

**COLONIAL POLICIES AND THE FAILURE  
OF SOMALI SECESSIONISM IN THE NORTHERN FRONTIER  
DISTRICT OF KENYA COLONY, c.1890-1968**

**SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
HISTORY DEPARTMENT  
RHODES UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

**ABDIRASHID ABDULLAHI**

**FEBRUARY 1997**

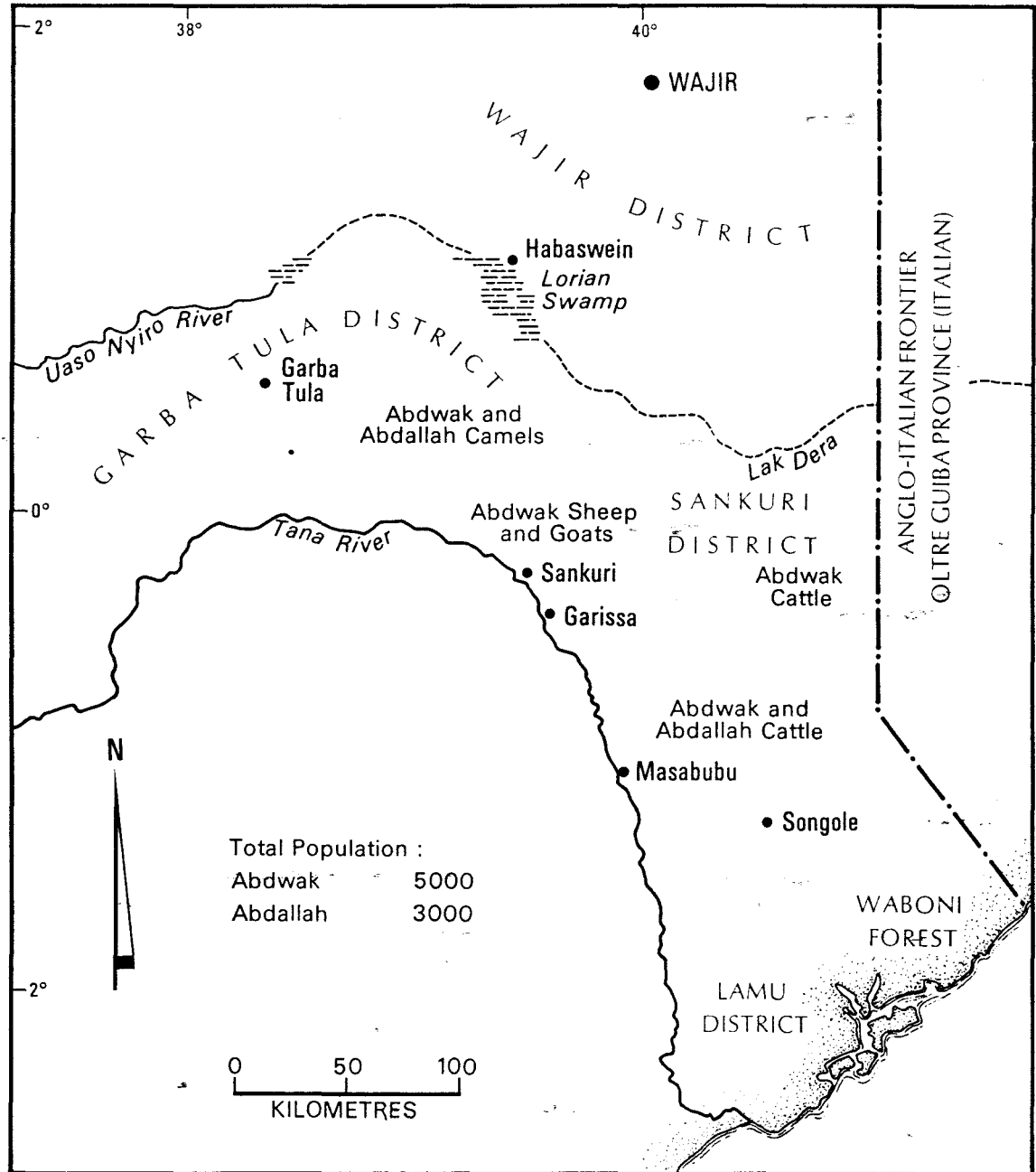
## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the events that took place in the Northern Frontier District / North Eastern Province of Kenya between the late nineteenth century and 1968. After 1900 the imposition of colonial policies impacted on the socio-economic and political structures of the Somali people. This thesis also examines the nature of Somali resistance up to the late 1920s when Somali society was finally pacified. It further examines colonial policies such as the creation of the Somali-Galla line in 1919, the separation of the Jubaland region from the Kenya Colony in 1926 and the Special District Ordinance of 1934. Between 1946 and 1948 the British Government through its Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, attempted to unify Somali territories in the Horn of Africa and this raised Somali hopes of unification. The Bevin Plan collapsed because of the opposition of the United States, the Soviet Union, the French and Ethiopian leaders. Similar hopes of NFD Somali unification were raised between 1958 and 1963 because of the unification of the former British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland. Due to the imminent end of British colonial rule in Kenya, the NFD Somali leaders demanded secession from Kenya to join up with the nascent Somali republic. But the NFD Somali hopes of unification with the Somali Republic were dashed by 1964 because of the same opposition provided by the United States, the French and the Ethiopians. The British Government were all along half-hearted towards Somali unification attempts even though the field administrators adopted a pro-Somali attitude to the issue. In the early 1960s, however, the NFD Somali leaders were faced with the additional opposition of the new KANU government in Kenya. In 1964 the failure of the NFD Somalis to secede from Kenya led to the guerrilla war, what the Kenyan government called the 'shifta movement', that engulfed the North Eastern Region until 1968 when the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Kenyan and the Somali Governments. The signing of the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding by the Kenyan and Somali Governments did not satisfy the NFD Somalis hopes of joining the Somali Republic. The main conclusion of this thesis is that the NFD Somalis, except for few collaborators, did at no time, whether in the colonial or post-colonial eras, accept being in Kenya. By the late 1960s the prospects of NFD Somalis unifying with the Somali Republic were, in view of the forces arrayed against the Somali secessionist movement, slim; and they have remained slim since then.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

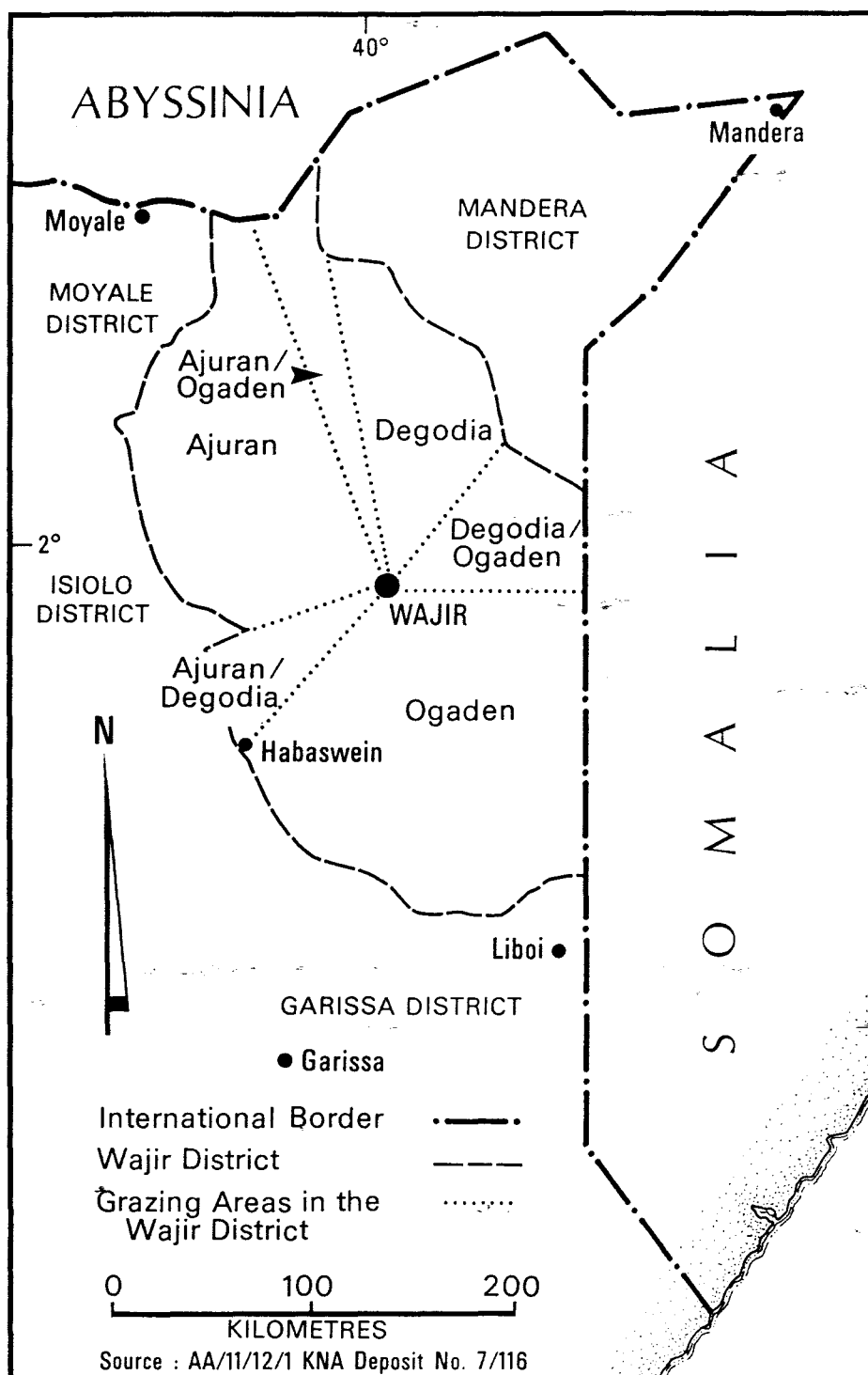
	PAGE
ABSTRACT .....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ii
MAPS .....	iii
SKETCH - WELLS IN WAJIR DISTRICT .....	vii
SOMALI CLAN STRUCTURE .....	viii
PRE-1900 NFD SOMALI POLITICAL STRUCTURE .....	viii
PHOTOGRAPHS .....	ix
ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xiv
INTRODUCTION .....	xv
 <b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	 1
I. The People of the Northern Frontier District and the Jubaland: c.1840-1895	
II. Socio-Political and Economic Organisation of the Pre-Colonial Somali of the Juba and Northern Frontier District	
 <b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	 26
Colonial intrusion and Somali response in the Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya c.1895-1925	
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	 53
Colonial policies and the Northern Frontier districts: c.1920-1950	
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR</b> .....	 89
Political parties, Nationalism and the genesis of identity crises among the Somali of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya: c.1930-1963	
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> .....	 124
How the Kenyatta government responded to the NFD secessionist attempts, c.1964-1968	
 <b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	 152
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	 160

**MAP 1: SANKURI DISTRICT, 1929, SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF CLANS WITH THEIR CAMELS AND CATTLE**

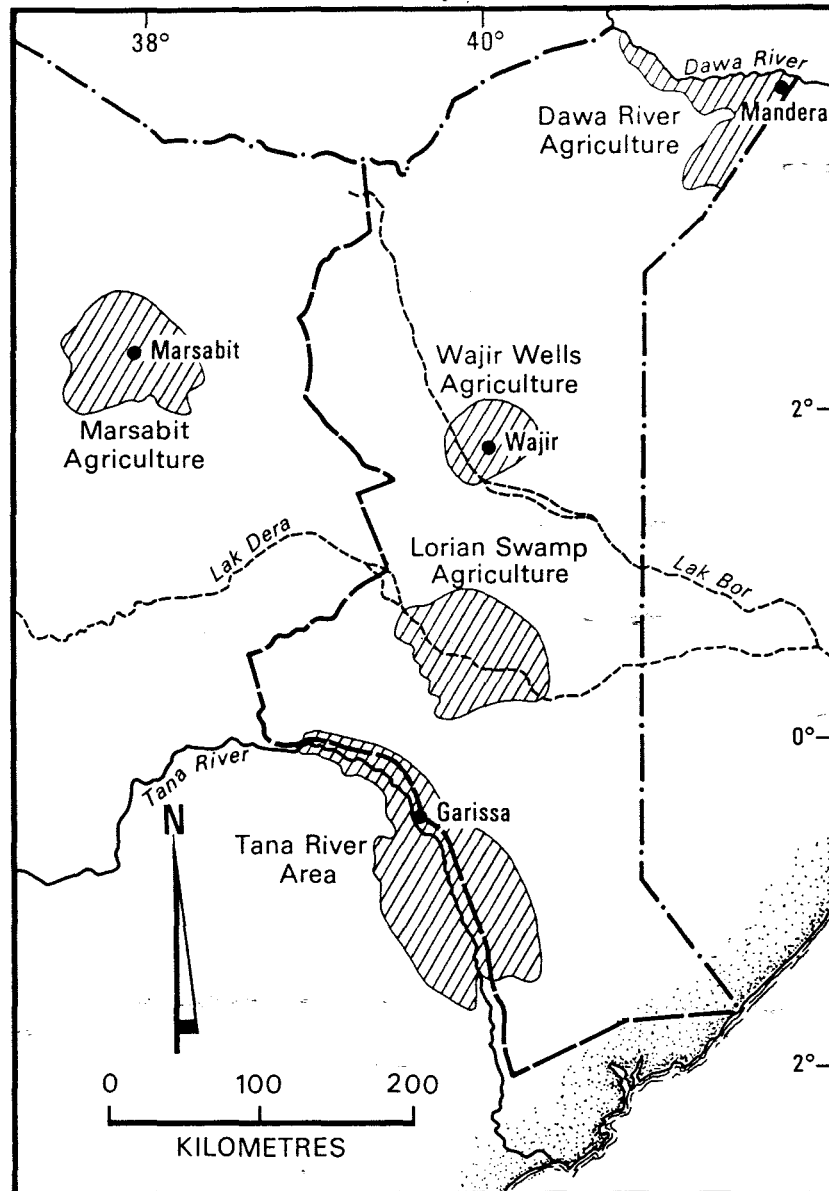




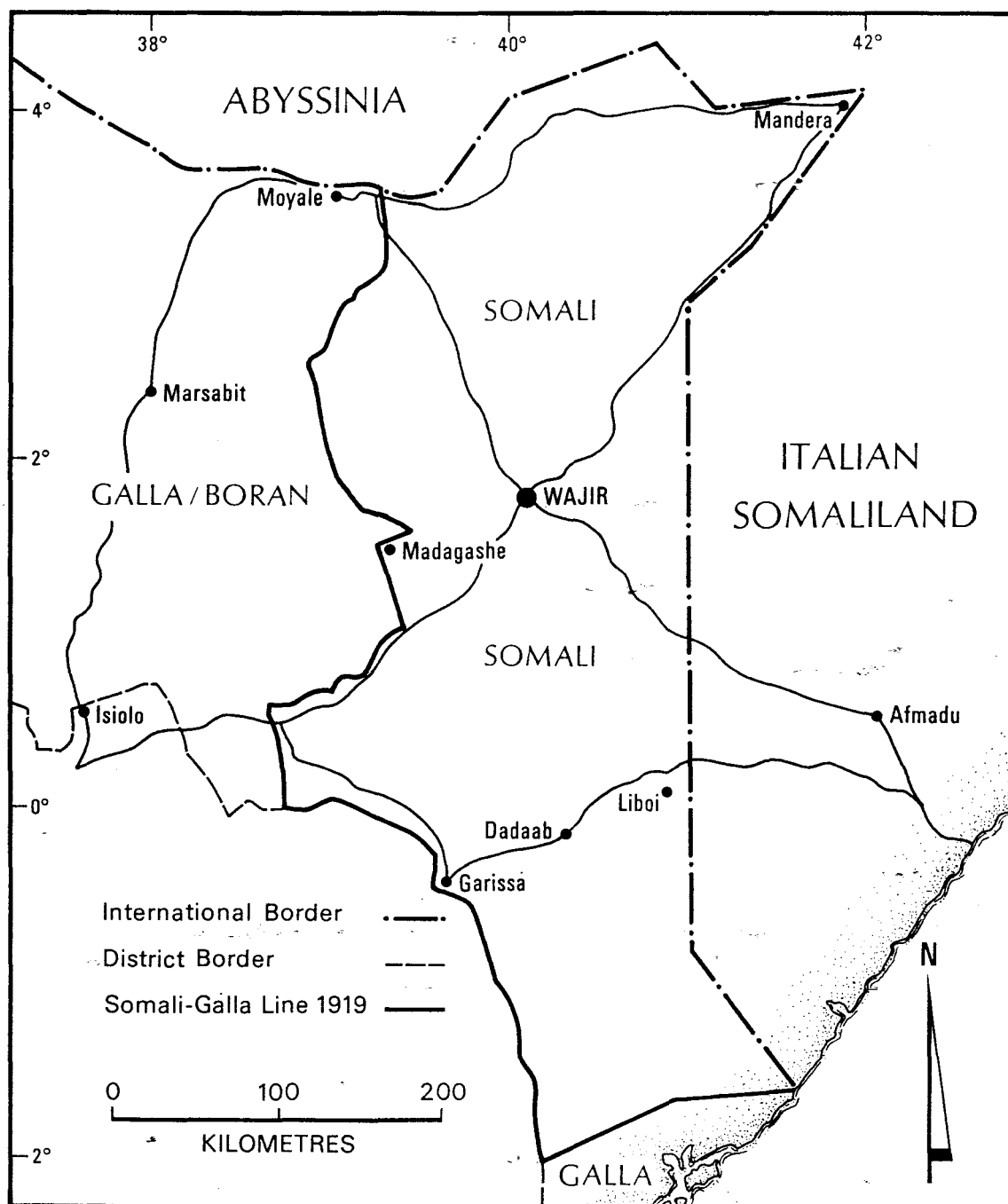
MAP 2: WAJIR DISTRICT, 1936, SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS CLANS AND THE GRAZING ZONES ALLOTTED THEM



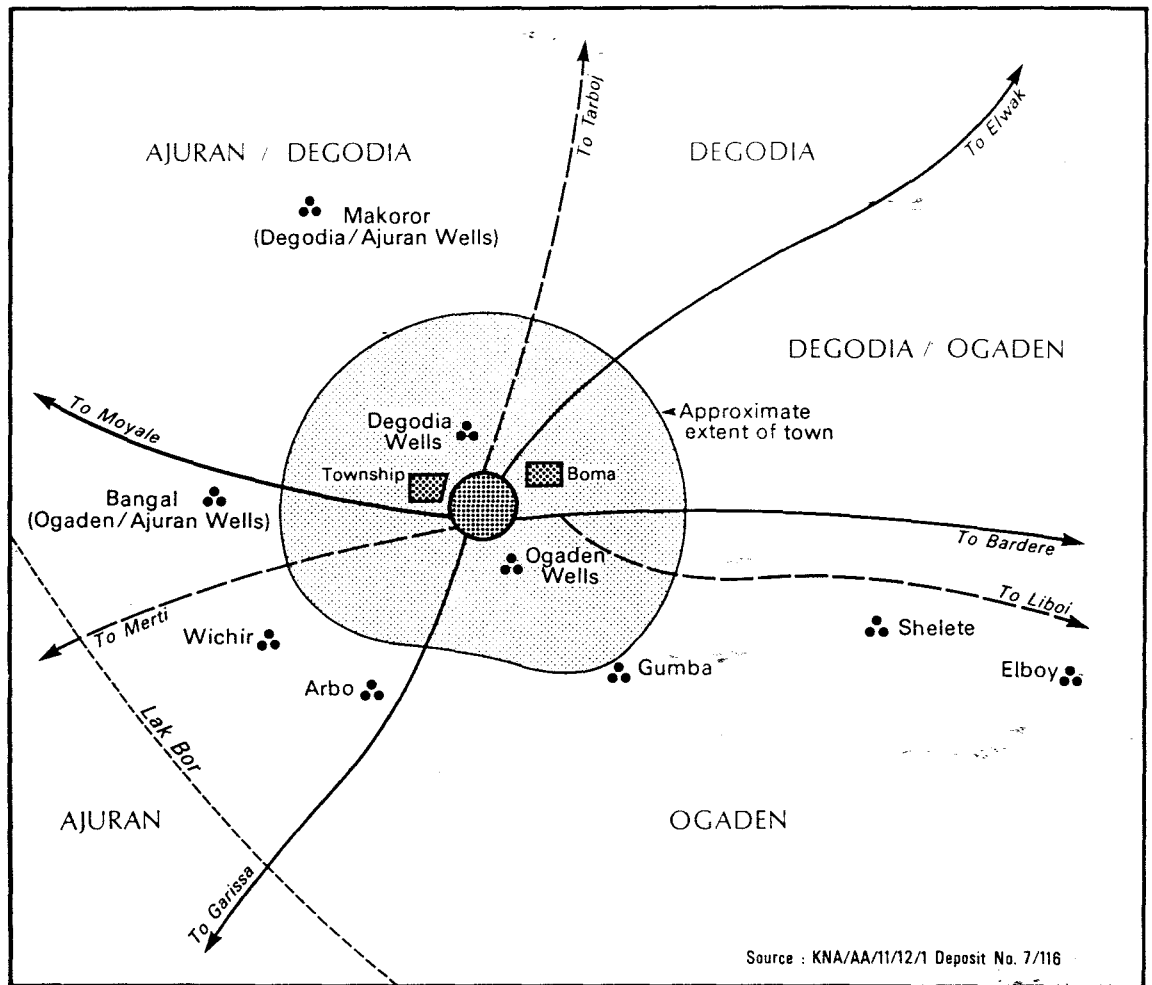
MAP 3: MAIN AGRICULTURAL AREAS OF THE NFD, 1947



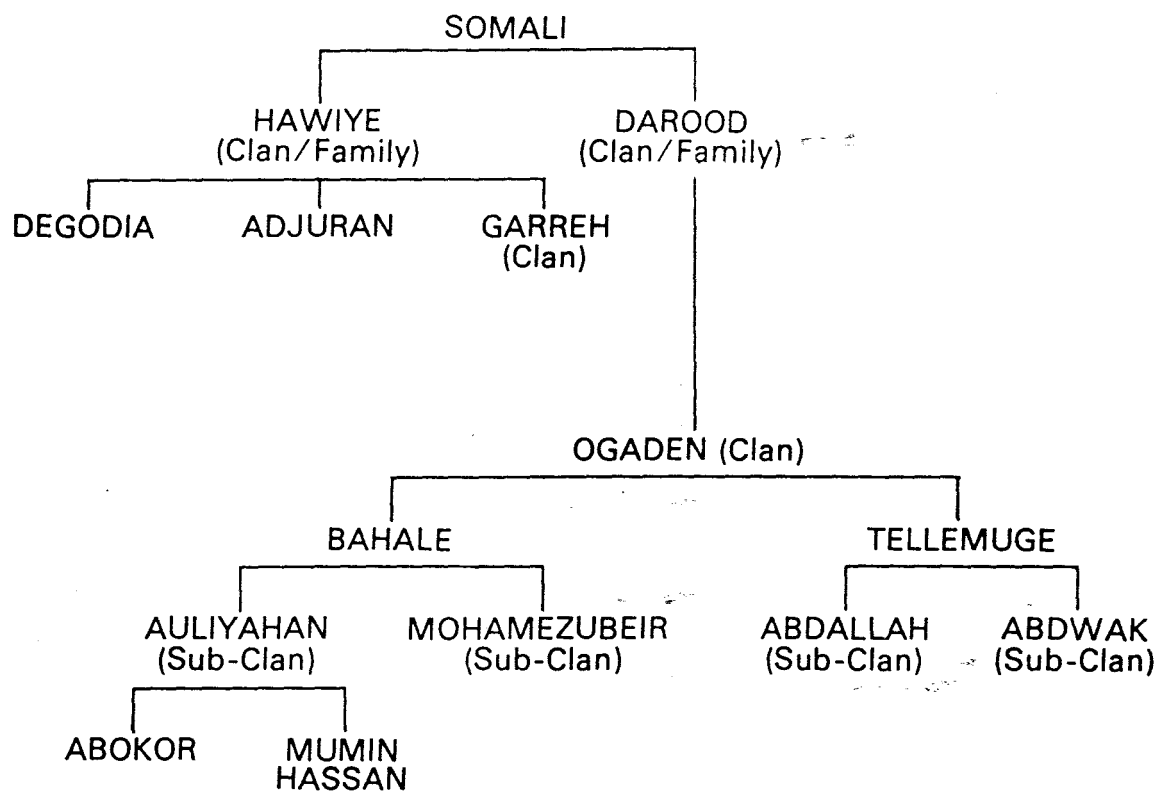
MAP 4: SOMALI-GALLA LINE, 1919, WITH ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRES



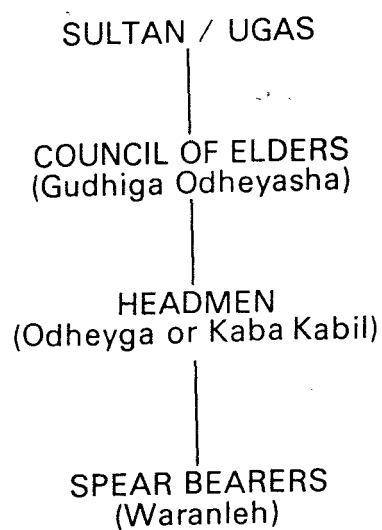
**SKETCH: ALLOCATION OF WELLS IN WAJIR DISTRICT, 1946**



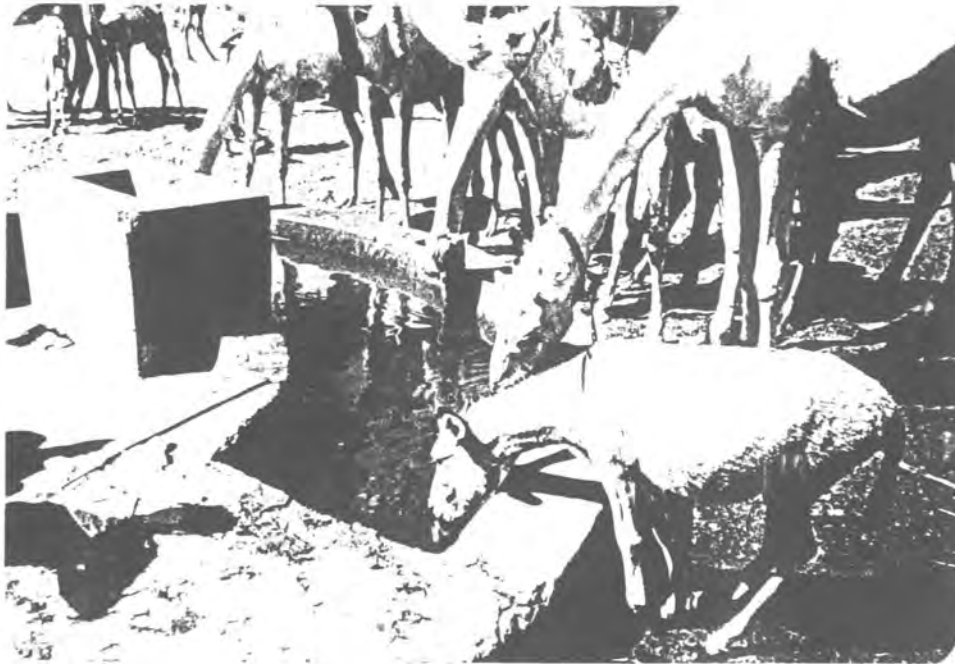
## SOMALI CLAN STRUCTURE



## PRE-1900 NFD SOMALI POLITICAL STRUCTURES



PHOTOGRAPH 1: SOMALI CAMELS DRINKING FROM THE WAJIR WELLS



PHOTOGRAPH 2: PACK CAMELS CONTAINING DRINKING WATER FROM THE WELLS

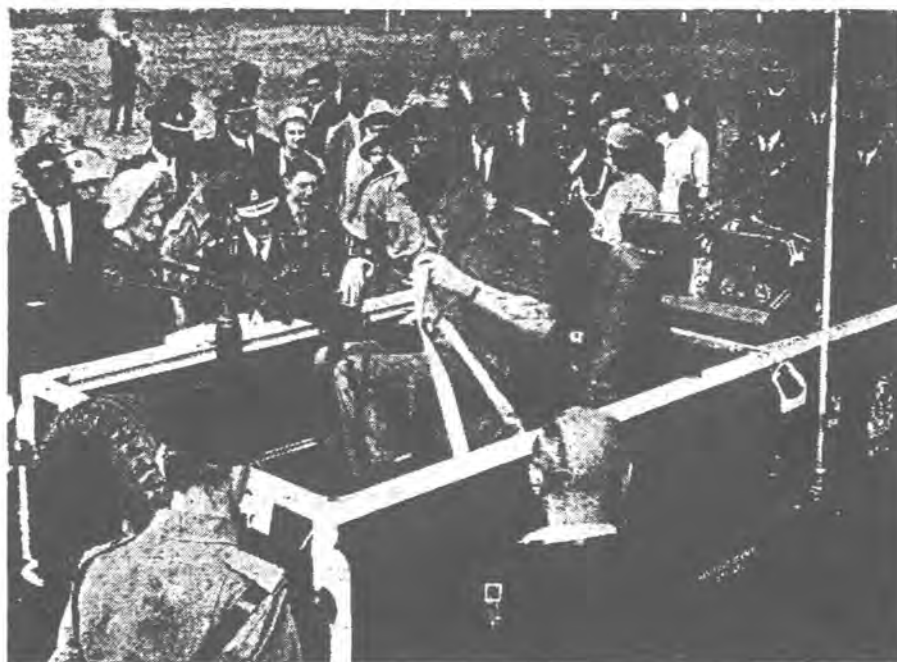


PHOTOGRAPH 3:  
THE 1962 NFD COMMISSION TAKING EVIDENCE FROM THE NFD SOMALIS



PHOTOGRAPH 4:  
BRITISH OFFICERS DISPLAYING MILITARY EQUIPMENT  
TO KENYAN ARMY OFFICERS, 1964

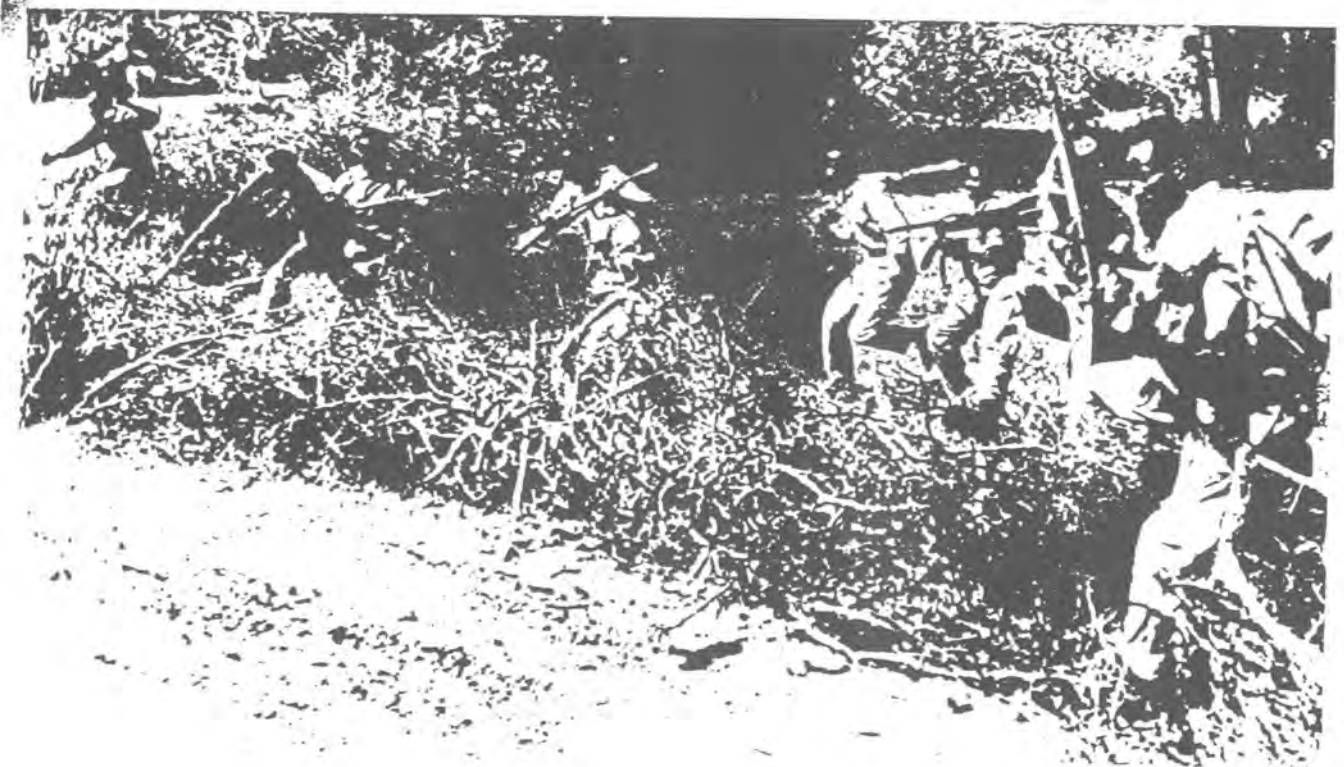
### ***ANTI-SHIFTA WEAPON***



PHOTOGRAPH 5:  
DEKOW MAALIM STAMBOUL, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE NORTHERN  
PROVINCE PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY (NPPPP), 1960-1969



PHOTOGRAPH 6: NFDLF COMBATANTS IN TRAINING, 1965





**PHOTOGRAPH 7:**  
**THE SEASONAL TOGWEYNE RIVER THAT SUPPLIES WATER**  
**TO MADOGASHE CENTRE**



## ABBREVIATIONS

DC	-	District Commissioner
IBEA	-	Imperial British East Africa
KAR	-	Kings' African Rifles
KNA	-	Kenya National Archives
NFDAR	-	Northern Frontier District Annual Report
NFD	-	Northern Frontier District
NFP	-	Northern Frontier Province
ODO	-	Outlying District Ordinance
SDO	-	Special District Ordinance
PC	-	Provincial Commissioner

### Political Parties

GPU	-	Galla Political Union
KADU	-	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	-	Kenya African National Union
NFDP	-	Northern Frontier District Democratic Party
NFDLF	-	Northern Frontier District Liberation Front
NPPPP	-	Northern Province People's Progressive Party
NPM	-	National Political Movement
NPPNU	-	Northern Province People's National Union
NPNU	-	Northern Province Native Union
NPUA	-	Northern Province United Association
UOSA	-	United Ogaden Somali Association
SYL	-	Somali Youth League

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of countless people who have encouraged, and directed, me to numerous places to get the final information. Of special mention are the Department of History, Rhodes University; Rhodes University's Cory Library for Historical Research, and the Inter-University library loan section. The former have supplied much needed journals and papers. The latter came in to assist when the Cory library did not have the materials required.

Special appreciation is due to my academic advisor, Dr J.R.D. Cobbing, who tirelessly encouraged me and had faith in me when many people doubted this work could be done. I am greatly indebted to him. Yusuf Hassan availed not only a computer facility, but also partly financed my research while in Kenya and I am also greatly indebted to him. Without the computer, it would have been difficult to carry out research in the remote North Eastern Province of Kenya. Finally my thanks to Mrs. Charteris who amended the typographical work and without whose help this thesis would have appeared clumsy. To all of them, I owe thanks.

## INTRODUCTION

My wish to write a thesis about the nationalism and identity crisis faced by the Somali and Oromo people in the Northern Frontier District/North Eastern Province<sup>1</sup> of Kenya developed in the late 1980s because of the marginalisation of the Somalis in Kenya. This marginalisation has its roots in the policies adopted by the NFD administrators during the colonial and post-colonial Kenya period. The literature available on the NFD region does not differentiate between the secessionist desires of the NFD Somalis and the 'shifta' banditry that has plagued the region since the early decade of the twentieth century. Kenyan historians and academics deliberately confused the two issues. This thesis postulates that there was a genuine desire by the NFD Somalis to secede and to join Somalia and that there was no 'shifta' movement in the 1960s. Active secessionist struggles, however, ended in 1968 with the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Somalian and Kenyan governments. This did not mean that the secessionist desires of the NFD Somalis were finally put to rest but rather that tensions and border hostilities between the governments of Kenya and Somalia were for the time being cooled.

The literature available on the NFD was written by scholars from outside the region and especially western scholars who have done some research on the historiography of the NFD. Previous works were peripheral and not indepth histories of the NFD region. As a result there was a need for the inhabitants of the region to write their history as they see fit. I myself am a Somali from Garissa. Even though I write this thesis from the perspective of a Somali from the NFD region, however, this is a scholarly work in which I have attempted to maintain academic objectivity. I speak the Somali, Swahili, English and Arabic languages that are widely spoken and used by the NFD people in their daily transactions, and am thus well placed to write about the region's history. But this does not mean that the academic integrity and impartiality of this thesis have been overlooked.

The chapters in this thesis are organised chronologically from the late nineteenth century to

---

1. Northern Frontier District was the original name given to the vast regions to the north and east of the Kenya Highlands. In 1947 the region became Northern Frontier Province. In 1964 the region's name changed again and became the North Eastern Region of Kenya.

1968. Chapter One will be discussing the socio-political and economic structures of the pre-colonial Somali society. Chapter two will be looking at the onset of colonial rule and Somali reactions to this phenomena. Chapter three will investigate the high noon of colonial rule in the NFD region and the various policies pursued by the NFD administrators. Chapter four will investigate the origins of modern political parties and their aims and policies of wishing to create 'Greater Somalia' in the Horn of Africa. The various policies adopted by the colonial powers in the Horn of Africa up to their departure will also be analysed. Chapter five will look at the nationalism and identity crisis felt by the NFD Somali and Oromo peoples in the early 1960s when independence was granted to the various colonies in the Horn of Africa. From 1964 to 1968 the Somali and Oromo people in the NFD region fought a guerrilla war against the nascent independent Kenyatta government because of the failure to achieve peaceful secession of the NFD region to Somalia. Kenyatta's bid to retain the NFD region was supported by the British Government which had nevertheless all along led the Somalis to believe that they would be joined up with the Somali Republic. Previous scholars have avoided the role played by the British Government in the early 1960s in the creation of an identity crisis among the NFD Somali and Oromo people. Furthermore, the role played by the British Government in squashing the NFD Somali dreams of joining up with the Somali Republic has been overlooked by previous scholars. In this thesis the role of the British and Ethiopian governments in helping to maintain the 'territorial integrity' of Kenya will be dealt with.

The NFD Somalis in what became the North Eastern Region of Kenya have been the most misunderstood community in Kenya since the early decades of the twentieth century. This is because the Somalis in the North Eastern Region of Kenya were nomads who criss-crossed the boundary between Italian Somaliland and the Kenya colony in search of water and pastures for themselves and their livestock. For example the Somali nomads in the Kenya colony were to be found in the Somali Republic during the *Jilaal* or the dry season from January to March because the dry-season water wells were found in Somalia. They grazed their livestock in North Eastern Province during the rest of the year. Their movements to and from Somalia confused not only the colonial government in Kenya but also the independent Kenyatta government that replaced the British colonial government. The Somali-Galla line created in 1919 was meant to halt the nomadic Somali propensities to displace the Oromo communities from their traditional grazing lands. Somalis who were found to the west of the

line were severely punished and their livestock impounded by the NFD administration. Taxation policy adopted by the NFD administration during the 1930s forced certain Somali nomads to migrate to Italian Somaliland, while others crossed the Somali-Galla line to avoid tax collectors. In 1934 the colonial government in Kenya declared the then NFD region a 'closed district' through the Special District Ordinance. As a result of this policy the NFD region was closed not only from the rest of the Kenya colony but also from the then Italian Somaliland until 1964.

Between 1941 and 1950 all Somali territories except French Somaliland were under British administration. It was during this period when the British Government adopted the Bevin Plan to unify all Somali territories under one administering authority that there developed among the Somalis throughout the Horn of Africa a wish to unite all Somali territories. The British Government, however, were not focused on the unification of Somali territories and the Bevin Plan was abandoned.

During the negotiations for Kenya's independence, the NFD Somalis wished to join up with the nascent Somali Republic in 1963 as they had never cultivated any links with the rest of the Kenya colony in the past. The Kenya nationalists, however, did not want to see any part of Kenya separated and vociferously demanded the retention of the NFD region as part and parcel of an independent Kenya. Kenyan nationalists argued that the separation of the NFD region would encourage other border communities like the Kuria and Masaai to secede if the NFD Somali wish of secession was granted. Unlike the Somali community, Kenyan border communities such as the Masaai and the Kuria, were not alienated during the colonial era nor did they wish to link up with their larger communities in Tanganyika. The Masaai and the Kuria were made to feel as belonging to Kenya colony.

The British Government attempted to unify all Somali territories both in 1948 and 1962. But on both occasions the British Government was not focused on the unification of Somali territories because of pragmatic politics which dictated otherwise. The feeble attempts by the British to articulate the hopes of the larger Somali people in Horn of Africa of Africa and in particular the NFD Somali desires for unification heightened their sense of nationalism and identity crisis. In 1948 the British in their bid to unify all Somali territories were opposed by the Americans, the USSR, the French and the Ethiopians; and in the 1960s the same forces



joined by the new KANU government in Kenya were against the NFD Somali secession.

By 1964 conflict between the NFD Somalis and the Kenyan government was inevitable. The Kenyatta government which replaced the colonial government in Kenya inherited a 'closed district' which had been separated from the rest of Kenya in the past. Because the NFD Somalis had not interacted with the communities in the rest of Kenya and had instead looked to Somalia in the past, they felt the need to secede from Kenya and join up with the nascent Somali Republic. In order to counter NFD Somali secession desires the Kenyatta government adopted the same policies that were pursued by the departing NFD colonial administration. In these policies which were meant to safeguard Kenya's territorial integrity, Kenyatta had the unwavering support of the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, who faced a similar secession crisis in the Somali-inhabited region of Ogadenia. After 1963 the Kenyatta government in a bid to stamp out the NFD secession pursued harsh policies such as villagisation which further alienated the nomadic Somalis. The Somali government, which had all along been agitating for the NFD secession, was forced to come to the assistance of the NFD Somalis by providing them with military equipment and training facilities.<sup>14</sup>

After 1964 Kenyan historians and politicians viewed the Somali secession negatively. This was because Kenyans in general, and historians in particular had very little historical understanding of the NFD Somalis. Because of media projections of NFD Somalis, Kenyans viewed the Somali as *shifita* or bandits who did not warrant much academic attention. This thesis will in a way correct the misconception held by the Kenyan mainstream academics that Somalis were unjustified in wishing to secede from Kenya and join up with Somalia.

The NFD Somali experience in an independent Kenya is riddled with contradictions. On the one hand the independent Kenyatta government strongly wished to retain the NFD region as part of Kenya. But on the other, the Kenyatta government did little in the way of seeking the loyalty of the NFD Somalis by initiating meaningful developmental projects. Instead the NFD region of Kenya remained as remote and undeveloped as it was when the first administrative station was opened at Archers Post in 1908. The NFD Somalis were not integrated with mainstream Kenyan society and nothing has been done to make them feel as if they belong to a wider Kenyan society.

This thesis will hopefully shed some light on misconceptions held by Kenyan historians who have always negatively projected the history of the NFD region. It is hoped that the thesis will also assist future scholars not only from Kenya, but all those interested in the history of the region to further understand the historiography of the region which has largely been ignored except at the peripheral level. E.R. Turton<sup>2</sup>, and Peter Dalleo<sup>3</sup>, however, deserve a mention in that the former did some research on the resistance waged by the NFD Somalis in the early part of the twentieth century. Dalleo has done some research on the NFD Somali - especially on the effects of colonial rule on the NFD Somali pre-colonial trade and pastoralism. This work is a continuation of the works of these scholars: it examines the effects of colonial policies on the nationalism and identity of the NFD Somalis.

Due to financial limitations, I could not visit other archival centres other than the Kenya National Archives which proved invaluable as they contained the NFD region's history from the late nineteenth century to 1968. Oral interviews, especially those conducted with the leaders who shaped the course of events, were invaluable in providing insightful information on the nationalism and identity crisis experienced by the people of NFD of Kenya to this day. To write a thesis such as this one in Kenya would not have been possible because the post-independent Kenyan governments, whose policy was and still is to maintain the status quo in the North Eastern Province of Kenya, would not have allowed a Somali from the region to carry out a historical research into the NFD history. There is a certain irony in the fact that I was writing this thesis at Rhodes University in South Africa, a university named after one of the major British imperialists of the nineteenth century.

- 
2. E. R. Turton has written a number of articles on the NFD region such as 'Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Political Activity in Kenya 1893-1960', *Journal of African History* VIII, 1 (1972). This otherwise excellent article lacks the depth and tone of the NFD region's history.
  3. Peter Dalleo's works concentrated on the economic aspects of the NFD regions' history without showing how this has affected the lives of the people of the region. It is commendable that his works, however, will remain invaluable to future scholars.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT AND THE JUBALAND: c.1840-1895

#### I

The pre-colonial history of what would become the Northern Frontier District and the Jubaland region of the British East African Protectorate is marked by the effects of migration by the Somali nomadic people who in the process displaced the Oromo and Rendille communities from both regions. The Rendille and Oromo communities in turn displaced Bantu tribes such as the Riverine Pokomo, Kamba and Giriama communities who had always lived to the west of the pastoralist societies. Migrations by the nomadic Somali and Oromo people would be halted in 1885 by the establishment of the British colonial rule in the region. The Somali and Oromo people in the Northern Frontier District and the Jubaland Region, like their larger counterparts in what would become Italian and Abyssinian territories, resisted the onset of colonial rule from 1885 until the 1920s when superior fire power was available to the British forces. By 1910, the Somali and Oromo people had accepted colonial rule as a hard reality which they had to adopt and in the process make the best use of their situation. By 1840 the Adjuran a sub-clan of the Hawiye clan-family were firmly established in the NFD and had been *sheegats* (clients) of the Oromo people whom the Adjuran had met in the NFD. The Hawiye-clan family make up one of the three main clan-families that comprise the Somali people, with the Darood and Issak being the other two. The Issak clan-family are not represented in the NFD and Jubaland and are to be found in the far northern tip of the Horn of Africa.

The North Eastern Province of Kenya and the Jubaland region of Somalia are inhabited by the two main clan-families of the Darood and the Hawiye Somalis. The Daroods in Jubaland are represented by the Ogaden who are the majority in Jubaland. There are Harti settlers in the coastal towns and in the urban areas. The Marehans are to be found in the extreme northern portion of Jubaland, while in north-eastern Kenya there are groups of Hawiye as well as Darood clan families. The former are represented by the Gurreh in Mandera district and the Degodia and Adjuran in Wajir district. The Ogaden seem to occupy the largest expanse of land in the North Eastern Province, settling from the southern area of Wajir in

the north to the Boni forest in the coastal area. The Boran Galla live in the north eastern region of the Somali-inhabited areas while the Rendille and Samburus live in the eastern portions.

The Ogaden Somali of Garissa share the Tana river with the remnants of the Orma Galla and the riverine tribes of the Pokomo and the Munya Yaya.<sup>1</sup> The Galla speaking people are distinctly different from the Somali in that they speak a different language from the Somali even though they are of the same Cushitic group of people. The Galla people physically resemble the Somali especially those who have intermarried with the Somali community from the nineteenth century onwards. Like the Somali people, they keep cattle, camels and sheep. Unlike the Somali, however, a minority of the Galla people cultivate crops such as millet and sorghum along the Tana river. Their adaptation to agriculture was due to the close contacts they developed with the Bantu peoples such as the Munya Yaya and the Pokomo. The Galla exchange their agricultural commodities for livestock from the Somali especially in the *Jilaal* or the dry season when the Somali pastoralists will readily part with their animals. Most of the Galla have been converted to the Islamic faith since the late 1870s due to their close contacts with the Somali. The Galla/Orma have been displaced over the last century, from their traditional grazing grounds in Garissa and are today found to the west of the Tana river.

### THE OGADEN

The Ogaden people occupy both the North Eastern Province of Kenya and the Jubaland region of Somalia. It is widely held that it is they who dislodged the Galla/Orma and other contiguous communities in 1840 from the Juba area and the southern parts of North Eastern Province. According to E.R. Turton, 'by the 1860's the Galla had lost control over the area between the Juba and the Tana rivers, just as hundreds of years before they had wrested control over the same area from the Somali'.<sup>2</sup> The linguistic, genealogical and oral evidence found along the Somali Benadir Coast indicates that indeed the Somali were settled there long

- 
1. Kenya National Archives (hereafter KNA) PC NFD/4/6/1. Jubaland Political Records Pre-1915 (hereafter JPR).
  2. E.R. Turton, 'The Bantu, Galla and Somali Migrations in the Horn of Africa: a Reassessment of the Juba/Tana Area', *Journal of African History*, XVI, 4 (1975), pp.519-537.

before the arrival of the Galla expansion southwards.<sup>3</sup> The Ogadens who were among the first Somali clans to have displaced the Galla from Jubaland came in two major waves.<sup>4</sup> The first wave commenced in the early 1800s and was characterised by slow penetration in which the search for grazing has been cited as the main reason behind the migration. At this stage the Ogaden were a small group that became *sheegats* (clientship) of the dominant Rahanwein clan who were settled in the upper reaches of the Juba river. The Rahanwein are a by-product of the inter-marriage of the various Somali clans and the Galla. The Rahanwein, for this reason, speak a different dialect of Somali called 'Mai mai'.

The second wave, starting in the mid 1830s, was composed of a larger group which numbered over four hundred fighting men who tried to evict the Rahanwein but could not do so after several bloody battles.<sup>5</sup> The Ogaden had to escape from them and cross to the west bank of the Juba river. They became *sheegats* to the Galla who lived here. While the Ogaden lived with the Galla from the 1840s to the 1850s, their numbers were being continuously increased by new arrivals from Ogadenia and Mudugh region in what became Ethiopia and Somalia. After gaining numerical strength the Ogaden mercilessly fell upon their host and drove them from the west bank of the Juba river by mid 1870s.<sup>6</sup> The Ogaden threat was a long term one since it took them more than two decades to achieve dominance over the Galla in the Juba region.

The immediate threat to Galla dominance in the Juba, however, came from other areas. The Bardera settlement under Sheikh Abiker along the Juba River, for one, continuously raided the Galla. Turton notes that the defeats suffered by the Wardei as a result of the Bardera settlement had 'seriously weakened them at a time when they were being harassed by a more tenacious enemy further west'.<sup>7</sup> Turton has further noted that the Wardei (a name used by the Somali since the 1840s to refer to the Oromo people originating from the root word War-

- 
3. For details of the oral, linguistic and written evidence, see H.S. Lewis, 'The Origins of the Galla and the Somali', *Journal of Africa History*, VII, I (1966), pp.27-46. See also Turton, 'Bantu, Galla and Somali Migrations', pp.519-537.
  4. Interview with Yussuf Dahir Magan, Nairobi, January 1996. See also E.R. Turton, 'Jubaland and the NFD in the 19th Century', British Institute for Eastern Africa (Nairobi, no date).
  5. Interview with Yussuf Dahir Magan, Nairobi, January 1996.
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. Turton, 'Jubaland and the NFD' pp.1-16.

dei which means 'look at') were continuously attacked by the Garreh and a host of other clans who lived in the north western parts of the Wardei country, to such an extent that by the mid-1840s 'the northern limits of the Wardei were generally represented as being somewhere to the south of Bardera and no further north than Dif'.<sup>8</sup> The balance of power between the Wardei and the Ogaden who lived among them had been one of equal strength for a number of years 'and the stalemate on the Juba continued for a number of years'.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that the Ogaden were just waiting for an opportune moment to become independent of the Wardei whom they held in contempt.<sup>10</sup>

This opportunity presented itself in 1865 when 'the Wardei were struck by a plague of smallpox which according to them, was brought into Afmadu by the new Somali immigrants'.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this manifest weakening of the Wardei they were attacked on all fronts and it is no surprise that they could not defend themselves but had to flee for their lives. According to Turnbull, 'the main conflict was in the east; and the actions fought at Afmadu, on the Deshek Wama, and at El Lein are still spoken of by the tribe'.<sup>12</sup> The Ogaden were at this point led by the grand old man of the Abd Wak, Abdi Ibrahim, the Sultan, while there were a number of 'invasion commanders'<sup>13</sup> under him. Abdi Ibrahim was noted for his bravery and skill in war strategy which eventually led to the Ogaden dominance in the Jubaland. His remarkable leadership qualities are still remembered to this day by the Ogaden. Notable among his commanders were Magan Yussuf, the Sultan of the Mohamed Zubeir/ Ogaden, and Hassan Berjan of the Abdalla/Ogaden.

The Ogaden clan were a united clan under the apt and recognised leadership of Abdi Ibrahim as the *Sultan* of all the component sub-clans. It was for convenience and safety that they remained united in the face of stiff opposition not only from the Wardei but also from other

---

8. *Ibid.*

9. R.G. Turnbull, 'The Darod Invasion', *Kenya Police Review Report* (Nairobi, 1957), pp.308-313.

10. Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996. See also Turnbull, 'Darod Invasion', pp.308-313; Turton, 'Jubaland and the NFD', pp.1-16.

11. Turnbull, 'Darod Invasion', p.6.

12. *Ibid.*

13. A term I coined for lack of a better phrase to describe the various sub-clan *Sultans* who assumed a new responsibility.

Hawiye clans on the left bank of the Juba.<sup>14</sup> A group of warriors numbering two to three hundred were at any given time on a raiding assignment to the Wardei and the latter though always prepared to defend themselves were no match for the determined and skilful Ogaden who believed they were waging a Jihad or a holy war against what they viewed as the 'Galla madow' or 'the black infidels'.<sup>15</sup>

Having displaced the Wardei from the Juba region the Ogaden were not content to settle down but continued their southward expansion since the loot from the Wardei was an appetizing reason to continue their raids. The availability of fresh pastures in the conquered lands coupled with the availability of surface water, especially after the rainy seasons around Afmadu and the Deshek Wama in the southern Jubaland, were other compelling factors that encouraged the Ogaden to continue their raiding forays into the Wardei country. As a result, the Wardei were being pushed south and westwards at the end of every rainy season.<sup>16</sup> Added to these incentives, there was also population pressure due to constant emigration from Ogadenia and the northern regions especially by the Galti Ogaden and Galti Marehan.<sup>17</sup> These new immigrants made it their practice to raid and to loot everything that came their way especially as they had come from the north with no livestock of their own.<sup>18</sup> The Galla/Wardei were continuously impoverished after every raid as they never seemed to successfully repulse them while the Ogaden accumulated large herds of cattle.

The Ogaden migration towards the Tana in the 1860s and 1870s, was one of struggle to wrest control of the land from the Wardei. The Ogaden were firmly established along the banks of the Tana River by the 1870's, having virtually conquered and subordinated the Galla to Somali domination. According to Turnbull

the attack [of 1865 by the Somali when the Wardei were weakened by plague] was so unexpected and so violent that the Wardei were utterly broken by it. Scattered though the fighting was, hundreds were killed; those who survived either fled to neighbouring tribes or became serfs to the Mohamed Zubeir, the Telemuggeh, or the Magabul. Many were sold as slaves in the markets of Lamu, and Zanzibar. It is said that at the end of the century the Wardei as a

---

14. Interview with Hassan Abdi, Johannesburg, April 1996.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. 'Galti' is a person who is newcomer to a place.

18. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.



separate entity were reduced to no more than seven families.<sup>19</sup>

To confirm the above contention by Turnbull, one informant noted in 1996 that the Ogaden had by the mid-1870s reached the river Sabaki/Galana near Lamu on the coast, having forced the retreating Wardei to cross the river. While there, they marked tribal symbols on trees and deliberated on whether to settle or not. They finally decided not to settle around the Sabaki River because of tsetse fly which the Somali pastoralists feared would decimate their livestock and people.<sup>20</sup> From this evidence one can conclude that the Wardei were completely overwhelmed by the Ogaden expansion and that had it not been for the arrival of Imperial British East African Company rule in 1885, the Wardei would have ceased to exist as a community with a separate cultural and political identity. This would have been a tragic loss of the southern vanguards of the great Galla expansion southwards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. No wonder people like Dr Kraph and Rebman thought that it was easier to reach the Ethiopian Galla from the coast of what would become the British colony of Kenya. The Wardei community that remained east of the Tana River intermarried with the Somalis and were in the process absorbed by the Somali and ceased to exist as a separate community after the 1850s.

The migratory routes taken by the various Ogaden clans appear to have been straight-forward in that they entered what would later be called the Northern Frontier District from an easterly direction. The camel-owning clans among the Ogaden preferred the country of Wajir in the centre which was endowed with salt licks and lush vegetation with less tsetse fly. The Mohamed Zubeir and the Auliyahan preferred Wajir country while the Abdalla and Abdwak opted for the 'dusty, gray, soft addable [a soil type] which provided good grazing for cattle'.<sup>21</sup>

Today the traces of Galla presence are apparent. The place names of the North Eastern Province were given or used by the Wardei.<sup>22</sup> For example the small out-post of 'El Wak' means 'the Well of God' in Wardei language. Alango Arba is another Wardei place name.

---

19. Turnbull, 'Darod Invasion', pp.308-313.

20. Interview with Abdi Haji, Nairobi, January 1996.

21. P.T. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism: Economic Factors in the History of the Somali of North Eastern Kenya, 1892-1948' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Syracuse University, 1975), p.9.

22. Interview with Tawane Abdi Haji, Nairobi, January 1996.

Many Somalis, especially the Abdwak Ogaden, forcefully married Wardei women in the process of the latter's displacement from Jubaland and the North Eastern Province of Kenya. Once married to Somali men, Wardei women gained their freedom and were no longer treated with contempt. The descendants of the children of Wardei mothers are many and they live among the Ogaden Somalis in Garissa. The Somali dialect spoken in North Eastern Province has been influenced by the Wardei language and is significantly different from the one spoken in Northern Somalia. Many words such as *kunya* (shrub vegetation) spoken by the Somali in the North Eastern Province are indeed from the Wardei language.

There are Hawiye clans besides the Ogaden to be found in what became the Northern Frontier District. Among the most important are the Degodia, the Ajuran and the Garreh sub-clans. The former two are to be found in Wajir District and the latter are to be found in Mandera in the far north eastern corner of Kenya.

### THE ADJURAN

The Adjuran are the oldest Somali clan thought to have lived in what would become the Northern Frontier District. They have lived in their present areas for five generations as *sheegats* to the Galla and occupied a wide range of land for grazing until the arrival of the Somali in the late nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

It is believed that the Adjuran migrated from the country around Afgoye, 15 km from Mogadishu in Somalia, where they had been the ruling dynasty from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries.<sup>24</sup> The Adjuran dynasty was destroyed when many other Somali clans, such as the Abgaal and the Bimaal, started settling among them in the eighteenth century. The Adjuran were eventually forced to move westwards towards what was to become the Northern Frontier District of Kenya.<sup>25</sup> With the destruction of their dynasty the Adjuran, like other Somali clans, scattered in all directions, though their main body is still to be found around central - southern Somalia. Some of the Adjuran crossed the River Juba and settled in the Wajir district in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth where they

---

23. Turton, 'Jubaland and the NFD', p.5.

24. L. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of the Somali Society* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), pp.84-118.

25. *Ibid.*, p.94.

became '*sheegats* with the Galla'.<sup>26</sup>

The Adjuran have intermingled so much with the Galla that they have become indistinguishable from their host over the past three centuries. They share cultural as well as linguistic ties with the Galla.<sup>27</sup> One distinct cultural trait they have borrowed from the Galla was the concept of a woman having two husbands. An outsider marrying into the Adjuran community has to share his wife with a local husband who goes away when the true husband is around. This type of cultural habit, which is widely practised, is called '*Gaariyo*'.<sup>28</sup> With the establishment of colonial rule in the NFD in the 1900s, however, this cultural trait of the Adjuran was discouraged as it was believed it was the major source of the spread of venereal disease especially gonorrhoea which was highly prevalent among the Boran and the Adjuran.<sup>29</sup>

Over the years, the Adjurans were subjected to constant raids by both the Degodia and the Ogaden. It is ironic that the Degodia, who for a long time were *sheegats* to the Adjuran, started to raid them after gaining numerical strength especially in the 1890s and early 1900s. From the early decades of this century, the Adjurans have constantly been pushed westward by the more powerful and numerically superior Degodias, who have used the time-honoured method of slow penetration and eventual raiding of the neighbouring clan. The Adjuran on their part started displacing the Galla amongst whom for a long time they had lived as *sheegats*.<sup>30</sup> Today the Adjuran are to be found in western Wajir, though the majority are in Moyale district. Even in western Wajir, the Adjuran traditional stronghold, they have been outnumbered by the Degodia and this has become a constant source of conflict between the two clans.<sup>31</sup>

### THE DEGODIA

The Degodia appear to be most recent immigrants to the Northern Frontier District. They came to settle in Mandera and Wajir districts as recently as 1900 and later.<sup>32</sup> The Degodia

---

26. *Ibid.*, p.95.

27. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

28. *Ibid.*

29. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1925.

30. Turton, 'Jubaland and the NFD', p.2.

31. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

32. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1926.



migrated from a place in southern Ethiopia called Addo, as result of the inter-clan wars and the scarcity of pastures in that area. The Ogaden pressure in the southern Ogadenia and Bale regions of what was to become the Ethiopian Empire, especially the wars waged by the Rer Afgab Auliyahan and the Marehan, forced the Degodia to migrate to the Garreh country in the vicinity of Mandera of what was to become the Kenya Colony.<sup>33</sup> While in the Garreh country in Mandera area, they sought permission to graze their camels from the Garreh Sultan, Shaba Alio, who allowed them to do so unsuspectingly. After two decades, the Degodia population increased considerably and their competition for both water and pastures led to constant conflicts with the Garreh.<sup>34</sup> Having attained numerical strength, the Degodia continually harassed and raided the Garreh, until the latter could not take any more. But the Garreh on their own could not challenge the Degodia clan in warfare.

During the period from 1900 to 1905, the Garreh had to make alliances with the Tigrean 'shifta' (outlaws) from Abyssinia and Adjurans in order to go to war against Degodia. The presence of the Tigrean 'shifta' in the vicinity of Mandera area provided the Garreh with an opportune moment to declare war on the Degodia since the Tigrean 'shifta' could be hired for the loot that would be available to all. The Degodia were routed and dispersed in two directions. One group took a southerly direction and another group took a westerly direction.<sup>35</sup> Those who came to the Wajir wells came as *sheegats* to the recently arrived Ogadens and the Adjurans who had long been settled there.<sup>36</sup> It was only with the arrival of British administrative rule that those Degodia who lived as *sheegats* to the Ogaden were finally evicted from them after long court battles.<sup>37</sup> Today the Degodia occupy Wajir East and West among the Adjuran.

### THE GARREH

The Garreh are the largest clan in Mandera district. It is believed that they also came from southern Ethiopia and have long been *sheegats* to the Galla of Southern Ethiopia.<sup>38</sup> Not only have they adopted some cultural traits of the Boran but even linguistically, are bilingual

---

33. *Ibid.*, 1920.

34. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

35. *Ibid.*

36. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1930.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

and speak the Galla language fluently.<sup>39</sup> The Garreh are widely scattered throughout Mandera though; their largest numbers are to be found in Southern Ethiopia where their sultan lives.

To conclude so far: the Somali tribes living in the Northern Frontier District are but portions of larger clans living either in Ethiopia or Somalia. Their most influential leaders were to be found across the borders.<sup>40</sup> Peter Thomas Dalleo noted:

those [Somalis] in North Eastern Kenya, perhaps more than any other, were on the periphery of Somali society. They were offshoots of larger groups located in neighbouring Ethiopia and Somaliland. The Ogaden and the Hawiye in Northeastern Kenya were less organized, less numerous, and less connected to the traditions of their brethren. Nevertheless they were the vanguard for Somali expansion in the area between the Tana and the Juba rivers. They provided the challenge to the Orma and the Borana, the Rendille and the Samburu, the Masai, the Pokomo, and the Kamba. They also controlled the trade of this area. And when the British established administration in northern Kenya, these Somali nomads finally faced the challenge met earlier by the larger groups in Somaliland.<sup>41</sup>

## II

### SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANISATION OF THE PRE-COLONIAL SOMALI OF THE JUBA AND THE NORTH EASTERN PROVINCE

All of the Somali clans<sup>42</sup> that are found in the North Eastern Province and the Jubaland region of Somalia are segments or parts of larger clan-families which are to be found in either Ethiopia or Somalia.<sup>43</sup> The clans are either of Darood or Hawiye origin. It is from these two main clan-families that clans subdivided into smaller units with theoretically defined territories and are to be found in North Eastern Kenya and the Jubaland. Their socio-political

---

39. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

40. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1928.

41. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.9.

42. I have used the definition of P.T. Dalleo's definition of Clan-Family, which he borrowed from Lewis. See Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.1; see also I.M. Lewis, 'Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa', *Journal of African History*, 1, 2 (1960), p.215.

43. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Reports, 1914-1930. Interviews with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996 and Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

and economic organisation mirrors those characteristics and features that are found in and are exhibited by their larger segments in what later became the Republic of Somalia and the Ethiopian Empire.

The Somali of North Eastern Kenya, moreover, speak the same language, Somali, spoken by their brethren throughout the Horn of Africa. Ethiopian scholars such as Mesfin Wolden Mariam<sup>44</sup> have asserted that there were dialectal divisions within the Somali language. Mesfin claims that various Somali clans such as the Rahan Wein and the Darou who are spread all over the Horn of Africa do not understand one another when speaking Somali language. This is misleading. A Somali who lived along the banks of the Tana river could comfortably converse in the Somali language with a Somali from the Gulf of Tajura on the Red Sea.

### **Political Organisation**

Somali society is highly segmented politically with no clear-cut powers vested in any political office.<sup>45</sup> Political decisions such as clan-migration and when a clan would make a raid were the product of a consensus arrived at by all members of the particular *Rer*, *raayi* and *qolo*. The highest officially recognised position of leadership however, is the *Sultan*, or the *Garad*, or the *Ugas*, or finally the *Wabar*.<sup>46</sup> The term *Sultan* is used among the Somalis in the same way as it is applied in Arabia. The *Sultans* were largely symbolic figures of leadership and could only exercise real influence on matters such as war and migration with the support and consensus of not only the sub-clan elders but also of all adult males in the sub-clan. The *Sultans* did not have concrete powers to run the day to day affairs of their clans and sub-clans on their own though they played a significant role in influencing decisions.

*Garad* and *Ugas* were the same in their roles as head of the council of elders and they settled disputes within and without the clan with the *Sultans* as their recognised head. All of these were traditional leadership titles of power and influence which varied from one clan to

---

44. M.W. Mariam, 'Ethio-Somalian Boundary Dispute', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2, 2 (1964), pp.189-219.

45. I.M. Lewis, 'People of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho', *Ethnographic Survey of Africa. Northeastern Africa*, Part 1 (London, 1955), p.98.

46. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.3.

another. For example, *Garad* was the most senior leader among the northern Somalis whereas *Ugas* and *Sultan* were the senior leadership titles among the southern Somalis especially the Ogaden clan.

In the pre-colonial societies of North Eastern Province and Jubaland the predominant leadership was vested in the *Sultan* or the *Ugas* from the Ogaden sub-clan. The Degodia had the *Wabar* as the most influential leader among them. The *Wabar*, was in fact a religious leader but when matters of war and peace were to be decided, he had the final authority.<sup>47</sup> No action could proceed without his prior consultation. These positions of leadership were hereditary and usually chosen from the main lineage of the *rer*<sup>48</sup> of the sub-clan. The *Sultan* or the *Ugas* 'is approached through the political organisation of the segment [i.e. *dhuqooshinka*]'.<sup>49</sup> Lewis erroneously believed that without the *Sultans* or the *Ugas* the Somali society would have been perpetually locked in intra-clan wars.<sup>50</sup> This is far from the reality in pre-colonial Somali society which used the council of elders more than the *Sultans* and the *Ugas* to minimise conflicts and tensions within the clan. Inter and intra-clan relations were traditionally to a large extent influenced and shaped, but not entirely decided upon by these *Sultans* or *Ugas* on behalf of their tribesmen.<sup>51</sup> The powers of these traditional authorities have been eroded over the years. This is due to colonial rule and the subsequent post-independence governments of the region coupled with the fast pace of urbanisation which have had a negative impact by eroding the power base of traditional kinship loyalties among the Somali.

In the pre-colonial Ogaden clan the *Sultan* was the most influential leader and under him were the *Ugas* of the various sub-clans. The *Ugas* can act as or in a real sense become a *Sultan* of his sub-clan. They deliberate though they do not have the final say in all matters that affect the community. The opinions of the *Sultan* and the *Ugas* can be overruled by the clan elders upon whom they depend for all decisions affecting the clan as a whole. But on

---

47. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

48. This word has a variable meanings and I use here to mean the smallest sub-clan as Dalleo and Lewis also meant. See also J. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge, 1987), p.17.

49. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.97.

50. *Ibid.*, p.55.

51. *Ibid.*, pp.50-1001.

the other hand, no *shir* (clan meetings) can take place and come to a decision on any matter without *Sultan*'s and *Ugas*'s active participation.<sup>52</sup>

According to Lewis, the powers of the *Sultan* and the powers of a *rer* headman are the same in so far as the execution of their roles is concerned.<sup>53</sup> One can disagree with this view because the *Sultans* wielded more influence in their capacities as recognised leaders in the wider clan. In other words the *Ugas* is the head of the sub-clan while the *Sultan* is the head of the clan depending on the locality. Lewis further noted that 'there is no stable hierarchy of power independent of the segmentary tribal structure. The chief (*Sultan*) was a figure with authority and power corresponding to the order of segmentation involved in a particular situation'.<sup>54</sup> Penalties and fines were imposed by the elders on his authority. His appointment was very democratic in that all the clan elders and the various *Ugas* or *Garad(s)* of the *Rer(s)* met to choose one. The process of choosing a new *Sultan* took place when the reigning *Sultan* passed away, or became senile and a leadership vacuum occurred. This 'office' was hereditary in most cases, however, and leadership passed on to the eldest son of the reigning *Sultan* or *Ugas*. If the son was too young, as was the case in 1899 among the Abdwak in Garissa District, the 'office' was temporarily held by the oldest male close relative who acted as regent or it could be challenged by another influential person.<sup>55</sup> After the death of Abdi Ibrahim in 12 October 1899 his son Stamboul was too young to assume the sultanship and the leadership went to Kuno Jibrael of the *Rer Yahye* on 2 April 1907. Yet Stamboul Abdi was not prepared to give up the sultanship and when he became of age there was a leadership wrangle between these two men representing two segments of the Abdwak sub-clan in 1907. This leadership dispute was settled in 1914 when the nascent British administration favoured the young Stamboul Abdi for the sultanship of the Abdwak sub-clan.<sup>56</sup>

Next to the *Sultans* in influence and power were the sub-clan elders. They normally formed a close-knit group known as the 'gudhiga odheyasha' which advised the *Sultan* or the *Ugas*

52. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

53. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.99.

54. *Ibid.*, p.98.

55. Interviews with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995 and Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

56. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1914.



and deliberated on most issues that affected the sub-clan. But these were not officially recognised positions and any male above a certain age became an automatic member of this group.<sup>57</sup> The very poor, or a known liar or even an old man of bad repute in the community, however, stood no chance of becoming an important member of this council.

After the council of elders, the next important group with influence were the *Waranleh* (spear-bearers). They were the fighters and defenders of the community from outside attack. Their role was to raid other clans for livestock and to defend their own clan from raids. Their average age was between 18 and 33 years. They had a representative in the meetings of the council of elders. Some young men in this age-group looked after the large herds of cattle and camels with other men of the clan far from their homes. As such, they could be away from their immediate families for up to three months during the *jilaal*, or dry season, which was from December to March. Their representative conveyed their sentiments and opinions to the council of elders.<sup>58</sup>

Below this age group were the young boys who normally herded milch cows and camels not far from their homes. In most cases these young boys were under the watchful eyes of their parents or elders. They were errand boys and helped the old people in milking the camels and cows when they were brought home from grazing in the evening. The young boys were considered too young and vulnerable to take part in clan raids and defending the clan from outside attack as their age-group varied anything between nine years to seventeen years of age.<sup>59</sup>

Women were not important in the day to day political life of the pre-colonial Somali nomad. But as Lewis has noted, 'women are [were] quite as influential as men'<sup>60</sup> in the daily life of the nomad. They could air views through their husbands and their husbands could forward those ideas to the *Sultan* or other influential people. The husbands would not, however,

---

57. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.97. See also S.S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1982), pp.36-54.

58. L. Kapteijns, 'Gender Relations and the Transformation of the Northern Somali Pastoral Tradition', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 28, 2 (1995), pp.241-259. See also Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.97; interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

59. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.97.

60. *Ibid.*, p.128.

acknowledge the fact that it was their wives' ideas they were forwarding but presented them as their own. Women did not actually participate in all clan meetings but could do so indirectly by sitting far from their men and putting forward their opinion through intermediaries, preferably young men whom would they send. In that way their voices or their opinions were heard indirectly.<sup>61</sup>

### **Social Organisation**

By the late nineteenth century Somali nomads in what would become the north eastern parts of Kenya and the Jubaland region of the Somali Republic were totally dependent on their livestock for the sustenance of their precarious livelihood. In these regions farming is only barely possible along the two main rivers, that traverse them, the Tana and Juba. Even the farming practised here was not that of the 'noble' Somali nomad but the lowly held Sab clans and their contiguous families. The Sab clans such as the Rahanwein and the Elay were a by-product of the Somali and Galla communities are found along the Juba River. Along the Tana River it is traditionally the Orma/Galla and the Bantu communities that are engaged in farming and not the Somali who adopted this farming only in the 1940s at the high noon of colonial rule.

Basically the Somali nomads depended on milk, milk-products, meat, corn when available and game.<sup>62</sup> Milk was (and still is) the main diet of the Somali as it was drunk in the morning as breakfast with tea and at lunch time supplemented with corn if available. In the evening fresh milk was yet again drunk by everybody supplemented with corn. Meat is eaten quite often as the Somali nomads normally slaughter old bullocks, and cows. Since Somali nomads cannot afford to slaughter bulls often, however, they got extra meat from neighbouring families when they slaughtered a bull, an act that was reciprocated later on by the receiving family. Game meat such as giraffe, gerenuk, antelope and gazelle were procured by hunting though not on an organised basis.

To a small extent, trade was carried out in times of necessity by the Somali and Galla nomads in what was to become the Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya

---

61. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

62. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.88. See also KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

Colony, especially for goods that they could not produce and which they had to procure externally.<sup>63</sup> Such goods, as will be seen in the following narrative, were mostly manufactured commodities such as beads, clothing, and iron implements such as cooking pots.

The smallest unit that Lewis has identified as the 'primary unit' was the family which consisted of the oldest male, the husband, his wives (not more than four), children and attached close kin. This small primary unit was self-sufficient in its basic needs and only joined another primary unit in times of need such as war or natural calamity. It was a combination of many of these primary units related to each other that made up a *Rer*. Many related *Rers* combined to form a *raai* or sub-clan and many sub-clans united to form a *Qolo* or clan. Finally many clans joined to make the largest of the units a person could belong to, the clan-family or the *Qaabil*.<sup>64</sup> All Somali were taught their lineage from the tender age of six or seven years old and a child should have mastered his or her genealogy by the age of ten years. The recitation of one's genealogy provides many benefits. For one, it identifies one's pedigree, that is if one was of noble origin or not. Secondly, it was an 'address' for a person as it identified the person's relations to the wider Somali society and hence a sense of belonging to something that was abstract, but to which one could still be related. (See diagrams for this terminology).

### Land

Land is theoretically for the Somali people the property of God and anybody can utilise it<sup>65</sup>, but there are constraints on this notion in that an individual whose clan was not within the vicinity could land himself in trouble. This is because he might be too far from his clansmen to defend himself and his livestock.<sup>66</sup> Land was the biggest factor in causing the frequent inter-clan clashes in both Jubaland and the North Eastern Province. Continuous conflicts between clans over disputes involving land was also the reason behind the migrations and seasonal movements of the nomads in both areas. For example the Degodia migrated from Addo in what was to become the Ethiopian province of Bale to the NFD of

---

63. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.12.

64. *Ibid.*, p.2.

65. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

66. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.43.



the Kenya Colony in the 1910s.<sup>67</sup> The Degodia movement into Kenya was by slow penetration and infiltration. This migration was largely due to the *rer* Afgab of the Auliyahan sub-clan who were exerting pressure on the Degodia. After suffering a number of camel raids the Degodia opted to move to the sanctuary of the British Protectorate that was being established on the fringe of their country in the 1900s and after.<sup>68</sup>

The infamous 'kalalut' war between the Abdwak and the Mohamed Zubeir sub-clans of the Ogaden forced the former to migrate from the Lorrian swamps in the Wajir District to the south towards the Tana River in 1909. The Abdwak lost a large number of fighting men and were forcefully evicted by the powerful Mohamed Zubeir from their traditional grazing grounds.<sup>69</sup> The Abdwak were saved by the mediation efforts of other Ogaden sub-clans, notably the Auliyahan, who, feared that the Abdwak might disappear as a sub-clan.

Land might be acquired by various means ranging from peaceful penetration to actual military conquest. When a distinct clan occupied an uninhabited area, it became the clan's own territory. The clan had its own right to defend the newly acquired land from rival claimants. In peaceful penetration, the most common feature was to become a *sheegat* (client) while waiting to gain numerical strength in order to own the land forcefully. In military conquest, the weaker clan emigrated from its land and the conquerors became the new owners of the land by virtue of their conquest.<sup>70</sup>

Acquisition of land was not enough. As Lewis has noted 'Property rights in land are acquired by occupying land and sustaining the initial rights so conferred against rival claimants. Effective occupancy is the most important criterion of ownership'.<sup>71</sup> Thus what counted most was the ability to exclude other clans from the land and its watering wells by use of force. The limits to the land owned by a clan were generally fluid though 'it is signified by marking rocks and branding trees along the line of entry with tribal marks (sumad)'.<sup>72</sup>

67. KNA PC NFD/1/1/3, Northern Frontier District Annual Reports, 1909-12.

68. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

69. *Kenya Census Book 1979* (Garissa Provincial Library, Kenya Government, Nairobi, 1979), p.70.

70. *Ibid.*, p.89.

71. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.43.

72. *Ibid.*, p.43.

Today, such tribal markings can be seen between the grazing grounds of the various clans for example between the Degodia and the Ogaden, and the Ogaden and the Boran communities respectively in Wajir and Garissa districts.

### **Religion**

All of the Somali of the Jubaland and the North Eastern Province are Muslims of the Sunni sect. There were no Shiites. Religion has been modified to suit the harsh ecological and human nature of the region. There were very few Somalis who actually practised Islam in all its facets. All Somalis practice the basic tenets of Islam but the intricate details in the religion were left to the *Wadaads* or the religious experts who were called upon to guide the people.

The religious leaders were highly respected people in Somali society. The religious leaders, for example, were given the best portions of meat in all religious festivities. They do not, however, wield any political influence except in the religious matters that pervade all aspects of Somali daily life. Dalleo has noted that 'occasionally sheiks rose to prominent positions'<sup>73</sup> because they possessed some divine powers which the ordinary nomads held in awe. Those divine powers that seem to be derived from their holiness included the power to heal the sick through prayers, especially those with mental imbalances.<sup>74</sup> They were also known by the people to possess some kind of 'love potion' which they used to give to jealous wives to prevent their husbands from marrying another wife. The 'kitaab gaabs' (short book owners), as they were traditionally called, were also feared by the people as they seem to have possessed knowledge that ordinary Somalis did not have. These 'kitaab gaabs' were not highly learned in the Quranic scriptures though they knew some specific verses of the Quran which enhanced their trade. The Somali respected them more out of fear than anything else. The 'Kitaab gaabs' did not like to share their knowledge with the wider community in case they lost their market since they were highly in demand.

In pre-colonial Jubaland and Northern Frontier District the young children attended traditional Quranic schools referred to as *dhugsi* where they were taught by the *Maalim* (religious teacher). These *dhugsis* were established by neighbouring families who also undertook to

---

73. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.4.

74. Interview with Hussein Ahmed Liban, Wajir, February 1996.

remunerate the *maalim* by giving a bull every year. The children had to be able to recite the Quran by heart by the age of seventeen years. But this could only be achieved by the gifted among the children and the majority of the children gave up the whole learning process by the age of fifteen years. This was due to responsibilities expected of them, which increased as they matured into adults.<sup>75</sup>

Religion has had a unifying effect and was of influence in the Great Darood southward thrust<sup>76</sup> by providing the ideological underpinnings in the process of evicting the Galla from their lands. The Galla were pagans and the southward moving Somalis were Muslims hence many Somali 'Waranle' or spear bearers fought in the name of religion to evict the Galla from their land. Those among the Galla who opted to live in Jubaland and N.E.P were forced to convert to Islam.<sup>77</sup> The Islamic beliefs of pre-colonial Somali society had accommodated some cultural traits that were of the pre-Islamic era. Such cultural norms like female circumcision, which was not Islamically approved, nevertheless persist among the Somali to this day. The Somali were Islamicised in the twelfth century when Arabian merchants and proselytisers started settling along the Somali coast. The Arab proselytisers who settled along the Somali coast in subsequent centuries intermarried with the local Somali families and therefore did not attempt to alter fundamental Somali cultural traits. Non-Islamic names such as Roble, Guhad and Ebla clearly show that Islam adapted and tolerated many aspects of pre-Islamic Somali cultural traits. Such names that are today still popular among the Somali were different from the Islamically accepted names such as Fathuma, Abdikadir and Mohamed.

### **Somali Traditional Law**

The Somali of the North Eastern Province and Jubaland base all of their customary procedure on their pre-Islamic and Islamic tenets or beliefs. According to Lewis 'in any given situation, jural relations are conditioned by the particular sectional interest concerned.'<sup>78</sup> Somali customary procedures (*Testur*) have largely been modified by Islamic principles over the centuries but where these two clash Islamic principles override, especially in the absence of

---

75. Interview with Tawane Abdi Haji, Nairobi, January 1996.

76. Turnbull, 'Darod Invasion', pp.308-313. See also Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.4.

77. Interview with Tawane Abdi Haji, Nairobi, January 1996.

78. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.106.

religious authorities and in the urban areas. This is where religious men (*wadaad*) become important in the recitation of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. Somali culture has been so fused with the Islamic beliefs that the line distinguishing the two has become blurred over the years.

Various offences have to be dealt with according to the severity of the offence. For example if a man commits homicide then he too has to be killed. This is because 'the basic principle activating the norms concerned with the expiation of murder is that of a life for a life: the equivalence of blood. The obligation to pursue vengeance rests primarily with the brothers and other relatives of the deceased, whose duty it is to prosecute the feud against the culprit and close agnatic kin until honour has been vindicated.'<sup>79</sup> Within the *rer* however, the murder of a free born male or a noble Somali (unlike that of a slave) does not call for the blood of the murderer. This is because murder committed within the *Rer* can and is usually settled peacefully. According to Lewis and other reliable sources, 'the standard rate of compensation for the murder of an adult free-born male is 100 camels or their equivalent, and is called *Mag'*'.<sup>80</sup> Lewis has done some excellent work on the various Somali customary procedures which is beyond the scope of this work, but it must be pointed out that for every crime or misdemeanour there is an equivalent punishment or fine to solve it. If, for example, a man abuses another man, then the offended man lodges a complaint to the council of elders. The council of elders then summons the accused and if they find he is guilty, they fine him a bull.<sup>81</sup>

The Ogaden *xeer* or customary law was a set of principles agreed upon by all the sub-clans in the early 1900s to regulate, guide, and monitor their social relations when they established themselves in what would later become the NFD of the Kenya Colony.<sup>82</sup> The Ogaden *xeer* was in actual fact a set of rules that was to be adhered to by every member of the Ogaden clan and the *xeer* would also affect Ogaden relations with the wider Somali society. The Ogaden *xeer* was laid down in a meeting of all the elders of the various sub-clans that made up the Ogaden clan in 1900. These customary procedures that were basic principles governing

---

79. *Ibid.*, p.107.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Interview with Tawane Abdi Haji, Nairobi, January 1996.

82. *Ibid.*

day to day relations of the sub-clans include, for example, when a man slanders another man of different of sub-clan, the victim has the right to convene a meeting called *gogol dik* or a peaceful conflict resolution.<sup>83</sup> This meeting was attended by the *otheyasha* of both sub-clans. The *xeer* that was in force in Jubaland and Northern Frontier from the 1900s was also meant to prevent war between the various clans, regulate grazing lands and allow peaceful settlement of disputes. These *xeer*, are not known to have been written down. All that is available today is a faint memory of the basic tenets and principles of the *xeer* amongst the very old men who might not live much longer. It is a matter of urgency that this *xeer* be written down before it is too late.

### **Seasonal Movement of the nomads in Jubaland and North Eastern Province of Kenya**

The Somali of the North Eastern Province of Kenya and Jubaland are basically pastoral nomads who move from one place to another in search of pastures and water for their livestock.<sup>84</sup> This movement is due to the harsh and unyielding environment that lacks conditions favourable to agriculture but has plenty of acacia trees and sandy soil.<sup>85</sup> Except for the two river valleys of the Juba and the Tana, no farming is possible anywhere. The country is semi-desert with a high evaporation rate throughout the year.

Rainfall averages in a given year vary from one place such as Kismayu with 700 mm per year to Mandera with less than 200 mm in a given year. As one moves away from the coast, rainfall averages decrease. Rainfall averages are higher along the coast near Kismayu where the maritime climate influences the rainfall amount. The climate is also harsh since temperatures average above 40 degrees centigrade throughout the year,<sup>86</sup> although temperatures vary according to the season of the year. In *Dhair*, or the autumn season which is from October to December, temperatures are generally cooler compared to the *Jilaal*, or the dry season, which is from January to March, when temperatures are extremely high, leading to high evaporation rates.

---

83. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

84. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, pp.17-18.

85. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', pp.7-8. See also KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, JPR 1915.

86. J. Ojany & R. Ogendo (eds), *Kenya: a Study in Physical and Human Geography* (Nairobi, 1973), chapter 2.



The seasons determined the nomad's yearly movements. There are four seasons throughout the year. The *Gu*, or long rains, which last from March to June, is followed by the *Haga*, a windy dry season where dust clouds are a common sight throughout the region. The *Haga* is from June to October, when temperatures are relatively milder due to the cool south easterly monsoon winds. This season is followed by *Dhair*, or the short rains, from late October to December. Lastly there is the *Jilaal*, or the dry season, which lasts from December to March. It is during the *Jilaal* that high temperatures are experienced. Only during the *Gu* season are there rain pools that the nomads use to water the livestock and also for human consumption. It is also during this season that nomads get the much needed respite from having to trek long distances for water.<sup>87</sup> It is this cycle of movement which was a Somali pastoral response to nature's unpredictable climatic conditions that predicated Somali migrations in a southerly and westerly directions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

During the *Gu* season Somali nomads scatter and disperse in all directions because of the availability of rain pools and fresh pastures; but towards the end of June, which is the beginning of the *Haga*, they start moving closer to the watering points whether it be home wells or along the two main rivers. However, it is during the peak of *Jilaal* that nomads concentrate around their home or along the rivers.<sup>88</sup> If drought is severe, as it was in 1914,<sup>89</sup> then it is because the preceding *Dhair* season (short rains) had failed to produce enough rain and the effects would markedly be felt in the following *Jilaal* season. The strain of the *Jilaal* season is clearly visible on the faces of the nomads as pastures became scarce and water had to be fetched from long distances. As Dalleo has noted, 'the Somali did not aimlessly wander but had a definite purpose to their movement. An important factor in this purpose was the attainment of economic objectives such as survival, prestige, wealth and trade'.<sup>90</sup> The nomadic pastoralism adopted by the Somali was one way of surviving in an environment that was climatically harsh and where the availability of water or lack of it meant life or death. Pastoral Somalis constantly moved so as to survive and continue with

---

87. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.8; Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.89.

88. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915; Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.89.

89. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1914.

90. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.11.

their 'frugal existence'.<sup>91</sup> After the establishment of colonial rule by the British in 1896, the administration of Northern Frontier District interfered with the movement of Somali nomads by enacting ordinances such as the Outlying District Ordinance of 1902 and the Special District Ordinance of 1934 which would restrict and confine pastoral Somali movements to specific grazing zones.<sup>92</sup>

### Economic organisation

The Somali of the Northern Frontier District and Jubaland are wholly dependent on their stock for survival.<sup>93</sup> Farming is barely practised by the nomad and has been left to the Sab clans of the Rahanwien.<sup>94</sup> The Somali nomad takes great care of his cattle, camels, sheep and goats. He invests a great deal of time in the welfare of his animals to protect them both from disease and predators. Among the Somali and Galla communities the type of domestic animals owned varies from one group to another and is largely dictated by the environment.<sup>95</sup> There are some clans like the Abdalla Ogaden in Garissa south who keep only cattle whereas, the Fai Degodia in Wajir east keep only camels.<sup>96</sup> But there are other clans like the Auliyahan who keep both cattle and camels. Ownership of a particular stock depended on the individual nomads' preference and his environment. In fact environment was a decisive factor as to which type of stock a nomad reared and it also dictated where he could live.<sup>97</sup> It has to be stressed that the nomad had to meet all of his basic needs in an environment that had little to offer in terms of natural resources besides his animals.

Trade was another economic activity that was carried out by the nomad as a peripheral activity,<sup>98</sup> though 'some groups involved themselves more than others'.<sup>99</sup> For example, the Gurreh in Mandera district were involved a lot in trade but even they 'mostly considered themselves nomads not traders'.<sup>100</sup> Pre-colonial Somalis engaged in both local and long

---

91. KNA PC NFD/5/1/8, Miscellaneous NFD Political Records, 1947.

92. See chapter 2.

93. *Ibid.*, p.16.

94. Lewis, 'People of the Horn', p.125; Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, p.17; Interview with Yussuf Dahir Magan, Nairobi, January 1996.

95. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.4.

96. *Ibid.*, p.11.

97. *Ibid.*, p.16.

98. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, p.6.

99. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.23.

100. *Ibid.*, p.23.



distance trade. Local trade was carried out by the nomad within the clan and involved exchange of one commodity such as *loox* (wooden implement for Quranic writing) and *hama* (wooden vessels for milk and water) for another commodity. In return, a community received from its neighbouring hamlet such items as salt, corn and dhurra (millet). In local trade or short distance trade no outsider was involved and the distance covered was not more than four hundred kilometres and the trader was only away from his family for a couple of weeks.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, long distance trade involved mostly luxury goods which had to be procured from the coast in which case the nomad could be away from his family for up to four months. Items of trade included clothing material, gold, china ware and other oriental goods available along the Somali coast.<sup>102</sup> The Somali took ivory, livestock, hides, ghee and Galla and Bantu slaves to the coastal merchants. Until 1910 when the British established administrative centres the Somali nomads traded in slaves with the Coastal Arabs. The nomad mostly dealt with Somalis who were not his clansmen, coastal Arabs and Indians.<sup>103</sup> In these long distance trade exchanges the nomadic Somali might be exploited and cheated by the coastal traders who overvalued the commodities they exchanged with nomads. For example, the nomad could exchange a bull for 10 pieces of calico material. The coastal traders sometimes hoarded goods so as to create scarcity and thereby increase the value of their goods.<sup>104</sup>

From the twelfth century until the onset of European colonial rule in 1896 trade provided a link with the outside world. This outside link was maintained with Arabia and Zanzibar. Arab merchants for centuries past stopped their dhows along the coast at cities like Kismayu, Merca, Brava and Mogadishu for refreshments and to carry out some trading activities while there. As a result of this long relationship, the *Sultan* of Zanzibar had some nominal influence in the form of exacting tribute from the coastal dwellers.

In return for this payment of tribute to the Zanzibar *Sultan*, he was expected to provide protection from outside attack notably from Somali nomads in the interior. The presence of the *Sultan's askaris* (soldiers) in garrisons that were established in the major towns acted as

---

101. Turton, 'Jubaland and the NFD', pp.1-16.

102. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', p.51.

103. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

104. Dalleo, 'Trade and Pastoralism', chapter 2.

a deterrent to urban crime and nomadic propensities especially of the Herti clans for drifting to the coastal cities. However, the impact of the *Sultan's* soldiers was minimal. The Sultan's representatives discouraged the nomads from settling in towns by segregating them in special areas of the towns because the Somali nomads were seen as '*badawi*' or uncouth and uncultured. These coastal cities already mentioned had by the 1880s become Somali residential quarters, though they were established outside the towns.

During the scramble for Africa by the European powers in the 1870s and 1880s it was realised that the *Sultan's* influence was no more than an occasional visit by his tax collectors whom some of the coastal cities resented.<sup>105</sup> The European powers, notably Britain and Italy, felt there was a need to keep the Somali coast free from other rival powers especially Germany.<sup>106</sup> To this end, in 1880 British and Italian colonial agents started the process of signing treaties of protection with the coastal dwellers, who were largely Arab merchants and Indian brokers along with their Somali partners. The Arabs and Indian merchants had lived along the Somali coast from the twelfth century and had since provided the capital necessary for long distance trade to occur. These trading communities never ventured to the interior of the Somali coast because it was too risky for them since they became targets of Somali raiding parties as they were easily identifiable from the Somali trader. During the 1880s when the British and Italian colonial agents first met the Arab and Indian traders along the Somali coast these two communities provided the link between the colonial agents and the Somali people.

By the late nineteenth century, Jubaland and the North Eastern Province were experiencing the first ripples of what was in store for them in the decades ahead in the form of formal colonial rule. Were the nomads prepared to lose their freedom without any struggle? For how long would they be able to withstand the maxim gun that was coming from the coast? How did the nomad adapt to the realisation that he had no more powers to withstand the maxim gun and the mercenaries employed by the incoming European powers? These and many other questions will be the focus of the next chapter.

---

105. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

106. R.L. Hess, 'Italy and Africa: Colonial Ambitions in the First World War', *Journal of African History*, IV, 1 (1963), pp.105-126.

## CHAPTER TWO

## COLONIAL INTRUSION AND SOMALI RESPONSE IN THE JUBALAND AND THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT OF KENYA c.1895-1925

The pre-1891 history of the interior of Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District regions of what would become the British East Africa Protectorate was a *terra incognita* to the British as little was known beyond the fact that the Sultan of Zanzibar had in the 1840s and after exacted occasional tribute from cities such as Merca, Brava, Mogadishu and Berbera along the Somali coast. The interior of Jubaland and the NFD in the period between 1800 and the 1880s was experiencing a population shift in which the Galla were being displaced by the southward migration of the Ogaden and the Marehan clans.

The British acquired the Jubaland coast from the fledgling suzerainty of the Sultan of Zanzibar in July 1891.<sup>1</sup> The Imperial British East African Company (hereafter I.B.E.A. Co.) entered into an agreement with the *Sultan* of Zanzibar in 1885 and established a fort at Kismayu where it assumed the administration of what then became known as the Jubaland Province of the British East African Protectorate.<sup>2</sup> This agreement covered a trading monopoly granted to the I.B.E.A. Co., extraction of any minerals to be found in the region, and establishment of law and order in Jubaland.<sup>3</sup> The four years of the I.B.E.A. Co. rule (1891-1895) were marked by continuous troubles, mutiny by the *Sultan's* garrison over pay and conditions, and an uneasy relationship with the local people.<sup>4</sup> The company rule in Jubaland ended in 1895 as it did in other regions in Eastern Africa. The British government took control of all areas of Company jurisdiction when it became apparent that the Company could no longer carry out its obligations. Jubaland was to be ruled from July 1895 from Zanzibar as a province of the recently declared British East African Protectorate and Mr J.C.W. Jenner, a sub-commissioner, was immediately dispatched to Kismayu in July 1895.<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that Kismayu at this time was a small village frequented by Ogaden Somalis

---

1. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. G. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya* (London, 1966), p.47.

who lived in the interior. Somali clan Sultans and elders were co-opted by the first I.B.E.A. Co. agent, Lemmi, to become company employees and were also given annual stipends. Somalis were to abide by the I.B.E.A. Co. rules and regulations governing such matters as the building of residential houses and permits to operate shops within Kismayu.<sup>6</sup> In 1894 the new regulations were resisted by the Somali elders and culminated in a fracas when, Todd, the company representative explained the need for these regulations. In this fracas Todd was speared to death and became the first casualty of the Somali resistance.<sup>7</sup> Further, Somali *Sultans*, *Sheiks* and *Odheys* (headmen) were to pay tribute to the I.B.E.A. Co. Thus between 1885 to 1895 the Somali society was hastily violently transformed into a subject society by the I.B.E.A. Co.

The NFD and Jubaland regions of the British East African Protectorate were the backwaters of imperial expansions in the Horn of Africa and were to become a point of contention amongst the three colonial powers of Ethiopia, Italy and Britain in the period between 1895 and the late 1910s. This was because Somali clan *sultans* such Ahmed Magan, Abidrahman Mursal and Stamboul Abdi had between 1891 and 1900 signed treaties of protection with the Italians, the British and the Abyssinians at one time or another. The presence of the tough fighting Ogaden and the Marehan clans, however, discouraged colonial expansion from the Indian ocean coast whether by the Italians or the British. The Ogaden and the Marehan clans around 1900, were not only increasing and expanding in population, but were war-like compared to the other Somali clans in the NFD and the Jubaland region of the British East Africa Protectorate. It was not until 1900 and after, when sufficient men and equipment were available to the British, Italians and Ethiopians, that attempts were made to venture into the interior from Kismayu and Mogadishu and from the Abyssinian highlands respectively. The Italian colonial agents expanding southwards from their foothold in Mogadishu and hoped to compete with the British colonial agents.

Colonial borders between Italian Somaliland, the British East African Protectorate and the expanding Abyssinian empire-state began to take shape after 1895 but were not finally established until the decolonisation era in the 1960s. The British Jubaland region and Italian Somaliland border was the Juba River from 1896 until Jubaland was transferred to the Italian

---

6. KNA/PC/Coast, 1/2/26.

7. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

administration in 1927 as a long-delayed result of the secret Treaty of London signed between Britain and Italy in 1915.<sup>8</sup> The NFD was retained by the British as a 'buffer zone' between the settled parts of Kenya and the problematic regions of the Abyssinians and Somalis to the north and north-east. The colonial border between the British East African Protectorate and what was the Abyssinian empire-state was never defined until 12 December 1963 when Kenya was granted its independence. The border problem between the British East African Protectorate and Abyssinian empire-state under Menelik was due to the expansion of the Abyssinian empire southwards from the early 1900s attributable to 'their [Abyssinian] unrestricted access to modern weaponry guaranteed by Abyssinia's exemption from the Brussels General Act of 1890, which otherwise prohibited the sale of firearms to Africans.'<sup>9</sup> It was in the process of Abyssinian expansion southwards that the various Galla and Somali communities were forcibly incorporated into the Abyssinian empire which would transform itself into the modern Ethiopian empire-state of the early 1930s.

The Ogaden and the Marehan clans were not complacent observers of colonial intrusion into their recently acquired territories but actively resisted it well into the 1920s, though no more than one sub-clan such as the Mohamed Zubeir or the Auliyahan resisted at a time. Yet when the dice had finally been cast in favour of the British at the end of the First World War, the Ogaden and the Marehan districts in the Jubaland province proved most difficult to administer even by the well-trained Kings African Rifles (hereafter K.A.R.) equipped with the most up to date weaponry. It was the stubborn determination of British officers such as Lt. Hope, Lt. Col. Barrett and Lt. Thesiger of the K.A.R from 1910 to 1920 that eventually subdued the Somali tribes and laid down the structures of colonial rule.<sup>10</sup>

The colonial powers had their reasons for craving to colonise these areas. The most important reason was the need to protect the perceived natural resources of Jubaland and the NFD from rival powers. Such natural resources included the possibility of European farming along the fertile Juba River and the forest products along the river. The British, the Italians and the Abyssinians clashed occasionally over land and the collection of taxes from the Somali and

---

8. KNA Official Gazette, 1924.

9. C. Gesheker, 'Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation: the Eastern Horn of Africa before 1950', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18, 1 (1985), p.6.

10. Lt.Col H. Moyse-Bartlett, *The Kings African Rifles* (London, 1956), p.444.



the Galla communities along their common frontiers such as at Dolo. Abyssinian soldiers clashed in 1909 with the K.A.R. soldiers along the northern frontier of the British East Africa Protectorate.<sup>11</sup> Rivalry between the colonial powers not only affected interclan relations such as those between the Ogaden and the Herti, which had hitherto been cordial, but also interfered with the trade routes. Cassanelli noted that 'competition between Italian and British officials to lure the caravan trade towards ports in their respective spheres of influence on opposite sides of the Juba [river] exacerbated interclan rivalries and added to the political uncertainties that hindered commerce'.<sup>12</sup>

The Somali clans played one colonial power off against another and thereby obtained respite from the colonial demands for some time, however shortlived this strategy was.<sup>13</sup> The Abdalla clan in Garissa district, for example, signed a treaty of friendship with the Italians in 1924, placing their country and people under the Italian flag. The British administration in the NFD of Kenya were not aware of the secret treaty signed by the Abdalla with the Italians and therefore endeavoured to force the Abdalla either to migrate to Italian Somaliland or to abrogate their recent agreement with the Italians.<sup>14</sup> The Abdalla opted to migrate to Italian Somaliland.

#### **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL RULE IN THE JUBALAND AND THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT OF THE BRITISH EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE c1895-1920**

Only the coastal regions of what would become the Jubaland province of the British East Africa Protectorate were under the nominal jurisdiction of the *Sultan* of Zanzibar between 1885 and 1895. It was during this decade that European colonial agents began appearing in the region as travellers, explorers and missionaries along the Jubaland coast. With the pace of European interest in Jubaland gaining momentum in the 1890s, as shown by the Anglo-German agreement of July 1890 which defined their respective areas of operation, there was a need not only for the British and German but also Italian merchants to enter into serious business with the local people. The European merchants were interested in the Jubaland and

---

11. KNA PC NFD/1/1/3, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1910.

12. Cassanelli, *Somali Society*, p.182.

13. KNA PC NFD/1/7 Garissa Annual Report, 1925; KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing over Report, T.D. Butler to R.W. Hemstead, 1929.

14. KNA PC NFD/1/7, Garissa Annual Report, 1927.

NFD regions because these two regions were the hinterlands of the Somali coast and strategically important route of the Red Sea. It was believed that whichever power controlled Jubaland and the NFD areas would also control the Red sea route. The upsurge of interest in this region was spearheaded by the various chartered companies such as the Imperial British East Africa Company. These companies sparked off the desire to establish areas of exclusive trading operations.

Company officials such as Lemmi of the I.B.E.A. Co. in Jubaland, and Zaphiro, the British government agent at Moyale in the NFD in 1900, and Menelik (who in 1887 conquered Harar, which became 'a symbol of Ethiopian expansion into the Somali peninsula')<sup>15</sup> helped to establish colonial rule for the British and Ethiopian empires. Vincenzo Filonardi and later in 1905 Antonio Cecchi of the Royal Italian East African Company were responsible for the consolidation of Italian colonial rule in the Gumbo region of Italian Somaliland.<sup>16</sup> It was the British who emerged as the most eager to establish their rule over the Somali and Galla people and who expanded from the Jubaland coast in the 1890s from Mombasa and in the west inland from Archer's post on the fringe of Naivasha Province in the 1900s. The first administrative station to be established in the vast NFD province of the British East Africa Protectorate was Archer's Post in 1909. Another station opened by W.E.H. Barret in 1909, Moyale, seven hundred kilometres to the north of Nairobi, was purposely used to check and monitor Abyssinian marauders harassing the local Somali and Galla communities for tribute. In 1912 Wajir station was opened by W.J.O. Hope, the newly appointed Officer in Charge of the NFD, to administer the various clans such as the Ogaden, the Degodia and the Adjuran as they converged to use the Wajir wells.

The British were able to dictate in the 1890s and the late 1900s the areas that were to be acquired by the Italians and the Ethiopians in their thrust for colonial acquisitions in this part of Africa. By signing a treaty with Menelik in 1897 over frontier demarcations, the British Consul at Mega, G.H. Thesiger, managed to contain Ethiopian advances southwards even though traditional grazing grounds and the best water wells such as the Gadaduma wells were ceded to the Abyssinians at the expense of the Galla and the Somali communities on the

---

15. Cassanelli, *Somali Society*, p.199.

16. *Ibid.*, p.202.



frontier.<sup>17</sup> Through the 1906 Tripartite Agreement signed by the Italians, the French and the British, these powers agreed to respect each other's interests and spheres of operation throughout the Horn of Africa. As a result Italian designs on the west bank of the Juba River were checked by the presence of British K.A.R soldiers stationed at Dolo in the far north of Jubaland. This left the Italians dissatisfied with the 'vague clauses of the 1906 Treaty'<sup>18</sup> The British eventually acquired for themselves the largest chunk of land including the British Somaliland, British East Africa and Uganda.

By 1914, the colonial boundaries that had hitherto been undefined were clearly marked and demarcated except the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary which was to prove to be a thorny issue until the British disengaged from Kenya almost fifty years later. The Anglo-Italian boundary in the 1900s was the Juba River which was only a geographical boundary and which divided the Somali communities.<sup>19</sup> The final Anglo-Italian boundary was only settled in 1924 by the King's boundary<sup>20</sup> by which the whole of the Jubaland province of then British East Africa was transferred to the Italian administration as a reward for the latter's participation in the First World War on the British side. The name of the boundary that separated Jubaland from the NFD was called the King's boundary, which was a straight line drawn from Mandera in the north to Ras Kiamboni in the south. The transfer of Jubaland province of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1924 left the Somali and Galla inhabited province of NFD within Kenya. The Somali and Galla communities in Kenya were only portions of other clans who lived across the border in Italian Somaliland and Abyssinia amongst whom were the most influential elders of the tribes who had never come into Kenya<sup>21</sup> (see the following map).

A lot of anxiety was felt by both the colonial administrators and the local tribesmen when it became known to them that Jubaland was to be ceded to Italian Somaliland because of the secret Treaty of London signed between Britain and Italy in 1915.<sup>22</sup> Many administrators

---

17. J. Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute* (London, 1964), p.48.

18. Hess, 'Italy and Africa', pp.105-126.

19. KNA Official Gazette, 1916; KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1924.

20. It took three years, from 1925 to 1928, for the actual demarcation to be completed.

21. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1914.

22. KNA Official Gazette, 1924.

felt they had betrayed the local tribes who had earned their loyalty in the past. The British administrators in the NFD did not support the actual separation of Jubaland from the Northern Frontier District in 1926 because they felt that the King's boundary did not make any sense, whether from a geographical point of view, or in its division of the local tribesmen. To the colonial administrator's view, the Somali in the Northern Province and Jubaland had opposed the cession of Jubaland for the following reasons:<sup>23</sup> Firstly, the methods of the two governments were entirely different<sup>23</sup> in that one was an Italian system where Sultans and headmen were entirely appointed by the Governatore while the British system allowed subclans to elect their own *Sultans* who would be confirmed by the District Commissioners as the government's link with the people. Secondly, trade in Italian Somaliland was very bad and they anticipated poor prices for their cattle. Further the Italian coinage was not in favour with the Somalis in the NFD. Thirdly, they believed that the present system of chiefs, *Sultans* and councils would be more or less abolished and that their powers would be largely usurped by appointed Cadis (religious leaders) and the powerful chiefs who resided in Italian Somaliland. The Ogaden clan *Sultans* who had hitherto been recognised as *Sultans* by the British East African Protectorate government would be replaced by appointed chiefs when the Italians took over the administration of the Jubaland province. Fourthly, during the First World War, the Somali in the neighbouring territory on the east bank of the Juba River suffered losses and starvation; grain having been requisitioned by the Italian authorities. As against this, the Jubaland Somali had prosperous years during the this period.<sup>24</sup> The administrative officers in the NFD and Jubaland province such as Glenday knew that it was unfair to divide the two regions into two governments even though the cession of Jubaland would reduce the Protectorate Government's Officials administrative work.

Menelik, the Abyssinian emperor between 1889 to 1913, had always wanted to expand and consolidate his overlordship in the lowland areas to the south and east of his stronghold in the Abyssinian highlands. In order to achieve his aims, which were largely to counter European encroachment on his kingdom up in the Abyssinian highlands and in the process preserve his empire-state, he made it known to the contending powers, that he was not prepared to sit idly by while European powers were carving up the Horn of Africa into their

---

23. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1927.

24. *Ibid.*

own domains of operation. He embarked on massive militarization by buying weapons and ammunition, especially from French and Italian arms dealers. Menelik also signed treaties of friendship and non-aggression with the European powers. The Treaty of Wechale,<sup>25</sup> which he signed with the Italian Count Pietro Antonelli in May 1889 gave Menelik the time to buy more weapons to expand his kingdom east and southwards into the Somali and Galla regions. Such treaties enabled Menelik transform his Abyssinian empire-state into 'Ethiopia', and in the process one of the colonial powers partitioning Somali rangelands into five colonial entities such as French Somaliland, Ogaden, British and Italian Somaliland and the NFD of the British East African Protectorate.<sup>26</sup>

Menelik helped the British Somaliland forces in the two expeditions of 1901-02 to subdue Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, the so-called 'mad-mullah', by providing rear bases for the British forces engaged against Sayyid in British Somaliland. Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan was a politico-religious leader of the Somali people whose land was partitioned when he appeared in the Horn of Africa in 1898 and after. The Sayyid believed that foreign powers had come to rule the Somali country and that there was a need to wage a 'holy war' against all the infidels<sup>27</sup> and towards that end he kept 'the British Somaliland, the Ogaden region, and the Benadir coast in a state of turmoil for two decades'.<sup>28</sup> The effects of the Sayyid's successful resistance in the northern regions of Somaliland were felt in the Jubaland region of the British East Africa though: 'more marginal and indirect, it was nevertheless a factor influencing both the principal Somali clans in the area, the Ogaden and the Marehan, as well as the attitude of the Protectorate administration towards them'.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, due to the 'turmoil' in Ogaden region and British Somaliland as a result of the Sayyid's resistance to foreign rule, many clans such as the Auliyahan and the Marehan began migrating southwards to Jubaland where they increased the population pressure.<sup>30</sup>

Thus when the Abyssinian leaders actively participated in the attempts to capture Sayyid

---

25. B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia* (London, 1991), p.74.

26. Gesheker, 'Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation', pp.1-33.

27. Samatar, *Oral Poetry*, p.45.

28. R.L. Hess, 'The "Mad Mullah" and Northern Somalia', *Journal of African History*, V, 3 (1964), pp.415-433.

29. E.R. Turton, 'The Impact of Mohamed Abdille Hassan in the East Africa Protectorate', *Journal of African History*, X, 4 (1969), pp.641-657.

30. *Ibid.*

Mohamed Abdille Hassan in 1901 and 1902 by sending expeditions against the Sayyid's forces, they were helping the British as equal partners in the subjugation of the Somali people.<sup>31</sup> In the final analysis Abyssinian leaders such as Menelik were able to survive and even participate in the colonial partition of the Horn of Africa not only 'because of their capacity to exploit the cupidity of the European colonialist'<sup>32</sup> but the Abyssinian leaders were also ruthlessly expansionists. This gave the European powers the legitimacy to occupy what would become the NFD and Jubaland regions of British East Africa and the Guimbo region of Italian Somaliland because Abyssinian expansion east and southwards was resented and resisted by the Somali and Oromo people as much as they resisted European colonial intrusions.

The British used their foothold in Kismayu to send expeditions into the interior, an interior that had only been traversed by a German adventurer named Vanderdecken before 1896 though he never came back to the coast alive.<sup>33</sup> The province of Jubaland, as will be shown later, became expensive to administer both in terms of the human toll it exacted in the form of administrators killed as well as in the capital outlay it demanded from the British treasury. But the British government was not prepared to incur the expense of pacification and eventual colonial rule of Jubaland at this early stage. The period between 1895 and 1917 witnessed a policy of observation by the Colonial Office, especially by Crewe, the Colonial Secretary in 1915, while the officers on the spot were eager to make British rule felt by the local people. This was evidenced by the numerous expeditions into the interior of Jubaland and the NFD. Among the numerous expeditions sent to Jubaland to subdue the Ogaden, were the June and November 1895 and March 1896 expeditions led by Mr Craufurd, the June 1897 expedition led by Major J.R.L. McDonald, the 14 April 1898 expedition led by Major W. Quentin, and Jenner's expedition of 1900.

As for what later became the NFD of the British East Africa Protectorate, it was approached from various fronts, though chiefly from Archer's Post and Meru which had been opened up by 1908. The expeditions from Kismayu were solely to 'pacify' the Ogaden country and not

---

31. Samatar, *Oral Poetry*, p.20.

32. A. Tekle, 'The Determinants of the Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Ethiopia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 27, 3 (1989), pp.479-502.

33. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

the Galla country to the far west which was approached from Meru. According to G. Mungeam, Meru was 'the natural gateway to the north and the vast unadministered areas.', and was also 'the natural supply base for extensions to the north'.<sup>34</sup> The British also operated from Mombasa, from whence an expedition led by Rogers in 1897 against the Ogaden Somali who lived along the Tana River was successful.<sup>35</sup> Rogers undertook another expedition from Mombasa in 1901, this time as an administrator of the Tanaland district to halt the Ogaden expansion into Galla territory along the Tana River, although Rogers was warned by Charles Elliot, the Protectorate Governor, 'against the dangers of such isolated actions'.<sup>36</sup> As mentioned, the Ogaden had been migrating southwards between 1800 and 1900 to escape the Abyssinian marauders in the north and had by 1896 crossed the Tana River reaching Makowe, fifteen kilometres from Lamu.<sup>37</sup> In the process they had forced the Galla to venture even deeper into the coastal areas of the Mijikenda tribes such as the Giriama and the Pokomo who lived in Kilifi and Hola areas respectively. In order to keep the Ogaden nomads away from the Tana River, the administrative officers such as Gilkison in 1909 and F. W. Isaac in 1914 were of the opinion that 'any Somalis who appeared within the vicinity of the Tana River should be shot at and their cattle seized'.<sup>38</sup> Yet the Protectorate Government under Sir Percy Girouard in 1912 was unable to spare the troops necessary to enforce such measures and the officers in charge of the Tanaland district 'had to carry on as best as they could with the aid of the few police who were placed at their disposal'.<sup>39</sup>

It was only after the 1920s that Ogaden migrations southwards were limited by the administration in the NFD to five kilometres east of the Tana River with the establishment of administrative centres at Masalani and Ijara in 1926. The Ogaden were allowed access to the Tana River only during severe droughts and in the *jilaal* or dry season while during the rest of the year they were to use rain pools gathered after the rainy season. Even then, the Ogaden Somalis had to move their livestock along specific routes to the Tana River such as the Ishaaq Bini, Malka Gababa and Ali Godana routes, so as not to trample Pokomo (a Bantu

---

34. G. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya* (London, 1966), p. 167.

35. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

36. Mungeam, *British Rule*, p. 79.

37. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*



farming community) and Galla farmlands along the east bank of the Tana River.

Since the Ogaden and other clans had never entered into an agreement with the *Sultan* at any time before, or with the I.B.E.A.Co for that matter, the British East Africa Protectorate government agents felt obliged to enter into agreements with them. British government agents such as Mr Jenner in 1896 started a process which was common all over Africa, that of signing treaties of protection with the local people. A classical example of those treaties is the one of 1 September 1896 whereby the newly appointed Sub-Commissioner for Jubaland, Mr J.W.C. Jenner, entered into an agreement with the Sultan of the Ogaden, Ahmed Magan in Kismayu, the regional headquarters of the Jubaland Province.

Signing treaties of protection was one thing, winning the loyalty of the Somalis in both the Jubaland and Northern Frontier District in the 1890s and early 1900 was another. Many of the Ogaden and Marehan *sultans* like Ahmed Magan signed various letters of protection with the European concession seekers without understanding the implications. To the Ogaden *Sultans*, these treaties were in essence not more than signing a friendship agreement with European agents. The Ogaden chiefs signed protection treaties which placed their country and people under the rule of the British Government. These treaties were written both in English and Arabic and were translated for the Somali leaders by an interpreter. If the chief did not write Arabic, they normally put their thumbs on the pieces of paper after being told of its meaning. The meaning of these treaties was not clear to the Somali leaders as indeed it was unclear to all African leaders of the time since 'the combined effect of coercion and inducement'<sup>40</sup> left them confused. That they were to lose their independence and have their land put under the protection of an alien government was a realisation that dawned on them later on. This realization took the form of active resistance by different sub-clans such as the Mohamed Zubeir from 1899 to 1903, the Marehan from 1910 to 1913, and the Auliyahan from 1915 to 1917.<sup>41</sup>

These treaties did not at first, however, affect the day-to-day activities of the Somali clans and they continued with their raiding of one another as they had done in the past until the late

---

40. S. Touval, 'Treaties, Borders, and the Partition of Africa', *Journal of African History*, VII, 2 (1966), pp.279-292.

41. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

1920s when effective administration of the NFD began to take shape. To the Somali *Sultans*, signing their names on a piece of paper did not require much effort if it would gain them some perceived immediate or long term advantage especially over the neighbouring clan. The Auliyahan clan signed a treaty of friendship with the British in 1899 so that they could gain the advantage of getting weapons to settle their traditional feud against the Mohamed Zubier, their closest relatives. Between 1890 and 1900, the Ogaden and other clans in Jubaland and the NFD did not believe that the British and the Italians with whom they were signing treaties posed any immediate threat to them.<sup>42</sup> The Ogaden *Sultans* believed that these European agents would go as soon they signed these agreements. But what these clan elders and their *Sultans* did not realise was that these officials who signed treaties with them would be there to stay and were backed by imperial forces unfathomable to them. Thus the British were forced to subdue the Ogaden and the Marehan by the barrel of the gun by sending the numerous expeditions noted above. It was just a matter of time before the Ogaden and the Marehan realised they were powerless and had to adopt new strategies for defying the new order by which they became subject people.

#### **THE STRUGGLES OF ABDIRAHMAN MURSAL, c.1896-1929**

Abdirahman Mursal was one of the Ogaden leaders who had early contacts with the British colonial officials dating from 1896. He fought against the British colonial agents especially Lt. Will, and Capt. Tanner who were sent by the British consul in Zanzibar to explore the hinterland of Kismayu in 1897.<sup>43</sup> Afterwards Abdirahman Mursal became a colonial agent who served British expansion in Jubaland very well, especially during the time of the first sub-commissioner, J.W.C. Jenner from 1897-1900. He took part in many expeditions against the Marehan and the Mohamed Zubeir clans who resisted British rule at this time and took a leading role in the expedition of 1903 against the Mohamed Zubeir for the murder of Jenner in 1900. He lived in Serenli area on the west bank of the Juba River where most of his followers grazed their livestock.

Like all Somali leaders of that era, he wanted to take advantage of British rule and thereby serve his own interests rather than those of British imperialism. To achieve this end, he clashed several times with the British Colonial officers such as Capt. Salkeld, the Assistant

---

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*



District Commissioner for Jubaland, and Mr Hope, the Provincial Commissioner in 1909. After 1910, Abdirahman Mursal came under suspicion of creating intrigue among the clans especially between the Marehan and the Auliyahan; and Captain Bois, the officer in charge of Serenli, where Abdirahman was based, decided not to utilize his services as government agent in northern Jubaland province.<sup>44</sup>

Abdirahman Mursal was the chief of the Auliyahan sub-clan in Serenli district in northern Jubaland province and therefore had to safeguard the interest of his sub-clan from rival clans notably the Marehan who were expanding southwards from Ethiopia. There were constant raids and counter-raids between these two neighbouring clans in the period 1896-1917, especially as both groups were migrating from the turmoil in the north caused by Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan's resistance to not only British rule but also Abyssinian and Italian colonialism. The Marehan and the Auliyahan came with a lot weapons which they used to raid each other and the neighbouring clans. The new Governor of the Protectorate in 1913, Sir Henry Belfield, adopted the policy of observation and did not intervene on behalf of any clan. The British were neutral as far as these two clans were concerned. This can be understood because the British were heavily engaged during this period in suppressing the struggles waged by Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, 'the Mad Mulla', in British Somaliland. The British were also engaged in various 'punitive' expeditions against the Kikuyu in 1901, Kipsigis in 1902 and 1905, and the Giriama in 1914. Hence the British officials whether in Nairobi or London did not want to engage themselves with the Ogaden Somalis in Jubaland as it would require a lot of uncalled-for expenses. So the policy formulated by London and Nairobi to the officers on the spot was to observe but not to act on the situation.

However, by 1916 the situation in northern Jubaland had become serious<sup>45</sup> and lawlessness became the order of the day. The British administration was forced to bring peace between these two traditional enemies. Whereas the Marehan were prepared to observe the truce negotiated by the local administrator, Captain Elliot, Abdirahman rejected the peace deals until the Marehan had brought back looted livestock. Elliot had no choice but to give an ultimatum to Abdirahman and his people to obey government orders. It was at this stage

---

44. *Ibid.*

45. Moyse-Bartlett, *Kings African Rifles*, p.434.

that Abdirahman requested to be given a day to consult with his elders concerning the ultimatum. Instead of coming to the negotiating baraza, however, Abdirahman and his people sacked Fort Serenli on the evening of 10 March 1916. The unsuspecting British forces at the fort were mercilessly routed and the District Commissioner, Captain Elliot, was murdered by Abdirahman Mursal 'with his own hand'.<sup>46</sup> The Auliyahan then began systematic looting of government stores and even the local business community was not spared. The government was forced to evacuate Fort Serenli to Kismayu in the south and Moyale to the north west. For two years Abdirahman Mursal was the authority in northern Jubaland and the British could do nothing as it was the peak of the First World War.

The sacking of Serenli was unique, in Jubaland's history because 'of the vast damage that had befallen the British in the Jubaland'<sup>47</sup> and it was only comparable to the lawlessness and destruction of both property and looting that was taking place in British Somaliland in the north in the same period. The casualties were disheartening for 'over 35 [K.A.R] soldiers were killed and about 50 civilians lost their lives'<sup>48</sup> during the sacking of Serenli. The Auliyahan looted the town for two days and the remainder of the loot was thrown into the River Juba. The other Somali clans, however, according to Abdille Hassan Illey, 'viewed the whole scenario with a lot of apprehension. They claimed that the Auliyahan did not know what to do with the sugar that was looted and had thrown it into the river so that their camels could drink sweetened water'.<sup>49</sup> Yet this was a scorched-earth policy adopted by the Auliyahan to 'deny the British forces supplies if they were to counter-attack Abdirahman's forces'<sup>50</sup> used in South Africa.

It was not until August 1917 that the 5th K.A.R under Lt. Col. Barret was despatched to Serenli to deal with the Auliyahan. But the Auliyahan had already retreated with their stock towards the upper reaches of the Juba River and were not even in Serenli. Hence Captain Martin of the 5th K.A.R was sent to capture Abdirahman dead or alive. In this operation against the Auliyahan, 'over 5,000 camels were brought in, 402 large-bore rifles and 16,000

---

46. KNA, Microfilm, 533/391/4.

47. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

48. Moyse-Bartlett, *Kings African Rifles*, pp.434-435.

49. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

50. *Ibid.*

rounds of ammunition<sup>51</sup> were captured by the British forces. As for Abdirahman, he escaped to Ethiopia where he lived as a senior chief of the Auliyahan until his death in 1937.<sup>52</sup>

### **THE PACIFICATION OF THE OGADEN IN JUBALAND PROVINCE OF BRITISH EAST AFRICA**

The first British expedition against the Ogaden had been led by Hamilton, the I.B.E.A. Co. agent in 1892, to punish them for killing Arab traders who travelled between Gobwein and Kismayu. The Somalis raided these small towns from time to time for cattle and camels. Hamilton was advised to retire either to the S.W. Kenia, a trading ship on the Juba River, or to the stone fort at Gobwein. This advice Hamilton ignored at the cost of his life seven days later when his small boma was raided by the Ogaden. He was 'shot in the back by a poisoned arrow'.<sup>53</sup> In this first expedition most of Hamilton's men were killed and only a few managed to escape to tell of the events that had befallen them. The administrative officers such as Jenner, Craufurd, and Kilkely wanted to avenge the death of Hamilton immediately but were warned by Arthur Harding, the Protectorate Governor, not to act until reinforcements arrived from India.<sup>54</sup> This incident was just the beginning of a long protracted struggle waged by the Ogaden people in Jubaland.

A lot of raids on the nascent government bomas such as Yonti, Kismayu, Afmadu and Serenli were waged by the Ogaden in resisting the establishment of colonial rule in Jubaland in the period between 1896 and 1926. This resistance took the form of hit and run tactics where bands of warriors organised themselves to loot the government bomas. Surprise attacks on imperial forces, such as the raid of 14 April 1897 on Yonte's garrison twenty kilometres north of Kismayu by Abdirahman Mursal, were another strategy adopted by the Ogaden in the hinterland of the Kismayu coast. Another raid was made by the Ogaden on the 14 July 1898 on Kismayu where they took away twenty eight Government cattle and one hundred twenty goats. The Government forces pursued the Ogaden warriors but could not catch up with them. Every time the imperial forces pursued the Ogaden warriors the latter would retreat and disappear into the bush. The Ogaden also looted from the imperial forces supplies

---

51. Moyse-Bartlett, *Kings African Rifles*, p.436.

52. KNA, Microfilm, 533/391/4.

53. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Juubaland Political Records, 1915.

54. *Ibid.*

and ammunition that were eventually used against the British forces.<sup>55</sup>

The Ogaden had no doubt of the advantages of their mobility and knowledge of their country which they put to good use. For example, on 10 April 1897, a force under the command of Lieutenant Ford was sent to the village of Magrada and the larger village of Hajuwen, both on the Juba River above the Turki Hill. On reaching both villages, the British Expeditionary force which included a surgeon Captain Kilkely, a Mr Craufurd, and twenty rifles, found the village empty of the Ogaden inhabitants. On the evening of 12 April, a report reached the expeditionary force that the post at Yonte, some fifteen kilometres from Kismayu, was in danger of attack by the Ogaden. Due to this, at 4.00 am on 13 April 1897 Mr Craufurd and his force marched to Yonti. Having reached Yonti at 9.30 am, they found only the tail-end of the Ogaden fighters disappearing into the bush.<sup>56</sup> The expedition could do nothing but to prepare for another sudden attack by the Ogaden warriors. This continuous state of affairs would influence the British East Africa Protectorate to cede the Jubaland province to Italian rule in 1926.

The most devastating blow to the British attempts at subduing the Ogaden came with the murder of the first Sub-Commissioner of Jubaland, J.C.W. Jenner, in 1900. He had travelled to Afmadu on the 25 July 1900 to collect fines from the Ogaden, who had not finished paying their fine imposed two years ago for the murder of Mr Hamilton. Mr Jenner also aimed in this expedition to settle disputes over the use of water wells among warring clans specially that involving the Mohamed Zubeir and the Herti clans. After meeting their elders in a baraza (open-air gathering) he had taken the Ogaden overtures of peace for granted. Mr Jenner in his haste to give out instant punishment to some elders, who objected to and rejected his proposal of 'sharing water wells among the clans',<sup>57</sup> caned some of them in the morning before his death in the evening.<sup>58</sup> The Ogaden elders it seems planned Mr Jenner's death in the afternoon, when the baraza came to an end and everybody went home. Mr Jenner was killed while asleep inside his tent by a number of elders including Aden Hagal, Omar Magan and Hassan Warfa, representing the Mohamed Zubeir and Auliyahan

---

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. Interview with Yussuf Dahir Magan, Nairobi, January 1996.

58. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

sub-clans of the Ogaden clan.<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that Mr Jenner's death was politically motivated because several elders of the Ogaden such as those named above were implicated in the plot to kill him. It was believed by the Ogaden elders that Mr Jenner was dishonest in his dealings with the Ogaden in general and specifically with the numerically powerful Mohamed Zubeir Clan. It was also the view of the Ogaden clan elders that Mr Jenner had favoured other clans, notably the Herti, with government posts in Kismayu and had elders of other clans on the government payroll. These same favours were not bestowed on the Ogaden who viewed the whole of the British administrative machinery with suspicion.<sup>60</sup> Ogaden - British relations throughout the colonial era, whether in Jubaland, in the Northern Frontier District, or even in British Somaliland, were marked by suspicion, mistrust, and outright dishonesty on both sides.

The British had three broad sets of policies from the 1895 to the 1920s in the administration of Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District : to bring about law and order among the tribes of Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District; to stop Somali expansion westwards into Galla lands; and to protect the Galla tribes from Abyssinian marauders who looted the Galla in the name of collecting tributes from them.<sup>61</sup> The British could not immediately implement these policies militarily and after sending a number of large expeditions such as in March 1896 led by Major J.R.L. McDonald, June 1897 led by Major W. Quintin, on April 1899 led by Lt Ford, in August and December 1899 and July 1900 led by Jenner, July 1907 led by Rogers and September 1916 led by Elliot to the Ogaden country failed to subdue the Ogaden. In all of these expeditions, the conflicts resulted in a stalemate and only increased the expenses of administering the Jubaland. By 1912 Sir Percy Girouard, the Governor of British East Africa Protectorate, with the approval of London, had adopted a policy of containment which did not have much effect on the Somalis and the Abyssinians.<sup>62</sup> In order to stop Abyssinian incursions against the British protected southern Galla, the administration of Sir Henry Belfield in 1914 opened legation offices both at Negheli and Mega in what later

---

59. *Ibid.*

60. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915; Mungeam, *British Rule*, pp.72-76; interview with Abdi Hassan, Johannesburg, April 1996.

61. KNA PC NFD/1/1/3, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1910; KNA PC NFD/2/1/1 Handing Over Report, Kittermaster to Blawman, 1919.

62. Mungeam, *British Rule*, pp.31-32.



became the southern regions of Ethiopia.<sup>63</sup> It was the administrative officers such as Muire, J.C. Hope, Castle Smith and F.W. Isaac in Jubaland and the NFD who were advocating active pacification. The policy of containment lasted until after the end of the First World War, when the British could use resources from other parts of the empire.

Besides pacifying recalcitrant tribes, the British frontier officers had to contend with harsh natural realities. As R.G. Turnbull has noted:

apart from the Juba and the Deshek Wama, the country [Jubaland] was virtually waterless; communications scarcely existed; resources, especially food, medical supplies and transport, were exiguous; and the troops [K.A.R] available were unsuitable to the countryside, and no match for the Somali in the bush.<sup>64</sup>

The adaptation to difficult conditions by the British officers took some time and many of them opted for a shorter tour of duty in these areas. The development of the NFD would to a large extent be influenced by these trends where the colonial officers did not stay long enough in the Province to have an impact on the lives of the nomadic Somalis. It was the policy of the Protectorate Government in Kenya to arrange for shorter tours of duty, usually not more than eighteen months so that administrators in the NFD and Jubaland are not too 'fossilised to be of use any where else'.<sup>65</sup>

The soldiers employed by the British were Sudanese, Yao and Indians who were not accustomed to living in harsh environmental conditions. All of these soldiers proved of little use in the countryside where the odds were stacked against them. They were not accustomed to long-distance trekking without water and on little food. On the other hand, the Ogaden warriors were a 'very plucky race and the finest marchers in the world. When on raiding expeditions, they travel very rapidly and will cover 40 miles daily with great ease'.<sup>66</sup> The climate also took a heavy toll on the British forces as the average daily temperature was 35 degrees Celcius. To quote one officer: 'these regular troops are at the greatest disadvantage in this country'<sup>67</sup> having to contend with natural hardships as well as the Ogaden resolve to maintain their independence from alien domination.

---

63. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1914.

64. Turnbull, 'Darod Invasion', pp.308-313.

65. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, 1922.

66. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

67. *Ibid.*

The British imperial forces quickly learned the Ogaden tactics of surprise attack and quicker retreat which they applied to the unsuspecting Ogaden villages throughout the Jubaland Province. The British colonial administrators and their levies looted Ogaden livestock in retaliation against the Ogaden resistance to colonial rule. This was exemplified when the British forces were sent to avenge the murder of Mr Hamilton in 1892, Lt. Ford's expedition of 10-17 April 1899, and in Mr Jenner's expeditions to the interior of 1899 before he met his death a year later. Rogers's expedition in 1907 to punish the Abdalla clan for killing Galla farmers along the Tana River also forced the Abdalla to pay five hundred cattle as a fine. Lt. Col Barret's expedition against the Auliyahan in 1917 led the Auliyahan to lose a third of their livestock and camel population. The Auliyahan were subsequently impoverished and had to sue for peace unconditionally. As a result of Lt. Col. Barret's expedition many Auliyahan pastoral nomads migrated from Serenli, the scene of the 1916 war, to the NFD of Kenya. Most of the looted livestock were never needed by soldiers but were shot nevertheless.

These actions on the part of the imperial forces always forced the Ogaden to retaliate on government bomas such as Kismayu in April 1895, Yonte in March 1896, Hellished in May 1897, Afmadu in July 1899 and Serenli in September 1916. In all these raids, the Ogaden reclaimed looted livestock from British East Africa Protectorate government bomas. The Ogaden also retaliated against collaborating clans such as the Herti clans in order to replenish their depleted stock and also to regain lost credibility before other clans. The Herti clans came from the Hobbio in the north eastern region of Italian Somaliland to the Jubaland coast as traders in 1896 with the establishment of British East Africa Protectorate administration in Kismayu. It was an attack and counter-attacking drama that was played out between the Ogaden and the British administrative forces until the British handed over Jubaland to the Italians in 1927.

The period between 1895 and the 1920s saw the Ogaden clans migrating away from the newly established Government bomas to scatter and disperse throughout Jubaland and along the rivers Juba and Tana. The Ogaden clan avoided living near the centres of administration such as Serenli, Afmadu and Bardera and preferred the countryside in order to maintain their independence. The British administration on their part adopted a policy of containment so that inter-clan rivalries did not affect the friendly clans. The British administration protected those



clans such as the Herti from Ogaden attacks by arming them especially between 1899 and 1901. Still, the British tried to bring the Ogaden within Government jurisdiction and control in the 1910s and 1920s, but without much success because the Ogaden were determined to maintain their independence while the Protectorate government did not want to incur more financial expenditure.

As late as 1925 the King's African Rifles went on a military expedition against Mohamed Zubeir of the Ogaden clan who had attacked the Herti clan for livestock and ownership of watering wells. As the Herti had been the most co-operative clan with the administration in Jubaland and had continually provided the bulk of soldiers to the K.A.R in East Africa, the British were forced to act on behalf of their allies. In this expedition, the companies of the 3rd and 4th K.A.R battalions 'inflicted some fifty casualties without loss to themselves and collected about twenty thousand head of stock'.<sup>68</sup> This was no mean feat. The policy of pauperizing the Ogaden had its origin in the military expeditions starting from Hamilton's military expedition in 1892 when Harding noted that 'these people [Ogaden] must learn submission by bullets - it's the only school; after that you may begin more modern and humane methods of education'.<sup>69</sup> Jenner's military expeditions of 1899 against the Ogaden and subsequent military expeditions led to the systematic confiscation of Ogaden livestock.<sup>70</sup>

The Ogaden were bedevilled by lack of unity and they never offered a concerted resistance to British rule at any one time. In the late 1890s when the Mohamed Zubeir clan was involved in resistance the Auliyahan and other clans did not come to their assistance because these clans would have felt more secure if Mohamed Zubeir's power was broken. When it was the turn of the Auliyahan to resist in 1916-1917, the Mohamed Zubeir and other clans did not aid the Auliyahan in any way but were actually sitting on the fence. It was one clan at a time which resisted without any assistance from the other clans and the other clans if not neutral were on the side of the British in order to settle old scores or grudges and to get new advantages.<sup>71</sup> For example during the punitive expeditions of 1893-1901 against the

---

68. Moyse-Bartlett, *Kings African Rifles*, p.439.

69. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Records, 1915.

70. Moyse-Bartlett, *Kings African Rifles*, p.454.

71. *Ibid.*, pp.434-438.

Mohamed Zubeir, other Abdalla and Abd Wak subclans did not come to aid them and were silent observers of the events while the Herti clan actively supported the British forces and participated in the looting of Ogaden livestock. Other Ogadeni chiefs, such as the chief of the Auliyahan clan, Abdirahman Mursal, actively supported the British by providing men and food to the K.A.R soldiers.<sup>72</sup>

The people in Whitehall and the British East Africa Protectorate Governors such as Charles Elliot and Sir Percy Girouard did not see any value in incurring serious expenses in Jubaland. As Charles Elliot the Protectorate Commissioner remarked about Jubaland in 1902: 'recent events have not altered my conviction that the country is not worth the money spent upon it. It is true that the strip called Gosha, on the Juba River, is fairly fertile, and that Kismayu does a considerable trade in exporting hides and importing cloth and coffee; but these advantages cannot be seriously set against the enormous military expenditure'.<sup>73</sup> It was the men on the spot such Lt. Col. Barret of the King's African Rifles, and Capt. Hope and Llewellyn of the NFD Administration who advocated a policy change concerning the expansion of British administration in Jubaland in order to check 'Abyssinian looters and marauders who constantly raided and harassed the border tribes'.<sup>74</sup> These required vigilant patrols by the K.A.R and the administration. Early colonial administrators in Jubaland and NFD like Llewellyn, G. Archer and Glenday were concerned with the constant raids on the British protected tribes and sought His Majesty's Government's help to counter the Abyssinian expansion eastwards and southwards into British colonies.<sup>75</sup>

Besides the active resistance waged by the Ogaden and other clans, the British had to deal with the constant immigration of the Somali clans into the British territory of the Northern Province.<sup>76</sup> This migration which was markedly felt after the cession of Jubaland to Italian Somaliland in 1927 was a big worry to an over-stretched administration who could do nothing about it. In 1927 and 1928 Somali clans such as the Auliyahan and the Garreh were crossing the border to the NFD side by a process of slow infiltration. The wandering nature

---

72. KNA, Microfilm, 533/391/4.

73. KNA PC NFD/4/6/1, Jubaland Political Reports, 1915.

74. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1914.

75. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1926.

76. There was a name change for the Province because Turkana District was amalgamated with the NFD in 1920.

of the Somali nomad grossly violated the Kenya Colony's policy of trying to keep all clans within a confined area for their grazing purposes and administrative convenience. This colonial design of confining each clan to a specific grazing area, however, did not take into consideration the fact that Somalis were nomads who had to travel in search of fresh pastures and water for both animal and human consumption irrespective of artificial boundaries. This newly created boundary separated homogeneous people under two different colonial entities. Yet the British authorities had by 1919 curbed the pace of Somali migrations though 'constant care is necessary as they [Somali] are artists at peaceful penetration'.<sup>77</sup> These policies were the forerunners of the Special District Ordinance of 1934 which prohibited free movement in and out the Northern Frontier District and its impact on the Ogaden will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Gun-running by clans such as the Marehan and the Auliyahan became a thriving business in the period from the 1910s till the mid-1930s. These guns found their way from Ogadenia and the Boran province of what would become Ethiopian Empire-State where there was administrative laxity as well as loose Ethiopian control of the people.<sup>78</sup> The Somalis of Jubaland and the Northern Province of Kenya bought these guns in large quantities for raiding purposes as well as for defence. The British administrators dealt with this problem by imposing heavy livestock fines on those clans which dealt in this trade and even denied them water wells for their livestock. These guns, most of them Martini Henry type, were bought from Abyssinian soldiers and entered the Northern Province through Moyale and Dolo in Jubaland.

The British were successful in eradicating gun-running especially in the Northern Frontier District by 1930 but could not completely stop the trade passing through from southern Abyssinia to Italian Somaliland. These measures definitely kept the K.A.R soldiers and the Tribal Police (formed in 1929) on constant patrols throughout the frontier district and also checking inter-tribal feuds and trespassing. These two organs of the British administration in the Northern Frontier and Jubaland were the cornerstone of peace and stability among the tribesmen. As far as Abdi Koriyo was concerned, the K.A.R. and the Tribal Police, called Dubas were:

---

77. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1920.

78. *Ibid.*, Handing Over Report, 1927.

the true soldiers this region has ever seen and will ever see because they never lived in towns and in the villages to harass civilians. They were constantly on patrol along the international boundaries<sup>79</sup>

Infiltration by what the British administrative officers termed as 'undesirable Somalis'<sup>80</sup> became a major issue which occupied the attention of many District Commissioners in the Northern Province after the cession of Jubaland Province to Italian Somaliland in 1927. The new migrant Somalis to the Northern Province engaged in illicit game poaching and gun-running within and without the two regions. Other immigrants came from Italian as well as British Somaliland and were also viewed as undesirable within the Protectorate as they usually came to indulge in 'itinerary trade at the expense of the local people'<sup>81</sup> who it was believed should have had this business. Moreover, these itinerant traders undercharged for pastoral commodities such as livestock, ghee and hides and skins. On the other hand, the itinerant traders overcharged for manufactured commodities such as cotton clothes, sugar and tea which they sold to the unsuspecting nomads. These undesirable Somali, who were also called 'alien somalis' by the administration in the Kenya Colony, kept the administration in the Northern Province busy as they engaged in the above activities which were detrimental to the smooth running of administration in the Northern Province.

These new arrivals did not much care for British administrative policies such as the zoning of grazing lands to allow the land to recover from overgrazing. To these immigrants, colonial boundaries had no significance because they cared more about their livestock than anything else. In Italian Somaliland where they came from there were no grazing zones for specific clans and the Ogaden and Herti nomads wandered at will to wherever there was abundant grazing. 'Alien Somalis' - a term that was used to describe non-indigenous Somalis whose clans were not residents of the Kenya Colony - gave a lot of trouble to the administration as they intensified looting, raiding and the general lawlessness in the protectorate which created a sense of frustration and apathy on the part of the administrators in the frontier districts in the early 1920s.<sup>82</sup> The intelligence report for 1920 noted the 'alien Somalis' to be the 'most undesirable element in the district [NFD] and it is only by making things thoroughly

---

79. Interview with Abdi Koriyo, Garissa, Kenya, March 1996.

80. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1925.

81. *Ibid.*

82. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1927.

uncomfortable for them that they would be compelled to return to their own district'.<sup>83</sup>

The administrative officers were by 1927 regaining their vigour in trying to administer the Northern Province region closely. This is owing to a number of factors. Firstly, the cession of Jubaland to Italian Somaliland reduced the geographical area of their administrative responsibility. Secondly, Jubaland had contained 'large portions of the most troublesome clans and their sultans'<sup>84</sup> who were often difficult to deal with administratively and who were now longer within the Kenya Colony. Finally, as is common in all remote regions, by means of the construction of motor tracks and the use of mechanical transport which begun to appear in the 1920s previously long communication routes were shortened.<sup>85</sup> There was a sense of new hope in the future of administration of the Northern Province.

The use of clan *sultans* as the legitimate leaders of their respective communities smoothed the administration of the NFD of the Kenya Colony after 1910 when they became official government appointees. The traditional pre-colonial *sultans* were now in the pay of the government and were expected to perform certain roles in the administrative machinery. These chiefs were provided with khaki uniforms so that they could be identified by the people; and the tribal police initially called *illaloes* or watchmen worked with the chiefs in administering their respective clans. The local District Commissioner gave directives to the community through these *sultans* who had councils of elders to assist them in their day to day activities. Some of these government chiefs such as Hilowle Mohamed of the Auliyahan sub-clan, became little tyrants, from whom people avoided seeking any help.<sup>86</sup>

Some *sultans* (to the government they were chiefs) such as Stamboul Abdi and Ido Roble, were more respectable, influential and diligent in their work than others. Yet others were immediately sacked if they proved to be lazy and did not have the support of their communities. Their appointment was very democratic in the sense that the D.C. consulted the clan and asked them to bring somebody to represent them in the government machinery. Their reputation and effectiveness largely depended on the individual character and how they

---

83. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1920.

84. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1927.

85. *Ibid.*

86. Interview with Siyaad Duale, Nairobi, January 1996.



performed their duties.<sup>87</sup> *Sultan* Stamboul Abdi and Ido Ibrahim of the Abd Wak and Ajuran clans respectively earned the admiration of the British administrators in the First World War period as faithful servants of His Majesty's Government for mobilizing Ogaden and Ajuran resources such as livestock and young men to the war effort. The young men from the NFD region served the British in routing the Germans from the German colony of Tanganyika.

The Somali opposed the cession of Jubaland to Italian Somaliland for many reasons. According to Abdille Hassan Illey the cession was the 'biggest injustice British colonial rule has brought to us because it divided families and sub-clans to be ruled by two different colonial rulers. A man who was married to three wives suddenly found his homes in two different countries now and he needed to have a travel document to visit his wife.'<sup>88</sup> It therefore forced 'people to sneak in and to sneak out' between these two regions without having to go through the authorities.<sup>89</sup>

For the nomadic Somali it meant curtailment of their movements to wells and pastures in either Jubaland or in Northern Province especially during the dry season when water is to be found only in permanent water wells. The Ogaden nomads made use of different wells at different seasons of the year. The Wajir wells were used during the *Jilaal* or dry season whereas the Afmadu natural shallow water pans were used during the *Gu* or rainy season. Before the cession, the nomadic tribes could move about with their livestock in search of water and pastures between these two regions. But this free movement was no longer permitted because of the cession of Jubaland and the creation of an international border. The Somali nomad responded to these artificial boundaries by ignoring and crossing the border as if it did not exist.<sup>90</sup>

Trade was also affected by the cession of Jubaland in that the nomads in the Northern Province could no longer take their stock to Kismayu and had now to take them either to Lamu or Isiolo. Both of these two markets proved problematic in more ways than one. The

---

87. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1937.

88. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

89. *Ibid.*

90. Interview with Mohamed Osman Warfa, Nairobi, January 1996.



route to Lamu was, as already noted, infested with tsetse fly so that by the time the livestock reached that market, it had already contracted the trypanomiasis disease on the way which reduced their market value. As for Isiolo on the northern fringe of the Kenya Highlands, its proximity to the Kenya Highlands meant that there was a strong settler lobby to discourage Somali cattle which provided a stiff competition to settler stock. As a result of this, Isiolo became a quarantine station between 1915 and 1930 for Somali cattle and this lowered the prices paid for the Somali stock since the livestock were held there for long time before they were sold to local traders.

Furthermore, many Somalis in the Northern Province felt that by being linked with the Kenya Colony administratively they would become 'natives'<sup>91</sup> and that they would soon lose their rights and be made to carry 'Kipande like the Kikuyu'.<sup>92</sup> Thus the Officer in Charge of Jubaland noted in his Intelligence Report for March 1924 that 'a considerable amount of discontent and dissatisfaction was noted'.<sup>93</sup> He gave two reasons for this discontent on the eve of the cession of Jubaland to Italian Somaliland: firstly the fact that 'the government had insisted on bringing in the Registration Act and issuing kipandes to the Somalis and secondly it has also been widely circulated that they will be treated as the Wakikuyu in the Reserve'.<sup>94</sup> The Ogaden and other clans believed that the administration in the Northern Province would, by virtue of ceding Jubaland to Italian Somaliland, be treated on an equal footing with the 'Bantu' communities in the rest of the Kenya Colony.<sup>95</sup>

The cession of Jubaland affected the lives of the people of Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District in many ways and one can even argue convincingly that this single act of splitting a homogenous people was the seed bed of Somali nationalism in these areas in the years ahead. Somalis in the Northern Province looked to their brethren across the newly created border for information, ideas and strategies to oppose to colonial rule. The British had experienced a very tough time in pacifying the Ogaden tribes of Jubaland and it was ironic

---

91. The Somali in the history colonial Kenya, detested this terminology and reacted angrily to any person referring them so.

92. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1924.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

that just when this process was completed the region was handed over to the Italians. So the British were left with the Northern Frontier District where it had taken the two previous decades for the administration to establish itself and which in 1920 they re-named the Northern Province of the Kenya Colony. Turkana district was joined in 1920 to the Northern Frontier District to become the Northern Province for administrative convenience. The cession of Jubaland in 1927 to Italian administration would complete the division of Somali lands in the Horn of Africa between Abyssinian, Italian, French and British administrations in a process that took place from 1885 to 1927. The Northern Province contained the same people as Jubaland. The various ways that they adopted to British rule would determine the administrative policies of the British colonial government.

## CHAPTER THREE

### COLONIAL POLICIES AND THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICTS: c.1920-1950

The NFD of Kenya was administered by the military from 1908 when Archers' Post was opened as the first station. NFD region was amongst those areas affected by the 1902 East African Outlying District Ordinance which declared certain areas such as the Turkana province closed to outsiders.<sup>1</sup> The East African Outlying District Ordinance of 1902 stipulated that there was to be no free entry or exit from the district by Somalis and non-Somalis without legal authorization from the administration in the region. Military officers administered the NFD until 1925, when civilian administrators such as D.R. Crampton, T.D. Butler, and R.W. Hemstead were posted to the region. It was the military administration that had paved the way for the civilian administration of the NFD after 1925 by pacifying various Somali clans. The administration in the NFD in the 1920s was ill-prepared to implement the updated Outlying District Ordinance of 1924 as it had small numbers and were therefore constantly on patrol to ensure its implementation. Moreover, because of a shortage of administrative staff in the NFD, certain clans such as the Abdalla in Garissa were without an administrative officer in 1929.<sup>2</sup> The Abdalla had an uneasy relationship with the Galla who lived on the east of the Tana river because the Abdalla cattle trampled over the Galla farmlands on their way to the Tana river. By 1930, according to the Provincial report, the NFD administration was looking forward to the implementation of policies such as taxation, which had not been possible before because of inadequate personnel. Yet the future success or failure of administrative policies such as the taxation which was announced in 1929 would depend 'on delimitation, disarmament and the creation of an adequate frontier police force'.<sup>3</sup>

The various Somali clans in the NFD region of the Kenya colony were nomadic people who tended to move westward and southward with their livestock, in the process displacing contiguous communities like the Galla and the Boran even as late as the 1930s. The Somali migration westward had a domino effect in that the Boran and the Galla in turn displaced the neighbouring Bantu communities such as the Kamba to west, the Mijikenda to the south and

---

1. KNA Official Gazette, 1902.

2. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1929.

3. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1932.

the Masai in the north west. In a bid to stop the Somali migrations westwards in 1919 the administration in NFD cut a line, a sort of a boundary, which they called 'the Somali-Galla Line'.<sup>4</sup> This line ran from:

Ras Kiamboni along the present boundary of Tanaland and Jubaland to Lat. 18 then a line to Sankur leaving Sankuri in Somali Reserve. From North of Sankuri to Muddo Gashe thence along the road to Habaswein and the road on to Arbo and Suddeh wells thence the present boundary to Eil Wak wells in Garreh country and onto Malka Re.<sup>5</sup>

The Somali-Galla line was drawn to separate the Somali inhabited areas of the NFD from the Galla inhabited parts to the west of the line so as to halt Somali encroachment on Galla grazing lands. For this reason the line was drawn from the northern parts of the country to the southern-most part of it. No Somali was permitted to cross the line and if found west of that line was liable to a fine of a tenth of his cattle or a prison sentence of not more than three months. This particular policy achieved the desired long term goal of confining the nomadic Somalis to their allotted areas though some communities, notably the Degodia and the Auliyahan, flouted it time and again. As a result of this Somali-Galla line, after 1934 there was inter-mixture of the various clans which the administration tried to discourage especially between the Degodia, the Adjuran and the Ogaden in Wajir district since there was no possibility of geographic expansion. Clans such as the Degodia and Auliyahan crossed the Somali-Galla line in search of fresh pastures and water for their livestock. These clans had to be brought back forcibly to their grazing zones in Wajir and Garissa. It was only through vigorous patrolling by the King's African Rifles soldiers and the imposition of heavy penalties that communities such as the Auliyahan and the Degodia were discouraged from encroaching on Galla territory.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this policy in the 1920s was to achieve three broad objectives. First it was to protect the Galla and Boran from being totally absorbed by the Somali; second, to protect the Kenya highlands from encroachment by the Somali;<sup>7</sup> and finally to create a reserve for the Somali where they could live as they wished without infringing upon other communities. The

---

4. KNA PC NFD/1/10/7, memorandum by J.O. Hope.

5. *Ibid.*

6. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1927. The Auliyahan and the Degodia were two of the largest clans who grazed along the newly-created Somali-Galla line.

7. G. Reece, 'The Horn of Africa', *International Affairs*, Vol. XXX, No.4 (1954), pp.440-449.

Somalis detested this regulation because it left no room for expansion. In the 1920s the Auliyahan and the Degodia clans who lived on the fringes of the Somali-Galla line adopted a strategy of hide and run from the provincial administration in their attempts to graze their camels and livestock to the west of this boundary.<sup>8</sup>

The cession of Jubaland to the Italian administration in 1927 had left the Marehan and the Herti clans on the Italian side and divided Somali clans such as Mohamed Zubeir, Gurreh and the Auliyahan between the Kenya Colony and the Italian administration. The cession of Jubaland, moreover, created friction among and within the clans. Some clans, especially the Herti who had supported the colonial administration in the early period, wished to migrate to Kenya Colony when Jubaland was ceded to Italian administration in 1927. Because of the cession of Jubaland there were constant raids by the Marehan from the Italian side on the Gurreh in Kenya Colony in 1927 which the NFD administration could do little to stop. The Gurreh headmen on each side of the boundary attempted to persuade Gurreh from the opposite side of the line to cross the line and join them.<sup>9</sup>

There was no economic policy formulated by the colonial government in Nairobi or London concerning the development of the NFD region in 1920s other than that implicit in the establishment of administrative structures, the maintenance of law and order, and the coexistence of the various clans that inhabited the NFD. The Somali migrations south and westward to the Oromo and Boran country took much of the administration's attention in NFD in the period up to 1930.<sup>10</sup> Yet the administration in NFD after 1925 was ill-prepared to implement the Special District Ordinance of 1934 as it had few active numbers and had constantly to be on patrol to ensure its implementation. Except for a few of them, such as Gerald Reece, the majority of the colonial officers in NFD opted for a fourteen month tour of duty after which they were entitled to request a transfer. The Officer-in-Charge of NFD noted in his annual report for 1925 that 'owing to a shortage of administrative officers two important districts of Wajir and Gurreh [Mandera] were carried on by military officers responsible to the senior commissioner until the end of the year'.<sup>11</sup> Raids by Abyssinian

---

8. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1929.

9. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1927.

10. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1930.

11. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1925.



soldiers were a constant menace to the smooth administration of frontier districts, especially Marsabit, where in 1925 alone four to five thousand camels were looted by the Abyssinians and twenty nine people killed.<sup>12</sup> By the early 1930s, however, British administrators had made the Ogaden, the Degodia, and other clans in the Northern Frontier District<sup>13</sup> realise they had no choice but to accept the rule of His Majesty's British Government. After 1930 various policies pertaining to the region were formulated by the Governor and the officers in charge of the NFD with the consent of the Colonial Secretary in London. These policies had far reaching consequences for the people of the NFD in more ways than one. Some of these policies such as the Special District Ordinance of 1934 (section 17) created special grazing areas for each clan in the NFD of the Kenya Colony. Other policies such as the forced labour requirements of the colonial government for road works did not go down well with the Ogaden and Degodia clans at all and were done away with by the administration in 1932. This is because the NFD administration did not have enough personnel to enforce such policies.

The first aim was 'to make the NFD more productive and profitable'<sup>14</sup> not only to the colonial government in Nairobi and the British Empire in general but also for the nomadic Somalis. The second was 'to improve administration and to aid the government of the people by the people so that their policing and control will not become unduly troublesome and costly as sophistication and detribalisation increase'.<sup>15</sup> This noble aim underscored the fact that the nomadic Somalis were essentially a colonised people who had no right to determine and chart their future destiny. The third aim was stated 'as elsewhere in the Colonial Empire, we strive to improve but not always change the way in which the people live'.<sup>16</sup> This policy aimed to increase the nomadic production without forcing a drastic change in their lifestyles. However, as the nomadic Somalis were incorporated into a market economy in the early 1930s, many of them preferred to settle in towns and engage in livestock and petty trade.

---

12. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1925.

13. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1947. By 1947, the name Northern Frontier District had changed to Northern Province. This was because of the amalgamation of Turkana district to be part of the NFD.

14. KNA ADM/11/20/20, Officer-in-Charge (hereafter O/C) Circular 1939.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*



The East African Outlying Districts Ordinance of 1902, which was amended in 1934, stated that the NFD was part of those districts declared to be closed. It was closed to outsiders coming to the frontier districts because of insecurity and the harsh living conditions experienced in the district. The 1924 Ordinance sealed the NFD region off from the rest of the Kenya colony where different colonial regulations were imposed. Such regulations included different taxation rates: a tax of ten shillings was imposed on the NFD residents while other communities in Kenya paid fifteen shillings. The NFD Somalis paid the NFD poll tax while the rest of the Kenyan communities paid the Native Hut and Poll tax. This taxation created a sense of unique ethnic feeling from 1931 as indicated by the fact that Somalis viewed themselves more special than the rest of the Kenyan communities. In addition Missionary activities were discouraged in the NFD whereas they were given a free rein in the rest of the colony.

The local administration had made use of the Outlying District Ordinance of 1902 quite often to discourage the movement of the Somali to the urban areas of the Kenya colony and also the entry into the NFD by the ex-K.A.R soldiers of Somali origin. This ordinance was also used after 1926 against those Somalis from Jubaland who moved into the Northern Frontier District in search of grazing pastures especially against the Hertis from the Jubaland. They were returned to Jubaland by this ordinance.<sup>17</sup>

The most far-reaching policy ever implemented in the Northern Frontier District, however, was the Special District Ordinance of 1934 (hereafter SDO). The SDO of 1934 totally forbade the free movement in and out of the District by the Somali, particularly section 18 which specifically declared the NFD a closed region and stated that:

No person shall leave the district or area to which this ordinance has been applied unless such person is in possession of a valid passport or other document satisfactorily establishing his identity issued to him in such form and under such conditions as the Governor in council may from time to time prescribe.<sup>18</sup>

Not only did the SDO of 1934 affect the movement of the Somali out of the province but it also restricted internal movements between the various district centres. If an Ogaden or a Degodia Somali wanted to travel to another district within the Province he had to get a permit

---

17. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1924.

18. KNA Official Gazette, 1924.

from his District Officer and state reasons why he should be issued with a permit to travel. The District Officer then confirmed the facts given by the person wanting to travel with his counterpart, the District Officer of the traveller's destination. In the words of Hassan Farayoub, a widely travelled businessman of that era had this to say:

The District Commissioner, who before 1940 was referred to as the District Officer, did not issue these travel papers immediately. There was always a grace period of one week or more, in which he investigated you by various means including calling your chief to a meeting. The DC also liaised with the DC of the district you were going to. Once he was satisfied that your story was genuine and you were not a trouble-maker, then he would issue you with the travel permit. Many Somalis still risked travelling without those permits.<sup>19</sup>

By 1939, the Officer-in-Charge of the NFD had instructed all of his District Commissioners to be careful when issuing travel permits to Somalis and to ascertain the necessity of that person's intended travel. Gerald Reece, the Officer-in-Charge NFD, noted in 1941 that 'pass books and passes are being often issued [to travellers] without reference to the District Commissioner of the District concerned with the result that entry is often obtained to a closed district on a bogus request'.<sup>20</sup> By 1940, however, internal passes issued to the Somalis in the NFD were 'not always necessary and District Commissioners were to settle between themselves whether they would issue passes for natives moving between their respective districts'.<sup>21</sup> Thus the DCs in the NFD from 1940 chose the option of issuing travel permits to Somalis wanting to travel within the district. The person wanting to travel could not go alone to the DC. He had to go to the DC accompanied by his chief, who would not only testify that the person was worthy of being issued with a permit, but would also plead his case before the DC. The process of getting a travel permit was succinctly described by Hassan Abdille Illey as follows:

You had to go to your clan chief who was a very busy man as a government agent and civil head. To get him would take you several days if not a month trying to trace him as he could be away on tax collection or some other government duty. However, once you met him, you had to convince him of the urgency and the need for your travelling. If he accepted your story, then he would accompany you and you were sure to get the travel permit the same day from the DC. There was no bribery involved in the process but it was time consuming and frustrating.<sup>22</sup>

The SDO of 1934 gave the administrators in the NFD wide ranging powers that their

19. Interview with Hassan Farayoub, Nairobi, December 1995.

20. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1941.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

counter-parts in the rest of the Kenya Colony did not have. Their powers emanating from this ordinance ranged from controlling the grazing rights of the tribesmen to the maintenance of law and order by any means necessary amongst the tribesmen.<sup>23</sup> The administrators implemented the ordinance without ever giving respite to the nomadic Somalis's propensities for disobeying government policies such as taxation and grazing control schemes which were enforced after 1934. The SDO was implemented by the colonial officers without consideration for socio-economic repercussions such as the need to migrate in search of water and pastures in an arid environment.

The Special District Ordinance of 1934 affected the Somali way of life both at the individual level as well as at the societal level. At the individual level, the ordinance had taken away their freedom of movement within and out of the province. Abdille Hassan Illey who travelled a lot between the districts in the NFD in the 1930s had this to say:

I come from Wajir and I could not visit my relatives in Garissa or even across the border in Italian Somaliland. If the Chief was not around and I could not go to the DC, I just went and while in Garissa, I borrowed a tax receipt from my relatives indicating that I was a Garissa resident. But the problem was, there were many government spies all over the town so I had still to be very careful not to be seen by any person in the day.<sup>24</sup>

The above allegation was confirmed by the Officer-in-Charge Gerald Reece in 1940 when he emphasised that 'the careful issuing of road passes and the checking up of travellers in the NFD was the duty of all the District Commissioners'.<sup>25</sup> The District Commissioners used the Chiefs and Headmen to identify and report non-residents and strangers in their districts to the colonial administrators.

Trade was another aspect that was negatively affected by the SDO of 1934. Not only did the SDO affect the external trade of the Province but it also affected trade between the districts. Local livestock traders were discouraged by the amount of paper work that they had to address in order to travel from one district to another. Many local traders did not move out of the province to seek higher prices for their stock and they were thus exploited by the agents of the African Livestock Marketing Organisation which was established in 1933. The Somalis popularly called this organisation the Supply Board. The African Livestock

---

23. KNA Official Gazette, 1934.

24. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

25. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1940.

Marketing Organisation held the monopoly to buy all livestock in the province at a fixed price per weight of the animal. It was illegal for a non-resident of a district to sell or buy livestock in a district other than his own. According to Hassan Farayoub:

You had to be a resident of Garissa district for you to sell your cattle during the sale auctions conducted by the Supply Board there. What most people did in those days was to borrow a receipt of a relative showing that you were a resident of that particular district. If no one was willing to lend a tax receipt, the trader stayed at relative's home while his stock was sold by the relative in the auction. That is how we beat the system introduced by the government.<sup>26</sup>

The SDO of 1934 affected the nationalism and identity of the people of the NFD as they were not allowed to mingle freely and share ideas and information with one another. People were denied social visits to districts other than their own and an identity crisis started to develop. Dekow Maalim Stamboul recollected how he felt living under the SDO:

the SDO played a role in creating a sense of identity because this Ordinance [that of 1934] differentiated us from the rest of the Kenya Colony. Even though the ordinance was meant to divide the Somali people it achieved the opposite as people still secretly visited each other for political reasons. This secret visitation by the Somali people was particularly felt from 1939 when soldiers who served in the British Army in foreign lands came back from active duty. So in one sense the Special District Ordinance of 1934 heightened our nationalistic feelings and our sense of having a unique identity but on the other hand it curbed its development.<sup>27</sup>

The SDO of 1934 was also used to control grazing and water resources of the nomadic Somalis in the NFD. Over-grazed areas were declared a prohibited area by the local administrators in order for that particular area to recover and also to stop land degradation. This policy could be compared to the Kamba destocking programme in 1935. Section 17 of the 1934 SDO gave powers to the Provincial Commissioner to:

- a) Reserve for any particular tribesmen or community such grazing or other areas or watering facilities within the area under his jurisdiction as are in his opinion necessary for their use;
- b) Prohibit the use by any tribesmen of any specified grazing or other areas or water;
- c) direct the removal of any village situated in close proximity to the frontier of the Colony to such site as may be deemed suitable, due regard being had to the amount of grazing grounds and watering places required by the inhabitants concerned, and, with sanction of the Governor, award to the inhabitants such compensation for any loss which may have occasioned to them by the removal of their village as,

---

26. Interview with Hassan Farayoub, Nairobi, December 1995.

27. Interview with Dekow Maalim, Nairobi, December 1995.



in the opinion of the Provincial Commissioner, is just.<sup>28</sup>

In 1935 the Boran who lived along the Abyssinian border were moved further into the Kenya colony away from the constant raidings by the Abyssinian marauders along the Kenya-Abyssinian border. Such removals had also been precipitated by the scarcity of water and pastures along the Kenya-Abyssinian border and the Boran were awarded livestock which the Abyssinians supplied as fines.<sup>29</sup>

Section 17 of the 1934 Special District Ordinance gave the administration in the NFD powers to reserve a certain grazing area for use by a particular clan. Even though the nomadic Somalis hated the aims of section 17, some areas such as the Uaso Nyiro region were overpopulated and could not support the population in that area. Therefore some clans such as the Auliyahan and the Mohamed Zubeir had to migrate especially during the *jilaal* or the dry season when surface water was depleted to areas where permanent water supplies were available because their traditional grazing areas lacked permanent water supplies.

The SDO had given the local administration the power to arrest anybody in the province of whom they were suspicious. According to Dekow Maalim Stamboul the local administration in the NFD were:

kings with powers to punish or reward anybody within the Province because the SDO had given them wide-ranging powers and they could interpret it as they deemed fit. This was a divide and rule policy adopted by the colonial administration.<sup>30</sup>

The Officer-in-Charge NFD in 1934 stated that 'with the passing of the Special District Ordinance, our powers have been greatly enhanced for dealing with them [Somalis]'.<sup>31</sup> The administration in the NFD knew their powers were enormous and they had extra-judiciary powers in order to enforce the SDO of 1934. Most of the administrative officers sent to the NFD were magistrates who could try minor offences such as trespassing, cattle rustling and inter-clan feuds.

On the other hand the SDO may in some ways have benefited the people of NFD in the long

---

28. KNA Official Gazette, 1934.

29. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1936.

30. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

31. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1934.

day resident in the said area shall be in such area without the written permission of the Chief Secretary to the Government of the Colony'.<sup>35</sup> The immediate effect of Defence Regulation 30 was to cut off the NFD from the neighbouring countries. It was specifically aimed at those Somalis in NFD who were sympathetic to the Italian cause of linking the Ethiopian occupied region of Ogadenia with Italian Somaliland during the initial stages of the Second World War. There were Somalis who supported the Italian cause so that the Somalis could expel Abyssinians from the Ogaden region. In the period from 1935 to 1940 Italian administrative policy was to win Somali political aspirations throughout the Horn of Africa by spreading propaganda to the effect that Britain would give up the NFD and British Somalilands to the Italians once the war was over. From 1939 to 1940 Italian forces passed through the NFD region of Kenya colony on their way to Abyssinia about which the colonial administration in NFD could do little but to evacuate Mandera, Wajir and Moyale. The Colonial government in Nairobi was forced to send reinforcements to the NFD region from June 1940 when Italy formally entered the war.

The Outlying Districts Ordinance of 1902, the Special Districts Ordinance of 1934 and Defence Regulations 30 of 1939, which were all used to curb the movement of the Somali in the NFD, helped shape the identity crisis and the unique ethnic feelings that developed in the region from the early 1930s. A sense of belonging to a distinct community separate from the rest of the Kenya colony emerged among the Somalis, especially among those who lived in the urban centres when they rejected registration and identification documents. This was the root of the eventual identity crisis that developed progressively towards secessionist in the early 1960s.

### **CONTROL OF ALIEN SOMALI**

From the 1920s the British colonial administrators tried very hard to restrict the entry of what it called 'alien Somalis' into the Northern Frontier District. For the British authorities, the term was used to define:

those Somalis who are living in Kenya but belong to tribes not normally resident in the Colony; they are immigrants and descendants of immigrants from British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland (including the country formerly known as Jubaland) and Aden.<sup>36</sup>

---

35. KNA ADM/11/20/20, O/C Circular 1939.

36. KNA PC NFD/1/1/2, Memorandum by G. Reece, 1939.



The majority of them comprised the Issak and the Herti clan-families who were not normally resident in the NFD. The former maintained they were of a higher breed of men than the Herti and other Somali clan-families and they tirelessly struggled to gain Asiatic status in the Kenya Colony in vain.<sup>37</sup> The Issak and the Herti believed themselves, because of their long association with British colonialism and their Islamic beliefs, to be above the Bantu. They aspired to gain all of the privileges enjoyed by the Asiatic people. Both groups came to the Kenya Colony as farm servants, traders, gun-bearers and soldiers when the Kenya Colony was being established by the British during 1880-1910. All of the soldiers opted to settle in Kenya when their terms of service with the King's African Service ended. To the alien Somali, 'East Africa is regarded as an El Dorado and a close touch is maintained between the Issaks of British Somaliland and those who have found their way to Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda'.<sup>38</sup> From the 1920s until the 1960s when the British were granting independence to these territories there was a continuous migration of the Somali from the British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland regions to join their brothers and cousins in Kenya.

In order to control the entry and eventual settlement by the Issak and Herti Somalis of the Kenya colony into the NFD in 1934 and after there was a policy to issue an 'evidence of Identity' to the indigenous people of NFD. This was, however, viewed negatively by the Ogaden, the Degodia and other clans of the NFD; and the administration feared it might lead to political problems as these clans were no less proud than the Issak and the Herti who were exempted from the identity cards and pass book system of identification. Moreover there were 'administrative difficulties'<sup>39</sup> such as shortage of administrative personnel and financial exigencies to implement such a policy from 1938 onward. The Somali of the NFD were consequently the only community in the Kenya colony that did not carry identity papers and they instead used their tax receipts as a way of identifying themselves to the authorities when requested. Other communities in the Kenya Colony such as the Luo and the Kikuyu had since 1920 been subjected to the kipande (pass book) system wherein details of the person such as tribe, employment record, age and district of residence were contained. The colonial administration in the NFD viewed the Ogaden as 'the Irishman of the East, and his dislike

---

37. *Ibid.* See also E.R. Turton, 'The Isaq Somali Diaspora and the Poll-Tax Agitation in Kenya, 1936-1941', *African Affairs*, 73, 292 (1974), pp.325-346.

38. KNA PC NFD/1/1/2, Memorandum by Reece, 1939.

39. *Ibid.*

of submitting to constituted authority whether it be Government, his own chiefs, or the "shuriah" - council of elders, is one of his most outstanding characteristics'.<sup>40</sup> The colonial administration in the NFD believed that the Ogaden would not yield to the pass book system since the Ogaden believed it would make them Bantu whom they despised. Therefore, the issuing of 'Kipande' or identity papers in 1938 to Somali by the administration was seen as an unnecessary policy that could be avoided. This created a sense on the part of the Somalis of having a unique identity of the Northern Frontier District.

The NFD administrators such as Glenday between 1930 and 1934, and Reece from 1934 to 1938 used the East Africa Outlying District Ordinance<sup>41</sup> (ODO) of 1902 and the SDO of 1934 to curb and limit the number of alien Somalis wishing to settle in the NFD. This was because the alien Somalis such as the Herti and the Issak clans had earned a bad reputation with the colonial government over the years. Up to 1910 the alien Somalis such as the Herti and the Issak were the favoured collaborators of British colonial rule because they were used as functionaries in the establishment of administrative centres such as Nairobi, Kisumu and Nakuru. Over the years the alien Somali became sophisticated politically and economically and came to pose a business threat to the Indian traders in remote centres such as Meru, Embu and Kakamega. Most of them were regarded as highly politicised because of their long association with the colonial government and their demands for Asiatic status.<sup>42</sup> There was fear among the administrators in the NFD region that the alien Somalis could sow seeds of discord among the NFD Somalis. Besides, the alien Somalis were very business minded and if allowed to settle among the NFD Somali, they would have denied the local inhabitants the opportunity to develop on their own terms because the alien Somalis could use their relatives in the Government service to their advantage.<sup>43</sup> The intelligence report for 1926 described the strategy adopted by the alien Somalis to swindle NFD nomads:

once out in the bush, they change their native clothes for khaki suiting,

---

40. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1927.

41. This Ordinance declared certain portions of the Kenya colony as closed regions. No person could go to such areas without the written permission of the Governor or any authority acting on his behalf.

42. Turton, 'Isaq Somali Diaspora', pp.325-346.

43. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1947. All the Annual Reports, however, had sections dealing with the Alien Somalis. It was complaints by the PC's to the Governor of the Kenya Colony to direct them on what policy to adopt in dealing with alien Somalis. See Annual Reports 1920-1960.

represent themselves to be government servants, and swindle or terrorize the local native out of his stock with impunity. The agitation over registration was traced entirely to these members of the community, and they lose no opportunity of undermining the local natives' loyalty.<sup>44</sup>

The behaviour and attitude of the alien Somalis in the NFD was another bone of contention as they used their relatives in the K.A.R and other organs of the government to intimidate and coerce the indigenous NFD Somali into selling their livestock at cheaper prices than those offered by the agents of the African Livestock Marketing Organisation. As a result of the Second World War there was a huge demand for meat by the military in Kenya and in Aden in southern Arabia. The alien Somalis profited from their middle-men role in the livestock trade and supplied the huge demand for slaughter animals created during the Second World War. The only region that could supply the meat requirements was the NFD. The African Livestock Marketing Organisation was given the monopoly to buy livestock from the nomadic Somalis in the NFD where they were able to dictate the prices for the stock separate from the prices offered by the independent trader.<sup>45</sup>

The alien Somalis were also associated with illicit game poaching and gun-running between the NFD and Jubaland. They tactically employed the locals, especially non-Somali speakers, in their game-poaching activities. Among the communities that collaborated with them were the Galla, the Rendille and Samburu. Ivory, leopard skins and other game trophies were then taken to Kismayu and other coastal markets for onward transmission to the Arab countries. This was a very lucrative trade and the alien Somali did not want to be denied the profits accruing from such activities even when the administrators in the NFD tried to stamp out this trade in the 1930s.<sup>46</sup> The poaching activities of the alien Somalis led to a decline in the numbers of big game such as elephants and rhinos both of which were abundant before the poaching activities intensified from 1930 onward.

The alien Somalis did not regard themselves as aliens in the NFD. For them, everywhere a Somali lived was their country, which was against the NFD administration policy of keeping each clan within a certain area. This attitude on the part of alien Somalis was encouraged by

---

44. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1926.

45. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

46. P.T. Dalleo, 'The Somali Role in Organised Poaching in North Eastern Kenya, c.1909-1939', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 12, 3 (1979), pp.473-482.

the fact that they had relatives who lived in the region whether as employees of the government or as traders in the province who would be sure to come to their assistance if the need arose. Alien Somalis did benefit from the role of an intermediary between the government and the indigenous people of the NFD.<sup>47</sup> They became itinerant traders who according to the Provincial Administration were good for nothing 'but sedition and illicit traffic in such articles as ivory and rhino horns'.<sup>48</sup>

NFD administration policy in 1940 and after was to discourage 'numerous traders wandering around the district, and to prevent them from farming out stock with the tribesmen'<sup>49</sup> as it would be difficult to control both groups administratively when they were scattered all over the NFD. It was the policy of the administration in the NFD to encourage 'trade centres, sometimes only temporary ones wherever possible. They form very useful sub-administrative units. Remember that neither these nor the shops in ordinary townships can possibly exist if itinerant trade is allowed'.<sup>50</sup> The administration in the NFD did not want to see numerous small-scale traders operating in the countryside, moving from one district to another.

The presence of the alien Somalis in NFD created an identity crisis and a sense of nationalism among the indigenous people of the NFD. The alien Somalis, in their attempts to benefit from their intermediary role, incited the local people to disobey government directives on several occasions such as the imposition of taxation in 1930. The administration in the NFD accused the alien Somalis in 1930-31 of inciting the Ogaden and other clans in the region to reject registration.<sup>51</sup>

### **THE IMPOSITION OF TAXATION**

From 1900 to 1912 the province did not experience taxation and there was no policy of uniform taxation. Some communities such as the Gurreh and the Abdalla objected to the imposition of taxation in cash. It was only the riverine people, the Borana and the Galla, who after 1912 paid taxation in the form of a tribute. Some time elapsed before individual Somalis paid taxation in cash. The Ogaden had refused to pay taxation in cash until the 1930s when

---

47. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1936.

48. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1934.

49. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1944.

50. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1934.

51. KNA PC NFD/3/1/1, Kenya Intelligence Report, 1926.



the government had no choice in the matter but to enact legislation such as the NFD poll tax ordinance of 1930 and its subsequent amendment in 1934 which dealt with the matter. The Somali did not know what taxation was all about at first and were reluctant to pay until its function was explained. Many communities like the Abdalla in Garissa district and the Gurreh in Mandera district opted to migrate in 1931 and 1932 to Italian Somaliland and Boran Province in Ethiopia respectively. The taxation policy in the NFD aimed to generate income for the region's development and to reduce subsidies from the colonial government so that NFD did not become a financial drag on the Kenya colony economy in its attempts to provide social amenities such as water pans.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1912 and 1930 taxation was paid in the form of tribute where a clan such as the Boran, Sakuye, Gabbra, Ogaden and Degodia paid a fixed number of livestock. Each clan was expected to pay 30 cows and 50 sheep in the whole year and it was the chief who normally collected the tribute. But this payment in kind was done away with in 1926 in those non-Somali inhabited districts such as Samburu, Marsabit, Garba Tulla and Moyale districts west of the Somali-Galla line. The payment of tribute in those districts was replaced by a Hut and Poll tax in 1928. This was because the Galla, the Rendille and the Samburu communities were 'less truculent, submissive and loyal in accepting government orders'.<sup>53</sup> The Ogaden and other Somali clans objected to the paying of taxes more because 'of their dislike of having their names recorded in a register than actual payment and a fear that it is only the thin wedge to making manual labourers of them'.<sup>54</sup>

The Somalis who inhabited districts to the east of the Somali-Galla line did not pay their tax in cash before 1931. There were legislative difficulties which considered them as 'non-natives while the rest of the tribesmen [to the west of the Somali-Galla line] are natives for purpose of taxation'.<sup>55</sup> The Ogaden and other Somali clans were not subjected to the payment of taxation in cash. This situation was rectified. The Ogaden and other Somalis were not willing to pay taxation and adopted a 'hide and seek' strategy with the NDFD administrators. The stage was finally set when on 1 September 1930 it was announced by the Officer-in-Charge,

---

52. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1931.

53. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1925.

54. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1928.

55. KNA PC NFD/2/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1928.

Mr Glenday, that each adult Somali was to pay a fixed amount of ten shillings in cash per year starting from January 1931.<sup>56</sup> Mr Glenday gave the nomadic Somalis a grace period of four months to decide whether to pay or not. The imposition of the Northern Frontier Province Poll Tax required that:

Every tribesmen of the apparent age of sixteen years or over who is residing with his tribe shall pay annually to a collector a tax (herein after referred to as "the Poll tax") of such amount not exceeding twenty shillings as the Governor may by proclamation direct.<sup>57</sup>

The reaction of the Ogaden and other clans was that people did not mind paying as long as the government did not interfere with their daily lives. It was, however, paid hesitantly by the people, especially the nomadic Somalis who were forced to sell their livestock in order to get cash. Since there was no market for cattle, the nomadic Somali went all the way to Maralall and Lamu to sell their stock in order to get money.<sup>58</sup>

The Northern Frontier Poll Tax Amendment Ordinance Act 15 of 1934 section 6(2) changed the taxation system for the Somalis of the NFD. This was because of the realisation by NFD administrators such as Gerald Reece and Glenday in the 1930s that the province was indeed a financial drain on the Kenya colony economy and that if the province was to progress in its livestock sector, there was a need to generate finances by internal revenue. In 1934 it became a criminal offence punishable by law not to pay taxation. It was clearly stipulated in section 6(2) of the 1934 Northern Frontier Poll Tax Amendment which stated that:

Any tribesmen who without reasonable excuse shall make default in the payment of the poll tax shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one month or to a fine not exceeding three times the amount of tax due.<sup>59</sup>

Those communities that refused to pay taxes were at first still allowed to use the facilities such as water-pans, veterinary campaigns etc meant for the tax-paying communities. It was after 1945 that those who refused to pay taxes were denied the facilities and services offered by the government. The Government sent the chiefs and tribal police to the watering centres to collect taxes. Most people were not willing to be denied water and so they were forced to pay. Those clans who were not ready to pay taxes were warned that they could not sit in the

---

56. *Ibid.*

57. KNA Official Gazette, 1930.

58. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1930.

59. KNA Official Gazette, 1934.



bush and wait events as they had done previously with disarmament but that they had an option of leaving British territory if they so wished'.<sup>60</sup> There was no consistent NFD administration policy regarding access to water and other facilities. Nevertheless, it was insisted upon by the chiefs and their tax clerks that a nomadic family be able to produce their tax receipt on request.<sup>61</sup>

Tax collection by the chiefs was not a popular activity since the nomadic pastoralists were reluctant to pay it. Defaulters, of whom the majority were nomadic pastoralists, moved from one place to another in search of grazing and water depending on the season of the year. In the process of their constant migration the nomadic pastoralists were never consistent in the payment of taxes.

When the first poll tax was made obligatory in 1930 the various Somali sub-clans reacted in different ways. Some tribesmen like the Abdalla of Garissa District and the Gurreh of Mandera District migrated to Italian Somaliland in what is historically referred to by the Somali as the year of 'Kodi Kacarar', meaning 'operation escape taxation'.<sup>62</sup> The Abdalla came back in 1935 when they realised the advantages of paying taxes such as improved water supplies and pan digging.<sup>63</sup>

The imposition of taxation by the colonial authorities created a sense of identity crisis as their nomadic brethren in Italian Somaliland did not suffer the same fate nor did those Somalis in the loosely ruled Ogaden province of the Ethiopian Empire. In these regions the Somalis did not pay taxes and were not harassed by police as much as were their counterparts in the NFD region of the Kenya colony in the 1930s. The Somalis in NFD of Kenya experienced a different kind of taxation system from the rest of the Kenya Colony in that the Ogaden and other Somali clans paid the NFD Poll Tax of 10 shillings while the Kenya African communities in the Colony paid the Native Poll of 15 shillings and a Hut tax of 3 shillings.<sup>64</sup> Thus one can objectively say that the Somalis of the NFD region felt confused as to where they stood with regard to the complex colonial demands for taxation the result

---

60. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1930.

61. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1936.

62. Interview with Abdi Koriyo, Garissa, March 1996.

63. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1935.

64. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1946.

of which was to pauperise them.

### THE ROLE OF CHIEFS

When the British arrived in the NFD region in the late 19th century, they co-opted *Sultans* and other traditional rulers into the new system. The *Sultans* were gradually transformed into colonial chiefs whose powers emanated from their contacts with the British colonial administrators. They became paid agents of the colonial administration. Ahmed Magan, the *Sultan* of the Ogaden, became the chief of the Mohamed Zubeir sub-clan. He had co-operated with the early administrators such as Jenner, Kittermaster and J. Hope in the establishment of colonial rule in the NFD and Jubaland between 1895 to 1903. Ahmed Magan, however, became an enemy of the NFD and Jubaland administrators of the then British East African Protectorate when he was implicated in the murder of Jenner in 1900. As a result of this, Ahmed Magan was demoted and thereafter led an ordinary life among his people in Wajir. Abidrahman Mursal, the chief who led the Auliyahan to attack on Fort Serenli in 1916, was, as mentioned earlier, forced to flee from his country to Ogadenia where he died in 1935. If after some time a chief became useless both in the eyes of the people and the British 'he was discharged disgracefully and immediately replaced with another'.<sup>65</sup> Gerald Reece, the Officer-in-Charge of NFD in 1938, noted that 'apart from half a dozen outstanding figures, chiefs and headmen of the province are still little more than passengers of the central government who should be replaced'.<sup>66</sup> This was the case in 1944 when Abdi Ogle was chosen by the Mohamed Zubeir sub clan in Wajir South to replace Ahmed Hassan who joined the Italian side during the Second World War. The colonial authorities in NFD requested the sub-clans concerned to choose a new *Sultan* to represent them in the government. Every adult male was consulted and it was the elders of the various *Raays* or sub-sub-clans who finally chose one from among the names of people put forward. This process of consultation could go on for a maximum of three months during which time a suitable person was to be found.<sup>67</sup> In this way the traditional rulers of the Somalis in NFD were transformed from being independent decision makers of their communities to becoming employees of the colonial administration.

---

65. Interview with Abdi Koriyo, Garissa, March 1996.

66. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1938.

67. Interview with Hassan Farayoub, Nairobi, December 1995.

According to Abdille Hassan Illey, among the Ogaden there were certain qualities which a suitable candidate had to fulfil before he was chosen and taken to the DC for confirmation. These conditions were: generosity, courage, hardiness and being a pure and patriotic Ogaden.<sup>68</sup> The Officer-in-Charge noted in 1940 that very few chiefs in the province had sufficient personality, courage, ability and influence among their people.<sup>69</sup> These were the qualities the administrators in the NFD were looking for among the chiefs. Once a person had fulfilled the above conditions and was chosen, there were celebrations and feasting by the sub-clan in a process called 'Calema Saar'<sup>70</sup> as happened in 1944 when Abdi Ogle was crowned the chief or the *Sultan* of the Mohamed Zubeir. The elders took the *Sultan* with them to the DC and introduced them to each other. The DC then acknowledged the decision of the elders and confirmed the nomination.<sup>71</sup>

The position of the chief was to be an important link between the people and the administration and in that capacity he had multiple duties that were expected of him. Every time a person wanted to see the DC he had first to go to the chief and if the chief could not solve the problem, they went together to the DC. The chief explained everything to the DC while the complainant was seated outside. After that, he would be called into the office by the DC whereupon a decision was forwarded to the complainant.

In the period between 1896 and 1930 'practically all chiefs and headmen in government pay had little authority over their people when it came to the point of carrying out government orders which might be objected to by the tribe'.<sup>72</sup> All government directives issued by District Commissioners were given to the chiefs who in turn gave these directives to their council of elders or even called a chief's baraza (public meeting) to inform the general public. The chiefs became civil servants whose authority stemmed from the local district commissioners.

The chiefs collected taxes and took them to the DC. After 1947 the duty of collecting taxes was performed by tax collectors employed by the administration. The chiefs became the

---

68. Interview with Abdille Hassan, Wajir, March 1996.

69. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

70. 'Calema Saar' means installation and celebration of a new Sultan.

71. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

72. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1925.

central nerve of the administration of the Somali clans and they became ever more busy with the NFD getting more administrative attention from 1947 onwards. The work of the chiefs, noted Turnbull, the Provincial Commissioner in 1947, consisted mainly 'of keeping the tribes within their boundaries, organising stock sales, finding labour for pan-digging and arresting criminals'.<sup>73</sup> The expectations of the NFD administration of these chiefs were not fulfilled. Even as late as 1948 many chiefs were being described as mere 'passengers in the administrative machine'.<sup>74</sup> That the chiefs were not performing their duties as was expected by the administration in the NFD was in no doubt. This knowledge the PC acquired from long experience of trying to administer NFD closely.

The many roles of the chief in the colonial period enhanced the identity crisis of the Somali in the NFD region of the Kenya Colony. This was because on the one hand chiefs appeared to the nomadic Somalis as powerful figures of authority but on the other hand the nomadic Somalis came to realise that in practical terms the chiefs relied on the DC for decision making. The colonial Somali chiefs alienated pastoral Somali families from the NFD administration because they harassed, intimidated and confiscated livestock from the nomadic Somalis in the process of tax collections. On one side the chiefs were not performing their duties as expected of them by the provincial administration. On the other side the community had looked to the chief as their 'problem solver', but on most occasions he failed to solve the major problems faced by the community such as the need to move because of lack of water and to find pastures for their livestock. The chiefs were viewed as colonial agents serving the interest of the DC rather than their respective communities. These were the contradictions faced by the colonial Somali chiefs.

### EDUCATION AND HOSPITALS

During the period under study schools were anathema to the Somali who viewed them as proselytising agents of Christianity. A few Somali families such as Haji Mohamed Yusuf, Omar Shuria, and Mohamed Sheikh Kassim sent their children to schools that were first established in Isiolo in 1946. Many parents did not send their children to schools before 1946 because there were no western schools operating in the province and the Somali nomads did not care to have any established in the region. There were traditional Quranic schools

---

73. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1947.

74. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

available in every Somali household. In these traditional schools, children were taught by locally trained *Maalim* or a teacher who knew the Quran and some Hadiths (sayings of the Prophet) by heart. The main methodology was through rote learning where the children were expected to have learnt the Quran by heart by the age of fifteen or at most eighteen. The *maalim* was paid in kind by the parents whose children he was teaching.<sup>75</sup> But the education imparted by the traditional *maalim* was regarded by the NFD administration as seditious. The Officer-in-Charge, Mr R.W. Hemstead, in his annual report for 1929 stated that, 'there were no advances in this direction [education] and Mohammedan sheikhs and Mullahs still impart religious and probably seditious teaching'.<sup>76</sup>

The need for western education was felt by the colonial administration in the NFD in 1941 when at a meeting attended by all the District Commissioners in the province they realised that 'the present complete absence of education in the NFD makes closer administration impossible'.<sup>77</sup> It was the general consensus that a boarding school should be established 'primarily to provide a limited number of educated local tribesmen for administrative and medical services and that without such a school it was impossible to obtain closer administration or to provide essential services'.<sup>78</sup> Objections were raised by some of the administrators, such as Mr F.P.B. Derrick, the District Commissioner of Wajir, who stated that 'the standard of living might be raised to an extent that the local population could no longer live in the desert conditions of the NFD. This would result in a demand for employment down country [in the rest of Kenya Colony] by a people who will be unwilling to return to the Frontier when they cease to be employed'.<sup>79</sup> Because of shortage of funds and lack of interest by the Somali nomads the first school was only established in 1946 after the Second World War.

Between 1946 to 1950 primary schools were established in Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Isiolo Moyale and Marsabit. There was an acute shortage of qualified teachers in the schools started in these centres and the administration in the NFD was forced to import teachers, especially

---

75. Interview with Hussein Fallouk, Nairobi, January 1996.

76. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1929.

77. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1941.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*



from Zanzibar.<sup>80</sup> Even then an education department did not exist in the province and it was under the director of education of Nyeri district in Central Province of Kenya Colony. Even though the local administration in the NFD over the years had advocated the establishment of an education department, it seems the administrators in Nairobi and Whitehall were not interested in the welfare of the nomadic Somali. The local administration played its part in making the Governor and other high ranking officials aware of the need for locally educated personnel in the province.<sup>81</sup>

The first lot of students that went to these early schools in the NFD were the children of the chiefs or the *Sultans*. Thus the DC for Wajir as early as 1941 suggested that 'we should endeavour to select pupils from those families who have influence in the tribes'.<sup>82</sup> Yet the British colonial officers at first discouraged the London Missionary Society, the only western missionary society operating in the NFD fearing that it would create discord and disharmony in a predominantly Muslim society.<sup>83</sup> Western missionaries were only allowed to work in the vast pagan Galla/Boran communities in the NFD in the 1940s.<sup>84</sup> Even in these communities the London Missionary Society did not win many converts; and it took them a number of years to achieve progress in the form of providing secular education to the pagan Galla and Boran communities.

The British colonial administrators directed the chiefs to bring two of their children to school. This was because of the need that arose especially after the Second World War for educated personnel to work in the administration of the region.<sup>85</sup> It was the children of the chiefs who went to schools and after graduation were immediately absorbed into the administration of the NFD as court clerks, tax collectors, translators, clerical workers etc. The Provincial Commissioner of the NFD, Mr R. Turnbull, directed every chief to 'bring forth two boys to be educated in boarding school'.<sup>86</sup>

---

80. KNA PC NFD/5/1/8, Post-War Five Year Development Plan, 1945.

81. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

82. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1941.

83. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

84. *Ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1946.

85. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1949.

86. *Ibid.*

The type of education provided at first stressed basic reading and writing skills as well as religious education. The colonial administration for this purpose imported a teacher from Zanzibar whom the Somalis regarded as a very religious man. The first school was built at Wajir in 1946, which was a boarding school for boys. This was so because the Somali were a nomadic society and there arose a need for a place where children could stay during the school term. When the schools were closed many children were forced to look for their families who could have migrated to some far off place in search of water and grazing for their livestock. Many children stayed with urban relatives who took care of them throughout their learning years at school.<sup>87</sup>

The British administrators did not encourage mass education but they wanted a controlled number of children enrolling in schools who would be assured of a job in the civil service after they completed their education. Education during the colonial era in the NFD was a luxury that only the children of the chiefs, traders in the urban areas, and the very few who 'did not mind their children being spoilt by western education instead of herding their family's stock'<sup>88</sup> could afford.

Education has contributed to the development of identity crisis and ethnic sensitivity felt by the people of the Northern Frontier District in the late 1940s and after. The Province was not, according to Dekow Maalim, 'ready academically to be granted independence or to be linked with an independent Kenya'.<sup>89</sup> The education the Somalis received did not encourage them to identify with the Kenya Colony. Teachers were all British and the few non-British were expatriates from Zanzibar who it was felt could earn the loyalty and respect of the difficult Somali children.<sup>90</sup>

Hospitals were neglected until after the Second World War. Prior to this period there were dispensaries which were established in all major centres of administration. There was only one doctor responsible for all of these centres and all emergency cases were referred to Nairobi's King George Hospital. In these clinics there were dressing officers who also had

---

87. Interview with Omar Sheikh Farah, Nairobi, December 1995.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

90. Interview with Omar Sheikh Farah, Nairobi, December 1995.

overall responsibility for these centres. The only doctor lived in the Northern Frontier District headquarters at Isiolo. He was a busy man and did not have time to visit all of the districts during the year.<sup>91</sup>

Somalis on their part did not attend dispensaries, preferring instead their traditional methods of treating their diseases. Somalis had traditional methods of treating sickness such as headache, stomach upsets, bone fractures and mental sickness. Headache was treated by mixing marer (a type of shrub) leaves and boiling them with water. Afterwards, a sick person would drink the water and be cured. For bone fractures, there was a specialist who knew the art of repairing damaged bones. Dispensaries were started in 1940 and provided free medical facilities to the nomads. The major sickness was malaria which was especially chronic after the long rains in March.<sup>92</sup> Malaria was traditionally treated by boiling the leaves of 'geet kharaaro' or the 'tree with bitter leaves' in water and drinking the water afterwards. This is a common desert tree that was valued by the urban Somalis for its medicinal use and it was planted near every homestead.

Treatments were usually prescribed by a qualified doctor who was responsible for all of the dispensaries in the NFD. The only doctor in the NFD in the 1930s and 1940s was assisted by sub-surgeons and dressers. It was the dressers who were responsible for the day to day running of the dispensaries in all the districts. Turnbull, the PC in 1947, noted that 'dressers are indispensable in providing basic services to the nomadic Somalis in small remote centres such as Dadaab, Masalani and other areas'.<sup>93</sup> The medical officer in Meru also assisted when called upon by the administration in NFD especially to make round trips to the neighbouring districts of Isiolo and Garissa as he did in 1944.

Lack of facilities such as hospitals contributed to the identity crisis that was taking root among the Somali of the NFD in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. This was because the only doctor in the province was based at the provincial headquarters and could only make scheduled trips to the other districts. Many Somalis viewed the shortages of medical facilities as deliberate neglect on the part of the colonial administration. The seriously sick were

---

91. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Reports, 1946-1960.

92. *Ibid.*

93. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1947.

airlifted to Nairobi's King George Hospital where the nomadic Somali was dumped with no relatives nearby to visit him or her. The absence of qualified local doctors heightened a sense of identity crisis as most of the doctors were British and were seen just as another 'John Dere' meaning 'John the tall man'.<sup>94</sup> To the Somalis, there was little difference between the colonial administrator and the medical officer as neither ever interacted with the Somalis on a daily basis.

### TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Roads were developed from an early period by the colonial administrators since it was easy and cheap to construct roads within the Northern Frontier District because of the topography of the land.<sup>95</sup> Road development went at a fast pace especially after 1927 with the appearance of motorised transport in the NFD. This was the case especially in the Garissa and Isiolo districts which were the main points of entry into the NFD region. Roads were used by government vehicles, especially the military and administrative vehicles that were common in the NFD. Commercial vehicles started appearing on the scene after 1928 and were owned mostly by traders of Indian and Arab origin. It was only after the Second World War that locally owned vehicles made trips to and from Nairobi for commercial purposes. Passenger service vehicles were unheard of in the NFD until the late 1960s.<sup>96</sup>

Roads in the NFD were built in the 1920s by hired labour from Kenyan African communities such as Meru, Turkana, and the Riverine people. The NFD Somalis had a natural dislike for manual labour in the 1920s, and the Somalis viewed those building roads as 'adoomey' or 'slaves' who were performing their natural duty. The Officer-in-Charge lamented in 1927 that 'it is not to be foreseen that the tribes of the province will become hand workers in the near future, as a result of their upbringing, of their comparative wealth in stock and of their nomadic inclinations'.<sup>97</sup> It was only after years of coercion and inducements especially after the Second World War that the Somalis of the NFD came to appreciate manual labour as a worthwhile activity. The chiefs were directed to provide labourers or pay fines for the construction of roads in their areas.<sup>98</sup> The 'road gangs' were paid twenty shillings and ten

---

94. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

95. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1926.

96. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Reports, 1947-1960.

97. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1927.

98. *ibid.*, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1933.

pounds of maize meal rations a month by the NFD administration in 1920 to 1930. Somali labourers on the roads in the 1940s were paid twenty shillings and meat was provided by the community in which they happened to be living at that particular time. The Officer-in-Charge noted in his annual report that 'road gangs were to receive a fixed monthly allowance of twenty shillings with meat rations to be provided by the clans inhabiting that particular section of the road.'<sup>99</sup> For example if they were in the Auliyahan country, then the road workers would receive slaughtered bulls from that clan free of charge. Somali labourers were forced to engage in manual labour because the recurrent droughts between 1930 and 1939 decimated their livestock and in the process pauperised them. It was out of necessity more than their love of manual labour that clans such as the Auliyahan and the Mohamed Zubeir made themselves available for road construction between 1930 and 1939. In these droughts, the Somali nomads were forced to move to the urban centres to seek alternative means of sustenance such as involving themselves in petty trading.

The trunk roads connected the main urban centres of Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Marsabit, Moyale, Isiolo and linked them all to Nairobi. The roads in the NFD were not used during the rainy seasons from 1940 onward because they were not all-weather roads and it was feared that vehicles would make roads impassable during the dry season. According to Tawane Abdi Haji, 'all the roads were closed to motoring vehicles in the rainy season and you would not get a permit to drive in the first place. Even moving livestock on the roads was not allowed and if found doing that you would be fined there and then',<sup>100</sup>

Lack of proper road networks accentuated the remoteness of the NFD and enhanced the identity crisis that the province had begun to develop between 1930 and the early 1940s. As a result of there being no interaction between the Somalis and the rest of the Kenyan communities in 1930 and after, Somali society had looked to Italian Somaliland for trading and cultural links. The poor state of the roads and the limited mechanised transportation by road meant that NFD was not part of the Kenya Colony but rather some distant colony where administrative officers were posted as an 'unpleasant necessity or a form of punishment'.<sup>101</sup> Linking such an area to the Kenya Colony would prove to be a thorny

---

99. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1946.

100. Interview with Tawane Abdi Haji, Nairobi, January 1996.

101. KNA ADM/11/20/20, O/C Circular, 1940.



issue when Kenya was being granted independence in 1963.

### **URBANISATION** (See map)

Towns in the modern sense of the word did not exist before the 1850s but there were small trading centres along the coast as well as along the main trade routes and around watering wells in the interior of Jubaland. These traditional pre-colonial towns were inhabited by a particular clan and the only foreigners were either traders or religious teachers serving the community.<sup>102</sup> For example, Bardera town, a pre-colonial town that was established in the fourteenth century had prospered not only because it was mainly a religious centre but because its location on the strategic Juba river meant that in the nineteenth century trade passed on its way to and from Mogadishu and Kismayu. Lugh, another pre-colonial town prospered between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries because of the trade in ivory and slaves that emanated from southern Ogadenia and Bale, regions that much later became part of the Ethiopian Empire.

With the arrival of the colonial administration in the NFD in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, urban centres were established all over Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District. These colonial urban centres were administrative centres around the main watering wells and in the centres of the large clans. The British established Afmadu town in 1905 because it was not only a watering centre for the powerful Ogaden but it was centrally located in the vast Jubaland territory. Wajir town, established in 1912 by the colonial administration, was also a watering centre for all of the clans who converged around the wells because there was no other source of water. Fort Serenli was established in 1898 to control the recalcitrant Auliyahan clan, but the availability of water from the Juba river was another factor in its establishment as a centre.

The British did not encourage the establishment of many towns or trading centres because it would encourage rural-urban migration and attract a high number of unemployed and unemployable people to these centres. The *Sultans*, the chiefs and their respective elders were told to discourage their followers from settling in these towns. Rural dwellers in 1934 and after could procure goods and sell livestock or milk in the daytime and get out of town before

---

102. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

sunset.<sup>103</sup>

The policy of the colonial administration in the NFD in 1940 was to have 'townships as small as is consistent with the needs of the territory from the point of view of trade'.<sup>104</sup> Townships were discouraged because there were constraining factors to their expansion such as shortage of water and scarcity of grazing near the township for a large population. The biggest factor that influenced the colonial administration in the NFD to inhibit the expansion of urban centres was the fact that there was no 'adequate administrative or police organisation for dealing with the affairs of large township communities'.<sup>105</sup> There was the additional fear that with the growth and expansion of townships everywhere there would be 'little scope for trade and industry in a region such as this', and that 'there is not adequate employment for large numbers of detribalised Africans in the townships'.<sup>106</sup>

Townships in the NFD between 1930 and 1950 were to serve many purposes at the same time. First they acted as trading and administrative centres. Such towns included Wajir, Moyale and Isiolo. Second towns were to serve as defence centres with airstrips, military sections and communication networks. Garissa township, which was founded in 1924, is a good example of a multipurpose colonial town. The three major sub-clans of the Abdalla, Abd Wak and the Auliyahan were all administered from Garissa township. Small centres were later established in the areas of the different clans even within districts such as Garissa. For example, the Auliyahan had Madogashe, Liboi and Dadaab, which were all established in the 1930s, while in the Abdalla sub-clan areas, there were small centres such as Masalani, Ijara and Hulugho. Here the purpose of establishing such small centres was to administer the clans as closely as possible and to encourage the development of the township and the trade of the local people. The Officer-in-Charge in 1936 noted that 'the one [administrative centres] gives stability to the district and an effective means of control, the other [trading centres] ensures peace by keeping the local natives occupied'.<sup>107</sup>

Inasmuch as the Officers on the spot wanted to have many towns they were handicapped by

---

103. Interview with Siyad Duale, Nairobi, January 1996.

104. KNA ADM/11/20/20, O/C Circular, 1940.

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*

107. KNA PC NFD/1/1/4, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1936.

the availability of services that those towns would need.<sup>108</sup> Each town was to have a number of shops, people, water and sanitation facilities. In their meeting of 1941, the DCs' concurred that 'big townships were eschewed because they encouraged detribalisation and caused more crime and disease and necessitated large police and administrative units. Moreover, the inhabitants of the towns used up more of the scanty resources of water and grazing than could be spared by the tribesmen'.<sup>109</sup> These facilities were in short supply in most of the recently established towns. The colonial administrators adopted a policy of discouraging nomadic Somalis from coming to settle in these small towns. All young men who had nothing to do in towns were rounded up and taken to their families in the rural areas. Others were caught and locked up in jail for vagrancy and served time in jails.<sup>110</sup> The nomadic Somali, according to Abdille Hassan Illey, 'were not even allowed to dress in urban attire. The nomadic Somali was to wear his traditional clothes wrapped around his body while the alien Somali was allowed to put on trousers and wear a jacket'.<sup>111</sup>

The colonial administration discouraged urbanisation in the NFD for fear that in the process the Somali nomadic way of life would be disrupted. To preserve the nomadic existence of the Somali society, the administration in NFD actively discouraged settlement in townships by what they referred to as vagabonds - young and unemployed men who escaped the hard nomadic life of the pastoral Somali. The Ogaden and other indigenous tribes were not allowed to live in towns and wear European clothes. On the other hand a number of alien Somalis were not only allowed to wear trousers but settled in NFD townships during the 1930s and after. This enhanced the identity crisis felt by the Somali of NFD as they were only allowed to wear certain clothes such as white 'bafta' calico over their shoulders and not shirts as the alien Somalis did.<sup>112</sup> The nomadic Somalis in the NFD unlike the alien Somali were required by the colonial administration to wrap calico cloth over their shoulders and waists. This mode of dressing was enforced on the nomadic Somali until 1947 when the dress became a political issue.

The colonial towns had distinct characteristics that they shared with all other colonial towns

---

108. KNA PC NFD/1/1/7, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

109. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1941.

110. Interview with Mohamed Osman Warfa, Nairobi, January 1996.

111. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1996.

112. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Reports, 1940-1950.

in the rest of Kenya Colony. One such trait was that most clans were allotted a specific part of the town in which to settle. There was to be no mingling of the various clans because the colonial administration feared that this might lead to detribalisation and loss of a sense of belonging to a particular clan. Thus there was a policy of segregating the clans in towns. When a nomad came from the countryside to town he would know where to search for his urbanised relatives. A distance of two kilometres or so separated different clans settling in the same town.<sup>113</sup> The segregation policy adopted by the colonial administration was not successful since different clans still met and socialised in urban centres as Somalis could claim to belong to the clan with which they lived. There was no means of knowing which clan a Somali belonged to other than by interviewing the person.

### **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture was almost impossible in the NFD except along the two major rivers: the Tana and Dawa rivers. This was because of climatic factors such as poor and unreliable rainfall throughout the year with an average of 150 mm per year. Agriculture was possible in areas that had permanent water, especially near wells and shallow streams such as Uaso Nyiro. Farming also took place from March to June during the long rains. But by and large, agriculture hardly required much attention by the administrators in the NFD in the period between 1930 to 1950.

Besides climatic factors, the cultural attitudes of the Somali nomad also discouraged the development of agriculture in the region especially before the Second World War. For the Somali nomad, 'tilling the land was traditionally the lowest activity a man could possibly do to get his daily bread'.<sup>114</sup> Agriculture was engaged in by the riverine people, the Galla and the Boran. In 1945 the colonial administration in the NFD encouraged these communities to produce food crops by sending agricultural advisers to Garissa, Isiolo and Marsabit district. Among the Ogaden and other Somali clans agricultural activity was secondary to pastoral nomadism. Few Somalis adopted agriculture and for those who did so agriculture was as a result of diminishing livestock numbers.

The Somalis had never practised agriculture before the onset of colonial rule in 1895. Even

---

113. Interview with Abdi Hurre, Garissa, February 1996.

114. Interview with Hassan Farayoub, Nairobi, December 1995.

after the establishment of colonial rule farming was not regarded as an important activity in a predominantly pastoralist society. Colonial administrators did not encourage farming in the NFD until 1940 when during the war the necessity of self-sufficiency in food requirements became the policy of the administration in the region. The main crops that were grown included food crops such as rice, maize, millet, sorghum and simsim. Cash crops such as coffee and cotton were experimented with in the NFD in 1947 but were not successful especially along the Tana river. The aim of the colonial administrators in these agricultural trials was to achieve self-sufficiency in food capacities within the NFD and to reduce dependency on having to import food from other parts of the Kenya colony. This was because of the rising cost of importing food and the increasing taste of Somalis for consuming imported food such as rice, which was not grown in the region. The administration in the NFD between about 1930 and 1950 knew there was little hope of increasing agriculture because of the nature of the land and that 'efforts should be made to render as many townships as possible self-supporting'.<sup>115</sup> This was achieved particularly in Garissa District which was able to supply the other districts in the NFD with food supplies like rice, maize and millet grown by few Somalis, Oromo and the Riverine Pokomo.<sup>116</sup>

The British colonial administrators tried to encourage agricultural activities after 1950 by rewarding those few Somalis engaged in it such as Sheikh Ali Seyyid and Mohamed Farah along the Dawa River in Mandera district, Ahmed Nunow on the Uaso Nyiro River and Haji Idriss Mohamed along the Tana River in Garissa district. The Somali farmers were given good prices for their produce and were also issued with certificates of merit for their achievements.<sup>117</sup> The majority of the Somalis were not inclined to adopt agriculture as a substitute for their nomadic pastoralism. For the Somali, the hazards of climatic unpredictability were too much to risk farming. It was easier to raise livestock and camels than experiment and grow crops in an area where the average rainfall was below 300 mm in a given year. Somali pastoralists got cash from selling livestock to pay taxes and still earned more to meet other requirements in life. Colonial rule between 1925 and 1945, however, curtailed the Somali pastoralists's movement and restricted them to specific grazing zones.

---

115. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1941.

116. KNA PC NFD/1/7/1, Garissa Annual Report, 1950.

117. *Ibid.*



### **LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT** (See Map)

Different parts of the NFD were suitable for different types of animal husbandry. Garissa district was basically cattle country while Wajir district, apart from the Habaswein area, was regarded as camel country. This was because of the topography of the land, the vegetation and the animal diseases found in those areas. Garissa district was renowned for camel diseases such as foot and mouth disease which discouraged the rearing of camels, especially in the southern parts of the district. There were districts such as Moyale and Mandera where both cattle and camels were reared as result of favourable conditions such as the absence of animal diseases such trypanosomiasis which is found in Garissa cattle areas. Camels were found in the drier parts of the NFD such as Buna in Wajir, Benane in Garissa, Rhamu in Mandera, and in semi-desert areas of Marsabit District, while cattle, goats and sheep were found in and around water sources especially along permanent and semi-permanent rivers.

Prior to the arrival of the British, the Somalis had never inoculated their livestock against diseases. If there were contagious diseases such as 'Duffan' (a kind of camel flu) and anthrax then they quarantined the affected animals from the main group until they healed or died. The other way of avoiding diseases among their livestock was by migrating from the affected areas to some far off place where the disease was uncommon such as the migration of the Degodia clan in 1925 to Tana River from Wajir.<sup>118</sup>

After 1935 the NFD administration started campaigns to treat and inoculate Somali stock in order to prevent animal diseases from spreading. The Somali nomad was expected to pay some money which was meant to cover the cost of travelling and fuel. The cost of the vaccination was free. The Veterinary Department (which was established in 1938) trained the local people in animal husbandry and the nomads were encouraged to report any disease that affected their herds. By 1948, veterinary officers were available in all of the administrative centres of the Northern Frontier District.

At the end of the Second World War, the livestock population in the NFD had reached alarming proportions. The Turnbull administration in the NFD after 1947 pleaded with the Governor to open up the Kenya colony which had hitherto been closed because of settler

---

118. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1925.

pressure not to allow NFD cattle to compete in the lucrative markets in the Kenya Highlands.<sup>119</sup> There was fear that without proper vaccinations NFD livestock would spread diseases to the cattle in the Kenya Highlands. This huge stock population in 1947 led to the deterioration of the land which could no longer carry the stock that was available. Evidence of land degradation in the NFD especially near the water sources and along the rivers Tana and Dawa was noticed from 1947 and after.<sup>120</sup>

The Second World War created a huge demand for Somali cattle by the army. After the war the Somali nomads sold their cattle to the Livestock Marketing Division which took over the monopoly previously held by the African Livestock Marketing Organisation in 1947 and fixed their own prices. In the process, the Somali nomads had enough cash with which to pay their taxes and also contribute to the war effort. It was the policy of the administration in the NFD after the Second World War to keep down the numbers of cattle to a limit in keeping with the holding capacity of the land. The colonial administration in the NFD aimed 'to continue after the war compulsory sale of livestock by the tribesman to the Livestock Control'.<sup>121</sup> Even though there was no policy of destocking in the NFD the administration aimed to reduce the number of livestock in the region by opening markets in the rest of the Kenya Colony to the NFD cattle.

The Livestock Marketing Division (LMD) which bought livestock from the Somali nomads, was not very competitive when compared to private buyers who largely came from the coast.<sup>122</sup> The Somali preferred to sell their livestock to buyers other than LMD. The nomads thought the LMD was controlled by settlers in the Kenya Highlands and that was the reason why they offered lower prices to the Somali trader. The Somali livestock traders, especially those in Garissa District, took their commercial stock to the coast and the market at Makowe, on the mainland opposite the Lamu island.

The Somali livestock trader was not happy with the price of forty five shillings per bullock offered by LMD between 1930 and 1950, and some of them took their stock to Kismayu

---

119. KNA PC NFD/5/1/8, Post-War Five Year Development Plan for the NFD, 1945.

120. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

121. KNA PC NFD/8/1/2, DC's Meeting, 1941.

122. Interview with Abdi Koriyo, Garissa, March 1996.

market where prices were much higher. The market in the other parts of the Kenya Colony was closed to the Somali stock because of unfavourable competition for the settlers, but the settlers had a strong lobby that always won the heart and sympathy of the government from the 1920s onward and hence those good markets were closed to the Somali well into the late 1950s when Kenya was being prepared for independence.

The cumulative effects of the Outlying Districts Ordinance of 1902, the Special District Ordinance of 1934, the imposition of taxation, the role of the chiefs, lack of education, hospitals and harsh urban policies led in the long term to the development of a sense of being different from the rest of the Kenya colony. This was evidenced by the formation of the Somali Youth League in 1947 which advocated physical separation of the NFD from Kenya Colony. This concept of being uniquely governed was enhanced by the fact that people from outside the NFD region were not permitted to come freely and settle in the Northern Frontier District. Likewise the Somali nomads were not allowed to settle among the other communities of the Kenya colony. The long term effect of the SDO of 1934 was to develop a separate identity for the Somalis and by 1950 Somalis in NFD had little in common with the rest of Kenya Colony other than sharing the experience of British colonial rule. The absence of land alienation in the NFD because settlers were not interested in the harsh conditions of the frontier meant that Somalis were spared the harsh living conditions experienced by their counterparts in the Kenya Colony. Unlike other parts of the Kenya Colony the NFD region did not experience settler demands for labour and land. The lack of European pressures as compared with the rest of the Colony led to the development of a unique identity on the part of the Somali. In 1946 the growth of modern political parties such as the Somali Youth League in the NFD appealed to Somali political aspirations because the local people faced an identity crisis. The largest of the external players to have had a profound influence was the Somali Youth League which was started in Mogadishu in 1943.

The pre-Second World War era in the NFD region was a period in which the Somali and the Oromo people were adapting to and making the best of the colonial situation. Political expression was confined to opposition to the various ordinances such as the Outlying District Ordinance of 1902 and the Special District Ordinance of 1934. Political dormancy at a regional level would come to an end after the Second World War as a result of many factors, but particularly of the emergence of a new elite, an elite that had much to gain in the

transformation of the Somali and Oromo people from a subject people into an independent people. The route to political independence would be long and in the process external powers would have much influence over it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLITICAL PARTIES, NATIONALISM AND THE GENESIS OF IDENTITY CRISES AMONG THE SOMALI OF THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT OF KENYA: c.1930-1963

There was no political consciousness in the modern context among the people of the NFD and they had no grandly ambitious goal of independence in the period leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Many factors contributed to this lack of political activity among the people of the NFD in the 1920s and 1930s. Among these factors were: illiteracy, as most people were not educated<sup>1</sup> because there were no modern schools; Secondly, the urban community was very small and did nothing to articulate the wishes of the people. All that the nomadic Somali wanted was to be left alone and have nothing to do with the government. Their major interests, as in centuries past, were to find water and fresh pastures for their livestock. Various sub-clans such as the Abdalla in Garissa made individual attempts to maintain their independence. In 1930 they migrated to Italian Somaliland as an indication of their dissatisfaction with the political status quo. But the Abdalla came back to the Kenya Colony when they realized that 'life was not any easier in Italian Somaliland'.<sup>2</sup> The Mohamed Zubeir also migrated to Italian Somaliland in the early 1930s to escape the imposition of taxation in their area only to come back in the 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

From 1930 and up to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 the NFD Somali's political consciousness was limited to their respective locality and was not region-wide. Their political awareness was limited to such activities as refusal to pay taxes and disobeying the trespass laws stipulated in the SDO of 1934. Nationalism and political awareness from 1930 to the early 1960s when the political crises flared into open violence and low intensity warfare was a slow process because of many factors such as the lack of finance and education and the remoteness of the NFD not only from Italian Somaliland but also from the rest of the Kenya Colony. Colonial administrative ordinances such as the ODO of 1902 and its amendment in

- 
1. The first graduands of secular schools in the NFD came out in 1954. Before this period most of those who worked in the civil service were educated outside the Province.
  2. Interview with Abdi Koriyo, Garissa, March 1996.
  3. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1930.



1924, the NFP Poll Tax of 1930 and its amendment contained in the NFP Poll Tax (Amendment) Ordinance of 1934, the SDO of 1934 and its amendments contained in SDO (Administration) of 1936 and 1937, had all influenced the development of nationalism and heightened the sense of political awareness until now unknown to the people of the NFD of the then Kenya Colony.<sup>4</sup>

Nationalism is used here in the context of the development of a unique identity of the Somali and Oromo tribes in the NFD of the Kenya Colony after the 1930s. Nationalism of the Somali people in the then NFD of Kenya manifested itself in the urge to delink from the Kenya Colony and unite with the wider Somali people of the Horn of Africa. In the 1940s Italian Somaliland under the British Military Administration experienced nationalist fervour among the junior cadres. The Somalis working for the British Military Administration supported the British policy of creating 'Greater Somalia' in the Horn of Africa. In the process of articulating the wider Somali aspirations centred in Mogadishu, such as maintaining their cultural, linguistic and religious identities, the Somalis of the NFD had hoped to join up with their brethren in Somalia, French Somaliland and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. The struggle to secede from the Kenya Colony from 1940 onward was spearheaded by the political parties such as the Somali Youth League. But it was only during Kenya's negotiation for independence in the early 1960s that there was a proliferation of political parties such as the Northern People's Progressive Party, Northern Frontier Democratic Party, and People's National League which all advocated the regions' secession from Kenya once the latter was granted independence. The urge to delink from Kenya was also championed in the early 1960s by NFD clan *Sultans* such as Maalim Mohamed Stamboul and other clan elders.

Modern political consciousness took root among the Somalis of the NFD as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War. This was because many NFD Somalis who were recruited as soldiers to serve the British Empire gained broader political experiences from distant lands such as Burma and North Africa. Italian propaganda in the initial stages of the Second World War for the unification of all Somali territories appealed to Somali political aspirations. The pre-Second World War period could be termed the era of adaptation to

---

4. KNA Official Gazette, 1902-1937.

colonial rule. Samatar describes these attempts to live within colonial confines in the pre-Second World War period as 'the accommodationist culture'<sup>5</sup> in which the Somali nomads were adapting to the incipient colonial administrative structures. As in British Somaliland in the 1920s, the 1940s in the NFD witnessed the emergence of a new group of Somali petty traders, '*tacabirin*' or travellers and retired soldiers who would awaken NFD Somali political consciousness. This was because according to Samatar, they were 'relatively more informed and mindful of the welfare of the community'.<sup>6</sup>

Important personalities like Ahmed Hassan, head of the powerful Mohamed Zubeir clan, went to the Italians in 1940 as he felt dissatisfied with the NFD colonial administration's policies such as taxation and trespass laws. He 'became an anti-British influence'<sup>7</sup> among the clans living on the Italian side of the border. Sheikh Farah of the Gerri clan in Wajir also went to Italian Somaliland to seek monetary favours from the Italians but was locked up by the Italians. Jeldessa Jarso, the head of the Boran, and his son 'were punished for helping Banda<sup>8</sup> deserters to hide rifles'<sup>9</sup> in their community because they were given money by the Banda. These were the attempts made by the recognized leadership to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Second World War to rid themselves of British colonial rule by throwing in their lot with the Italians. Between 1935 and 1941 Somali leaders such as Aden Abdullahi Issa and Mohamed Gure in Italian Somaliland vociferously supported the Italian fascist ambitions of the Governor of Jubaland in the Second World War to unify all Somali territories in the Horn of Africa. These leaders actively participated in the recruitment of Italian Bandas (tribal soldiers) from their communities. There were NFD Somali leaders such as Stamboul Maalim who supported the British during the Second World War and many traders supplied the meat requirements of the British troops. The British forces were able to rout the Italian fascist forces in the Horn of Africa and restored Haile Selassie to his throne in January 1941. It was after the Italians were defeated in the Horn of Africa theatre that there was the emergence of modern political parties such as the Somali Youth League in all Somali-inhabited territories. The upsurge in political activities from 1941 to 1947 was

---

5. Samatar, *Oral Poetry*, p.44.

6. *Ibid.*, p.44.

7. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

8. Bandas are the tribal police in Italian Somaliland equivalent to the 'Dubas' in the NFD of Kenya.

9. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1942.

facilitated by the British policy of creating a Greater Somalia in 1946 under the Bevin Plan, so named because it was proposed by the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. The plan was supported by administrative officers in all Somali-inhabited territories. In 1940 the NFD Somalis attitude towards the Italian fascist policy was ambivalent. Some Somali leaders such as Sheikh Farah of the Gerri clan in Wajir district supported the Italian fascist cause because of Italian propaganda while others such as Maalim Mohamed Stamboul stood against the Italian cause.

### **THE SOMALI YOUTH LEAGUE AND THE BEVIN PLAN, 1945-1948.**

With the defeat of the Italian forces in the Horn of Africa in 1941, the British had the opportunity to administer all Somali territories in the Horn of Africa and in the process introduce political and economic policies that were different from the Italian system. As a result of the British Military Administration of the Ogaden and ex-Italian Somaliland in the period 1941-50, NFD Somalis in the Kenya Colony were not only provided with an opportunity to widen their political awareness through the opening of the Somali Youth League (hereafter SYL) branches in the region but also with the introduction of the Post War Five Year Development Plan for the NFD of Kenya in 1946. The Post War Development Plan aimed to redress years of developmental neglect of the NFD region by initiating various livestock and water projects. The SYL was a pan-Somali political movement based in Mogadishu and operated throughout the Somali territories in the Horn of Africa from 1943 to 1948. The SYL was formed in 1946 by junior civil servants such as Haji Mohamed Hussein and Aden Abdullahi Issa working in Mogadishu. It emerged out of the Somali Youth Club, a non-political welfare association formed in 1943 by urban Somalis living in Mogadishu. The British Military Administration in Mogadishu encouraged and guided the inexperienced Somali politicians in the early 1940's to organise the political structures of the SYL party. Policy decisions affecting the party were made in Mogadishu with the consent of the British Military Administrators and were disseminated by the party officials throughout the party branches in the Horn of Africa. The SYL had a President, Haji Mohamed Hussein, who was advised by an advisory committee made up of various branch chairmen, secretaries and treasurers. The British Military Administrators advised the SYL leaders under the influence of the Bevin Plan which was a set of proposals forwarded in 1946 by the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to the victorious Allied Powers. The Bevin Plan aimed to create a 'Greater Somalia' encompassing all the territories inhabited by the Somali nomads

throughout the Horn of Africa including the NFD as evidenced by the reaction of the administrators in the region.

British colonial administrators in the NFD and Italian Somaliland during the Second World War and up to 1948, however, had a very sympathetic ear for the Somali people. In 1943 the NFD Provincial Commissioner, Gerald Reece, noted that 'in order to avoid international frontier friction and to enable some social advancement to be made in this corner of Africa all Somali people (and perhaps even some of the Galla tribes) should be united under one Government'.<sup>10</sup> This was not to be because the other victorious allies France, the Soviet Union and the United States opposed the Bevin Plan for the unification of all Somali territories under British trusteeship. Ernest Bevin, who had become Britain's postwar Foreign Secretary, was an influential personality who made his desire to see a unified Somali-inhabited territory under preferably British government known. In a speech before the House of Commons in 1946 he pleaded the Somali case and said that:

At about the time we occupied our part [of the Somali coast], the Ethiopians occupied an inland area which is the grazing ground for nearly half the nomads of British Somaliland for six months of the year. Similarly, the nomads of Italian Somaliland must cross the existing frontiers in search of grass. In all innocence, therefore, we propose that British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, and the adjacent part of Ethiopia, if Ethiopia agreed, should be lumped together as a trust territory, so that the nomads should lead their frugal existence with the least possible hindrance and there might be a real chance of a decent economic life, as understood in that territory.<sup>11</sup>

The British post war policy of creating 'Greater Somalia' allowed the SYL to open branches in the NFD region. SYL branches were opened in January 1947 in Wajir, Mandera and Isiolo while the Garissa branch was opened in July 1947.<sup>12</sup> The leadership of the League were men of integrity who included Ibrahim Mohamed, branch chairman of Garissa district, Mohamed Sheikh Kassim, chairman of Wajir branch and Mohamed Haji Jama, chairman of Mandera branch. Working with the chairmen of the League's branches were other officials who worked as branch secretaries and treasurers. The major duty of the NFD branch office bearer was to implement the SYL policies such as the unification of Somali territories. The office was responsible for helping the sick and establishing schools in all areas occupied by the Somalis. The NFD branches hoped to create political awareness among the people of the

---

10. KNA NFD4/1/3 Political Documents, 1943.

11. A.A. Castagno, 'Somalia', *International Conciliation* (New York, 1959), p.392.

12. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1947.



NFD who seemed to have been politically dormant when compared to their brethren in other Somali-inhabited territories. The policy objectives of the SYL were quite appealing to the Somali and Oromo tribes in the NFD as they were, as the PC noted in his annual report for 1947:

to unite all Somalis living in the Horn of Africa [NFD of Kenya, Ogaden region of Ethiopia, French Somaliland, British Somaliland, and Italian Somaliland] to increase educational facilities, to help the sick and poor, and to foster the mohamedan religion.<sup>13</sup>

The above were the broad aims of the League throughout the Horn of Africa. There were in addition, specific goals that were put forward by the League branches in the NFD in 1947 in order to win the moral and material support of the people. These included first ridding the NFD of all infidels through a 'jihad' or holy war. This goal was aimed at appealing to the religious devotion of the Somali who were Muslims and therefore would easily respond to the call of a Jihad. Since all of the administrators were of British descent and not Muslims the Somalis saw them as Christians who were imposing themselves on the Somali.

The League further aimed to undermine and weaken the tribal administration of the Somali and kindred tribes by persuading them that 'in future all matters relating to Somali such as tribal disputes, affrays, civil debts and bride price should come under the jurisdiction of the chosen leaders of the league and not be dealt with by the headmen'.<sup>14</sup> They were aiming to usurp the powers of the chiefs and other government agents such as the elders, whom they saw as traitors who were not mindful of the people's welfare. The League hoped to form the next government in all Somali territories including the NFD once British rule was terminated; the SYL believed this to be imminent because of the 'indefinite attitude maintained by the Colonial Government'.<sup>15</sup> They intended to achieve this by preparing and giving their members experience in the day-to-day running of government structures such as the 'setting up of unlawful courts'.<sup>16</sup> They also arrested and punished any Somali they suspected to be a government spy. In other words they behaved as though they were a government in waiting without the approval of the colonial administrators.

---

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*



The League hoped to do away with the inter-tribal boundaries and grazing control schemes, and they aimed to make the NFD a place where 'all Somalis will live together happily and wander at will throughout the Horn of Africa'.<sup>17</sup> Given the nomadic hatred of grazing control and inter-tribal boundaries this SYL aim must have struck at a delicate cord in the Somali pastoralist psyche. The SYL claimed that it would also terminate the payment of taxes by the people of the NFD once it took over the government from the British. The League's aims opposed the colonial policies that were in force in the NFD even though the leadership of the league supported the aims of the Bevin Plan.

The SYL leadership throughout the Horn of Africa supported and identified with the aims of the Bevin Plan which was to unify all Somali territories under one administrative authority, possibly under the British Government. This was indicated by the views of Haji Mohamed Hussein, the then President of the SYL, in an interview in 1948 before the Four Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies. This Commission consisted of representatives of Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and France. The Soviet Union representative specifically asked the President of the SYL if he knew the opinions of the various Governments regarding the future of the Italian colonies. The President replied that he knew of the Bevin Plan and its aim of creating a Greater Somalia. Haji Mohamed Hussein stated that 'when we [SYL] saw this [the creation of a Greater Somalia] being uttered by a Foreign Minister of a Great Power we were very happy indeed because it is one of our great aims'.<sup>18</sup> The SYL leadership espoused a pro-British stand and were anti-Italian and did not want the return of Italian administration to Somalia. Italian administration of Somalia was advocated by the Italian community and clashes occurred between anti-Italian demonstrators and pro-Italian demonstrators during the visit of the Four Power Commission representatives in Mogadishu in 1948.

British policy in the Post War period up to the establishment of the Four Power Commission in 1948 was to lobby for the unification of Somali territories and to that end to encourage the formation of political parties in all the Somali regions they administered. The British military authorities in both Somalia and British Somaliland and the NFD administration believed that since the Somali people had more things in common than anything that could divide them the

---

17. *Ibid.*

18. S. Touval, *Somali Nationalism* (Massachusetts, 1963), p.80.

task of administering them jointly would be far easier than when they were administered separately. The Post War Development Plan<sup>19</sup> for NFD of Kenya which was in itself a kind of 'Marshall Plan', was a landmark when compared to the previous era of apathy and highlighted this policy change. Like the Marshall Plan adopted by the United States government to rebuild Europe and counter the expansion of communism after the Second World War, the Post War Development Plan was meant to uplift the economy of the NFD region. It was the first of its kind ever made for the NFD and aimed to tackle the underdevelopment of the region especially its livestock and water resources. The British had aimed in the Post War Development Plan to solicit the support and confidence of the Somalis in the NFD so that they would not identify the slow progress in all sectors of the NFD economy as a deliberate policy of the colonial government. The change in attitude by the colonial administration in the NFD could be attributed to the late realisation that the NFD people:

have for some thirteen years past been taxpayers, but in return for about 100,000 pounds which they have contributed to the revenue of the Colony through direct taxation they have been given little more than a limited protection and law and order.<sup>20</sup>

So the colonial administration in the NFD felt the need to address the socio-political wishes of the people of NFD by giving the Somalis the green light for the formation of political parties in preparation for the time when all Somali territories would be united. It was postulated by the British Post War administration of Somali territories that if 'Italian Somaliland were taken over after the war by His Majesty's Government, or by some friendly power or group of nations, it would probably be convenient for Kenya to hand over to an administration that would specialise in the Somalis, deserts and nomadic pastoralists a part of her, which has always been something of an embarrassment and a source of expense'.<sup>21</sup> It was assumed that if the control of Italian Somaliland were to pass permanently into British hands there would be:

no need for either the present or the former frontier between Kenya and Italian Somaliland. With the exception of the Rendille tribe [who should be administered with the Samburu] and a few Boran and kindred Galla tribes for whom provision could be made, the NFD is inhabited almost exclusively by Ogaden and Hawiya and bastard Somali tribes, all of whom have sections also

---

19. KNA PC NFD/5/1/8, Post-War Five Year Development Plan, 1945.

20. *Ibid.*

21. KNA NFD4/1/3, Northern Frontier District Political Document, 1943.

in Italian Somaliland.<sup>22</sup>

A lot of attention was given to the NFD in the Post War era by the administration in the NFD, especially its economic and political future. It was in these circumstances that in 1946 the SYL opened branches in all the urban centres in the NFD of the Kenya Colony with the aim of propagating their aims of unification and enhancing Somali nationalism in line with the aims of the Bevin Plan. The NFD administrators did not view the eventual linking of the NFD as a long term solution for the NFD Somalis and Oromo people.

In 1945 the Provincial Commissioner in the NFD, Mr Gerald Reece, echoed the feelings of the administrators in all Somali inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa when he sent a memorandum to the Chief Secretary, in response to the latter's request for briefing on the possibilities of unifying Somali territories. Reece emphatically stated that 'no international or inter-colonial frontier that divides the Somalilands will ever be really satisfactory. There can be little doubt that in order to avoid international frontier friction and to enable some social advancement to be made in this corner of Africa all Somali peoples (and perhaps even some Galla tribes) should be united under one Government. This would mean taking away from Ethiopia the Ogaden and possibly also some of the territory of the Galla and Shangalla peoples whom Menelik II conquered at the end of last century and who have since then been badly governed and oppressed or neglected by the Ethiopians' and joining them with NFD administration. On the NFD inclusion in the Greater Somalia Plan, Mr Reece supported the Bevin plan and stated that NFD region was 'always likely to be a source of some expense and embarrassment to the Colony [Kenya]. It is never likely that its life and administration would - or indeed should - fit conveniently into the life and administration of the other half of Kenya and it is felt that the present arrangement whereby we have to regard it as a part of the whole causes both inconveniences and inefficiency'. The sentiments expressed by Mr Gerald Reece were supported by the chief military administrator in Mogadishu who said: 'I am in complete agreement with Mr Reece's statement; he added that he was 'of the opinion that for reasons so clearly and ably stated by Mr Reece it will be our duty after the war to endeavour to ensure that all the Somali people (including those formerly maladministered by Ethiopia) should be united under one government'. This definitely included those Somalis who lived in the NFD of Kenya.<sup>23</sup>

---

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

Supporting the views expressed by Gerald Reece of the NFD of Kenya and Brigadier D. Wickham of the Military Administration in Mogadishu was the Governor of British Somaliland in Hargeisa, Mr G.T. Fisher. Mr Fisher in a long response to Mr Reece's views on frontier rectification said that:

... it seemed to be necessary that the people affected [Somali nomads in the Horn of Africa] ... should be subject to one single authority, governed by one set of laws, and guided by one approved tribal policy.<sup>24</sup>

The Somaliland Governor Mr Fisher strongly believed in 1943 that the division of Somali territories between the various colonising powers in the late nineteenth century and more specifically the giving of Somali grazing lands to the Abyssinian empire was historically wrong and that subsequent political and grazing problems could all be attributed to this past mistake. The Somaliland Governor in no uncertain terms said that 'the treaty concluded in 1897 between His Majesty's Government and the Emperor Menelik II, created, as British Somaliland, a wholly uneconomic unit. The Somalis are a pastoral people, but for topographical and climatic reasons their stock cannot live within the present boundaries of the protectorate for the whole year and they are therefore obliged to migrate seasonally far beyond them into country which until recently has been under foreign control'. Fisher was adamant that the 'case for abolishing altogether boundaries which divide Somalis from Somalis, and for placing all Somalis under one Government is such a strong one'. He further added that the experienced Administrative Officers in British Somaliland proposed to remove 'the artificial and thoroughly unsatisfactory divisions of Somalilands which are the legacy of the past'.<sup>25</sup>

The nine years (1941-1950) of British administration of all Somali inhabited territories in the Horn of Africa had created a sense of reunification and feelings of Somali identity as evidenced by the formation of the SYL and its opening of branch offices in all the major towns in the Horn of Africa. The similarity of British administrative policies in British Somaliland, the Ogaden, the ex-Italian Somaliland, and in the NFD region of Kenya Colony was apparent to the Somalis in all of these regions and they took full advantage of the status quo. Somali families were able to cross frontier borders freely again to meet long forgotten

---

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*



relatives whether in British Somaliland, in the Ogaden, or in ex-Italian Somaliland without problem. Such a relaxed cross-border movement did not exist along the British Somaliland border with the French Somaliland. This caused the NFD Provincial Commissioner to note as early as in 1941 that:

there was considerable fraternization between the tribes of the same section who had previously been divided by the international boundary. This was most noticeable amongst the Auliyahan [and other clans who lived along the frontiers]. The official attitude taken by us [administration in the NFD] was that it was neither possible nor desirable to stop [cross boundary movement] but permanent settlement in the NFD was not encouraged.<sup>26</sup>

It can be seen that the British administrators in all Somali regions were with the support of the Foreign Office in London hoping that all the Somalis would be united under one administering power. The British lobbied France, the Soviet Union and the United States of America to that end, but these powers did not view the situation from the same perspective as the British. France did not want to relinquish her tiny enclave of Djibouti to the British or any other power as she would lose the commanding influence of the strategically important route through the Red Sea. As Geshekteer notes: 'France and the Soviet Union denounced it as a simple scheme to expand the British Empire'.<sup>27</sup> This allegation was categorically denied by the British Foreign Secretary, Mr Ernest Bevin when he stated that: 'all I want to do in this case is to give those poor nomads a chance to live. I do not want anything else. We are paying nearly £1,000,000 a year out of our budgets to help to support them [Somalis]. We do not ask to save anything. But to have these constant bothers on the frontiers when one can organise the thing decently-well, after all, it is nobody's interest to stop the poor people and cattle there getting a decent living. That is all there is to it'.<sup>28</sup> Bevin envisioned Greater Somalia as encompassing all Somali-inhabited territories then administered by France and Britain. Ethiopian demands for the restoration of its share of the Ogaden region 'drew decisive American support for its territorial integrity after the Sinclair Oil Company signed an exclusive concessionary agreement with Haile Selassie in 1946 that permitted oil drilling in the Ogaden'.<sup>29</sup> Ethiopia under Haile Selassie believed that a united Somaliland was a nightmarish prospect as it would be a powerful neighbour that would control the important railway line of Addis Ababa-Djibouti that passed through the Somali-

---

26. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier province Annual Report, 1947.

27. Geshekteer, 'Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation', pp.1-32.

28. Touval, *Somali*, p.79.

29. Geshekteer, 'Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation', pp.1-32.



inhabited Ogaden region which was the life-line of Ethiopian trade to the coast. The creation of Greater Somalia as envisaged by the Bevin Plan, which would delink the Ogaden region from Ethiopia, was regarded by Ethiopian leaders as a direct threat to the existence of the Ethiopian entity as a sovereign nation.

It was only the Italians who supported the British attempts at unification of the Somalilands but they had little influence with the other powers. The lone British voice in the wilderness that had raised the concept of Somali unification in the 1940-49 era created a sense of 'bitterness at the failure of the Bevin proposals'<sup>30</sup> among Somali nationalists throughout the Horn. It was even more painful that the opportunity of Greater Somalia coming into existence 'had been irretrievably lost' with the Somali nationalist energies now concentrated 'upon local issues in British Somaliland and Somalia while elsewhere it was suppressed and condemned to a clandestine existence',<sup>31</sup> especially in the NFD of Kenya. The Bevin Plan could not be implemented because France, the Soviet Union and the United States, who were working together, were hostile to the creation of a Greater Somalia. With the failure of the Bevin plan to materialise, the British Government in 1949 altogether gave up the idea of creating a Greater Somalia in the Horn of Africa and planned to return all Somali territories it was administering to their pre-war status quo ante. By October 1948 the League was proscribed throughout the NFD region and its leadership exiled to Lokitaung in remote Turkana district.

#### **WHY THE SOMALI YOUTH LEAGUE WAS BANNED IN THE NFD IN 1948**

The League's activities were banned in the NFD by the administration because of the collapse of the Bevin Plan and uncertainties concerning the future administration of Italian Somaliland. The future dispensation of the former Italian territories were debated by the Allied Powers and the British administrators throughout the Horn of Africa did not know what the outcome of the decision would be. The League's activities in the NFD to achieve its goals were manifold, and indeed some of them instantly earned the wrath of the Colonial government which banned its activities in 1948. The League's activities and its stranglehold on the people by 1948 threatened 'to bring the normal administration of the Somali areas to a standstill and

---

30. I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia* (London, 1980), p.138.

31. *Ibid.*, p.138.

to stultify grazing control measures throughout the whole of the Northern Frontier District'.<sup>32</sup> Yet the colonial administration in the NFD did not actually know the inner workings of the League as 'it had been almost impossible to obtain reliable information concerning the League's activities'.<sup>33</sup> The people were not forthcoming with information concerning the League's activities and it was becoming difficult for the authorities to monitor the movement before it was banned in June 1948.

According to the PC's annual report for 1948 the 'subversive' activities of the SYL that eventually led to its proscription included 'the setting up of unlawful courts'. In these courts fines had been levied for 'offenses' such as referring a dispute to a Government headman or acting as guide to the tribal police. Secondly, 'unlawful drilling'<sup>34</sup> was organized by members of the League who served in the Kenya Police or K.A.R. This drilling was regarded as unlawful by the NFD administration because they did not recognise the SYL brigades nor did the SYL leaders seek permission from the administration to engage in such activities. Thirdly, 'the spreading of a legend that members of the League were immune from arrest and that the Government had no power over the League'<sup>35</sup> was aimed at instilling a sense of invulnerability on the SYL leadership. The League's leadership were adamant that they were a legal movement supported by the people for a noble cause and that the government indeed supported their activities. This 'propaganda'<sup>36</sup> by the League officials was aimed at increasing the grassroots membership of the League and the policy was directed 'at the usurpation of the lawful functions of the established Government; the League's original declared aims of benevolence, philanthropy and social welfare work were merely a disguise to cloak seditious activity'.<sup>37</sup> Lastly, the League encouraged its members to 'defy the Government headmen and the tribal elders'<sup>38</sup> as they viewed them as agents of colonial rule. All along the League considered themselves to be the sole representatives of the people of the Northern Frontier District and they demanded to be consulted on the affairs of tribal administration. The SYL leaders such as Salat Hathe and Ibrahim Mohamed of Garissa

---

32. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. The Colonial Administrators in NFD came to view the party's activities as mere propaganda and tried to down-play the party's achievements until 1963.

37. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

38. *Ibid.*

branch believed that any dealings with the government should be through them and not through the chiefs and tribal elders. The NFD Provincial Commissioner, Mr Turnbull, noted in his annual report for 1948 that by the middle of the year an intolerable situation had developed and 'government chiefs and headmen' were largely bereft of their powers to control the situation; bands of youths paraded through the district and drilled in regimental fashion'.<sup>39</sup>

The SYL adopted various strategies so that their activities would not be viewed as destructive and tried various methods to keep the League from trouble. These included circulating 'promises of a Somali Youth League utopia where no taxes need be paid and there would be neither tribal boundaries nor grazing control measures'.<sup>40</sup> These were mere dreams meant to win the support of the nomads. Such promises were of course beyond the SYL's reach and the colonial administration would not entertain such SYL goals. Hence, the administration in NFD had to ban the League's activities before it got out of control.

In 1949 the SYL also spread 'false reports to the effect that the British Government was shortly to be replaced by a Somali Youth League Government'<sup>41</sup> in all Somali-inhabited territories that were now being administered by the British. The SYL propagated the notion that it would be a better and more just replacement of the oppressive colonial administration. The British colonial administration, however, were nowhere near departing from the region in the 1940s and were in fact intensifying their efforts to make the NFD catch up with the rest of the Colony by implementing various water schemes and grazing control schemes such as the Dixey water scheme and the Dr. Edwards Grazing measures.<sup>42</sup> By 1945 the Colonial Government in Kenya had done absolutely nothing in the way of development (except policing of the NFD), because the region was considered to be 'unprofitable and it was thought that the population was too small to merit attention while there was so much to be done in the more densely inhabited areas of the Colony'.<sup>43</sup> This negative attitude towards

---

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. For more details about these two projects and how the Colonial administrators responded to suggestions therein, see KNA PC NFD/5/1/8, Post-War Five Year Development Plan, 1945.

43. *Ibid.*

the NFD region by the administration would be altered by the Post War Development Plan that was to improve the social and economic amenities of the region that had been neglected during the era before the Second World War.

Another method that the SYL used was 'intimidation of those [people] reluctant to join'<sup>44</sup> the league. The SYL had wanted to win the hearts of those sitting on the fence or those who were undecided in their loyalty to the League. All of those Somalis who did not join and support the League were viewed as unpatriotic and traitors to the Somali cause and therefore as enemies of the people. All those who supported the League were seen as anti-government by the colonial administration but in the eyes of League members were patriotic citizens and heroes with noble aims.

The SYL members had a unique way of identifying themselves by wearing a bone with five stars and the moon carved inside. This was called '*Hilaal*' by the members.<sup>45</sup> The five stars symbolically represented the five divided regions of the Somalis which were: NFD of Kenya, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland and French Somaliland. Anybody who wore it automatically won the confidence and respect of another member even if it happened that they did not know each other. These souvenirs were part of the fund-raising campaign operated by the SYL. The '*Hilaal*' was circulated within the NFD where it was made by some old men who specialised in its making. There was also a fashionable way in which SYL members saluted each other, which incidentally was similar to the socialist type in which the members raised up the clenched fist of the right hand.<sup>46</sup> The SYL members were issued with membership cards which they bought from their offices. These cards were called '*Karwal*' by the Somalis, which meant 'Carry well', as they believed it was a very dear card.<sup>47</sup> The cards were issued by the party branches and they were procured from Mogadishu and circulated in all Somali-inhabited regions of the Horn.

By 1948 when the League was banned throughout the NFD Somalis in the NFD were polarized into two distinct groups: a pro-government and a virulent anti-government group.

---

44. KNA PC NFD/2/1/2, Northern Frontier District Annual Report, 1940.

45. Interview with Mohamed Osman Warfa, Nairobi, January 1996.

46. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1949.

47. Interview with Siyaad Duale Hassan, Nairobi, January 1996.

The former consisted of the majority of the chiefs, the tribal elders, and government civil servants. The latter group were traders, some civil servants and others who had retired from the civil service but lived in towns. Bad blood developed even within families because of members taking a pro-SYL stand or a government stand. There were chiefs who sympathized, though not openly, with the League members. Some of them were actually staunch members of the League, for example Maalim Mohamed Stamboul who was described by Turnbull as 'developing into a definite personality with the natural grace and charm of a born gentleman'.<sup>48</sup> He supported the League's aims and its activities covertly even after its proscription in 1948.<sup>49</sup> The Issack and Darood Somali leaders in Isiolo district were in 1947 called upon either to resign their posts as Government Headmen or sever their ties with the League and they opted for the latter. Consequently the League's popularity soared among the Somalis of Isiolo District<sup>50</sup> until its proscription.

The popularity of the League waned as time went by and people came to realize that the SYL could not achieve its stated aims. Because of the violent tactics adopted by the League such as molesting individuals accused of spying for the Colonial Government, Somalis came to view the whole movement as a risky business. Some leaders of the League such as Mohamed Sheikh Kassim of the Wajir branch grew rich and accumulated wealth by misusing the League's funds at the expense of the members. There were dissensions within the ranks of the movement to the extent that some Somali elders came to see the movement as a movement of the 'corner-type boys association'.<sup>51</sup>

With the proscription of the League in 1948, its leadership was banned to the desert location of Lokituang in the Turkana region of the Northern Province for eleven years. In total, seven men of the top leadership of SYL from Garissa District were held incommunicado until they were released in 1959. These seven men were Ibrahim Mohamed (Hudur),<sup>52</sup> chairman of the SYL, Garissa Branch, Salat Hathe, Ahmed Aden, Aden Yussuf Da'ar, Aden Ahmed (Aden Kamasow), and Barre Hassan. They were representative of the three major clans in

---

48. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

49. Interview with Dekow Maalim Mohamed Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

50. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

51. *Ibid.*

52. I grew up in his household, and didn't have the chance to interview him as he passed away five years before this project came into my mind.



Garissa and 'were highly respected by the community'.<sup>53</sup> The colonial administration, in one of its attempts to silence the leadership of the SYL and thereby decrease its activities, used the SDO of 1934, section 16 to exile them. Section 16 had given immense powers to the administration in the NFD. It stated that:

Where after inquiry the Provincial Commissioner or District Commissioner is satisfied that any person within the district or area under his jurisdiction -  
 (a) is conducting himself so as to be dangerous to peace and good order; or  
 (b) has a blood feud; or  
 (c) has created a cause of quarrel likely to lead to blood-shed.  
 Such Provincial Commissioner or District Commissioner may by order in writing require such a person to reside in such place as may be specified in the order.<sup>54</sup>

With the leadership of the SYL out of the way, colonial administrators in the NFD were hoping that the SYL would die a natural death, but it was not to be. There was the underground movement called *Horset* which was the youth movement of the party. It was this underground movement that kept the fires of nationalism or the urge to delink from the Kenya Colony burning, but as time went by they too became ineffective and dormant. The '*Horset*' paraded throughout the districts on important occasions such as the Ramadhan festivities. The *Horset* also organised social activities such as football matches between the districts. Dekow Maalim recounted that 'as a member of the *Horset*, we moved in groups and visited families to remind them of our leaders who were exiled in Turkana but the people were afraid of the Government's punishment'.<sup>55</sup> The decline of interest in the *Horset* could be attributed to the fact that 'the leadership was incarcerated in Lokitiaung and there was no policy of action from the leadership'.<sup>56</sup> The longer the leadership were in exile, the more the people forgot about them and the SYL. In the 1950s the Mau Mau struggles in the rest of Kenya dominated their discussions. The planned transfer of administration in Somalia from the British Military Administration to Italian Trusteeship administration and whether the NFD would be included or not were issues that dominated the NFD political landscape from 1949 to 1950 and the fact that the League was no longer effective in winning the support of the NFD Somalis as events taking place in the rest of Kenya overshadowed its activities.

---

53. Interview with Hassan Farayoub, Nairobi, December 1996.

54. KNA Official Gazette, 1934.

55. Interview with Dekow Maalim, Nairobi, December 1995.

56. Interview with Siyaad Dualle, Nairobi, January 1996.

The impact of the League's activities was clearly felt by the colonial administration and the Somalis who lived in the urban centres of the NFD. By 1948, Turnbull noted that:

it has become necessary for District Commissioners to devote a great deal of time which could more profitably be spent on other duties to the collection of intelligence and to the checking of league propaganda amongst the tribesmen. The Police, too, have been affected; fairly large bodies of men are tied down to the townships in case disturbances should break out ...<sup>57</sup>

There was a kind of political vacuum created in the period between 1953 and 1959 when all political parties were banned throughout the Kenya Colony. As the leadership of the SYL was exiled in 1948, the spirit of Somali nationalism was kept alive by the youth wing of the SYL which acted without any policy framework. The political activity of the SYL in the NFD between 1948 to 1958 was reduced to 'a few mild rumours ... and this passive state of affairs does not, however, mean that there would be no recrudescence of active subversion if vigilance was relaxed - there most certainly would be'.<sup>58</sup> The general disruption of communication between Kenya and Somalia due to heavy rainfall, especially from 1951 to 1953, made 'it increasingly difficult for the league sympathizers in the NFD township to keep in touch with the heads of the movement in Mogadishu'.<sup>59</sup>

In such a situation, nothing was heard of the SYL branches in the NFD until 1958 when there were elections in Somalia. The 'election mania' of the Somalis in Somalia proper in 1958 influenced the Somalis of the NFD into becoming active participants of the events unfolding in Somalia. The Italian Trusteeship of Somalia, which lasted for a ten year period beginning in 1950, prepared the Somalis of that country for independence. The Italians in 1950 established a Territorial Council composed of Somali tribal leaders who were to act in an advisory capacity. The first elections which marked a first step in the slow process of preparing Somalis for independence were held at municipal level in 1954 and two years later a territory-wide election took place and the Territorial Council was replaced by an elected Legislative Assembly. The most important election, however, took place in 1959 the result of which was that the SYL became the predominant party that formed the transitional government in waiting. The SYL campaigned in all major towns within the Trust Territory

---

57. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1948.

58. *Ibid.*, 1952.

59. *Ibid.*

with the goal of a Greater Somalia as its main platform.<sup>60</sup> The SYL 'one Somalia' campaign slogan of reunification of Somali territories had reached every corner of the Somali inhabited territories in the Horn of Africa including the NFD region of Kenya though neither the Italian Trusteeship administration nor the NFD administration had espoused the creation of Greater Somalia in the Horn of Africa in the 1950s. Concurring with the above views, Saadia Touval noted that 'in order to further its Pan-Somali objectives, the party [SYL] has maintained branches in British Somaliland. It has also had branches in Jibuti and in Kenya, but these were proscribed by the authorities',<sup>61</sup>

Turnbull, noted in his annual report for 1958 that 'these surprising events in Somalia bewildered the Somali politicians [in the NFD], who started the year with the single clear-cut aim of promoting the proscribed Somali Youth League'.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the rapid political development taking place in Somalia prompted the Somalis in the NFD to agitate for their political aims which were to link up with Somalia. Yet there was political dormancy throughout the NFD from 1948 in the NFD until 1956. NFD political parties were allowed to operate in 1958 on the eve of the election in Somalia that led to the resurgence of SYL activities in the NFD, though on a far smaller scale than in previous years. The NFD clan elders in 1955 declined to be represented in Kenya's legislature unless by one of their own members.<sup>63</sup>

During the early 1950s the political situation in Kenya was dominated by the Mau Mau insurgency which in 1956 finally led the British Government to send the Secretary of State, Oliver Lyttelton, to Nairobi to find a political solution to the Mau Mau crisis. Even though the NFD region was spared from the blood-letting that was taking place in the rest of Kenya, nevertheless NFD political affairs were affected in that the *Sultans* and other clan elders were anxious to see the outcome of the instabilities in Kenya. The declaration of a state of emergency throughout Kenya in October 1952 in which all political activities were banned included the NFD region. The colonial administration in Nairobi was less concerned with NFD political development because of the rapid political development such as the need to

---

60. Touval, *Somali*, p.10.

61. *Ibid.*, p.95.

62. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1958.

63. *Ibid.*, 1956.

increase African representation in the Legislative Council. The Lyttelton proposals envisaged the 'establishment of a multi-racial government with full ministerial posts for unofficial members, of whom there would be three Europeans, two Asians and one African'.<sup>64</sup> The African members of the Legislative Council who were to represent the districts were nominated by the colonial administration. The colonial administration, however, allowed the formation of district and tribal based political parties throughout Kenya, except in the NFD and the Mau Mau-affected region in the Kenya Highlands. While political activities were banned in the Kikuyu and Somali regions of Central and Northern Provinces respectively of the Kenya colony, political progress was made in the rest of the colony in the form of elected representation. This was because the central province was the core of the Mau Mau insurgency while the NFD's political activities had been banned in 1948. From 1952 to 1958 political development in the rest of Kenya dominated the attention of the colonial administration in Nairobi and London.

The administrators in the NFD did not have a clear-cut policy on how to deal with the resurgent League in 1958. Patrick Renison, the new Governor in 1958, made a policy speech in Wajir during his tour in 1958 stating that 'they [Somalis in the NFD] were British citizens of Kenya and their flag was the Union Flag which they saw flying every day at their District Commissioner's office. They would remain under the protection of this flag ...'.<sup>65</sup> The Governor's speech at this crucial time in the history of the NFD political aspirations of secession lulled young Somali politicians such as Abdirizak Khalif, Dekow Stamboul and Alex Kholkhole into believing that the British Colonial Government would not betray them. According to the NFD political leaders, Renison's speech was an undertaking so far by the most senior representative of British Government.

The administration in the NFD knew very well that 'the Somali irredentist is unlikely to regard any statement as finally authoritative, unless it is made by a minister of the United Kingdom Government'.<sup>66</sup> The administration in the NFD did not expect the speech by the Governor to dissolve the Somali political uncertainties. While Governor Renison was

---

64. G. Bennet & C.G. Rosberg, *The Kenyatta Election: Kenya 1960-1961* (London, 1961), p.9.

65. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1958.

66. *Ibid.*

reassuring Somali politicians, the administrative officers in the NFD knew that Somalis would not be content with mere reassurances but only with actual steps toward delinking the NFD region from the rest of Kenya. The fact that Somali politicians in the NFD contemptuously viewed the Kenyan politicians such as Kenyatta, Tom Mboya and Daniel Arap Moi was well-known to the colonial administration in the NFD. Mr P.E. Walters, the NFD PC, noted in 1960 that Somalis were determined 'to break away from a Government dominated by men they dislike and despise, and join the Somali Republic'.<sup>67</sup> Yet the colonial administration in Nairobi and in the NFD did not address the Somali political aspirations of secession in the crucial period between 1948 to 1955 as there seemed to have been more pressing matters before the colonial administration such as the Mau Mau uprising and its political aftermath. In 1960 Mr Walters further noted that 'the issue has now been appreciated, but not squarely faced. In the opinion of the writer, a satisfactory solution does not lie in the creation of an opportunity to negotiate secession of territory after the date of bestowal of independence on Kenya; it must occur simultaneously with that event'.<sup>68</sup> From 1956 Kenya experienced the slow political development that saw Africans struggling for more constitutional amendments that would eventually lead to an African majority in the government. The constitutional struggle was spearheaded by Tom Mboya, Odinga Oginga and other leaders from the Western regions of Kenya. The period between 1956 to 1963 was crucial to the future political dispensation of the NFD because it was an opportune era when the colonial administration could have addressed the Somali political aspirations; but it never did so and the chance was lost.

Besides the verbal reassurance given by the Governor to Somalis concerning their fate being with the British Government and not with any other Government, the Colonial administrators in the NFD prepared themselves for the worst events that could occur. In an endeavour to protect its wider interest in the Kenya Colony the administration in the NFD took various precautionary measures for all eventualities including any violent attempts by Somalis for secession. The administration in the NFD in anticipation of Somali secession reported that 'precautionary measures against the Somalia threat were largely completed by 1959 ... and the Province now posses a chain of well sited airstrips, patrol bases or forts along the frontiers with Somalia and a network of strategic roads upon which some progress has been

---

67. *Ibid.*, 1960.

68. *Ibid.*



made'.<sup>69</sup> The threat of violence as anticipated by the NFD administration's precautionary steps already taken, would be posed by the nascent Somali Government which had all along supported NFD Somali secessionist demands.

The insincerity of the British administrators in Nairobi between 1948 and 1960 was indicated by the hesitation of the administration to address the thorny issue of NFD secession. The Somalis were bewildered as 'formerly trusted guides and mentors, now appeared to be propelling people inexorably to an unsure destination, by using forces utterly beyond their control or comprehension'.<sup>70</sup> The Somali clan *Sultans* and elders were uncertain of the two pronged policies of assurances by the Governor and military preparations of the administration concerning the future political destiny of the NFD. The negotiations for independence by Kenya nationalists that were to begin in 1960 created a heightened sense of anxiety among the Somalis and kindred tribes of the NFD as to what the future held in store for them as they did not want to remain part of an independent Kenya. When political parties were unbanned through out the Kenya Colony in December 1959 there sprang up a number of political parties in the NFD all jostling for a position of influence. The identity crisis that had been building up during the whole era of colonial rule burst into the violent reactions that would characterize the political scene in the Northern Frontier District in the 1959 to 1968 period.

#### **THE POLITICAL AND IDENTITY CRISES IN THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT: THE CASE FOR SECESSIONISM, c.1960-1963**

The identity crises and political confusion that had been developing in the NFD since the failure of the Bevin plan in 1948 to create a 'Greater Somalia' surfaced during the negotiation of an independent Kenyan constitution that began in early 1960. In the negotiations for Kenya's internal government the British were prepared to abide by the universal dictum of allowing subjects self-determination concerning their future. The British agreed to send a commission of inquiry to ascertain the wishes of the people of the NFD region. It was because of the uncertainties about the future of the NFD region that the Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, flew to Moscow in 1959 to secure a loan to show his disgust at the apparent British policy towards the Horn of Africa of aiming to create a 'Greater Somalia'. Haile

---

69. *Ibid.*, 1959.

70. *Ibid.*, 1960.

Cellose's action created ripples in Downing Street and 'his acceptance of a \$100 million Russian loan indicated the possible repercussions of disregarding Ethiopian interests'.<sup>71</sup> From then on British policy had a sympathetic tone towards Ethiopia. In a major foreign policy statement that was to guide policy makers in Whitehall, Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister announced before Parliament in April 1960 that 'Her Majesty's Government did not and will not encourage or support any claim affecting the territorial integrity of French Somaliland, Kenya, or Ethiopia. This is a matter which could only be considered if that were the wish of the Government and people concerned'.<sup>72</sup> This policy was announced because of the imminent departure of British colonial rule from Kenya and the unification of British Somaliland and the ex-Italian Somaliland into the Republic of Somalia. This statement was meant to appease Ethiopian restlessness and would be the guiding policy of British administrators for the remaining period of the British presence in the Horn of Africa. The urgency of the NFD question did not escape the attention of the NFD region's PC, Mr Walters, who believed that a secession of the NFD region should be negotiated before Kenya was granted her independence. In the conclusion to the annual report of 1960 he stated that:

Within the next year or two, a solution has got to be found, before extremism takes a hand, to the political problem posed by the unshakable determination of the NFD Somalis, and perhaps others, to break away from a Government dominated by men they dislike and despise, and to join the Somali Republic.<sup>73</sup>

Mr Walters was stating that the negotiations and process of delinking the NFD region should take place at the same time as the negotiations for Kenya's independence and that a negotiation for delinking the NFD region after Kenya was granted independence in 1963 was not in the interests of all parties concerned as it would lead to violent repercussions if Somali demands for secession was not granted. The NFD secession was ingrained in the Somali minds and nothing short of complete secession would satisfy their political aspirations. Walter remarked that 'their implacable and uncompromising determination not to be governed by "Kikuyu" and on the part of NFD Somalis, their desire for unification with the newly constituted Somali Republic'<sup>74</sup> was strongly felt by the NFD Somalis. Kenyan nationalist leaders such Kenyatta would not be prepared to negotiate without the NFD region as 'part

---

71. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.185; Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, pp.101-103; Touval, *Somali*, chapter 13.

72. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.103.

73. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, NFDAR 1960.

74. *Ibid.*

and parcel of Kenya'.<sup>75</sup> Walters's view was not, however, shared by his superiors in London and Nairobi who seem to have lacked a clear policy for solving the NFD secession question. The British Government 'acted too indecisively and too slowly' until the problem 'became insoluble except at the cost of alienating one side or the other'.<sup>76</sup>

Even by as late as 1960 the administrators in the NFD, in contrast with the Government in London were sure that the future political status of the region lay in linking the region with Somalia. Waters noted that the NFD Somalis believed that 'the concept of Greater Somalia is inevitable, and is merely a question of time'.<sup>77</sup> This was an over-optimistic notion but was a justifiable expression of the reality on the ground in the NFD. The administrators in the NFD knew the mood of the Somalis whom they were administering and had no doubt that NFD Somalis' loyalties were for linking up with their brethren in Somalia. The senior administration officials in Nairobi, including Renison, were vague about the future political status of the NFD.

During the negotiations for Kenya's election in 1961 there were four political parties from the NFD region that participated in the talks between the Kenya African nationalist parties such as KANU and KADU and the departing British Colonial administrators acting as arbitrators. These political parties were: The Northern Province People's Progressive party (NPPPP), which had its headquarters in Wajir, and was an ardent pro-secessionist party; The Northern Frontier Democratic party (NFDP), with its headquarters in Garissa, was a pro-secessionist party in favour of the continuation of British rule; The People's National League (PNL), with its headquarters in Garissa was a pro-secessionist party which supported the NPPPP; The Northern Province United Association (NPUA), with its headquarters in Marsabit, was anti-secessionist and supported the mainstream Kenyan Nationalist parties such as KANU and KADU. The pro-secessionist parties such as NPPPP and NFDP boycotted the 1961 elections as an indication of their anti-Kenya feelings and a wish to link up with Somalia. The pro-secessionist parties such the NPPPP did not evolve out of the SYL as these newly formed parties were led by young and educated Somalis. Moreover, the leadership of the SYL were barred from participating in the political life of the NFD region and the SYL

---

75. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.190.

76. *Ibid.*, p.194.

77. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, NFDAR 1960.

dissolved itself in 1960. SYL members joined the newly formed parties after 1960.

The mainstream Kenyan nationalist parties such as KANU and KADU were formed just after the first Lancaster House Constitutional Conference in 1960 from the myriad of factional and district based political parties that were in existence in the 1950s. KADU was formed on 25 June 1960 from an amalgamation of ethnically-based political parties representing smaller tribes in Kenya such as Masinde Muliro's Kenya African People's Party of the Luyah tribe; the Kalenjin Political Alliance; the Maasai United Front; and the Coast African People's Union. KADU represented 'the less potent and less cohesive forces of rural nationalism',<sup>78</sup> whose lands would be threatened by a Kikuyu-Luo alliance at the centre'. KANU was formed by the two main ethnic tribes in Kenya; the Kikuyu and the Luo. KANU was regarded by the Colonial administration as more aggressive and intransigent in its policies concerning land rights and labour laws.<sup>79</sup> The two nationalist parties of KANU and KADU at first had a different vision of a post-colonial Kenya. KANU advocated a strong centralised form of government while KADU advocated a federal type of Government. KADU promised the Somali politicians in the NFD all along that it would address the Somali political aspirations by granting the NFD regional internal autonomy if it came to power. KADU wanted an independent Kenya to have 'seven regional assemblies, which in actual fact were mini-parliaments'.<sup>80</sup> According to KADU the central government would be powerless to act in the various regions, except as a supervisor. The ideological polarity between KANU and KADU, however, disappeared when KANU swept the independence elections of May 1963. Most of the KADU leadership such as William Murgor and John Seroney defected to KANU in late 1963 to prepare Kenya for a unitary form of government. With the disappearance of a strong KADU as an opposition party the federal vision that it had previously been advocating also disappeared. Both parties were vehemently against secession of any region of Kenya and they were united in their opposition to the Somali aspirations. It was only KADU that was prepared to grant the Somalis autonomy within a federal system of government. This was because KADU represented smaller communities such the Maasai, the coastal people and the Kalenji interests. It advocated a 'Swiss-style regionalism; a plan

---

78. D. Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya wanted to Forget* (New York, 1982), p.146.

79. *Ibid.*, p.190.

80. J. Bailey, *Kenya: The National Epic* (Nairobi, 1993), p.134.



devised in the first instance by KADU's European associates and designed, essentially, to protect local land rights and prevent political domination over the weaker groups by the stronger'.<sup>81</sup> But KANU was not prepared to entertain any negotiations about what they referred to as Somali irredentism.

The top leadership of the political parties in the NFD, such as Abdirashid Khalif of the NPPPP, Yussuf Haji Abdi of the NFDP, and Guyo Dube of the PNL, went to London during the Lancaster House Conference in February 1962 to present their secessionist goals. These officials were later joined in their secessionist bid by an official delegation from the NFD, comprising leading figures such as the *Sultans* and chiefs from the six districts that make up the NFD. The Colonial Secretary, Mr Reginald Maulding, assured the pro-secessionist delegates that there would be 'no change in the status of the Northern Frontier District or in the arrangements for its administration'<sup>82</sup> until a Commission was set up whose terms of reference were 'to ascertain, and report on, public opinion in the Northern Frontier District (comprising the Districts of Isiolo, Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Moyale, and Wajir) regarding arrangements to be made for the future of the area in the light of the likely course of constitutional development in Kenya'.<sup>83</sup> The NFD Commission was sent by the British Government to gauge Somali feelings in the NFD concerning their future political dispensations. In 1962 Kenyatta and other nationalist leaders were undergoing trial in Maralal and were not consulted about the future political status of the NFD while in detention from 1952 to 1962. It was clear, however, through their representatives such as Tom Mboya in the Lancaster House negotiations, Kenyatta and other detainees would not support the cession of the NFD region from Kenya. According to John Drysdale, Mboya believed that Somalis could 'legitimately seek a form of local government in which they could play the fullest part, and that other needs could be met by good government'.<sup>84</sup>

Between 1960 and 1963 there were NFD political parties that did not want to secede or to be delinked from Kenya. NPUA was at the forefront of such parties and they co-opted KADU and KANU delegates participating in the London talks to represent them. KANU and

---

81. Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya*, p.188.

82. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.122.

83. *Ibid.*, p.124.

84. *Ibid.*, p.108.



the NPUA had similar political views concerning the future political status of the NFD. The leadership of both parties met on the eve of the KANU delegates' departure in June 1960 for London to inform KANU of the political aspirations of the pagan Boran and Oromo communities. KANU leaders argued that they too had the support of the NFD people who did not want to be delinked from Kenya.

The pro-secessionist parties in the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference of 1962 faced daunting opposition not only from the Kenyan mainstream political parties such as KANU and KADU, but also from Ethiopia which was exerting enormous pressure on the British Government. Ethiopia, as evidenced by Haile Cellose's trip to Moscow, did not want Britain to give much attention to the NFD secession question as it would also affect the existence of the Ethiopian Empire as an entity. Ethiopia vividly remembered past British attempts to create a Greater Somalia under the Bevin Plan which they had bitterly opposed and their failure to stop the unification of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland to form the Republic of Somalia. They were now confronted with a similar situation in the attempt to link the NFD region to the Republic of Somalia, a possibility they were not prepared to see. Hence Ethiopia in 1962, according to I. M. Lewis, began to 'accuse the British government of seeking to establish a pro-British Greater Somalia and to press for an elucidation of Britain's policy'.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the NFD question appeared to be a minor irritation among the many issues that were before the conference such as what constitutional arrangements an independent Kenya should adopt, controversies over the bill of rights, minority rights, and the Kenya Highland buy-outs by Kenya Africans among other issues. The British Government found itself in a quagmire and opted for the middle way of stalling to buy time.

This third option available to the British government was in April 1962 to appoint an independent two-man Commission consisting of a Nigerian Judge and a Canadian General to ascertain the wishes of the NFD people after which 'a decision on its findings taken by her Majesty's Government before the new constitution for Kenya was brought into operation'<sup>86</sup> would decide the future political dispensation of the NFD region. This second undertaking by the British Government was the crux of the matter because it mollified the pro-secessionists into believing that their secessionist aims would be realized before Kenya

---

85. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.185.

86. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.112.

got its independence. But it was not to be since this undertaking was deliberately removed from the NFD Commission's terms of reference before they departed for Kenya.

Because of the fast pace of political development in Kenya the deployment of NFD Commission took some time. The Commission took seven months to visit the NFD and three months to do the ground work 'while Kenya's African leaders acquired further authority and began to display increasingly militant attitudes towards Somali secessionism'.<sup>87</sup> The Commission arrived in the NFD in October 1962 and had their report ready by 12 December 1963 when Kenya was set to achieve independence. However, the Commission was not vested with the power to recommend anything once they found out the wishes of the people of the NFD. With the leaders of the secessionist political parties, they hoped that once the views of the Somalis, Borana and Oromo tribes were known, then the British Government would not deliver them to the Kenyatta Government or any government that would replace British colonial rule in due course.<sup>88</sup> Mr Abdirashid Khalif, the chairman of NPPPP, stated that 'the policy of Her Majesty's Government, following the Commission's findings, will be acted upon concurrently with or prior to the attainment of internal self-government for Kenya'.<sup>89</sup> The NFD secessionist leaders knew what the Commissions' findings would be. There was no doubt in the minds of the secessionist leaders that the Commissions' findings would hasten the British Government to make a decision on the NFD secession.

As a result of the fast pace of political development in Kenya in 1962 and the forthcoming Commission to the NFD, there emerged several narrow and chauvinist clan-based political parties, besides the four parties that took part in the initial negotiations. Among these parties were:

1. The Northern Province Native Union Party (NPNUP), with its headquarters in Garissa. It represented the sedentary and riverine groups who lived along the Tana River. They were anti-secessionist because they feared domination by the Somalis to the east of the Tana River.
2. The Northern Province People's National Union (NPPNU), with its headquarters in Garissa District. It represented the Pokomo along the Tana River. They were also anti-secessionist because they too feared Somali domination.
3. The United Ogaden Somali Association (UOSA), with its headquarters in Nairobi and the main branch in Garissa District. It represented the purely Ogaden people living

---

87. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.188.

88. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

89. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.109.

- outside the NFD. They were in favour of secession.
4. The National Political Movement (NPM) with its headquarters in Nairobi. They were in favour of secession.
  5. The Galla Political Union (GPU), with its headquarters Nairobi. It represented the Galla views in Nairobi. This party was anti-secessionist.

In October 1962 the Commission, comprising Mr G.C.M. Onyuike, a Nigerian Judge, and Canadian Major-General M.P. Bogert sought the views of the people by holding public barazas (open-air public meetings) and they heard representations from the leaders of political parties, elders, and the general public. In this way, the Commission was able to gauge the public mood and ascertain the wishes of the people. They summarized their observations that 86 per cent of the people of the NFD were pro-secessionist and were aligned with the NPPP, NFDP, UOSA, and NPM parties. The Commission further stated that, those who were anti-secession were a negligible percentage who lived on the fringes of the region<sup>90</sup> and were aligned to the NPAU, NPNUP, GPU, and NPPUN parties. The views gathered by the Commission can be summarized as follows:

The political parties had different visions of their future status. They can be divided into three broad categories based on the opinion they gave when the NFD Commission visited the region in 1962. The most important group are what can be called the 'Nationalist Pro-Somali parties' such as NPPPP, UOSA and NPM. They passionately called for the immediate unification of the NFD with Somalia. They were referred to as projecting the 'Somali-opinion' because of their goal of linking up with Somalia and 'their implacable and uncompromising determination not to be governed by 'Kikuyu'.'<sup>91</sup> These parties were predominantly Somali in membership though there was a large percentage of the Muslim Gallas, Boran and Rendilles communities who were members and were represented in the leadership. The Somali Government supported the pro-secessionists in their attempts to delink from Kenya by pressurising the British government all along and when the NFD Commission made its findings public in December 1962, the Somali government was 'prepared to do its

---

90. John Drysdale has remarkably dealt with the findings of the NFD Commission Report -see Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, pp.122-129; Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, pp.182-191.

91. KNA PC NFD/1/1/9, Northern Frontier Province Annual Report, 1960. See also, KNA Northern Frontier District Commission Report, 1962.

own duty by the assumption of sovereignty over the territory and people in question'.<sup>92</sup>

The second group of parties can be called the 'anti-Somali parties'. These parties did not want anything to do with Somalia and preferred to stay put with Kenya. They claimed that the NFD belonged to them and that the Somalis clamouring for unification with Somalia were but recent immigrants who had dispossessed them of their land. Thus they were of the view that Somalis should go to Somalia if they wanted to join them but they were adamant that they preferred to be in Kenya. Such parties included the NPAU, NPUNP, NPPNU, and GPU. These parties were predominantly non-Somali in membership and had a total distrust of the Somalis in all respects. This group of parties projected what was referred to as the 'Kenya-opinion' because of their wish for a Kenyan linkage. The claim that Somalis were recent immigrants to the NFD was a travesty of the truth because, as already noted in chapter one, the Somalis displaced the Galla and the Boran from what would later become the NFD in the mid-1840s and had since then been settled in their present locality.

The third group of parties were what can be termed as 'pro-British' parties. They did not want an immediate linkage with Somalia or Kenya. They opted for a third ambivalent route, which was a continuation of British rule until such a time that they were able to join Somalia on their own terms and conditions. Such parties included: NFDP, UOSA, and PNL. These parties had a mixed membership of Somalis and Gallas, but they were adamant that they did not want to be linked with Kenya in the future.

What emerges in this rush for political recognition among the people of the NFD is a picture of clan cleavages and divisions. The political situation in the NFD between 1962 and 1963 was similar to what happened in 1960 in the Somali Republic. Markakis noted that in the Republic of Somalia 'clan competition permeated the body politic, rendering it a caricature of nomad society, and making a mockery out of the nationalist vision of unity and political solidarity'.<sup>93</sup> The divisions within the larger community that lived in the NFD must have provided the British colonial rulers and the Kenyan political leaders with a justification not to cede the NFD to Somalia.

---

92. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.131.

93. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, p.91.



Over 80 per cent of the NFD population voted in favour of secession. It was the Somalis of the NFD who were unanimous as indicated by the findings of the Commission in their secessionist bid whereas the non-Somali groups were divided in their vision of the future. The NFD Somalis were portions of bigger clans in Somalia, and therefore the NFD Somalis looked to Somalia as the guiding influence on their future. The NFD Somalis had more in common with Somalis across the border than with the Galla and Boran communities whom they traditionally despised. The non-Somalis such as the Boran, Orma, and the Rendille were divided along religious lines; the Muslims opted to join Somalia while the pagans and Christians among them opted to remain in Kenya. The pagan Galla and Boran communities on the other hand traditionally viewed the Somalis as oppressors who had displaced them from their lands and they wanted nothing to do with the Somalis and the Somali Republic. They believed that if they linked up with the Somali Republic they would be assimilated, converted to Islam and eventually lose their identity as a separate community from the Somali.

Among all the parties, the Northern Province Peoples Progressive Party (NPPPP) emerged as the one with the most widely supported and clear-cut agenda. Its headquarters were in Wajir township and it had branches in all the other six districts. The Northern Province People's Progressive Party never had the clan propensities shown by the other parties which they believed were 'mere creations of KANU to counter the influence and appeals of the NPPPP'.<sup>94</sup> Unlike other parties, the NPPPP 'took up a number of Somali grievances concerning educational facilities throughout the NFD region'.<sup>95</sup>

The commission went back to London having ascertained the wishes of the people and it was up to the British Government to fulfil the obligation of implementing them but it never did so. Instead between December 1962 and December 1963, negotiations were conducted with the Kenya African politicians for the coming elections over how Kenya should be run under an African government. The British Colonial Government abandoned its duty to the Somali people in the NFD for its wider imperialistic interests in Kenya as it kept on delaying a decision on the NFD question even when it had the findings of the NFD Commission. The land transfer that involved European farmers in the Kenya Highlands and how these farmers

---

94. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

95. Touval, *Somali*, p.151.



would be compensated if they wished to leave were issues that took lengthy discussions between Kenya African nationalists and the departing colonial administration. The transfer of lands in the Kenya Highlands from white ownership to African farmers was made possible through loans guaranteed by the British government to the Kenyatta government. Britain did not want to jeopardize its delicate land transfer agreements with the Kenyatta government by ceding the NFD region to the Somali Republic. KANU, which was the main party negotiating Kenya's independence did not want the secession of any region within Kenya. The Kenyan African leaders viewed Somali aspirations as illegitimate and uncalled for, since Somalis in the NFD region had not experienced African rule as a threat to their future.<sup>96</sup> The Kenya African leaders argued that if the Somalis wanted to join Somalia, 'then they should pack their camels and head for Somalia: nobody would stop them'.<sup>97</sup>

There was a hidden view of the British Government that was given to the NFD Commission that 'Her Majesty's Government regard the statements [made respectively by Mr Macmillan and the Governor of Kenya in April and June, 1960], as precluding any cession of Kenya territory so long as HMG are responsible for Kenya. The [above] statement would not, however, preclude arrangements being made, during pre-independence, if that were then the settled policy'.<sup>98</sup> The NFD's future political status had in fact already been decided by the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan's, announcement in Parliament in April 1960 and the NFD Commission was aware of that policy. In summary British policy in 1960-63 was double-faced: on the one hand, the British were appeasing NFD Somalis by sending the Commission of Inquiry to ascertain the wishes of the people, and making the Somalis believe that the British Government would not leave them under Kenyatta's Government. On the other hand, the British did not want to jeopardize their bigger economic interests in Kenya and Ethiopia by allowing the secession of the NFD region to the Somali Republic. In the process, the British allayed the fears of Kenyan nationalists like Tom Mboya and Kenyatta who wished to see an independent Kenya that was intact. The British also allayed the fears of the Ethiopian leaders and their American supporters when the NFD cession was not implemented.

---

96. Tom Mboya's views as quoted in Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.108.

97. *The Reporter*, 24 June 1962.

98. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.133.

The British Government instead sent a Regional Boundary Commission in October 1962 which created the 7th region in Kenya comprising the predominantly Somali inhabited areas. This newly created region was named the North Eastern Region and comprised all the districts to the east of the Somali-Galla line. This decision must have been the straw that broke the camel's back. It jolted the pro-secessionist leaders to the reality that their wishes would not be implemented by the British. Mr Hussein Seyyid Suliman of the NPPPP Moyale Branch had this to say: 'We were tricked by the British into believing that they would honour their pledges and that they would join us to our Somali brothers, but they [the British] had been secretly negotiating with the Kenya politicians about our fate. It was sad those days that we trusted British rulers like meek subjects'.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, during Kenya's first general elections in May 1963 the British Government, through the announcement made by Duncan Sandys would not make a unilateral decision to cede any part of Kenya and decided that the NFD question should be handled by an independent Kenya and the parties concerned.

The pro-secessionist parties boycotted the elections of May 1963 and were not prepared to start negotiations with the Kenya Nationalist leaders such as Kenyatta, Tom Mboya and Ronald Ngala, who were after all united in their anti-secessionist views as evidenced in the constitutional conferences from April 1960 to December 1963. The pro-secessionist parties and their supporters, chiefs and other elders, all converged in Wajir in April 1963 to decide what move they should make. At the end of the conference it was decided that all Government employees and chiefs would resign from their jobs as an indication of their dissatisfaction. When Kenya was granted its independence in December 1963 the first move by the Kenyatta Government was to ban all political parties in the NFD region and detain its leadership. People such as Alex Kholkhole, Dekow Stamboul and others of the NPPPP top hierarchy were all detained a week after Kenya got independence. Others were able to escape the dragnet and started the Northern Frontier District Liberation Front just across the Kenya border with Somalia.

The role played by the nascent Somali Government in 1958 to 1963 was important in more ways than one. They provided the moral and material support to the political leadership of the various parties in the NFD that were pro-secessionist. The SYL- dominated Government

---

99. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

in Somalia wanted to retrieve all Somali territories still missing including the NFD. In a speech before Parliament in 1960 Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, the Prime Minister of the Somali Government, stated that 'our neighbours are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate boundary arrangement ... how can we regard our brothers as foreigners? Of course we all have a strong and very natural desire to be united'.<sup>100</sup> It was stated in Article VI, section 4 of the Constitution of the Somali Government that 'the Somali Republic shall promote, by legal and peaceful means, the union of Somali territories and encourage solidarity among the peoples of the world, and in particular among African and Islamic peoples'.<sup>101</sup> To that end the Somali government made it its duty to get back those lands inhabited by ethnic Somali that were under foreign rule. The SYL wanted not only to fulfil its election manifesto of 1958 but also appease its electorate in Somalia who viewed their NFD counterparts as being still under colonial rule. The Somali Government also sent many deputations to the British Government, such as the delegation headed by the Prime Minister of Somalia, Mr Abdirashid Ali Sharmake, in December 1962, which met Mr Macmillan and other government officials concerning Britain's obligations to the Somalis of the NFD. All of the Somali Government's efforts were in vain; the Somali policy of pressurizing the British Government had little effect when compared to Ethiopian pressures on the British Government because Ethiopia represented a bigger interest than did Somalia. When the British Government announced its decision to create the NFD as the 7th region of an independent Kenya it had envisaged that the region would 'give its inhabitants greater freedom in the management of their own affairs and more effective means of safeguarding their own interests and maintaining their way of life'.<sup>102</sup> In response to Duncan Sandy's final speech on the creation of the North Eastern Region the Somali Government severed its diplomatic links with Britain and thereby lost an annual subsidy of £1.7 million.<sup>103</sup> By the early 1964, British aid to Somalia was replaced by USSR government that undertook to modernise the Somali national army.

Thus by the end of 1963 the NFD was set on the path to a military conflict. Negotiations to find peaceful solutions had failed to satisfy the wishes of the majority of the people of NFD.

---

100. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.179.

101. *Ibid.*, p.269.

102. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.141.

103. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, p.182.

In the words of Dekow Maalim Stamboul the Secretary General of the NPPPP,

We [NFDI] were separated from Kenya for over eighty years by various ordinances that were in place throughout colonial rule. We did not know each other. We were fearful for our future with a Kenyan African Government that we did not know anything about. We feared for our culture and religion. Then on the eve of the British departure, they delivered us to a people we hardly know anything about. So in order to chart our destiny and join Somalia in an act of union, we had to fight for it. There was no other choice opened to us.<sup>104</sup>

The route to violence was laid down not only by departing British colonialism but also the incoming Kenyatta Government which started calling the NPPPP leadership 'shiftas', out to dismember the integrity of the emergent Kenya Government. According to Dr. Njoroge Mungai, the new Kenyan Defence Minister, the secessionist leaders had become by 1966 'foolish hotheads who arrogantly consider themselves too superior beings to be governed by "down-country" Africans and were attempting to dismember Kenyan territory in pursuit of the illusory mirage of Greater Somalia.'<sup>105</sup>

---

104. Interview with Dekow Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

105. *The Times*, 12 December 1996.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HOW THE KENYATTA GOVERNMENT RESPONDED TO THE NFD SECESSIONIST ATTEMPTS, c.1964-1968

The creation of the North Eastern Region as the 7th region on 8 March 1963 in a soon-to-be independent Kenya resulted in a mass demonstration being staged in the predominantly Somali-inhabited townships of Wajir, Moyale and Garissa throughout the following week. Demonstrations in Moyale on the Kenya-Ethiopian border on the 16 March 1963 resulted in the spearing of the DC, Mr John Balfour, and the splitting of the police inspector's head.<sup>1</sup> The public statements from Kenyan nationalist leaders such as Dr Njoroge Mungai and Dr J.G. Kiano who asserted that 'Somalis should retrace their footsteps back to Kismayu, Mogadishu or Hargeisa, if they dislike being integrated with their African brothers in Kenya'<sup>2</sup> closed the doors for negotiations with secessionist leaders. Such public statements coming from Kenyan leaders sealed the fate of the people of the NFD with relation to Kenya and by April 1963 the region was 'preparing for war instead of peaceful development in the area'.<sup>3</sup>

The NFD secessionist leaders were left with no option to negotiate with the Kenyatta Government. Through the pressure exerted by the Somali Government, however, peaceful efforts to find a solution to the secessionist desires of the NFD people culminated in the Rome Talks of September 1963. At the Rome Conference the Somali Prime Minister, Abdirashid Ali Sharmake, represented NFD Secessionist leaders Dekow Maalim, Mohamed Duale and Mohamed Sheikh Kassim who attended the Rome talks as observers. Kenyan nationalist leaders were at first represented by the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peter Thomas, and his delegation. As the talks progressed a Kenyan delegation that comprised senior public servants James Gichuru, Tom Mboya and Joseph Murumbi accompanied by Charles Njonjo and Malcom Macdonald were allowed to participate since 'Britain would be responsible for Kenya only a few more months and the British Government

---

1. *The Reporter*, 16 March 1963.

2. *Ibid.*

3. M.D. Odinga, Secretary-General of the African People's Party, in a letter to *The Reporter*, 6 April 1963.



considered that it would be wrong to take a unilateral decision about Kenya's frontiers, without reference to the wishes of the Kenya Government'.<sup>4</sup> The frantic efforts made by the Somali Republic to convene the Rome Talks were threatened by the opinion of Kenyatta who stated on the eve of the Conference that 'not one inch of Kenya would be given up. The Somali Republic had no rights in the Seventh Region and would get none'.<sup>5</sup> The Rome talks ended in a stalemate with no compromise solution to the NFD secession question; if anything it had confirmed Kenya's right to administer NFD as a region within an independent Kenya. The efforts made by the Somali Republic at the diplomatic level on behalf of the NFD people with the British Government, the Arab world and with other African countries were in vain; the Kenyan authorities were adamant that the NFD region after Kenya's independence 'would be administered by Africans like any other region' within Kenya.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the failure to find a peaceful solution to the NFD question, the NFD people waged a guerilla war from January 1964 to 28 October 1968 when the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding<sup>7</sup> was signed by the Somali Government and the Kenyan Government. The Arusha Agreement was brokered by the Zambian President; and the governments of Kenya and Somalia agreed to 'exert all efforts and do their utmost to maintain good-neighbourly relations' whereby 'the gradual suspension of any emergency regulations imposed on either side of the border'<sup>8</sup> would end the hostility between the two countries. The 1968 Arusha agreement was a watershed in the struggle waged by the Somali and Oromo tribes of the North Eastern Region: it marked the end of the active guerilla war because the Somali Republic stopped the moral and material support it had provided for the liberation of the North Eastern Region through the Northern Frontier District Liberation Front (hereafter NFDLF). The NFDLF was the military wing of the Northern Province People's Progressive Party (hereafter NPPPP) formed in July 1963 by the exiled leadership of the NPPPP, and now left to struggle on its own. This proved increasingly difficult as time went by.

The Kenya Government, under Kenyatta, was firm in its wish to retain the NFD region as

---

4. *The Reporter*, 31 August 1963.

5. *The Times*, 24 September 1963.

6. *Ibid.*

7. For more details see, 'Arusha Memorandum of Understanding', *Africa Report*, October 1967.

8. *Africa Report*, February 1969.

part of Kenya and a statement issued in September 1963 by the Minister of State, Mr Joseph Murumbi, that 'Kenya would oppose any suggestion that Britain should continue to administer the NFD after Kenya's independence' eliminated any future role the British Government might have played in the NFD secession.<sup>9</sup> The Kenyatta regime with the backing of the British Government embarked on military preparations to combat what was erroneously regarded as the 'shifta' menace. The word 'shifta' was a derogatory term used by the Abyssinians in the 1920s to describe Oromo pastoralists who fled to the Kenya colony from Abyssinian misrule and enslavement. On 16 March 1963 an editorial comment in *The Reporter*, urged that 'some show of strength is urgently required on the part of Britain and the Kenya Government which is fully supporting Britain on this issue'.<sup>10</sup> To the media and the Kenyan authorities the Northern Frontier District Liberation Front had by January 1964 become 'shifta' or outlaws and bandits because the nascent Kenyatta Government would not accept the NFDLF goal of delinking the North Eastern Region from the rest of Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta and other Kenyan nationalist leaders in 1964 did not recognize and would not allow the right to self-determination of the Somali and Oromo-tribes living in the NFD of the Kenya colony; so the NFDLF was termed 'shifta'. This was because the NFDLF targeted influential Somali and Oromo personalities such as the respected Oromo chief, Galma Dida and the Isiolo DC, who were both murdered by pro-secessionist combatants in June 1963. The various policy options such as granting of autonomy to the NFD region within a federal Kenya, continued British administration of the NFD, or a joint Somali-Kenya administration of the NFD that were available to the Kenyatta Government up to 1968 to solve the secessionist crisis engulfing the North Eastern Region were swept aside by the single goal of maintaining Kenya's territorial integrity, a territory that had been fashioned by the British colonial rulers without the consent of the people who were the subjects of the country.

The two main nationalist parties in Kenya, KANU and KADU, had similar views about the secessionist aspirations of the NFD people between 1960 and 1964. KADU, as the main opposition party in the 1960 to 1964 period, advocated regionalism and was willing to accommodate Somali regional autonomy within an independent Kenya which would have had

---

9. *The Reporter*, 7 September 1963.

10. *Ibid.*, 16 March 1963.

a federal constitution<sup>11</sup>. In September 1963 the KADU leader, Ronald Ngala, viewed the self-governing constitution which was regarded as the solution to the NFD to be the stumbling block when he said in a press conference that 'the NFD and Somali problems can be solved if we genuinely honour the regional pact [signed at the Lancaster House Conference] which gave them control of local affairs'.<sup>12</sup> Ronald Ngala further asserted that 'autonomous regions, comprising the people who wish to live together in Kenya, and providing for the rights of minorities, can be a solution to the problems of suspicion, problems of fear, problems of insecurity, and even problems of secession'- a comment that related to the Somali secession attempts.<sup>13</sup> Ngala advocated the complete 'decentralization of power. Such decentralization must be to authorities which can implement and execute their responsibilities without depending on Central Government aid, either financially or in any other way'.<sup>14</sup> Ngala envisaged an independent Kenya where central authority would have little say in the day to day administration of the regions.

The KANU leaders Kenyatta, Gichuru, and Mboya on the other hand envisaged a strong centralised government in post-independence Kenya where all decision affecting the regions would be made in Nairobi. KANU was not ready to allow Somalis in the then NFD to delink from an independent Kenya as that would be tantamount to dismembering Kenya. KANU was not prepared to grant internal autonomy to the NFD Somalis or any other region for that matter as KANU wanted 'a unitary form of government'<sup>15</sup> and as such did not entertain regional government as the best form for a post colonial Kenya. In a speech before the Somali president in Mogadishu Kenyatta replied to his Somali counterpart:

We regard the NFD as part of Kenya. We also regard Somalis who live in the NFD and elsewhere as our brothers. They are part and parcel of Kenya and we would like them to live in Kenya in that fashion ... This is a question which we can discuss with the Somalis in the NFD, this being a domestic affair of Kenya.<sup>16</sup>

Because of the failure of the secession bid by the NFD people, on 12 December 1963 when Kenya became independent, a reality unacceptable to NFD Somalis and the majority of the

- 
11. B.A. Ogot & W.R. O'chieng, *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940-1993* (London, 1995), p.70.
  12. *The Times*, 24 September 1963.
  13. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.119.
  14. Ogot & O'chieng, *Decolonization*, p.72.
  15. *Ibid.*, p.72.
  16. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.118.

Boran and the Rendille communities was bequeathed to them by the departing British Colonial administrators. The fact that Kenya would be a sovereign nation under African leadership in which the newly created North Eastern Region would be a province was a bitter pill to swallow for the pro-secessionist leaders. The Northern Province People's Progressive Party leaders had no alternative but to embark on the violent route of military action to get their problem solved because negotiations had so far proved to be futile and unproductive. The NFD administration and the senior police officers such as P.E. Walters, who were all British, covertly supported the NFD secessionist leaders in that they turned a blind eye to the activities of those clamouring for secession. This is evidenced by the statement of NPPP leader Hussein Seyyid Suliman:

I was held in Moyale district jail for in December 1963 after the DC was stabbed during the riots. The regional Police Commissioner and the DC of Marsabit visited me in prison and I was released. That gave me the chance to escape to Somalia. I tell you they were kind to our cause but they were hand-tied by the policy emanating from Nairobi and London.<sup>17</sup>

The British had left the door open for secession during the Lancaster House Conference negotiations by allowing delegates from the pro-secessionist parties to participate in the talks. By 1963 when they were granting independence to Kenya, the British decided to retract their previous policy of allowing the NFD and Oromo communities the right to self-determination in their acceptance to send the NFD Commission. Instead Britain created the Seventh region. The British expressed the hope that 'the creation of the new region [North Eastern Region] will give its inhabitants greater freedom in the management of their own affairs and more effective means of safeguarding their interests and maintaining their way of life'.<sup>18</sup> Some Somali secessionist leaders such as Dekow Maalim Stamboul saw this as a small step towards eventual secession as the Somali would have an exclusive region where they would not be ruled from Nairobi.<sup>19</sup> From the British Government's point of view, however, 'the creation of the Seventh "Secessionist" Region meets the undertaking, at least as a temporary measure'.<sup>20</sup> This was not to be as Kenyatta and his largely Kikuyu advisors embarked on the road to centralizing authority and power from the regions to the capital, Nairobi, in their attempts to create a united independent Kenyan nation, with one centralised authority. KADU, as the opposition party that stood for regionalism dissolved itself within a month

---

17. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

18. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.141.

19. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

20. *The Times*, 24 July 1963.



after independence to pave the way for Kenya's unitary system of Government.<sup>21</sup> KADU was the moderate party that would have allowed Somalis in the NFD internal autonomy within an independent Kenya as was shown by various policies formulated before its dissolution in March 1964. KANU leaders such as Daniel Arap Moi who supported federalism joined KANU in April 1964 and supported the unitary system of government.

After December 12th 1963 Somali and Oromo desires for secession became sedition and their leaders became 'shifta'. Kenyan leaders saw 'shiftas' as nightmare devils, associated with all kinds of bandits, cattle rustlers, brigands, wildlife poachers and a host of other illegal activities outside the norms of what is accepted as civilised and honourable activity in the North Eastern Region of Kenya and Southern Ethiopia. The Somali and Oromo combatants naturally did not see themselves as 'shifta' bandits or brigands but as people who wanted to exercise their right to self-determination. In their attempts to achieve their secessionist goals the Somali and Oromo leaders started to solicit military support from the Somali government that had been representing them at the international forums. The Somali Government provided the NFDLF with weapons and training camps in Doble and Belet Hawa, just across the Kenyan border with Somalia; and the NFDLF started to target Kenyan Government loyalists such as the chief of the Abdalla Ogaden, Omar Shuria, who was killed on 20 December 1963. This strategy of killing Kenyan Government loyalists was adopted in the early stages of the conflict to discourage loyalty to the Kenya Government. From January 1964, however, the NFDLF combatants enlarged their military operations by hitting at police posts like the one at Rhamu and other Kenyan military installations.

As a result of the escalating attacks by the NFDLF forces Kenya signed a defence treaty with Ethiopia on 31 January 1964. Kenya and Ethiopia arranged to collaborate in their attempts to legitimize their forceful occupation of the Somali lands, lands whose inhabitants had time and again expressed their wish to delink from these two countries. In this treaty which was ratified on 11 June 1964 Ethiopia agreed to train Kenyan soldiers and provide other mutual assistance 'should this be necessary'.<sup>22</sup> In other words Ethiopian troops could be made available to Kenya if and when the Somali Republic attacked Kenya. Ethiopia militarily had occupied the Somali inhabited region of Ogadenia in 1950 with the departure of the British

---

21. Ogot & O'chieng, *Decolonization*, pp.65-67.

22. *The Times*, 11 June 1964.



Military Administration. The Ogaden people had violently resisted Abyssinian government attempts to administer the Ogaden from the early 1920s when European colonisers accepted the region as Abyssinian territory. After 1964 Kenya coordinated its anti-secessionist strategies such as intelligence gathering and conducted joint military exercises with Ethiopia. Ethiopian interest in maintaining Kenya's territorial integrity lay in the fact that Ethiopia, too, was illegally occupying the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region which Britain had handed back to Ethiopia in 1948. Ethiopia feared that the secession of the NFD region from Kenya would encourage if not hasten the rapid decolonization of the Ogaden region since Ethiopia faced a similar situation *mutatis mutandis* as that prevailing in Kenya. It was Ethiopia's avowed policy in the early 1960s that a Greater Somalia should never come into existence as it would pose a regional threat not only to her existence, but also to Kenya and French Somaliland which would cease to exist as complete entities. In 1959 General Charles De Gaulle made a visit to Djibouti and stated the French policy of maintaining its presence in the Red Sea and in the process countered Somali nationalist claims to the tiny French enclave. According to Lewis, France 'had no intention of relinquishing'<sup>23</sup> the administration of the Djibouti which now rivalled the British port of Aden.

It is painful to consider that between 1943 and 1963 the British Colonial Officers in the then NFD and the Governor of Kenya had given the local Somali the impression that they would one day be rejoined with their kinsmen across the border in Somalia. The Bevin Plan had raised the Somali hopes of reunification in the 1940s and the unification of the British Somaliland with Italian Somali in 1960 accentuated that hope. The British consent to the participation of Somali secessionist leaders in the Lancaster House Conference in 1961 had encouraged the Somali leaders in the NFD to think that secession was just around the corner. Even the British Government had, by the appointment of the Commission of Enquiry in October 1962, investigated the wishes of the NFD people on their future and thereby given the impression to the Somali Government that 'it was willing to concede self-determination to the inhabitants of the region'.<sup>24</sup>

As for those leaders of the pro-secessionist parties who were able to escape the Kenyan dragnet, they went to Somalia after December 1963 and were given political asylum on

---

23. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.181.

24. *Africa Report*, April 1967.

arrival in the Somali Republic. The Somali government helped the newly formed NFDLF with military weapons such as old Italian vintage guns and any other material support it could render. The NFDLF were given bases just across the Kenyan border in places such as Kolbio, Diff, and Balat Hawa. The Somali public in the Republic of Somalia saw the exiled leadership as heroes and accorded them educational facilities for their children, training camps for the liberation combatants and salaries for those willing to join the NFDLF.<sup>25</sup> The Somali Government provided training instructors for NFDLF combatants who were given instructions in guerilla warfare. As the NFDLF did not have external links, the Somali Government provided the conduit through which external assistance from the Arab countries in particular Egypt and Saudia Arabia who were sympathetic to the creation of a Greater Somalia reached the NFDLF combatants. All sympathetic governments channelled their assistance through the Somali Government for onward transmission to the NFDLF cadres in their struggle against Kenya.

The independent Kenyan Government reaction to the formation of NFDLF and other parties that were pro-secessionist was vigorous because Kenya wanted to preserve its territorial integrity at whatever cost. For the newly independent Kenyan Government to consent to the secession of the North Eastern Region of Kenya would set a precedent for other communities that were separated by the old colonial boundaries. Among the Kenyan communities that were divided by the artificial boundaries were the Masais and the Kurias who lived both in Kenya and Tanzania, and the Teso and the Samia communities who lived in both Kenya and Uganda. There was the fear that if the NFD people were granted their wish these communities would also agitate for secession. Even though these communities had not indicated their wish to be delinked from Kenya nothing would have stopped them from clamouring for secession once the NFD Somalis achieved their secessionist goals. The most influential chiefs among the Masais, the Kurias and the Teso were found in Tanzania and Uganda and might have exerted enormous pressure on their followers had the Somalis in the North Eastern Region been allowed to secede from Kenya in 1964.

Hence Kenyan leaders argued that the Somali people in the North Eastern Region were not unique and that they should look to Kenya instead of Somalia for their future well-being.

---

25. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

What the Kenyan leaders forgot to consider were the historical roots that had created a 'separate identity' that had been maintained and inculcated throughout colonial rule. Such factors included the 'racial stock and the language of people of the North Eastern Region who shared affinity with the people of the Somali Republic'<sup>26</sup> but had nothing in common with what they regarded as the Kenyan Bantu Government and its people. The NFD Somali secessionist leaders argued that the arbitrary drawing of the King's line in 1927 that separated them from their kith and kin across the artificial border was an historical mistake that needed urgent rectification. They further believed that the incoming Kenyatta regime had to respect the wishes of the NFD people by allowing them to secede. The overwhelming majority of the Somali and Oromo tribes in the North Eastern Region were Muslims who resented Christian 'infidel' rule, which they considered to be alien domination that would not tolerate and respect their religious beliefs. The Somalis believed that since more than seventy per cent of Kenya's population were Christians, Somalis and Oromos in the NFD would become a minority in a Christian-ruled Kenya.

The NFD of Colonial Kenya had experienced different administrative policies from the rest of Kenya and the Somali secessionists believed that an independent Kenya would certainly do away with such policies. For example, Somalis in the NFD did not carry identification documents while their counterparts in the rest of Kenya did carry identification books. Moreover, in what was regarded as the 'Turnbull policy', 'the entire Northern half of Kenya was completely insulated from the rest of the country ... contact was effectively cut off, but while the red-tape-curtain effectively operated from Isiolo along the Tana River, there was nothing to stop the constant flow of Somalis back and forward across the Kenya-Somali frontier'.<sup>27</sup> Thus whereas the people of the NFD had not nurtured any links with the rest of Kenya in the past, either in pre-colonial or colonial eras, the same could not be said of their links with the Somalis across the border. It was natural that the Somalis and Oromo tribes should look to Somalia and not to Kenya for their future political as well as economic links.

---

26. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.107.

27. Richard Turnbull inherited this policy in 1948 (when the NFD region was separately administered by the Colonial Government in Kenya) from Gerald Reece who was a great admirer of the Somali society. See also, *The Reporter*, 16 March 1963.

Kenya temporarily adopted a two-pronged policy towards the secessionist-minded Somali and Oromo tribes of the North Eastern Region up to the 1968 Arusha Agreement when the NFD conflict subsided. One policy was to woo Somalis to the Kenya Government side by giving them preferential treatment such as financial rewards to the loyalists. The other policy was to deal with the secessionists ruthlessly by fighting them on the battle field. Those chiefs and prominent personalities who were anti-secessionist in 1962 to 1963 and who supported the Kenyan Government were immediately promoted to become senior chiefs for example Omar Shuria of the Abdalla in Garissa district and Sheikh Farah of the Gerri in Wajir district and were awarded medals of bravery by the Kenyatta Government. They had their sons Abdi Omar and Omar Sheikh Farah appointed to senior government positions even when they were not qualified for them. The Kenyatta Government made it easy for the collaborating chiefs and their people to receive licensing facilities to engage in trade and were also given Government contracts so as to ensure their continued loyalty to the government as evidenced by the early accumulation of wealth by these collaborators.

Children of the collaborating chiefs and children of those parents who were known to be pro-Kenya, for example Mohamed Haji Yussuf and Abdi Ogle were sent to schools outside the North Eastern Region where they had the opportunity to further their education. The Kenya Government provided them with free education in state schools unlike other children from the rest of Kenya who had to pay fees for their education.<sup>28</sup> These hand-picked children were being prepared to fill the low posts within the administration of the NFD; the policy was a demonstration to the Somalis of the North Eastern Region that they could gain more if they aligned themselves with the independent Kenya Government rather than with the Somali Republic.

It was claimed by Dekow Maalim Stamboul that children whose parents were prominent secessionists were not only denied education and employment but that they were also detained and were busy avoiding government spies and bullets.<sup>29</sup> Children from the North Eastern Region were even captured and sold into slavery by the Kenyan Government and were never seen again. Some were taken to Tanganyika or Zanzibar and still others were sold within Kenya to local buyers. According to Dekow Maalim Stamboul over 10,000 children were

---

28. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

29. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.



abducted from the NFD and sold as slaves by the Kenyan army to other places in up country, in Uganda, and Tanzania',<sup>30</sup> Children were abducted from their families to work on state farms; and still others were adopted by families who exploited these children by employing them on their farms. In 1964, a prominent leader from Garissa district, Mr Ali Mohamed, popularly called 'Ali Ethiopia' by the Somalis, lost his son who was found in Meru district in 1990 as an adult man working on a Meru-owned farmland.<sup>31</sup>

Through the policy of inducement the Kenyatta regime hoped eventually to win all Somali people in the North Eastern Region to the Kenyan side. Anti-secessionist Somalis, however, were seen by the secessionist Somalis as 'traitors'; they led risky lives as they continuously earned the wrath of the secessionist Somalis in the NFD and the Somali Government across the border.<sup>32</sup> The anti-secessionist Somalis were a vulnerable group because they were a minority in the Somali and Oromo communities and the Kenya Government did not provide them with security. Chief Omar Shuria was killed in December 1963 by members of his own clan after he declared his support to the Kenyan Government in June 1963. His son, Abdi Omar Shuria, was appointed as a District Officer in 1965 by the Kenyatta regime to mollify the pro-Kenya segment of the Somali community. A prominent businessman in Mandera District, Mohamed Sheikh Ali, was twice faced by assassination attempts in 1964 by secessionist groups in that district because of his pro-Kenya stand on the secession issue. The anti-secessionist elements within the wider Somali community became beneficiaries of the Kenyatta regime; and the Moi Government has continued with the same policies since 1978.

Kenya reacted by condemning the secessionist movement as 'shifta' bandits out to cause havoc and harm to the innocent *wanainchi* (citizens) of Kenya. Among the first promulgations that were announced to combat the NFDLF was the Anti-Shifta Bill which was published in the Government Gazette in September 1964 'to enable it [the Kenyan government] to pursue the war against Somali shifta, who are raiding Kenya's North Eastern Region in ever-increasing numbers'. In the Anti-Shifta Bill 'shifta suspects may now be detained in a series of camps which are being established' in every district of the region.<sup>33</sup>

---

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Daily Nation*, 15 October 1990.

32. Somalis who were pro-Kenya were regarded as traitors and sell-outs who deserved to be killed.

33. *The Reporter*, 23 October 1964.



The NFDLF attacked Kenyan military camps spread across the NFD at night, and also mined major roads to discourage Kenyan military vehicles from moving about. These two strategies adopted by the NFDLF increased during 1964 and after. The Anti-Shifta Bill had given administrative officers in collaboration with the military the power to detain people without trial throughout the North Eastern Region. The whole population of the North Eastern Region has been terrorized since the implementation of this bill in 1964 to the present where even incidents of highway banditry are regarded as a 'shifta' revival.<sup>34</sup>

The Government made ingenious use of media propaganda to put its case before the largely illiterate Somali community. It used the newspapers, which portrayed the NFDLF combatants as bandits, thugs, terrorists and gangsters. Most Kenyan newspapers, for example *The Reporter*, the *Standard* and the *Drum Magazine* were pro-Government and were the channels through which the Kenyan Government disseminated propaganda. In press releases from Kenyan authorities the newspapers depicted the NFDLF combatants as 'murderers', 'hoodlums', and 'bandits'<sup>35</sup> out to wreck the peaceful development of Kenya.

The Government also issued pamphlets displaying the Government aim of developing the region to attract the naive Somali and Oromo tribes in the North Eastern Region onto the Government side. In the mid-1960s these pamphlets were parachuted into the nomadic villages by helicopters and planes even in the very remote areas of the North Eastern Region. Some of the pamphlets had pictures of prominent leaders who had defected from the secessionist cause and extolled those people who abandoned secessionism as a cause and were rewarded by the Kenyatta Government. The Kenya Government was trying through these leaflets 'to assure Somalis that under the Kenya Bill of Rights, they will enjoy complete religious freedom, freedom of thought, speech and action within the law, the protection of the law and the security of the existing individual and tribal land rights'.<sup>36</sup> This was mere propaganda meant to win the loyalty of NFD Somalis and to dissuade them from looking to Somalia which encouraged and supported the Somalis. The Kenyatta Government in reality

---

34. There was massive terrorization of the three district in North Eastern Province. Garissa was burnt down by security forces in 1980 to flush shiftas among the Somalis. Wajir was also brutalised in 1981 in order to disarm the Degodia. Mandera had its share of security nightmare in 1985.

35. *The Reporter*, 1962, 1963 and 1964 (all issues).

36. *The Times*, 12 September 1963.

acted contrary to these promises made in the early 1960s to discourage the NFDLF from waging a guerilla war in order to delink the North Eastern Region from Kenya by curtailing the freedom of speech of the secessionist leaders who were confined to Narok district where they could not meet fellow Somalis.

There was also a radio war between Voice of Kenya and Radio Mogadishu.<sup>37</sup> Radio Mogadishu had an edge over the Voice of Kenya in that they had a variety of programmes of poetry, songs and daily news of the progress of the situation in the North Eastern Region broadcast in the Somali language. On the other hand, Voice of Kenya broadcast in Kiswahili, a language that was not well understood by the average Somali of the 1960s. The NFD Somalis viewed negatively those who spoke the Kiswahili language which they associated with the Bantus in Kenya. So the Voice of Kenya was forced to employ amateur Somali broadcasters who spoke a dialect that was not the pure Somali language and was mixed with Kiswahili. Ironically most of the poems and songs played on the VOK station were copied from Somalia. Nobody took them seriously as a source of any news or entertainment and they became the butt of Somali jokes. It was becoming obvious that in this radio war between Kenya and Somalia it was the latter who was gaining the upper hand until Kenya was forced in early 1966 to protest to Somalia to stop 'the inflammatory statements broadcast by Mogadishu Radio' that were bringing about restlessness among the inhabitants of the North Eastern Region of Kenya.<sup>38</sup>

By 1966 however, the NFDLF movement was gaining momentum and achieving the upper hand in the conflict with their attacks on remote police posts such as the ones at Rhamu, Liboi and Moyale. In several of these attacks Kenyan police were killed and police stations destroyed while guns belonging to the Kenya Government were taken by the NFDLF combatants. Because of the increased spate of attacks on police and military camps the Kenyatta Government was forced to resort to harsher and more ruthless methods of subduing the wishes and aspirations of the people. By January 1966 NFDLF combatants had mined all of the major roads within the North Eastern Region especially those linking the major administrative centres of Wajir, Moyale, Garissa and Isiolo. To combat the NFDLF menace

---

37. C. Legum, 'Somali Liberation Songs', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1, 4 (1963), pp.503-519.

38. *Ibid.*

the Kenya Government required that all Kenyan Somalis register with the authorities within the month of June 1966 or be prosecuted. This was believed to be 'in retaliation against anti-Kenya propaganda from Mogadishu' and the increasing scale of military incursions made by the NFDLF combatants in the region.<sup>39</sup> This compulsory registration was meant to curb the infiltration of the Somalis from Somalia; but it was a doomed initiative by the Kenyatta Government since a person could come and be registered only to go back to Somalia. It was impossible to differentiate a 'Kenyan Somali' from a Somali of Somalia by paper identification.

Emergency regulations had been put in place throughout the North Eastern Region by 1966 so as to discourage the Somalis from supporting the NFDLF in the daytime as Kenyan authorities believed that 'shiftas' were assisted by the Somalis in the region. The regulations included a dusk to dawn curfew being declared all over the region. Somalis who moved at night risked being shot as only the security forces were permitted to move at night. From January 1966 all vehicles that plied the major routes to and within the North Eastern Region were to travel in a convoy escorted by heavily armed Kenyan security forces that further alienated the NFD Somalis in that constant travels within and out of the region became a major hassle. This last regulation was put into effect in order to cut contact between the civilian Somalis and the NFDLF combatants who were in the bush. One can also argue that this measure was indirectly meant to safeguard the security forces themselves as they mingled with people in case of sudden 'shifta' attacks. They could take cover among the people whom they were supposed to protect. The emergency regulations also provided the military personnel in the North Eastern Region with extra powers such as arbitrary arrest of the 'shifta' suspects who could be detained for as long was deemed necessary.

Villagisation introduced in January 1966 was another cruel method that the Kenyatta Government used to combat Somali secessionist desires and to arrest anybody found outside those villages.<sup>40</sup> This policy was introduced so that outlying villages would not provide assistance in the form of intelligence reports to the NFDLF, or water and food to NFDLF combatants who moved from one locality to another on their missions. In these villages nomadic Somalis were forced to live without taking the stock to water or for grazing. There

---

39. *The Times*, 2 July 1966.

40. K. Adar, *Kenya Foreign Policy Towards Somalia, 1963-1983* (London, 1994), p.75.

were many villages set up throughout the North Eastern Region in which many people died because of the horrific conditions in these villages. Even this forced villagisation was a failure. Colin Legum argued that 'even among the Somali "loyalists" there was a continuous defection to the other [secessionist] side'.<sup>41</sup> The Kenyan security forces could not identify who was a secessionist and who was not because every body was a Somali 'who in the day was a loyal citizen but a secessionist at night'.<sup>42</sup> Many children were born in these villages without proper medical attention and as a result the mortality rate among children in the villagisation programme was high.

In 1966 a systematic pauperization was also embarked upon by the Kenyatta Government by giving the Kenyan army free rein in decimating Somali livestock, camels and other domestic animals. It is claimed by one informant that thousands of camels were gunned down in 1966 by the Kenyan Military in order to 'get the nomads out of the bush'.<sup>43</sup> Starvation and hunger became a common feature and people were forced to go to Government villages where the conditions were worse than anything previously known to the nomadic Somalis. According to Dr Njoroge Mungai, the Kenyan Defence minister, 'the whole butcher's bill for this massacre lies fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the Mogadishu Government'.<sup>44</sup> Dr Mungai's reasoning was that the Somali Government was responsible for the escalation of the conflict and the resultant loss of both lives and property in the North Eastern Region in 1966.

Another informant claimed that women and girls were raped en masse by the Kenyan army personnel who have had a bad reputation ever since. Girls and mothers were raped and then murdered in front of their fathers and husbands.<sup>45</sup> The Kenyan army personnel, being from upcountry Kenya, could not speak the Somali language and could not understand the pleas, the cries and the agonies of the elderly. Abdisalan Sheikh Mohamed who as a young man lived in the area between Garissa and Wajir districts recalled an incident when a detachment of the Kenyan army visited a nomadic hamlet and demanded that all of the young men come out. Since the young men were either away herding the cows or had joined the NFDLF, the

---

41. *African Report*, April 1967.

42. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

43. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

44. *The Times*, 12 December 1966.

45. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.



next victims were the girls. 'Girls were raped and tied to the behinds of the army lorries and killed painfully in the process. Their carcasses were left to decompose in the scorching sun'.<sup>46</sup> Informants recollected such incidents and claimed they were common in the countryside throughout the emergency period from 1966 to 1968.

To the Kenyan leaders the NFDLF and its allies were seen as bandits with no political agenda whatsoever. The Kenyatta Government aimed to crush them militarily from the word go. During the 1960s the Kenyatta Government had the unflinching support of the military might of the British Government and the Ethiopian Government. The British Government had thrown its weight behind Kenyan Government efforts to stamp out the 'shifta' banditry by providing military and economic support to the Kenyatta Government. It chose to support Kenya in order to protect British investments in Kenya and also to appease Ethiopian fears of British hesitancy to aid Kenya in combating the secessionist desires of the NFD Somali and Oromo people. By April 1966 the crisis in the North Eastern Region was no longer regarded as 'an irritating security problem over demands by nomadic Somalis for the right of self-determination ... the struggle is now assuming the character of a guerilla war against the bulk of the Kenya army'.<sup>47</sup>

The crisis was becoming expensive to the Kenyan tax-payers as the Government spent £4,000,000 in 1967 that it could ill afford and the cost was rising yearly. Even with such a burden on the Kenyan economy, the North Eastern crisis did not make the Kenyan leaders negotiate with the political leaders of the NPPPP. Kenyan leaders, especially the inner circle of Kenyatta's advisers, beat the drums of war even louder. As Dr Njoroge Mungai, the Kenyan Defence Minister, said: 'The only persons the 'shifta' are going to negotiate with are the Kenyan soldiers whose rifles spit bullets'. These statement showed that the Kenyan Government believed that it had a superior fire power over the NFDLF combatants, a fire power that was evident in the frontline in the form of active British participation in the crisis. The British Government provided Kenya with 'anti-Shifta weapons such as armoured Landrovers' that were adapted to be used on the bumpy NFD roads.<sup>48</sup> Ethiopia gave moral and material support such as press releases by Ethiopian leaders to the effect that they would

---

46. Interview with Abdisalan Sheikh Mohamed, Garissa, March 1996.

47. *African Report*, April 1967.

48. *Ibid.*



come to Kenya's assistance if the Somali Republic attacked Kenya. The Ethiopian Government gave military spare parts to the Kenyan army whose personnel were also trained by Ethiopian instructors. Ethiopia provided this assistance to the Kenyatta Government in order to defend its 'territorial integrity' which in essence meant denying the Somali and Oromo tribes their inalienable right to self-determination.

### **THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN THE KENYA-SOMALI CRISIS, c.1963-1968**

The British Government supported the nascent Kenyatta Government through the constitutional agreements that were signed between 1960 and 1963 in which Britain committed herself to protect Kenya's territorial integrity.<sup>49</sup> As already noted, Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister had already assured the Kenyan and Ethiopian leaders in a 1960 speech before the House of the Commons that Britain would not support the dismembering of either of the two countries. The unfortunate part was that the North Eastern Region of Kenya was used as a bargaining chip by the departing British Colonial rulers so as to force Kenyatta Government into accepting a neo-colonial status. The young Kenyatta government allowed British civil servants to continue working and living in Kenya. Kenyatta was to pursue a pro-British policy in all foreign relations and Britain agreed to reciprocate by protecting Kenya from external threats to its territorial integrity.

In the early 1960s, Tom Mboya, the right hand man of Kenyatta in the negotiations for Kenya's independence, said: 'there is no point in change for its own sake. Only if some special institution has utility within our special circumstances is it justified'.<sup>50</sup> It was in such circumstances that in April 1962 Britain forced the Kenyatta Government to agree to the multimillion pound settler farm buy-out by indigenous Kenyans through a loan payment made available to the Kenyatta Government by the British. The existence of the settler interest in Kenya and their future destiny in an independent Kenya was one big issue that may possibly have influenced British policy towards Kenyan nationalists *vis-à-vis* the NFD question. This was because if the NFD Somalis were allowed to secede, Kenya's border with Somalia would have been near the former 'White Highlands' where the bulk of British interest were

---

49. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, p.187. See also Ogot & O'chieng, *Decolonization*, p.69.

50. Ogot & O'chieng, *ibid.*, p.93.

concentrated in the form of large British plantation companies. The British Government was not prepared to radicalise the Kenyan nationalists who might have nationalised large plantations owned by British companies such as Brook Bond Tea Company, and therefore Britain chose to support the Kenyan nationalists who wanted an intact Kenya to be granted independence. The British Government was more or less forced to concede to the Kenyan nationalists' demands of rejecting the secessionist bid by the Somalis in the North Eastern Region.

In March 1963 the British Government initiated a joint military exercise by the British Armed forces and the Kenyan Armed forces and called 'operation Sharp Panga' by the military. In this operation, as remembered by the old men in the North Eastern Region, more than four thousand three hundred men took part, including large numbers of the KAR, British troops from the Scots Guards and the 3rd Royal Horse Artillery, and a few men brought from Aden. The equipment used in such exercises was massive and varied and included 'items of heavy artillery, including "Mobat" anti-tank guns, 105 mm field howitzers, rocket launchers and a pair of "ferret" armoured scout cars' all of which show the seriousness of the British military scheme for defending Kenya integrity.<sup>51</sup> *The Reporter*, an influential fortnightly magazine of the early 1960s, describes the scene at Isiolo in February 1963:

Seldom, if ever, has the bleak airfield at Isiolo handled so many aircraft, for vast quantities of supplies were airlifted from Nairobi to Isiolo in R.A.F. Beverlys of the Middle East Air Force. From there the massive dumps of petrol, drinking water, compositions and posho were split up and taken to the forward areas by R.A.F. Twin Pioneers, in some cases airdropping by a new method with platforms supported by two chutes, in others landing on landing strips bulldozed from the bush.<sup>52</sup>

These military exercises provoked sharp reactions from the Somali Republic, which viewed them as deliberate provocation on the part of Britain. This encouraged the Somali Government to embark on military preparation on an enormous scale. In order to counter the Kenyan and British threat, the Somali Government went into military alliance with the then Soviet Union. The Somali Republic signed a defence treaty with the Soviet Union on 18 September 1963 aimed at 'developing a Somali army of twenty thousand men from the existing four thousand strong force'.<sup>53</sup> This may have been partly due to the realization by

---

51. *The Reporter*, 24 August 1963.

52. *Ibid.*, 2 March 1963.

53. *Ibid.*, 16 November 1963.

the Somali Government's realization that Britain did not intend to delink the North Eastern Region from the rest of Kenya. The NFD secession was a high priority issue of the Somali Government and was in fact prescribed in Article VI, section 4 of the Somali Government constitution of 1958 which stated that 'the Somali Republic shall promote, by legal and peaceful means the union of Somali territories'.<sup>54</sup> It was the avowed goal of the Somali Republic to retrieve those Somali-inhabited regions that were still under colonial rule.<sup>55</sup> The urge to get back the 'missing parts' of the Somali Republic was 'nurtured by tribal genealogies and traditions, by the Islamic religious ties, and by conflicts with foreign peoples'.<sup>56</sup>

Britain supported the Kenyatta Government from 1964 to 1968 with military personnel who were on secondment from Britain and directed the newly established Kenyan Armed Forces. The Kenyan army with the help of British officers fought the secessionist forces consisting largely of ex-KAR soldiers who had defected to the NFDL. British forces provided the logistics as well as the strategy to fight the NFDL by actively participating in the conflict.<sup>57</sup> British officers played the crucial role of providing maps, equipment and communications which were a necessity in the North Eastern Region where the people, climate, and topography all combined to disadvantage the infant Kenyan Armed Forces.

The British forces were also training the nascent Kenyan army in desert warfare during the 1963 to 1965 period. Joint military exercises conducted by both forces in the North Eastern Region created a situation where the nomadic Somali and Oromo tribes 'were beginning to wonder what exactly was going on'<sup>58</sup> as the Government did not inform the people about the exercises. These exercises had definite psychological effects on the nomadic Somali and Oromo tribes in the NFD as they had never witnessed such enormous military capability.

The British Government also provided the military hardware needed by the Kenyan army. State-of-the-art military equipment was provided on loan to the Kenyan army by the British

---

54. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.269.

55. Drysdale, *Somali Dispute*, p.120.

56. Touval, *Somali*, p.84.

57. All issues of *The Reporter* in 1963-1964 have articles dealing with Anglo-Kenya cooperations.

58. *The Reporter*, 2 March 1963.

Government.<sup>59</sup> This equipment was immediately tested in the North Eastern Region. Bomber planes of the 'Canberra' model, helicopter gun-ships, military rations and clothing were part of the material support provided by the British Government to the Kenyan army and which the Kenyatta Government hoped to purchase in 1964 'in order to defend the country properly after the British troops are moved out some time next year'.<sup>60</sup> Technical skills in building bridges, military reconnaissance and intelligence gathering support were also made available to the Kenyan army by the British Government after 1964. It is probable that without the British military support to the Kenyatta Government the latter would never have been in a position to suppress the secessionist attempts made by the Somali and Oromo tribes in the North Eastern Region.

### **THE ETHIOPIAN ROLE IN THE NFD CRISES, c.1963-1968**

Ethiopia, a colonial power in its own right, had everything to gain by protecting the so called 'territorial integrity of Kenya'.<sup>61</sup> Since Ethiopia was forcefully occupying the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region it dreaded the process of Somali unification which was made moot first by the British Government during the Second World War and later embarked upon by the nascent Somali Republic. Somalis in the Ogaden region had resisted Ethiopian occupation of their lands in the 1890s and after. Moreover, Ethiopian occupation was confined to the urban centres such as Harar, Dire Dawa and Godey. Markakis has described the Ethiopian administration of the Ogaden region as a garrison occupation and noted that 'no Abyssinian, save the reluctant official and soldier, ventured among the nomads'.<sup>62</sup> Ethiopia tried by any means possible to make the dream of creating a Greater Somalia as difficult as possible for Somalia and those Somalis who unfortunately found themselves on the wrong side of the borders. Even before Kenya was granted independence Ethiopia had been a vigorous opponent of a 'Greater Somalia' in the post-war era and had vigorously opposed Bevin's idea

---

59. *Ibid.*, 14 August 1963.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Kenyan intellectuals, like Korwa Adar in his book, *Kenya Foreign Policy Behaviour Towards Somalia* (Lanham, 1994), would maintain that Kenya was justified in brutalizing the Somali in the North Eastern Region to maintain its territorial integrity. To him, secessionism was still active even in the late 1980s. This is misconstruing the facts as the secessionist help provided by the Somali Republic ended with the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding signed by Kenya and Somalia on 20 October 1967.

62. Markakis, *Nationalism and Class Conflict*, p.171.

of unifying all Somali-inhabited territories in the Horn of Africa.<sup>63</sup>

In the 1960s Ethiopia waged a radio propaganda war against the Somali Republic in all of its broadcasts. This is remembered by the many informants interviewed who claimed that 'Ethiopia failed to win the loyalty of Somalis in her propaganda war against the Somali Republic'.<sup>64</sup> Ethiopians coalesced with Kenyans to depict themselves as victims of the expansionist Somali dream of creating a 'Greater Somalia'. Like their Kenyan counterparts Ethiopian radio propagandist did not achieve the desired goal of winning the Somalis to their sides. It was regarded by the Somalis in the Somali Republic and more specifically in the North Eastern Region as another attempt by Imperial Ethiopia to deny the Somalis their right to self-determination. These allegations were confirmed by several informants who claimed that Ethiopian radio propaganda 'did not win a single Somali to their side'.<sup>65</sup>

Ethiopia also used the OAU forum to legitimize its occupation of Somali-inhabited areas of the Ogaden and to support the Kenyan desire to maintain its 'territorial integrity'. Ethiopia portrayed Somalis and Somalia as expansionists who wanted to dismember African countries. Ethiopia used her position as host to the OAU secretariat to lobby other countries into supporting her against the Somali Republic. By 1966 Ethiopia had been successful in isolating the Somali Republic in its attempts to retrieve the 'lost territories' of the NFD, the Ogaden and French Somaliland because Ethiopia had the unwavering support of the Kenyan Government and the French colonialists who were still administering Djibouti as the French Territory of Issa and Afar. Ethiopia used the OAU charter, Article III (6), in UN gatherings and the meetings of the None-Aligned Movement to assert her claim to Ogaden region. The OAU charter, Article III Section 6, which the Ethiopian Government used against the Somali Republic's attempt for reunification stipulated that member countries should have 'respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and its inalienable right to independent existence'.<sup>66</sup> Thus Ethiopia had the backing of the African countries while Somalia was seen as the aggressor in these conflicts.

---

63. Lewis, *Modern History*, p.125.

64. Interview with Dekow Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

65. Interview with Abdille Hassan Illey, Wajir, March 1995.

66. Z. Cervenka, *The OAU and its Charter* (London, 1968), p.34.



Nationalism and the identity crisis felt by the Somali people in the Horn Africa attracted the attention of foreign powers who meddled in the internal politics of the countries in the Horn. In the 1960s the United States of America interfered with the nationalism of the Somalis in the Horn by supporting Somali opponents such as Ethiopia who were forcefully legitimizing their occupation of the Somali-inhabited region of Ogaden. The USSR switched their allegiance from Ethiopia to Somalia and in the process provided the Somali Government with weapons to achieve their desired goal of unifying all Somali-inhabited territories. The USSR government support to the Somali Republic was not effective at the diplomatic level especially in relation to the Western countries and their policies towards the Horn of Africa.

### **A Clarification of the Terminology: Shifta**

To understand the Kenyan Government's reaction to the secessionist NFDLF movement and how they erroneously viewed the whole movement as 'shifta' it is necessary to define what or who 'shifta' is. In what context does a person qualify to be called 'shifta'? For a start the term 'shifta' evokes different meanings and emotions from different people, depending upon the circumstances and the locality of its usage. For some people, for example those in power whether in Kenya or in Ethiopia, 'shifta' is a nightmare devil, associated with all kinds of bandits, cattle rustlers, brigands, wildlife poachers and a host of other illegal activities outside the norms of what are accepted as a civilised and honourable activity in the North Eastern Region of Kenya and Southern and Eastern Regions of Ethiopia.<sup>67</sup> For other people, especially the Somali and Oromo speaking tribes, the term evoked the painful realities of domination by a system of Government they hated.

The word 'shifta' has a long historical root in the context of Abyssinian conquest of the lowlands to the south and east of the Abyssinian Highlands. It is an Amharic word, '*shifte*', which means a 'bandit', an 'outlaw', a fugitive or a renegade from the long arm of the law. Oromo and Somali nomads did not recognize Abyssinian authorities and cared less about Abyssinian laws that were implemented in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>68</sup>

---

67. As a result of one man's activity, which was a 'shifta' and not secessionist bid whatsoever, emergency regulations were declared on Garissa town for two months. A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the residents. As a student, my friends and I were jailed because of not abiding by the curfew hours. Such a case was shifta activity, and not secessionist activity.

68. Zewde, *Modern Ethiopia*, pp.27-29.

Many communities such as the Somali and Oromo speaking tribes were in essence called 'shifta' by Abyssinian rulers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for varied reasons as will be explained in the following account.

The word 'shifta' gained a lot of currency during the Abyssinian operations against the southern Oromo along the British East Africa Protectorate border with Abyssinia in the early twentieth century. Many Oromo and Somali-speaking communities who escaped from Abyssinian ruthlessness while the Abyssinians were collecting tribute were termed 'shifta' by the Abyssinian authorities when they were asked by the British Colonial rulers who they were looking for.

The ruthless Abyssinian empire builders of the late nineteenth century such as Tewodros, Menelik and their descendants, had forcibly incorporated many divergent groups such as the Galla and Somali tribes into the Abyssinian hegemony. Those who refused to be part of the Abyssinian empire and migrated to escape the maladministration of their country by fleeing to British protection were termed as 'shifta' because they refused to pay the harsh tribute and became refugees in colonial Kenya. To the Abyssinians, these hapless people, who were largely Oromo and Somali, became 'shifta', because they were perceived to be outlaws from Abyssinian authority and had to be brought back to 'face the law in Abyssinia'. In their pursuit of these people, Abyssinian soldiers brutalized and enslaved large segments of the Oromo and Somali-speaking people in the south and east of the Abyssinian Highlands throughout the period from 1900 to 1935 when the Ethiopian Emperor was dethroned by the Fascist Italians. This was confirmed by the observation made by an American traveller, Dr Donald Smith in his diary of 1897 while in the Ogaden and other southern regions of what would become the Ethiopian Empire. He noted that:

when we reached Sessabene (near Degahbur), I was astonished to find there were great herds of fine cattle. The natives were most civil and anxious to trade with me. You can imagine my chagrin when I heard a few days afterwards that they had been raided by the Abyssinian under Ras Makonen, their cattle driven off, young girls taken as slaves and the older people killed and mutilated. Never have the evils of slavery shown themselves in a more terrible light than that in which they are now manifesting themselves in Abyssinia, nor could as cruel a Government be found in the world as that which is in store for the tribes among whom I journeyed if Menelik be not checked.<sup>69</sup>

---

69. KNA PC NFD4/1/3, Northern Frontier District Political Documents, 1943.

In short, life for the Somali and Oromo nomads in the Ogaden and Sidamo regions was one hellish nightmare after another and every time these nomads tried to escape or resist, they would be termed 'shifta' by the Abyssinians.

The Fascist domination of the Ethiopian Empire in the 1935 to 1941 period was in fact a welcome respite for the Ogaden and Oromo tribes from the harsh administrative conditions to which they were subjected under Ethiopian rule. It is perhaps pertinent to quote the words of an old Oromo Chief to the Senior British Political Officer at Neghelli in 1941 when he was told that Ethiopian rule would soon be re-established: 'today I feel like a sheep whose throat has just been cut, kicking for life, knowing I cannot live'.<sup>70</sup> Life for the ordinary Galla and Somali-speaking communities under Ethiopian rule was unbearable considering that Ethiopian soldiers lived off the people because they never got any salary from the central government. The old Galla Chief further informed the British Political Officer that when the Italian Government had rescued them from the tyranny of the Ethiopians in 1935 'they were given their first taste of humane administration'.<sup>71</sup>

The British colonial rulers whether in British Somaliland or in the Kenya Colony did not return these unfortunate people to Ethiopian maladministration throughout the colonial era. The Galla were allowed to live in Kenya where they became domiciled. For the Galla communities living in colonial Kenya was preferable to living in Ethiopia where they were subjected to all kinds of daily harassment. The Somalis in the Ogaden were also permitted to cross back to British Somaliland during the wet seasons to graze their stock and also escape the periodic Ethiopian tribute collections that in essence amounted to be daylight robbery of the Somali cattle and camels.<sup>72</sup>

The term 'shifta' was used between 1900 and 1943 by the media and the colonial administration in the then Northern Frontier District of Kenya to mean any person wandering at will in the countryside either to kill people or cause damage to property. A 'shifta' became a modern day Al Capone - a person who does not bother or seems not to care about the laws

---

70. KNA PC NFD/5/1/8, Post-War Five Year Development Plan for NFD, 1945.

71. *Ibid.*

72. For harrowing accounts of the Ethiopian rule of the Galla and Somali peoples, see Gesheker, 'Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation', pp.1-33.

of the land. The British colonial rulers in the NFD of the Kenya colony used this term specifically to refer to bandits in the NFD who were illegally in the country for game poaching and gun-running. A 'shifta' had no legal residential status and could be jailed any time he was found. Thus the terminology continued with the negative image of its original Amharic connotations during the British colonial rule in the NFD.

With the granting of independence to Kenya the term 'shifta' was used to depict the secessionist movement as gangsters and it became the 'shifta movement', not a genuine liberation movement. The phrase 'secessionist movement' was not used to describe those Somalis and Oromo tribes wishing to delink the NFD from Kenya. After 1963 every Somali and Galla in the North Eastern Region became a 'shifta' suspect.<sup>73</sup> 'Shifta' became a tag name. To this day other Kenyans can call a person from the North Eastern Province a 'shifta' because a Somali or an Oromo would be a potential 'shifta' if they are not one already.

That 'shifta bandits' had no place in Kenya was apparent throughout the 1960s and that Kenya would ruthlessly deal with the 'shifta' movement to the last man was the avowed determination of the Kenyatta regime. In July 1966, the Kenyan Defence Minister, Dr Njoroge Mungai, stated that Kenya and Ethiopia have 'agreed to tougher measures to eliminate the "shifta" and also endorsed steps recently announced by President Kenyatta aimed at getting rid of the "shifta" raiders once and for all'.<sup>74</sup> What is clear, however, is that NFDLF was not a 'shifta' movement; neither did they regard themselves as 'shifta' bandits. They regarded themselves as a liberation movement that aimed to delink the NFD from Kenya and join up with Somalia. Since it was the military wing of the NPPP, the NFDLF adopted guerilla tactics to achieve its goal of separating the North Eastern Region from Kenya.

---

73. I remember, in 1984, as a high school student in Meru, a cousin of mine was chased from the same school I was studying because a teacher referred to him as a 'shifta' which my cousin objected to. He was forced to discontinue school. Today, my cousin is a Captain in the Kenya Defence Force.

74. *The Times*, 19 July 1966.

### **WAS THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT LIBERATION FRONT A 'SHIFTA' MOVEMENT?**

The NPPPP and its military wing the NFDLF were not a bunch of hoodlums as the Kenyan Government and the local media wanted people to believe in the 1960s. They were articulating the wishes and aspirations of the Somalis and Oromo tribes in the North Eastern Region as indicated by the mass support the movement came to enjoy among the people. The movement had the moral and material support of the three hundred thousand people of the North Eastern Region of Kenya. The people willingly donated livestock towards the cause. That they were fighting a just cause was in no doubt given the fact that the movement was never short of young men and women to fight on its behalf. Between 1964 and 1967 young men from all the six districts within the region crossed the border to Somalia to receive basic military training.<sup>75</sup>

The movement was highly organized militarily and had a political wing that made the political decisions. The NFDLF was indeed a highly organized front in that they, like all other liberation movements across the world, had a chain of command. The most senior in rank was a 'General' who was the overall commander of the front. Under him were various platoon commanders, and the combatants. Military decisions such as who, when and where to strike were made by the NPPPP political leadership in consultation with the NFDLF commanders. The first NFDLF commander was Mohamed Farah from Mandera District.

The platoon commanders were responsible for directing the soldiers in their attacks and raids on Government installations. The NFDLF made a number of daring attacks between 1963 and 1968 when the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Somali Republic and the Kenya Government. In 1964 the NFDLF attacked Elwak border post and killed three police officers.<sup>76</sup> The NFDLF started its hit-and-run raids on police stations along the border with Somalia. Among the first stations that were attacked by the NFDLF combatants were the Mandera police station and the Liboi police station in Garissa District in June 1963 and January 1964 respectively.<sup>77</sup>

---

75. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

76. *The Reporter*, 15 July 1964.

77. Dekow Maalim Stamboul was the second person to hold this rank. He was the NFDLF Commander until 1977. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.



By 1965, the NFDLF were getting more experienced in guerilla war and were penetrating deeper into the North Eastern Region. They attacked the police station in Gurar division and the Moyale police station in March 1965 and Kula Mawe police station in Isiolo District in December 1966. At all these police stations they inflicted heavy casualties on the Kenyan security forces and also captured various items of military equipment such as 303 guns and ammunition, as well as military clothing. By 1966, the casualties on the Kenyan security side were a hundred soldiers of the Kenyan army killed whereas the NFDLF combatants had lost over a thousand fighters. The NFDLF platoons numbered fifteen to thirty combatants who only moved at night.<sup>78</sup>

The NFDLF did not move during the daytime because of the topography of the North Eastern Region which was semi-desert, with no mountains. It was flat land with no vegetation cover to provide hide-outs for the NFDLF combatants. They spent their days sleeping under the thorn or acacia trees that were the most common vegetation. They struck at night. The Kenyan security forces on the other hand moved during the day-time and so could not fight a conventional war with the NFDLF who were not ready to engage them. The Kenyan security forces had no idea when and where the NFDLF would attack. The NFDLF were not bandits as they did not attack and loot civilian properties as the Kenyan military forces did. In fact the 'NFD recovered a lot of livestock looted by the Kenyan force'.<sup>79</sup> The NFDLF combatants were respected and were hidden while on active operations by the Somali and Oromo tribes in the North Eastern Region. To argue that the NFDLF were bandits and 'shifta' is a misnomer and misrepresentation of the facts. The NFDLF fought to liberate the NFD region from what they regarded as the 'black colonial' rule of the Kenyatta government.

The secessionist desires of the Somali and Oromo tribes and the low intensity warfare in the North Eastern Region subsided with the signing of the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding by the Kenya Government and the Somali Republic. The Arusha Memorandum of Understanding has its roots in the elections of June 1967 in the Somali Republic that brought Abdirashid Ali Shermarke to power. Abdirashid and his Prime Minister, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal changed tactics and adopted a fresh approach to get back

---

78. *The Reporter*, 20 January 1966.

79. Interview with Dekow Maalim Stamboul, Nairobi, December 1995.

the missing territories of the Somali-inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa. The Arab states most notably Egypt, to which Somalia had 'looked for moral and material support seemed weak reeds to lean on after the six-day war with Israel'.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, Somali leaders saw the Soviet policies in the Middle East as a factor that led to the defeat of the Arab countries. The Somali leaders realised the precarious nature of relying on the Soviet Union when compared to the assistance that the Western countries, notably America accorded to Kenya and Ethiopia. The closure of the Suez canal was another factor that 'threatened the Somali economy on many fronts, notably by curtailing banana exports to Italy'.<sup>81</sup> In the mid-1960s these factors forced the Somali leaders to adopt peaceful initiatives towards solving the problem of Somalis still under the rule of neighbouring countries. Kenya and Ethiopia positively responded to Somali initiatives and were too glad to accept the mediatory role of Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda. What the Somali leaders have done was 'to develop a "new look" for the Somali. The Somali Government relinquished territorial claims on the neighbouring countries. Instead, Somalia emphasised 'the right of ethnic Somalis living outside the Republic to determine their future by a free political act'.<sup>82</sup>

With the peaceful initiatives of the Somali Republic, the Arusha Memorandum cooled the hostilities between the two Somalia and hoped to normalise border relations. It was brokered by Presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere of Zambia and Tanzania respectively. African leaders such as Nyerere were disturbed by the regional instability that affected Tanzania's trading relations with Somalia and Kenya. But as long as the Kenya Government did not address the dire socio-political and economic needs of the people of the region, peace and stability would remain an elusive dream. As Hussein Seyyid Suliman noted: 'North Eastern Kenya is a time bomb ticking, waiting to explode one day if the Kenya Government does not improve the socio-political and economic well-being of the Somali and Oromo people in the region'.<sup>83</sup>

---

80. *African Report*, February 1969.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. Interview with Hussein Seyyid Suliman, Nairobi, December 1995.

## CONCLUSION

The Somali society was colonised during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the process the Somalis were split into five administrative regions: British Somaliland, French Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, the Ogaden region in Ethiopia and the NFD region of Kenya Colony. After the Second World War the Somali people tried to unify their fragmented lands and failed miserably. There were internal and external factors responsible for the failures by the Somalis to unify their lands. By 1968 the Somali dream of 'Greater Somalia' was still unrealised.

After the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Somali society in the Horn of Africa underwent tremendous socio-political and economic changes wrought by external and internal factors. Between 1875 and 1910 the Somali society was expanding southwards and westwards. In the process of expansion the Somali people displaced contiguous communities such as the Oromo and the Rendille from their traditional lands. These Somali migrations were a response to the environmental hardships and population pressures in the northern regions which resulted in an escalation of not only inter-clan wars but also raids against the Oromo and the Rendille to dominate the area between the Juba and the Tana rivers. By the end of the nineteenth century Somalis had not only confirmed their dominance in the region between the two rivers but had continuously pushed the Oromo, the Rendille and the Riverine communities further to the west.

In the period between 1875 and 1910 the Somali people in the Horn of Africa were intruded upon and divided up by the various colonial powers such as Britain, France and Italy. During the 1890s the Abyssinian empire under Menelik, too, participated in the scramble for parts of Somali and Oromo lands and acquired Ogadenia, Sidamo and Bale regions. Somalis were not passive observers to colonial intrusions into their lands but resisted as exemplified by the successful resistance waged by Seyyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan from 1896 to 1920, Ahmed Magan from 1903 to 1912 and Abdirahman Mursal from 1914 to 1917. Because of their restricted access to weapons, however, the Somalis unlike the Abyssinians, were finally defeated and had to adapt themselves to living as colonial subjects. By the 1920s Somali society was carved into the five different regions of Ogadenia, British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland French Somaliland and the NFD region of the Kenya Colony. All these five

regions experienced different administrative structures thereby altering the traditional Somali system of rules and regulations.

In 1885 the British occupied the strategically important areas near the entrance to the Red Sea to guard their maritime interests and renamed that area British Somaliland; in 1886 the French competing with the British in maritime supremacy occupied the Somali territories to the north-west of British Somaliland. The French renamed their newly found territory the French Territory of Somaliland. The Italians claimed the Hobbia and Benadir coasts to the south of the newly created British Somaliland in 1890. It was from these coastal regions that the European powers penetrated into the interior of Somali territories. From the 1890s the Abyssinian empire expanded from their highland bases to the coast seeking an outlet to the Indian Ocean and in the process occupied the Somali region of Ogadenia. The Abyssinians were not successful in establishing their administration over the Oromo and Ogaden regions because of the stiff resistance offered by the inhabitants of those regions.

In the process of establishing colonial rule on the Somali people these colonial powers imposed new laws and regulations that affected the Somali traditional way of life. The colonial powers created artificial boundaries among the Somali people. The Somali people, however, did not acknowledge the legitimisation of the artificial colonial boundaries that separated brother from brother and a sub-clan from its main clan. Influential clan leaders were separated from their people and could no longer carry out their traditional roles. These artificial boundaries restricted Somali seasonal migrations in search of pastures and water wells which were now administered by different colonial powers. Colonial boundaries were to some extent 'porous' due to the fact that the various colonial administrations did not have adequate finances and personnel to monitor the Somali nomads criss-crossing these boundaries. The Somali nomads moved across these artificial boundaries when escaping from one colonial administration to another. This was a strategy of survival adopted by the Somali nomads to cope with the demands imposed by colonialism.

British East Africa Protectorate assumed the administration of the vast Northern Front District region and established Archers Post in 1908 as the first administrative station. In 1919 the NFD colonial administration created the Somali-Galla line in the middle of the NFD region to halt Somali migrations westwards. Somali nomads were forbidden to cross west of the

imaginary line that divided the Somalis and the Oromo people. Like the artificial boundaries that separated NFD Somali clans from their main group in Italian Somaliland, the Ogaden and Degodia clans did not recognise the Somali-Galla line, and flouted it time and again. The NFD administration responded with harsh punitive fines. These clans adopted a 'hide and seek' strategy to circumvent this administrative requirement. The Somali nomads' basic need was to find water and fresh pastures for livestock or camels and they did not care about policies and rules formulated in Nairobi and London which the field administrators were to implement.

During the 1930s the Somali position in the NFD region of Kenya worsened. The SDO of 1934 prohibited the Somali movement within and out of the NFD without proper authorization from the administration. The SDO of 1934 cut off the NFD Somalis from having any links with not only Somalis in Italian Somaliland but also with the rest of the people in the Kenyan Colony. The NFD Somalis could not visit relatives and friends in the neighbouring districts within the region. After the 1930s the NFD Somalis clandestinely moved from one district to another and even moved to other regions like Tanganyika without proper documentation. Taxation of the Somali nomads was another demand of the NFD administration. The Somalis were expected to contribute to an administration they did not recognise and some nomads evaded the payment of taxes by migrating from one colonial administration to another. Even though the NFD region had been subjected to taxation from 1930, social amenities such as hospitals and schools were not built by the NFD administration until after the Second World War. The transformation of traditional *sultans* from independent decision makers of their communities into colonial employees eroded the NFD Somali cultural values. No more were the traditional *sultans* respected by their communities. Some of them like Abdi Ogle in the 1940s had earned bad a reputation over the years because of their dedicated service to the NFD administration. Life under colonial rule became hard for the nomadic Somalis who were forced to constantly migrate between the various colonial entities such as Italian Somaliland, Abyssinia, and the Kenya Colony.

The imposition and entrenchment of colonial rule in the Horn of Africa naturally led to the emergence of leaders who wished to articulate the need for independence and the maintenance of their people's way of life. In the 1940s these leaders, a product of the colonial system itself, formed the Somali Youth League, a modern political party that voiced the political



aspirations of the Somali people. The Second World War saw the defeat of Italian fascist aims in the Horn of Africa. In 1941 this led the British Government to take over the administration of all Italian colonies in the Horn of Africa. From 1941 the British were able to administer all Somali-inhabited territories except French Somaliland. The British replaced Italian policies and introduced their policies of allowing modern political parties which were hitherto not allowed to operate. The SYL party which was established in 1943 in Mogadishu was guided and advised by the British administrative officers. The SYL adopted the unification of all Somali territories as its goal which was in line with the British policy of creating 'Greater Somalia' under the Bevin Plan.

After the Second World War the British Government adopted a policy of creating a 'Greater Somalia' in which they hoped all Somali would be united and administered by one government and the nomads would be able to continue with their 'frugal existence'. In 1946 the policy of creating 'Greater Somalia' was proposed by Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary. Ernest Bevin was a great believer in the creation of 'Greater Somalia' encompassing British Somaliland, Ogaden region of Ethiopia, NFD region of Kenya and Italian Somaliland with a future French Somaliland included. Towards that end the British Government in 1947 lobbied the victorious Allied Powers to support her policy. In 1949 the USA, however, rejected the idea of creating 'Greater Somalia' because of Ethiopian pressures (the Ethiopians having offered the Americans the naval facilities at Degmaw near the port of Asmara in 1948). The Ethiopian naturally feared the consequences of having a 'Greater Somalia' as neighbour. Abyssinian leaders have cherished the fragmentation of Somali territories so as to continue their unlawful occupation of the Ogaden. The French rejected the Bevin plan because of the Anglo-French rivalry along the Red Sea in which the British had gained dominance by the end of the Second World War. The USSR were against the Bevin Plan because they perceived it to be one way of extending British maritime influence in the Indian Ocean and along the Red Sea. After having raised Somali hopes of unification in 1948 the British Government backtracked from the Bevin Plan because of the daunting opposition from the Americans and the Russians. The British Government was concerned with bigger issues such as the independence of India and the creation of Pakistan out of the old 'jewel of the empire'. In 1948 the creation of Israel in the heart of the Arab world led to Arab riots and the start of a guerrilla war waged by the Palestinians. All these factors combined led the British to betray the Somali political aspirations and sold the Somali dream of unification.

By 1950 the British Government were planning to return all Somali-inhabited territories to their pre-war administrative status. Ethiopia was given back the Somali-inhabited region of Ogadenia while Italy was granted the administration of southern Somalia. Bevin betrayed the Somalis in 1948.

In 1949 the SYL which had all along operated freely in all British administered Somali territories with the consent and encouragement of the British administrators in the field was banned by the British. The SYL was alone in articulating Somali aspirations. In British Somaliland, the administration encouraged the formation of a new party, the Somali National League though it was banned in the NFD region of Kenya. The pre-war boundaries which separated Somali people remained unchanged. The British betrayed Somali unification dreams because of the pragmatic politics of the late 1940s and early 1950s when the capitalist Americans were flexing their interests in the Arab World. Successive British Governments in London were not as focused on the Somali issues as the field administrators were. It was the field administrators who advocated the unification of Somali territories but could not get the consent of their superiors in London and Nairobi.

By 1958 the Italian Trusteeship Administration in Somalia was preparing the Somalis of that country for independence and nation-wide elections were held that year in the country. The SYL formed the government in Somalia and had made the unification of all Somali territories its goal. The election in Somalia prompted Somalis in the NFD to demand secession from the Kenya Colony. The Somali leaders pressured the British Government to separate the NFD issue from the negotiations in the Lancaster House and to allow NFD Somalis to freely join with Somalia. Somali attempts to pressurise the British Government were not successful in achieving anything more than token attempts such as sending the NFD Commission in 1962 to the region to ascertain the future political wishes of the NFD Somalis.

The NFD Somali politicians argued during and after the first Lancaster House Conference in 1960 for the separation of the NFD region from the Kenya Colony before it was granted independence. In 1960 the British Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, in a speech before the Parliament set the future policy guiding the British Government which would not allow the separation of the NFD region from a soon-to-be independent Kenya. The British Government's acceptance of sending a Commission to ascertain the wishes of the NFD

Somalis was a strategy to 'buy time' so as not to jeopardize its wider interest in East Africa including the Horn of Africa. In 1960 MacMillan betrayed Somali political aspirations; his policy continued to guide the policy makers in London. The field administration in the NFD projected a pro-Somali attitude towards solving the secessionist desires of the NFD people between 1960 and 1964. But their superiors in London had ambivalent policies and were not focused on the NFD secession. The British Government was more interested in safeguarding its investments than in separating the NFD from Kenya which would have earned the antagonism of the Kenyan nationalists. The Kenyan nationalist leaders such as Jommo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya were pressurising the British Government not to accept Somali demands throughout the Lancaster House Conferences.

In 1962 the British Government declined to commit itself to separate the NFD region even after the NFD Commission's report was made public and even though 87 per cent of the NFD people wished to join with the Somali Republic. The British Government's decision not to separate the NFD region could be attributed to many factors which were both internal and external. As in 1948 the British were faced with opposition from the Ethiopians, the Kenyan nationalists and even Somali loyalist in the NFD region who did not want to join up with the Somali republic. For the Ethiopians under Haile Selassie the secession of the NFD region would be one step nearer the creation of 'Greater Somalia' and would in the process lead to the loss of the Somali-inhabited region of Ogadenia. Kenyan nationalists did not want to see the separation of the NFD from Kenya because it would encourage other communities to agitate for political separation. The NFD Somali loyalists did not want secession from Kenya as they believed that they had better future prospects in an independent Kenya than in Somalia.

Among the external factors that compelled the British not to agree to the secessionism of the NFD region included pressures from the United States. The United States government did not want a strong and unified Somalia along the Indian Ocean area. Instead the US government provided military and economic support to Ethiopia which was occupying the Somali-inhabited region of Ogadenia. American policy makers believed that United States' interests would best be served by fragmented Somalis in the Horn of Africa. The Somali Republic in the early 1960s was closely aligned to the Egyptian government under Jamal Abdi Nasser, an arch anti-American leader in the Arab World. Nasser had promised to help

the Somali Republic get weapons and diplomatic support from the Arab World. The US Government did not want the Egyptians to have influence along the entrance to the Red Sea, which was vital to the Western shipping companies. The United States obtained Ethiopian bases to counter Egypt's sphere of influence in Somalia. In return for the Ethiopian favours the US Government undertook to arm and protect Ethiopian interests in the Horn of Africa. Americans were supportive of the Ethiopian leader, Haile Selassie, who was enraged at the unification of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland in 1960. To Haile Selassie, the unification of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland was the first step towards the creation of 'Greater Somalia' which would be a nightmarish neighbour for Haile Selassie and Ethiopia.

The Russians had mixed policies of trying to support the Ethiopians and the Somalis. When in 1960 the British Government was about to consent to Somali demands for secession, the Russians as evidenced by the USSR invitation to Haile Selassie and their promise to give him a loan, were supportive of the Ethiopian emperor and Kenyan nationalists who were against the secession of the NFD region from Kenya. The Russians pursued an ambivalent foreign policy in the Horn, and switched alliances between Ethiopia and Somalia depending on where the United States supported. In 1960 the Russians undertook to safeguard Ethiopian interests in the Horn of Africa and three years later the Russians in an agreement signed with the Somali Republic undertook to arm the Somali National Army and enhance Somalia's interest in the Horn of Africa. In the 1977-78 War between Ethiopia and Somalia the geo-politics of Super Power rivalry in Horn of Africa would change with the Russians supporting Ethiopia militarily and the Americans promising to help the Somali Republic. The 1977-78 swap of Super Power alliances in the Horn of Africa created further instabilities in the Horn and legitimised the Kenyan and Ethiopian occupation of the Somali-inhabited NFD and the Ogaden regions.

The Somali Government received diplomatic support from the Arab countries, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia; but these countries were weak reeds to lean on for the issue of the NFD secession. The Arabs provided some moral and material support to the Somali Government but these were meagre when compared to British and American support to Kenya and Ethiopia respectively. The British support of the Kenyan nationalists was more forceful and included the latest military equipment and training facilities for the infant Kenyan Armed Forces. The NFD Somali secessionists were, apart from the help provided by Somali

Republic, left alone to face Kenyan nationalist leaders, the Ethiopians and the external forces arrayed against the NFD secession. All that the NFD Somali secessionist leaders could do was to pressurise the Somali Government to voice the NFD secession at international forums. But Somalia's case was not seen by the international community as a viable one and most countries avoided the issue.

Kenyan nationalist leaders were adamant all along that Somalia had no business in meddling in the internal affairs of Kenya and they viewed Somalia's interference as an unwarranted provocation against Kenya's territorial integrity. They rejected the Somalia Government's pleas for a just settlement of the NFD issue by separating the NFD issue from Kenya's negotiations for independence. By 1963 it was too late for all parties to reach a compromise solution for the NFD crisis. The NFD crisis was polarized to the extent that violence would be inevitable. It appears that the British Government was largely responsible for the NFD crisis as it never made a decisive policy regarding the NFD secession. Perhaps a peaceful solution to the NFD secession could have been achieved had the British Government been more focused on the NFD secession from 1948 to 1963. The failure to find a peaceful solution to the NFD crisis led the NFD secessionists to fight for the NFD secession. The NFDLF, the military wing of the NPPPP, engaged the Kenyan Armed Forces between 1964 and 1968, when the Arusha Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Somali and Kenyan Governments. The dream of a 'Greater Somalia' which would comprise former Italian Somaliland, the NFD of Kenya, former British Somaliland, and the Ogaden Region of Ethiopia remained unfulfilled and elusive.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. UNPUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

#### 1.1 KENYA NATIONAL ARCHIVES, NAIROBI

- Jubaland Reports, Pre-1917
- Annual Reports (Provincial), 1909-1964
- Intelligence Reports, 1920-1960
- District Reports, 1920-1964
- Miscellaneous Reports, 1900-1964
- Native Affairs, 1900-1960
- Official Government Gazettes, 1900-1964
- Kenya Police Reviews, 1910-1960

#### 1.2 MACMILLAN LIBRARY

- Official Government Gazettes

### 2. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

- The Reporter
- The Times (London)
- Africa Report

### 3. INTERVIEWS

1	Dekow Maatin Stanbowl	Nairobi	Dec 1995
2	Hassan Farayouh	Nairobi	Dec 1995
3	Hussein Seyyid Suhimian	Nairobi	Dec 1995
4	Omar Sheikh Farah	Nairobi	Dec 1995
5	Hussein Fallouk	Nairobi	Jan 1996
6	Mohamed O Warfar	Nairobi	Jan 1996
7	Yussuf Dahir Magan	Nairobi	Jan 1996
8	Tawane-Abdi Huji	Nairobi	Jan 1996
9	Abdi Huji Dahir	Nairobi	Jan 1996
10	Ahmed Abdi Ogle	Nairobi	Jan 1996
11	Siyad Duale	Nairobi	Jan 1996
12	Omar Soba	Garissa	Feb 1996
13	Buthul Dagane	Garissa	Feb 1996
14	Gedi Bare	Garissa	Feb 1996
15	Muktar Aden	Garissa	Feb 1996
16	Sirat AbdiRabe	Garissa	Feb 1996
17	Mohamed Duale	Garissa	Feb 1996

18	Mohamed M Hussein	Garissa	Feb 1996
19	Abdi Hurre	Garissa	Feb 1996
20	Abdi Osman	Wajir	Mar 1996
21	Abdinoor Hassan Tunj	Wajir	Mar 1996
22	Hussein Abdi Liban	Wajir	Mar 1996
23	Abdirahnan Osman	Wajir	Mar 1996
24	Abdille Hassan Illey	Wajir	Mar 1996
25	Mohamed Yung Hiji	Kakamega	Mar 1996
26	Hassan Abdi	Johannesburg	Apr 1996

#### 4. PUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

- Abdi, S.A. *Devine Madness* (London 1993).
- Acher, J. *Personal and Historical memoirs of an East African Administrator* (London, 1963).
- Adar, K. *Kenya Foreign Policy towards Somalia, 1963-1983* (London, 1994).
- Bailey, J. *The National Epic* (Nairobi, 1993).
- Bennet, G. and Roseburge, C.G. *The Kenyatta election: Kenya 1960-1961* (London, 1990).
- Berman, B. *Control and crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London, 1990).
- Blackhurst, H. 'Ethnicity in Southern Ethiopia: The General and the Particular', *Africa*, 50, 1 (1980).
- Cassanelli, L. *The Shaping of Somali Society* (Philadelphia, 1982).
- Castagno, A.A. *Somalia, International Conciliation* (New York, 1959).
- . 'The Somali-Kenya Controversy: Implications for the future', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2, 2 (1964).
- Cevvenka, Z. *The O.A.U. and its Charter* (London, 1968).
- Dalleo, P.T. 'The Somali Role in Organized Poaching in North Eastern Kenya c.1909-1930', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.12, No.3 (1979).
- . 'Trade and Pastoralism: Economic Factors in the History of the Somali of North Eastern Kenya, 1892-1948' (Ph.D. thesis, Syracuse University, 1975).
- Drysdale, J. *The Somali Dispute* (London, 1964).
- Farah, I.M. *From Ethnic Response to Clan Identity - A Study of State Penetration Among the Somali Nomadic Pastoral Society of North Eastern Kenya* (Uppsalla, 1993).
- Gesheker, C. 'Anti-Colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol.18, No.1 (1985).
- Goldsworthy, D. *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (New York, 1982).
- Hess, R.L. *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (Chicago, 1966).
- . 'Italy and Africa: Colonial Ambitions in the First World War', *Journal of African History*, IV, 1 (1963).
- . 'The Mad Mullah and Northern Somalia', *Journal of African History*, V, 3 (1964).
- Kapteijns, L. 'Gender Relations and the Transformation of the Northern Somali Pastoral

- Traditions', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.28, No.2 (1995).
- Laitin, D. *Politics, Language and Thought: The Somali Experience* (Chicago, 1977).
- Legum, C. 'Somali Liberation Songs', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1, 4 (1963).
- Lewis, H.S. 'The origins of the Galla and Somali', *Journal of African History* VII, 1 (1966).
- Lewis, I.M. *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (London, 1961).
- . *The Modern History of Somalia* (London, 1980).
- . *People of the Horn: Somali, Afar and Saho*, *Internal Affairs Institutē* (London, 1955).
- . 'Modern Political Movements in Somaliland I', *Africa*, XXVIII, 3 (1958).
- . 'Modern Political Movements in Somaliland II', *Africa* XXX, 3 (1958).
- . 'The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa', *Journal of Modern African History* 1, 2 (1960).
- . 'Historical Aspects of Genealogies in Northern Somali Social Structure', *Journal of African History*, III, 1 (1962).
- . 'Pan-Africanism and Pan-Somalism', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1, 2 (1963).
- Markakis, J. *Nationalism and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge, 1987).
- Mesfin, W.M. 'The Background of the Ethnio-Somalian Boundary Dispute', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2, 2 (1964).
- Moyse-Bartlett. *The Kings African Rifles* (London, 1956).
- Mungeam, G. *British Rule in Kenya* (London, 1966).
- . *Kenya: Selected Historical Documents 1884-1923* (Nairobi, 1978).
- Novati, G.P. 'Italy in the Triangle of the Horn: Too Many Corners for a Half Power', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32, 3 (1994).
- Ogot, B.A. and O'chieng, W.R. *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940-1993* (London, 1995).
- Ojany, J. and Ogend, R. *A Study in Physical and Human Geography*, (Nairobi, 1972).
- Pankhurst, S. *Ex-Italian Somaliland* (London, 1951).
- Reece, G. 'The Horn of Africa', *International Affairs*, Vol.XXX, No.4 (1954).
- Samatar, A. (ed) *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality* (London, 1988).
- . *The Somali Challenge: from Catastrophe to Renewal* (London, 1994).
- . 'Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the Tribal Convention', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30, 4 (1992).
- Samatar, S. *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1982).
- Smith, A. 'The Open Market: The Economy of Kenya's Northern Frontier Province and the Italo-Abyssinian War, East Africa', *East Africa Journal* (Nov. 1969).
- Tekle, A. 'The Determinants of Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Ethiopia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 27, 3 (1989).
- Tignor, R. 'Colonial Chiefs in Chiefless Societies', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, 3 (1971).
- Touval, S. *Somali Nationalism* (Massachussetts, 1963).
- . 'Treaties, Borders and the Partition of Africa', *Journal of African History*, VII, 2 (1966).

- Turton, E.R. 'Kirk and the Egyptian Invasion of East Africa in 1875: A Reassessment', *Journal of African History*, XI, 3 (1970).
- . 'Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Political Activity in Kenya 1893-1960', *Journal of African History*, VIII, 1 (1972).
- . 'The Isaq Somali Diaspora and the Poll-Tax Agitation in Kenya, 1936-1941', *African Affairs*, 73, No.292 (1974).
- . 'The Impact of Mohamed Abdille Hussan in the East African Protectorate', *Journal of African History*, X, 4 (1969).
- . 'Bantu, Galla and Somali Migrations in the Horn of Africa: A Reassessment of the Juba/Tana Area', *Journal of African History*, XVI, 4 (1974).
- . *Jubaland and the NFD in the 19th Century* (British Institute for Eastern Africa, undated).
- Zewde, B. *A History of Modern Ethiopia* (London, 1991).

## 5. UNPUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

- Gotto, P. 'The Boran of Northern Kenya: Origins, Migrations and Settlement in the Nineteenth Century' (B.A., University of Nairobi, 1972).
- Hussein, S. 'Northern Kenya: A Historical Perspective' (LL.B., University of Nairobi, 1991).
- Makhokha, J. 'The Politics of Nationalism and Irridentism in NEP' (M.A. thesis, University of Nairobi, 1979).