defined towns to include all regional and district headquarters regardless of size. Also defined as towns were all other communities having populations of 2,000 or more. Some administrative headquarters are much smaller than that. Data on the numbers specifically urban in the 1975 census are not available except for the region encompassing and consisting solely of Mogadishu. At that time the capital had 380,000 residents, a little more than 52 percent of all persons subsumed under the rubric "non-agricultural" (taken to be very largely urban). Only three other regions—Woqooyi (West) Galbeed, Shabeellaha Hoose (Lower Shabeelle), and the Bay—had urban populations constituting 7 percent to 9 percent of the total urban population in 1975. The sole town of importance in Woqooyi Galbeed Region at that time was Hargeysa. Berbera was much smaller, but its role as a port town on the Gulf of Aden may lead to considerable growth. The chief town in Lower Shabeelle Region was Marka, of some importance as a port, but there were several other port towns (for example, Baraawe) and some inland communities that served as sites for light manufacturing or food processing. In Bay Region the major towns (Baydhabo, Buur Hakaba) were located in relatively densely settled agricultural areas. There were a few towns of some importance in other regions: one





*Nomads erecting their portable hut, which is dismantled and transported by camel when the people and their herd move on.*  
Courtesy WORLD BANK PHOTO

was the port of Kismaayo in Lower Juba, another Dijuuma in the agricultural land of Middle Juba.

### **The Segmentary Social Order**

Ethnic Somalis are united by language, culture, devotion to Islam, and putative genealogical ties linking all of them to a common ancestor. Genealogical ties, however, have also provided the terms in which divisions among the Somalis have occurred, divisions historically more common than unity.

All Somalis trace their original to two brothers, Samaal and Sab, said to have been descended from members of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh of Arabia, a notion based in part on the Somali adherence to Islam, in part on actual Arab influence (see *The Somalis: Origins, Migrations, and Settlement*, ch. 1). According to tradition, the brothers are the ancestors of the largest descent-based units in Somali society, the clan-families of which six important ones existed in 1981. Four of these, the Dir, Darod, Isaaq, and Hawiye, constituted together an estimated 75 percent of the pop-

ulation; they trace their descent from Samaal. Of these groups, the majority, widely distributed, were nomadic and seminomadic pastoralists, but an increasing minority were settled cultivators. The Digil and Rahanweyn, who trace their descent from Sab, constituted about 20 percent of the population. They were settled in the riverine regions of southern Somalia and relied on a mixed economy of cattle husbandry and cultivation (see fig. 6).

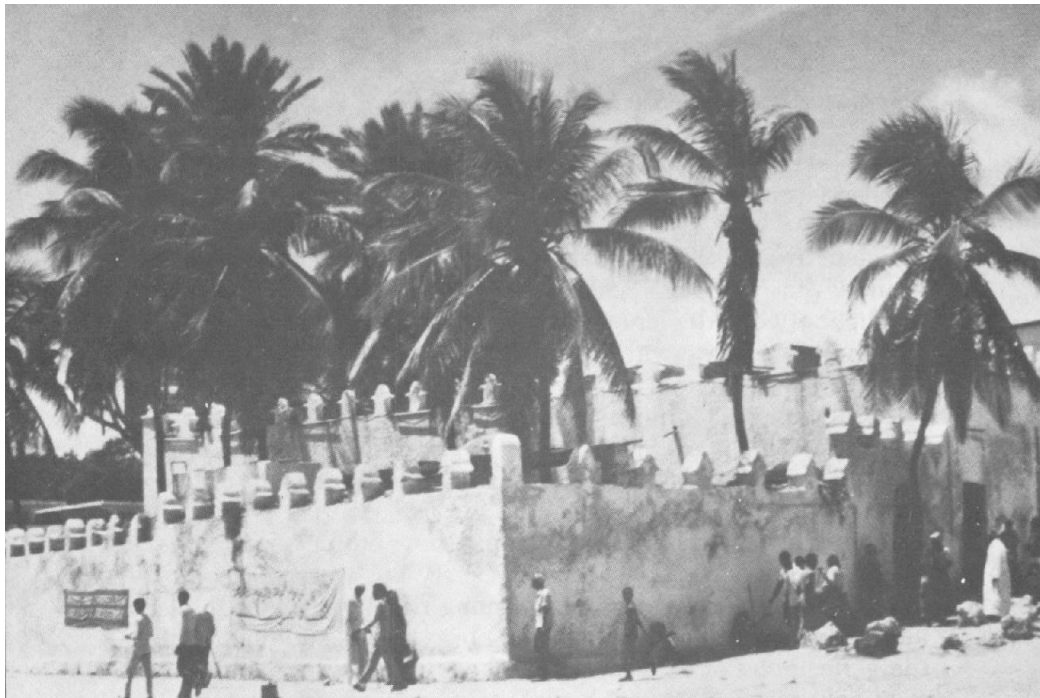
Clan-families, too large and scattered for practical cooperation, had no real political or economic functions. For a time they served as rallying points in the formation of political parties and other political alliances, but their importance in this respect has probably diminished (see *Problems of National Integration*, ch. 1; see *Politics and Ideology*, ch. 4). The important units in the traditional system were the subdivisions of clan-families, the clans and the lineages each of these clans comprised. Membership in all of these groups was traced through males from a common male ancestor.

Descent as the basis for group formation and loyalty was modified, but not overridden, by the principle of contract. Membership in the same clan or lineage did not automatically entail certain rights and obligations. These were explicitly made the subject of treaties or contracts. Thus some of the clans in a clan-family might unite for political and military purposes, and some lineages within a clan might be associated for cooperation and the paying and receiving of blood compensation in cases of homicide, injury, and other offenses. These alignments had a kinship base in that those who joined were often descended from a particular wife of a common ancestor, but units formed by contract or treaty could be dissolved and new ones formed.

The traditional social structure was characterized by competition and conflict between descent groups. Among the Samaal the search for pasture and water drove clans and lineages physically apart or pitted them against each other. The Sab had a history of warfare over trade and religious matters and of fighting the encroachments of camel-herding nomads.

Whatever their common original condition, Samaal and Sab evolved differently as they adapted to different ecological conditions. With some exceptions Samaal lived in areas that supported only a pastoralism based mainly on camels, sheep, and goats. The Sab lived in the area between the rivers where they raised cattle and came to dominate the non-Somali cultivators found there when they arrived. After the end of slavery the Sab themselves undertook cultivation.

Except in their relations with members of despised occupational groups, the Samaal remained fiercely egalitarian but considered themselves superior to settled Somalis. The Sab developed a heterogeneous society that accorded high or low status to different groups depending on their origin and occupation. The lineage



*Street scene in the older part of downtown Mogadishu  
Courtesy Terry C. Eakin*



*Urban Somalis in Western dress at a busy open  
market (suq)*

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remained the focal point of loyalty for roaming pastoralists. Group cohesion assumed a territorial dimension among the settled agriculturists.

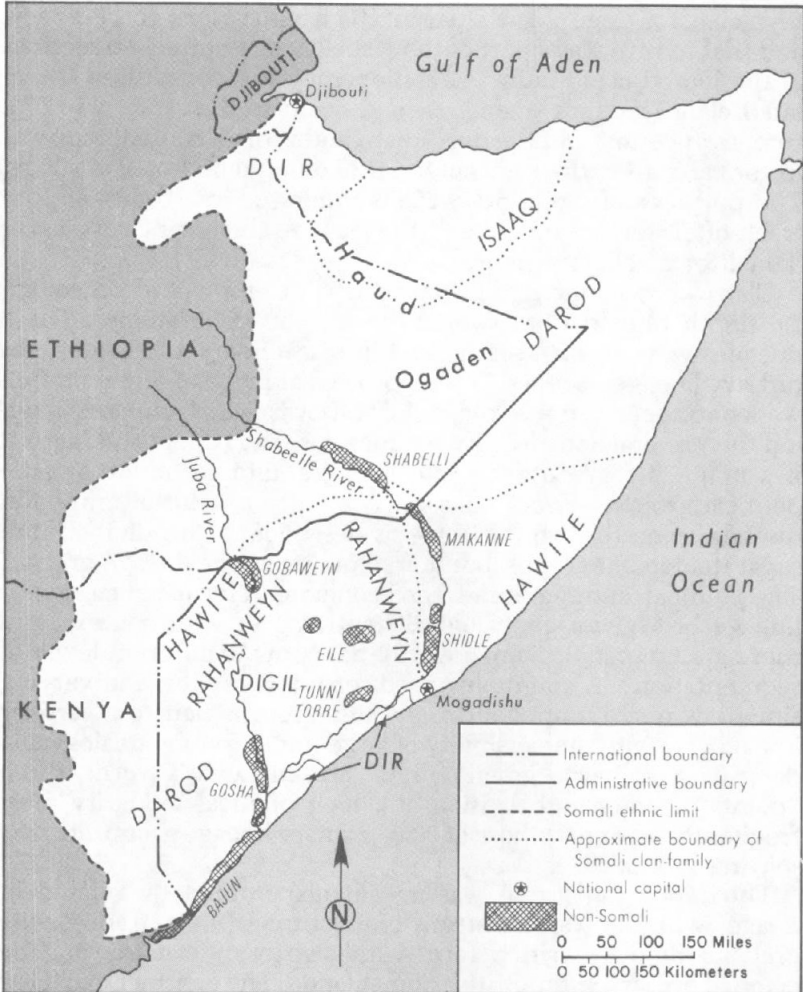
The nature of relations between and within groups underwent changes during the colonial era and after independence. Armed conflict between descent groups (or in the south, territorial units) became rare; slaves were freed. Nevertheless the basic modes of social organization and relations persisted, particularly among the pastoral nomads. Moreover national politics were often perceived and frequently operated in terms of relationships between segments of various kinds, e.g., clans, clan-families, and clan confederacies.

Several thousand persons, including some ethnic Somalis, were integrated into traditional Somali society but were not comprehended in the six clan-families. Among them were Somali clans descended from ancestors predating or otherwise not included in the genealogies of the six clan-families. Others were lineages of relatively unmixed Arab descent, often much inbred; most lived in the coastal towns. Such lineages or communities had varying relationships with local Somalis; some were clients subordinate to Somali groups, and others were independent entities in the larger towns. A second category comprehended the *habash*, cultivators (or hunters) of non-Somali origin who lived among the Rahanweyn and Digil in the interriverine area. A third category consisted of occupationally specialized caste-like groups, members of which were attached to Somali lineages or clans. Finally, until the last were freed in the 1920s, there were slaves attached to both pastoral and sedentary Somali groups but of greater economic importance among the latter.

### **Samaal**

Among the Samaal clans were the largest political units, most of which had heads known as *soldaan* (sultan) or *bokor* (belt—to bind people together). With occasional and rarely institutionalized exceptions, a nomadic clan head's functions were honorary and ceremonial. The number of clans within a clan-family varied, and there was a good deal of difference in their sizes, but their numbers averaged roughly 100,000 people in the twentieth century. Clans were associated with a given territory, essentially defined by the circuit of nomadic migration but having unspecified boundaries, so that the territories of neighboring clans tended to overlap.

A Samaal clan kept careful count of the generations between living members of the group and the ancestor for whom it was named: the greater the number of generations, often implying substantial internal segmentation (many subclans or lineages), the greater the clan's prestige, which was validated by the numbers and power usually associated with generational depth and seg-



Source: Based on information from I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, London, 1980, p. 253.

**Figure 6. Distribution of Clan-Families and Non-Somali Ethnic Groups**

mentation. Some ancient clans, however, dwindled, and found it necessary to attach themselves to other clans of the same or another clan-family. Similarly, small groups (lineages), detached from the main body of their clan, made alliances with the clan in whose territory they were then living.

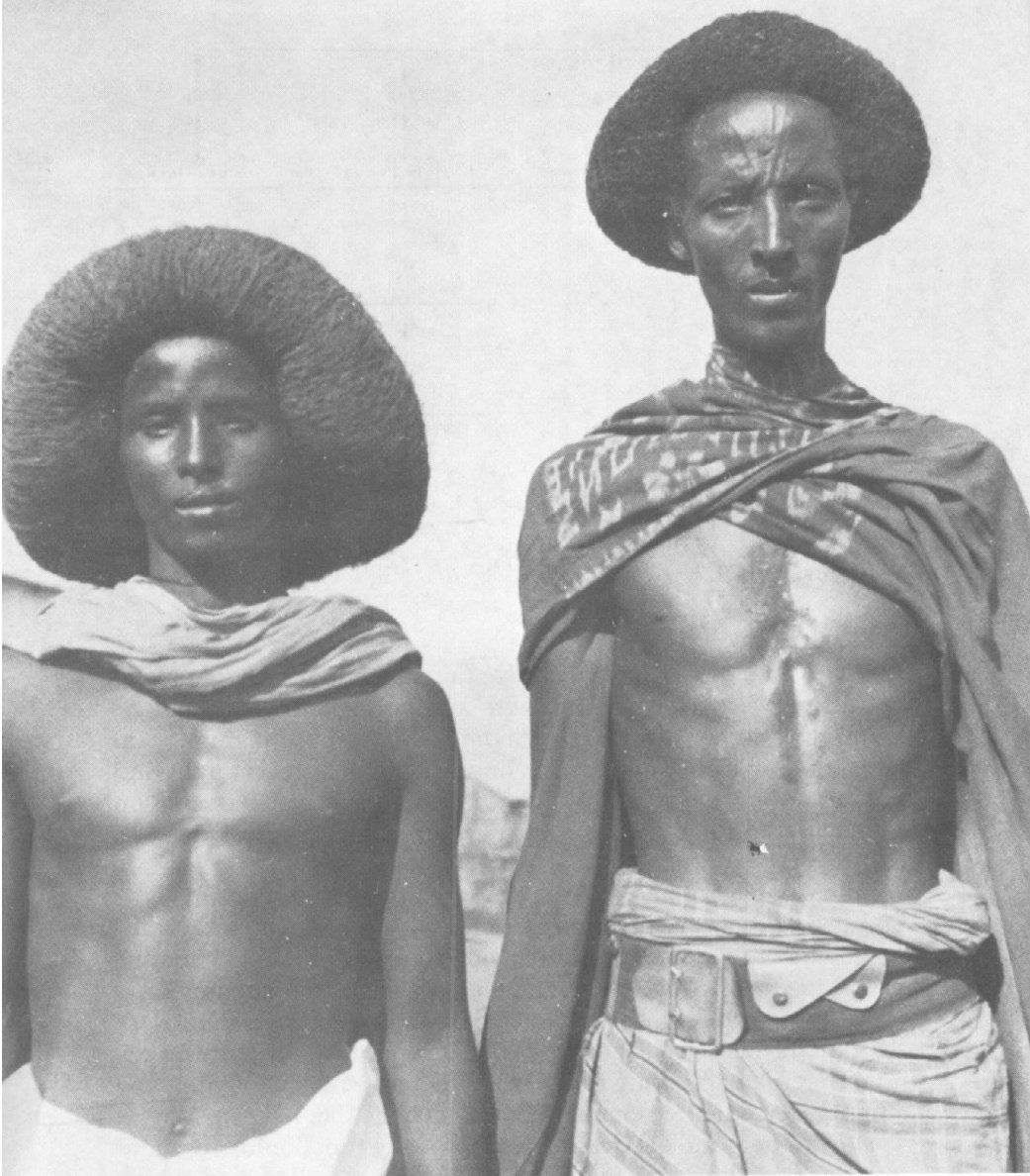
Clans living in contiguous territories sometimes joined in confederacies often marked by internal subgroupings. The Major-

teyn clan, for example, was part of the Kombe-Harti confederacy, and that in turn was a part of the Kablalla, one of the two sections of the Darod clan-family. A confederacy was constituted by related clans (perhaps tracing their descent to the same wife of a remote ancestor), but the decision to enter into a confederacy was historical rather than an automatic consequence of genealogy. The purposes of the entity were enumerated in a treaty or contract, often set down in one of the early Arabic script versions of Somali by a religious figure.

Clans were segmented into primary lineages whose genealogical depth ranged from twelve to fourteen generations. These lineages were in turn segmented into secondary and sometimes tertiary lineages (see fig. 7). The process of internal segmentation was continuous. In the words of I.M. Lewis, who has closely studied the pastoral Somalis, "Every ancestor who begets several sons is a point of segmentation into lineages, into corporate agnatic political groups. Every ancestor is at once a point of unity and division since through his sons his descendants are divided into separate descent groups, but united in him as one lineage-group." The political (and sometimes the economic) relevance of a clan or lineage of a given genealogical depth varies with context, and there are no specific Somali words that apply to different levels of segmentation. A commonly used term is *reer*, which in varying situations may be applied to any unit from a clan to a tertiary lineage. Despite the possibility of large numbers of genealogically deep or shallower segments, there are, in Lewis's words, three "points of unity and division at which political solidarity most frequently emerges...those of clan, primary lineage group, and *dia*-paying group."

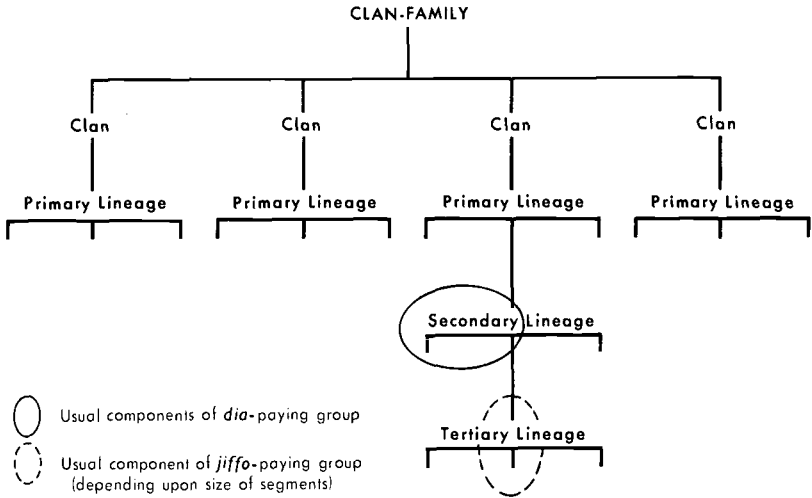
The *dia*-paying group was an alliance formed by related lineages within a clan by means of a contract (*heer*), traditionally oral but filed in written form with district officials during the colonial era, at least in British Somaliland. The contract explicitly stated the rights and duties of members of the group with respect to the burdens of payment and the distribution of receipts of blood compensation when the parties were members of the same or different *dia*-paying groups. In the case of a homicide the lineages of the group shared in giving or receiving a specified portion of the compensation. A smaller but still substantial portion (the *jiffo*) was given or received by the relatively close kin of the killer or the deceased, that is, by an agnatic group descended from a common ancestor three or four generations back. In the case of offenses requiring the payment of a smaller compensation, sharing still occurred within the *dia*-paying group, but in minor cases the *jiffo*-paying group alone might have been involved.

The lineages constituting a *dia*-paying group were often of the kind called secondary; that is, the ancestors of each of them were fewer than the twelve to fourteen characteristic of a primary



*Young unmarried Somali herdsmen of Bay Region. After they take wives, the length of their elaborate hairstyles will be shortened.  
Courtesy United States International Communication Agency*

*Somalia: A Country Study*



Source: Based on information from Irving Kaplan, et. al., *Area Handbook for Somalia*, Washington, 1977, p. 65.

*Figure 7. Model of Nomadic Descent Group Segmentation*

lineage, and the latter might contain two or more *dia*-paying groups. If, however, a group with a remote ancestor lacked the manpower to constitute its own *dia*-paying group, it might join with another such group to form one. Too small a group might find the burden too heavy. Moreover the ultimate traditional sanction was armed conflict, and here again lack of manpower was clearly a liability.

Both *dia*-paying and *jiffo*-paying groups were important units of social and economic organization aside from their stated purpose. They functioned as mutual aid groups in times of economic hardship or other emergencies. They established regulations and were able to enforce them. In 1964 it was estimated that more than 1,000 such groups existed in the republic. Among the nomads, membership ranged from 300 to more than 5,000 men and among the sedentary Somalis from 5,000 to 100,000.

The political and economic business of any functioning segment in Samaal society was managed by a council called *shir*, which included all the adult males in the group. Each member might speak and take part in deliberation. Age and seniority of lineage took precedence in that an older man or one from an older lineage would customarily be asked to speak before others did, but a persuasive speaker, whatever his seniority, could carry greater weight (see Language and Communication, this ch.). Moreover despite the basic egalitarianism of the Samaal, a wealthy herder



might also have a greater say. The term *oday* (elder) could be applied to any adult male, but those with more prestige and experience might be asked to judge disputes over a wide area and act as an ad hoc leader in political matters.

Most Samaal men followed a life as warriors and herders; a warrior (*waranle*) considered his status nobler than any other with the exception of lives devoted to religion. Religious persons (*wadaddo*, sing., *wadad*) were considered of equal dignity, but relatively few committed themselves to a life of religion. Many who did so retained their ties to clan and lineage, although in principle they should have avoided partisanship and armed conflict. (That rule did not pertain to religious warfare—jihad.) A few settled in religious communities (see Religious Life, this ch.).

Cultivating groups of Samaal origin existed in various places. These groups, which also kept livestock, were accepted as fellow Samaal by the pastoralists but were considered to have lost prestige, even if they had gained economically. Some Samaal attached themselves as cultivating clients to stockraising Sab in the riverine region, but the Samaal usually ended such relationships, either when they were able to resume their former pastoral activities or when the economic advantages of cultivation diminished. The lineage pattern remained intact among Samaal cultivators, and they defined themselves in terms of their lineage affiliation although the community also commanded loyalty.

### **Sab**

The Sab are composed of the Digil and Rahanweyn clan-families. The Digil are believed to be the descendants of Sab and the Rahanweyn an offshoot of the Digil, but grown to be much larger than the latter. The term Sab has fallen into disuse because a similar term *sab* was used by the Samaal as a pejorative designation (*sab* means “low”) for the groups that followed certain disdained specialized occupations. The Samaal did consider that the Sab had lowered themselves by their reliance on agriculture and their readiness to assimilate foreign elements into their clans.

The social structure of the Sab resembled that of the Samaal because it was putatively based on descent groups, but in fact there were significant differences. Sab clans were confederations of lineages and included persons originating in all Somali clan-families as well as assimilated peoples. They came into being through a pact or promise between the original founding segments, one of which, of Sab origin, was dominant; the name of the Sab segment became the name of the clan. By the twentieth century the descendants of that dominant lineage often constituted only a relatively small core of the clan. The constituent lineages of the clan, whatever their origin, tended to have much shallower genealogies than the Samaal.

Another important difference between the nomadic Samaal societies and the sedentary Sab was the significance of territoriality. Sab clans lived within clearly marked borders. The entire clan (or large subclan) often constituted the *dia*-paying group in relation to other clans. The term *reer*, which the Samaal used in connection with descent, was used with a place name, e.g., *reer barawa* (children of Baraawe).

Many clans were subdivided into three subclans, called *gember*, although some, as the Jiddu clans of the Digil clan-family, had only two subclans. Clans and subclans usually had single heads. In some cases however, as among the Helai clans of the Rahanweyn, there were no clan heads. Clan affairs were handled by leading elders called *gobweyn* who had assistants called *gobyar*.

Clans or subclans were subdivided into lineages that reckoned three to five generations from ancestor to youngest member. The lineage was the important economic unit. It traditionally owned land and water rights, which the head men distributed to individual lineage members.

The manner of formation of Sab clans led to the development of recognized social inequalities, sometimes marked by differences in physical appearance owing to stratum endogamy. Each stratum in a community consisted of one or more lineages. The basic distinction was that between nobles and *habash* (a mixture of pre-Somali cultivators and freed slaves—see Riverine and Coastal Peoples of Non-Somali Origin, this ch.).

In some Rahanweyn and Digil communities there was a further distinction between two sets of nobles. Within the Geledi clan (located in Afgooye and its environs), studied by anthropologist Virginia Luling, the nobles were divided into Darkskin and Lightskin categories, designations corresponding to the physical appearance of their members. The Darkskins were descendants of the core or founding group of the Geledi; the Lightskins had a separate line of descent, claimed partly Arab origin, and in fact resembled the Arab populations of the old coastal towns. They had been completely Somalized, however. The wealth and position of the Lightskins were similar to that of the Darkskins, but the latter had precedence in certain traditional rites.

Each of the lineages (of perhaps 300 to 400 persons) or Darkskins, Lightskins, and *habash* had its own set of elders and constituted a *dia*-paying group vis-à-vis the others but were bound in a common contract for rates of compensation and other matters. In principle *habash* lineages had equal rights in this system. Each lineage further controlled specific segments of the land and allocated to individuals as much land as his family could cultivate. Only the *habash*, however, were subsistence cultivators in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The nobles,

whether Darkskins or Lightskins, cultivated much larger areas of land by means of slaves and exported surpluses via the coastal towns to Arab lands. In the case of the Geledi, wealth accrued to the nobles and to the sultan not only from market cultivation but from their involvement in the slave trade and other enterprises, such as ivory, cotton and iron. Generally they also raised cattle.

The sultan of the Geledi (a member of the Darkskin stratum) had a political and religious role. A holder of the sultanate had somewhat greater authority than the sultans of Samaal clans, but their authority was by no means absolute. Nevertheless a strong incumbent of the position (like some of the Geledi sultans in the nineteenth century) could exercise considerable power.

The sociopolitical organization and processes of the Geledi resembled those of many Digil and Rahanweyn communities, but there were probably some differences. Not all such communities had a Lightskin component, and many were not located as auspiciously as the Geledi, for whom trade developed as a major factor in the economy. Most, however, had slaves who worked the land of the nobles.

The sedentary Somali communities (some of which were of Samaal origin) in the coastal and interriverine areas were more strongly affected by the colonial presence than the nomadic pastoralists. Clans, and sometimes large lineages, came to have government chiefs appointed by colonial authorities, sometimes where there had been no chiefs of any kind. In the case of the Geledi, the most important such chief was the sultan.

Whatever his origin, the government-appointed chief was expected to be the intermediary between colonial government and the people. Perhaps more important, first the slave trade and then slavery itself were outlawed, changing not only the lives of the slaves but the situation of the nobles whose economic and political power rested on the slave economy. This was clearly the case among the Geledi and probably in other sedentary communities. In Geledi areas (and elsewhere) many slaves left to take up other land as subsistence cultivators. A few remained, and their descendants maintained a quasi-dependent relationship as clients of their former owners. By the second decade of the twentieth century, nobles had to cultivate their own land for the first time. Neither nobles, *habash*, nor ex-slaves worked voluntarily as wage labor as on the Italian plantations established at that time. Such labor was typically forced by colonial authorities.

Despite this radical change in the social, political, and economic orders, the nobles retained their superior position in Geledi (and probably in other Rahanweyn and Digil) communities. According to Luling, "What accounts for their remaining, though relatively impoverished, still head and shoulders above the...[rest] of

the community is...their sense of their own status: that they ought by rights to have wealth..." That sense disposed them to take advantage of new opportunities for gaining wealth. Such opportunities included paid employment with the Italians or trade in the growing Afgooye market.

The nobles (and less frequently, the *habash*) took advantage of commercial and employment opportunities through the entire colonial period and of educational and political opportunities when they were offered, particularly during the trusteeship period (1950-60). Independence introduced still other changes to which the nobles responded (see Social Change, this ch.).

### **Riverine and Coastal People of Non-Somali Origin**

Along the southern coast, in the valleys of the Juba and Sha-beelle rivers, and in a few places between the rivers live small groups of people—probably totaling less than 2 percent of the population—that differ culturally and physically from the Somalis. Some are descendants of pre-Somali inhabitants of the area who were able to resist absorption or enslavement by the Somalis. The ancestors of others were slaves who escaped to found their own communities or were freed in the course of European antislavery activity in the nineteenth century. The Somali term for these people, particularly the riverine and interriverine cultivators, is *habash*.

The relations of these communities with neighboring Somali groups varied, but most of them were attached in some way to a Somali lineage, and all but a few communities along the coast spoke Somali as a first language. Some *habash* communities had considerable independence. In others *habash* were much like serfs, cultivating land under the patronage of a Somali lineage. In such cases, however, it was understood that they could not be deprived of their land, and there was little reason for the pastoral Somalis to do so. Somalis and *habash* did not intermarry nor would a Somali eat a meal prepared by *habash*. As these restrictions suggest, Somalis—whether Samaal or Sab—considered the *habash* their inferiors. Nevertheless the political relationship of some *habash* groups to neighboring Somali groups was that of near equals.

The attachment of *habash* groups to sections of the Somalis usually entailed the participation of the *habash* community in the *dia*-paying group of their Somali patrons and in the ancient (non-Islamic) religious rites of Somali lineages or clans. Like the Somali, all but a few had been converted to Islam, and some *habash* had become leaders of religious communities in the interriverine area.

Most of the non-Somali peoples were primarily cultivators, but some, like the Eyle, also engaged in hunting (which the Somalis would not do). A few groups, including the Boni, remained

largely or exclusively hunters into the twentieth century and were accordingly looked down on by the Somalis. By midcentury, however, most of these peoples were turning to cultivation, and some had gone into the towns and become laborers.

Along the coast live the Bajuni and Amarani. They are fishermen, sailors, and merchants, derived from a mixture of coastal populations. Their ancestors may include Arab and Persian settlers and seafaring peoples of India and the East Indies. Both speak dialects of Swahili. The Amarani, who were estimated to number fewer than a thousand in the 1960s, inhabit small fishing communities in and near Baraawe, Mogadishu, Marka, and the inland town of Afgooye on the Shabeelle River. The Bajuni inhabit the east African coast and Bajun Islands in a continuous strip from Kismaayo southward into Kenya as far as Lamu, and in scattered communities as far away as Mozambique. Both Amarani and Bajuni had little contact with outsiders except in towns. Partial geographical isolation and an active ethnic consciousness distinguished by differences in language separate them from the Somalis.

### **Specialized Occupational Groups**

Certain occupational groups such as hunters, leatherdressers, and smiths were known as *sab* (low) among the Samaal and as *bon* (low caste) among the Sab. They physically resemble the Somalis, but their ethnic origin is uncertain. Some authorities suggest—and group members believe—that they may be derived from the original population of the land. They speak Somali but they also use what are usually referred to as secret languages, which might better be compared to localized slang or occupational jargon. Differences of custom also distinguished the *sab* from the Somalis.

In the late 1950s when the Somali population was estimated at roughly 2 million, the number of *sab* was estimated at somewhat more than 12,000, i.e., less than 1 percent of the total population. Of these, about three quarters were of the *midgaan* group whose men acted as barbers, circumcisers, and hunters. Less than a quarter of the total were the Tumaal, who were engaged chiefly in metalwork. An even smaller group was the Yibir (Yahhar in the south), who were magicians called upon to make amulets for the newborn, to bless Somali weddings, and act as soothsayers. In return for these services they were given gifts.

Occupational groups had lineages, but these were not usually the foundation for *dia*-paying groups before Somalia's independence. Except perhaps for the Yibir, who moved from one group of Somalis to another, families of occupational specialists were attached to Somali lineages, which acted as their patrons and claimed compensation on their behalf. By the end of the colonial period, change had begun to take place in the political, legal, and social status of these groups, a process that has continued.

## **Social Change**

Although colonial domination had some effects (for example, the formal abolition of slavery) in the pre-World War II era, particularly in the interriverine area, the social and economic orders in which most Somalis lived was not greatly changed. After the war the institution of the trusteeship in the south and greater attention to education in the north gradually led to further change (see *The Colonial Period*, ch. 1).

The late colonial period and the first decade of independence saw the decline, in part legally enforced, of caste-like restrictions and impediments to the equality of *habash* and traditional occupational groups. In the south, although nobles were more likely to take advantage of educational opportunities, increasingly *habash* did so.

The growing importance of manual skills in the modern economy gave some occupational groups an economic (if not immediately a social) advantage. Many Tumaal blacksmiths, for example, became mechanics and settled in towns. In southern port towns, carpenters, weavers, and other artisans (often originating in traditional occupational groups) formed guilds to protect their common interests. As skilled manual work became more available, and some Somalis considered it acceptable work for themselves, there was increasing social acceptance of members of the traditional groups to the point where some intermarriage occurred in the towns. In the rural areas, members of these groups formed their own *dia*-paying units and in a few cases began to take part in the councils of the Somali lineages to which they remained attached. The appellation *midgaan*, referring to the largest of these occupational groups, was considered pejorative and forbidden by law.

Somali leaders made conscious efforts to eliminate the traditional disabilities of low-status groups. In early 1960, just before independence, the legislative assembly of the Italian trust territory abolished the status of client, that is, of those *habash* who were dependent on Somalis for rights to land and water. The law stated that Somali citizens had the right to live and farm where they chose, independent of hereditary affiliation. Patron lineages in the riverine area resisted the change and retaliated against *habash* assertion of their independence by withholding customary farming and watering rights, excluding them from *dia*-paying arrangements and, in some cases, seeking to oust them from the land they had farmed for generations as clients. Some *habash* brought cases in court, seeking to affirm their newly granted rights, but initially many continued the old arrangements. Fragmentary information on developments since the 1960s suggests that clientship diminished in fact as it had been abrogated in law.

While some features of traditional stratification were being eroded, another kind of stratification based on education and command of a foreign language—English or Italian—was emerging in the late colonial period (see Education, this ch.). The rise of a new elite and subelite became even more salient as independence made the highest political and bureaucratic positions available to Somalis. Posts in local and regional government were filled by persons with lesser (but for the Somalia of the 1960s, relatively substantial) educational qualifications. Those who filled the high- and mid-level positions had incomes a good deal greater than most Somalis. In many cases, however, they were the sons of men who had acquired a degree of wealth as landholders, traders, and herders in the colonial period, in part because the costs of secondary education in that era could be met only by relatively well-off parents.

Two somewhat contradictory forces were at work on educated urban Somalis in the 1950s and 1960s. On the one hand their income and education (above all, their literacy in a foreign language) tended to distance them from most other Somalis. On the other hand lineage and clan were still important to most of them as private individuals, and these descent groups acquired a new importance in national politics (see Problems of National Integration, ch.1).

Mixed middle groups arose at the local level, particularly in the larger towns. One part of such groups comprised the representatives of the national government (the subelite)—the district commissioner, the judge, the secretary to the municipality, the subordinates of some of these, teachers, and the national police—all outsiders. The other part consisted of the councillors elected by the community—all local. Some were lineage heads; others were businessmen or had some other basis for their status in the area. Some of the local notables had sons serving as district officials, but such persons were not permitted to serve in their home communities. In Afgooye in which the Geledi, the Wadan (a group of the Hawiye clan-family), and others were represented, the local people and the subelite meshed well at the time Luling studied them in the mid- and late 1960s, but Afgooye was not necessarily representative of local communities in the riverine areas or elsewhere.

Although the social relations of the pastoral Somalis were marked by a fundamental egalitarianism, there has been since the nineteenth century an incipient distinction between the Somalis in nomadic camps (the great bulk of them) and their kinsmen in the towns who acted as middlemen in the livestock trade with Aden. Some of these townsmen became relatively wealthy and

for that reason and because of their wider knowledge of the world may have carried more weight in council.

By the 1960s the demand for livestock in the oil-producing countries had led to a great expansion of the livestock trade through Berbera. Hargeysa and Burao became (and remain) the points from which 150 to 200 major livestock dealers and their agents—all but a few Somalis—operate. The nomadic producers have to a considerable extent directed their activity toward the commercial market, but the traders dominate it, controlling the terms of trade, feed lots, and some of the better grazing land. The government has not interfered; the livestock trade is too important as an earner of foreign exchange, and the traders have been efficient at getting the animals to market.

A new class of merchants, some of them very wealthy, has thus emerged. They apparently retain their connections with their lineages, but their interests are significantly different from that of the nomadic herder. If they are not educated, they try to make sure their children are, a process that makes members of their immediate families eligible for the government elite. There is some competition between livestock traders, but they have common interests that have led them to organize for their realization. The long-run consequences of these developments are uncertain, but a return to the old egalitarianism is unlikely.

After World War II and during the first decade of independence, much was made of the need to replace loyalty to clan and lineage with loyalty to the nation as a whole. The Somali segmentary system was seen as a divisive force, a source of nepotism and corruption, and Somali politicians denounced it as tribalism in the same way that ethnic loyalties were denounced elsewhere in Black Africa. A very few Somalis actually rejected reference to clan and lineage, and nominally clans were ignored as a framework for personal relations. Nevertheless persons meeting for the first time queried each other about their "ex-clans." Clan-families, once functionally unimportant, became increasingly significant as political rallying points, particularly as Somalia approached independence, and they continued to be so in the 1960s.

Smaller units (clans and lineages) remained the basic groups, functioning as regional and local social, political, and economic units. Although the government of independent Somalia was theoretically opposed to the salience of these entities, it continued to appoint and pay lineage heads; lineages and clans were in fact voting units. Supreme Court decisions in 1962 and 1964 effected a major change in the role of the *dia*-paying group. The court's judgments forbade collective payment for premeditated homicide. Payments for unpremeditated homicide and injury, however, were defined as compensation for a tort and were permitted.



In this era, too, the *dia*-paying group's responsibilities were extended to cover death in traffic accidents.

The military leadership that came to power in October 1969 enforced some of the changes initiated but only occasionally implemented by the previous regime. It also introduced new elements that constituted a radical break with the past. Scientific socialism was soon declared to be the new regime's guide and frame of reference (see *The Revolutionary Regime*, ch. 1). Its basic ideas were a pragmatic version of their understanding of Marxism adapted to local social and economic conditions. In this version the notion of the class struggle did not apply; the bourgeoisie was very small, composed of the new elite and subelite (chiefly employed in government), a few traders, and a few professionals. There was no significant proletariat, rural or urban, and no great Somali entrepreneurs or landholders.

In its initial zest for change, the new regime focused on the divisions in Somali society: the cleavages between clans and lineages, the settled and nomadic, strong and weak pastoral lineages that competed by forces for grazing and water, patrons and clients in the cultivating regions, urban and rural dwellers, and on the continuing disdain for those of low status. Clan and lineage affiliations were to be irrelevant to social relations, and pejorative language for specific groups thought inferior to Somalis was forbidden. All Somalis were asked to call each other *jaalle* (comrade), regardless of hereditary affiliation.

Within limits the language of public discourse can be changed by fiat; much pejorative language has been expurgated, at least in its original straightforward form. Nevertheless Somalis continue to learn each other's clan or lineage affiliation when it is useful to do so, as it seems to be in an economy marked by constant shortages, and in private it is not uncommon for Somalis to refer to *habash* by the phrase "kinky hair." The term *jaalle* is widely used in the media and in a range of public situations, but its use cannot be said to reflect a change in world view.

The government also sought to change the actual function of the clans and lineages. The title of elder was abolished and replaced by that of peacekeeper. Peacekeepers were the appointed spokesmen of what were officially regarded as local groups composed of individuals, whether cultivators or pastoralists. Ties of kinship and descent were, in principle, irrelevant to their responsibilities. In the early 1970s collective responsibility (*dia*-payments) in any guise was abolished.

Like almost all governments having substantial numbers of nomads as citizens, the pre- and post-revolutionary regimes were interested in finding ways to settle them, partly because it was considered a way to improve the pastoral economy, partly because

it was easier to control and to provide services for a settled population. Proposals to convert the nomads into ranchers did not get very far in the prerevolutionary era, and in the early 1980s most herders were still nomadic or seminomadic. The drought of 1974 (rather than the spread of revolutionary ideas) did drive large numbers of pastoralists to seek government help; by 1975 roughly 105,000 had been resettled, 90,000 as cultivators and 15,000 as fishermen. Clans were deliberately mixed within the settlements, and the settlers were expected to deal as individuals with local councils, committees, and courts, whose membership was also heterogeneous. Three years later nearly 45 percent of the adult males had left the cultivating settlements, perhaps to pursue herding. Most of those living in fishing communities remained. Neither the farmers nor the fisherman had been economically successful. The forms of social organization and social relations that have emerged in these new communities have not been described. It has been suggested, however, that members of the same lineage or clan seek out each other and build their houses in a specific section of the community.

The dismantling of the *dia* system, the institution of a variety of political and administrative offices intended to do away with power vested in the lineages and clans, and the establishment of committees, councils, cooperatives, and the like were meant to replace the descent group system as ways of organizing political, economic, and social life. For example weddings, burials, and religious rites held on a lineage or clan basis were banned in 1973. Wedding ceremonies were henceforth to be held at orientation centers or other public places. Money could not be collected from lineage members for the burial of a dead member, and the law banned religious rites tied to local traditions. It has been reported that certain ceremonies involving the participation of lineages or clans continue outside Mogadishu and a few other towns (see *Folk Islam and Indigenous Ritual*, this ch.). On these matters and others, however, no studies have been published nor have experienced observers set down their impressions.

Most published observations refer to the continuing role of clan affiliation in national politics. The clan-family, which rose to considerable importance in Somali politics of the 1950s and 1960s, seems to have lost its earlier force as a rallying point. The groups that carried weight or opposed the regime are all of the Darod clan-family: President Mohammed Siad Barre's clan, Marehan; his mother's clan, Ogaden; his son-in-law's clan, Dolbahante; and the opposition clan, Majerteyn. The interriverine sedentary clan-families were apparently omitted from the cabinet in the late 1970s and early 1980s but clan-family relations may not have been responsible for that omission.

There is some anecdotal material on the continuing importance of clan or lineage affiliation in obtaining jobs, services, and favors,

and there are indications that even those who try to ignore clan favoritism as much as possible sometimes find it necessary to use their lineage connections. Here again systematic study of the situation is not available.

The revolutionary regime also addressed the status of women. After World War II all political parties had established women's committees; in the Italian south women had voted for the first time in the 1958 municipal elections, and in the formerly British north in the 1961 national referendum on the constitution. Still their role in public affairs remained minimal, and little was done to change their legal situation.

Under Somali customary law and in practice a woman was under the legal protection of a male—her father or husband, or a kinsman of theirs in the event of their deaths. In blood compensation her life was usually valued at half that of a man. Islamic law permitted daughters to inherit half that inherited by sons, but in Somali practice daughters did not ordinarily share in the inheritance of valued property (camels or land). Few girls were sent to school and even fewer continued beyond the elementary level. Although Somali women lack status and power in the public domain, it has been noted that they had a good deal of influence in the domestic sphere.

The revolutionary government moved quickly to change the legal and political status of women. The question of *dia* payment for injuries to women became, in principle, moot following the formal termination of the traditional system. Soon after the revolution, committees were established to deal with women's affairs, and women were encouraged to take an active part in government, committees, sports, and the like. In early 1975 Siad Barre announced the decision by the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) and the Council of Ministers to give equal rights to women in several respects, including equal inheritance rights, a move that led to protests by some Islamic leaders (see *Challenges to the Regime*, ch. 1). Perhaps more important in the long run was the government's insistence that girls be sent to school, particularly beyond the elementary level.

There were women in visible public posts in Somalia in the early 1980s. For example six of 171 members of the People's Assembly were women. Increasing numbers of girls and young women were going to school at the secondary and university levels, although in the latter case they were likely to be less prepared than the young men, a condition that should change in time. Whether in fact daughters inherit as do sons has not been studied, nor are there useful observations concerning the status of women in daily life.

There have been no published descriptions of developments in the relationships between north and south, pastoral nomadic and settled agricultural peoples, or English-speaking and Italian-speaking Somalis. The categories of Somalis defined by these dis-

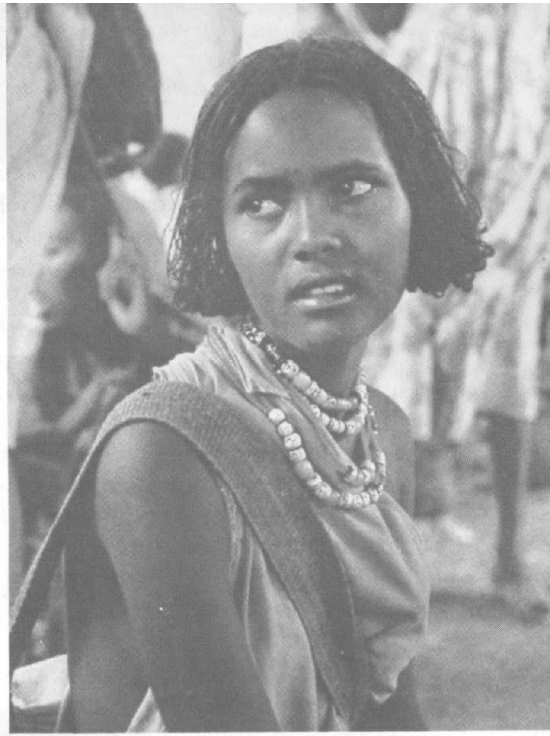
inctions overlapped to a considerable extent. Specifically, Somalis of the interriverine, cultivating clan-families—Rahanweyn and Digil—were southern, and their elites in the prerevolutionary era were likely to be Italian-speaking. In the traditional hierarchy of status, pastoral Somalis looked down on them, and English-speakers seemed to be gaining an advantage in the quest for political and economic opportunities in the 1960s.

The institution of Somali as the official language and the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools presumably reduced the relevance of the distinction between English and Italian speakers. If any advantage still lies with a speaker of a foreign language in the educational field, it may lie with those who are fluent in Italian—at least as long as the Somali National University continues to be staffed largely by Italians, and most of the courses are taught in the language. A greater educational advantage may accrue to the settled peoples, of whatever origin, given that the school system was oriented chiefly to the settled communities, the children of nomads being educated, as of the early 1980s, in a special system (see Education, this ch.).

The Siad Barre government has fostered a flowering of agencies of the state at the national, regional, and local levels. These agencies include economic enterprises that either have come under state control or have been initiated by the regime. The growth of the state apparatus and the socialist orientation of the government notwithstanding, much productive and distributive enterprise—some relatively large-scale in the Somali context—remained in private hands (see Agriculture and Pastoralism, ch. 3). These developments have generated considerable differentiation in income, control of resources (including land), and access to services among Somalis, a process begun before the revolution but intensified since then.

In the rural areas in which 75 to 80 percent of the population still lived in the early 1980s, the process of differentiation and nascent stratification has most affected the sedentary and seminomadic Somalis, particularly those living on and between the Juba and Shabeelle rivers. There is no systematic study of who owns (or has the secure use of) the several kinds of arable land: rainfed, irrigated, and flood land (the latter cultivated after flood recession). Nevertheless it seems fairly clear that much of the irrigated land has been acquired by the government (beginning with the colonial government) or by large-scale private farmers (often Somali successors of Italian or other foreign landholders). In the late 1970s small-scale farmers worked some of the irrigated land and much of the flood land, but if the latter were converted to controlled irrigation, it was likely to come under state control. For the most part, rainfed land cultivation was still in the hands of

*The role of Somali women  
has changed to one of  
greater participation in  
the government's efforts  
to achieve national  
development goals.  
Courtesy Somali Embassy,  
Washington*



traditional smallholders engaged in subsistence farming, some of them gaining the cash they needed by working for state farms. Most extensions of the irrigation system have been oriented to the development of large-scale state farms rather than to benefit the smallholder. Some rural Somalis hold no land at all and rely exclusively on wage labor on state farms and large private holdings (chiefly banana plantations) for a livelihood. It is probable that the mass of Somalis living in the riverine area (and in the far northwest where some cultivation also takes place) are engaged in subsistence cropping combined with herding and, in some cases, wage labor.

Animal husbandry remains primarily in the hands of individual pastoral Somalis. The chief change lies in the readiness of these pastoralists to sell their livestock in response to a substantial overseas demand. Marketing is in the hands of private traders who have accumulated enough capital to construct water storage units and to invest in a transport fleet and who may enclose rangeland to produce hay, thereby excluding Somali herders who had formerly used the land. These traders benefit not only from the government construction of roads and other facilities but also from arrangements whereby their overseas earnings may be used in part to buy imports for private sales in Somalia. There are differences in wealth among the producers of livestock, although the extent to which that wealth can be maintained, given the environmental problems pastoralists face, is problematic. In this

part of rural Somalia, substantial wealth accrues not so much to the producer as to the trader. Whether the traders who have taken advantage of these developments came from families of traders—there have always been some—or emerged from the ranks of pastoralists is not known.

Although there are clearly distinctions of wealth and income among Somalis in the private sphere, those who combine comparatively large incomes with reasonable security are government employees whether administrators, technical personnel, or managers of state-owned enterprises. As under the first independence regime, administrators do not serve in their home territories and are therefore not linked by kinship to the better-off Somalis in the local private sector.

Despite the fluid character of the system and the lack of research that would permit a more precise delineation of its contours, it seems clear that the apex of a local hierarchy in a rural settled area consists of the higher (and to some extent mid-level) representatives of the state. Included are regional and local administrators, managers of state farms and agro-industries, such as the sugar refinery at Jowhar, technicians, and highly skilled workers. Not only do they dispose of relatively high incomes, but they have access to other resources, e.g., they can be reasonably sure that they will be able to see their children through school, which is important in finding a prestigious and remunerative position. In many cases they make the important decisions determining the flow of resources to various elements in the private sector. They therefore exercise not only political but also economic power greater than that of the wealthy merchant or large landholder whose income may be the same or larger. The extent to which these two components of the upper stratum in any settled rural area share the same outlook, are cooperative or antagonistic, and have more significant bonds with extra-stratum persons or groups than with those in the same stratum is not known.

At the other end of the scale, although not necessarily at the bottom of a pyramid, are most rural Somalis, whether sedentary or nomadic. Oriented primarily to subsistence cropping or herding, they nevertheless respond to the market and sell what they can. They have little contact with government, however, and have been relatively untouched by development projects because of their remoteness, lack of government effort to reach them, or their own lack of initiative. The farmers among them cultivate the poorest land and barely earned minimal incomes with wage work. The pastoralists are most affected by the exigencies of a difficult environment. Moreover in the late 1970s and early 1980s, limits imposed on their range of migration by the hostile relations between Somalia and Ethiopia caused further hardship. Whether

lineage remains practically important among these Somalis is yet to be determined, as is the extent to which they maintain ties of some kind with their better-off patrilineal kinsmen.

The other two important categories in the rural areas are the rural workers whose wages derive from state-owned or state-sponsored activities and the landholders or herders who operate on a smaller scale than the plantation owners. The latter are oriented to the market and to any advantages, direct or indirect, that can be gained from government support. Neither of these categories is homogeneous. Wage workers range from landless and relatively unskilled agricultural workers whose income may be intermittent, to low-level workers in government agencies whose income is likely to be steadier and who may be heads of or members of families with subsistence farms or herds. Plots or herds owned by farmers or herders vary considerably in size and quality as does the income derived from them. Nevertheless farmers and herders fare better economically than the mass of subsistence farmers. They also join cooperatives, take advantage of adult education, and participate in government programs that promise to enhance their incomes and the status of the next generation. Members of this category send their children to school and may arrange for some of them to seek more lucrative or status-giving employment in Mogadishu or another town.

Not clearly in any of these categories are the petty traders in the rural areas. Their incomes are not large, but they may equal those of many lower level wage workers and small-scale market-oriented farmers.

In urban areas—particularly in Mogadishu, which is both the national capital and by far the largest town—another pattern of differentiation has developed, related to the one that had emerged in the decade immediately after independence. It has been affected, however, by the growth of government and state controlled enterprises. Unlike the rural pattern, in which the mass base is provided by subsistence farmers and herders having roots in the area, most of the urban population of the early 1980s consists of newcomers, many of whom have migrated in search of economic opportunity.

In this pattern, clearly at the apex of society in Mogadishu (and nationally) because of their incomes and the power they wield, are the highest officials of party and government. In the mid- and late 1970s the salaries and allowances of cabinet ministers were twice that of the next highest officials (the directors general of ministries) and nearly twenty-five times that of the lowest level in the civil service. Below the ministers and directors general but well above the clerks of the bureaucracy were other high-level administrators and the executives and skilled personnel. The

manager of a large state-owned factory earned somewhat less than a minister but more than a director general. He was followed by a department director, who earned a little more than a director general, and then by engineers, other technicians, and senior administrators. An unskilled laborer in a state farm earned less than the lowest level civil servant, but an unskilled worker in a factory earned a little more. All earned only from 5 to 10 percent of a manager's salary.

In the towns as in the rural areas there are substantial numbers of persons involved in the private sector, although there is no clear picture of the ratio of public to private sector employees (and owners) or of the relative income and wealth of those in the private sector. It is possible only to indicate the range of activities and occupations. In some respects the merchants and traders have the deepest urban roots. The bulk of them are petty traders and shopkeepers whose wealth and status are more akin to that of craftsmen than to the wealthier merchants.

In the mid-1970s a census of manufacturing indicated that there were roughly 6,000 enterprises employing five or fewer persons, most of them no doubt family members. Unlike the larger, often foreign-owned industrial concerns, these have not been nationalized. In 1981 enterprises like these must have accounted for a substantial (if minor) proportion of the urban population. Where their owners stand in relation to other urban dwellers with respect to social status, income, and outlook has not been reported.

The great mass of urban dwellers are wage workers, but they have various skills, sources of employment, and incomes. For example low and middle-grade clerks in the government bureaucracy and in state enterprises earn no more (and sometimes less) than skilled artisans in state firms, and both earn perhaps twice as much as an unskilled factory laborer in such firms. The wages of skilled and unskilled workers in private commercial and industrial enterprises were not available for comparison, but it is likely that they were lower. Not available were data on number of workers at specific income levels and in specific occupations or categories of occupations and a systematic appraisal of the prestige accruing to white-collar and manual workers data essential to the construction of a picture of income and occupational stratification.

Descriptions and analyses of the effects of incipient stratification in both rural and urban areas on intra- and inter-lineage relationships and vice versa were lacking. Further, although it seems that the heights of the hierarchies of power, status, and wealth are commanded by those who run (and are employed by) the state, the nature of relations between those at the various levels of the state apparatus and at comparable levels in the pri-





*Townspeople putting a thatched  
roof on a new house  
Courtesy United States International  
Communication Agency*

vate sector has not been analyzed. Of particular interest is the observation that many at the higher levels of government have reacted to the ceilings on their salaries, intended as an egalitarian measure, by engaging (directly or through their close kin) in private enterprise.

### **Religious Life**

The vast majority of Somalis are Muslims. (Less than 1 percent of ethnic Somalis are Christians.) Loyalty to Islam reinforces the

distinctions that set them off from their immediate African neighbors, most of whom either are Christians (particularly the Amhara and others of Ethiopia) or adhere to indigenous African beliefs.

The ideal of Islam is a society organized for the implementation of Islamic precepts in which no distinction between the secular and the religious spheres obtains. Among the Somalis this ideal had been approximated only occasionally—and less fully in the north than among some groups in the settled regions of the south where religious leaders were an integral part of the social and political structure. Among nomads, the exigencies of pastoral life gave greater weight to the warrior's role, and religious leaders were expected to remain aloof from political matters. Generally Somali belief and practice has differed to some extent from that required by Islam, either because ancient Somali ritual has persisted or because Somalis cannot or will not submit to the rigors of Islamic practice. Whatever the discrepancies between the requirements of Islam and Somali practice, their Islamic identity is integral to Somalis' conception of themselves.

The role of religious functionaries began to shrink little by little in the 1950s and 1960s as some of their legal and educational powers and responsibilities were transferred to secular authorities, but their situation changed substantially after the revolution, whose leaders introduced an ideology they called scientific socialism (see Siad Barre and Scientific Socialism, ch. 1). These leaders insisted that their version of socialism was not at odds with Islam but compatible with Quranic principles, and they condemned atheism. Nevertheless they relegated religion to the moral sphere, and religious leaders were warned not to meddle in politics.

The new government instituted changes in law that some religious figures saw as contrary to Islamic precepts. The regime reacted sharply to criticism, executing some of the protestors (see Islam in the Colonial Era and After, this ch.). Subsequently, religious leaders seem to have accommodated themselves to the government, but their private views cannot be known.

### **The Tenets of Islam**

Islam, founded in A.D. 622 when the Prophet Muhammad left Mecca and marched with his followers to Medina, was brought to Somalia by South Arabian merchants and seamen who founded settlements along the Somali coast 1,000 or more years ago (see Coastal Towns, ch. 1). Before Islam reached the Somalis, quarrels over the succession to leadership had led to a split of the Islamic community into Sunnites (traditionalists) and Shiites (from Shiat Ali, or partisans of Ali). All ethnic Somalis are Sunnites.

Islam means submission to God, and a Muslim is one who has submitted. The religion's basic tenet is stated in its creed: "There

is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is His prophet." Recitation of the creed, daily prayers (of which the creed is always a part) performed according to prescribed rules, fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan, almsgiving, and the pilgrimage to Mecca constitute the so-called Five Pillars of the Faith. Four of these duties may be modified by the situation in which believers find themselves. If they are ill, they may pray without prostrations and reduce the number of times they pray from the obligatory five to three. Fasting (going without food, drink, tobacco, and sexual relations from two hours before dawn until sunset) may be omitted during a journey but should be made up for at a later time. Almsgiving and the pilgrimage depend upon one's ability to afford them.

The basic teaching of Islam is embodied in the Quran, believed to have been given to Muhammad by God through the angel Gabriel. After Muhammad's death his followers sought to regulate their lives scrupulously by his divinely inspired works; if the Quran did not cover a specific situation, they turned to the hadith (remembered doings and sayings of the Prophet). Together, the Quran and the hadith form the sunna (tradition), a comprehensive guide to the spiritual, ethical, and social life of Muslims.

Islamic law (sharia) derives from the Quran, the hadith, and from a large body of interpretive commentary which developed centuries ago. Several schools of legal thought developed, among them the Shafii school, which is represented in Somalia. The sharia covers a number of categories of behavior: obligatory actions, desirable or recommended actions, indifferent actions, objectionable but not forbidden actions, and prohibited actions. The Five Pillars of the Faith would be in the first category; night-long prayer and watching in the second, and many ordinary secular activities in the third. Divorce is in the objectionable but permitted category, whereas adultery and other sins are prohibited.

Both settled and nomadic Somalis tend to conform to Muslim requirements for ritual purity, e.g., washing after contact with unclean things and after specific activities. Some settled Somalis, particularly in communities founded by religious orders, are more likely to observe Islamic requirements than are nomads. For example Muslims may omit (or put off) certain duties while traveling, and nomads may take advantage of this permission, although their laxity may arise from lack of instruction. Ordinary settled Somalis were also likely to pay less attention to religious observance by the 1960s. Luling (cited by David Laitin) states that only a few devout Somalis in Afgooye said their daily prayers regularly. Devout Somalis (and others who value the title of haji—pilgrim—for its prestige) may make the pilgrimage to Mecca, but many more to go to the tombs of the local saints (see Religious Orders and the Cult of the Saints, this ch.).

### **Religious Roles in Somali Islam**

In Islam there are no priests who are intermediaries between the believer and God, but there are religious teachers, preachers, and mosque officials. In Somalia religious training is most readily available in urban centers or wherever mosques exist. These children learn to memorize parts of the Quran, often without understanding what they have memorized, in part because many of their teachers do not understand it either. It is customary for some teachers to travel on foot from place to place with their novices, depending on the generosity of others for their living. The teachers serve the community by preaching, leading prayers, blessing the people and their livestock, counseling, arbitrating disputes, and performing marriages. Few are deeply versed in Islam, and they rarely stay with one lineage long enough to teach more than rudimentary religious principles.

In the absence of a wandering teacher, nomads depend on a person associated with religious devotion, study, or leadership, called *wadad* (pl. *wadaddo*). The *wadaddo* constitute the oldest stratum of literate people in Somalia. They function as basic teachers and local notaries as well as judges and authorities in religious law. They are rarely theologians; some are active members of a religious brotherhood, or belong to a lineage with a strong religious tradition. In the latter case they were not necessarily trained but were nevertheless entitled to lead prayers and to perform ritual sacrifices at weddings, on special holidays, and during festivals held at the tombs of saints.

### **Religious Orders and the Cult of the Saints**

Somali Islam is marked by the significance of religious orders (*turuq*; sing. *tariqa*, meaning way or path). The rise of these orders was connected with the development of Sufism, a mystical current in Islam that began during the ninth and tenth centuries and reached its height during the twelfth and thirteenth. In Somalia Sufi orders made their appearance for the first time in towns during the fifteenth century and rapidly became a revitalizing force. Sufism seeks a closer personal relationship to God through special spiritual disciplines. Escape from self is aided by poverty, seclusion, and other forms of self-denial. Members of Sufi orders are commonly called dervishes, from a Persian word perhaps denoting a mendicant. Leaders of branches or congregations of these orders are given the Arabic title "sheikh," a term usually reserved for such leaders or others learned in Islam and rarely applied to ordinary *wadaddo*.

Dervishes tend to wander from place to place as religious beggars and teachers. They are best known for their often spectacular ceremonies, called *dikr* (from the Arabic *dhikr*—meaning testifying or remembrance) in which states of visionary ecstasy are

brought on by group chanting of religious texts, by rhythmic gestures, dancing, and deep breathing. The object is to free oneself from the body and to be lifted into the presence of God. Dervishes have been important as founders of agricultural communities, called *jamaha*. A few of these contain only celibate men, but usually they are inhabited by families; specific regulations of behavior are applied to women. Most Somalis are nominally members of Sufi orders, attending services in mosques of the order with which they are affiliated, visiting the tombs of saints connected with that order, and so on. In fact few undergo the rigors of complete devotion to the religious life, even for a short time.

Three Sufi orders with various subdivisions are prominent in Somalia. In order of their introduction into the country they are the Qadiriya, the Ahmadiya-Idrisiya, and the Salihya. The Rifaiya, an offshoot of the Qadiriya, is represented mainly among Arabs resident in Mogadishu.

Qadiriya, the oldest order in Islam, was founded in Baghdad by Sayyid Abd al Kadir al Jilani in A.D. 1166 and introduced into Harer (Ethiopia) in the fifteenth century. It spread during the eighteenth century among the Oromo and Somalis of Ethiopia, often under the leadership of Somali sheikhs. Its earliest known leader in northern Somalia was Sheikh Abdarahman al Zeilawi, who died in 1883. At that time Qadiriya adherents were merchants in the ports and elsewhere. In an apparently separate development the Qadiriya order was also introduced into the southern Somali port cities of Baraawe and Mogadishu at an uncertain date. In 1819 Sheikh Ibrahim Hassan Jebro acquired land on the Juba River and established a religious center in the form of a farming community, the first of the *jamaha* in Somalia.

Outstanding figures of the Qadiriya in Somalia include Sheikh Awes Muhammad Barawi (died 1909), who spread the teaching of the order in the southern interior. He wrote a great deal of devotional poetry in Arabic and also attempted to translate traditional hymns from Arabic into Somali, working out his own phonetic system. Another was Sheikh Abd ar Rahman Abdallah of Mogadishu, who stressed deep mysticism rather than teaching; a literary figure and an amateur astrologer, he attempted a series of prophecies on the future of the city. His reputation for sanctity caused people from a wide area to seek him out. His tomb at Mogadishu is a pilgrimage center for the Shabeelle area, and his writings are still circulated by his followers.

The Ahmadiya-Idrisiya order, founded by Sayyid Ahmad ibn Idris al Fasi (1760-1837) of Mecca, was brought to Somalia by Sheikh Ali Maye Durogba of Marka. A distinguished poet who joined the order during a pilgrimage to Mecca, his visions and reported miracles gained him a great reputation for sanctity, and his tomb became a place for pilgrimage. The Ahmadiya-Idrisiya, which has the smallest number of adherents of the three orders,

has few ritual requirements beyond a few simple prayers and hymns. During its ceremonies, however, participants attain spectacular states of trance.

A conflict over the leadership of the Ahmadiya-Idrisiya among its Arab founders led to the establishment of the Salihiya in 1887 by Muhammad ibn Salih. The order spread first among the Somalis of the Ogaden area of Ethiopia, entering Somalia from there about 1880. The most active proselytizer was Sheikh Muhammad Guled ar Rashidi, who became a regional leader. He settled among the Shidle (Bantu speakers occupying the middle reaches of the Shabeelle River) where he obtained land and established a *jamaha*. Later he founded another among the Ajuran (a section of the Hawiye clan-family) and then returned to establish still another community among the Shidle before he died in 1918. Perhaps the best known of the Salihiya leaders in Somalia was Mohamed ibn Abdullah Hassan, leader of a long lasting resistance to the British and what he saw as errant Somalis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (see Mohamed Abdullah, ch. 1).

Generally both Salihiya and Ahmadiya-Idrisiya leaders have been more interested in the establishment of *jamaha* along the Shabeelle and Juba rivers and the fertile land between them than in teaching because few were learned in Islam. Their early work establishing farming communities had some importance, however. They not only cultivated and harvested cooperatively but developed some effective agricultural methods. In Somalia's riverine region, for example, only *jamaha* members thought of stripping the brush from areas around their fields to reduce the breeding places of tsetse flies.

Local leaders of brotherhoods customarily asked lineage heads in the areas where they wished to settle for permission to build their mosques and communities. A piece of land was usually freely given; often it was an area between two clans or one in which nomads had access to a river. The presence of a *jamaha* not only provided a buffer zone between two hostile groups or consisted of land with controversial title, but caused the givers to acquire merit and a blessing since the land was considered given to God. Tenure was a matter of charity only, however, and sometimes became precarious in case of disagreements. No statistics were available in the 1970s on the number of such settlements, but twenty years earlier there were more than ninety in the south, having a total of about 35,000 members. Most were in the Bakool, Gedo, and Bay regions or along the middle and lower Shabeelle River. There were few *jamaha* in other regions because climatic and soil conditions did not encourage agricultural settlements.

Membership in a brotherhood is theoretically a voluntary matter unrelated to kinship. Lineages, however, are often affiliated with a specific brotherhood and, generally, a man joins his father's



*Aerial view of downtown Mogadishu; Four Corner Mosque (Arbaca Rukun) in foreground*

order. Initiation is followed by a formal ceremony during which the order's particular dīkr is celebrated. Novices swear to accept the head of the branch as their spiritual guide.

Each order has its own hierarchy that is supposed to be a substitute for the kin group from which the members have separated themselves. Previous heads of the order known as the Chain of Blessing (*silsilad al baraka*) are cherished rather than ancestors. This is especially true in the south where residence tends to be more important than descent.

Leaders of orders and their branches and of specific congregations are said to have *baraka*, a state of blessedness implying an inner spiritual power that is inherent in the religious office and may cling to the tomb of a revered leader who, upon death, is considered a saint. Some saints, however, are venerated because

of their religious reputations whether or not they led or were associated with an order or one of its communities. Sainthood has also been ascribed to others simply because of their status as founders of clans or large lineages. Northern pastoral nomads are likely to honor lineage founders as saints; sedentary Somalis revere saints for their piety and baraka.

Because of the spiritual presence of the saint at his tomb, pilgrims journey there to seek aid (such as a cure for illness or infertility). Members of the saint's order also visit the tomb, particularly on the anniversary of the saint's birth and death.

### **Folk Islam and Indigenous Ritual**

The Somalis have interpreted or modified much of Islam in terms of their pre-Islamic heritage and their particular situation. The social significance of the idea of baraka is a case in point. It is considered a gift of God to the founders and heads of Sufi orders who also inherit it through their personal genealogies going back to Muhammad. It is likewise associated with secular leaders and their clan genealogies.

A leader has power to bless, in some cases even to perform miracles and bring good luck to his people, but his baraka may have potentially dangerous side effects. His curse is greatly feared and his power may harm others. When a leader of a clan or strong lineage visits that of another, it is customary for the host's relative to receive him first in order to draw off some of the power so that his own chief may not be injured.

The traditional learning of a *wadad* includes a form of folk astronomy or astrology based on actual stellar movements and related to the changes of the seasons. Its primary objective is to signal the times for migration, but it may also be used for other predictions such as determining the dates of rituals that are specifically Somali (and not Muslim). It is also used in connection with ritual and magical methods of healing and averting misfortune as well as for divination.

*Wadaddo* help avert misfortune in other ways. For example they make protective amulets and charms that transmit some of their own baraka to others, or they add the Quran's baraka to the amulet in the form of a written passage. The baraka of a saint may be obtained in the form of an object that has touched or been laid near his tomb.

*Wadaddo* may use their power to curse as a sanction. Occasionally they are suspected of misusing this power against rivals. Generally, however, misfortune is not attributed to curses or witchcraft, nor is it considered a special punishment from God; man's basic sinfulness would then make misfortune a permanent condition. Somalis have accepted the orthodox Muslim view that a man's conduct will be judged in an afterlife. It is thought,



however, that a person who behaves in a shockingly antisocial manner, as in committing patricide, is possessed of supernatural evil powers.

Despite formal Islam's uncompromising monotheism, Muslims everywhere believe in the existence of mortal spirits (jinn), said to be descended from Iblis, a spirit fallen from heaven. Most Somalis consider all spirits to be evil, unbelieving, and a source of difficulties, but some think that there are believing and benevolent spirits. Somalis have accepted the Arabic notion of jinn, but they lay greater practical and ceremonial stress on spirits of their own pre-Islamic traditions. Sometimes, however, they identify indigenous spirits with jinn.

Certain kinds of illness, including tuberculosis and pneumonia or symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, vomiting, and loss of consciousness, are believed to come from spirit possession. The *wadaddo* of the spirit world who attack without reason are said to be involved. The condition is treated by a human *wadad*, preferably one who has recovered from the sickness. He reads portions of the Quran over the patient and bathes him with perfume, which in Somalia is associated with religious celebrations.

Although there is scriptural support for the existence of jinn, and the spirit *wadaddo* are considered to be in the same category, many Somalis regard the belief in spirit possession as superstition. This is especially so in the case of possession by the *zar* (a spirit). This form of possession and the ceremony of exorcism used to treat it are sometimes referred to as the "cult of the *zar*." The cult in various forms is found in Ethiopia among the Amhara and some Oromo. The victims are women with grievances against their husbands. The symptoms are extreme forms of hysteria and fainting fits.

The exorcism ritual is conducted by a woman who has had the disease and is thus supposed to have some authority over the spirit. The ritual consists of a special type of dance in which the victim and others participate. The victim tends to reproduce the symptoms and fall into a trance during the dance. The illness enables a disgruntled wife to express her hostility without actually quarreling with her husband. Moreover there is always the threat that the attack may recur. If this happens too often, however, the husband may suspect that the agent is an old woman whose malicious suggestions have brought on the condition. In the colonial era the religious authorities disapproved of *zar* dances and had them banned in many districts.

A third kind of spirit possession is known as *gelid* (entering), in which the spirit of an injured person troubles the offender. A jilted girl, for example, cannot openly complain if a promise of marriage, arranged by the respective families, has been broken. Only her spirit, entering the young man who was supposed to marry her and stating the grievance, brings the matter into the

open. The exorcism consists of readings from the Quran and commands from a *wadad* that the spirit leave the afflicted person.

The same type of possession is thought to be caused by the curse or evil power of a poor and helpless person who has been injured. The underlying notion is that those who are weak in worldly matters are mystically endowed. Such persons are supposed to be under the special protection of God, and kind acts toward them bring religious merit, whereas unkind acts bring punishment. The evil eye, too, is associated with poor unfortunates, especially women, but also with covetousness in a way that suggests the European medieval idea of a witch. It is consistent with this attitude that the Yibir, who are the least numerous and the weakest of the special occupational groups and traditionally the least acceptable socially, are the most feared for their supernatural powers.

Somalis also engage in rituals that seem to derive from pre-Islamic practices and in some cases resemble that of other Eastern Cushitic-speaking peoples. Perhaps the most important of these were the annual celebrations of the clan ancestor among northern Somalis—an expression of their solidarity—and the collective rain-making ritual (*roobdoon*) held by sedentary groups in the south.

### **Islam in the Colonial Era and After**

Islamic law has its origin in prophecy and revelation. In principle, religious officials have the duty to ascertain the precise will of God by interpreting the Quran and the hadith. Ingrained in Islam is a certain inflexibility that has made it difficult to cope with the social, economic, and political changes beginning with the expansion of colonial rule in the late nineteenth century.

Nevertheless adaptations have taken place, often without direct reference to the relation of those changes to the apparent requirements of Islam. Some, however, have sought in Islam sanctions for change they have thought desirable or necessary and have found them. As in any long-lived and widespread religion, interpretations of scripture may vary. In the Somali context none have rejected Islam, despite quite varied responses to the impact of colonialism, independence, and revolution.

One response was to stress a return to orthodox Muslim traditions and to oppose Westernization totally. The Sufi brotherhoods were in the forefront of this movement, personified in Somalia by Mohamed Abdullah, the noted early nationalist. Generally the leaders of Islamic orders, fearing a weakening of their authority, tended to oppose the spread of Western education.

Another response was to reform Islam by reinterpreting it in modern terms. Those responding in this way pointed out that early Islam was a protest against abuse, corruption, and inequalities, and they attempted to prove that Muslim scriptures contained all the elements needed to deal with the forces of modernization.

To this school of thought belongs Islamic socialism, identified particularly with Egypt's late Gamal Abdul Nasser. His ideas appealed to a number of Somalis, especially those who had studied in Cairo in the 1950s and 1960s.

The constitution of 1961 guaranteed freedom of religion but also declared the newly independent republic an Islamic state. The public course followed by the first two governments was vaguely defined as following the principles of Islamic socialism. The coup of October 21, 1969, installed a radical regime committed to deep-rooted changes. Shortly afterward *Stella d' Ottobre*, the official mouthpiece of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), published an editorial that dealt with the relations between Islam and socialism and with the differences between scientific and Islamic socialism. Islamic socialism, it said, had become a servant of capitalism and neocolonialism and a tool manipulated by a privileged, rich, and powerful class. In contrast scientific socialism had the same altruistic values that inspired genuine Islam. Religious leaders should therefore leave secular affairs to the new leaders, secure in the knowledge that they were striving for goals that conformed to Islamic principles. Those who attacked scientific socialism were actually opposing Islam itself, the editorial argued. A short time later a number of protesting religious leaders were arrested and accused of counterrevolutionary propaganda and of conniving with reactionary elements in the Arabian Peninsula. Several members of religious tribunals were dismissed for corruption and incompetence.

When the Three Year Plan 1971-1973 was launched in January 1971, the SRC leaders felt compelled to win the active support of religious leaders for the transformation of the existing social structure of which these leaders were an integral part. "A good Muslim must espouse scientific socialism because of its goals of justice, equality, and plenty for all," said a member of the SRC in a February interview. "Who is against scientific socialism is against the only system compatible with our religion," proclaimed *Stella d'Ottobre* in March.

On September 4, 1971, more than a hundred religious teachers were assembled in the capital and exhorted by Siad Barre to participate actively in the building of a new socialist society. He criticized their method of teaching in the Quranic schools and said that some of them used religion as a source of personal profit.

The campaign for scientific socialism and, parallel to it, the attack on what the regime referred to as the traditional upper classes (including the religious leaders) intensified in 1972. On the occasion of Id al-Adha (the most important Islamic festival of the year in January), the president defined scientific socialism as half practical work and half ideological beliefs. He declared that work

and belief were entirely compatible with genuine Islam because the Quran condemned exploitation and moneylending and urged compassion, unity, and cooperation among fellow Muslims. But he stressed the distinction between religion as an ideological instrument for the manipulation of power and as a moral force. He condemned the antireligious attitude of confirmed Marxists. Religion, he said, was an integral part of the Somali world view, but it belonged in the private sphere whereas scientific socialism dealt with material concerns such as poverty. Religious leaders should exercise their moral influence but refrain from interfering in political or economic matters. In the years since that time, the compatibility of Islam and scientific socialism has been reiterated in print and orally. For example in 1980 Somalia's English-language newspaper *Heegan* carried an editorial essentially on that point.

In 1973 the National Adult Education Center in Mogadishu began a training program for Quranic teachers. After one session in July the press reported that the sixty participants had accepted the truth of scientific socialism and had promised to pray for its success henceforth. Whether they did this out of conviction, out of opportunism, or out of a deep-seated feeling that scientific socialism represented only a short-lived threat to their ancient religion it is not possible to say.

In early January 1975, Siad Barre, recalling the message of equality, justice, and social progress contained in the Quran, announced a new family law that gave women the right to inherit equally with men. The occasion was the twenty-seventh anniversary of the death of a national heroine, Hawa Othman Tako, who had been killed in 1948 during political demonstrations. Apparently this was seen by some Somalis as proof that the SRC wanted to undermine the basic structure of Islamic society. In Mogadishu twenty-three religious leaders protested inside their mosques. They were arrested within hours and charged with acting at the instigation of a foreign power and with violating the security of the state. Ten of them were executed on January 23. Most religious leaders, however, kept silent. The government has continued to organize "training courses...for our sheikhs from time to time, thus keeping them abreast of development," according to *Heegan*. There have been no clear public signs of opposition by religious leaders since the mid-1970s, but their private views have not been reported. One observer, Somali historian Abdi Sheik-Abdi, has suggested that the regime remains skeptical of religious leaders.

## **Education**

Few educational facilities and opportunities were available to Somalis in the colonial era, although the British and Italian authorities paid more attention to education in the last decade before independence. The prerevolutionary independence government

made relatively little progress in the field from 1960 to 1969. Unlike many other new African states it did not assign a very high priority to education in the Western mode, and it was not initially pushed to do so. Until well after World War II there was not a strong demand for secular education from the nomadic majority; indeed many of them and some of the sedentary minority considered such education an attack on Islam. Many sedentary Somalis, however, were receptive to educational opportunities in the trusteeship era. The existence of two official languages—English and Italian—and a third—Arabic, widely revered as the language of the Quran if not so widely used and understood—posed problems for a uniform educational system and for easy training in literacy at the primary school level.

Although the speakers of one Somali dialect may have initial difficulty in understanding the speakers of another dialect, Somali is a single language spoken by the vast majority of Somali nationals. For a number of political and religious reasons, however, agreement on an orthography for Somali could not be reached, and the prerevolutionary government was unwilling to risk a decision in favor of one of the several orthographies that were available.

The revolutionary government considered education crucial to Somali economic and social development; moreover it was prepared to impose an existing orthography (devised many years earlier by a Somali), and it did so in 1972. By 1974 and 1975 a mass literacy campaign was undertaken. The development of education and literacy has not been easy, however. The demands placed on Somalia's extremely limited resources by drought and war have limited the funds available for education. Nevertheless enrollment has grown substantially; materials in Somali for use in the schools and elsewhere have been developed, and the language itself has been adapted for use in technical and scientific fields.

### **Language and Communication**

Except for a few communities along the southern Somali coast where dialects of Swahili (a Bantu language) and Arabic are spoken, Somali nationals (including persons of non-Somali origin) speak one or the several dialects of Somali. Somali is a member of a set of languages called lowland Eastern Cushitic spoken by peoples living in Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Eastern Cushitic is one section of the Cushitic language family, which in turn part of the great Afro-Asiatic stock.

Of the several Somali dialects the most widely used is Common Somali, a term applied to a number of subdialects, the speakers of which seem to be able to understand each other easily. Common Somali is spoken in most of Somalia and in adjacent territories (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti), and it is used by broadcasting

stations in Somalia and in Somali-language broadcasts originating outside the country. Coastal Somali is spoken on the Benadir Coast (From Cadale to south of Baraawe) and its immediate hinterland. Central Somali is spoken in the interriverine area, chiefly by members of the Rahanweyn clan-family. Speakers of Common and Coastal Somali are said to be able to understand each other after a few weeks of close contact, speakers of Common and Central Somali only after a few months.

Facility with speech has been highly valued in Somali society; the capability of a suitor, a warrior, or a political or religious leader has been judged, at least in part, by his adroitness in the use of words. In such a society oral poetry was well developed, and a person's ability to compose verse in one or more of its several forms enhanced his status. Oral skills have not lost their importance. In the conflict between the regime and its opponents, both sides have mobilized poets in what Sheikh Abdi has called their radio war.

In the traditional social order (and probably still in local communities and small groups) the art of negotiation involved the careful use of language. Because pride is important in Somali society, a blunt request or a blunt refusal that might lead to loss of face by either party was to be avoided. For example one seeking another's cooperation in a project and not wishing to make an issue of it approached the subject indirectly to discover the other's probable attitude. If it were unfavorable he might have refrained from asking the favor in order to avoid a direct rejection. The other, in trying to sound out the first person's intent, would try to reply in a way that gave the correct impression. Traditionally all serious negotiation was carried on in this way. The avoidance of direct confrontation was consistent with a social order in which most important decisions were made and disputes resolved not by a person in a position of authority but by agreement among equals.

Humor is important as a means of softening criticism or unpalatable advice or of extricating oneself from embarrassing situations. Most Somali humor is based on puns, plays on words, and the manipulation of shades of meaning.

Speakers in political or religious assemblies and litigants in courts traditionally were expected to ornament speech by appropriate use of poetry or poetic proverbs. Even everyday talk tended to be marked by a terse, vivid poetic style, characterized by carefully chosen words, condensed meaning, and alliteration.

The extent to which egalitarian, nonconfrontational communication persists in the political domain is not certain. The government of Siad Barre has been authoritarian in character, but the nature of the interplay between traditional Somali style and that authoritarianism has not been closely examined.

Until the establishment of the Somali script in 1972, there were two languages of government—English and Italian. In the prerevolutionary era, English became increasingly dominant in the school system and in government, leading to a degree of conflict between elites from northern and southern Somalia (see *The Language and Literacy Issue*, ch. 1). The important issue was the development of a socioeconomic stratum based on mastery of a foreign language. The relatively small proportion of Somalis (less than 10 percent) who had a grasp of such a language—preferably English—had access to positions in government and the few managerial or technical jobs in modern private enterprises. Such persons became increasingly remote from their nonliterate Somali-speaking brethren whether in the towns or the rural areas, but because the secondary schools and most government posts were in urban areas the socioeconomic and linguistic distinction was in good part a rural-urban one. To some extent it was also a north-south distinction as those educated in the Italian system and even in Italian universities found it increasingly difficult to reach the higher levels of government.

Even before the revolution, Somalis had become aware of and publicly decried social stratification and the growing distance, based on differences in language and literacy, between ordinary Somalis and those in government. The decision in 1972 to make official a Somali script and its use in government demolished the language barrier and an important obstacle to a rapid growth in the literacy rate.

Several steps have been undertaken in the years since the institution of the Somali script, among them the early requirement that Somali officials learn the script and the attempt to inculcate mass literacy—in 1973 among urban and rural sedentary Somalis, in 1974–75 among the nomads. The long-term effects of the mass literacy campaigns of the mid-1970s are problematic, however (see *The Schooling of Somalis*, this ch.). Even before 1972 a few texts and manuals had been prepared in the new script, and this process has continued. In most cases wholly new texts were prepared, focusing on Somali experience and presenting the government's perspective on Somali history and development. In others, materials were translated from European sources. Closely related to the publication of printed matter in virtually all fields was the development of a vocabulary to deal with a range of subjects from mathematics and physics to administration and ideology, a task accomplished by Somali scholars with an extraordinary degree of success. In many cases they have adapted Somali terms to new uses. In others they have converted words in international use, e.g., atom, to Somali *atom*.

By the late 1970s a sufficient quantity of materials in Somali were available to permit the language to be the medium of in-

struction at all school levels below the university. There, because Italians dominated the senior faculty, Italian was still in use, although some texts had been translated into Somali and some lectures were given in that language. Hussein Adam, Dean of the Social Sciences at the Somali National University, wrote in 1978 that "...by 1981, a predominantly Somali-language freshman class will enter the SNU [Somali National University]. Plans are under way to Somalize the university as best as possible." That class would have been educated in Somali through secondary school, and students would have been familiar with other tongues only as second languages. Of these Arabic was said to have been taught to all students beginning at the elementary level and continuing into the secondary phase. English was offered as a subject. Students entering the university were first given a course in Italian.

### **The Schooling of Somalis**

The relative lack of direction in educational policy in the pre-revolutionary period was replaced under the SRC by the enunciation in the early 1970s of several definite goals reflecting the philosophy of the revolutionary regime. Among these goals were the expansion of the school system to accommodate the largest possible number of students, including a substantial increase in the number of girls; the introduction of courses geared to the country's social and economic requirements; the expansion of technical education; and the provision of higher education within Somalia so that most of the students who went on to advanced studies would acquire their knowledge in a Somali context. Also announced was the intention to eliminate illiteracy. All of these efforts depended on the introduction of an orthography for Somali, which was to become the language of instruction through the secondary level and to the greatest feasible extent at the university level. A considerable degree of success with respect to all of these goals had been achieved by 1980, although much remained to be done as indicated in the presentation of Somalia's program (and hopes) for education in the 1980s at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (January 1981).

In 1981 the Somali school system had four basic levels—preprimary, primary, secondary, and higher. All but the first of these, however, were divided into sublevels or separate streams or both. All schools were directly under government control, private schools having been nationalized in 1972 and Quranic education made an integral part of existing schools in the late 1970s.

The preprimary training given by Quranic schools remained a part of the educational scene until the late 1970s. Quranic teachers traveled with nomadic groups, and many children received only the education offered by such teachers. There were a num-





*Literacy among Somalis has risen as a result of classes in rural areas that provide instruction in the use of the Somali language.  
Courtesy United Nations*

ber of fixed religious schools in the urban areas as well. The decision to bring Islamic education more firmly into the national system reflected a long-standing concern by some that the Qur'anic learning imparted by most teachers was rudimentary at best and generally inadequate. But the change may have also reflected a wish to institute tighter government control over what was an autonomous source of perspective and information.

Until the mid-1970s primary education consisted of four years of elementary schooling followed by four grades designated as intermediate. In 1972 promotion to the intermediate grades was made automatic (a competitive examination had been required until that year). The two cycles have subsequently been treated as a single continuous program, although some government statistical data distinguishes the first four from later years in the primary

system. In 1975 universal primary education was established in principle, and primary education was reduced to six years. By the end of the school year 1978-79, however, it appeared that the system was not working, and the eight-year primary school was reintroduced.

The primary system is intended to be universal, and there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of students enrolling each year, beginning in 1969-70, but particularly after 1975-76 (see table 3, Appendix). Primary schooling should begin at age six, but data from the late 1970s suggest that many children begin at ages seven through nine or even later. At that time, however, schooling of some kind had only recently become accessible to much of the rural population, and it is likely that children will enter primary school earlier as time goes on. Despite the increase in numbers it is clear that many, especially girls, do not go to school, and that some drop out, particularly after they have completed four years. Although many Somalis see some point in an elementary education for girls, they are not persuaded that it must continue beyond the age of menstruation, which it is likely to do if they do not begin schooling until the age of eight or nine.

In 1981 Somalia's presentation to the UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries stated that the nomadic population was omitted "from the formal education program for the purposes of forecasting primary education enrollment." In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a three-year educational program for nomadic children. For six months of each year (when seasonal conditions permitted the aggregation of substantial numbers of nomads) the children were sent to school. For the remaining six months, when nomads were dispersed, they accompanied their families. Nomadic families that wanted their children to attend a school throughout the year had to arrange to board them in a permanent settlement, sometimes at a considerable cost.

There is little information on the content of the primary school curriculum. In addition to training in reading and writing (made much easier by the use of the Somali script) and arithmetic, the teaching of which draws upon some novel techniques, social studies courses are offered, using new textbooks that apparently focus on Somali materials and contexts. How much scientific socialism was inculcated at this level in the early 1980s is not clear. Arabic was to be taught as a second language beginning in primary school, but it was doubtful that there were enough Somalis able to teach it beyond the rudimentary level. Another goal, announced in the mid-1970s, was to acquaint the students with some modern knowledge of agriculture, animal husbandry, and other useful skills. It was not expected, however, that primary school graduates would be in a position to earn a living at a skilled trade.

In the school year 1978-79 the number of students enrolled in secondary schools was only 7 percent of the total in primary

schools, a function of the constraints of lack of teachers and materials, and demography. Despite the growth in the number of secondary schools, most were still in urban areas, and given the rural and largely nomadic nature of the population, they were necessarily boarding schools. Further if Somali was to be used at the secondary level, the teachers had to be Somalis, and training a sufficient number of them would take time. Presumably the ratio of secondary to primary school students will grow as the flow of primary school graduates becomes more regular. Until the late 1970s a rather large proportion of those who had finished eight years of primary school did go on to secondary education of some kind. In the mid-1970s there was considerable interest in developing technical and vocational schools as alternatives to the standard four-year general secondary school, but there was no definite information on the kinds of courses (and their duration) taken by secondary students. Beginning in the 1980-81 school year, however, a formula for the allocation of postprimary students was to be put into effect. It was assumed that 80 percent of all primary school graduates would go on to further education. Of those who do, 30 percent would go to the four-year course of general secondary education, 17.5 percent to either three- or four-year courses in technical education, and 52.5 percent to vocational courses of one to two years duration. The criteria governing the allocation were not known.

The principal institution of higher education was Somali National University, founded in 1970. Its physical plant in Mogadishu was still being developed, and its programs expanded in the early 1980s. Nine faculties had been in place for some time: law, education, economics, the sciences, agriculture, veterinary sciences, engineering, geology, and medicine. Added in the late 1970s were the faculty of languages and the combination of journalism and Islamic studies. Still others were proposed, among them a faculty of marine sciences. The College of Education, which prepares secondary schoolteachers in a two-year program, is part of the university, but the faculty of education has other programs including a division of social sciences.

There were about 3,600 students in the various faculties of the university in the early 1980s, but it is not known whether all were engaged in a continuous program leading to a degree or other formal qualification. The Somali presentation to the UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries noted that "there are dropouts in appreciable numbers in between the course years. Compared to the intake, the output tends to be small...It has not been possible to work out an average...of dropouts and those finally qualifying. No attempt has...been made...to arrive at the total enrollment in each year." About 700 students were admitted

to the university each year in the late 1970s—roughly 15 percent of those completing the general secondary course and the four-year technical course. Despite the frequency of dropouts (for which no explanation has been offered), the country's needs and the demand from prospective students has led the authorities to project an intake of roughly 25 percent of general and technical secondary graduates.

Given the comparative lack of reading and research materials in Somali at the university level and the relatively few Somalis educated to the level required for university teaching, most university courses were conducted in Italian. Some courses in Somali language and literature were held in Somali, and a few used Arabic. The senior professors were, with few exceptions, expatriates, but a number of the junior teaching staff members were Somalis. It was proposed in the late 1970s to establish a master's degree program in several subjects in order to provide university teaching staff and research personnel, but the program did not get underway in 1979 as it was to have done. The Ministry of Culture and Higher Education intended to begin it in the 1981–82 academic year when a little more than fifty students were to be admitted to it.

In 1981 there were also a number of institutes admitting secondary school graduates. Among them were schools for nursing, veterinary science, and telecommunications and a polytechnic institute. The numbers enrolled and the duration of the courses are not known.

In addition to the standard system encompassing primary through tertiary education, there were several programs directed to adults and women. Of particular importance was the adult education program intended to extend and consolidate the literacy of Somalis. The Somali government had claimed 60 percent literacy after the mass literacy campaign of the mid-1970s, but by early 1977 there were already signs of relapse, particularly among the nomadic population. The government then established the National Adult Education Center to coordinate the work of several ministries and many voluntary and part-time paid workers in what became an extensive program directed to persons between sixteen and forty-five years of age. The program was intended to provide a firm basis for literacy and knowledge of practical value to the largely rural population. Although many people have attended such courses in the years since 1975, the proportion that has retained a functional literacy is not known, and a firm literacy rate for the early 1980s cannot be given. Nevertheless it was substantially higher than the 5 to 10 percent rate that was estimated in the late 1960s and early 1970s before institution of the Somali script, the several literacy drives, and the growth of enrollment in the school system.

## Health

The high incidence of disease that persisted into the early 1980s reflected a difficult environment, inadequate nutrition, and insufficient medical care. In the years since the revolutionary regime came into power, drought, flood, warfare (and the refugee problem that is a consequence of the latter) have, if anything, left diets more inadequate than they had been. Massive changes that would make the environment less hostile, such as the elimination of disease vectors, had yet to take place as of 1981. The numbers of medical personnel and health facilities had certainly increased, but they did not meet Somali needs in the early 1980s and were not likely to do so for some time.

The major diseases prevalent in Somalia include pulmonary tuberculosis, malaria, and infectious and parasitic diseases. In addition schistosomiasis (bilharzia), tetanus, venereal disease (especially in the port towns), leprosy, and a variety of skin and eye diseases severely impair the population's health and productivity. As elsewhere, smallpox has been virtually wiped out, but occasional epidemics of measles can have devastating effects.

Ecological, economic, and social conditions are apparently conducive to a high incidence of tuberculosis among young males who graze camels under severe conditions and transmit the disease in the course of movement and regrouping characteristic of nomadic life. Efforts to deal with tuberculosis have had some success in urban centers, but control measures have been difficult to apply to the nomadic and seminomadic population. The development of adequate treatment centers for the disease was a major goal of the Three Year Plan 1979-1981.

Malaria may affect the entire population, but it has been more prevalent in the southern regions, particularly those traversed by the country's two major rivers. By the mid-1970s a malaria eradication program had been extended from Mogadishu to other regions; good results were then reported, but there are no useful statistics for the late 1970s. The Three Year Plan indicates that much remains to be done.

Spot checks have revealed that 75 percent of the population are affected by one or more kinds of intestinal parasites, a problem that will persist as long as the use of contaminated water sources remains common and the way of life of most rural Somalis (pastoral and agricultural) remains unchanged. Schistosomiasis is particularly prevalent in the marshy and irrigated areas along the rivers in the south. Whatever their sources, parasites are not often lethal, but they contribute to general debilitation and make the population susceptible to other diseases.

Underlying Somali susceptibility to disease is widespread malnutrition, exacerbated from time to time by drought and since the

late 1970s by the refugee burden (see Refugees, this ch.). Although reliable statistics were not available, the rate of child mortality is thought to be very high because of inadequate nutrition.

The organization and administration of health services is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, although regional medical officers are given some authority. All medical personnel are employed by the government, private practice having been brought to an end in 1972.

In the years 1973-78 there was a substantial increase in the number of physicians, and a far greater proportion of them were Somalis; of 198 physicians in the latter year 118 were Somalis, whereas only thirty-seven of ninety-six were Somalis in 1973. The operation of the medical school of the Somali National University is expected to continue that trend. An effort has also been made to expand the number of other health personnel and to foster the construction of health facilities (see table 4, Appendix). To that end two nursing schools and several other educational programs have been instituted. Of equal importance is the distribution of personnel and facilities throughout the country. In the early 1970s most facilities and personnel were concentrated in Mogadishu and a few other towns. The situation had improved somewhat by the late 1970s, but the difficulties of serving a rural and particularly a nomadic population posed substantial problems, and the distribution of health care was still unsatisfactory from any point of view including that of the government (see table 5, Appendix). Here again, the Three Year Plan projected the development of facilities and the allocation of personnel to districts suffering from an acute lack of them.

## **Refugees**

The conflict between Ethiopian military forces and ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia has led to a massive influx of Somalis from that region (and to a lesser extent from others) into Somalia. Beginning in March 1978 the decisive advance of the Ethiopians, aided by Soviet arms and Cuban manpower, generated substantial numbers of refugees. The bulk were ethnic Somalis, but there were also many Oromo, an ethnic group located primarily in Ethiopia. In September 1979 the Somali government, no longer able to cope with the influx, appealed for help to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but it was another six months before the UNHCR (and the UN secretary general) formally set in motion requests for international aid.

The number of refugees actually in Somalia from 1979 through 1981 is not precisely known. In its first public appeal to the UN, the Somali government estimated 310,000 in the camps in September 1979. By mid-1980 estimates had risen to 750,000 persons



*Refugees in one of the many camps erected to care  
for displaced Somalis  
Courtesy UNICEF/Arild Vollan*

in camps and at least half that number outside them. In early 1981 the government in Mogadishu estimated more than 1.3 million refugees in the camps and an additional 700,000 to 800,000 at large, either attempting to carry on their pastoral nomadic way of life or quartered in towns and cities.

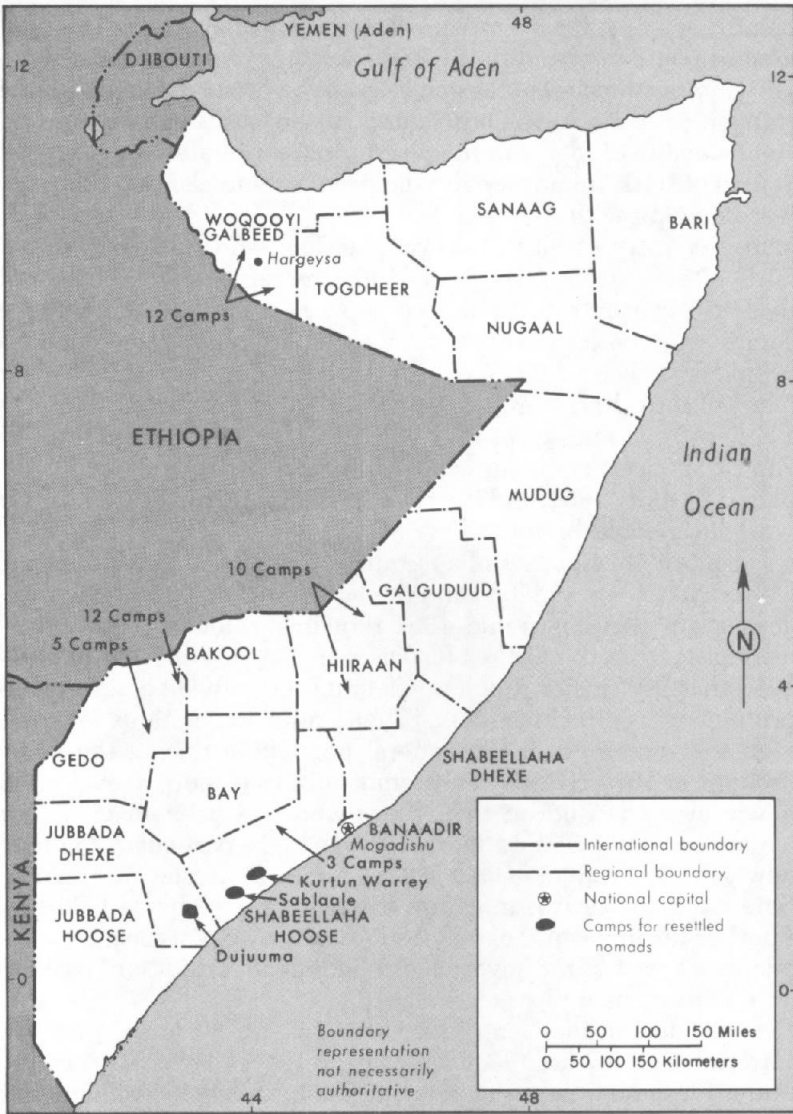
In 1980 representatives of international agencies and other donors of aid expressed skepticism at some of these claims, and in 1981 these agencies asked UN demographers to carry out a survey. According to Jean-Pierre Langelier (in *Le Monde*) the survey yielded an estimate of between 450,000 and 620,000 refugees in the camps. That may not have been the peak figure, nor was an estimate made of refugees outside the camps. The Somali government has rejected the results of this survey, but international agencies have subsequently based their budgeting on a figure of 650,000.

The age and sex structure of the refugees deviated from what may be assumed to have been the structure of the Ogaden Somali population. Some reports have referred to a refugee population that was 90 percent women and children. The Somali government in April 1981 estimated that 60 percent of the overall refugee population in the camps were under age fifteen and that 20 to 30 percent were women; the remainder were chiefly elderly men. A team of epidemiologists from the Center for Disease Control of the United States Public Health Service sought to determine the demographic characteristics of a sample of refugee camps in mid-1980. They found the very young (under five years) to range from 15 to 18 percent of the camp population; those from five to fifteen ranged from 45 to 47 percent; from 29 to 33 percent were between fifteen and forty-four; and 6 to 8 percent were forty-five and older. They did not find the male-female ratio unusually distorted even in the fifteen to forty-four age group, although they noted relatively fewer males in the fifteen to twenty-five group. The UN survey generally supports other estimates of the age and sex structures of the camp population.

In February 1981 there were forty refugee camps in Somalia located in four of Somalia's sixteen regions (see fig. 8). The number of persons in these camps ranged from under 3,000 to more than 70,000, but most held 35,000 to 45,000 refugees. According to a government document the fifteen camps in Gedo held more than 450,000 persons, the ten in Hiiraan more than 375,000, the twelve in Woqooyi Galbeed well over 400,000, and the three in Shabeellaha Hoose nearly 70,000. (In light of the 1980 UN survey, this figure may be considered overestimated.)

The burden of the influx of refugees on Somalia (even of the reduced numbers recognized by international agencies in 1981) was heavy. Somalia is one of the world's poorest countries, an importer of food in ordinary circumstances and lacking crucial elements of physical and social infrastructure (transportation and





Source: Based on information from Somalia, Ministry of National Planning, *Short and Long Term Programme for Refugees in the Somali Democratic Republic*, Mogadishu, 1981.

Figure 8. Refugee Camps in Somalia, 1980

health facilities, for example). The general poverty of the indigenous population and the ad hoc character of the National Refugee Commission and other government agencies dealing with the refugee problem have contributed to the misuse and even outright stealing of food and medical supplies intended for refugees. Somali officials acknowledged the problem and claimed that they were dealing with it.

In a country having limited arable land and fuels and visited fairly often by drought or flash floods, the refugees were hard put to it to contribute to their own support. Some of the refugee camps were so located that transportation of food and medical supplies has been fairly easy, but that has not been the case for many of the others. Similarly some were in or near areas where, in a year of good rain, crops may be grown, but others were not. In almost all cases easily accessible firewood had been rapidly depleted by early 1981, and the refugees had to go long distances for what little could be found.

Despite the responses of a number of countries—including the United States—to the food and medical requirements of the refugees, their situation in mid-1981 remained difficult. The epidemiologists from the Center for Disease Control reported in early 1980 that the “major problem affecting the refugee children was protein energy malnutrition...[Their] nutritional status is worse than that observed in the general population during the Sahel drought in 1974...[However] malnutrition was more prevalent in newly arrived children than those who had been in camp for longer periods....” Child mortality was high, particularly among newly arrived refugees. A 1980 epidemic of measles was responsible for many deaths in camps in Gedo and Woqooyi Galbeed. Another leading cause of children’s deaths was diarrhea, a consequence in part of the severe lack of adequate sanitation, particularly with respect to water sources.

As the data in the Center for Disease Control’s survey suggest, extreme malnutrition declines when refugees have been in the camps for some time, although none can be said to be well fed. But to sustain the refugee population even at a low level requires reliable (in amount and timing) contributions from other countries, an adequate and competently managed distribution system and, if possible, some contribution by the refugees themselves to their own subsistence. In April 1981 Somalia’s Ministry of National Planning issued its *Short and Long Term Programme for Refugees* detailing projected needs and proposals, all of which require international support in various forms—money, food, medical supplies, and expatriate staff, among others. When the program was published, overall responsibility for refugees lay with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and its

National Commission for Refugees. That seemed still to be the case in late 1981. Other ministries, including those of health and education, were assigned responsibility for implementing specific projects. By 1981 most of those ministries had special divisions or sections devoted to refugee matters.

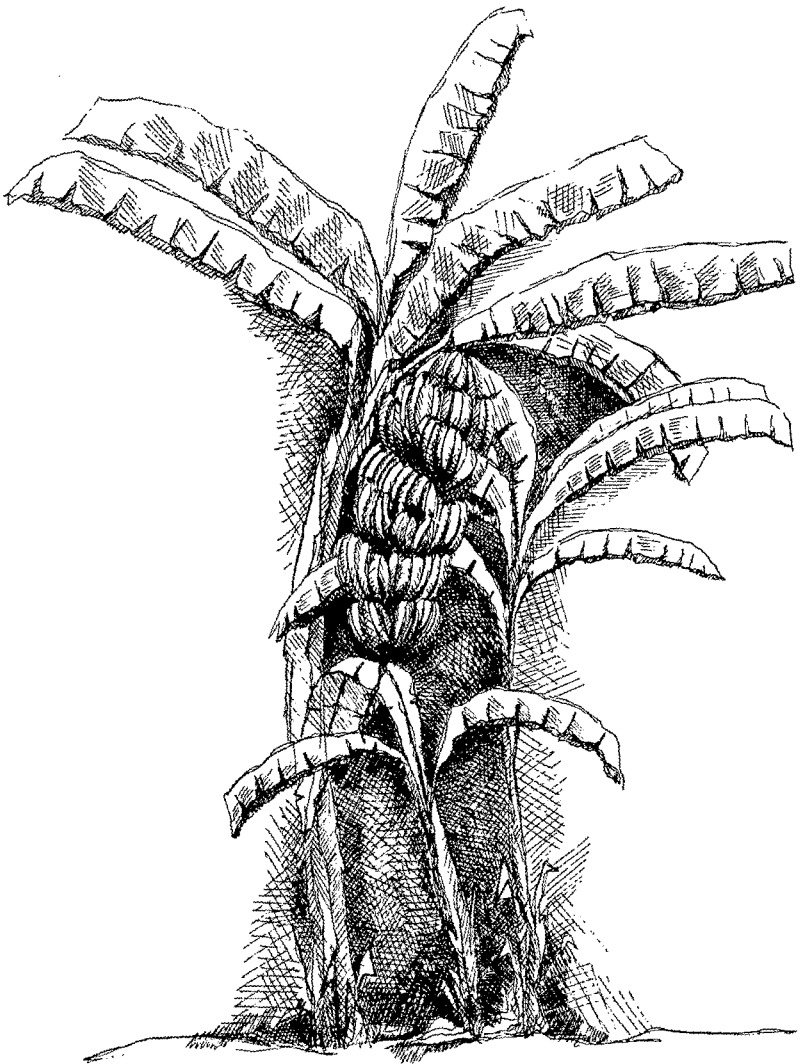
To the extent that it may be inferred from projections in the proposals of the Ministry of Planning, the short term comprehended the year 1981 and the long term 1982, 1983, and the first half of 1984. How long the refugees were likely to be in Somalia was not predictable in 1981 given the unsettled conditions in the Ogaden and the antagonism between Ethiopia and Somalia. But the government in Mogadishu did not intend permanent settlement of the refugees within Somalia.

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The classic work on the social and political system of the pastoral nomadic Somalis (based on research done in the 1950s) is I.M. Lewis' *A Pastoral Democracy*. Lewis has also written a number of articles on specific topics, several dealing with aspects of Somali Islam and indigenous religion. His "From Nomadism to Cultivation" provides an introduction to the traditional social and political orders of the interriverine sedentary Somalis. Virginia Luling has published some of her findings on one group of sedentary Somalis (the Geledi clan and its neighbors) in "Colonial and Postcolonial Influences on a South Somali Community." David Laitin's *Politics, Language, and Thought: The Somali Experience* deals with the politics of deciding on a written form for the Somali language and presents a controversial theory on the relation between that language and social and political behavior. No systematic research has been published on the consequences for the Somali social system of the changes wrought by the revolutionary regime, but Dan R. Aronson's "Kinsmen and Comrades" provides some indication of emerging structure among Somali pastoralists consequent upon intensified commercialization of the livestock sector. Statements concerning such consequences are based on piecing together fragmentary information. (For further information see Bibliography.)



## Chapter 3. The Economy



*Bananas, Somalia's principal commercial crop*

**IMPLEMENTATION OF SOMALIA'S** economic policies, which in theory are based on socialist concepts, has given the public sector a dominant role in the economy since 1970. The government has declared its ultimate objective to be the organization of all economic activities so that the means of production are owned and operated by and in the interest of the people, and the resulting benefits are distributed equitably. Steps were taken during the 1970s toward attaining this goal through the nationalization of various, though not all, existing private enterprises, the creation of a substantial number of large parastatals covering a wide range of economic activities, and a start on the formation of producer and service cooperatives. Private ownership was completely eliminated in the areas of banking, insurance, and wholesale trade, and large-scale and some small industry were essentially restricted to the public sector. In 1981, however, the private sector still encompassed a large part of the economy including traditional agriculture, livestock raising, retail trade, and most small manufacturing and traditional crafts, although the introduction of cooperatives had begun in some areas. Foreign private investment capital remained acceptable in certain joint ventures, and several agreements for oil exploration were entered into in the late 1970s. A place for small private investors existed, according to the government, which has encouraged their participation in productive activities. But the extent of the future role of private investment had not been clearly stated.

Despite substantial development expenditures, the economy made only limited gains during the 1970s. The gross domestic product grew at about the rate of growth of the population. The country was unable to feed itself, and increasing quantities of foodstuffs were imported. A per capita income estimated by the World Bank at the equivalent of US\$130 in 1978 ranked Somalia eighth among the least developed countries. Certain developments during the decade, however, had imposed unusual hardships on the economy. In 1974 and 1975 the already harsh environment was greatly worsened by a severe drought that affected almost two-thirds of the country, resulting in great loss of livestock and human suffering that required emergency measures and diversion of efforts from economic development. In 1977 the severance of relations with the Soviet Union, long a major source of development aid and essential technical assistance, halted a wide range of economic activities. This was followed by a further serious blow to the economy from the Ogaden war with Ethiopia in 1977-78, which caused the government to allocate development funds to security purposes—a condition that continued in 1981. A massive influx of refugees occasioned by the war had

placed a further heavy burden on the economy, despite continuing large-scale foreign assistance.

Natural resources were limited, but the population size has remained relatively low, and foreign economists were of the opinion that measures for proper utilization of those resources could materially improve conditions for the predominant agricultural and pastoral sectors. Implementation of several foreign-funded projects to that end was under way in 1981. Reportedly there had been some degree of success, but considerable further effort would be required for effective improvement of the livelihood of much of the rural population.

### **Economic Development**

Little economic development occurred in the area of present-day Somalia during the long period of colonial administration. Neither of the two colonial territories that eventually became independent Somalia possessed the rich mineral resources or the potential for large-scale development of industrial crops that had attracted foreign investors to other African countries. Private sector activities were largely limited to the establishment of banana plantations and the cultivation of some other irrigated crops in the southern area that was under Italian rule. Limited government programs in both colonies were concerned mainly with the social sectors. During the 1950s some effort was made in the Italian trusteeship to prepare the economy for independence, and from 1954 several concurrent seven-year sectoral programs were implemented. They were based on plans developed by the United Nations (UN) and the United States International Cooperation Administration (later United States Agency for International Development—USAID). The principal economic achievements were in the livestock and agricultural sectors and included construction of new wells and catchments in the drier regions to aid livestock development, and grain storage facilities, catchments, and flood control works in the cultivated area between the Juba and Shabeelle rivers. In the British area, efforts were also made to aid livestock development. During this period individual Somali promoters and groups constructed a considerable number of additional water tanks in the rangelands. Largely as a result, a marked increase in the livestock population and livestock exports occurred after the late 1950s.

Postindependence economic development, which commenced with the First Five Year Plan (1963–1967), was hampered greatly by the lack of statistical data on the economy and the dearth of trained professional and technical staff. Systematic planning based on knowledge of manpower availability and material resources was almost impossible, and the plan was very largely a presentation of desirable projects, most of which were dependent on external aid for implementation. Only about half of planned



expenditures were made during the plan period, and foreign aid commitments were not fully utilized. At the end of the period a large number of projects in which substantial funds had already been committed remained uncompleted. A three-year plan, the Short Term Development Programme 1968–1970 was drawn up for the completion of ongoing projects. It represented basically an interim measure for consolidation of the efforts initiated under the first plan and for creation of more favorable basic conditions—improvement in administration and more effective mobilization of domestic resources—essential to better formulation and implementation of later plans. Overall the development effort had achieved only limited success by the time of the military coup in October 1969. A number of important projects were completed, however, including construction of a major cotton textile plant, fish and meat canneries, and a milk plant, development of deep-water ports at Kismaayo and Berbera, and hard-surfacing of several roads to facilitate banana exports. Several surveys and other projects in the agricultural and livestock sectors had also been carried out. One of the principal reasons given at the end of the first plan for its lack of marked achievement was the need in government to concentrate attention on attaining political stability. Inadequate attention by the government to development was an important reason given by the military regime for its takeover.

Soon after the coup the military government announced a new set of objectives for economic development that centered on raising the standard of living of the people, providing opportunities for employment to the entire labor force, and eradicating all forms of exploitation. Self-help, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency were emphasized. The Development Programme 1971–1973 launched by the new regime was overambitious, but it attained considerable success in extension of the agricultural crash program. Progress also was made in animal disease control, food grain marketing, and other agricultural and livestock projects. But major projects such as the Baardheere dam irrigation scheme had to be carried over to the succeeding Five Year Development Programme 1974–1978 (see *Agriculture and Pastoralism*, this ch.).

The 1974–78 plan was seriously affected by unforeseeable factors that included the increase in world oil prices after 1973 and the subsequent inflation. The latter, in particular, forced the recosting of projects and caused serious difficulties in project management because of reduced financing and related supply problems. Financing difficulties were further affected by the drain on local resources because of the 1974–75 drought and the war with Ethiopia in 1977–78. Important achievements were registered, however, including formation of agricultural cooperatives, resettlement of nomads in agricultural and fishing cooperatives

(under a separate drought relief program) and new additions to irrigated crop areas. Major accomplishments were completion of a petroleum refinery, addition of substantial mileage to the paved road system, and development of a deepwater port at Mogadishu. Considerable advances were also made in the social sectors. Nonetheless a large number of the projects in the plan had to be carried forward to the Three Year Plan 1979–1981. In retrospect the government has noted that the major cause of plan delays continued to be the lack of skilled personnel at all levels from administrative, managerial, professional, and technical, to craftsman. The emigration to the Middle East petroleum producing countries by trained professional and technical people frustrated by wage constraints in Somalia has been especially damaging.

In 1981 the government had in process the preparation of a new development plan. According to foreign economists the government made commendable efforts to mobilize domestic financial resources for development during the 1970s (see *Government Finance*, this ch.). But the extent to which development plans were implemented—as during the 1960s—was related in great part to the amount of external financing, both as support in meeting domestic development expenditure and to pay for the imported materials and technical assistance components. Somali planners expected this situation to continue in the plan that follows the Three Year Plan 1979–1981, which had anticipated that about two-thirds of programmed development funds would come from foreign sources. (Preliminary data on the financing of the development projects actually implemented in the earlier Five Year Development Programme 1974–1978 indicated that close to 54 percent of expenditures were derived from foreign loans and grants.) In the period covering the several plans, domestic resources have been used mainly to fund investment in the social sectors, whereas foreign financing has gone principally into projects in the productive sectors and economic infrastructure.

Development related loans have been furnished by the UN and several African multilateral banks and funds. These accounted for about 32 percent of Somali's outstanding public debt, repayable in foreign currencies or merchandise at the end of 1979. A dozen other countries had extended bilateral loans amounting to 68 percent of the outstanding debt, of which half had been provided by Arab states. The largest single donor was China (see table 6, Appendix).

### **Agriculture and Pastoralism**

The agricultural sector, including crop and livestock production, forestry, and fisheries, was estimated in the late 1970s to employ about four-fifths of the labor force. It accounted for roughly three-fifths to two-thirds of the gross domestic product

(GDP—see Glossary), and more than 98 percent of the country's merchandise exports were derived from the sector (see table 7; table 8, Appendix). The livestock subsector was by far the most important, providing the livelihood of the large nomadic population and supplementing that of the smaller sedentary farming segment. Climatic factors have led to the separate development of crop and livestock production; settled cultivation has centered in the somewhat higher rainfall areas of the southwestern and northwestern parts of the country and livestock raising has been carried on in the vast intervening expanses where low participation permits the growth only of semiarid and arid vegetation suitable for grazing (see *Climate*, ch. 2).

In the early 1980s crop production still was largely a subsistence pursuit. Only a comparatively small segment of the farming population—engaged almost entirely in growing irrigated crops—produced principally for market sales. The large traditional sector carried on cultivation under rainfed conditions and to a limited extent used flood irrigation. Its members participated only marginally in the monetized economy, marketing at most 25 to 30 percent of their grains, the principal crop, of which 15 to 20 percent was sold to the state purchasing monopoly, the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC), and perhaps another 10 percent in local markets. Incentives for the traditional farmer to produce surpluses for sale were few. Most did not use any inputs other than seeds and their own labor, and the narrow range of consumer goods usually available locally did little to encourage extra production for cash sales. The pastoralist mode of life tended to dissociate many nomads from the monetized sector, but the great growth of animal exports since independence had brought a major increase in the commercialization of the livestock sector; although production still basically followed traditional patterns, there had been a change from a primary emphasis on subsistence to production for marketing.

The state had become involved in a major way in agriculture through state farms, the so-called Agricultural Crash Program, promotion of agricultural cooperatives, and establishment of agricultural settlements. The crash program was initiated by the military government in 1970 as an emergency measure to absorb unemployed youths in the urban areas. The goal was to provide them with agricultural and mechanical training and at the same time to instill a sense of national consciousness, proper attitudes toward work, and the like. The program seems to have become a permanent fixture that in the late 1970s operated seven large state farms—six of them encompassing about a twelfth of the land under controlled irrigation in the southwest and one in Woqooyi Galbeed Region occupying a large area of good, rainfed land in the

northwest. Mechanized farming and the use of modern inputs characterized their operations. The intention was that they become self-supporting; but productivity has remained low, and they have been continuously subsidized from the government budget and at times, grant aid from international agencies.

The military government placed great stress on the development of agricultural cooperatives as part of the effort to build a socialist society. The legal status of the cooperatives was established by the Law on Cooperative Development of 1974, which provided the framework for formation of what was called a truly socialist cooperative system (in contrast to the "token systems" that had emerged in various other African countries). Three kinds of cooperatives were provided for, essentially based on foreign models; the final form was the collective. The first kind, of which forty-seven were reported formed by the end of 1978, was the Multipurpose Cooperative Society, encompassing two to four villages. Property (land, equipment, and livestock) remained individually owned, but marketing, supply, and community self-help projects were handled cooperatively. Most of the cooperatives established were in irrigated areas. At a higher stage (the Group Farm Cooperative) land was communally owned and cultivated. Four-fifths of the income from production was to be distributed on the basis of work furnished. In practice, group farms actually in operation have not made use of the traditional individual holdings but have cultivated communally an area of adjacent land. Some workers on the communal areas were landless laborers. There were 224 of these cooperatives at the end of 1978.

The highest level cooperative envisaged use of all land, equipment, and labor on a completely communal basis. There was to be no private ownership of land. As of late 1981 there were no reports that any of these collectives had been established. The worth of the functioning cooperatives remained open to question, and there was nothing to indicate that they had been of significant value to members. Little use of cooperative marketing appeared to be made by the multipurpose cooperatives. In the case of the Group Farm Cooperatives, members tended to devote more time to their own holdings, and because seasonal tasks came at the same time, the group farm often suffered from shortages of labor that, according to the cooperative law, could not be made up by hiring workers. Thus, despite the use of mechanized equipment and other inputs, group farm yields were reported to be low. In view of the overall mediocre results of the cooperative program, it has been observed that the formation of new cooperatives and perpetuation of existing ones had apparently come to relate more to political than pragmatic considerations.

The government has sought to encourage nomads to take up settled farming, but through 1981 it had been directly involved in

a significant way only through the emergency settling of pastoralists who were the victims of the severe drought of 1974-75. In 1975 about 90,000 nomads from relief centers were transported, with Soviet help, to settlement locations in Dujuuma (18,000 hectares), Kurtun Waarey (6,000 hectares), and Sablaale (6,000 hectares), districts situated between the lower Juba and Shabeelle rivers. The Dujuuma settlement proved impractical because of poor soil, and most of the settlers were later moved to an area near Fanole farther up the Juba River. In 1976 the Kuwait Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the International Development Association (IDA), a part of the World Bank (see Glossary), provided funds to aid in the development of both irrigated and rainfed cultivation. Other assistance was furnished by USAID and the World Food Program. Substantial areas were prepared for cultivation, but rainfed cropping in particular failed to come up to expectation. Settlers began moving out to look for other opportunities, and by 1979 fewer than three-fifths of the original group was left. During 1980 the settlements continued to require outside aid to remain viable.

#### **Land Use, Soils, and Land Tenure**

Estimates of land use in 1981 were very rough, and differences in classification by the reporting sources resulted in large variances in some category totals. About 8.2 million hectares, or 13 percent of the land area, were generally considered suitable for cultivation. The social and physical infrastructure necessary for exploitation existed only in limited areas, however, and the land actually in crops or in fallow was believed by the Ministry of Agriculture to be, at most, 700,000 hectares in the late 1970s. Development of access roads and potable water sources was relatively feasible for about 2 million hectares more, but opening up much of the remaining potentially cultivable land for farm settlement would require far greater preparatory work. Land suitable for grazing was the largest single category. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) classified almost 28.9 million hectares (46 percent of the land area) as permanent pasture, but other sources placed the total suitable for grazing at 35 million hectares (56 percent). About 8.6 million hectares were classified as forest and woodland, although about 6 million hectares of this actually had only a bush or shrub vegetation cover. The remaining land, excluding built-up areas, was desert wasteland or land having vegetation capable of providing only marginal grazing.

Broad areas of northern and north-central Somalia have sandy calcareous, gypseous, or saline soils. Depending on the amount of rainfall received, they support grasses and other vegetation ranging from adequate for normal livestock grazing to sparsely covered arid wastelands of marginal or no economic value. Well-

drained, sandy calcareous soils are found in the broad plateau that encompasses Hargeysa. The heavier vegetation permitted by the comparatively high rainfall in this area has resulted in a moderate organic content in the soil, and dry farming has developed extensively since the 1930s. In 1981 the sedentary agricultural economy of the region was the country's largest outside the southern agricultural zone.

South of Hargeysa the semiarid region known as the Haud is characterized by red calcareous soils that continue on into the Ogaden area of Ethiopia. They support vegetation that in normal times provides some of the country's best grazing. East of the Haud lies the vast expanse of pink and orange tinged sands of the Mudug Plain, which merges into a wide coastal strip of coarse, gray sands. A rich grass growth and other vegetation on the latter provide excellent grazing. Among the country's best agricultural soils are those found in the area of the Juba and Shabeelle rivers. Soils between the rivers vary from reddish to dark clays. Fine-textured alluvium parallels the rivers, and situated behind these alluvial soils are fertile black soils. The soils along the Shabeelle have a poor water-retaining capacity and tend to be saline because of the alkalinity of the river's water; those along the Juba are less saline. An extensive stretch of reddish to yellowish sandy soils containing small amounts of organic matter and some plant nutrients characterize the fixed sand dunes along the coast from Mereeg to the vicinity of Kismaayo. They support some growth where rainfall is adequate.

Before the establishment of the colonial governments there appears to have been no individual ownership of farming or grazing land. Grazing land in certain areas was generally used by associated lineages, but rights of occupancy ultimately stemmed from the effective military strength of the occupiers. Within such areas the use of pastures was communal, and where land was allotted to farmers it was on the basis of need and remained inalienable. In the principal areas of cultivation—the lands along and between the Juba and Shabeelle rivers, and to a much more limited extent in the northwest—holdings belonged by custom to members of the clans and lineages who traditionally had tilled the land, and these rights were passed on to descendants or other kin. Although the constitution adopted at independence stated that "in principle" all land belonged to the state, in practice such traditional occupancy rights continued to be respected.

Italian acquisition of land for plantations in the Juba-Shabeelle region was under way in the early 1900s. Somali entrepreneurs in time also purchased land, and especially after independence numbers of wealthy Somalis bought large landholdings from local clans for the commercial production of bananas and other crops. The

concept of legal occupancy rights was strengthened by legislation in the late 1960s that gave district heads the authority to grant ninety-nine-year leases to qualified applicants. This occurred most frequently in the urban areas, but some leases were also granted in the interriverine area, and in the northwest the private enclosure of both arable and pastureland went on. In October 1975 the country's first major land tenure law declared that all land was state property, in effect nationalizing all holdings. This concept, that the land belonged to the state, was later incorporated in the 1979 Constitution. Dealing more specifically with arable land, the 1975 act assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture the responsibility for issuing set-term concessions for agricultural land (the only way such land could be held legally) and established statutory limits on the size and the transfer of holdings. The law's basic intent apparently was to change traditional landholdings into a system of leaseholds. In principle, after the law's passage individual families could hold their land only under a concession, but available information indicated that in 1981 existing customary rights continued to be honored. Plantations existing when the law was passed had to register in order to obtain a concession grant. Thereafter land had to be excluded from the selling price, the sale covering only improvements and use value. A new concession was given to the purchaser.

In the case of grazing land, the government appeared to favor communal landholding by grazing cooperatives—whose legal status was provided for in the Range Law of 1979—of which some fourteen were reported in existence in the northern part of the country in the late 1970s. Although the total area preempted by the existing cooperatives was not known in late 1981, the average of 16,000 hectares held by an initial twelve would indicate well over 200,000 hectares. The communal land tenure concept was also evident in the grazing reserves allocated to the less formally organized grazing associations. In 1981, however, although some of the better grazing land had been reserved for the cooperatives and associations, the greater part of the nomadic population still retained customary rights to most of the country's grazing land.

### **Livestock**

Livestock is the dominant sector in the Somali economy. Its contribution to GDP increased in the 1970s, although toward the end of the decade, when the sector was estimated to account annually for almost half of total GDP, growth had generally stagnated. Milk and meat provided about half of the diet of the roughly 60 percent of the population who were nomadic pastoralists. Many of the other foodstuffs they consumed and the miscellaneous items they purchased were obtained through sales of animals and animal products. Livestock was an important adjunct

to crop cultivation for the roughly 20 percent who were settled farmers, and meat and milk were by preference a large component of the urban diet. Industrially, livestock supported meat processing, tanning, and other related agro-businesses. Live animals and livestock products were also the major source of the country's foreign exchange earnings, accounting in the late 1970s for over 70 percent of export receipts (see Foreign Trade, this ch.).

There were in 1975 almost 34 million domestic animals in the national herd, according to a government census. Estimates by foreign economists varied greatly, but most were far below that figure, the highest being 21 million estimated in 1973 by the Planning and Economic Advisory Group from the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). The government total included 5.3 million camels, 4 million cattle, 9.5 million sheep, and 15 million goats. Camels were the principal animals in the northern and central regions and in parts of the interriverine area. Cattle, of which there were four main strains of the shorthorn zebu type, were of comparatively minor significance in the north, more important in the central regions, and the dominant animal in the valleys of the Juba and Shabeelle rivers. Sheep and goats were of least importance in the latter area. These latter two animal categories were the pastoralist's most important tradable stock, and black-headed, white-bodied indigenous Somali sheep were preferred in Middle Eastern markets and commanded premium prices.

The size of individual herds has fluctuated substantially as the result of periodic droughts. There were very few large herds having hundreds of animals, apparently because of the problems involved in managing them. Nomadic pastoralists usually kept a mixture of animals based on pragmatic considerations. The different grazing habits of camels, goats, sheep, and cattle permit more effective use of the vegetation. Resistance to drought also differs, as do reproductive rates—factors that act as safeguards against total animal loss in times of extreme drought and for restoration of herd size afterward. Camels are kept mainly for milk and transportation. Sheep and goats are the principal sources of meat and some cash income, and cattle are raised for milk and also for marketing. Although only meager information was available on the factors that influenced nomadic herders to retain or sell their stock, the development of the large-scale export trade in animals since the 1960s seemed to indicate that livestock owners have had little reluctance to dispose of surpluses in contrast to the situation in many other African countries, where herd size has been a prime consideration as a measure of wealth and prestige. (Nevertheless prestige and influence in Somalia are still related to the number of camels owned.) The importance of economic considerations to the Somali nomad in herd management is also evi-





*Livestock and its by-products are Somalia's  
major export earners.  
Courtesy Somalia Embassy, Washington*

dent in the age and sex ratios found by surveys that show heavy culling of male animals. For example one survey found seven times as many female sheep as males in a flock over fifteen months old, and another revealed thirteen times as many adult female cattle as males, only enough of the latter being retained for herd reproduction or buildup.

Along with its large livestock herd, Somalia in 1981 apparently still possessed one of the most abundant and varied stocks of savanna and other wildlife in Africa. Most prevalent throughout the country among the larger herbivores were antelopes and gazelles, skins of which were exported in large numbers in the 1960s (for example, 535,000 in 1965 and 393,000 in 1966). After the military coup in 1969 all hunting and trapping were forbidden, but many species continued to be affected by the growing numbers of livestock, exclusion from watering spots by human preemption, and the cutting of trees and bush vegetation that destroyed natural cover and damaged grazing capacities. Al-

though game reserves had been designated in different parts of the country only two were in existence, and poaching was the only form of wildlife exploitation. Foreign economists consider the wildlife an important economic resource that could be profitably put to use by the harvesting of surplus animals through sport hunting under proper supervision.

Important to the future of the livestock industry and the betterment of the livelihood of the country's pastoralists is proper management of the rangelands (roughly half of the country's land area), whose annual 50 to 200 millimeters of irregular rainfall make them suitable only for grazing livestock. Over time a pattern of grazing and herd management had been developed by the nomadic pastoralists that fitted the ecosystem and its periodic droughts and diseases. Herd sizes were also effectively restrained by both interclan and intraclan territorial pressures that on occasion were accompanied by warfare (see *The Segmentary Social Order*, ch. 2). By the 1950s, however, changing circumstances had resulted in reported damage to some areas of rangeland, and in 1966 an FAO aerial survey, supplemented by overland and spot checks, found widespread overgrazing. The factor believed mainly responsible was the growing size of the national herd, which had accompanied the growth of the human population and the increase in the latter's subsistence needs. The increase in the herd size had been made possible by better veterinary disease control and greater range water supply. Law enforcement, which had restrained armed clashes, also permitted wider migration and consequent enlargement of individual herds, and gradually improving marketing channels provided further encouragement to raise more animals.

Efforts at range management and grazing control were unsuccessful until the mid-1970s. An early United States-sponsored project initiated in 1956 in present-day Afmadow District, Jubbada Hoose Region, demonstrated that rangeland around publicly constructed watering points could be improved rapidly by rotational and deferred grazing. But because of the failure to take into consideration social factors—in this case the customary right of free access to public wells—the project area, designed to support 3,000 head of cattle, was overrun by 30,000 head and destroyed. Another project in the 1960s at a government livestock station near Hargeysa that was closed to general grazing met a similar fate when guards were driven away and the range subsequently devastated. Accordingly, in reporting on its 1966 survey, FAO in 1967 stressed the need to precede range management projects by surveys designed to evaluate the sociological impact on the area's nomadic population and to carry out massive adult edu-

cation programs on range management accompanied by demonstrations of the practical benefits.

By 1970 a joint rangeland conservation and development survey created by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and FAO was under way, designed to classify Somalia's northern rangeland and water resources. This was followed by a project started in 1974 under which according to government sources, twenty-one grazing reserves were marked out; the project ended in 1976 because of UNDP financing problems. In 1976 the IDA, utilizing in part the UNDP/FAO findings, prepared the Northern Rangelands Development Project. Initiated at the beginning of 1977 and financed by the Kuwait Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the project covered the three northern regions of Togdheer, Sanaag, and Nugaal, an area of about 140,000 square kilometers. By 1980 fifteen village and town grazing areas were reported in operation. Each reserve covered 400 square kilometers, half of which initially was closed during the *gu* wet season and the other half during the *dayr* period of rains (see Climate, ch. 2). The pattern was changed later to reserves divided into four 100-square-kilometer sections, one of which was closed to grazing for an entire year, followed in rotation by the other sections.

In 1979 the similar Central Rangelands Project was started. This project covered about 149,000 square kilometers encompassing Mudug, Galguduud, and Hiiraan regions. Some seventeen village and town grazing reserves were said to have become operational by 1980. Initial financing for the project was by IDA. Additional funding has included a grant from USAID. Overall rangeland development was under the National Range Agency (NRA), established in 1976, which also furnished guards to prevent nomadic herds from grazing the closed sections. NRA planned to establish larger grazing reserves of about 900 square kilometers each, divided into four sections that were based on new water boreholes. It was also reported to have undertaken to set up so-called drought or famine reserves of 500 or 600 square kilometers in each district that were to be used only in time of drought. Information on implementation of this aspect of the program was unavailable in late 1981.

As part of the effort to improve the rangelands, the government has encouraged the formation of range and livestock grazing associations that are basically representative groups for the pastoralists of a given area. Members are elected by the community and consist ordinarily of respected elders whose status gives them considerable influence over the attitudes of the pastoralists and enables them to act as mediators between the community and the government authorities. The members also are directly involved in marking out the reserves and have responsibility for ensuring

that the grazing regulations are respected by the community after they have been agreed on. About forty-five such associations were said to be functioning at the end of the 1970s.

The government's ultimate goal has appeared to be the establishment of a system of grazing cooperatives, a course also recommended by the International Labour Organisation's Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa (JASPA) Employment Advisory Mission in the mid-1970s. The first cooperatives were started in 1974 under the supervision of the Ministry of Livestock, Forestry, and Range but they were subsequently placed under the NRA after formation of that agency. Fourteen cooperatives reportedly had been organized in the northern rangeland area by the end of the 1970s—eight by pastoralists and six by livestock traders. The existing cooperatives each had been allocated an exclusive area that averaged well over 200 hectares—and in some cases over 300 hectares—of grazing land available to each family. In time of drought the members of the cooperative were able to graze traditionally common land. Establishment of the cooperatives also opened a way to provide social services (educational, health, and other facilities), group procurement of goods, marketing, and the like.

Poultry raising constitutes only a very minor segment of the livestock sector. It is practically nonexistent among the nomads where the mode of life is unsuited to raising poultry. Chickens are kept principally for subsistence purposes by sedentary farmers and by families in urban areas. In 1972 the government established a modern poultry and egg production facility near Mogadishu, and two other units were built subsequently. Another unit that started operations at Hargeysa in 1974 was under further development in 1981. In addition chickens were raised commercially at a poultry resettlement farm near Baraawe and at the three refugee agricultural resettlements. The total capacity at government developed projects was some 165,000 birds in 1980. Only one private commercial poultry producer was reported in 1980, operating a small unit at Afgooye.

### **Crop Production**

In the early 1980s it was estimated that fewer than 200,000 families were engaged in sedentary cultivation. Of the approximately 700,000 hectares devoted to crops, about four-fifths were located in the valleys of the Juba and Shabeelle rivers, the areas immediately to the east and west of the rivers, and the upland between them. The only other area of significant settled farming was in the northwest, between Hargeysa and Booraama in Woqooyi Galbeed Region. Of the total cultivated area, roughly 50,000 hectares, or 7 to 8 percent, was under controlled irrigation, including an estimated 35,000 to 38,000 hectares along the Sha-

belle River and 12,000 to 14,000 hectares in the Juba valley. Controlled irrigation in other parts of the country probably totaled under 1,000 hectares. At the beginning of the 1980s ongoing irrigation schemes were believed to be adding 1,000 to 2,000 hectares a year to the irrigated total.

There is a substantial amount of additional irrigable land in the Shabeelle valley, but the government has estimated that only another 50,000 hectares could be irrigated because of water flow conditions, and even this total has been questioned by outside experts. The Shabeelle maintains a full flow usually only about seven months a year, depending largely on the amount of precipitation in the two rainy seasons. In the late 1970s parts of the existing lower Shabeelle systems were reported already to experience an occasional water shortage, although this was due in part to inefficient use of available water. In contrast the water flow in the Juba was usually year-round. In 1981 the government was seeking external funding for a major multipurpose dam to be constructed near Baardheere on the middle Juba that would have the potential to provide assured irrigation for an estimated 150,000 to 160,000 hectares. Actual development of irrigation under this project, however, appeared unlikely at least until near the end of the 1980s, according to government sources.

The cultivation of irrigated market crops began in the early 1900s when private interests established the country's first banana plantations. The number of plantations gradually increased, and by independence over 200 were in existence, all having controlled irrigation. Meanwhile commercial cropping was extended to sugarcane, cotton, rice, sesame, groundnuts, and grapefruit. Since independence the state has become a major factor in market crop production. In the early 1960s the civilian government began the establishment of state farms to ensure, it stated, proper utilization of new land in view of the early stage of development of Somali peasant agriculture. The government declared at the time that this step did not necessarily indicate the adoption of a socialist system but that it was based essentially on pragmatic considerations. This policy of establishing state farms was continued by the military government in the belief also that they represented the best way to increase agricultural output rapidly and at the same time reduce the need for food imports.

Most of the state farms of the 1960s involved the development of irrigated land. During the 1970s the expansion of irrigation became even more closely associated with the state farms and government-sponsored agricultural cooperatives, and a significant concomitant was the state's assumption of large areas of irrigable land from traditional cultivators under the right of eminent domain. Through mid-1981 government policy on the extent of

individual smallholder participation in irrigated agriculture had not been clearly defined, but continuing planned expansion of public sector and cooperative irrigated farms in the 1980s carried the implication that further alienation of land from traditional occupiers might be anticipated. It appeared that if the trend were to continue, most of the best land along the Juba and Sha-beelle rivers would eventually be in the hands of the state or private plantations.

Uncontrolled irrigation has long been used by cultivators taking advantage of river floodwaters, and in 1981 an estimated 110,000 hectares were farmed using traditional irrigation practices. The principal method was to plant crops successively as the water receded from the floodplain. Ditches were also used to divert the flowoff to adjacent fields. In some cases channels were constructed leading from the river, but these were of value only if the river rose sufficiently for the water to reach the fields. Flood-irrigated cultivation was more intensive than for ordinary dryland farming, and under favorable water supply conditions yields were reasonably good, resulting in surpluses that produced cash income. The principal crop grown under uncontrolled irrigation was maize, but beans, cotton, and sugarcane were also raised.

The most general form of cultivation is rainfed farming, practiced by close to 700,000 cultivators in the late 1970s. Rainfed crop production involves high risks because of the erratic nature of the rainy seasons, the amount of rainfall, and the low technology of traditional cultivation. The latter consists of clearing the land of bushes, shallow hoe preparation of the soil, use of usually poor quality seeds, and later, inadequate weeding. Seeds are sown unevenly and are widely dispersed, and this has helped to reduce the drain on the soil and with reasonable rainfall has produced a somewhat sparse but full crop. Land is readily available, and when yields begin to decline, the cropped field is left in fallow up to about three years. The principal dryland crop is sorghum, which is grown on about 55 percent of the cultivated land. Crops of lesser importance are pulses, maize, millet, sesame, and occasionally groundnuts. One-third to one-half the land is double-cropped—sorghum being planted by many farmers in both wet seasons. In the main cultivated areas of the southwest farm families usually crop from three to five hectares, about the maximum possible under the intensive labor requirement of the traditional system. Comparatively few farmers have adopted improved practices that include using animal power for plowing, better seeds, crop diversification, and some pesticides. The government has undertaken to improve agricultural services for the dryland farmer, but such services still remained poorly developed in the early 1980s.

Production estimates for staple crops, including sorghum, maize, beans, and rice show that output stagnated during the

1970s except for rice, the production of which increased substantially toward the end of the decade. Oilseeds and cotton production also stagnated, and output of the two most important industrial crops—sugarcane and bananas—declined, in the case of the latter quite markedly (see table 9, Appendix). Estimates for 1980 showed little change except for rice, which although increasing in volume, still constituted only a small part of total grain production. Foreign observers were of the opinion that an overall relative decline in output had occurred because of the probably greater area devoted to crops as the sedentary agricultural population increased in numbers during the decade through natural growth and the addition of new settlers.

Bananas, the principal commercial crop, are grown for the international market on plantations situated almost entirely in an area near Shalanbood on the lower Shabeelle River and a roughly equal area on the Juba River in Jubbada Hoose Region. A small number of privately owned operations—somewhat over half owned by Somalis, a few by mixed Somali-Italian interests, and the remainder by Italians—accounted for about 90 percent of production. The remainder was produced on state farms of the National Banana Board (NBB), which was also the sole purchasing agent for export. (Three-quarters to four-fifths of production was usually exported annually.) Output dropped considerably from the mid-1970s, attributable to a decline in the overall area cultivated from 8,300 hectares in 1975 to 6,000 hectares in 1979 and in the area of production from 6,100 hectares in 1975 to 5,100 hectares in 1978 (although the later increased again to 5,800 hectares in 1979). Yield per hectare also dropped during this time. Factors behind the decline included inadequate investment (apparently because of uncertainties over possible nationalization), low producer prices (believed to be a main cause), short supplies of fertilizers and pesticides, and management skill inadequacies.

Sugarcane, the second largest commercial crop, is grown for the milling of sugar for domestic use. A major drop in production occurred from the early 1970s from an average of over 400,000 tons harvested annually in the early 1970s to 261,000 tons in 1979. A major factor was the reduction in cultivated area because of developing soil salinity at the Jowhar Sugar Estate on the Juba River. Other factors included shortages of fertilizers and pesticides, degeneration in the quality of planting stock and, in the late 1970s, labor shortages. In 1978 work began on the development of another state-owned sugarcane plantation at Jilib on the lower Juba River having a planned irrigated area of 8,000 hectares. A sugar factory constructed at the site officially went into operation in September 1980. Data on the actual size of the cultivated area, cane production, and other pertinent facts were unavailable in late 1981.