

SOME CULTURAL ELEMENTS AS REFLECTED
IN SOMALI FOLKTALES

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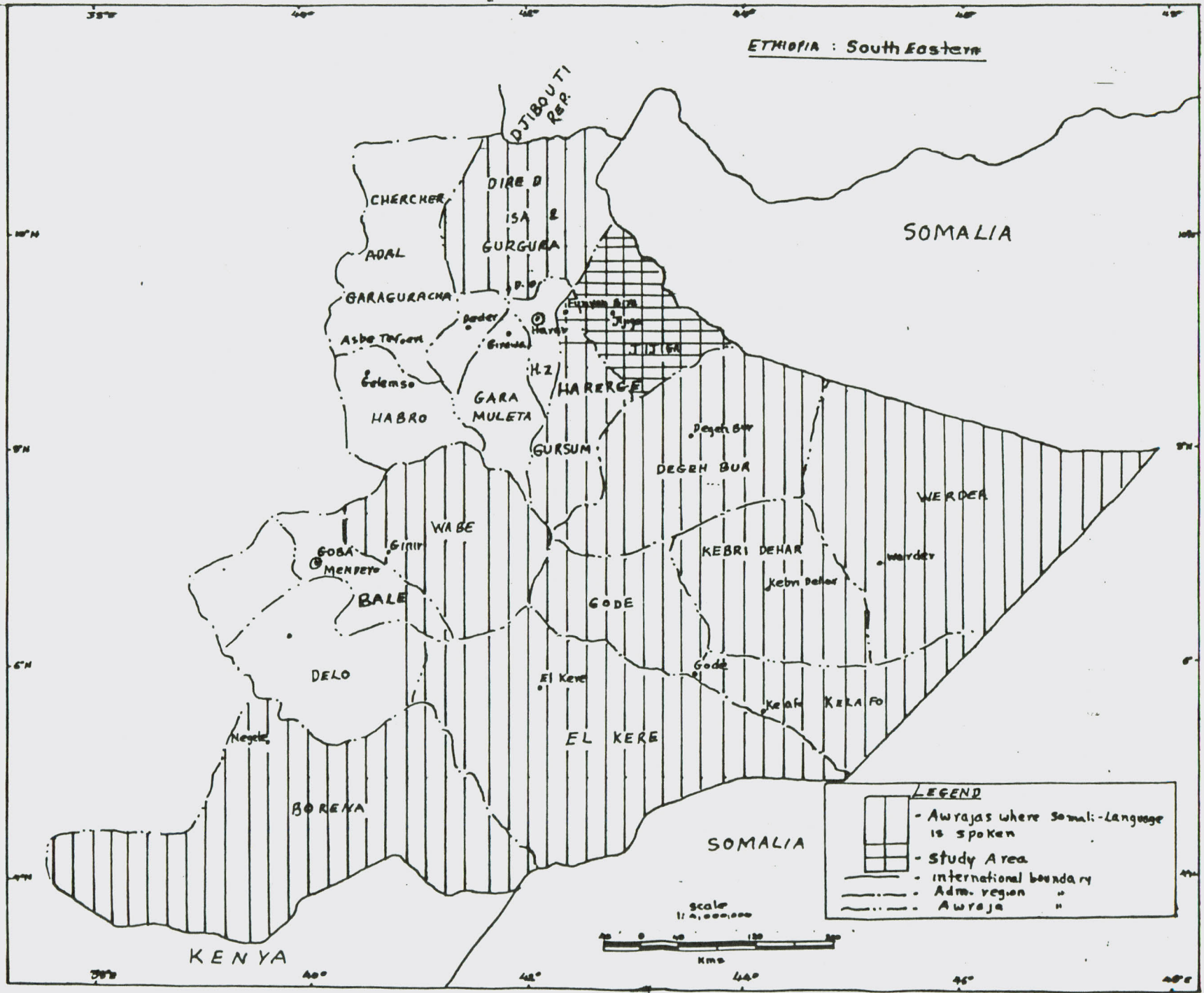
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
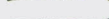

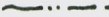
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ETHIOPIA : South Eastern



LEGEND

-  - Awraja where Somali-Language is spoken
-  - Study Area
-  - international boundary
-  - Adm. region
-  - Awraja

ABSTRACT

This study has three main divisions. The first part which runs from chapter one to six lays the foundation for the study by describing the purpose of the study, the Somali people, their language, culture and economy. The area of study, the methodology used, transcription and a brief introduction to oral literature in Somali culture are also given in this part.

The second part deals with description and analysis of the tales selected. Here, a brief description of each tale, or that of a group of tales is given, and then, the cultural elements it (they) embodies are pointed out through a thematic analysis. This part is where the bulk of the work is, and it has several subdivisions.

The third part is the conclusion, which sums up significant elements observed in the analysis, and also attempts to point out the implications of some of the cultural values to the modern concepts of education and national integration.

Eighty-two tales selected for this study are entered in the appendix.

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SOME CULTURAL ELEMENTS AS REFLECTED IN

SOMALI FOLKTALES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of research

This study has been primarily undertaken to bring forth some cultural elements of Somali folklore. Folklore is too wide a concept, but the focus of this study is on tales, and it is hoped that through them, the underlying cultural and psychological elements would be revealed.

Folklore might be associated with things of the past, but the relevance of the study of a people's folklore to the understanding of their world outlook to their reactions towards systems of governments, towards various types of development projects, specially in developing countries is increasingly being felt.

A person interested, say, in organizing Farmers Associations in a certain community might for instance first look for what exists potentially in the culture of lead towards such end.

The rhetoric of an expert in land use, preaching, say, about conservation of soil or plants could prove futile, if he does not base his teachings on (if any) the positive values the society of attitude if he approaches his students through the medium of their culture. A political administrator or a judge needs to know the sense of government and

justice a certain people has, before enforcing the decrees of modern legal systems and practices. The social values of a society at a given time therefore, could give the student of folklore an inside picture of its owners, and this could also help other interested in the welfare such people.

This however, should not give the wrong impressions that all values in a certain society have positive qualities that could contribute to the development of that society. Judgement in this respect is quite relative, and a strict dichotomy of 'bad' and 'good' values may not be maintained; but at least social values that could contribute to 'progress' or 'retardation', could, according to the times, be discerned. The 'good' ones are transmit with the necessary modification into the future society, and the 'bad' ones are gradually left behind, new values taking the place.

This paper basically is a literary paper, in that it analyzes the tales given thematically and tries to point out the values reflected, which in the end are expected to give the reader a picture about the society. Some reserved attempt would in the end be made to point out the significance of such values for the betterment of the Somali society of which the tales come. I say 'reserved' for the simple reason that I am not comprehensively knowledgeable to give such a blue print for development.

1.2 Definition

Folktales occur in the broad body of knowledge known as 'folklore' and a brief introduction about it, in general would I hope be relevant to furnish a better basis for the analysis of the tales.

An attempt to define the term 'folklore' would be beyond the capacity of this paper, especially in the light of the debate that exists about it.

Maria Leach lists about twenty one definitions of the term 'folklore', out of which three are presented here to make the reader sense what is meant by it, and also feel for himself the magnitude of the debate.¹

(a) William R. Bascom

In anthropological usage, the term folklore has come to mean myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, verse and a variety of other forms of artistic expression whose medium is the spoken word. Thus folklore can be defined as verbal art. Anthropologists recognize that an important group of individuals known as folklorists are interested in customs, beliefs, arts and crafts, dress, house types, and food recipes; but in their own studies of the aboriginal peoples of various parts of the world, these diverse items are treated under the accepted headings of material culture, graphic and plastic arts, technology and economics, social and political organizations, and religion, and all are subsumed under the general term culture. There is, however an important part of culture which does not fall under any of these convenient

¹Maria Leach (ed). Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend. (New York, Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1950), pp. 389, 399 and 403.

headings, and which is classed separately as folklore. Folklore in all its forms, thus defined is obviously related to literature, which is written; but folklore may never be written even in a literate society and it may exist in societies which have no form of writing. Like literature folklore is an art writing. Like literature folklore is an art form related to music, the dance, and the graphic and plastic arts, but different in the medium of expression which is employed.

(b) Stith Tompson

Although the word folklore is more than a century old, no exact agreement has ever been reached as to its meaning. The common idea present in all folklore is that of tradition, something handed down from one person to another and preserved either in memory or practice rather than written record. It involves the dances, songs, tales legends and traditions, the beliefs and superstitions and the proverbial saying of peoples everywhere. It also includes studies of customs, of traditional agricultural and domestic practices, types of buildings and utensils, and traditional aspects of society organizations; but for these latter aspects there seems to be a general agreement of consider them, when found in a primitive or preliterate society, as a part of ethnology rather than folklore. This latter division of labor is largely a matter of convenience and is not universally accepted. At least among literate peoples all the subjects mentioned above are considered as folklore, since all of them are truly traditional.

(c) Theodore H. Gaster

Folklore is that part of a people's culture which is preserved, consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs, and practices, customs and observances of general currency; in myths, legends, and tales of common acceptance; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual. Because it is repository of popular "climate" folklore serves as a

constant sources and frame of reference for more formal literature and art; but it is distinct therefrom in that it is essentially of the people, by the people, and for the people.

What is evident from the above definitions is that 'folklore' also embodies what is known as oral literature, which itself has various forms, one of which is the tale.

In this paper, therefore, 'folklore' is understood to denote the wide social heritage of man, that is, his social and material culture; while 'oral literature' specially refers to the verbal heritiages of man that have artistic qualities.

The Tale

As Ruth Finnegan puts it, the tale is the "Prose Narrative" genre of oral literature. The two important schools of folkore, the Historical-Geographical and Structural approaches recognize legends, myths, animals' and people's tales under the title TALES.

The study and analysis of the tale, like all other genres of oral literature has been affected by the two schools of folklore. The Historical-geographical scholars have always been interested in tracing the origin, types, distribution and classification of tales. To this effect, well known folklorists like Stith Thompson have published such important books as: The Folktale, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, The Types of Folktale and several other works. This approach is more of a literary analysis of folklore

and of course of the tale as well.²

The structural approach is more sociological and anthropological. A combination of the form and function of the tale, or any other folklore item is used for analysis. A Russian, V. Propp in his book, Morphology of the Folktale has done an important work in this respect. Because this approach has its roots in anthropological theories, important anthropologists were also very influential.

The tale therefore, is understood merely as prose narrative, generally in oral literature and with the same meaning in Somali oral literature as well.

²See both: Ruth Finnegan: Oral Literature in Africa (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1970) and B. W. Andrezejewski and G. Innes- "Reflections on African Oral Literature", African Languages, I, 1975.

2. Language and People

2.1 Language

In Ethiopia the Somali language is spoken in Hararghe (Eastern Ethiopia), Bale (South Eastern) and Sidamo (South). Hararge is the province in which it is widely spoken and the Awrajas in which it is spoken are the following: Gursum, Jijiga, Dire Dawa-Isa and Gurgura, Dhagabuur, Qebridahar, Gode, Wardheer, and Qalaafo. From Bale are Wabe and Elkare Awrajas, and from Sidamo, Borena Awraja (see map).

Somali is also spoken in Somalia, Northern Kenya and the Republic of Djibutti.

Somali is grouped among the Cushitic language groups and its closest neighbours in Ethiopia, geographically and linguistically are Afar and Oromo.³

Among some characteristics Andrzejewski and Lewis mention about the Somali language, the following remark could be taken as fairly typical:

The Somali language is remarkably rich in grammatical structures and vocabulary. Nominal and verbal formations have numerous affixes with variety of grammatical functions, providing a wide range of subtle distinctions and shades of meaning. Unlike those of Bantu languages, the inflections normally follow roots instead of preceding them. Only five verbs in the entire language diverge from this norm: these exceptions, like⁴ Semetic verbs, have both prefixes and suffixes.

³ Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis. Somali Poetry: An Introduction (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 33.

⁴ Ibid., p. 34

Writing on dialects in the Somali language the above mentioned authors distinguish the following as it applies to the Somali Republic.

- a) "Common Somali" - which they say is spoken by the majority of the pastoral nomads in Somalia.
- b) "Central Somali" - spoken by Somalis living in the cultivation area of the Juba and Shebelle rivers.
- c) "Coastal Somali and (Benadir)"- which they write is spoken by Somalis living in coastal areas.⁵

I am not aware of any study pertaining to Somali language dialects on the Somali spoken in Ethiopia, but a general opinion, expressed by for instance, Somalis living in Hararge is the following:

- a) The Somali spoken by semi-nomadic Somalis living in Gursum and Jijiga Awrajas.
- b) The Somali spoken mainly by nomadic Somalis in Dhagax-buur, Qebridahar, Gode and Wardheer Awrajas and
- c) The Somali spoken by Somalis living along the Wabi Shebelle river specially in Qalafo Awraja.

I dare not correspond this division based on mere opinion to that of Andrzejewski and Lewis mentioned earlier.

John Joseph Pin mentions that the Somali language has twenty-one consonants and eight vowels, according to a study he made of the Somali dialect spoken in Mudug district of

⁵Ibid., p. 37

Somalia.⁶ But I see 21 consonants and 8 vowels.

There are two orthographies of Somali. One is the one used in Somalia since 1972, based on Latin script, and the other is the one used in Ethiopia, since 1975 for the National Literacy Campaign and based on the Ethiopic alphabets.

2.2 People, Culture and Economy

Somalis live in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibutti. Anderzejewski and Lewis describe them in these words: "In their physical features Somali are usually tall, their heads long and narrow in shape, and their skin colour varying from light brown with a reddish tinge to dark black."⁷ This description fits the nomadic and semi-nomadic Somalis more than it does the river side Somalis of Bantu nature who live in both Ethiopia and Somalia. In Ethiopia we find them around Dolo (Sidamo, Borena Awraja) and in Hararge in Qalaafo Awraja around Mustaxiil and Qalaafo towns. Ethnically, the Somalis "belong to the Hamitic (or cushitic) ethnic group."⁸

Somalis live on nomadism and agriculture. The cultivating ones usually live around rivers (Southern Somalia, Qalaafo and Gode Awrajas in Ethiopia) and around lands

⁶ John Joseph Pin, "Somali Sound and Inflection." (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Idiana University, 1965).

⁷ Andrzejewski and Lewis, op. cit., p. 5

⁸ Ibid.

adjoining the highlands (Gursum, and Jijiga Awrajas). Though Somalis are mostly associated culturally and economically with nomadism, the cultivating population also commands a significant socio-economic sector. These agriculturists are not purely farmers, they are usually semi-nomads. They grown maize, sorghum and a few other cereals as in the case of Jijiga and Gursum Awrajas.

The cultivators and the semi-cultivators, though economically different, socially and culturally identify themselves more with the nomadic culture. Religion, marriage, kinship organization and other social practices could be mentioned as examples to prove the point. This could be so because the majority of the Somali population practices nomadism.

The life of the nomad is the most arduous and the most loved kind of life by the Somali. Climatically the habitats of nomads are semi-arid with poor vegetation and rain. There are two main seasons the gu' (summer, wet) when water and pasture are in plenty, and when the nomad too is mentally serene and compassionate. It is during this seasons that youngsters sing to each other for hours and hours in the long and peaceful moony nights, that elders reconcile enemies, that marriages are in plenty and that even the urbanite Somali goes down to his kin to drink milk. Water during this season is in every pond and young men are relieved of the back-breaking pulling of water from deep

wells, as during dry seasons; young women and girls too are relieved of the long journey of water-fetching, for in this season, water is only a few paces away from the village. The most loved of beasts camels, cows, goats and sheep too browse proudly on the tender grass and leaves without giving much ado to their herds. It is during this season that praise songs and lasting nicknames are bestowed upon the beloved animals. This abundance however is not allowed to intoxicate people to the point of forgetting Allah or the coming dry season. As a Somali proverb has it: Cows jiilaal waa la ma huraan

"The inevitable is dry season's grass."

Contrary to this, the dry season. (Jiilaal-winter, dry) is a harsh season when water and pasture are scarce, and along with it, milk, the staple food is at its lowest ebb. The Jiilaal is hot, dry and dusty. This dryness, dust, thirst and hunger gets on the nerves of the nomad. He is no more "serene and compassionate" but irritable and harsh. The sun's heat seems to boil his blood to action for he has to drive his cattle for miles over arid land to look for water, and then possibly, bitterly contend rivals over the meagre water; and on the same day he might fight others over pasture. The cattle during this season are no more affectionately praised, but cursed and jostled around for their notoriety. Plunders and raids, retributive measures of earlier wounds are the order of the day.

These two seasons seem to play important roles in the making of the Somali man. His movement through these two opposite poles, in my opinion is what his life is -- they affect his personality, and at large, formulate his world view, and whatever existed by way of social values, religious or otherwise are there to shape this man to these opposing demands. He is expected to take satiety with a reasonable appetite, and to prepare himself for hardship in the dry season, and also exercise restraint in his dealings with his fellow men in such hard times.

The social organization and political structure of the Somalis is best expressed by I.M. Lewis in the following way in his two books:

A Somali tribe is a highly segmented group, with its own specific name and tribal mark (Summad) traditions and sentiments. It occupies a common territory within which it considers itself, and is considered by other, to be the land-holding unit The tribe has a segmented political organization normally in a tribal chief, whose power is restricted to matters concerning the tribe as a whole.

In this second book of 1961, Lewis has the following on the same subject.

Like all pastoral nomads, the Somali have no indigeneous central government or political institutions. The key to Somali plitice lies in kinship who trace descent through males to a common male ancestor from who they

⁹ I.M. Lewis - Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar, Saho. Ethnographic Survey of Africa. (London, 1955), 1955), p. 14.

take their corporate name. Political affiliation is thus determined by agnatic descent The second basic principle and one complementary to kinship is a form of social contract, the Somali heer, an explicit treaty¹⁰ defining the term of their collective unity.

Lewis, in both the books extensively discusses how the Somali individual moves through the tribe, which is both a territorial and a political unit down to the last unit, the reer , a small social group.

There are also a considerable number of Somalis whose main occupation is trade living in towns. They trade in merchandize mainly in shops or by taking them on burden camels from place to place. This merchant group has not lost contact with their nomadic home bases and are culturally still attached to nomadism. Whenever nomads come from the interior they usually stay with their closest kins till they depart, and towns men also occasionally go to the rural areas to stay with their kins for a while or to to see some of their livestock that they usually leave with their kins.

Somalis are usually heard dividing their settlements broadly into two - Miyi iyo magaalo, 'rural and town' life. The rurals look at the urbanites with contempt, for they consider them weak, and they accuse them of having lost the Spartan quality of the nomad. Here are some of the things they say to them:

- The urbanites, like children eat food thrice or four times daily.

¹⁰ I.M. Lewis - A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 1.

- They easily get sick and even if they have something as simple as common cold, they complain a lot and run to hospitals.
- Their men and women are shiny and soft, not fit for hardships - a day's thirst or hunger is enough to send them to their graves.
- They do not understand the validity of kinship; they underestimate it mostly.
- They do not understand Somali culture and language very well.
- They are not good Muslims - they don't pray five times daily and are also lenient in fasting the sacred month of Ramadan.
- They are usually victims of bad habits, smoking, 'chat' chewing or prostitution.

The urbanites on the other hand consider their rural kinds uncivilized. The following two proverbs are typical expression.

Reer miyi magaala galay

Waa dameer massaajid galay.

" A rural person that entered a town
Is like a donkey that entered a mosque"
Meaning he is as confused as the donkey in the
mosque!"

Dhar magaalo sida looqaata way dhib yartahay

Dhal magaalo sida loonoqdaa se way dhib dadantahay

"To dress in an urbanite's garment is easy,
But it is not easy to act and behave like an
urbanite born."

The dominant religion of Somalis is Islam Andrzejewski
and Lewis write:

... Islam is a vital force and the regular religious duties are taken seriously: the daily prayers (most scrupulously observed by the old), alms-giving to the poor the feast of Famadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, and the confession of the faith: 'there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet' ... To Somali, God is remote, all-powerful, judging and just, and men turn to him in sorrow and distress, as well as in joy and thanksgiving. Sickness and health, good and ill fortune, all exist with his consent and are in his power to withhold or bestow...¹¹

Islam at the village is taught by local teachers and at mosques, in its advanced level by Shiekhs.

The Shiekh or the wadaad is an important figure in the society. Beside his religious teachings he attends the sick, leads prayers, solemnizes marriage, councils people and generally acts as a spiritual leader. The Quraan serves not only as religious, but also as treatment for diseases or, personal misfortunes, or is used toward off natural calamities. For medicine, verses from the Quraan are written on pieces of papers and sewn in parchments to be hanged from the neck or worn around the arm as amulets.

¹¹ Andrzejewski and Lewis, op cit., p. 27-28

Sometimes shiekhs read the Quaraan and spit on a bowl of water and make patients drink the water considered to have a healing power. Such water is called tahliil.

Marriage in Somali society is an honorable practice expected of every respectable adult. If a man fails to marry deliberately he is considered a fool, and if a girl is ignored till after marriage age (15 and above) she is referred to as coon, a fool with long nails often with dis-levelled hair, disorderly dressed and generally stupid, and only good for herding goats.

Marriages, though necessary, are not usually easy. Bride prices and dowries are high, and there are times when men fail to marry if they do not have relatives to back them. Payment of bride price is in kind (clothes ornaments for the bride) cows or camel and in cash. Regarding choice of partner, the male often selects the girl of his choice, talks to her and then informs his relatives who formally request the girl's parents or close relatives. If agreement is reached the marriage contract is formalized by a shiekh or a religious court, and the wedding takes place some time later.

There are several criteria for the choosing of a partner for both sexes. The girl the man chooses could be from any Somali clan except the low castes called Midgaan, Gabooye or Tumaal. She has to be reputed for the strength of her clan, beautiful, strong physically and mentally hospitable and a woman who can bear strong healthy children in the future.

The girl on her part is expected to marry "a man in whose arms her relatives can trust her." He has to be from a reputable clan, wealthy if possible; but most important of all a strong disciplined man, dedicated to his family and kin, and who has all signs of being able to carry, the family through hard times. Girls usually test their would-be husbands wittingly and could resign accepting him if he does not come up to their standards of what a husband should be.

The most commonly heard purpose for marriage is that of children. Personal and emotional motives though understood are kept subservient. Propagation in this society is an important issue for the survival of a certain clan or tribe is dependent upon its numerical strength. The harsh ecology dictates the philosophy of the survival of the fittest. A clan's access to water and pasture is guaranteed by its strength; blood-wealth paying for instance is easier, and even encourages men to revenge on their enemies when one is assured by the support of a clan with an impressive population. In marriage therefore, it is the communal interest that is capitalized on and not the individual. This, however, does not mean that, say, a woman is not expected to love her husband or express her love. If she is hospitable for his kin, and they recognize it for her, it is considered as a sign of love for husband; the same is true for concern and care she shows to his property, wealth and his children.

Foolishness, feebleness and lack of courage are traits abhorred in marriage and other aspects of social life, for giving room for the existence and development of these traits would inevitably lead to degeneration or extinction. For that harsh ecology they live in strength is an indispensable quality for survival.

A further discussion on the culture of the Somalis, would, I am afraid rob the paper of its main body and I hope the above brief introduction would give the reader a fair picture of Somali society.

The Somalis from whom the tales for this study are collected more or less share the same socio-economic-cultural picture, and hence no separate attention would be given them by way of introducing them socially and culturally. If there is anything peculiar to them, it would be treated briefly in the next chapter of the paper.

3. Area of Study

The study was made in Jijiga, a town found in Hararge Administrative Region, in Eastern Ethiopia. The collection of the tales was not made by going into the rural areas and living with and observing the people; this was not possible due to reasons beyond my control. I did the collection among four to five thousand people settled by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission temporarily, on the outskirts of the town, at Shiekh Sherif.

The dwellers of this shelter came from the surrounding "Woredas", from Gursum Awraja to the west, and from Dagaxbuur Awraja to the south. The bulk of the population though, is from Jijiga Awraja, (See map on Page).

The Bartire tribe come from the East of the shelter, speak only Somali and are agriculturalists and nomads. The Ogaden and the Abasgual who come from the south are mainly pastoralists and also practice some agriculture. The Geri and the Jarso are from the northwest and are mainly agricultural, but they also practice nomadism. They speak Somali and Oromo. The Bursuug people come from the west, are both agricultural and nomadic, and speak more Oromo than Somali.

The shelter is located in the western part of the town on a vast plane at the foot of the Karamara mountain chain, and is spotted with thousands of huts.

The shelter is divided into twelve "Kebeles", each with its chairman and council of elders. At the top is the administrator of the shelter with his staff and he is the representative of

the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. These people have not yet lost contact with their home bases. Most have some people left there, to take care of the little left from war and drought, and they visit them every one or two months.

The dwellers of the shelter are one-hundred percent Muslims and the great majority speak Somali, except the Bursuug (from Gursum Awraja) and Geri who speak both Somali and Oromo.

Topographically, Jijiga Awraja is found in what is known as "The Southeastern Highlands and their Associated Lowlands."¹² It is obviously in the adjoining low lands and has the climatic characteristics of semi-arid areas. Temperature here, ranges between 20°C and 30°C, whereas the mean annual rainfall is 500 mm. "The area is characterized by annual water deficit."¹³

People in this Awraja practice both nomadism and cultivation. They have cattle, sheep, goat and camels. Their burden animals are donkeys and camels. Sorghum is the main crop produced, for it "has the ability to withstand moisture shortage ... (and) can be adopted to various altitudes."¹⁴ Sorghum also has high yield.

¹²Daniel Gamachu - The Location and Topography of Ethiopia. Faculty of Education, HSIU, 1969 (revised).

¹³Bekure W/Semayat - "Life Patterns in the Semi-arid Region of Ethiopia" in Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA) November 1980 (Proceedings of Workshop. April 9-13, 1980 - Nazareth, Ethiopia).

¹⁴Tewelde Berhan G/E and S. B. Edwards. "Ecological Problems and Prospective of Semi-Arid areas in Ethiopia." "Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa. November, 1980.

4. Methods

Finding informants was not an easy matter. J. Vasina says there are two possibilities in the transmission of tradition. "It is", he writes "handed down by specialists or by ordinary channels", and he advises the collector to be careful not to land on the one with "the foreign mentality", or on the one with multi versions; but to choose "Someone who is common and who has reached a position which enables him to be conversant with tradition."¹⁵

At first, in the town, many posed as specialists, only to prove soon that they knew very little. The little money, "Chat" or meagre invitations offered them were the driving force behind their pretense.

The shelter, much organized as it was, immediately produced four people the elders thought were "light-tongued" or "men of words". The two men and the two women I was offered were mainly singers and poets and could remember only one or two tales. They were mainly conversant in either Gabay (long serious classical poems - in the case of the men) or Buraanbur (less elaborate and lighter poems composed by women). This official channel was strenuous, and only when I got to know the people more, was I able to find my way about.

From my limited experience of two and half-months with these people I am inclined to say that there is no such things as "an official storyteller", or a "tradition-bearer" in Somali society,

¹⁵J. Vasina - Oral Tradition: A study in Historical Methodology (translated by H.M. Writht) Penguin Books, London, 1973.

as some folklorists witnessed in some West African Cultures.¹⁶
The Somalis distinguish the "poet", (male or female), the singers (both sexes) and "the wise old man", usually learned in the Quran. It is possible that one is a poet, a story-teller, or a singer at the same time.

"Sheeko", in Somali literally means just 'talk' or 'chat'. One could ask a friend to have a "Sheeko" with on serious matters, or just to kill off time. The word also means a 'story' or a 'tale'. It was difficult to get "Sheeko" from all adults unless it was of serious moral, religious or of philosophical nature. All other tales according to them are maalaayacni - 'useless', 'worthless' or just Sheeko dhalaan - 'Children's tales'. I then had to go to the women folk, and after taking quite a long time to gain their confidence, I got my tales. The men's explanation for this was that women themselves are no better than children, that their constant concern and stay with children made them so. That is why most of my tales are from women. The lofty ones, as mentioned above are almost all from men. Of course the men too did tell me some lighter ones. Children between 8 and 15 too, were some of my informants.

Finnegan has the following to say about the degree of specialism:

Story-telling is usually practised by non-professionals ... Though some individuals are clearly regarded as more expert than others ... it tends to be a popular rather than a specialist art.¹⁷

¹⁶In Finnegan's - Limba Stories and Story-telling (Oxford, 1967) the role of the story-teller in this form of Limba literature is discussed.

¹⁷Ibid.

Of the one hundred tales, about 80 were taken down by dictation in an orthography adapted in Somalia since 1972. This was a very tedious job, specially for the informant who had to slow down to my writing speed. I think this would have been impossible had it not been for my familiarity and identification with the people, the language and the culture. They simply considered me as one of them. The rest of the tales were recorded in my home, on cassette receiver where there was electricity and less noise.

Story-telling naturally attracts listeners, and when I was taking down the tales there was always a group of people, children or some adults to laugh, comment, or just interrupt, to throw in their version, or to just snatch what was to come next from the informant's mouth. At times, this grew so intolerable that I and the informant had to sit shut in a hut for hours.

While taking down the tales, I first asked the name of my informant, his age, the area he came from and his occupation prior to his/her coming to the shelter. I also asked if the informant spoke Oromigna along with the Somali. This last question was particularly of help in distinguishing whether the informant first heard the tale in both languages, I asked them to briefly tell me each tale, and then took down the one he had heard in Somali. This was particularly so with informants from Gursum Awraja, and the Geris of Western Jijiga.

Dwellers of the shelter as I mentioned earlier are not all from Jijiga Awraja. Those who came from Gursum were mostly agriculturalists and those from Dhagaxbuur mainly nomadic.

Though a tale that could come from both areas may be thematically the same and in the same language, at times characters differ, hinting at, whether the tale is agricultural or nomadic based.

The following tale could make the point clearer.

Hyena and Monkey boasted to each other about beauty. Each argued he was more beautiful than the other. They went to a man to judge their case. On the eve of the judgement day each went to the man and threatened him. The Hyena went to the man first and told him he would eat the man's calves if he disfavoured him in his verdict. The monkey too went to the man and told him to be in his favour; or else face a destruction of his crops. The man agreed to be fair, and told each separately that he would pinch the beautiful on the shoulder. When they came to him the next day, he asked them to stand side by side giving him their backs. With his two hands, he then pinched each and said "you excel him in beauty." Each, thinking the pinch was meant only for him was very happy, and without looking back rushed forward. The clever man saved both his farm and calves.

In the second tale (not within here), the characters are Hyena and Forest Pig, and all the rest are similar.

Pigs are not well known in the mainly nomadic areas like Dhagaxbuur, and so, for them the characters are Hyena and Monkey. In the agricultural areas the characters are Hyena and Pig. The pig is a well known destroyer of crops.

As I am interested in thematic and not in structural analysis, such tales posed no problem in the collection as long as they were from the Somali language and culture.

Another problem that often cropped up was that of versions. Where two or three versions appeared, I took the one more popular, and some times also took the second. Some tales overlapped - an informant begins to tell me a tale which at first appears to be different from the one heard before on the same theme, but

is found ending in the same way as before. In such cases too, I wrote down the one that was popular with several informants.

During the day, I was busy taking down the tales and it was only in the nights that I had the time to read the tales and correct some parts that I had hastily taken down. The time taken to collect the tales was about two and half months - from early August 1981 to mid October.

I began translating the tales into English from Somali when I came back to Addis in December. Most of the tales were translated and summaries of each tale was put on cards. This was followed by a thematic categorization, again on cards, and a close study of the selected tales was followed by going to and from between the original and the translations.

The tales selected for this study are in the appendix and are arranged and given sequential numbers by themes. Reference would be made to these numbers during analysis in the main body of the paper.

4.1 Transcription

I used the 1972 Somalia orthography, because I thought it much simpler than the International Phonetic Alphabets; it uses the Latin script which is not a problem for English speakers provided some letters with peculiar sounds are explained. Here is the whole set.¹⁸

¹⁸Phonetic transcription are given only for some peculiar consonant sounds, the rest are similar to English.

(a) Consonants:

b	g	l	r	w	Dh:	ʃ
c = q	h	m	s	y	x:	k
d	j	n	t	kh:x	Sh:	ʃ
f	k	q:q				ʔ

(b) Vowels

a	i	o	u	e
aa	ii	oo	uu	ee

The selected tales are all translated into English. The need for this orthography will arise when some indispensable Somali words expressions or proverbs appear in the translated tales or in any other part of the paper.

5. Oral Literature in Somali Language.

Anybody who understands the Somali language and lives among them would easily feel the richness of their oral literature. Proverbs for instance, are almost on everybody's lips - in shops, just in the streets, in tea houses, or in ordinary social gatherings. Government representatives and people from other Ethiopian cultures who live with Somalis are often stunned by the elegant oratory of elders or association chairmen in public meetings. It was only last September, 1981 when we were celebrating the 7th anniversary of our Revolution at Jijiga Revolution Square, that a young man from the surrounding Farmers' Association was given the platform. The introducer told the assembly that the young man was going to recite a poem on the occasion. In no time, Somalis speakers were seen sandwiched around the platform, and a deadly silence reigned. The theme was something like "Stand united against external aggression", and the audience was already chorusing with him, picking some of his rhyming words. Strangely enough, in that same afternoon, people were repeating the poem.

This love for oratory, poetry and wit, is what adds to the quality and reputation of a person. When, for instance one hears someone addressed as "a real man", it may not necessarily reflect only courage, generosity, justice or his hard work; but also his skill in oratory, poetry, songs and other qualities of the type.

Andrzejewski and Lewis have the following remark in their book about the place of poetry in Somali society:

Poetry occupies a large and important place in Somali culture, interest in it is universal, and skill in it is something which everyone covets and many possess. The Somali poetic heritage is a living force intimately connected with the vicissitudes of everyday life.¹⁹

Andrzejewski, I think is more articulate and elaborate in what he says in an article entitled "The Art of the Verbal Message in Somali."

The extensive and conscious cultivation on the art of speaking is one of the most striking features of Somali culture. Its highest form is found in the alliterative oral poetry outside the rigid framework of alliteration and poetic rhythm, the speech of everyday life is often enlivened by striking images and with.²⁰

He then goes on to explain how important "verbal message" is in a highly illetrate society where only a few Shiekhs learned in the Quran, could only read; and how "the rhythm and the rigid requirements of alliterative verse preserve the message from distortion, contamination or omissions." Another interesting point he mentions is how what he calls "an invisible envelope". that is, messages put into codes, protected the 'secrecy' and 'privacy' of the message. The example of the poet Raage Ugaas and his father, in their exchange of messages through a bearer, unaware of the secretive content of what he takes with him, is most amusing.²¹

¹⁹ B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis - Somali Poetry: an Introduction. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 3

²⁰ B. W. Andrzejewski, "The Art of the Verbal Message in Somali", Neueafrikanistische Studien (Hamburg, 1966), p. 29

²¹ Ibid.

It would not be fair to speak of the various forms in which Somali oral literature appears without making a comprehensive study of it. I would only venture to mention the most obvious ones. Narrative Prose (tales), Poetry, narrative poetry, proverbs, riddles, anecdotes and songs. Prose narrative contains legends, myths and ordinary tales. Songs are work songs, love or praise songs for man and animals and those songs that occur in tales. Proverbs, riddles and anecdotes are self-evident.

For what comes under poetry, I think Andrzejewski and Lewis' classification is fair enough.²² They distinguish:

- The Gabay - long classical poems of serious nature thematically.
- The Geeraar - A slightly shorter poem, much 'swifter' and livelier than the Gabay.
- The Buraanbur - lighter and elaborate poems composed and recited by women.
- The Jiifto - closer to the Gabay.
- The modern are relatively recent innovations short and Heelo and Hees - condensed and with 'light entertainment'.
They are usually sung.
- 'Dance and Work songs'

Perhaps one last remark about Somali oral literature could be the function and utility of it and at what occasion each genre is used.

²² Andrzejewski and Lewis, op. cit., pp. 46-52

The narrative prose is mostly self-evident. There are, those teaching morality, entertaining, or reflecting philosophically on life. Each is told or expressed in its proper place. Children herding cattle or goats may, for the most part of the day and under shady trees, tirelessly parrot to each other their child-lore. They may continue this with adults or among themselves, at night after the cows are milked, or after the daily farm work is over, around the fire, or in the bright moon, in the clearings of the village. Shiekhs and elders might illustratively recite pertinent tales to guide the youth in the 'right' and accepted way.' Other tales of etiological nature or legendary nature could to be told to youngsters or adults to justify the existence of a certain natural or social phenomena or to acquaint the listeners to the history or glory of a certain clan.

Poetry too is expressed in relevant contexts, but its purpose seems more explicit. As Andrzejewski and Lewis put it:

Somali poetry serves as a medium of publicising the poet's views, thoughts and attitudes. It may be used for giving moral support to someone, or for undermining his prestige; it may be used as an instrument of war, or of peace and reconciliation...

If a poem like Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' were translated into Somali alliterative verse and chanted to a Somali audience, they would wait till the end and then would inevitably ask, "In what circumstances the poet first recited the poem and what was the purpose?"²³

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Andrzejewski and Lewis. Ibid: p. 44

Poetry therefore, is deliberate and composed whereas, the other genres by and large, are inherited. Poems in the form of songs that occur in narrative prose and which have lived with the tales for quite long may not be considered as composed, for they are part and parcel of the tales themselves.

The above brief introduction about the culture and the oral literature of the Somalis will, I hope give some insight into the literary milieu in which the tales occur.

6. Classification

A popular method with oral literature collectors and analysts to classify tales has been by content. A common category for instance (as in Ruth Finnegan's Limba stories and story-telling)²⁴ is to divide tales into "Animal Tales" or "People's Tales", this, from the outset does not specifically reveal the inner thematic content, and some other analysts have gone a bit further and used such titles as "Moralizing Tales", "Divination Tales", "Hunter Tales"²⁵ etc.

In the former case, animals' tales may not necessarily be about animals alone; in fact, in most cases they are personalized animals reflecting human values. People's stories too may not necessarily be of people alone. There are stories in which animal and human characters act side by side. The overlapping of themes from one category into the other becomes very evident, and it also indicates how arbitrary thematic classifications could be.

Following are given two tales, the first to show that animals tales are not solely of animals, and the second to show how difficult and arbitrary thematic categorization could be.

(a) The Fox and the Tortoise that raced (Appendix 8)

This is usually the first story told to Somali children after the common opening formula:²⁶

²⁴Ruth Finnegan, Limba Stories & Story-telling (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967).

²⁵See: Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits, Dahomean Narrative (Northwestern University Press, 1958).

²⁶An informant, asked about why Somali tales usually begin with this tale retorted, "because it is easier for the tongue," by which she meant the alliterative sounds in Diin (tortoise) and Dacawo (fox), Fox is also pronounced as Dawaco.

Sheeko! sheeko! - 'Tale! Tale!'

Sheeko Xariir - 'Tale the beautiful' and the response from the audience,

Ha inno xarirowdo!

'Let it be beautiful for us!'

It is a trickster tale, in which Fox, the most popular trickster animal in Somali folktales outwits tortoise. During the race, a thorn is broken into fox's leg and she begs tortoise to pull it out for her. Tortoise refuses, but finally yields and pulls out the thorn. A thorn breaks into tortoise's leg and he begs fox to pull it out for him. She refuses to do it till he begs and begs and begs! she pulls it out for him and the race continues. They get two houses: the fox gets a flimsy house, while he gets a new house with a tight door. She outwits him and takes the house from him by telling him that his house is only one doored and that it will not be convenient to escape if enemies came. With her shabby house it is possible, for it has several openings. The race continues and they get a cow and an ox. The tortoise's luck is with a fat ox while hers is with a dying old cow. The fox stuffs some wild white forest fruits into her cow and tells tortoise that it is fat, and persuades him to give her his good ox. The race continues, and they get knives. He gets a blazing knife and she gets ten dry feathers. Here too she outwits him of his good knife telling him that she has many reserves of knives if the first were broken. In the end we see that poor tortoise is at the mercy of Mrs. Fox for everything.

Eventhough the characters of this tale are animals, the underlying theme of intelligence and wit are evident.

(b) The Fox and The Soothsayer: In this tale a certain king invites a reknown soothsayer to tell him about the future. It so happens that the soothsayer has lost his power to predict when the invitation reached him. He had no choice but to obey the king's command and sets out for the king's palace, leaving everything in the hands of Providence. On the way he meets a fox who enquires whether he was going. He tells her that he was going. He tells her that he was going to the king to tell him about the future, for which he has, since sometime, lost the power; and that he was merely going in obedience to the king's command. She expresses her willingness to tell him the future, provided he was willing to equally share with her the gift he receives from the king for his service, she tells him what is in store for the king the coming year. He agrees and tells the king to prepare himself and his subjects against a year of war. On his way back with some cattle given him as gift, he rationalizes and convinces himself that it is foolish to share such a fortune with an animal. He in fact decides to kill her, and throws his spear at her on sight. She doges it and is saves. The following year the king invites the soothsayer again. The man's power to predict is still missing. He meets the fox on the same spot he had met her the past year, and again acquaints her with his problem. This time too they agree to share the king's gift and she tells him to tell the king to prepare himself against a year of drought. Back with the gift, this

time he deliberately changes route and does not meet the fox.

The same request comes from the king on the third year and still the poor man is devoid of his knowledge. With all kinds of apologies he begs the fox to pardon him and pleads for help. She tells him to go and tell the king that the year would be a year of plenty and peace. This time, the man comes with the gift to the fox, to give her her share. The fox, politely asking him for attention tells him that he had flung the spear at her in the first year because it was the time of war. That he had hid from her during the second year, for it was the time of drought when everyone did so. She told him that he has now come with the gift in the year of plenty when she least needed it. She refused the share and told him to go back and tell the king that he should administer his subjects according to the spirit of the different times.

What are the possible thematic interpretations of this tale? Is it about "Man's lack of indebtedness", about "leadership" or about, "The vicissitudes of time and man's behavior". It probably could be looked at thematically from all the angles suggested, and that is what makes thematic classification of tales arbitrary.

But if we apply the techniques literature uses to identify dominant themes, it is true that unambiguous themes that could be justified could be arrived at. My classification has also been according to the dominant theme reflected in each or groups of tales. In the classification such words as "Jealousy", "foolishness", "wit" or "wisdom" have been used to denote themes.

In themselves they might appear to reflect the themes inadequately, but their interchangeability with "theme" is easily understandable. "Jealousy" for instance could be taken as the universal problem of jealousy in men and women and its effects on the behaviors of individuals in life. Accordingly therefore, the following themes are identified among the corpus of tales selected for this study.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) Explanatory | (5) Religiousness and
Morality |
| (2) Wit | |
| (3) Wisdom | (6) Marriage |
| (4) Justice | (7) Women and Jealousy |
| | (8) Natural Calmity |

7. Descriptive Survey and Analysis of the Tales

7.1 Explanatory (etiological)

The concern of etiological tales most of the time is to trace the genesis of natural and social phenomena. Such tales are not usually confined to "that is why it is so", but also imply moral or religious sanctions.

I. M. Lewis writes the following about causation in Somali society: "The ultimate focus of causation is God (Allah), conceived largely as an impersonal power before whom man is impotent and helpless. Sickness and ill health, good and ill fortune, all exist with his consent and are ultimately in his control to withhold and bestow."²⁷

Natural and social phenomena in this society are explained ultimately from a religious point of view.

The locust (No 1) for instance multiplies because the lady mistreated goes and appeals to Shiek Hussien (a saint in Bale province) who gives her one locust. She locks it in a wooden milk vessel and when she opens the vessel some time later, it swarms out in millions and destroys people's crops.

When people go to the Shikh himself and appeal to be relieved, he asks them if anyone among them had committed adultery to a woman among them. When they accept the allegation they are referred back to the lady with a sign given them, and it is only after her blessing that the scourge is warded off.

²⁷ I.M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy, A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 158.

Locust, therefore, has come because of a moral or religious misconduct by man. The attribution of natural calamities to the anger of dieties or the supernatural is a common practice in most primitive societies, and rural Somali society is no exception.

The little bird that lives on the remains of the locust's body answers why it is always after the locust.

The four friends (No 3) are turned into a rabbit, a bird and two insects, because they abandoned society and refused to partake in any funeral.

In the third story, man is changed into rabbit because he fails to abide by religious orders. Probably this story depicts the fight between paganism and Islam in the earlier days.

Xarala (No. 4) is both the name of a place and people. As is evident from the tale, the initial part of the tale is a challenge against the Almighty that refused to give them rain. The result is disastrous: about six hundred people perish. The torrential rain that they get is itself in the form of punishment. A period of plenty follows, and every activity is carried to the extreme, till they pray against:

"a well that never dries"

"crops that never fail" and

"cows that ever give milk"

When Allah in anger wipes out their cattle, they use bread (injera) as mats and pillows. Repentance is never

seen till the shiekh begs of Allah to completely annihilate them; and it is done. The storyteller's embellishment of the situation by a Somali proverb seems most relevant:

saada la ma xajiyo

"Satatiety is never handled properly."

The tale, essentially is religious, but it also traces the history of the Xarla people. The most conspicuous religious teaching is that Allah is unchallengeable. That one has, as Islam preaches, to say, Alxamdu Lillaahi 'Thanks Allah' to whatever he gives - good or bad.

In the farmer's complaint (story 5) we see again the power of God. The farmer complains to God against birds that destroyed his crop and God orders another predator to finish them. When the little birds complain to God, the predator bird is made to die by colliding into a tree trunk, When this big bird complains against the tree, termites are ordered to destroy the tree, and when the tree complains, black ants are orderd to eat them; but when the termites complain, God says he will not destroy the black ants, for they are a united species.

In tale 6, the Almighty Allah has the power to change the snake into a beautiful youth on his marriage day. This happens so because the snake who was born with a boy is ignored when a wife is sought for the boy. It is, as is clear in the story, from this snake that the Legesse, a sub-clan of the Bursuug descend and they have the power to heal snake bites.

In tale 7 it is the leopard that is unfaithful to his friends and breaks promise by eating alone, the little food they get together. He is therefore punished by God and dies of coughing, which has since then become the cause of its death.

Tale 9 explains an important economic element in Somali social life. The man gets the name Gelimeeys from Gelimeeyso in Somali, meaning "you will not enter." Some people come with cattle to be watered to the well this man owns, and because of the scarcity of water he doesn't allow them to drink. They force themselves in and break his head. He too retaliates on another day by shooting at them and their cattle; but since he appears the most victimized, God in anger sends, an epidemic that could only be averted by the man's blessing, and from then on the victim becomes a venerated saint.

A common theme that we witness in all the tales is the omnipotence of God - that he has the power to punish immorality and irreligiousness very severely to the extent of transforming human beings to animals, or annihilating them altogether if need be. This religious mentality has an important place in the world outlook of the Somali. This acknowledgement of the might of God seems also reflected in the socio-economic behavior of the Somalis, for they seem to believe that 'might is right'. This idea would be further elaborated in subsequent chapters. A Somali proverb which seems to show 'might', seen in human life says:

Rabbi iyo rag baa jiraa intakalena war soo raac

"It is only God and the male (man), the rest are append-
ages".

The proverb implies that next to God, the most powerful
is the male sex, which symbolizes might.

7.2 Wit

When Somalis refer to someone as "a real man", among the criteria they have in mind are wit and intelligence. In the harsh nomadic environment where most Somalis live: 'might' plays an indubitable role among the warring tribes. This does not however, often pay. There are for instance times when a person has to pass through a hostile tribe. In such instances, the 'might' of a person against a whole clan is futile. The passerby must use his ingenuity to tactfully avoid unnecessary hostility. He may have to identify himself as a friendly clan, making sure he knows their geneology perfectly. Or such a person could come by, a well owned by a hostile clan with his thirsty cattle. It takes a 'real man' - an orator and a witty person to water his cattle. A girl, say, kidnapped by people she does not approve of is expected to be witty to trace back her way safely. Elders and councillors are expected to be witty and intellegent in collecting blood wealth from their members, or in trying to stop a protracted tribal war. Promising children are expected to be witty and independent at an early age between eight and ten; otherwise they are labelled as dogon' - 'fool', and are harassed till they are worth the attributes of a real man. A needy relative may come to a person from a long distance, and if the expected aid giver is not economically in a position to do so, he must be clever enough to convince his relative of his inability to help. A blunt

refusal or a tactless justification may result in a bad reputation for the host. A relative soon off with little or no help, but with good words may say of his host when he reaches home: hebel hadduuna wax i siininna, si fiican buu iilasohadle which would literally mean: "Even if 'x' did not offer me anything, he spoke to me well" or Nin wayn tag la gumayiraahe, wuxuu kutagaa la tussaa "To an elder one does not say "go", but gives him signs for his departure".

So, wit, intelligence and **expediency** are necessary qualities, and are admired. Life is not lived only by might.

Tales considered under wit are trickster tales for both animal and man.

Of animal tales Finnegan says:

Many of these stories are light-hearted, even satirical and center around ... tricks and computation On another level, what is often involved in the animal stories is a comment, even a satire, on human society and behavior. In a sense, when the narrators speak of the actions and character of animals they are also representing human faults and virtues, somewhat removed and detached from reality through being presented in the guise of animals, but nevertheless with an indirect relation to observed human action.²⁸

The first tale (No 8) is the tale I used as an example on page 26 and is the first tale that Somali Folktales usually begin with. As Finnegan says of such tales,

²⁸ Ruth Finnegan - Oral Literature in Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 351.

it is full of tricks and competition and very much reflects the cunningness of the fox. It is light-hearted and amusing. Another story of the same nature is No. 13 where she outwits all her mates and finally becomes the last person to inherit the cattle. This story however hints at an important bone of contention in the nomadic life. Raiding other clans for the possession of cattle is a common practice. Though the usual motive for this practice is wealth-seeking, there are times when it is performed by proud young men for the sheer adventure of it. The fox in this tale is raided by people who hear of her sole possession of such big fortune. Powerless and lonely as she is, she uses her intelligence to defend her property. Only when it is assured that she is alone are her cattle driven off, but she reclaims them back by her wit.

Two cultural elements seem evident: the weak is often subject to attack; and wit could be his substitute for force. I shall come back to this point when I discuss "Might is Right."

Tales Nos. 9 and 10 could be seen from the point of view of shiekhs in Somali society. Shiekhs or wadaads as they are referred to in Somali, play an important role in teaching Islam, in leading prayers, in formalizing marriages and funeral ceremonies, in acting as spiritual protectors in wars, in arbitrations and in attending the sick and ill by reciting verses from the Holy Quran

on patients or by preparing them various kinds of charms and amulets extracted from verses in the Quran.

The ritual and ceremony at the arrival of a shiekh invited to attend to a sick person is exorbitant. A sheep or a goat is killed, tea is served and "chat", if available, is brought.

The shiekh is usually lodged in a separate hut, and where not possible, a partition is made in the same hut. Thus, he consults his book first, about the possible cause of the patient's ailment, and then chants verses from the Holy Book on the patient and writes him amulets sewn in small leather bags, to be dangled from the neck or tied on the arm. At times, the patient is made to drink holy water spat on from readings of the Quran, called tahliil. This is usually followed by - "kill a sheep or a goat of such and such color, these many years old." The lion's share of this dear wealth is consumed by the shiekh and his entourage - whose size depends according to the popularity of the shiekh. Fee for the shiekh's service is at times agreed upon from the very beginning. A heifer, a couple of goats or sheep, a young camel, a sack of sorghum or, if the hosts are merchants, sugar or money. In some extraordinary cases where the patient has previously passed through the hands of several shiekhs to no avail, the price is higher and dearer. There are for instance cases where shiekh might demand the hand of a girl as

a fee. I personally know of a case where a mother with an epileptic daughter, hearing of a famous shiekh in the interior of the Ogaden took her to him. It was only after a week's treatment that he called the mother and told her that her daughter could be cured provided she (the mother) was ready to cooperate. The poor mother consented to anything in her power, and he told her that it was a sack (100 kgs) of sugar and the hand of her daughter to him. The mother resolutely refused to agree and took away her daughter. She was, however, strongly advised to consent, lest the shiekh cursed the girl and exposed her to more misery.

Shiekhs are not often successful in their healing. They are usually cursed and blamed for having caused so much by way of expense, and failing to heal the patient very rare cases have been witnessed where a shiek alone, or with his entourage has been chased out of a village by desperate hosts.

In tale 8 for instance the fox tries to escape after having consumed so much, but is eventually punished. The trickster nature of the story is more revealed when she fools poor hyena. Incidentally, the hyena is a popular partner that the fox often fools.

In story 9 too the shiekh fox has wasted much - the pragmatic element of punishing the villian even is he is a shiekh is also there, though this time she is saved, but at least wounded.

This double standard of reverence on the one hand for the shiekh and punishment on the other, I think symbolizes the pragmatic attitude of the Somali culture. The following adage perhaps illustrates it more:

Nin dhintay Koba hiisaa dhaamaa

"His shoes are better than he, who died."

Stories Nos. 11 and 12 have more or less the same theme and plot. Both the leopard and the lion have broken faith, but the victimized sincere man is rewarded by the wit of fox that brings his enemies under his control. In both stories the man saves the leopard and the lion from difficulties and each when relieved turns on his benefactor. The victimized man is saved by the witty fox who subjugates the mighty beasts to the snare (the lion) and the bag (the leopard).

The tales are typical trickster tales where the smaller and weaker animal outwits and overcomes the bigger and the stronger. The underlying thin veneer of the use of the relevant rhetoric and wit in justice, is hopefully evident.

In story No. 15, we see how the frog tactfully delays the paying of the blood wealth paying is an important element in the social organization of Somali society. The "tribe" in Somali society as Lewis points out, could be looked at "as a territorial unit", "a political unit, its unity in war and feud", and its behaviors in

marriage.²⁹ Evidently unity in "war and feud" is a guarantee for the survival of a group or even at its lowest level of the individual. This blood-wealth payment is a form of compensation for the lost blood of a kin by another clan. It is called mag in Somali. The "standard rate of compensation" (Lewis, 1955) is one hundred camels for the life of a male and fifty for that of a female. Blood compensation is an important method of controlling violence, which if not curbed could lead to the extinction of a clan. If a certain clan is strong in number, it can easily pay-off the compensation, and if not it is usually painful for its members, and hence the vulnerability to another attack. Blood wealth paying usually takes a long time to negotiate. Series of meetings are held between elders of the warring groups, and it at times requires the intervention of neighbouring or more influential clans and personalities to reach a compromise. Delaying tactics, attributed quite often to bad seasons, drought or the dispersion of the clan into different areas, and hence the difficulty to collect contributions are very common. Payment of blood compensation may be delayed, but never forgotten. The victimized, waiting for an oportune time will one day take his revenge. As a Somali proverb has it:

²⁹ I. M. Lewis. People's of the Horn of Africa. Somali, Afar, Saho. Ethnographic Survey of Africa, North Eastern Africa, Part I. (London, International African Institute, 1955).

Yeelaa wuu illobaa, la' yeelaa se ma illoobo.

"A doer (of harm to another) may forget, but the one upon whom it (harm) is done, forgets not."

The frog in our story (No. 15) is trying to play her cards well with the rat. It tries to fool the rat by an obvious natural fact about its "clan" - that of shouting in water during rainy seasons. The shouting is interpreted as confusion-as the inability to listen to each other and hence impossible to raise the issue of compensation. Mr. rat is appointed for the dry season when obviously the nomad is not in a position to dispense with his livestock.

Stories nos. 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 19 are simple trickster tales. In story 13, the fox outwits all her mates and finally inherits the cattle by playing upon their weak points. In story 14 the big elephant is killed by the small ground squirrel again by exploiting his weak points. The ground squirrel enters into the elephant's stomach through his anus and cuts his intestine into pieces.

In story number 16 a lion and three oxen become friends, and the lion eats them all by act. The oxen are white, brown and black in color. The lion tells brown that the color of white attracts enemies and eats him. To black, he says could be an obstacle to people and eats him; and to brown, the last he simply says, "he for whose friend's hair is shaved, you too must come with your hair wet to be shaved." and eats him.

The rest I hope could easily be understood.

A common element observable in all these witty tales is that the leading characters often exploit the weak characteristics of their victims.

Stories 21, 22 and 23 need special attention:

In 21 and 22 Wiilwaal is the main character. He was an actual hero well known for his prowess and leadership and lived around Jijiga area in the late 19th or early 20th. century. He was from the Bartire tribe that still inhabits the same area. He combined two qualities: might and wisdom in his leadership. There are several stories about his war exploits, his horse and horse riding skill, and his excellence in oratory, wisdom and justice. The two qualities of wisdom and might which he combined are both characteristics that Somalis wish to see in their leaders. The boqors, garaads or sultans of tribes - all kings and chieftains, were expected to have such qualities. At times, leaders were Imams and poets aside from military strength. In story no. 21 the hero Wiilwaal, who could have easily got rid of his rival by sheer force is easily seen compromising because he couldn't outwit him. In other words, he accepts the friendship of Cigaal because he is an intelligent speaker despite the great offence of adultery Cigaal commits on Wiilwaali's wife.

In story no. 22 we see a tussle going on between force and wisdom. When the fearful Wiilwaal threatens, the villagers to produce the piece of meat that "reconcile and

equals men", or face death, the villagers expend all they have by way of meat, till they are saved by the wit of the daughter of one of the villagers whom Wiilwaal marries because of her intelligence. This girl outwits the gaint Wiilwaal himself. He asks her to bear a child overnight, and she, on the morrow, announcing to have given birth asks of him the milk of a cow that conceived in the night and gave birth to a calf in the morning. She again saves the villagers from fear when, he on his departure demands to see his horse with an off-spring when he comes back. She pacifies them by alerting them to the fact that the gestation period for horses is twelve months, and that he will not be back till then. The tale seems to say blind force and violence could be sideslipped by wit.

A story that says the same thing is that of Araweelo (No. 23). Araweelo is a legendary queen that was a scourge to men in the reign. Where she had ruled is not clear; all that is known is that she was a queen that ruled with an iron hand. She was determined to perpetuate her reign and was particularly against the male sex as a whole whom she used to castrate right at birth. Her clandestine rival and destroyer was Ode Biige, her grandson (according to the version I heard) who was saved by her daughter's endless pleading and tact. The legend says that he was the man behind the scene who foiled all her logically unmeetable demands; and this seemingly unchallengeable herione had

to be brought down to her knees only by wit. The men that surrounded her were only bulls who could not muster any courage to rebel; for it is believed that the castration had adversely affected their manhood. Ode Biige, the man whose manhood is not touched, answers all her riddles.

Araweelo in Somali oral literature now symbolizes women's cruelty and spitefulness. Sometimes one hears even small girls jokingly addressed or nicknamed Araweelo!, to denote a little girl's untimely matured speech and wit. For Somali men Araweelo is considered to be the mother-source of all women's evil; and in the perpetual war between men and women, the latter are said to be acting on the legacy of Araweelo's precepts. To this effect, a singer and once said:

Dabcigii Araweelo dulacay ku sitaane,

Waa idiin digayaaye,

Dumar daacad ha moodina.

"In their girdles they carry Araweelo's behavior,
I am alerting you oh! men,
Think not that women are honest."

The legend of Araweelo in Somali tales has had an important effect on the attitudes the society bears about women in general. "No women should be given the liberty to have the upper hand in any social intercourse, ^{if} ~~lest~~ she turns out to be another Araweelo", seems to be a general principle towards dealing with women.

7.3 Wisdom

Wisdom and wit are liable to be confused at times, and I wish to give very simple dictionary definitions. This is quite deliberate for I do not want to indulge into profound and philosophical definitions which apparently are not the concern of this paper.

Wit - "The ability to perceive unexpected connections between ideas, things or situations and express them in a brief, clever, and often sharp way."³⁰

Wisdom - "Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with good judgement"³¹

Wisdom clearly has more depth and width and seems also to reflect a philosophical attitude based on long time observation of social and natural phenomena, and I wish to look at wisdom this way in this section of the paper.

Wisdom in Somali society is said to be God-given and is believed to have supremacy over force. Coupled with religion, it is what is said to give guidance to human thought and action.

Tale no. 24 is a typical example of the supremacy of wisdom over the two other traits given, that is, generosity and courage. The three men in the story boast to each other traits given, that is, generosity and courage. The three

³⁰Jess Stein (ed) - The Random House Dictionary (New York, Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 1020.

³¹Ibid., p. 1019.

men in the story boast to each other of their qualities, and the man who possesses wisdom sets out on a journey with the two, to prove to them that wisdom is supreme. Their first encounter is a bushsquirrel that killed a she-camel and the wise man takes this as an example of wisdom. If it were not for the God-given wisdom, the tiny squirrel would not have killed such a gaint as the camel.

In the evening they come to a village, and according to custom they expect to be hosted; but to their amazement the villagers fence their gates against them and threaten to kill them if they try to force themselves in. A bigger surprise is added when the villagers tell the travellers that they have two lions that come every evening to their village and for whom they sacrifice one among their members. The village elders say that they are lucky tonight for having got them (the guests) to relieve their man for the night. The leader of the three alerts them to this strange experience quite new to their custom, and asks them to come up with solutions. The generous comes forth to sacrifice himself and the courageous proposes to fight. The wise man reminds them that all will not pay, save wisdom, at such critical moments. The lions come and the wise man prays to God to make them talk to him. By His grace they talk to him and he asks them which one of the lions is the king so that he would give them their evening dinner. The lions, never having been conscious to such a question before, are at a loss and each claims leadership. They fight to settle

the issue and both lions die in the combat and the men pass the night peacefully.

When in the morning the villagers see what has happened, and learn that their enemies were overcome by wisdom, and God's grace - they host the three men and give a girl as gift to the leader. He declines the girl and tells his hosts that he only wanted to prove the supremacy of wisdom to his friends. He accepts a hundred camel and lives with his hosts then after.

Two elements stand out quite clearly in this tale. One is, as mentioned, the supremacy of wisdom coupled with God's power, and the respect and veneration given to wisemen. This latter element seems to correspond with how saints or prophets ascend to power in Islam. Such people are given due respect and places of leadership because of the miracles they perform. The hero of our story too is given leadership position and gifts for what he does to relieve the society of its scourage.

'The fox and the soothsayer' (no. 25) reflects an important philosophical observation of life. The soothsayer who loses his power to predict the future is helped by the fox. The man promises to share every gift he receives from the king whom he tells the future every year. The first year becomes a year of drought and the king is told by the man to prepare himself and his subjects against it. The soothsayer is given gifts but decides not share them with the fox and takes a different route to his house. For the

second year too, the man is at the mercy of the fox to tell the future to the king, and it becomes a year of war. Back with gifts, the man this time throws a spear at her, but she is saved. Again on the third year he is at her mercy and she tells him what to tell the king; that it is going to be a year of plenty.

She tells him that he had bypassed her with the gifts in the year of drought for that is the way people behave towards each other in time of need; and that he threw the spear at her in the year of war, because that was the spirit of the time. She tells him further that she declined the gifts the man brought in the time of plenty for the simple reason that she did not need them, for everything was in plenty now. At least, she tells him to go and tell the king that he should rule his people according to the vicissitudes of time.

The fox seems to pardon the man, for she understands that man's behavior is subject to the objective conditions of the times he lives through.

Somali world outlook seems to understand this fact very well. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper and shall be discussed under "Natural Calamity" in 7.8 drought for instance changes people's behaviour tremendously. In such periods people are restless, aggressive and violent. Plunders and raids, contentions over natural resources, and even transgressions of existing moral-religious laws are common. On the contrary the season of plenty witnesses

love and peace. The fact that human behavior in general is governed by objective socio-economic conditions is no doubt a universal truth and not a truth peculiar only to Somali culture; the fact however, that the culture recognizes it, I think reflects a stronger element of pragmatism which is closely congruent with the hostile type of life most of these nomads lead.

Tale no. 27 reveals wisdom gained out of a close observation of natural phenomena. A son with two men above the waist and two male organs, but only two legs below the waist is born to a family. These peculiar creatures are married to a woman when they are of age. The woman bears them a son, over whom they bitterly quarrel as to whom it should belong. A wise man uncovers the mystery by pinching the genital of the men when they are asleep; and the person who become sensitive to the pinch is given the son.

Such mystery solvers are common in Somali society. There is for instance a legend of a wise man who used to solve mysterious natural and social phenomena. Because he never fails in his judgement, people wanted to test him. Some men made a she-camel swallow an ox and when it started suffering brought her to the wise man to diagnose her illness. The wise man examined the camel as closely as he could for hours, and when he could come to no symptom of all the camel diseases he knew, he said, "This she camel has laid my mind astray, I wonder if she swallowed an ax."

(Hashu mannkeeygay gadday ma missaar bay laqday.

That a camel should, in its normal life swallow an ax is so incredible that he said it so, and luckily it proved so.

In story 30 the fight over the camel off-spring is solved by applying an experience gained out of living with camels for long. Two men find their lost she camels who were on the verge of giving birth at the same place. By the time they find them, both had given birth, and each man, of the two young animals claims his to be the female one (for she is most valuable). They go to elders and the elders take the she off-spring across a river and say its mother will follow it, despite the camel's fear of water. The real mother followed its young despite the water, and that way the owner of the she camel that crossed the river took the little she camel.

The story of the Python and the Man (No. 26) whose elder son is killed by the Python, reminds one of how vengeance is not easily forgotten among these people in the continuous hostility between clans and tribes over natural resources. In the story the man attempted a revenge but fails to kill the Python. Instead his sword leaves a scar on the tree under which the python dwells. When the man demands friendship, despite what happened, the Python reminds him of the impossibility of such relationship as long as the man's son is missing, and for her, as long as she sees that scar on the wood.

In the Somali society unless homicide is redressed by payment of blood-wealth in kind or cash to the victim's relatives, peace cannot be anticipated. For the revenge, even a person who is not aware of the feud, but merely belongs to the guilty clan could be the target.³² The Python has mentioned a standing truth to the man. She knew, it seems, that the man was merely trying to facilitate his vindictive end.

In story 28 a king's three sons fight over the throne and they are sent to wise man to settle their case. The wise man simply gives them three twig tooth brushes and asks them to see him the next day. When they come and he asks them about the tooth brushes, the first son says he threw it away, the second says he used it and chewed it and shows it to the wiseman, and the third says he used it and carefully kept it in his pocket, and gives it to the wise man.

The wise man's verdict is that the one who threw the tooth brush has nothing to look for, for he is not fit to take any such responsibility. The second is told that he would chew his power thus; and the kingship goes to the last son who used and preserved the tooth brush.

The tooth brush is a very common tool that nomads often carry with them. Their flushing white teeth are the result

³²Blood wealth payment for male is a 100 camels and 50 for women. Nowadays however, the number has come down to 3/4 and/or 1/2 of the previous amount. Some elders still argue that the number should never be lowered if violence is to be curbed.

of, at times, day long brushing, and as they say, too, due to the white milk they drink. These tooth brushes are usually tucked around the corners of the ears and are the easiest of tools to be carried. The wise man tests the dutifulness of the sons by these simple tools, implying that he who could not take care of such a trivial responsibility could not be entrusted to bigger one.

In tale no. 29 again it is about three sons and the will their father leaves them. The king leaves his children three closed boxes and the sons take them to wise men to know what they are all about. On the way to the wise men they see three wonders: a vulture sitting on a carrion and shouting to the world that it is hungry, a python, half its body in water and claiming to be thirsty, and two animal games running one after the other. The first animal is wounded and is running with its blood dripping and strangely enough, its blood kills the other one following it. When the sons arrive at the wise men's place they witness three other wonders. The youngest of the three wise brothers appears the oldest, the next younger in age is moderate; and the oldest of the brothers appears the youngest. The sons ask the wise men to tell them the mysteries of the nine events they witnessed.

The wise men's answers for the boxes are easy. One box contains soil, and the son who got it will farm, the other box's content is dung and its owner becomes a nomad.

The third box contains money, and its owner becomes a merchant. Of the three wonders on the way, the wise men say that the vulture is the insatiable rich, the python the blood suckers of mankind and the game, the victimization of the innocent by what he does not know. Of themselves, their youngest appears oldest for he has not a good wife and peace. The second younger is so, for he has several daughters and is poor (daughters are said to ask for anything their father has, to be given them), and their eldest appears the youngest, for he has a considerate wife, a good place to sleep at, and has peace.

The philosophical observations behind this tale concerning the exploiters of mankind are I think evident in the example of the vulture and the python-the insatiable rich and the blood-suckers. Somali society has not, and is not devoid of exploitation. Wealth in fact is a respected symbol of pride, especially in the form of livestock; but the wealthy has, according to Islam to give a certain percentage of his wealth in the form of Zakka (alms given to the needy in cash or kind) and most important of all by clan obligation he is expected to help his clan. A wealthy lone-eater is often condemned and has a bad reputation among his nearest relatives.

Another cultural element is what we see reflected in the ages of the wise men. The youngest looks the oldest in appearance and the oldest, the youngest, all because of

their wives. The husband of the considerate wife is in good condition while that of the inconsiderate is suffering. Wives generally in this society are expected to feed their husbands well, at the expense of themselves living on scrap of food. When for instance she presents a bowl of porridge to him, she turns out everything out of the cooking pot and gives it to him. It is customary for men to leave behind some food for women in the end. Husbands and wives, even in urban areas do not eat from the same dish. Women eat alone, and so do men. If a husband is physically weak it is common to ask his wife, "Are you not feeding the man?" or some times she is euphemistically asked whether she is demanding of him too much work in bed.

In the harsh nomadic environment of woman is not expected to be sentimental and seductive. If she does so it means she will divert her husband's attention from the focuss of working hard to sustain the family, or to fulfill the manly duties that are expected of him by his clan in times of war, raids or plunders. A Somali saying says:

Naagtaadu qeerrkaaga weeyna kaa reebta weeyna
ku qarab gelissaa.

"It is your wife that could make you run abreast with your equals, or retard you."

Two general outlooks seem to stand out conspicuously, namely that:

- wisdom is God-given and thus supreme to any man-made system to run the world and that

- Life itself is a big school in which wisdom is learnt,
and that the pattern of human behavior is subject
to objective socio-economic factors of the time.

7.4 Justice

I. M. Lewis points out two important elements in Somali Social organization: Kinship and Xeer. In Kinship: "Political affiliation is thus determined by agnatic descent and political divisions correspond to differences in agnatic organ."³³

And of Xeer:

The second basic principle and one complementary to kinship is a form of social contract - the Somali Xeer, an explicit treaty defining the term of their collective unity.³⁴

Xeer, therefore prescribes, the 'rights', 'duties' and 'obligations' in the Kinship System. The term Xeer, as Lewis recognizes is sometimes referred to as Caado or generally culture. If for instance someone says "let the case at hand be treated in Somali Xeer", he means to say that the case be seen according to the customary laws of the nationality, as opposed to the formal government laws. "Lack of any stable hierarchy of political units is characteristic of the Somali Social System."³⁵

Lewis writes, this perhaps could be one reason why there are not formal courts per se. The Shir, the general meeting in which every adult partakes is the formal platform where justice is exercised. It is usually held under shady trees in the open air, or, if in towns in houses. Cases

³³ I. M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy, Op.cit., p. 1

³⁴ Ibid.,

³⁵ Ibid.

brought to the Shir range from issues as complex as clan clashes and homicide to personal disputes over natural resources, wealth or marital cases. It is common that a Guddi, ad hoc committee, some times handle special cases.

Islamic law, (the Shareeca) is another facet of legal practices in Somali culture.

The Somali concept of justice could be seen through the following proverbs:

(1) Gari laba nin kama wada qosliso

"Justice does not please two (opponents) at the same time."

(2) Guddi jilicsan iyo qacan gurran waxba kuma taraan

"A weak committee and a left handed man, both, help you not."

(3) Ilaahow eexashona wax hannooga tagin aqoon darrona ha nagucadaabin.

"O God! Show us no mercy if we are partial, but damn us not for ignorance."

(4) Walaalka gar iyo gardaroba ugu hiili.

"In right and wrong, be on the side of your brother."

(5) Runi rag kama naxiso.

"Truth does not cause men to panic."

(6) Run sheeg waa ceeb sheeg.

"To tell the truth is to expose shame."

The tales I have selected for justice could be seen into two broad categories.

(a) Tales of human justice and

(b) Tales of divine justice

(a) Tales of human justice

In tale 31 the frog husband is deserted by his wife who goes to her people. As the custom is, he goes to her people to retrieve her back and presents his case to his brothers-in-law. He demands justice by presenting three characteristics that are typical of him, which he justifies them as sacred qualities by associating them with religion. He tells the jury:

- "If my wife told you that she deserted me because I don't have buttocks, she is right, for I had lost them on constant horse riding during the days of the Prophet when we were fighting the nonbelievers."

- "If she told you that my side is often frosty she is right, for I often pray and use much water to cleanse myself."

- "If she said I am noisy, she is right, for I often make noises while praying with my rosaries."

Justice is not always a one-to-one correspondence, it needs a clever tongue and a witty mind to convince the jury and this is particularly so in the Somali society that loves oratory and respects the persuasive orator or poet. The husband frog knows that his wife left him for the three things he mentioned above; but he has to justify these deficiencies by associating them with venerated religious

qualities. The husband frog's rhetoric also hints at a conception the society has about women; namely, their snobbery. Women like pretences, they want to be lured into a make-believe-world and cannot live with the naked realities of life; and so, according to the society's conception, women are troublesome and illogical.

In tale 32 three men boast to each other of the difficulties they passed through and go to a judge to see their case. One of the contestants says he had fallen into a dry well and an elephant fell over him. He did not die but could not come out and had to live there for two years eating the rotten flesh of the elephant. The second says he went on a journey with his mother-in-law who was pregnant and he helped her deliver a child while on the journey; and the third says that he was born with three fools whom he had to protect from the attacks of others, their attacks against themselves and their attacks against himself. The judge's verdict favors the one born with the fools; and this is no accident.

I will write more elaborately about foolishness in 7.83, but will only mention here what a notoriety it is in Somali society. The fool, in this society that admires and covets wit and intelligence, coupled with might, is a pathetic personality. He never becomes a real man and remains a 'child' all his life. He never can defend the clan, earn his bread properly, nor take any family

responsibility. If anything, he might help in herding. The judge in this story is, according to the out look of the society right in his verdict, for the fool is the most intolerable person in their life that demands strength and wit.

In story No. 33 a King castrates his servant for having attempted to rape the queen. The castrated servant retaliates by taking a five year old son of the king into a river, and the king begs the son to be save, promising to give the servant anything he demands. The servant's only condition becomes the castration of the King himself. This is done, and at every stage of the operation the man in the river asks where the king feels the pain most. The first reply of the king is the head, to which the servant does not agree and commands the castration repeated. The second point of pain is the back, and the answer is 'no'. The third is the sole of the feet and only then does the man agree that the castration has been carried out. He does not, however, save the son; he goes with him down stream saying that all the mistake lies in the king who listened to a woman's advice.

It is an eye for an eye type of justice, but again the negative attitude toward women is evident even when they are victimized.

In tale 34 a man goes to a mountain near by and on the way meets a leopard. The leopard attempts an attack and

the man gets it by the tail and does not give the leopard a chance to bite him. Another man who was also going to the mountain comes by and the first man asks him to relieve him of the beast, but he refuses and continues on his journey. In the evening the same man comes by the first man, and this time accepts to receive the leopard's tale and asks the first man to kill the leopard. The first man passes the tail to him but declines to kill the leopard and leaves him. For the whole dark night the second man holds the leopard by the tail and in the morning the first man comes and kills it. Now the two men fight on the leopard's hide and threaten each other with death, They take their case to an old man whose verdict is that the hide should go to the man who held the leopard's tail in the darkness of night.

The first man meant to teach the bitterness of his experience when he left the leopard unkilld in the hands of the second man, but it is his selfishness that brings him in the morning to kill the leopard. Justice however, favors the one that suffered most, and rightly, gives the hide to the second man.

Premarital sex is not allowed in Somali society. A man bethrothed to a girl can officially have the liberty to stay and sleep with her for some days before marriage through an arrangement called dadab gal, but outside that he would be in trouble. In tale 35 the wedding preparations

of a young couple is underway. The mother of the daughter is proudly constructing the wedding hut with her friends. Meanwhile, the girl goes out to fetch wood and her betrothed who sees her, follows her into the forest, and demands to sleep with her. She tries to reason with him, but in vain, and he attempts rape. The girl shouts and people assemble. The girl's mother who hears this pulls down the hut in anger, swearing that her daughter would not be given to such a rascal. The father of the daughter who comes in the evening says that the boy should have been patient till evening, the girl should have kept quiet, for she would have met the same man any way, and the mother-in-law should not have pulled down the hut for the couple would have done the same thing they did outside in the house too.

The advocacy for restraint is apparent, but the element of pragmatism that lies behind the verdict of the father is very impressive. The couple and the parents could have been saved of public shame had they reacted rationally to the situation, is the message of the old man.

Tales Nos. 36 and 37 show how justice could be mishandled. Several things could often influence justice: money-power, physical power, power through organizations or power through sheer greatness of number over the victim. At times, intelligence and wit could become the only way out.

In the quarrel between the ground squirrel (No. 36) and the rat, the rat insists that her ox gave birth to a calf. When the case is presented to an animal court, ground

squirrel is deliberately late for the meeting. When it is asked the reason for its late coming, he gives them an impossible reply - that he was sewing torn earth. When asked how this would be possible, he answers them by another question of how possible it is for an ox to give birth to a calf.

In tale No. 37 too hyena and fox quarrel over a donkey and a camel. The hyena owns a pregnant donkey and the fox owns a pregnant camel. In the absence of the fox the camel and the donkey give birth, and donkey takes camel young to his donkey and brings the donkey's to the camel. When fox comes and an argument ensues, they come to no compromise and so take their case to an animal's court which favors hyena's declaration. Rabbit, who was absent from the meeting comes late and stands aloof; he is asked to join the meeting but refuses and shouts from afar that they should put the camel young with its mother, and the donkey young too with its mother. The animals, wondering at how they failed to see such a simple thing, in anger, rise to crush rabbit; but alas! he is gone into his bushes. So justice is saved, and fox reclaims its camel.

In tale 38 a woman quarrels with her husband and goes out of her home, and on the way she is eaten by a lion. Her husband who discovers the lion in the morning courageously fights the lion, and while they are struggling, another man comes and opens the lion's stomach with a knife.

A necklace that the eaten woman wore drops out, and the men fight over the ownership of the necklace. They go to elders when their argument is about to lead to killing each other. The elders decide that the necklace should go to the husband who was ready to sacrifice his life for his wife.

(b) Tales of Divine Justice

What I call devine justice is judgement given by God in the affairs of man, and so, they are basically religious. Such justice in the following tales takes place when the leading characters of the stories are victimized by other fellow human beings for some natural short comings they have, or for injustice done secretly, and which only God has the eyes to see.

In tale 29, for instance a blind man abandoned by his migrating kins is given the flesh of venomous snake by an enemy of his. The blind man vomits and miraculously regains his sight. The intervention of God seems to be because of the helpless victimized.

In tale 40 cat, dog, hen and donkey who served man for years are eventually threatened by death or abandonment. They say "if man hates us, God does not" and go out to live in a desolate forest where they are not molested by man. They get an old deserted house, and while they are resting in it, three thieves come with some gold they had stolen. Unaware of the occupants, they relax to rest. The four animals, deciding to take their revenge on man, shout at the men loudly, and the men, scared to death, flee the

the house, leaving the gold to the animals. One among the men decides to come back and secure his wealth and he is attacked severely. In the end, the animals sale the gold and live on the money for the rest of their lives.

In tale 41 a king is without children with his wife. She nags him for divorce, putting all the blames of childlessness upon him. He begs her to no avail. Finally, he suggests to her that he will test himself on another woman and asks her to give him only a two-month's time. The second woman becomes pregnant and the first one gets madder. She goes to her father and asks him if he or ~~her~~ mother had any disease that could have prevented her from having children. The father tells her that her mother had a disease and he finds her herbs and other medicines from Shiekhs till she's cured, and two months later she too becomes pregnant. Now both have children, but the first wife decides to destroy the second wife; for she thinks she and her children cannot share the king's wealth with the second wife. She establishes friendship with the second wife and one day poisons her food. The second wife dies and the first mourns pretentiously. Now, according to custom the king has the right to marry the dead wife's sister, but his first wife would not let him do it. When she insists, he knows that she had killed his second wife.

We see here that the first wife tries to break her marriage in want of children, but one thing she overlooks according to Islam, is patience. A Somali proverb says:

Samre sad ma waayo

"The patient, shall be rewarded in the end."

The barren woman in the tale is expected to wait for divine justice in such cases instead of resorting to human justice that could lead to sin, as happened to her.

Tale 42 is a typical example of divine justice. Two men go out into the forest to gather some edible gum. One of them gathers more gum than the other and the second asks him for some. The first man refuses to give the second anything, and the first kills his friend by a spear. The death of the second man remains a mystery for quite a long time, and one day, when the killer passes by the spot he killed the man on, he sees his friend's bones and smites one of the bones with the bottom of a spear he was carrying. The bone flies up and hits one of his eyes. He feels the pain so much that he fears death, and he confesses to his kinsmen who were with him that he had once killed so and so on this spot, and that they should pay his blood wealth; a little later, he dies.

God's justice may be delayed, but it is sure to come. The man had hidden the crime, but God disclosed it and punished him for it.

The necessity of justice in this society, as could be deduced from the tales, appears to be to control and perpetuate society; control, because of justice were not to interfere, either violence or infringement of social

values will take place. The violence that emanates out of injustice or lack of justice negates the perpetuation of society in both its material and social aspects. Infringements of social or religious values are equally important, for they could lead to the alienation of the individual in his own society, or he could receive God's punishment.

The need to perpetuate society certainly is a universal desire, and it could be looked at mainly from the point of view of trying to maintain the status quo and from the vantage point of preserving humanity. What, however, is special about Somali society in this regard is that the commonness of war and feud which, on the one hand are necessary qualities for survival, and an annihilating one on the other hand. As has been mentioned in several parts of this paper, 'might' is an important quality for the struggle with other fellow men and the struggle with nature to survive. Justice, it seems, therefore strikes some kind of balance between force and reason. The social values seem to imply that might, when justifiable could be used; but not to an extent where it could lead to the perishing of society itself.

The following lines by I. M. Lewis better express the position of violence in this society and the implication I am trying to get at about justice, could I hope be deduced as well from them.

In a society such as this, where fighting potential determines political status, feud and war are instruments of politics, they are the chief means by which the relations between groups are regulated.³⁶

and some pages later in the same work,

The use of magic to harm a person is rare when there is hostility between people, the resort to force is the standard procedure, there is little room for magical retribution.³⁷

³⁶ I. M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa, (London, Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 242.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 258.

7.5 Religious and Moral Tales

Somalis generally are Muslims except for a few Christians I heard of who live in Mogadisho - Somalia. Andrzejewski and Lewis say the following about Islam and the Somalis:

... Thus Islam is a vital force and the regular religious duties are taken seriously: the daily prayers (most scrupulously observed by the old), alms-giving to the poor, the feast of Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, and the confession of the faith: 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet.' These words spring readily to their lips at all times and the omnipotence of God is constantly recognized. ... To Somali, God is remote, all-powerful, judging and just, and men turn to Him in sorrow and distress as well as in joy and thanks giving.³⁸

Islam in Somali society is taught at village level in the Quranic schools, at mosques, where shiekhs teach itinerant students advanced theology, and at the centers of different Saints.

The tales presented here could be viewed at as both moral and religious. The demarcation between the two is so narrow that I have generally put them in one category.

The religious tales begin with an allegorical tale (No. 43) of the journey of Lillaahi (honest) Khaa'in (dishonest) snake, lion, fire, water and earth. They get some cattle and Khaa'in plans to destroy all his other friends and possess the cattle. So he tells snake to kill the lion. Next he goes and tells fire how snake is a danger to their existence, and fire kills snake again water is made to silence fire and water is swallowed by earth. The fate of earth is

³⁸ Andrzejewski and Lewis, Loc.cit., pp. 27-28.

not given, but it is presumed harmless. When Khaa'in and Lillaahi are left alone Khaa'in tells Lillaahi to wait open-handed at the bottom of a hill for rocks of gold he would roll down. He rolls down actual rocks that at the bottom of the rock turn to gold in the arms of Lillaahi. Khaa'in, thinking the same would happen in his arms exchanges position with Lillaahi. The latter rolls down the rocks and they kill Khaa'in. The cattle finally goes to Lillaahi.

The religious and moral implication is simple - that honesty pays.

In tale No. 44 one among three brothers refuses to work and depends on God to feed him, and his faith in God pays, for a barrel of snakes thrown into his house by his brothers, turns into gold.

In tale No. 45 we see three men closed in a cave and when they have no way out they tell each other that each should pray to God, reminding Him of a good he had done.

The first reminds God of how he had treated a servant of his fairly by giving him thirty goats, an only goat of him had bred. The second man prays and reminds God of how he had refrained from seducing sexually an orphan daughter of his uncle that lived with him; and the third prays and reminds God of how he respected his parents. At each prayer the gate opens a little, till it finally opens wide to let them out - all for the good they did.

In tale 46 we see the ingratitude of man. A donkey hosts lion, snake, donkey and man for a night. His hospitality pleases them so much that they promise to repay their debts. Donkey brings him money, lion brings him cattle and man because of his evil nature comes to plunder his host's cattle brought him by lion. Snake, however defends his host's property by stinging all the plunderers to death, and that way repays his debt.

In tale 47 we see how God punishes the man with excess behavior. The sex maniac gives no peace to women fetching wood and water. The whole society prays for his death, till on day religious figures beg of God to rid them of the man. The sex-maniac falls into a python hole and thinking that the reptile's mouth is a woman's genitalia, inserts his genital organ and she sucks him to death.

The moral-religious implication in tales 46 and 47 are quite obvious and they need no further elaborations.

In tale No. 48, a poor man is given goats by God, but God does not leave them in peace, for they are pestered by predator animals. The man divides his goats into two and says one half belongs to God and He could do whatever he likes with them. God punishes him for this, for when one day, while drinking water by his mouth from a river, his mouth is cemented there. He begs and is relieved. But again his goats are pestered by wild beasts and some break on rocks. It is then that he says: "If we talk, it means

the cementing of our mouth to stones, if we keep quite, God would not leave these goats in peace."

Two things are evident from the tale: First, that poverty and riches in man are at the will of God; God is both a giver and a withholder. The second element is the disillusionment in God. The poor man is glad to have been relieved of poverty, but he did not expect rivalry with God. If God lifted him out of poverty why strive to demote him as long as he behaved well. Underneath the story lies the idea of rebellion, however suppressed it is.

In tale No. 49, the hero-leader Willwaal challenges an important religious doctrine - that God alone is to be feared. In a sermon, Willwaal hears Shiekhs preach that there is no one to be feared save Allah. After the sermon, he argues with the preachers that there is someone else to fear. They fiercely stand against his line of thought and he appoints the Shiekhs for the next day to prove to them his belief. When they come, he keeps them in two separate huts. He kills two sheep and goes to each hut with his sword dripping blood and each group of Shiekhs, thinking that their friends were massacred rush out of the huts to save their lives. Willwaal overtakes them and tells them that not only God, but a hero, or man is also to be feared.

Perhaps the ordinary believer would not dare to stand against the omnipotence of God so boldly. Willwaal was a hero and a warrior leader, and that could be the reason for his courage, but the truth of his statement is very striking.

Tales 50 and 51 reflect the values of friendship. In story 50 we see two friends, unemployed at Dire Dawa. When one gets a job as a shop-keeper, he helps his friend. The other friend goes to Hargeisa and gets a job as a banker. He comes back to Dire Dawa and falls in love with the girl betrothed to his friend. His shopkeeper friend passes his girl to his friend and facilitates her wedding to his friend. After some time the shop-keeper friend contracts leprosy and goes to Hargeisa as a beggar. He chances to sleep at the verandah of his friend's house who recognizes him after sometime. His beggar friend, unaware of his friend, tells him that human blood is his medicine, and the banker friend sacrifices his own child to treat his friend.

The next tale, (No. 51) contrary to the positive values of friendship we see in No. 50 reflects its negative aspect.

Three itinerant students leave a friend of theirs in a well, and at night three jins (devils) come to a tree near the well and tell each other how the king's daughter could be cured, how and where water and gold could be drilled. On the next day travellers who come by the well pull him out and he is taken to the king where he tells the king about what he heard from the jins. He is then made an advisor of the king and becomes rich. His brothers, famine-stricken come to him and he gives them food and when he tells them of the secret of his success, they go and sit in the well. The jins come at night and discover them. In anger, they finish them all.

This story has a similar theme to that of Joseph and his brothers in the Quraan. The only difference is that Joseph eventually pardons his brothers when they bring him his father. What is significant is that the person who mishandles the promise of friendship is divinely penalized.

The religious-moral tales we have seen so far, like all religious tales teach what is good and what is bad. In all we have seen that faith in God and in friendship pays. We have also seen that religion, or God is at times a dilemma for man. Though God is recognized as the ultimate power, suspicion and challenge against him are not out of the scene.

7.6 Marriage

A broad perspective in which people are viewed is, Caruur iyo ciroole, literally, "children and gray-haired old people." Within this range exists for men: geel jire, (camel herd) waranle (spear-bearers),³⁹ wadaad or shiekh, or farmers. Young males are either: dhalaan, caruur (children) kuray (between the ages 9-10 + 11), doob, (unmarried youth) and Oday (old man) ranging from a man twenty five and above, shouldering family responsibility, to elders from forth and above. The female share dhalaan and caruur with the male for 'children', and then, foodlay (9-11, 12 years) gashaanti (about 15, or age to marry) gamboolay⁴⁰ (literally a woman with a head shash and married) and Islaani, (an elderly lady). Divorcee women are referred to as garoob or carmali. The unmarried male is a dibjir, literally 'one who lives outside' or is 'wild.'

Every male is expected to desire marriage when he is in the doob period or a little past that - about 20. The girl is expected to be married in her gashaanti period about - 15. If the boy is past the marriage age whose range could be between 20-30, he is referred to as dogon

³⁹ As used by Adrzejewski and I. M. Lewis, Op.cit., p. 30.

⁴⁰ The head-shash or scarf symbolizes a naag aqal leh, "a woman that has a house", meaning married. It is indiscent for a married woman to go bare headed. The foodlay are especially free of this control. One could see a gashaanti with a shash or bare, plaited head.

(a fool) and is despised. He could only be excused if he is committed to pursuing religious education (for some time), poor (unable to pay bride-price or dowry), sickness or if he is in foreign land - where perhaps he is expected to have some deterrants, among which could be religion, kinship and others. The girl passed the marriage is referred to as coon - a fool, only good for herding goats.

The purpose of marriage is understood to be for respect, and most important of all for children.

The male member of a family or clan takes upon himself the responsibility of multiplying the number of his family or clan. In a society where, "the key to politics lies in kinship who trace descent through males,"⁴¹ number matters much. The strength of a clan or tribe is measured by its size. The clan or tribe can defend its territory, protect its water (wells) and pasture, safeguard their livestock from raiders, subjugate others, pay blood-wealth contributions without pain, provided its number is sizable and strong. That is why children must be born to the maximum number possible from one, two, three or four wives; and that is why a barren woman is prone to divorce. I am not doubting the strong prevalence of this attitude still in the nomadic areas. One might think urbanite Somalis would treat this attitude less conservatively, and perhaps accept the idea of birth control; but the dependence on

⁴¹I. M. Lewis, A Pastoral Democracy, Op. cit., p. 1

kinship is still strong here too. In towns, contentions may not be on pasture and wells, but on newly formed socio-economic benefits and privileges, and hence the rationale for more children.

Match-making in marriage is mainly arranged. The boy usually has the independence to freely talk to the girl, but the final arrangement is through the knowledge of relatives on both sides. Bride-price and dowry is paid in cash and kind, and actual marriage contract is solemnized by quaadis - religious judges, or just by any recognized shiekh.

Traditionally marriage was not easy for a boy, for he had to pass several blockades of negotiations, and most important of all the tests of the girl.

The following proverbs show the difficulty hinted at:

Naagu inay dhib leedahay ninkii yarad ka dhiibaa
og inay dheef macaantahay ninkii dhowr ka dhalay
baa og.

"It is he who paid bride-price for a lady that knows the difficulty she puts one in; and that she is profitable and sweet is known by one who got children by her"

Other general observation on marriage are:

- Nin iyo naagti colna ma aho nabad na ma aho

"A man and his wife are neither enemies nor friends."

- Naagi waa balaayo loo baa hanyahay
"A woman is an indispensable evil."
- Guurku waa sadax:
 - darren dareen guursaday,
 - aamin aamin guursaday, iyo,
 - darren aamin guursaday.

"Marriage is of three kinds:

- The suspicious that marries the suspicious,
(both married before),
- The faithful that marries the faithful
(both new) and
- The suspicious that marries the faithful.
(an experienced man in marriage, marrying
a girl for whom marriage is new)"

Perhaps it would be appropriate to begin with tale 52. In this tale a girl asks her mother what type of man she should marry. The mother tells her not to marry the twenty years old for he is sexy, not to marry the thirty years old for he often needs cleanliness, not to marry the forty years old for he **is strong** and eats a lot, not to marry the fifty years old for he is sleepy and gives no time for tidying the bed, not to marry the sixty years old for he gives her no liberty in his wealth; to marry the seventy years old who always stands in defence of his wife, and not to marry the eighty years old, for he eats much, and has no sperm.

A visible criteria is that of protection.

Tale 53 portrays the rationale in marriage. A man in this story has at first a wife that bears him no children. He marries a second, and she too bears him no child. The third wife he marries is an coon, a fool, and she bears him children. The second wife persuades him to divorce the first and the last, for she is beautiful and good for him personally. Following her advice he divorces the two. Soon after, his closest kins marry both women before they go to others. The first, they marry because she is hospitable for the kin, and the third, because she bears children. The second that remains with the man begins to hen-peck him and she even becomes adulterous, till she finally chases him out, telling him that he is a man ostrasized by his clan.

The tale very clearly shows that marriage is not strictly a personal affair. A wife's goodness and real love for her husband is measured by her attention to his kinsmen. The first wife in our story is remarried despite her lack of children, because she is well liked by the man's kins. Children are important and so the fool is tolerated. The one that possesses the man for herself alone alienates the man from his kins, and herself, morally degenerates; this is a punishment for her dieds.

In tale 54 we see the challenges of marriage. A man is promised a girl and a hundred camels if he brings an elephant's

milk, a live snake, and asked to satiate goats in a day's graze. He fulfills all and is given what he is promised. Such challenges were not only given to suitors by the girl's relatives, but by the girls themselves to their suitors. Such is the case in tale 55 where the girl dismisses her suitor when he cannot answer her questions and riddles. Fathers do not often like to leave their daughters in the hands of an uncertain breadwinner. In tale 56 an old man has a lot of goats and he promises to offer his daughter to whoever satiates them in a day's graze. Many try and fail, but a young man who knows goats very well drives them to a place full of pucture-vines and chases them around all day, beating them. When they come in the evening, they are so tired that they only want to rest, ignoring tender leaves their owner presents to them, to test whether they are well-fed or not. The father then offers his daughter according to the promise, saying he would only trust her in the arms of that young man.

In tale 57 a man and his cousin kidnap a girl from a village. The girl tests her would be husband in several ways while they are on a journey to the man's village, and when they reach there, swears not to marry him, for she says he is a fool; instead, she marries the man's cousin.

The foolish woman is a common character in tales about marriage and she is often avoided, but is accepted

on the grounds that they are often fertile on the other hand. In tale 58 for instance the wives of two friends are a fool and a clever. The clever outwits the fool and leads her to kill her baby and paint her house with her child's blood. When the two husbands are back from a journey the fool presents bad food while the clever one comes with good food and so on.

In tale 59 too, a man goes back with the camel he brings for bride-price when he discovers that the girl he is lured to marry is a fool.

But in tale 60 a man marries an coon - a stupid woman past her marriage age. The man teaches this coon how to manage and furnish her house, how to care for the cattle and how to be hospitable to relatives. He does all these before marrying her, and when she is good enough, he takes her into his house. She bears him children and is worth a woman. It is said that the coon's children are immune to diseases, and specially if sons, grow up to be clever young men or heroes. So, it seems that the foolish woman is to be tolerated for the sake of children, and probably is undertaken in by poor men who cannot afford to pay the dear bride prices.

In tale 61 we see the moral sanctions against incestuous marriage. A boy who is of age tells his father that he wants to marry, and his father, giving him a horse tells him to go and find the girl of his liking. He roams about

and comes back, to only tell his father that he has fallen in love with his own beautiful sister. The girl, hearing this, flees the country, taking with her a needle and a knife. On her flight she finds a donkey, kills it and skins it and dresses in its skin. She comes to a village where she is employed as a shepherdess. The village's king suspects this beast of a human, and detects on her. One day, he discovers her bathing in a stream and quickly returning to her donkey hide. When she returns home he proposes to marry her, to the utter surprise of his subjects and councillors. He sticks to his decision and marries her. Some time later her father and brother come to her, famine-stricken, and she recognizes them and tells her husband about them. He hides them till they are well fed and appear rich, and then publicly introduces them to his people as his wife's father and brother.

We see that the girl who runs away from the incestuous relationship is rewarded, while the villain brother is penalized by famine.

One of the severe punishments awaiting a girl involved in pre-marital sex is expressed in tale 62. In the tale, the father discovers her girl's illegitimate pregnancy and decides to kill her, and relatives also agree she should be killed. Then, the father takes her to a forest near by and ties her to a tree. When he is about to shoot, the boy who impregnated her emerges from behind the tree, stark naked, and covers the girl, facing the bullets of her father.

The father, according to custom asks the young man to dress, and the girl is saved. Later, with an official pardon, the girl is wed to the young man.

From the tales presented and analyzed, four facets of Somali marriage are noticeable: The first is that there are sanctions on marriage, specially on pre-marital sexual relation or on incestuous relations in marriage. The second element observable is that marriage is a social necessity that has challenges that come to the suitor both from the girl's and her relatives' side. The third aspect is that there are qualities expected in partners, like intelligence and courage. The fourth and the most important value reflected is that the aim of marriage is primarily for children, and that individual interests in marriage are subservient to common clan goals.

7.7 Jealousy and Women

The conception the Somali society has about women and jealousy, in general I think complement each other.

Women generally are understood as inferior, but cunning. Reference is often made to Eve (Xaawo) to point at their malicious nature. She is always a riddle to man: cunning, unpredictable and yet an indispensable person in life. As was mentioned earlier:

Naagi waa balaayo loo baahanyahay

"A woman is an indispensable evil"

From a very tender age the young boy is bombarded with ideas about the evil nature of women and that he has to often guard himself against their influence. As my used to say:

"She is a bag in which you put something valuable and then take it out some other time."

In marital life the young husband is expected to have the upper hand. If he is weak, he is referred to as a fool "conquered by his wife". For instance a man who fails to marry a second wife is accused of being afraid of his first wife, and a fool.

The girl too, before marriage is coached to look at men with suspicious eyes. She is told: Naa ninku yuuna kaa adkaanin.

"Girl, let the man not have the upper-hand over you."

The concept she often has about the male is that they are dishonest and inconsiderate.

A woman for instance never openly admits love to a man for fear of bending to his authority. As the adage has it:

Naaga waxay coonaan bay diidaan

"Women refuse what they need (desire)"

The man too keeps up his pride; he never takes any advice from her - otherwise he could become:

Owr, owr waddo iyo nimay naagi waddo,

labada midna kaama leexdaan.

"A camel led by another camel, and a man led by woman; both give you no way."

A woman singer had once sang:

Raggu waa nacab an kosanayno ...

"Men are enemies that we are bringing up..."

It is therefore with such preconceived notions about each other that the couple meets in a house as husband and wife. Home seems to be the battle-ground for the long-expected combat - the real tug-of-war begins in it.

Men say of women:

Naagi hadday uba kuula timaado ka jebi!

"If a woman comes to you (to you home)

with a gourd (the least of any property) break it!"

This, apparently is by way of establishing his undisputed authority over her, right from the very beginning.

The Somali society is a polygamous society - both religion and custom support this practice.

The main reason for polygamy is children, though a man may do it as well, if he is wealthy.

Women fight bitterly against their husband's second marriage. The suspicion seems much higher if the husband is wealthy; for she thinks he could easily pay for another wife. She would prefer her husband not to own much in cash or kind, for that would mean stimulating his desire; he would rather remain mediocre or poor and stay with her alone.

It is said that men are sometimes pushed into other marriages by the over suspicion and persistent naggings of their wives. The men seem to follow the saying:

Naag naag baa lagu dhiftaa

"A woman is hit by another woman".

When a second marriage is materialized the previous wife literally goes mad. She prates all day long, she nags everybody; she wanders aimlessly from house to house or even leaves the village and goes to her people. In the row she raises she may even demand divorce, accusing her husband of this and that. The culture however, understands her - she is right to be jealous and her disturbed state of mind is tactfully cooled down. There is for instance what is called Hinaasa tir, a special gift in kind or cash exerted from the husband to let her forget the jealousy, and go back to her husband and children.

The jealous wife's kins or relatives do not hurry to interfere in rows and squabbles that a jealous wife makes. Elders, through experience have proved the truth of the saying:

Walaashaa iskuma hubte seedigaa ha coleeyaan.

"For you cannot depend on your sister, do not antagonize your brother-in-law."

Jealous wives are also seen to be profoundly involved in various types of out lets during their period of jealousy. Some turn to religion and fervently pray. Others, and the most common perhaps feign spirit-possessions, and through them (ostensibly) air their suppressed emotions. Through the spirits she may demand the slaughtering of sheep or goats, she may demand for expensive perfume or colorful dresses, or she may foretell some disaster that may fall on the family, the children in particular, if such and such demand is not readily met. Apparently, all "her" exorbitant demands are to revenge on her husband in every way possible.

If jealous co-wives are living close by, it is hell for the husband - they quarrel on almost anything, childishly spoil each other's works, and rally their children and other women friends or relatives against each other. A jealous wife accepts the hard fact that she has to share her husband with another woman, after a long battle that could even last for years.

Three stories are presented here about women and jealousy.

Story No. 63 shows the extreme notoriety of the jealous wife, and how, when she is divorced she marries another

husband and tries to be a better women, only to anger and revenge on her previous husband that had treated her badly.

In story 64, an extraordinary behavior in the jealous wife is witnessed. Jealousy has affected her mind to the point of reducing her to failing to understand a natural system that has been familiar with her for years. She only resigns from her foolishness when she herself tries the experiment.

The lion and his wife in story 65 show the stubbornness of women and the ineffectuality of their decision. The lioness fails to fulfil her husband's advice and victimizes the cubs. In anger, the husband kills the wife but repents so deeply. He says he could have himself gone with her; however, woman as she is, she has raged him to commit an irreparable damage. After all, "woman is an indispensable evil."

The following poem best expresses the mental framework of jealous women.

The poem is said to have been recited by a woman in her old age whose husband married another woman.

Hinaasuhu waa col naageed ee, ma i cuskaday

Ma i caruureeye anigii cirada lahaa,

Oo kuleel cudur oon i hayn kaar ma layga shiday

"Jealousy, women's enemy, has it enclosed on me too,
Has it made me regrees to childhood, me-the gray-haired,
and has it blazed in me high temperature
and fever caused by no disease in me."

7.8 Natural Calamity.

Life in both the purely nomadic and the semi-nomadic Somali society is never free of natural calamities. It is either:

Col iyo abaar

"War and drought"

Contrasted by:

Naba iyo caano

"Peace and milk (plenty)"⁴²

Col (war) is usually the result of inter-clan skirmishes on natural resources, due to retaliatory measures against other tribes', raids or the effect of clashes between neighbouring countries.

War and drought are usually conceived as going together. Obviously drought is the effect of delayed rain; but during such dry seasons due to the scarcity of natural resources strife is very common. Plunders and raids are common, old feuds are sought to be redressed by violence, and generally, people's attitudes seem to be as hostile as the environment itself.

Andrzejewski expresses the scourge of drought in the Somali society in the following words:

In Somali culture drought is one of the most feared events, since it can mean not only poverty but death, especially in the remoter rural areas ...⁴³

⁴² I. M. Lewis, Op. cit., p. 45.

⁴³ B. W. Andrzejewski, "Drought As Reflected in Somali Literature" - Savana (London, 1973), Vol. 2, No. 2)

Roobdoon - rain seeking - prayers by shiekhs, Quraanic students and the community at large,⁴⁴ are some ways of trying to resist the calamity.

The plight of drought on animal and human life is expressed by Cali Klaas, a man of about 32, living in the Relief and Rehavilitation shelter at Shiekh Shariif Camp, Jijiga.

Lo'dii giirka ahead,

Gaabanow arigii,

Wiilkii geela jiraayay,

Garboolayda haweenka,

Awrkii gowlka ahaa,

Abaar baa gam ka siisay.

Those cloured cows,

Those shorty goats,

That boy (youth) with the camel,

Those though-shouldered women,

That lion - like fattened camel,

All were eaten and wiped out by drought.

The young therefore are prepared for a tough life. Ingenuity, interpidness, independence and wit are inculcated into the minds of male children at any early age. In the nomadic interior young male children are sent to camel herding units to be initiated (Andrzejewski, 1964) to the Spartan type of life - hunger, thirst, scorching heat and freezing desert cold, the fear and preparedness against raids and plunders, long journeys through thorns, bushes or enemy

⁴⁴ Ibid.

territories, are among the values injected. It is, for instance a common sight to come across a young boy of 8-10 with a herd of camel in the interior of the Ogaden. He is usually naked above the waist and is carrying a small club; if asked where he is going he would answer, "to the well", and when asked about the adult males, he would answer, "they have gone ahead to the town for tea etc." by the time the young herd reaches the well, the men are back from their tea and are ready to water the camel.

The girl too is given her dose. She is to be a strong mistress of her house. She has to know how to furnish her future house with local material - mat woven from different forest grasses and rinds of trees, how to construct and dismantle the nomadic tent, specially during transhumante.

She has to know edible and inedible fruits in the wilderness to sustain her future children in case of drought. She is expected to be cunning, kind-hearted and especially generous and hospitable to her kin or to that of her future husband; but not too emotional and sentimental, for if so, she might as well weaken her husband.

On the contrary therefore, whether it be in the development of children or in what is expected of adults, foolishness, miserliness, greed and lack of wit in solving problems are looked upon as serious shortcomings that could endanger survival.

The tales presented hereunder appear, in the following order:

- (a) Tales pertinent to drought per se.
- (b) Tales about the Butti, a blood-sucking ogress considered as a natural calamity and,
- (c) Tales about might, greed, miserliness and foolishness - which reflect human behaviors and values within the context of natural calamities. These values, in other words could be vivid and meaningful if analysed from the point of view of their practical manifestations, in relevant socio-economic contexts.

7.8.1 Drought: This term is understood to be the scarcity of food and water for both animal and man due to lack of rain. Drought could lead to malnutrition, and in its severest case to famine and death.

There is nothing more pathetic than when innocent children are victimized by what they are not responsible for its happening.

In story No. 66 we see that the family is in a period of severe drought, and the three children are nearly dying of hunger. There are, however, some goats in the pen, out of which the mother insists one should be killed to save the children. The father stubbornly resists this move till he finally yields when the mother's pleading grows irresistible. When the mother goes into the pen to catch a goat to be slaughtered, the children, in their last breath issue three different sounds. The first beleches, the second farts and the third defecates. The father shouts to the mother in the pen to save his lambs, for the children are alive according to him, because of the sounds they make. The mother rushes back to the hut to find her children dead.

Here we see the love the nomad has for his animals, reluctant to dispense with them, even to save human life. This kind of attitude has been

witnessed time and again in the Ogaden where the nomads witness their cattle and kins dying side by side. Livestock in general for the nomad is a symbol of wealth and security. A story that reflects this love (for camel this time), at the expense of going naked is No. 67. The woman threatens to come out of the hut naked if here husband drives out a camel to be sold in the market to buy her clothes.

In story 68, the family is again in severe drought. The father of two daughters whose mother had died, and were brought up by him under great strain gets married. The new wife cannot stand the children, for they are more mouths to be fed in this period of hunger. She forces the husband to get rid of his daughters or divorce her. The father obeys the wife and takes the girls to a forest where he abandons them and comes back to live with his wife. This culprit father is eventually punished - for he falls in the hands of the same daughters he had abandoned, who are now wives of rich men. The wife for whom he had left his children in the lurch abandons him when he can no longer feed her.

Waan gaajoonayaa bakhtiga looma cuno⁴⁵

"One does not eat an unsanctified meat
because of hunger."

⁴⁵ Another proverb of the same theme is:

Waan baahanahey looma bahala cuno

"Because of hunger one does not eat any beast."

This proverb indicates the severity of the degree of sanctity religion expects regarding what to eat and not to eat. Edible animals are clearly identified and donkeys are among those excluded. In tale 69 we see how the family is forced to transgress the religious decree and how bestially the man reacts against a tiny fly that rests on the cheek of his wife-to "share with them the meat", according to him.

In tale 70, the Gabooye⁴⁶ couple fight because the husband wants her to drink the fat of an imaginary game that he will hunt, and in tale 71, when the husband could not catch the klipspringer (game animal) that he had seen lying under a shade, he rationalizes that the wara-wara (his clan) are not lucky with that of game. The tales reveal how rightly preoccupied the characters are by thinking about food in this period of drought.

What is visible in tales 65 through 68 is that drought effects a tremendous change of personality in people's beliefs and attitudes. Cruelty on children (as in 66 and 68) is a universally abhorred practice, yet, we see it in action in the face of such calamity. The donkey eaters (69) are mere

⁴⁶ The caste group around Jijiga is referred to as Gabooyo. It is said that in early times they were hunters. Today they have livestock and farms, and those in towns are craftsmen and women. Others also work in butcheries.

breakers of the rules and perhaps with less severe a breach. The two husbands in 70 and 71 wish to remain bread-winners in front of their wives, despite the crippling drought. To keep up their image, they have to be ingenious, at least verbally. Drought therefore is not solely a physical phenomena, but a profoundly psychological one as well.

7.8.2 The Butti

Natural calamities in the Somali culture are not only drought and war. There are epidemics for both man and livestock that have become milestones, there are calamities caused by God's anger, like that of Xarla in tale No. 4. One individual levels there are cases of persons who turn mad, become crippled or paralyzed due to curses from the tongues of renown shiekhs, parents, or other mistreated individuals. Spirit possessions like the jini, wadaado or ruuxaan cause (it is believed) incurable psychiatric maladies. The Butti is another personality recurrent in several Somali tales.

The Butti is a blood-sucking ogress that usually hosts lost children or women without the knowledge of her mother. In another Somali speaking area the Butti is known as a dad galato, literally man-slaughterer (dad = man, gal = slaughter). No two people could define or describe the Butti in a similar way; and none of my informants, old or young saw her ever, though stories about her are very popular. A general conception people have about her is that she is a woman who has the magical power to transform herself into man or beast as the need arises, and lives on human blood. When she wants to disguise her Buttiness she turns human and even lives among them for a while

till she is identified, then killed or expelled from the village. She is usually described as a woman with long nails on her hands, with dishevelled hair, dressed in tattered rags, strong physically, with a pitiless face and a hardened heart.

Children, (especially young herds) women and young men are her best victims. The liver of children, other than the blood she sucks, is her best delicacy.

Two definitions given by two of my informants about the Butti are worth mentioning.

- a) "The Butti is just a human being whose heart is hardened by loneliness."

The informant implies that the loneliness could have been caused by the loss of many children, her husband or kin, by some natural or man-made calamities:

- b) "The Butti is just a leopardess that live in the forest and attacks people".

My own personal experience could add a little to the confusion.

In the town where I lived as a child (Sidamo, Negelle Borena) there used to occasionally come to the town, a woman that we used to refer to as dad galato (man-slaughtere). She belonged to none of the nomadic villages surrounding the town approximately within the radius of 30-50 kilometers. All we knew was that she was a Somali, of probably the Mareexnan

clan that dwelt around there, because, she cursed and abused us in Somali when we gave her no peace. Physically she was in no way different from the Somali women there - she was brownish in color, about forty in age and quite decently dressed. I never went near enough to check on her alleged 'long' nails. The purpose of her coming to town was to beg around and go back to her forest. We children, in groups, used to shout dad gualato! dad galato! after her, only to scatter in confusion when she turned her stony face on us, or hurled a stone or a bone at us. Perhaps she was only an individual with her own internal and external problems.

The fact however remains that the Butti is a scourge in Somali tales, or that she is some kind of calamity that challenges people. According to the tales, habitats have been fled for fear of her. Under her shadow, the fool and the clever characters are challenged, where in most cases the clever outwits her, while the fool is victimized.

As I said earlier, my interest in the Butti tales as some kind of calamity is to point out the values behind the tales and, as I did in the foregoing paragraphs, to acquaint the reader to the Butti as understood by this culture.

Typical of the Butti tales is No. 72, where two little girls and their little brothers fall prey to the Butti. The Butti's sympathetic daughter has done her best to conceal them from exposure, but due to the prattling of the foolish girl the mother Butti learns of their presence. Later on too when they (the children) are sent to fetch wood, the clever girl takes her small brother along with her, while the fool leaves hers behind. The clever girl never comes back, but the fool does, and even eats the flesh of her cooked brother.

In 73 the Butti is a trickster, but is eventually killed when her trick is discovered.

In 74, the Butti's daughter collaborates with the four marriage seeking girls and a man, to destroy her mother. The daughter joins 'human community' and is married, but herself eventually becomces a Butti, and is killed.

In all the three Butti tales it is evident that the Butti is a scourge to the society and that she is punished for her evil deeds. Combating her also involves two things: intellegence and violence. Foolishness therefore does not pay in the face of such calamity.

One might ask the necessity for creating such character as the Butti in the Somali tales. My doubt

is whether we could be satisfied by designating the Butti as a mere character. Research could prove that the Butti must have actually existed in earlier times in the history of these people. If so, she would cease to be a 'creation', and a being with flesh and blood; in which case the question of why it is in the tales could be accounted for. If we take the Butti as a mere character in tales, then, some speculations could be ventured.

The Butti, however is an ogress, and ogres and ogresses of various types are well known characters in many tales around the world. Maria Leache's Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend (1950) mentions that Stith Thompson in his Motif-Index of Folk Literature discusses cannibal ogres, gaints, ogres in animal forms, the witch type ogress, the corpse-eating ogres and various other monster ogres.

The ogre, the dictionary continues is a gaint in Sweden, Scotland, Ireland and dragon in Greece. It is a serpent with seven heads in Hungary and Russia. One speculation by folklorists according to the dictionary is that ogres could have been forms of cannibalism in earlier times. The Butti in Somali culture could also be embodied in this speculation. In our tales, we see the Butti as a natural calamity against which two contrasting characters, the fool and the clever are tested.

7.8.3 Foolishness

Foolishness perhaps is the most hated trait in human personality in Somali culture. This is perhaps so because of the arduous life most Somalis lead in their relatively hostile habitat.

The word doqon (doqon, for female) is not confined only to the universal fool reflected in many cultures. A person is a fool if say, he fails to support his kin in need; he is a fool if he does not defend his marital rights or property; he is a fool if he is a hen-pecked husband, and many others. A woman is a fool if she mismanages her house or is inhospitable to her husband or his kin; she is a fool if she bends down to the authority of her husband, or if she remains quiet against a rival co-wife. There are also several other contexts in which a man or a woman could be labelled as foolish.

The following Somali proverbs I hope could best show how the fool is conceived in the culture.

1. doqon hana garganarin hana gargaaraan
2. doqoni nimay taqaano iyo tolkeeda kama tagto
3. doqon sokeeyo maaho
4. doqonta usha agteeda ku dhifo hadday garanweeydona goga u geli

5. doqoni ma dhimanin bay ko faantaa.
 6. doqoni daawa ma leh
 7. fariidi wuuna ku dilaa wuuna ku nooleeya
doqonise dhanna kooridimaeyso
 8. dogon iyo naagi nimay ka adkaato kama kacaan
 9. doqoni indho xishooda ma lehee, ihdho
 10. Doqoni darreen rimman
 11. Doqoni kariga lagu dilaayo xuslaheey ku
sidataa
1. "Help not a fool, nor seek help from him
(her.)"
 2. "A fool leaves not her kin and a person
she (he) knows."
 3. "A fool is not a kin."
 4. "To hit a fool, first scare him; if he does
not understand that, then hit him."
 5. "A fool boasts that he (she) did not die."
 6. "A fool has no treatment."
 7. "A good (clever) person kills you or gives
you life, but a fool throws you to neither
side."
 8. "A fool and a woman never let free a person
whom they once over power."
 9. "A fool doesn't have eyes that are ashamed,
but he (she) has eyes that are afraid."
 10. "A fool is always pregnant with suspicion."
 11. "A fool carries around in his (her) arms,
the rope he (she) is to be killed with."

The uselessness of the fool is, I hope, expressed through these proverbs which are only a few among the many others on the fool. In the tales presented here, the fool is apparently contrasted with his natural counterpart, the clever.

In tale 75 a man has two wives - a clever and a fool. The clever is childless while the fool has a son, the clever wife, conspiring with her husband outwits and tells the fool that her child is dead. The fool's brother however, demands for justice, and when the court is stages, and elders present two children to the fool to identify her child, she cannot do it. Her brother finally recognizes that his sister is only good to "herd the goats for her husband."⁴⁷

In tale 76, Cibaado seduces Muxummed the fool at first, but he grows increasingly intolerable as a husband. He continually pesters her by questions about "That thing" (her genital organ) when, she is alone, or with people in public. Her brother is so humiliated on behalf of his sister that he takes an active role with his sister in the conspiracy to get rid of Muxummad the fool. Poor Muxummad ends with his sexual organ in the mouth of a Python that he takes-as Cibaadoo's "that thing", which she had told him was forgotten in the village they had left when migration was announced.

⁴⁷ Goat-herding is not usually arduous - and herds do not often take them far away from villages. "Even a fool can do it" is the message.

7.8.4 Greediness and Miserliness

Both greediness and miserliness are not openly expressed in this society, specially so in times of calamities. The Somalis are often heard priding themselves of egalitarianism. The kin system for instance, obliges its members to help each other in all the basic needs of life - it is common to see for instance relatives of person coming from a long distance for help, or just a member of a clan demanding for a right he had to be helped.

In tale 77 where the insatiable vulture demands for more and more meat, the message is simple and clear - greed leads to death. In 78 the woman who gives vent to her personal desire, and for whose sake the husband kills the only burden camel they have, eventually dies under the load of the house she had promised to carry. In 67, even though the tale superficially expresses the profound attachment of the nomad to his livestock, I think it also expresses some form of greed that leads to disaster.

The miser too is a hated person. He is a misfit in the society that has a strong sense of communality. Somalis are mostly open in expressing what they feel about people. Nicknames for instance are very common and any miserly person usually has, among several other nicknames Dhuun yaale.

"Who has a throat?", literally to mean he often capitalizes on food that goes through his throat.

A Somali saying remarks:

nimay soori kaa qaaday waa nimay seefikaaqaaday

"A person devoted to eating is like a person you lost by a sword (death)."

Miserliness often expresses itself in marital life. The man miser is called a Qorqode, and he is the kind of husband that gives his wife no freedom in the management of her house. He always suspects that she hides some food or wealth for her personal benefits. He often goes into the details of the affairs of women, cooking, selling or buying petty items from shops, checking on the milk or butter she keeps for the family etc.

The woman miser is referred to as Dhuuryo. She is the type of wife that cooks food and eats alone in the absence of her husband. She is even said to be not good for her own children.

Following is a poem by a woman whose husband was a qorqode (a miser):

Qoranay qorqorde wuu queeyliyaa

Sida dhurwaagu dhirdhirbiya

Sida dacawaduu shiuuriyaa

Sida libaaxu wax u liqaa

Naa rida gal oo qari buu i yiri

Oo qiiga yuu baxin buu iyiri

Naa qoraan qoryo u diro buu i yiri

Qoladiinana ha u tagin buu i yiri

Qurubna ha u gooyn buu i yiri

Naa kubadu waa kurus buu i yiri

Naa ganaca duuduub buu i yiri

Oh my dear Qoran⁴⁸ the miser cries,

Like the hyena he scratches the earth and howls,

Like the fox he wiggles his tail,

Like the leopard he lies in wait,

Like a lion he swallows.

Kill the she goat, and hide it, he said to me,

And let not the smoke out, he said to me,

Send ants to fetch you wood, he said to me,

Go not to your kins, he said to me,

Give them not a piece (of meat), he said to me,

The stomach⁴⁸ (of the goat) is hump-fat, he said
to me,

Roll up the intestines,⁵⁰ he said to me.

Two tales about misers are presented here. In tale 79, the miserely man is so stingy that the hot porridge he takes with him into the animal pen while milking the cows spills on him and kills him. This

⁴⁸ The name of a woman who is listening to the poem.

⁴⁹ There are some Somalis that do not eat animal's stomach. They consider it dirty, and even with those Somalis who eat it, only women consume it.

⁵⁰ Some Somalis also do not eat this part, for they usually throw it away with the stomach. In towns and cities, however, they make delicacies out of it.

happens because he does not trust the food with his wife. Tale 80, presents a special problem where the miserly man who divorces his first wife meets another extravagant woman. Strangely enough the woman is punished for her behavior - perhaps indicating that miserliness (as with the man) and extravagance (as with the second wife) are not both approved of.

7.8.5 Might is Right

It has been mentioned earlier that, "The key to Somali politics lies in kinship."⁵¹ Kinship is a strong bondage through which Somalis express their care and concern for each other. In most environments that nomadic Somalis inhabit, life can be understood to be the survival of the fittest. There is always a constant contention over water, pasture and livestock. In such a society therefore, the might of a clan becomes an indispensable quality for life. Referring to this the Somalis say that a clan is either:

a laandheere or (long branched clan)

a laangaah. (short branched clan)

This also indicates the nobility of a clan, but latent in it is also the element of might. The greater the size, the more guaranteed is a clan for political supremacy and access to natural resources. "The supremacy of Xoog"⁵² (force, power) as Lewis indicates is a decisive quality in their life, and he discusses this point further in the following words:

⁵¹ I. M. Lewis (1961), op. cit., p. 1

⁵² Ibid., p. 26

The aim is not so much to subjugate enemies... to establish political ascendancy. Somali wars are not properly wars of conquest except in a limited sense of giving the victors temporary grazing or water rights in a particular region.... In a society such as this, where fighting potential determines political status feud and war are instruments of power politics.⁵³

Lewis further points out the use of force:

The use of magic to harm a person is rare when there is hostility between people, the resort to force is the standard procedure, there is little room for magical retribution.⁵⁴

These clan sentiments and the resultant positive or negative repercussions are still as fresh as ever.

A recent clash (September, 1981) between the Abasguul and the clan from the Isaaq was said to have been caused by a retributive motive of an earlier wound.⁵⁵ The Iidoor or the Isaaq wanted redress. It ended in more than ten lives lost and took the government couple of months to negotiate the paying of blood-wealth among the two clans.

Various clans, to approach the government, organize themselves mostly on the basis of clans. Even the drought stricken population being helped by the government and where this study was made prefer to cluster their huts around their clans.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 242

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 258

⁵⁵ At Qabri Bayax, about 100 kms. South of Jijiga.

At a larger level, the problem of tribe or clan oriented state power is observable in Somalia, where one clan is said to be dominant politically.

Some proverbs in the language may reflect what I have been trying to say in a more economical way about might in Somali society.

1. Rabbi iyo rag baa jiraa, inta kalena waa soo raac

"It is only God and the male (man), the rest are appendages".

2. Rag hadal cad iyo hub cad baa looqaata.

"In dealings with man (male) one should use clear, lucid language and a visible weapon."

3. Rag i daa kuguna daaye, wuxuu kugu daayaa la tussaa

"A man (male) leaves you not in peace because you say so, but only if you show him something he fears." (weapon, any sort of action that could limit the opponent's advance.)

4. Rag waa isu sahay waana isu sabab

"Men, for each other are like provisions one takes along with him while on a journey, and they are also causes of each other's death."

5. Geesi aan hub laheeynow ha igu diririn!

"Oh! ye brave warrior without weapon, die not in my hands."

6. Xarka geel ma wada xiraan, kii xajiyaa

Umbaa lagu xiraa

"All ropes do not tie camels, only those that are strong tie them."

7. Bilaawa af baa kiciyaa

"The knife is brought to life by the tongue."

8. Geel xeradii waa godob la'aan.

"The wealth of camel lies in the owner's being free from blood." (Otherwise he would be subject to raids and plunders motivated by retributions, etc.)

Three stories that I thought reflected this notion of 'Might is right' are presented here. The stories, basically are simple animal tales, but underneath, they portray a revered value of most Somalis.

In tale 81, the nine hyenas are given one scabbie-ridden camel to share among themselves while lion takes the other nine. When the leader of the hyenas comes back with the group to complain of the injustice, he is taught the bitter lesson that might is right, at the cost of losing one of his eyes. Out of fear, another hyena suggests that lion also take the one camel he had given them for nine.

N.B. The word RAG in Somali connotes two meanings here. One is the limited 'man' or 'male', while the second refers to manhood - ('Ragganimo') courage, bravery and general manliness.

In tale 82, the lion refuses to pay hyena the heifer he had borrowed and threatens to use violence if he (hyena) repeated the question. Hyena on his part boasts he would assemble all his kin to win back his wealth, but it is obvious that however united, hyenas, cannot overcome the might of the lion. Two things are evident here: that might is right as seen in the lion's case and that the source of might could be the solidarity of the clan, as seen in Hyena's wish to unite his clan and fight lion, to reclaim his heifer.

8. Conclusion

An analysis of a corpus of some eighty Somali folktales has revealed a certain number of recurring underlying themes. These themes, while at first appearing unconnected, do in actual fact clearly indicate closely related cultural ideas which do much to shape the life and world view of Somalis.

The first general impression we get from the tales is that in the main, Somali society is nomadic. This establishes the material basis, socio-economic basis within which Somali social values and social organizations are formed, and operate.

Dr. Negussie Ayele better express the interaction between ecology and man as regards Somali in the following lines:

In the first place, it is not the nomad that made the area arid or semi-arid, but rather the semi-arid conditions of life that has made the Somali nomad what he is. Secondly, nomadic social and political behaviour is in turn conditioned and regulated by the realities of ecological man-milieux relationship. In other words, the nomadic pastoralist who is what he is by virtue of the harsh and scarce resource conditions develops his social and political institutions and activities as a function of his struggle with his environment...⁵⁶

A Marxist thesis Doctor Negussie quotes in another part of his paper further reassures the behavior of man's dependence on his form of production relation:

⁵⁶ Negussie Ayele, "The Socio-political impact of semi-arid ecology: The Case of the Horn of Africa!" in Organization for Social Research in Eastern Africa (OSSERA), November 1980 (Proceedings of Workshop, April 9-13, 1980, Nazreth, Ethiopia.

... legal relations as well as forms of state could neither be understood by themselves, nor explained by the so-called general progress of the human mind, but that they are rooted in the material conditions of life.⁵⁷

I.M. Lewis, B. W. Andrzejewski and other scholars on Somali culture have also vividly revealed in their works the close relationship between Somali ecology and culture.

We have seen that "the key to Somali politics lies in Kinship who trace descent through males" (Lewis, 1961). This, in other words, means that social organization is at large based on tribes, and this comes down to clans, sub-clans and reers (smaller units of village level). This loose stratification, we have witnessed, is bound by a common territory and a social contract known as Xeer compared to other social organizations - say, like that of Highland Ethiopia, Somali social organization is loose. This is due to the nomadism they practice which makes it impossible for a large group to live together at one place. The scarcity for pasture and water makes living together in groups impossible and hence necessitates migration from place to place. Dr. Negussie writes:

The constant seasonally conditioned movement in search of pasture and especially water in the semi-arid ecology of the Horn accounts for the evolution of such atomized and fluid social structure of the nomadic pastoralist on the Horn. Quite understandably, under the circumstances, a smaller tight-knit group such as the dia-paying group is meaningful for group nomadic transhumance and quasi-social organization than whole clans of 100,000 or more members in each.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 317

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 306

This implies that the struggle for survival with nature is not easy and that strife and contentions over natural resources in common. This sort of life dictates the shaping of though people, and the social values reflected in the tales are various cultural elements that contribute to the making of such a person.

The analysis began with explanatory tales where the causes for the occurrences of natural and social phenomena are explained. Somali society follows Islam, and causation is mainly attributed to Allah. In most of the tales studied here Allah transforms heretics and rebels against social values into diminutive creatures. There seems to be some sort of correspondence between this might of Allah and the kind of 'might' that the social values of this society teaches as necessary and indispensable in the struggle for survival.

It has been repeatedly said that life in Somali society demands strength in body and mind. Fetching water from a long distance, defending one's pasture land, water, clan, and livestock against contending groups necessitates force and endurance. But force does not always pay, and the values reflected in the tales under 'wit' have shown the need for wit and intelligence to survive.

In the tales under wisdom, we have seen a general world view of pragmatism and expediency. As the story of 'The soothsayer and the fox' for instance, shows, man's social conduct and behaviors are subject to the objective conditions he lives in. One feels how encouraging this attitude is in

the light of, for instance, the alternating occurrences of war and drought in Somali life. There is no whimpering and weeping over these phenomena. Statements like:

abaar baan ku jirno xoolahiiyo dhan way naga madheen.

"We were in drought, and all our livestock were dead."

Anagoo nabad ah, buu col reerkayaga soo galayoo, dad

iyo duunyoba waxba nagagamatagin!

"We were in peace when an enemy came to our village and left us no life and wealth!"

are heard expressed quietly, just as a matter of course. This is a psychological preparation and reconcilliation with the facts of life, and again contributes to the conditioning of the individual to face hardship.

In a society where the principle of survival of the fittest prevails, clashes and conflicts are unavoidable.

The pastoralists are a warlike people... all disputes, whether they spring directly from competition for sparse resources or from other causes, tend ultimately to be resolved by force of arms. Political status depends primarily upon fighting potential and consequently upon male strength, the proverb, "Either be a mountain or attach yourself to one" will express the importance of military supremacy in Somali society.⁵⁹

Thus quotes Dr. Negussie Professor I. M. Lewis.

If justice is not properly exercised in such society, extinction by violence is evident. Justice strikes the necessary balance between war and peace, and we have seen in the tales analyzed in

⁵⁹ Lewis, "Force and Fission in Norther Somali Lineal Structure." American Anthropologist, Vol. 63, # 1, pp. 95-96 (emphasis Dr. Negussie's).

this chapter how justice is used to perpetuate society, and in some cases, to maintain the status quo. Justice in these tales has been seen as either secular or divine. An important element to notice here is that if the Somali sense of justice is not rightly met, or is misunderstood, violence will follow.

In the religious tales two elements have been prominent: the teachings of Islam regarding what is good and bad, and the disillusionment in God at times, in the eyes of some individuals. The former ones are simple and universal, the latter, as expressed in tales 48, show the disillusionment of man about his God, and in 49, the challenge against His omnipotence.

In marriage we have seen that the society is polygamous and that the important elements in marriage are children. Polygamy is motivated by the desire for more children, which are believed to expand the size in number, of a clan. This desire is closely linked with the dictates of Somali ecology; if a clan or a group is strong enough, it is guaranteed water, pasture and peace.

Another element we saw reflected in tales about marriage is that partners of both sexes prefer strong and intelligent mates that can pull the family through the hostile environment. Consequently, the most feared trait in a partner is foolishness.

Woman, we have seen in this society "is an indispensable evil." She is always a mystery and is not expected to be sentimental with her man, in order not to "weaken him", lest he fails in the bitter struggle for survival.

Some of the tales examined have revealed certain human traits like foolishness, cleverness, greed, and miserliness, set against the background of the ecology in which Somalis live. In tales where fools and clevers are the characters, the fools often fall prey to the natural or man-made calamities, whereas the clevers succeed. Similarly, greed and miserliness are not at all encouraged in this society in which scarcity of basic necessity is an order of the day, and where the guarantee for survival lies in a strong sense of communality.

Somalis in the Horn of Africa today are encamped in systems of governments, which apparently are much more cohesive, organization wise, than the fluid social organization that nomadism has imposed for years. Government systems for instance have come with the desire for national integration on a broader base, contrary to the narrow, clan-based unity. This demand anticipates tolerance with neighbouring clans and other nationalities, and not a narrow sense of territory demarcated by tiny clans. How does a state, within whose borderlines live nomads, reconcile the question of national integration with that of the nomad's conception of territory and unity? One might argue: "these concepts, after all, have emanated from the nature of the ecology; contentions over water for instance could be eased by drilling as many wells as possible, and scientific systems of pasture usage could be devised to ease tensions and minimize parochial sentiments." True, both ways have been tried and are being exercised by the concerned nations, but developing as all

these nations are, they could not turn the semi-arid deserts green, as fast as they wished them to be. It seems that now most of the nations involved in the welfare of the nomads agree that settling the nomad around development projects, could in the long run alleviate the nomad's hardship and answer positively the important question of national integration. Somalia's example of trying to settle the nomads around agricultural and industrial projects, and Ethiopia's effort around the Wabe Shebele River could be mentioned as examples.

Another important issue in Somali culture is the question of leadership. As we have seen in the etiological, wisdom, justice and some other tales, leadership is of two kinds: secular and religious. Secular leadership is strictly clan-based, while the religious is not necessarily so. Secular leadership is not complex and hierarchical. At the village level it is an elderly man or elders that lead; and this goes up to Shir, a general council of some sort that could comprise a sub-clan or a whole clan. A typical characteristics of secular leadership is that the leader is from the same clan, and is expected to fervently defend the right of the clan against other contenders in all aspects of life. A leader who fails in defending or bettering the condition of his group at any cost is considered foolish, and his chance of staying in office is limited. There seems to be an element of universal truth in this demand from all leaders, but it is much stronger in a society as the Somali, where life is not easy.

This strong clanish sentiment in leadership and other social interactions, when it comes face to face with government administration, creates some problems.

First, the nomad approaches the government organized on the basis of clan, because that is the medium his social organization dictates. The government on the otherhand approaches these people with its programmes, bearing in mind generally, the people of a certain Awraja or Woreda, irrespective of any clan. Each clan in such cases tries to win the government to its side. Such maneuverings are more conspicuous and confusing, especially when the government representative of a certain area is a native-born Somali, for he would inevitably be acused of siding with one, or another of the clans. Such accussions have led many a potential government representative to utter pessimism of ever trying to unite his people, and to help them march abreast with his other fellow Ethiopians towards development and national integration.

This question of tribal or clan sentiment in Somali society is a serious deterrent towards development and national integration. I. M. Lewis for instance mentions how foreign powers took advantage of inter-clan hostilities and cleverages to colonize what was formerly known as Italian and British Somaliland. Even today in our times, bourgoise nationalists are exploiting these sentiments by politicizing the Somali masses along tribal lines. Typical examples in this respect are the bandits Said Barre sends into Ethiopia under the guise of liberation movements, whom he has meticulously organized purely on tribal lines.

Oral literature in Somali society, we have seen plays a very important part in the education of the young and adults, next to the formal teaching of Islam. Explanatory tales sometimes teach about the nature of animals and human behavior. Tales on wisdom, on justice, and proverbs teach about human nature and social values. Most of these tales I think can be exploited with modifications, to be used in formal schools, and as has been already tried, in the National Literacy Campaign.

Educating the nomad has been a question of great concern to all concerned with their welfare. The most glaring problem is their mobility which is incompatible with formal education. Mobile schools or teams following nomads with 'education' have been suggested and tried in some places; but still I am of the opinion that this did not help much, for the problems of trained manpower and logistics in constant mobility, seem insurmountable.

Hope for the nomad seems to lie in education; but this education presupposes a change in the mode of production. The nomad need to be settled around development projects as is being tried, and given the necessary education for development and nation-building. This however, is not to materialize in the near future, and upto then, hundreds of thousands of people would continue practising nomadism. Until then, the choice seems working with the nomad in his present context, which would necessitate a thorough understanding and knowledge of the nomadic culture, before launching any socio-economic development programme whatsoever. To this end, the nomad's folklore would contribute

a lot in revealing the mode of thinking of the nomad as a whole. The nomad's values, or mode of production could be juxtaposed with the desired modern values and techniques to be taught, and the potentially useful values taken, while, such values encouraging, say, hostility and the use of undesirable force, and narrow tribal or clan consciousness could be avoided.

APPENDIX (The Tales)

Explanatory (Etiological)

1. Birds and Locusts

Once, birds and locusts went together on a raid. First the birds called each other and then went to locust and told them that they were waiting for them. Locust counted the birds calling each by its name. Locust then told the birds about their origin.

Locust told the birds that their mother's father was not known (she was an illegitimate woman). She went to Shiekh Hussien of Bale and told him how society mistreated her and that she wanted from him something that could give her the power to revenge on those who mistreated her. She promised to pay the Shiekh the due respect. He gave her a tufti (anything that carries the power of the Shiekh). The tufti given her was something that could pester man but that could not kill him. Shiekh Hussien gave her a milk vessel in which was only one locust. The Shiekh told her to keep the vessel at the sea side. The locust bred in the vessel. She was told by the Shiekh to tighten the vessel's lid with ropes. After some months she opened the vessel and the locust swarmed but and filled the earth and the sky. On the second night the locust filled the sea. On the third night they were every-where. The locust then devoured all the cereals it could come across, the trees and the green grass. People were at a loss to find why God plagued them so. Some people suggested that the curse was from a woman without a father (an illegitimate person). They sought for this person. They also went to Shiekh Hussien and told him that insects that eat no human beings but crops and trees was plaguing them.

The Shiekh asked them if they had ever illegitimately impregnated a woman, and to their shame they confessed. The Shiekh asked them if the insect they were talking about ate pumpkins and gourds. They said 'no', and he told them that it was so because the gourd and the pumpkin had the Prophet's blessings. The Shiekh told them also how the lady's daughter had come and begged for a tufti¹ and how he had given her. He said that now the power of averting the locust plague was in the daughter's hands. They asked the Shiekh for a reminder they could take to the girl. He gave them the famous forked stick which is the symbol of his followers. They then went to the lady (girl) and asked her to avert the locust off their crop. She told them about her contact with the Shiekh. They told her they too had gone to him. She asked if they had any reminder and they produced the forked stick. She then dispersed the locust to different lands.

The locust then invited the birds to make raids with them on farms. In the race to the farms, birds could not catch up with the locust. When they landed on crops, the birds could not eat as fast as the locust. The smallest of the birds sun bird (wren) bijji begged the locust to leave him some of his refuse. That's why we find today the sun bird (Bijji) bird after the locust.

¹ tufti = any religious power bestowed upon exceptional individuals by Shiekh and Saints. It is also called Karaama.

2.

The Four Brothers

There were four brothers from the same mother. When they were of age, they got married. With four servants and their old mother they settled at a desolate place. They were thirteen with their wives and servants and felt self-sufficient. They decided not to take part in any funeral ceremony of the society.

Their servants and wives left them saying they could not accept the isolation. They were left with their sick old mother who died after some time. Since they were not in society, the responsibility of burying their mother solely fell on their shoulders. They divided to share jobs regarding the burial of their mother. The first brother promised to bring the shroud, the second brother said he would find an Ox to be slaughtered on the grave, the third brother said he would fetch wood for cooking the meat, and the fourth said he would stay with the corpse, to keep it guard.

The first brother went to a nearby town to buy the shroud. When he bought it and was coming back he saw a crowd of people from a distance. Thinking they would do him some harm, he hid in a forest nearby. The crowd passed by him, and when he was out of the forest, he was a rabbit.

The ox-seeker became a bird. He is the bird that we see today feeding on cows or animals' wounds. (ox-pecker)

The wood-fetcher became a woodpecker we always hear him pecking at wood.

The corpses watcher became an ant with a pungent smell, for the corpse had decayed and spread its bad smell on him. (soldier ants)

If people misbehave in society, they are bound to face such consequences.

3. How Man changed to Rabbit

Long ago the rabbit was a human being. He was all the time a short little ting. Whenever he got married he used to say Waa iga biyo² "It is like water for me." In his farm he used to produce chickpea, teff and cabbages. He used to produce upto five "short-treed plants." He also used to get married to short women. The Culumo (knowledgable shiekhs) one said to the rabbits. "Whenever your women see their menstruation tell them to wash themselves, and when you men too get married wash your babies." (What is euphemistically treated here is sexual copulation). They (the rabbits) then said, "We will not do it, do we have to change our customs!" The man who was the Shiekh then begged Allah" Oh Allah! may yoy shorten the lives of these who changed the Muslim custom? May hell be mattressed for them? May Allah make you rabbits those who inhabit mountains? Three days after the Wadaad's (a religious heirarchy a little lower than a Shiekh) curse, they all became rabbits. Allah's anger fell on them. One, left from the rabbits,

² An idiomatic expression expressing the oath taken by rabbit not take bath or cleanse himself say fater copulation as dictated by the Koran

and a human being now, said, "If you have known this for us³ and made us animals, and you even made the tiny hare superior to us (in size), what should we do? We are not lions to plunder cattle, we are not elephants to enter farms we are not hyenas to plunder goats. So, please may you appeal in our behalf to the powerful hyena, to at least support us with the left overs of his preys?"

"My blessing for you", the Shiekh said, "is for you to roam about the bottom of a tree. For you to eat the waste of the hyena. For you to eat gareydho , cilal , likke (all root plants, some edible also by human beings.)

That is why you often see the rabbit unearthing these fruits. He does not have any other arsaaga (Arabic: Arznaqah; A God-alloted provision).

³An idiomatic expression meaning if we are fated to this kind of life.

4.

Xarla

There are clans called Xarla Koombe, Geri Koombe and Jiraan Koome.⁴

In earlier times, the Xarla Koombe were very poor people. They never used to have crop yields. For ten years, not a drop of rain was seen in their country. They used to fetch water from a distance of 12 days' journey. The children used to suffer much of thirst till the water fetchers came back. When the children of one family cried for water, the mother of those in the next hut complained to the mother of the criers to let her children quiet, as hers were asleep; for if they woke, she was afraid they would also cry for water. When the water fetchers arrived, everybody in the village, from child to elders assembled at a common clearing, children rushed to the water carrying camels with various types of containers - from crude ones to the well-made. Drops were given them, and the rest to the weakest of adults, and another batch of fetchers took the next round.

People then started to talk seriously about their condition, knowing that they could no more continue that way.

Some short-sighted members of the society met and decided to climb up the sky by making ladders of each other. They complained against the sky that refused to drop rain on their territory when it did on others. They told each other that they would take up spears with them and puncture the rain-laden clouds in the sky to make the

⁴They share common descent.

rain come down on their land.

Three hundred men, pointing their spears to the sky climbed up the sky. On each his pointed spear turned into him and killed him. All the three hundred were finished there. Their journey to Allah also ended there.

A Shiekh, carrying a book came to their land and preached to them that Allah can't be reached by spears. They told him they wanted only the rain from him, but he was smarter than them. The Shiekh then told them that Allaha can't be plundered; he can only be begged. The Shiekh suggested that he pray and beg with them Allaha's compassion, and also beg him mercy for those who died in defiance of him. One person among the audience suggested he be given the chance for reconnaissance envoy to check on whether the clouds had rain or not. He demanded for 300 other men and sent them to climb up the sky with spears. They were met by a torrential rain that washed them down - they too ended there.

The sender then came to the Shiekh and said:- "Shiekh, was not my reconnaicance good? The Shiekh answered him that it was only by Allah's will that it rained.

About 300 villagers hurried to channel the rumbling flood into their long time forgotten farms. They were all burried upto their necks in the flood and sand.

Now, Shiekhs consulted the holy books about the fate of these people and told the people that they were destined for a period of plenty and that each man had to plough his land. The word of God

was soon manifested and all over the land the crop yield was in surplus, till storage became a problem. For three years they were in this satiety and plenty, when that preacher Shiekh visited them and asked them about how they were. They responded saying that they had nothing to tell him, save that plenty and satiety was killing them. "We are", they said, "suffering from rain that never interrupts and from wells and streams that never dry. They continued telling the Shiekh that they were praying against three things:-

- (1) A well that never dries
- (2) Crops that never cease growing and
- (3) Cows that never cease giving milk

You see, as the Somalis say, "man can never handle satiety properly"⁵.

Alla's reaction was swift. First, the cattle were all swept off by daba karuur (renderpent)

Rot and pungency was everywhere. No hide mat could be got from any of the caracas. The dwellers then prayed to Allah that he stop the well's water as the cattle were finished now. In the morning, they discovered their prayer answered. The well's bottom was as dry as cement. When they could get no mats, each man beat his wife, ordered her to pound plenty of sorghum and make thousands of bread for 2 months, and made the family use the bread as mats. When the women spread the whole floor with bread, the men once more ordered them to make more bread for pillows.⁶ They went on for a year in

⁵The Somali Proverb - Saada Lama Xajiyo.

⁶Flat, thin bread - injera

this condition. Then, a Shiekh in the surrounding villages dreamt.

He dreamt the Xarla - land would be turned over and a serious disaster would befall it. He advised that lest their curse spread to others, to make offering to the saints and Allah.

The Shiekh went and cut a two-fronged long stick from a tree called Dhebi. The stick, had green leaves on each of its frong. The stick was circulated among all the villages and each village was expected to smear the leaf with butter; and from each village a gray-haired old man had to pass it to the next. While the stick was criculating, simultaneously, the overturning of Xarla was announced, and that each village had to pray piously to Allah, so that he averted the danger. The stick passed through all the villages and the Xarla village was quite aware of it. Their reaction was that they did not recognize Allah - for in defiance of Him they had spread bread on the floor of their houses. When the Shiekh heard this he advised all innocents among them to vacate their area and mix with the believers. The people around that area, therefore, was divided between Xarla and the rest.

The Shiekh cursed the Xarla folk and went to their village one Friday evening. When they saw him from a distance they too cursed him expressing their hatred for him.

The Shiekh climbed up Jaba Cas (a rocky mountain west of Jijiga) and pleaded Allah to see these infidels that slept and walked on food. He continued and said:

We heard that Xarla Koombe has become proud,
We heard that poverty has stricken them,
We heard that agony and misery befell their land.

He then climbed the mountain still higher and begged Allah to stop these witches from infecting the people. He demanded their being swept off the land, to cleanth the air for true believers.

A strong, red, red wind blew from the left. The Shiekh saw it and hurried down the mountain...the wind was very fast, Allah gave the Shiekh wings and he was thrown into his village. While flying, the Shiekh had looked down on the Xarla village from above. The majority of it was already under the ground. Only a small part of the village, where the weak and the old dwell survived.

The Shiekh came back to the desolate Xarla^{*} village on the morrow. He found the mad, the weak and the half burnt, and inquired how the night was for them. They answered it was hell and that they have become so unfortunate that they could not follow their comrades in death. The Shiekh then once more climbed up Jaba cas and complained to Allah why these infidels were not included in the disaster.

The remaining Xarlas were frying bits of what was left of their huge store of grain. They had no water and they grew so desperate that they decided to throw themselves into a huge fire that was burning.

Before the Shiekh climbed down the mountain he saw from a distance an old lady whose garment was on fire. Irresistably she was running into the fire; soon, groups followed, and the last of

* Xarla. The informant of this says Xarla is near Daqaxle, a small village on the way to Harar from Jijiga at about 45 km. Another Xarla, a place with some ruins is also on the way to Harar from Dire Dawa at about 10 km. The Harti Koombe is also said to dwell there.

the Xarla folk ended there.

The Shiekh then slaughtered many camels there and prayed at the Xarla land for days on end. The land was cleansed of the curse and now the reer Shekhaash dwell in it. A big tomb is also built there, where people go to pray and pay homage every year.

A insignificant number of Xarla also live at Biyaale.

5. The Farmer's Complaint

A farmer had a good yeild of crops. Birds raided his crops. He then appealed to God to divert these birds from his crops. God sent a shimbire-laaye* (a big bird that hunts and eats amaller birds). The birds then appealed to God to avert this scourge from them. God caused the big bird to die by colliding into a tree (it always dies that way). The shimbire laaye too begged God to help him as regards the tree. God ordered termites to eat the tree. The tree too appealed to God to ward off the ants from it. God ordered jinac (black ants) to eat them and they did. The termites then appealed to God to save them from these ants. God then said that as the jinac species were a united species that listened to each other, he will not accept the termites' complaint. That is why the jinac upto now feeds on termites. The jinac eat the termites there and then, they do not carry them to their holes.

* A Falcon bird.

6.

The Pregnant Woman and the Snake

A pregnant woman takes food to her husband who was ploughing in his farm. She sleeps under the shade of a tree. A snake comes and goes into her belly. When the baby was born the snake also was born with it; but the snake was the first to come out. A small area near the hut was fenced for the snake and he was treated as the brother of the boy with whom he was born. The snake and the boy grew up together like two brothers.

When the boy was of age, a girl was sought for him and he was to be throthed. The snake said he was mistreated, for he was the first to be born and according to custom he should have been married first. He asked his brother and parents whether he was treated so because he was an animal. The boy's girl was passed to the snake. The girl's people were poor, but when they heard that their daughter was to be wed to a snake they advised her to come back home and decided to give back the bride price they had received. The girl decided to sacrifice herself rather than her parents give back the bride price. Her parents considered her dead and mourned her officially. She was wed to the snake. At mid-night, the snake asked her to undress and she was too frightened. Then, all of a sudden God sends a man's dress, and the snake turns to a beautiful youth. In the morning the villagers see the handsome young man. When the girl's father was told of the miracle, he comes with two milch camels and a gun as a gift for the bridegroom and thanks Allah.

Today we have a clan of the Bursuug called Legesse. They have the power to heal snake-bites. This clan is descended from that snake.

7. Why was it called Gelimeeys?⁷

It was once asked why Gelimeeys was called Gelimeeys. They had once a deep well. Livestock and people used to come from different places to drink at this well. The well therefore was overcrowded. Once, there was a man on the well when some people came with cattle to the well. They said to him, "oh man, what is your name?" To which he replied, "you would know my name later, I ask you now to take away your cows from the well." They told him they won't do it, and that they have come to water their cows from the well. The man then jumped into the well and another man from the new comers followed him. The former warned him not to enter, but this man did not listen though he was threatened he would be hit by the water bucket. He ignored the man's cries and started throwing out water into the water channel in front of the well, and watered about five divisions from his cows. He came out of the well and his cows left. Another group of people arrived. They asked that same man that was on the well, whether they could enter. He told them "you won't enter." (Sooqalimeeysaan) they threatenee they would. The well was four men deep.⁸ The owner jumped into the well and three of the new comers followed him. The owner of the well stood at the lowest level. Then the man at the top threatened he would throw down buckets on his head.

⁷ A Sub-clan of the Geri living NW of Jijiga.

⁸ Four men stand one over the other on the wall of the well and receive water from the lowest. The man on the mouth of the well pours the water into the channel from which cattle or people drink. The channel is made of mud and is like a long thin bowl. It is called daray in Somali.

All the new comers threw down their buckets on the man and his head was crushed. He was blood all over and they took him by the shoulders and pulled him out. The man's relatives arrived and held the culprits responsible for the blood of their kin. Four sheep, ten heifers of cows and butter were brought. When the wounded man ate all those he was soon healed, and quickly went back to the well. He waited for his enemies on the well. A widow came to the well and begged for water and the man knocked her with his club. The man had also a gun called Allamaan with him. The place at which the well was, was dry and harsh and people could even die of thirst. It was only the Gelimeeys that had a well there. His enemies came with their cattle and asked the man if they could drink from the well. The man and the man spend the whole day parroting. "Let us enter" (the men) and "You won't enter" (the man). At last the man suddenly opened fire on his enemies and the cattle that was there. The men decided to leave the well, but first asked each other what name they should give this man. They agreed to name him Gelimees⁹, for he had told them not to enter into the well. One of the men said we have to bleed this man that wounded a woman and two of our men. This man, with a club smashed the Gelimeey's head. Then God spread an epidemic through seven clans from the Darood Ismaaciil.

⁹ Gelimeeyso in Somali means you won't enter from Gal = enter. Meeysc= you won't

The disease spread was one that sent people to sleep. The people then said, "that man we had wounded must have been a saint, that is why all of us are ill, let us go and get his blessings." And the wounded man obsessed by the well, was never away from it. The offenders bought clothes, locally made shoes and a belt and went to the man on the well and threw them on him without his knowledge, and said, "we have recognized that your name is Gelimeeys, give us your blessings and ward off this epidemic off our land. He accepted their gifts and shook hands with them. They took the man by the hand and took him to the house of a Garaad (chief) so that he could give his blessings. Then the garaad ordered coffee beans to be fried. The Glimeeys ordered each person to have a bite from the fried coffee. He also ordered that cows should be made to eat. He gave them his blessings and all was well.

The Gelimeeys was then asked to take the responsibility of being an uncle to the four sons (clans) of the Absame, i.e, the Ogaadeen, Weeyteen, jidwaag and Balead.

He accepted it, and it was well ever after.

8. The Fox and the Wit Tortoise Paced

The two raced and raced. A thorn pricked the fox. She begged tortoise to pull it out for her. He refused at first, but yielded when she insulted him. A thorn pricked tortoise and he begged fox to pull it out for him. She refused at first, but yielded when she found him helpless. The race continued. The tortoise got a fat ox and fox got a dying old cow. They left their findings and continued the race; this time to look for knives to kill the animals with. Tortoise, lucky as he was, got a blazing sword. The fox got ten dried leaves of a certain plant. they raced back and came to where the ox and the cow were. She then told the tortoise to stay with his ox and sword, as she would go to the pond to water her cow. What she did actually was to take the cow to the forest and stuff its belly through the anus with some wild fruits. She brought the cow and drove it on a hilly area, and when the fruits she stuffed began falling out of the cow, she told tortoise that it was fat, and took his ox. Poor tortoise begged her to give him but she would not listen to him. It took him a long time to persuade the fox to give him the dying cow. When it came to killing the animals she used her knife and at once slaughtered the ox. Tortoise, broke all his leaves and did not even make a scratch on the cow. He begged for help and she consented to slaughter his cow with her sword after a long time.

They continued their race, and this time found two houses. The fox got a shabby house while the tortoise got a good house with a tight door.

She said of her shabby house with several openings that she would go out of either one of the doors if enemies came. Tortoise, thinking what she said was right again begged the fox to give him her house. As usual she made him beg for hours before she consented. She took the intact house and, some time later it rained heavily. The fox closed her door and was enjoying her fire. Poor tortoise was drenched by the rain, and flood was running in his house. He came out and begged the fox to let him in. She refused to do so, and he begged and begged. She told him she had no room, for every place was occupied either by her husband, children; or it was where her fire was. When she was tired of his begging she let him in and sit at a corner. He was enjoying the fire when he saw something shining between fox's thighs. He asked her what it was, and she carelessly told him to drive a burning wood through it. When he did, she jumped up giving a cry of agony, and said: "Oh! that is where Cali and Cumar were born through." Alas! it was her genital organ that tortoise was about to burn.

9.

The Fox and the Shiekh

A fox came by a village in which there was a sick Shiekh. She was asked to heal the Shiekh. She asked the villagers to bring all leather hides in the village into the room in which the sick Shiekh was. She ate these leather ropes for a couple of days and attempted to escape saying, "Do you expect Daya Cali (her nickname) to cure this old man that has been swollen and swollen for days and who had died long ago?" She was persuaded and caught. The villagers then tied her to a tree and went to bring boiled water they wanted to drench her with.

Meanwhile hyena came and saw the fox tied to a tree. He asked her why she deserved this penalty, and she told him that she was tied here fox refusing to drink the butter her relatives had given her to drink as a purgative to cleanse her stomach. He begged to be tied but she refused. He begged and begged till he misbegged her and she finally consented to time him to the tree. She did that and left. The villagers came and were surprised to find hyena there. They decided he too was an enemy and drenched him with the boiling water. They persuaded her and found her lying under the foot of a tree. They wanted to throw spears at her, but she pleaded she was not the one that tricked them. They left her and went away.

A lion came across while she was relaxing under the shade of that tree. He asked her why she was so full-bellied. She told him that her maternal uncles had killed a sheep for her and she ate half the fat and left the other half there. He begged her to

direct him to that place and she gave him the direction to the village of her persuers.

When he went to the village an old man who saw him knew that he (the lion) was sent by the fox, and told his people to kill him by tricks. The villagers then told the lion they would give him food, the way they did to fox; but suspecting danger he fled away and came to the fox who was relaxing belly-up under the tree's shade. He said to her "My waist is so narrow and yours is so wide let me measure yours?" She consented and he boxed her on her stomach and she died there. That is how the witch (fox) died and people were relieved of her malice.

10.

The Fox as a Doctor

A king once fell ill and no cure was found for him. A fox came to the village in which the shiekh was and people asked her if she knew of any medicine. She asked them whether they tried the holy books; to which they answered 'yes'. She then told them she could do something, and asked them to kill two fattened oxen and two fattened sheep. She took all into the sick man's room and demanded to be left alone. She then caught two buzzing insects and inserted each into the nose-trills of the sick shiekh who had died just then. She then told the people to wait and listen to the Shiekh's prayer call on the morrow. The fox then went out for a while and summoned her relatives who, for eight days feasted with her on the beasts slaughtered. Fox then told her hosts that she

had finished her job and would leave the next morning, and that they have to care for the sick man who was 'better', as she said. Fearing discovery, she sneaked out in the evening. In the morning the people discovered the decayed corpse of the Shiekh. Some of the villagers went to bury him, others with spears and clubs went after the hoax. They came back in vain.

In the evening fox came to a place near the village and told the villagers shouting, how she could not have been responsible for the death of an already dying and doddering old man.

All the abled rushed after her with whatever was handy by way of weapons. A fast runner discovered the hole she hid in. He came back and told the pursuers who all run to the hole and threw their spears into the hole. A young expert got her and wounded her with her spear. A root of a tree passed through the hole and whenever the spears landed on the root, she waited, "Oh! my heart!"; and whenever any spear hit her, she loudly said it was the root that was hit. At long last, the attackers, thinking that she was finished left her. She was not dead however, and that way she saved her life.

11. The Man and the Lion in the Snare

Once a man came across a lion in a snare. The lion begged for help and said he would pay the man his debt. He freed him. The lion, contrary to what he had promised turned upon the man to eat him. The man pleaded for mercy until three men who were coming arrived. He told the three men his case and begged for their help. They told him they could not help him. He again begged for mercy until a fox he had seen from afar arrived. He told the fox the same story. She said she would not believe a lion as big, was in the snare. The lion responded he was. She argued back he was not. They continued arguing for a while. She suggested testing his claims. He agreed and was resnared. She then told the man to flee. He said he had a debt to pay her as she saved his life and asked her to go with him to his village. She pleaded to be left alone, but he would not listen. He asked her why she did not want to go and she told him that she was afraid of dogs. He promised to protect her and she reluctantly followed. When they were a little distance away from the village, children who saw them coming shouted in amazement, mentioning the fox following the man. They then released their dogs who rushed to the fox. The man did his best to defend her, but all was in vain. She was falling into pieces when she uttered her last words saying:

"Knowing it would happen, we ventured to go into it"

12.

The Man and the Leopard

Two men met a leopard and decided to kill it. They chased him for quite a distance, when the leopard met a man coming. The leopard begged the man to hide him in a leather bag he was carrying. The man obeyed and hid the leopard in the bag and when the persuers arrived and asked him if he had met any leopard, he told them he did not, and they continued their search forward. When the men passed, the man told the leopard to come out. It did and it wanted to eat its benefactor. The man could get no reasonable explanation from the leopard for his behavior. A fox arrived while they were arguing and the man acquainted her with his plight. The clever fox then asked the leopard to show her how it first got into the leather bag. The leopard did, and went back into the bag. The fox then asked the man to show her how he had tied the bag when he hid the leopard. He showed her how he did it. She then said to him:

"Now the wisdom is with the man and the stones are on the ground."

13.

The Fox and other Animals

A lion was the grandfather for four, amongst whom the fox was one. She said she wanted to herd the cattle that day and asked who should do so with her. The lion told her to go with hankool.¹⁰ They saw people building a house and fox suggested to hankool to go and be of service to those people, as they would give them food. Though he refused, she persuaded him and he went, and the people used him, and he went, ~~and he was broken~~.

In the evening when she brought the cattle she told the lion that she had warned the hankool not to go there, and that he would not listen, and was thus broken there. She asked for his calf and cow, and was given.

The next day she asked who should go with her. 'Butter' was given her. When they were in the forest she told him to sit on a hot stone. He refused, knowing he would melt. She told him she would at once collect him with her hooked finger, and he did. He remained there. Back at home she told the lion, how butter refused to listen to her when she told him not to sit on a hot stone. She asked for his cow and calf, and was given. Next day's turn was chaff's (husk.) She told him to drink from a down-stream. He refused, but she persuaded him, telling him she would gather him up at once. He was lost there. As usual she asked for his cow and calf ^{and} she was given.

¹⁰ A hankool is a wooden instrument used for pulling thorny branches. Hankool is specially useful when constructing animal pens with thorny trees.

The Ostrich was the next company. She gave her some edible forest gum with thorns in it. It stuck in her throat. When she (fox) addressed her she ostrich responded in a coarse voice quite unnatural to her. When they went together home, she told the lion how ostrich could not listen to her and ate the gum, and was ill now. When the lion asked her, she responded clumsily and he picked an hankool and with a stroke killed her. Fox took ostriche's cow and calf.

Qude, (a long wooden spoon for mixing porridge or butter) was the next to go with her. When they were out, she saw women melting butter and she asked him to go and be of use; and in return receive from them the remains of the butter. Though he feared they would burn him as wood after using him, she persuaded him and he never came back. At night she told lion of how he refused her advice and took his cow and calf.

When no one was left she suggested to her grandfather the lion, to take the turn. He accepted and went. In his absence she dug a hole, burned wood in it, and covered it with a hide used as mat. When he was back she begged him to rest on it, as he was tired. He did and was roasted there. At last she was heir to all the cows. People who heard of her sole ownership of the cattle, decided to raid her. When she knew that, she lit fire in various corners of the animal kraal. When the raiders came to the different entrances, she run to each and showed her presence, giving them the notion that many owners were around. The next night the raiders

knew the trick she played and plundered her, leaving her only an old ox. She mounted that ox, loaded it with ash and dangled jingling tins on each side of the ox and pursued her enemies. When she was close by, she shouted: "Oh! Cali look here! Oh Cumar look here. Do not let the hoofs of the horses collide." Meanwhile she blew up the ash and made such a cloud of dust that scared her enemies who fled, leaving the booty behind. She brought back her cattle to her pen.

The enemy, remember, had thought an army was after it.

14. The Elephant and the Ground Squirrel

An elephant and a double humped camel once had children at the same place. The she camel gave birth to little camels and the elephant gave birth to a sack full of worms. The elephant told the camel to either go and fetch food, or he would do it himself. The camel was left with the children. It crushed the elephant's worms, and fled with its kids. She first met a hyena and asked him to milk her and protect her from a scaby-ridden elephant. He refused, and she went to a lion and said the same thing. He too refused and she finally went to a ground squirrel and said the same thing. He asked her to sit down. The elephant came asking for her. The bush-squirrel said she was there. When the elephant asked to be shown the ground squirrel shouted to be left alone. The elephant again asked for the camel and the ground squirrel answered she was there.

When he asked to be shown, the ground squirrel retored no one talked to him at all. The elephant, angry, swore to trample on the ground squirrel. The ground squirrel too swore he would plunge into him through his anus. The angry elephant attempted the trampling but could not get him, as the ground squirrel was much tinier; almost the size of a cat. The ground squirrel however, succeeded to rush into the elephant's belly through its anus. Once it was there it started cutting its intestines until the elephant could no more stand. When it fell, the ground squirrel stood on the elephant's corpse and whenever people passing by asked who killed the elephant, he boasted it was he. At last the ground squirrel appropriated the camel, and that way he won the day.

15.

The Rats and the Frogs

Two clans, one from the rats and the other from the frogs fought. A rat was killed in the battle. After a separation of some time the rats demanded for blood-wealth from the frogs. The frog told the rat that the demand came in the dry season when he had nothing, and he'd pay it in the rainy season. When all would be in plenty and kins will be assembled. The rat agreed and went to the frogs when all was in plenty and paused his question. The frog told the rat that as he (the rat) hears, all his relatives are on the shout and are not in a position to listen to each other. He therefore said he would do the paying when they are quiet and serene, and he never paid. That way blood wealth remained unpaid.

16. The Friendship of Three Oxen and a Lion

Three oxen and a lion were friends. The oxens' colour was white, black and brown. The four went together to live in a forest. One day, lion told brown and black that the white ox be killed, for it will attract enemies from afar by its whiteness. He killed and ate it. The next day lion told brown that black should be killed, for it could obstacle people in the night by its darkness. The lion killed black and ate him. To the brown the lion did not find any pretext. He simply said to him:

Ninkii geeyrkii looxirow adna soo gooyso

"He whose age-mate is shaven (head) you too must come ready with a wet head."

Thus, he ate him too.

17. The Hyena and the Pig

A hyena and a pig once boasted to each other of their beauty. Each said he was more beautiful than the other. When they could come to no agrument, they went to a man to judge their case. The hyena threatened the man he would wipe out his cattle if his judgement disfavoured him. The pig too threatened to completely destory the man's farm (crops) if he judged against him.

The man then asked them to stand side by side and give him their backs. They did. He then tapped each on the shoulder and said: "You're more beautiful!" Each thought judgement was for him, and without looking back, galloped forward. That way, the man saved both his cattle and crop.

NB. This is the Oromo verstion of the story. The Somali version has as its characters Hyena and Monkey. The Pig apparently is an animal most found in farming areas. The Hyena is common to both.

18. The Two Thieves and the Goat-herds

Two men set out to steal and came across children herding goats. One of the thieves asked his friend how best they could steal the goats. The other said, "Burry me in this sand leaving me my hand and neck above the ground, and call the children to see the wonder that the earth has hands. I will keep them busy and meanwhile you should drive away the goats."

This was done and the unburried thief shouted to the children to come and see the earth's moving hands. The children happily came and started playing with the burried man, asking him to repeat moving about his hands. When they were in the middle of their enjoyment, the thief slowly left them and drove away the goats. The children forgot all about their goats, the more they saw the burried man playing with his neck and hands.

19. The Farmer and the two Thieves

A farmer was busy ploughing his farm when two thieves saw him and devised a way to steal his oxen. One of them stood at a place and shouted "This is a wonder! This is a wonder!" The farmer hearing him rushed towards him asking him what it was all about. Then the thief replied, "It is because I see a man farming with an only ox." The farmer turned towards where the thief was pointing to, and saw one of his oxen missing. The fact is that the thief's friend had unyoked the missing ox when the farmer had run to the thief to witness the "wonder." Now the farmer run about the forest to look for his missing ox. Meanwhile, the thieves took away the remaining ox and when the farmer was back, he only found his yoke and plough.

20. The Two Thieves and the Lady

Two men, who were looking for something to steal went together. They encountered a woman carrying a gourd full of minced meat fried with butter, and a fat sheep she was pulling. One of the men told his friend the strategy they would use to steal the sheep and the gourd from the woman. He said, "I'll pause myself as a blind man and ask her to lead me with my stick. She will then give me to pull the sheep. Meanwhile you should of course be hiding. When I walk some distance with the woman, you should come and very slowly take the sheep from me and go into the forest. When the woman is conscious, I'll simply tell her that the rope slipped out of my hand

and ask her to hand me the gourd so that she goes fetching the sheep. When she is off to do so, I'll run off with the gourd. Let her then stand black handed (open handed) and go to her village and shout for help. We will do it that way. His friend accepted the idea. The trickster man then came to the woman and said to her, "Oh! my dear sister, please don't pass me by. I am a blind man, lead me please," She then thought he was a poor Muslim speaking the truth and said to him:

"Man, with one hand I am carrying a gourd, with the other I am pulling a sheep, what can I do for you?" The man then spoke and said.

"Woman, you give me the sheep and take my stick to lead me." She complied. He took the sheep and she took his stick. When they walked for some distance, the thief's friend came, and as agreed took away the sheep. He took the sheep to a place they used to hide whatever they stole. When the man and the woman travelled for a while, the woman looked back, and said, "Oh blind man where's the sheep I had given you." He waved his stick this way and that way and said, "I....I..don't know really, may be it slipped out of the rope." She then said, "I know not of what you are saying, I ask you, "Where is the sheep?" He then said, "I don't know, the rope was knotted and long, I was only intent on following you; it surely slipped out of my hands. It's better now that you come up with a solution." She then said, "What do you yourself suggest now?" He said, "I suggest that you give me the gourd and trace back the footprints of the sheep." She complied, gave him the gourd, asked him to sit and wait for her there, and left. He sat where she told him to sit with the

gourd. Could she ever find a sheep taken away by a thief? She despaired from finding it. The man too, thinking she would catch him there, fled with the gourd sometime later. When she came back to where she had left the blind man - nag (empty!), there was not even a soul. She did not know what to do. She then said:

"Am I to go back to the village I had been given the gift from and seen off ceremonially! No! I would proceed to my own village". When she reached her village she related what befell her. The thieves too admired each other on how on earth they had hit upon such wit to confuse the lady.

21.

Wiiwaal and his Rival

Wiiwaal once asked his wife whether there was any man who exceeded him in manhood. She told him that the man who could not let her sleep the previous night was better in manhood than him. She told him the mark he could identify the man with, when they will be together in the meeting on the morrow. At the meeting, the man, suspecting discovery cut the rims of the cloth that all wore, which she said was the special mark. Wiiwaal thus could not succeed. She then told him the other sign, which was his nodding in the meeting. Wiiwaal spotted him at once and inquired why he was nodding. He answered saying that he was meditating on whether Ostrich's legs were forelegs or back-legs. Wiiwaal continued addressing the meeting. Again the man nodded. Wiiwaal asked, and he replied saying that he was meditating on whether women's breasts

were front or back breasts ("udder", in Somali is also breast). Wiilwaal then suggested to Cigaal that they go on a reconnaissance. Wiilwaal, wanting to kill his rival (by trick) alerted him to a vulture flying above and which was not there, and asked him where the vulture might land. Cigaal answered saying that it would land on either of them who falls first. Wiilwaal then gave up and arranged peace with Cigaal and thenceforth they became good friends.

22.

Wiilwaal and his Hosts

Wiilwaal once demanded of his host to include in the food they were to bring him the piece of meat that reconciles and equals men. They killed sheep and camels and in all he found not what he wanted. A girl in the village inquired what the fuss was all about and when she was told and told her father to include the esophagus in the food. Wiilwaal wanted to know this wise person. When he was told it was the girl, he declared his desire to marry her, and he did. At mid-night he told her to bear a child or else he said she would be killed. In the morning she said she was ready to deliver. All were out and few minutes later she said she was through and asked people to tell wiilwaal to fetch her the red milk of a heifer that was impregnated only the other night, that delivered a calf, and was just only licking its babe. Impossible as it was, he lost, and said he wanted to leave and asked his horse to be saddled for him. When he mounted his horse he told them that he

would leave his mare behind, to come back to it. He said he would like to see the mare with a young horse. The wife then said the mare should be taken to a colt, as it was ready to conceive. She also told her people that her husband would only come when the month in which they were then came around meaning twelve months the gestation period for horses. Such were the riddles of Wiilwaal that he used to test people with.

23.

Araweelo

Araweelo once ordered her subjects to load a camel with sodom apples (Karuur), without using any mattress or other loading accessories on the camel's back. This became a puzzle to the listeners, and they took the case to Ode Biique, a wise old man famous for his foiling of her unmeetable demands. He was always hidden from her for he was the only man uncastrated. All the rest were castrated men who bowed down to her iron hand and had lost the gut to rebel.

Ode Biique suggested that the men smear mud on the camel's back and then easily fix the sodom apples on the mud. The men did as they were told and took the camel to Araweelo. She asked who advised on the solving of the problem, and suspected Ode Biige had a hand in it.

Next time she announced a migration of the village and ordered that all camels with their loads should climb up a mountain near by. Camels by nature, as you know cannot climb mountains - but if they are led by a strong camel they would do their best. Again

the men took this difficult question to Ode Biique who suggested that a strong young black camel should be used to lead the others. The plan was successful and the camels crossed over the mountain, and the village was settled at a plain beyond the mountain.

When the village was settled on the open plain care was taken not to expose Ode Biige to Araweelo. He was hidden in a leather bag (oli) and mounted on a camel. When the camels were to be unloaded, he was slowly taken down with the bag and a hut was built around it. Araweelo noticed nothing.

It was now time to water the camel and Araweelo's men asked her permission if they could take the camel to the wells. Her reply was negative. When they asked her the same question the next day, she told them she was busy washing her small finger, the next day she was washing her forefinger. This went on till all her ten fingers on her hands were washed. The camels were about to die.

One day she announced another migration. People were extremely fed up of her rule. A young man for whom she was a grandmother and an uncastrated man, swore to destroy her. While the convoy of camels was moving slowly he took with him some men and rode in advance. He dug a long hole and covered its mouth with grass and hide mats. He told his men that he would ask his grandmother to sit on the hide mat and rest; and when it sinks down with her if she wails "I am lost!" (ba'y)¹¹, hurl down stones at her and finish her. If, however, she says "Oh! my relatives!" (tolay)¹² spare her.

¹¹Ba'y = "I am lost," implying that she cares not for her kin nor their help

¹²Tol'ay = "I am without my kin, where are they! I need their help."

24.

The Three who Journeyed Together

Three men started their journey from a village. One of the men was intrepid, the second was generous, and the third boasted of his wisdom. The three boasted to each other. The two asked the swaggerer if he had anything of value to them. He then said that there was a lot they did not see and hear and asked them to go with him. He promised to show them something. They went to a country they never heard of even in tales. They came by a place where there was a lot of commotion. They went to it and asked the people there what the fuss was all about. They told them that a ground squirrel that was there had, broken a big she camel. The crowd was surprised how the squirrel, smaller even than the cat, could break an animal as huge as the camel. The camel was slaughtered and the three journeying men were also invited to eat of the meat. The man who had claimed wisdom said to his two friends, "You have claimed to have seen everything, did you ever see or hear a ground - squirrel (dababqaale) killing a camel?" They answered "No," and he told them to count this discovery as the "first" in the unfolding of his wisdom. They continued their journey for quite a very long distance, and they once again came to a country they never had seen, nor ever heard of it in tales. They came by a reer (village) settled at a place. They asked the villagers to take them in for the night, as they were Allah's messengers travelling. The villagers told them they would take council on their request and meanwhile asked them to rest under some hedges, outside the cattle pen. Immediately the villagers closed the gates of their pens with the usual thorny bushes. The villagers

then shouted the following to the guests from their animal pens.

"We have two lions that come to us every night. Every evening we tie one of our men for them. Thanks to Allah that you are here tonight, the lions will feed on three of you and our man for tonight is saved. If you attempt to break in into our enclosure; we swear to kill you."

The wise man asked his friends whether they had seen or heard of such a thing. He reminded them that in their area people are "taken in" from lions and not "pushed out" to be their preys. To his question of course, they answered "No!" Evening came and the lions' roar was heard. The wise and the brave together asked the generous to come up with a solution, now that the lions were approaching. He proposed being eaten, generous as he was. When the brave man was consulted for a way out, he proposed fighting them. The wise man then asked the other two if they had any other suggestion of saving the group's lives. They told him they knew of no other means. He then told them he would save them by his wisdom. He said he would beg Allah the Creator of all, to enable the lions to talk to him by his grace. He asked the men to hide behind a hedge. He then prayed: "Oh! Allah! Though art the creator of these lions and us. Tonight we are your guests. May thou make these lions speak to me by your power. Oh! you lions, I am a human being, talk to me by the grace of Allah." They bade him to talk by Allah's power. He then told the lions that God only allows one king at a throne, and he wanted to know which among the two lions was the king.

He told them he would give one man to the one among them presented as king. The two lions then fought for the title, and killed each other in the combat. The wise man then told his friends that they were saved by wisdom and that from that time on they should recognize the supremacy of wisdom. He also reminded them to acknowledge his leadership.

When it was morning the villagers came out and were surprised to find the men alive and wanted to know how. The other two gave them signs to ask the wise men. He told them how by the grace of God the lions spoke and fought each other. The villagers regretted their decision and bestowed a girl on him as a compensation. He told them he was not in need of a wife, but wanted to prove to his friends the supremacy of wisdom over courage and generosity.

The villagers begged him to stay with them, which he declined, and they finally gave him a gift of 100 camels. By their experience, it was also proved that wisdom, and not force and generosity ruled the world.

25.

The Fox and The Soothsayer

A king once invited a soothsayer to come and tell him of the future. The invited man, who was not so knowledgeable was shocked, lest he told lies and was victimized. Luckily he met a fox on the way who by Allah's power talked to him. She asked him about his mission, which he told her and she asked him if he knew anything of the future that he could tell the king. He confessed

ignorance and she asked him to share her whatever he got from the king and she would tell him what she knew about the future. She told him to tell the king that the coming year would be a year of war and that he should be ready for it. He told this to the king and he was rewarded. On the way back he convinced himself that he would not share this wealth with a beast and decided to kill the fox. When he approached her, he threw his spear at her, but missed her. The king invited this soothsayer for the second year. This time also he met the same fox at the same place. She asked him if he was the same Waddaad (Shiekh) and he shamefacedly admitted. She reminded him of how God had saved her the last time and asked him whether he was ready to share the king's gifts with her this time, if she told him this year's prediction. He agreed and she told him of a coming drought. He told this to the king and he was saved with his people. On his way back the man this time deliberately avoided the fox's route. The third year the king again invited the waddad who again met the fox at the same place. She blamed him for his failure to fulfill the promise and asked him if he knew what he would tell the king this time. He confessed ignorance and she told him to tell the king that the coming year would be a year of abundance and prosperity. The king was happy and gave the waddaad gifts. This time the man brought the gifts to the fox and asked her to share the wealth with him. She then told him that this money was nothing for her and that he should know that during the year he had intended to kill her, then he was not a bad man and that it was the period itself that threw the spear on her. And during

the drought it was because of the famine that he had decided not to see her - people hid from each other then- "so it was the time," she said. She told him that he was a bad man as he only brought the gift of the king when all were abundant - (a year of fertility). So she said that it was the period that gave her the money and not him. She told him she would not take the money, but told him to go back to the king and tell him that he should always go in life according to the spirit of each age. That was she ended the story.

26.

The Man and The Python

A Python killed the elder son of a man. He decided to kill the python and went to a tree under which it lived. When she came out, he aimed to cut her with his sword but missed her, and instead hit the tree. On another day he came and asked the Python to be friends with him. She then said to him:

"I cannot trust you as long as I see the scar on the tree, nor would you leave me in peace as long as your son is missing, so our friendship is not possible."

27.

The Double Man

A woman was married to a man. She became pregnant, she gave birth to a son who had the male sexual organ from the ambilical cord downwards; and from the ambilical cord upwards he was two men. Their parents brought them up. When they were grown up, they found them a wife and wed them. The wife was pregnant and gave birth to a son. Each man argued it was his son. Every book of knowledge was consulted to solve this mystery - but it was invain. It was finally decided that their case be taken to wise men. A man said he would untie the mystery, and asked to be given only two witnesses. The wise man hid in the house of the double men. When they were asleep, he slowly pinched each, at intervals, three times on his genital. The wittnesses knew about the wise man's plan. When it was morning, the wise man asked the double men, (in the presence of the witnesses) if they had encountered any difficulty what soever the last night. One said he heard, nor felt anything till he woke. The other said that something had pinched him thrice on his penis. The wise man's verdict was that the son belonged to the sensitive. The other, he judged, was only a wart that developed on the body of the other man.

28. The Three who Fought over Their Father's Throne

Three sons fought over the throne of their father, and relatives failed to bring peace between them. They were then sent to a wise man whom they thought could give the right judgement.

They went to the wise man and he gave them three tooth brushes and told them to see him on the next day.

When they came to him the next day, he asked them about the tooth brushes he had given them. The first said he had thrown it away without even using it. The second said he chewed it and threw it away. The third said he used it and has kept it in his pocket, and he presented it to the wise man. The wise man's verdict was that the son who had thrown the tooth brush away has nothing to look for, about the second he told him he would chew his power thus.

The wise man said the kingship goes to the son who used the tooth brush and preserved it. That way the problem was solved.

29. A King's will to His Three Sons

A king, at his death-bed told his three sons to open and take the treasure in three boxes after his death. The sons, after the death of their father took the boxes to wise men known as "The sons who read the minds" (Ilma maan garato). On their way to the wise men they came across three things. First they saw a vulture perched on the hamp of a dead camel and begging for food.

Then, they saw a deer running alongside another deer. One was wounded and was dripping blood. Its blood droppings killed the innocent follower. Thirdly, they witnessed a python at a waterside, and yet begging for water and licking the stones.

When the three boys reached the wise men's house and were introduced, there were three other surprising events. The eldest of the three wise brothers was the youngest in appearance. The next elder was gray haired, and their youngest was the oldest of them all.

The three brothers therefore, all in all asked the nine riddles to be answered them:

- a) The question concerning the three boxes they had come with
- b) The three events they encountered on their way and
- c) The explanation to the incompatibility between age or appearance of the wise brothers.

The wise men said of the boxes that the eldest of the brothers was to have the money box - thus his father gave him urban wealth. The next was to take the box containing cattle dung, by which his father wanted him to become a cattleman. The third was to take the soil box to become a farmer.

Of the events they witnessed on their way the wise men said:-

"The vulture incident represented the insatiable rich. The deer killed by the mere blood of its wounded friend symbolized that

in today's world the often victimized is the on looker and not the offender. The python represented Haile Selassie who sucked people's blood despite his wealth.

" Of their aged appearance they said. The eldest of them appeared younger for he had a good wife, a comfortable place to sleep and food. The next elder is so they said for he was the father of many daughters. As a rule daughters always ask their father to give them this and that. The youngest appeared the oldest for he had an inconsiderate wife, an inconvenient place to sleep on and was poor, and that is why he appeared oldest of all."

30. The Fight over the Female Camel Young

Two she camels who were in their last days of birth giving went astray from two different areas. Both gave birth; one to a he camel and the other to a she camel. Two men who were looking for them met them at the same place. An argument ensued because each man wanted to have the female offspring.¹³ They went to elders to settle their case.

The elders decided to drive the little female camel across a river.¹⁴ They said her mother would, without any fear splash

¹³They are more valuable

¹⁴Camels are often afraid crossing over water; even if it is a small stream. They have always to be forced across

into the river and follow her. They did so and the mother camel followed. They then said the little she camel belonged to the owner of the mother camel that followed her baby. That way, the two men wer separated.

That's why the Somalis say: "If someone claims your elder son to be his, win him back by debate and not by force."

31. The Frog Husband Deserted by His Wife

The wife in anger leaves her husband for her people. The husband goes and sits in front of the house of his brothers-in-law and says the followings:-

- a. If she said my husband has no buttocks, she's right, as my buttocks were finished during the ¹⁵ Asxaab' wars because of too much riding on horse-back.
- b. If she said his side is frosty she is right because I pray often, and am most of the time in water.
- c. If she said he is noisy, she is right because I often use my rosary when praying, and I make noises.

If she said that she complained against all the above, she is right; if not she is wrong, and I demand for the return of the money I had paid as dowry.

¹⁵The Holy wars Propet Mohammed waged against non-believers in the early days of Islam.

32. ·The Three Men who Boasted to Each other About the
 Hardships they had come Through.

Three men boasted to each about the difficulties they had encountered in life. Each boasted his was the worst. Since they couldn't come to an agreement, they went to a wise man and asked him for justice. The wise man asked them to relate their tales by turn. The first man said that once he was thirsty while on a journey and had to go to a well to drink. While he was drinking an elephant fell into the well and he narrowly survived. The well was closed. For the 12 months he was in there, he fed on decayed flesh of the elephant and the worms born out of the meat. When it was dry season and it was time for all closed-up wells to be opened, people opened his well, took away the elephant's bones and finally got to him, and saved him.

The second said that at one time he had gone on a journey with his mother-in-law who was pregnant. Labor came and he had to help her deliver and take her along with her baby to the village. The third said that he was the brother of three fools. He said he was busy all day doing three things:

- (a) Once he had to arbitrate among the not to quarrel
- (b) At other times he had to protect them from being attacked by other people
- (c) And at other times he had to protect them against himself.

The wise man then gave his verdict:

- For the one on whom the elephant had fallen he told him that he had

only fallen into a hole.

- For the one who had helped his mother-in-law deliver the baby he told him that he had only got a brother.
- The one he said that passed through the most ardvous difficulty was the one born with the three fools - for at one time he is busy avoiding their quarrel, at another protecting them from others and finally gaurding them against his very soul.

33.

The Castrated Man and The King

There lived a king who had a man servant who knew the language of the crocodiles. One day, the king went on a trip. The servant sneaked to the queen and demanded to sleep with her. The queen became so furious and chased him off. When the king returned, she told him of what had happened and demanded the servant be expelled or castrated. The king took the latter choice and castrated the servant. The servant was so angry that he took away a five year old son of the king and went into the river. The corocodiles did him no harm for he knew their language. The king begged the servant to save the child and accept any amount of wealth. The only condition the servant could accept was the castration of the king himself. The father had no choice but accept it. The opeation was performed within sight of the man in the water. He asked where the king felt pain most. The answer from the king was the head. The servant said it was not genuine and ordered a repetition of the performance. He asked a second question, and this time the king said it was on his

back that he felt the most pain. The servant demanded the operation repeated. The third answer from the king was that he felt the most pain in the soles of his feet. This time the servant said the castration was genuine. He did not however release the boy, instead, he swam with him down stream, shouting:

"I am castrated! the king is castrated and the boy is lost; all for listening to a woman's advice"

34. The Two who Fought over the Leopard Hide

A man set out on a journey. He climbed over a mountain. There he encountered a leopard. To save himself he caught the leopard by the tail. A man came by him and he asked him to kill the leopard and save his life. The man refused and passed by. In the evening this same man came by again the first man begged him to kill the leopard. This time the second man obeyed, but requested to take the tail of the leopard so that the first man would kill it. When the second man took the tail, the first, leaving him with the leopard left him. In the morning the first man came back. The second pleaded that he kill it and the first did. Each then claimed the right to the hide. When they could not come to agreement, they went to an old man to arbitrate them. The old man's verdict was that the hide belonged to the night man, as he was the one most prone to danger. The leopard could have turned itself upon him any moment in the darkness.

35. The Man Who Raped his Bethrothed on the Eve of His
Marriage Day

A man wanted to marry a cerntain girl. He paid the necessary bride wealth and asked to be wed. The parents-in-law consented and the marriage was arranged for the next day. The mother-in-law, with the help of other woman pitched the hut. The mother, while she was busy with the hut asked her daughter to go and fetch wood. When she was out into the forest, her fiance who was around followed her. He caught up with her and asked her to sit down. She enquired why, and when she discovered his motive for sex, she tried to reason out with him reminding him of how bad it would be for both of them. He was impregnable to her reasoning and he rapped her. She shouted and people run to them and he let her free. The mother-in-law was very furious for she could not understand how the man for whom she was preparing everything could behave so shamefully. She ordered her helpers to pull down the hut. The father-in-law came at night and when he saw the catastrop, he said the following:-

- (1) The boy missed one thing - the girl was being groomed for him for the night and he should have had patience till the evening.
- (2) The girl too missed one thing - i.e, she should not have cried, as the rapper was only her husband who would have met her in the evening anyway.

(3) The mother too missed one thing - and that is she failed to see that what the couple performed outside was also bound to have been performed at night in the house - and so she should not have pulled down the hut.

The girl missed one thing,
The boy missed one thing,
The woman missed one thing,
I did not miss a thing.

He finally ordered the hut to be constructed for the couple and the marriage be effected.

36. The Quarrel Between the Ground-Squirrel and the Rat

The ground squirrel had a cow and the rat an ox. In the absence of the ground squirrel, his cow gave birth to a calf. Rat took the calf and kept it under his ox. Ground-squirrel came and asked about his calf. Rat told him that it was his ox and not his cow that gave birth to a calf. Ground-squirrel told rat the argument was absurd. When both could not come to any compromise, they decided that their case be seen by a council of elders composed of relatives of both adversaries. A date was fixed for the meeting. Rat came early for the meeting on the appointed day. Ground-squirrel came very late and when the council asked him why he was so late, he answered that he was busy sewing up torn earth. The council, in

surprise, asked him how this could be possible. Ground-squirrel answered them by asking them how it was possible for an ox to give birth to a calf; and for a cow, to only give birth to an after-birth.

37

The Fox and The Hyena Who Went On A Raid

A hyena and a fox went on a raid. The Hyena got a gourd of butter and she got a butterfly. He exchanged his gourd of butter for donkey. She took her butterfly to a village. A hen ate it. She insisted to be given the hen. She was given. She took the hen to a village that had a cat. The cat ate the hen. She insisted to be given the cat. She was given. She took the cat to a village in which a blind lady lived. The old woman hit the cat with a cudgel and it died. She insisted to be given the old lady. She was given and she took her to a hill near a village and left her there. Two oxen fought over the hill, trampled over the lady and killed her. She insisted to be given the oxen. She was given and she took the oxen and went. On the way she met a man with a pregnant camel. She asked him to trade his camel with her oxen. He told her his camel was better and refused. She told him he could use the two oxen to farm and that they were after all two. He agreed and traded with her. She took the camel to the hyena that was her comrade. She said, "My camel is about to give birth, your donkey too is about to give birth. Take care of both, I'll go to drink water from that yonder village. In her absence, the camel gave birth to a she camel and the donkey to a donkey. The hyena took the baby camel and placed it

infront of the donkey. He brought the baby donkey to the mother she-camel. The fox came and asked what her camel had born. The hyena told her that it had given birth to that young donkey;" and for me my donkey brought forth that young camel." She argued and when it was useless she suggested that the animal kingdom hold a meeting to see their case. The animals assembled and they were asked to whom the little camel belonged. The lion said it should belong to the donkey. The elephant too said it should belong to donkey. When all the rest were asked they said it should belong to the donkey. There was one animal who was not there. It was the rabbit. Since all the animals were tired of waiting for him, messengers were sent to fetch him. When he came, he was asked why he was late. He replied he was sewing up torn earth. They invited him to come into the group. He said, "You people, the case is all finished, place the donkey born infront of the mother donkey; and the camel born infront of the camel mother. All stood and said, "How come we couldn't see what this tiny creature saw?" When he saw them all standing, fearing they would eat him, he fled for his life.

38.

A Woman Eaten By a Lion

A man and his wife were living together. One evening after mid-night they quarrelled. The wife, pretending to go out for urine never returned. She took the way to her people and on the way a lion met and ate her.

The husband waited and waited, but when she did not return he went out to look for her. Nobody could tell him which way she took. So he collected his weapons and went out of the village. He journeyed the whole night and when it was morning he found the footsteps of his wife. The foot-steps brought him to where the lion was eating her. She was already three-fourths eaten. He did not want to leave his wife even if she was eaten. He rolled his go (a wide sheet of cloth - the size of an average bed-sheet worn on shoulders by men) on his hand and decided to face the lion. The lion saw him and roared in anger. The man went closer to it, and the lion instantly sprung on him. They struggled and the man was thrown down.

Another man passing by that road saw the man and the lion wed locked. Without wasting time, he pulled out his knife and opened the lion's belly. A necklace was thrown out of the lion's stomach. The fallen man tired, but alive rose up from the ground. The man who killed the lion picked up the necklace and wanted to possess it. The first man who fought with the lion recognized the necklace of his wife and told the man so; but the killer of the lion would not listen to him.

The husband told the other man that he cannot lose both his wife and the wealth. The killer of the lion said that had he not saved his life he (the husband) would not have got the necklace. The two men almost decided to kill each other when some travellers came by. They listened to their case very carefully and decided that the necklace should belong to the husband who was ready to sacrifice his life for his wife. The killer then argued that the lion would have killed the man had he not interfered. The husband responded saying that it would not have saved him as well. The judges demanded that the verdict should be carried out for the sake of peace, and it was done.

39. The Blind Man who was Given a Snake to Eat

A blind old man was abandoned at a village by his kins who migrated to another area. It rained heavily and the poor man felt cold and hungry.

An enemy of the blind man came to where the man was and killed a snake. He roasted the snake and gave it to the blind man to eat, telling him that it was proper meat.¹⁶ When the blind man ate it, he vomitted, and miraculously he regained his sight. When he saw what the man gave him was snake, in anger, he slaughtered his enemy and followed his kins.

¹⁶Somalis do not eat snakes.

40. The Four Friends: Cat, Dog, Hen and Donkey

A donkey overheard his master that he would abandon him because he was old and useless. The donkey, surprised at the ingratitude of man left his master's area to find protection in God. A cat too overheard that her mistress was going to throw her into a river, for she became old and useless. She too fled her mistress's house to seek protection in God. A hen also overheard that her mistress was going to kill her and eat her before she got too old. She too fled the house. A dog also overheard that his master was going to abandon him for old age, and he too fled his master's house.

The four of them met at a forest and exchanged their deeply felt grievances against man. They all agreed that if man hated them God did not, and decided to live together.

They got an old deserted house and were resting in it when four thieves came in with some gold they had stolen. This old house was the usual place these thieves kept whatever they stole, and so they did not suspect the presence of anyone. They flopped their bag of gold on the ground and immediately went to sleep, for they were very tired. The four friends decided to scare off the men of their gold, for they thought this was an opportunity to revenge against man. All the four friends shouted at the top of their voices. The man woke up in confusion and rushed out of the house, leaving their bag of gold behind. The friends heartily congratulated each other at their first success.

One of the men, refusing the advice of his friends came the next day to collect his gold. The four friends saw him from a distance and kept quite till he came into the house. When he was in the middle of the house, each fought him in the fashion he knew and the man, seriously wounded broken and blind traced his way back to his friends. His friends took him to a hospital. The four friends sold the gold and lived on its money for the years to come. If man hated them, God did not hate them.

41. The King's Wife who had No Children

There was a rich king whose wife had no children. Since the woman could live no longer without children, she demanded to be divorced. The king begged her to stay and have faith in Allah, but she would not listen. She said she preferred children to wealth. The king asked her to give him some months, for he will marry another woman and try himself with her. The king then paid an expensive dowry and married another woman. By Allah's grace the new wife conceived a child. The former woman now acknowledged the offence she made, but all the same, decided to leave the king. She was now more jealous for she foresaw no inheritance in the king's wealth because she lacked children. This wife goes to her father and asked him if he ever had any serious disease like smallpox or leprosy, that could have by inheritance prevented her from becoming pregnant. He told her that her mother had such a problem and she blamed her father for not having treated her medically on time. The father then promised to help her and went to shiekh in Balbaleeti to seek herbs.

A prayer was held for the woman, four sheep were killed and she was to drink the fat. She went back to her husband and a month later she was pregnant. She gave birth to a son and the king was very happy. He advised her to cool down and run her family. But woman as she was she was prone to jealousy, even if God was kind to her. She decided to destroy her rival the second wife. She gave the other woman no peace. She often added poison to her rival's food and the latter was oftentimes narrowly saved from death, for her father who was a king who used to bring her all kinds of herbs. The second wife gave birth to twins, but she demanded to be divorced, for she could no longer stand the first wife's malice. She decided to sacrifice all her children's inheritance only to rid herself of the diabolic co-wife.

The first wife went to her father and told him that she and the second wife could not sit on one throne as queens. She said she would either poison her husband or the co-wife to death. Her father who was poor, and used to live on the king himself did not like his daughter's idea. He consented that she poison her co-wife.

The first wife unusually made friends with the second wife. One day she prepared lunch, poisoned her co-wife's dish, freed hers, and brought the two dishes. Pretending she had cold and could not eat much, she let her co-wife eat the poisoned dish. She died after only two bites. The poisoner then shouted and people assembled. She told them that some insect must have bitten her. The killer wept and

and wept to show the world her innocence. The dead woman was buried.

The King then Said:

"I am dead and I am saved." by which he meant "dead", because of his wife's death, and "saved" because he could have the right to marry his dead wife's sister. When his wife heard this she threatened to kill him. Then the king knew that she was the murderer of her co-wife.

42. The two Who Went Gum Gathering

Two friends went out into a forest to gather gum. By the end of the day, one of them had more gum than the other. The one who had less gum asked the other to give him some gum. The former refused to give anything. The other, very angry, killed his friend by a spear he was carrying. The death of the deceased remained a mystery for quite a long time.

One day, the blood-stained man happened to pass by the place he had killed the man on. The killer on that day was with his kinsmen. The murderer saw a bone of his dead friend, and struck it with the bottom of his spear. The bone flew up and hit one of the man's eyes. The strike was so painful that he thought he would die. When the pain became very serious and he was on the verge of death, he confessed in the following words:

" My dear kinsmen, it is the bone of x that I had killed a year ago that has hit my eye and is causing my death, I swear to God I was his killer, and bid you to pay his blood wealth. I am dying, good bye!"

He did not live a minute longer when he uttered those words. God is just and he can easily disclose man's evil nature.

43. The Journey of Lillaahi (Honest) Khaa'in (Dishonest), Snake, Water, Fire, Earth, and Lion

The seven journeyed together. They came across some cattle. Khaa'in said to snake, "Lion is the most powerful of us all, how should we get rid of him." The snake, promising to do the job, ambushed and stung the lion and killed it. Khaa'in then went to fire and said, " Fire you know snake has killed lion, it is only you who could rid him of us" The fire ambushed, and set himself on the snake, which was fried there! Khaa'in went to water and said, "Why don't you do something about fire, It has killed snake." Water ambushed for fire and put him out. Khaa'in went to earth and asked him to do something about water. The earth swallowed water.

Lillaahi was not aware of all that was happening. He was just, driving the cattle. Finally, Khaa'in and Lillaahi were left alone. Khaa'in climbed up a mountain and told Lillaahi to stand at the bottom of the mountain to receive a bog rock of gold he would roll down the hill. He told him to wait for it with open hands. Khaa'in climbed up the mountain and rolled down a large rock. When

the rock kanded in Lillaahi's arms it truned into gold. A second rock he sent too, turned gold. Khaa'in told Lilaahi it was his turn to go up and roll down the gold. Lillahi went up and rolled down the rock he was told would turn gold, when it reached the bottom of the mountain. The rock did not turn gold; it rather came down and killed Khaa'in. The anomisity between Lillahi and Khaa'in began that day. Lillaahi eventually possessed the cattle.

44. The Three Brothers One of Whom was Idle

Three men were brothers. One was from a seperate mother. He prayed, "Oh! Allah, I won't go out to win my bread anywhere, I want you to provide me right here in the house." His wife reprimanded and insulted him a lot for his laziness. She asked his half brothers to advise him to improve on his utter uselessness. When they advised him to work he swore not to go and fetch any provision whatsoever, unless it came to his very gate.

One day, his wife went out to fetch five wood. In the forest, she found a barrel full of gold to the brim. She came running to her husband and urged him to go with her to secure the gold. He then said, "Did not I tell you I will not fetch for any provision save what comes to my very house?" She went and told this fortune to his half-brothers and asked them to bring and share the gold with her. They rushed and brought the barrel and hid it behind their huts. They ate their dinner and came and opened the barrel.

Allas! they found the barrels full of snakes. They then instantly said, "Let us put this barrels of snakes in the house of that bastard and lazy brothers of ours. Let him eat them!" They threw the barrels into their brother's house. By Allah's grace, all the snakes turned into gold. He then gathered and gathered the gold.

This man had begged and made a promise to Allah, and his Lord did not fail him. Allah brought everything for him to his doors. If you beg Allah and believe in him without doubt, you will get what you ask of Him. We have to acknowledge and believe in Allah. If we abide by Allah's commands, we are sure to get whatever we ask of him.

45. Three Men Closed In A Cave

Three men went on a journey. They were tired and took rest under a cave which closed in on them. They said to each other, "Let us each pray to God through some good we had done before in fear of God." The first man said that he once had a servant for whose service he had given him a goat. The servant had left him byt the goat bred and the livestock reached 30. He said he had to send errands everywhere to find the servant so that he could give him his goats. The man finally found, but refused to take the thirty as he said he owed him only one. The master insisted, and the servant took the goats and was happy. 'Oh God' he said 'If I had

done that good in fear of you may you open this cave for us'.
It opened slightly.

The second said that a beautiful daughter of his deceased uncle used to live with him and he wanted to sleep with her by seducing her will with money. She refused. He then had told himself that she would yield, orphan as she is when she was out of clothes. She was so and he again asked to sleep with her. This time she yielded; but when he was about to sleep with her she shivered. When he had asked her why she had said it was for fear of God.... he too then had left her for fear of God. So he pleaded God to open this case for them if he had done that good in fear if Him the opening of the cave increased.

The third said he once wanted to milk his cows for his hungry wife and children, but abstained fearing he would awaken his parents who were asleep . He made his family suffer till his parents wok_. When they did, he milked the cows and gave the milk first to his parents. They complained why he did so and **only with their consent did he feed the family** even after they woke. So he pleaded God to open the cave for them for that good he did for his parent in fear of God. The cave opened completely and they were safe.

46. The Four: Lion, Snake, Man and Donkey Who Were Guests to a Man

The four went together and asked a man to host them. He accepted, but asked what the diet of each was. The lion said he ate meat. The snake said he drank blood. The man said he will eat whatever the host ate. The donkey said he ate the stomach.

The man killed an animal for them. The lion ate the meat, the snake drunk the blood, the donkey ate the stomach, and the man shared his food with the host. That way they spent the night. On their departure all thanked the host for his treatment, and promised and swore by Allah's name, to pay their debt. They told him they were his brothers, henceforth. They bade him fare-well and left him.

The lion travelled to a far off country and brought his benefactor a hundred heads of cattle. He poured them into the barn of the man and said, "Brother, that way have paid my debt."

The donkey was working in a money factory. Often time he was loaded with money he took to other places. He was always honest and prompt in his job.

At long last, his masters, developing confidence in his honesty and loyalty stopped driving him. He was left all alone to transport the money. One day he was loaded with gold and was left alone as usual. Straight away, the donkey took the gold to his benefactor who unloaded the fortune with pleasure. The donkey told his benefactor, that he had rapaid his debt, and bade him farewell.

The man came to his benefactor and saw that his born was full

of cattle. He learned this and left him. The next night he came with a group of men to plunder his benefactor's wealth. When they were at the man's gate and the leader was about to lift the gate open, the snake who had come to pay his debt saw him and stung him. The leader shouted "a a a !", and the man next to him, angry and surprised shouted at him and tried to open the gate himself. He too was stung. The third man replaced the second, and he too was stung. The rest then decided to open the barn from another corner and shifted to the other side. The snake too shifted and heroically defended the barn by stinging all the raiders to death.

When it was morning the man opened his gate and was dumbfounded to see the heap of corpses at his gate. He enquired: "Oh Allah! what has finished them all?" The snake then spoke and said:-

"It was that man 'x' who had spear-headed this enemy to plunder your cattle, and it is I who killed them in defence of your wealth. That way I too have paid my debt." They bade each other farewell and parted.

47.

The Sexy Man

There was a man who was over sexy. He used to follow women who went to fetch wood and water. On one day alone he trapped nine women and slept with all of them. He was called Giraanle because he wore rounded braclets around his hands and neck. All women around that area prayed for his death, because they could not go water

or wood fetching. Giraanle did not even give peace to little goat herds. One day he met two got-herd girls of about fifteen and rapped them and the girls got pregnant. People around there, from this incident on started to take more care. They could not trace Giraanle, for he was almost a wild beast of the forest. Women were told to avoid the area he was said to be, and then Giraanle got no women. This made him almost mad. One day Giraanle fell into a hole in which there was a python. Thinking she was a woman he inserted his genital organ into its mouth. The python sucked him and sucked him. He then said:

I am foaming! I am foaming!

I am feeling sick! I am feeling sick!

Why do not you let me free you woman's organ

Of course the python did not leave him and he died there.

48.

The Poor Man and His Goats

There was a poor man who used to complain about his poverty to God. He said that he had given wealth to all other people, but only gave him a donkey he said "Shaa!" after and even that, God sent to Shuuraa (a star in the sky - meaning it died). After some time the man got some wealth. He mostly had goats. Hyenas and foxes could not give him peace. Whenever he took his goats to the river many were broken on the flat stones. He again complained,

Then one day he went to a river to drink. The place was all stony and there was water flowing. He knelt down to drink and his mouth was cemented to the stones. His attempt to dislodge was in vain. He pleaded God for release and was helped. From then on he divided his goats into two. One half he said belonged to God and the other to himself. He told God to do whatever he liked with his share; but only save his. When on another day he brought his goats to the river a beautiful ewe got its leg broken on the stones. He murmured and said "If we (I) complain, it is the cementing of our (my) mouth to the stones; if we (I) keep quiet God does not stop treating these goats like these.

49.

Wiilwaal and The Shiekhs

It was on the occasion of Ciida'l fitr (the Muslim holiday after the Ramadan month) that a Shiekh in a ceremony he gave preached that there was no one to fear save Allah. Wiilwaal (an actual hero) who was in the meeting refuted this statement and a bitter argument followed between the Shiekhs and Wiilwaal. They arranged to meet on the morrow to continue with their argument.

Wiilwaal ordered his people to construct two huts and when the Shiekhs arrived according to the appointment, took them separately to the two huts. He killed a sheep and went to the first group of Shiekhs with his sword dripping blood. This immensely shocked the Shiekhs who thought the cruel Wiilwaal had slaughtered

their friends. He went out without uttering a word to them. Again he killed a sheep and went with his sword dripping blood to the other group of Shiekhs. They too were shocked and believed their friends were killed. Here too, Wiilwaal went out without uttering a word. The Shiekhs in both huts rushed out and took to their heels. Wiilwaal over took them and brought them back, and when they took breath told them that it was not only God that should be feared, but also a courageous man as well.

50.

The Two Friends

There were two friends, one from Hargeise and the other from Addis Ababa. They met at Dire Dawa and both were unemployed for quite a while. Then one of them got a job in a shop with some rich merchants and promised to help his unemployed friend. The friends made a strong bondage to help each other for the future. For six months the shopkeeper helped his friend and at the end of the six month the unemployed asked his friend to give him some money so that he will go and look for a job elsewhere. His friend gave him 600 shillings and he went to Somalia where after some time he got employed at a bank.

The shop-keeper meanwhile became a faithful worker much liked by the owner. The shop owner was so pleased by his honesty and deligence that he gave him his daughter as a wife. The girl,

now once engaged was free to roam about.

The shop-keeper's friend who now became rich came to Dire Dawa to visit his old friend. As soon as he was out of the bus he saw a girl passing by and was struck by her beauty. He fainted on the road, and people gathered around him. His friend shop-keeper whose shop was near by saw the crowd and came out to see what it was all about. He pressed through the crowd and to his utter surprise saw his friend prostrated on the ground. He lifted him up and by the help of some men and took him to his home.

The shop-keeper fed his friend and also asked him to take bath and then rest. In the evening when his friend felt better he asked him to tell him the cause of his fainting. At first the friend refused to tell him anything but yielded at last. He told him that he had fainted because he saw a beautiful girl. His friend promised to find him that girl and fulfill his desire for marriage if he wanted to. The shop-keeper friend invited all the girls in the town including his betrothed and asked his friend to identify the girl that fainted him. He pointed at the very girl that was betrothed to his friend the shop-keeper. His friend, unhesitantly passed the girl to his friend and arranged for a wedding. He did so because of the friendship bondage that existed between them since long. The friend took his wife and went back to Hargeisa.

The shop-keeper friend fell ill after months - hospitals, Shiekhs nor traditional doctors or soothsayers could not heal him. He spent all his money on treatment, but all was in vain. He was

forced to leave the shop and take to beggary. Sometime later the disease proved to be leprosy and knowledgeable people told him that human flesh and blood was the only cure. This made him more hopeless and he started wondering aimlessly from place to place. These journeys took him to Hargeisa town. Since he knew no one in the town he slept at the veranda of a certain house. When it was morning a woman came out and he begged her for alms. She responded, "May God give us all!" The beggar then collected his rags and was prepared to leave when the woman's husband saw him and told his wife to call him back. The husband then invited the beggar in, gave him food and tea and asked him to tell him about his life. The beggar then enthusiastically related the story of his life from the beginning to the present. The listener knew he had met his friend but did not reveal anything to him. He only told his wife to go out and shop enough food and meat provisions for some guests he expected the next day. She took her basket and went out. Meanwhile the man took his beggar friend to another house in a different area, and provided him with all he needed - water for bathing, clothes and food. He then took his son, slaughtered him, cooked his flesh and gave it for his friend to eat. He also smeared the body of his friend with the blood of his son.

When the mother came back with her breasts exploding with milk and she asked for her son, her husband told her that the last he saw of the son was in his bed. They searched for the son everywhere but could not find him. At last she was convinced some

beast ate the son, or that he was stolen. Her husband consoled her to forget it as they could get another son as long as they were healthy and alive. Meanwhile, in seven days' time the beggar was completely healed of his leprosy. His friend then gave him some money and told him to go and find a wife.

He brought home the lady of his choice and his friend ceremonially wed him. His friend also opened for him a shop in the town through the help of his rich friends and because he himself was a banker. The beggar friend all the time was in great amazement; he could not at all understand why this man was helping him so much; he could figure ~~no~~ blood or other relationship that existed between them. One day the beggar friend had the chance to ask his friend his puzzling question. It was one afternoon when they had sat for chat and were alone that he raised the question to him. His host's response was that he did all he did, because his whole life depended on him. The beggar could not understand this, but his host further told him the story of their friendship, and that the wife he has now was a gift from him (the beggar). He told him how he was eagerly waiting to repay his debt one day and told him that the flesh and blood that healed him were that of his own son. The beggar friend was awe stricken and full of deep respect. All he could say was:

"You are a real brother in God."

So promises are not easy things - they test a man's integrity in many ways.

51. The Three Itinerant Students Who Left Their Friend in a Well

It was noon, about the time for the noon prayer. Three xir (itinerant students) came to a well. They wanted to take water in their (gourds) for ablution. The two persuaded the third to go down the well and get them the water. He obeyed and after he filled the gourds they decided not to take him out. He pleaded but it was in vain. He had to squat there all day. At night three jins (demons, devil) came to the well. They did not see him and so they began talking. One of them said the king's daughter who was ill could be cured if she is smoked by her own hair. The second said he knew where, if drilled by a spear water could spring out from. The third mentioned where gold could be found.

During the day some people came to water their cattle. They sent down their leather buckets, and he sat in one of them and was pulled out. They asked him why he was in there - he told them his story and asked about the sick daughter of the king. He met the king and treated the girl accordingly. The water spot too was drilled. The gold was also excavated. He became rich. Those friends came as beggars and he gave them money. After three days they recognized him and he told them of his fortune. They went and staid in the wells. They were killed there by the jins who were angry by the disclosure of their secret.

Marriage

52.

The Girl who Sought Marriage Advice

A girl told her mother that she wanted to marry and so, she wanted her mother to give her some advice. The mother said:

- 1) "Don't get married to a 20 years old because day and night he asks you for sex."
- 2) "Don't marry a 30 years old as it is the period when men most like enjoyment and neatness. He'll beat you because this or that is not clean."
- 3) "Don't marry the 40 years old as it is the period when men are most strong and when they eat a lot. Watch out against him."
- 4) "Don't marry a 50 years old because that is when men are most sleepy and the mate is often occupied by him and it is difficult to dig it."
- 5) "Marry not the 60 years old because that is the period when men most like their wealth and he may accuse or beat you for having dispensed with anything without his knowledge."
- 6) "If you need the enjoyment of a man, marry the 70 years old because he always says "Don't touch my wife" he knows he can't get another. For him, you are the only truth teller."
- 7) "Don't marry the 80 years old, for he has no sperm and eats a lot - he is of no value to you."

53.

The Man with The Three Wives

A man was married to a woman. Because she did not have children for him he married a second wife. This second one was beautiful and she had the habit of roaming about - which was not proper of her. She too gave him no children. He then married a third wife; this time an ugly, foolish girl who was far beyond the marriage age. This fool brought forth children, but the man kept her despite her intolerable ugliness and stupidity.

The three wives had three distinct traits. The first, though barren was well liked by his kin for she was very considerate to them. The second, in the eyes of the husband's kin was not popular, for she was a "wonderer"; but she did please her husband very well in every aspect of their relationship and he often times sided with her, and listened to her words. The third was just a harmless moron whose sole business was to "produce" children.

The second wife, beautiful but shrewd, had, as mentioned earlier a great influence on her husband. She feigned anger and jealousy against the one liked by the kin, and the fool whom she accused of being unable to take care of her children. She persuaded her husband to divorce them both. When he did, two of his brothers immediately married them.¹⁶

The man was asked why he divorced them. He said that he had stayed with the first wife because of his clan, that liked her so much.

¹⁶They could not stand such good wives going to men outside their kin.

With the second he stayed because she was good for his life and gave him pleasure. The third, he kept her merely for the children she produced.

The second wife started a new life with her husband now that she possessed him alone. The man was ostracized by his kins. Nobody took any interest in his affairs. His wife began to despise him and in fact became adulterous. He then complained of her behavior to his clan. Nobody listened or sympathized with him. He continued presenting his complaints to his kin whom he often found gathered at the house of his x-first wife. That woman, by the grace of Allah got children from the new husband; and the fool too became wise. The man became overpowered and hen-picked by his wife. She used to call him, "the fool who was disliked by his own kin." He almost lost his wits; and was in no proper control of the wife and life. She finally divorced him and left him in the lurch.

54. The Man Who Brought All he was Asked to Marry A Girl

A man was told he would be given a girl (for marriage) and a hundred she camels if he brought four things:

- (1) A live snake,
- (2) An elephant's milk,
- (3) A reined lion and
- (4) A well satiated herd of goats (after a dialy graze) that ignores tender brances served it; after its return from a daily graze.

First, he took a wooden milk jag and closed it on the mouth of a hole in which a snake lived. The snake glided into it, and then the man tightened the lid around the jar's neck and took the snake to his questioners.

For the elephant's milk, he went to a place where an elephant had given birth to babies recently. While the mother-elephant was out grazing, he killed one of the little ones and wrapped himself with its skin. When the mother arrived, he milked it into a milk pot he had carried. When the mother-elephant left him for its pasture, he took the milk to his questioners.

He looked for a lion in the forest and found some cabs under a tree. He climbed up the tree and suspended down a slice of fatty meat from a branch of the tree.

The lioness came and looked up the tree and saw the hanging meat. It opened its mouth, wanting to devour it. The man dropped a stone into the lioness's mouth. When all its teeth were crushed, he mounted it and directed it to the village beating it, and handed it to his questioners.

As for the goats, he took them to a grazing area full of puncture vines and drove them madly over the vines till they were dead tired with pain. When in the evening he took them home, the questioners were surprised to find the goats avoiding the tender leaves they presented them with. The shepherd was asked what he did to them, and he said what was expected of him was only to have satiated them, and that he did it. He demanded the girl according to the promise and was gladly offered.

55. The Girl Who Challenged All Her Suitors

There was a girl who refused to marry. She avoided marriage by often asking all candidates difficult questions. A man swore to answer her riddles and went forth. She asked him three questions:

- (1) To tell him what the best place for a man to seleep or relax on is.
- (2) What the barn of camel is and,
- (3) What the real sauce of cooked grain is.

To the first he answered that it is simply a neat sleeping place. The barn of camel, he answered is that which is always clean of dung and dirt. The grain sauce he said, is milk and butter.

She said he did not know the answer and said the following were the correct answers:

- (1) The best place for a man to rest in, is love and obedience shown him by his wife.
- (2) The barn of a camel is the prevelance of peace to wherever it goes to graze.
- (3) The sauce of cooked grain is a hungry person who would not even remember sauce.

She followed it by three other riddles. "What is it" she said, "that is in its youth when it is three days old and in its old age, on its thirtieth day?"

He said he did not know it.

She answered it was the moon—which is young the first three days and old when it has lived thirty days.

Her last riddle was for him to know what runs, but leaves no trace behind, whatsoever. He did not know it, and she answered that it was the wind.

56. The Old Man who Challenged All His Suitors to His Daughter

There was a man who had a beautiful daughter. He also had a lot of goats. He refused to give his daughter to several men. But people did not stop bothering him. He then said he would give his daughter to the man who takes out his goats for grazing and brings them home satisfied. A young man who was begging to be given the daughter was ready with his stick for the day as a goat herd. He boasted he would fulfill the quest and took the goats, way into the forest where he thought was abundance of grass.

The poor young man had no knowledge of what goats had said once. "As I keep on saying one! one! and never reach two, the accursed shepherdess lays her stick on me."

The shrewd old man, the father of the daughter cut a tender branch from a thorny tree, asked the goats' clearing to be cleaned and placed the branch in the middle of the clearing. He said when the goats are brought back tonight if they don't rest in the clearing

and eat this branch it would mean they are not satisfied, and therefore he will not give his daughter to that young man. If they rest and do not eat the leaves, the young man wins the day, and he will be given the girl then and there.

When the goats were brought in the evening, they ran to the branch and began to eat it. The old man told the boy to eat his dinner and to go back to where he had come from.

A second candidate appeared and was told the condition. This young man felt the goats failed to be satisfied because they had not drunk water. He therefore took them to a river where they drank their full, and later took them to graze in a grassy area.

When he brought back the goats in the evening the old man was, as usual ready with the branch in the clearing. The goats ate the branch and the boy was seen off as a loser after he was given whatever was there by way of food and drink.

A third candidate appeared and boldly asked the goats to be let out of their barn for him. He ate and drank what was given him and started after the goats. He took the goats to a desolate place long ago deserted as a settlement, full of thorn called gocondho (puncture vine)* and a dustbowl in general. He took a long, big stick and began beating the goats and chasing them around never letting them to bend and have a bite. The goats became so nervous, and very tired in the legs.

* Scientific name = *Tribulus terrestris*

They would have been most happy if they were only allowed to rest and given nothing to eat. The tiny thorns all around, broke into their tiny legs, but the young man would not at all let them take breath.

The old man was ready with his thorny branch and a neat clearing for the goats when in the evening the boy was back with the goats. This time, the goats did not even see the branch, they hurried to rest. The goats prostrated in the clearing and did not even raise their ears. "The old man and the young man were like a jin (devil) expeller against each other. The old man then told his daughter that he could only forget her in the arms of that young man; and that very night, the marriage formality was carried out and she was wed to the clever shepherd.

57. The Girl who Married The Cousin of Her Kidnapper

A young man eloped with a girl and asked a cousin of his to accompany him. They journeyed the whole of the night and when it was morning the girl said, "give us something to eat", The would-be husband complained they were not in a village or town. The cousin who was acting as bestman said, "she means", let us brush our teeth." They continued their journey and after some distance rested under a tree. The girl then said, "Why do not you let us rest?" The kidnapper told her that they were already resting under the shade of a tree. The bestman then said, "She means to tell us to take out our shoes and ventilate our feet." The journey continued

and they passed through a drought-stricken area and the girl said "I see a fertile place." The kidnapper said, "What a liar are you? How could one possibly talk of a fertile place in this drought-stricken area?" The bestman then says said, "She means to tell us that she has seen a village - for where there is a village and people are settled, it is bound to be fertile - so look around for any sign of a village." The journey continued and the girl again saw from after fertile land. She then said she saw a vulture, for which her kidnapper again accused her of lying. The bestman again interpreted it as a village, and soon they came across one - and it was the kidnapper's at that.

When they were in the village, the girl swore not to marry her kidnapper for in her eyes he was a fool; instead, she asked his bestman to marry her. You see, cleverness is not what one is born with, it is what Allah either gives you or not.

So Hurre married the girl and she started to test him as well. One evening she prepared porridge for dinner. In the middle of the bowl was the butter that served as sauce. She took a knife and sliced the porridge into two, letting the butter flow to her side and saying all the while, "You know that remark you said yesterday cut my heart like this." (it hurt my feeling). This was only a trick she had devised to channel the butter towards her side. He was however, much cleverer for he said: "Your remark churned my stomach thus," and with his wooden spoon disturbed the whole dish. She knew then he had passed the first test.

In the second test, she pulled down their nomadic hut and hanged the grass mats of which it was made on a tree, and constructed a smaller one that could only accommodate her. She never left the hut and gave him no chance to sleep with her. This happened in the rainy season when all the sheep had given birth to lambs. The lambs and the sheep-mothers were often separately penned, so that the little lambs may not suck the mothers empty. Hurre thought of a way to out-wit his wife regarding the special confinement she made for herself.

It was before milking time when one day Hurre released the lambs to their mothers. His mother who was thereabouts saw what was happening after sometime, and alarmed her daughter-in-law and others who were around. Hurre's wife rushed out of her hut and with her mother-in-law tried to separate the lambs from their mothers. Meanwhile, the clever Hurre run to the little hut his wife had built for herself and lay in it.

When his wife came back from her mission and found someone lying in her hut, she was surprised and angry. Soon, she heard her husband's voice.

"Ay lady! someone has occupied the hut before you!"

She knew she lost the game and acknowledged the true manliness of her husband and was pleased deep at heart.

The next day, she built a bigger hut with her woman friends, decorated it, and in the evening invited her husband.

58. The Two Men Who Married Two Goat-Herds

Two girls herded goats together. One was black and the other red. The red one was foolish and the black clever. Two men who wanted marriage visited them. The red one said to the black, "Aye! you, who people pass by to and fro, would you turn the goats this way!" The black one then replied, "Even the Waadhi (a red tree) too is red - false is your redness." One of the men said he would take his chance with the black one. The red was of course left to the other. That way, both were taken away as wives and wed. Their men left them for a journey. While the men were away they became pregnant. They gave birth to two babies in their absence. The red one suggested they kill their children and paint the hut's pillars with the blood. The black girl went to the forest, brought some red bark of a tree, dyed it and ~~painted~~ her house. She then showed the red one telling her that she had killed her baby and painted the house according to the agreement. The red one did not hesitate to kill her baby and paint her hut. The black one then produced her son whom she had sent to sleep. The red one caught a crow, folded it in a cloth and laid it on the bed. The men's arrival approached. The black one went to town and bought some spaghetti she would serve her husband with. She told the red one she was going to fry some ears of corns and preserve them in the tagungs (places where grain is stored). The fool, believing that, did as she was told to do. The men arrived and first went to the house of the red one and asked for food. She then produced her

fried and stored corn. They fled her house and went to the other. A big wooden-bowl full of spaghetti was given them. They ate to their full and then asked for their children; as they wanted to shave them. The black one produced her son and was shaved by his father. When they went to the red and asked for her son, she produced the crow. When the father caught it to shave - it flew out of his hand.

59. The Marriage Seeker and Meeldhamanla' Cali

A man once set out to look for a wife. He went to many villages and houses, but at last hear the name Meeldhamanla' Cali. It was the name of a certain girl and he looked for her village and found it at after sometime. When he came to the village, he asked to be shown her house. He then asked to be shown Dhamanla' and was shown another beautiful girl that lived in the village and that was bethrothed to another man. He was satisfied by the girl and he told the elders he would come back on such and such date with the bride price.

Leaving behind the camel and goats, he only came with money and he was welcomed and entertained well. He paid the money and a great deal of 'chat' was chewn. He then told the elders that the month he was in was Maalma doone (a month in which it is a taboo to take out livestocks from barns) and that he would come the following month with the proper bride price by way of camels and goats. He

stressed that they wait for him on that day.

When the appointment was due he sent some elders before him, and he and his friend started their journey with the bride price livestock, some camel, sheep and goats.

The man came across Meeldimanl'a cali with her goats. She was tearing some rind from trees. The camels he was driving were already to be milked and he asked if she could give him some rind for tying the udders of the camel for the milk not to waste. She then said:

"Do you think Meeldhimanl'a Cali cares at all for rinds when her prospective husband has already brought her bride price?"

Instantly a new idea flushed into the man's mind. He could not believe this was the foolish wife waiting for him. He shouted to his friends to return back his cattle as he discovered that the case he was going for was useless. His friends asked him why he was so much disheartened if she refused to give him the rind. They in fact told him that the cattle could be milked in the village they were going to.

The prospective husband then squatted near the girl and asked her if she were the Meeldimanl'a Cali they were talking about. She said 'yes', and he then asked her if her prospective husband was bringing the bride price tonight. To this too she answered in the affirmative and his last question was whether this husband had come before now.

She told him about the previous day he had come, the money he paid, the invitation and the 'chat' ceremony. She added that on that day she was with the goats.

The man then was reassured that Meedhimanl'a Cali was the fool being prepared for him. He told his friends that he would consider whatever he had paid before now as lost wealth and was ready to save what he has brought now. He told them he was disgraced and said the old man he had sent would come back when Allah wished them to, and he bade his friends to turn back ~~by~~ cattle to his own village. He said to the girl at his departure:

"Meeldhamanl'a Cali may you forever peel your rinds; I for one have gone back with my wealth."

Meeldhimanl'a Ali was a Guumees¹⁵ and an Coon' whose age-mates and those following, and the next, were all married. She was the only one left behind.

NB: The name Meeldhamanl'a in Somali literally means 'The one without any physical defect.'

¹⁵ A grown up foolish girl with long nails and shabby, dress only good for herding goats and far past her marriage age.

60. The Man Who Married the Coon¹⁶

There was an Coon in a village, ignored by all men. Because she was foolish and stupid, she did not know how to make food, bake bread, pound sorghum, milk the cows or even tidy herself. A man in the village said he would marry, and everybody in surprise asked him of what use she would be for him as a wife. His reply was, "Let her at least be between me and the fire." meaning she could at least protect him from danger. Before marrying her, he taught her how to cook, how to tidy the house and herself for almost a year. Somalis say sons born from such women are strong and clever, and are immuned against any disease.

When the marriage time approached he invited his close women kin and asked them to infabulate her for him. Girls are usually 'circumcised' at the age of seven, but because this one, was an coon,^{she} was still carrying her clitoris. The women relatives tried to cut it with a blade, but could not, for it was too long and strong. They therefore used an ax and cleansed her. He then married her and she bore him eight sons, and became one of the best women in the village.

¹⁶ A girl passed her marriage age, usually foolish and stupid.

61. The Girl Who Fled Her Brother's Marriage

There were two brothers whose father was alive. One of them was of age and he wanted to marry. His father told him to take a horse and come home with the girl he loved most. He rode off, went around for a while and at last came and told his father that he could get no one. He confessed to his father that he was in love with his own sister. When his sister heard this she decided to flee the land. She took a knife, a kind of big needle, and fled her village. She was a very beautiful girl. In her journey she came by some grazing donkeys. She killed one, skinned it carefully and was dressed in the donkey's hide over her dress. She continued her journey and saw from afar some people under a tree. The people were a king and his entourage. The king who had seen the girl coming said that he would kill that thing approaching it if was a beast, and if it happened to be a human being, he said he would keep it for tending his cattle. She arrived and when she was asked her name by the king she answered it was ('Assy') Dameeray. He ordered that she be taken to the village. On the morrow she was given the goats to herd. The king, suspecting this beast with donkey ears, decided to find out what "was hidden behind" the donkey skin, and followed her. He climbed up a tree (unnoticed) under which a river run, and about midday the herdess came to bath in the river. She undressed and bathed. The king was astonished by her beauty. When she took back the goats in the evening, the king demanded his food to be brought to him by Assy."

She refused at first, but was persuaded. When she met the king in his room he demanded of her to cut him open with a knife or allow him to do the same on her. She said that since he was the king he should do it. He split the skin open and her beauty filled the whole room. The king married her and she was prosperous.

One day she saw her father and mother poverty-stricken and victims of famine in front of her gate. They couldn't recognize her, but she told the king who they were. The king then asked her to keep their identity secret until he bettered their condition. He gave them a karaal of sheep, a karaal of camel and cows, and they were rich. He also got his brother-in-law a wife. After that, they were openly announced as her father and brother.

62. The Father Who Decided to Kill his Daughter

Once, a girl became pregnant illegitimately. She tried to hide her pregnancy for sometime by pretending to be sick. Her father, very much concerned sought medicine all over the land to no avail. When finally his daughter's belly belged out he became very furious and told his kinsmen that he will kill her. They too agreed she should be killed. The father then took his daughter to a forest nearby and tied her to a tree. He then stood afar and aimed at her with his gun. Before he fired, a young man, stark naked, appeared from behind the tree and covered the girl, facing the father's bullets. The father, according to custom could

no more shoot; he took the young man's cloth and covered his shame. The father knew that the young man was responsible for his daughter's pregnancy. He took the boy and the girl to the village and told the people what took place.

Custom obliged that the young couple be married, and so they were officially wed.

63. Jealousy and Woman

The Jealous Wives

There were two co-wives. One was very jealous and dominant. She used to spoil the food of the other woman, cooked or uncooked. The victimized wife appealed to her husband for divorce. Her husband, seeing no fault in her, refused to grant the divorce. She took her appeal to the elders since her rival did not stop her disturbances. The elders decided that the offender wife be divorced. One morning, the husband brought the offender wife in front of a meeting and poured insults on her. When the offender asked why she deserved all these, she was reminded of all her diabolic deeds. She said she did all those because she had confidence on her brother and her relatives who would take her out of any trouble. Her husband asked her to leave on the morrow for her kins. This offender wife sent her daughter to her father to beg him mercy for her mother. The husband was unflinching and the offender wife had no choice but leave for her kins in the morning.

When she reached there, her relatives, specially her sister reprimanded her for her hasty decision in leaving her home and wealth.

Some days later, another man proposed to marry her, paying eight cows and twelve camels. Since she was from the farming area, she did not know much about nomadic life. With the help of his relatives he taught her how to weave mats. She became such an expert in this work that she produced many grass-woven mats over night. She became good in everything and her new husband promised to revenge her on her previous husband that had mistreated her.

Her x-husband was invited when she was at the zenith of her pride and wealth, Onkod was his name and he came and found his previous wife completely different. His love for her was revitalized. This angered the present husband and Onkod was forced out of the village. He sang to his previous wife, but she had no ears for his songs nor for his love. In fact, she was determined to take her revenge. A daughter of Onkod who was with her mother resented very much the way her father was treated. This little girl refused to listen to the advise of her step father. One day he shut her in a big milk-vessel and she died there.

Her mother got three sons by her new husband. One among the boys called Ceelaabo swore to revenge his sister. On one Ramadaan afternoon he found his father sleeping under the shade of a tree. He called his mother and the other two brothers. He told his mother that he was going to revenge his half-sister. She instinctively agreed. They tied him to a tree. He woke up, and they gave him food.

Then Ceelaabo shot an arrow through his father's breast. At night when camels came, the boys asked their mother if they could close the gate. The mother then in a loud voice for others to hear, said it should not be closed for their father had not yet come. When he did not show up upto midnight, she deliberately shouted, saying her husband must have been eaten by beasts. Villagers came to her home and under the leadership of Ceelaabo, they went and found the man's body, torn into pieces by beasts. Villagers did not suspect the authenticity of the affair. Everybody agreed he was eaten by beasts.

64.

The Jealous Woman and the Testicles

There was a man who had a wife. He married a second wife and stayed with her for some weeks. One evening he went to his old wife's house. At night he slept with her. His wife then felt his testicles and asked him why he did not insert them as well. He reminded her that testicles never before have been entered. She would not believe him. She in fact accused him of saving them for the new wife and refused to cooperate by wriggling out of his embrace. He begged her not to let him spill his sperm outside. To convince her he asked her to do the inserting of the testicles herself. Accepting the proposal she tried it herself, but they could not enter her. Only then did she believe that he was not saving them for the other wife.

65.

A Lion And His Wife

A lioness told her husband she would take the cubs down the river for water. The husband proposed going with her, and she refused. He then told her not to do three **things**:

- (1) "Do not go by a village - for there is bound to be the burden camel of an old man tied in a corner of a village, and you would be tempted to kill it, which might invite danger to you and the cubs."¹⁷
- (2) "Do not take the cubs to a crowded **water** spot."
- (3) "Do not go by a narrow cliff with the cubs."

She took this advice and left with the three cubs. Soon, she came across a village and saw the camel her husband had warned her against. Convincing herself that her children were hungry, she sprung on the camel and killed it. Villagers came out running with spears and killed one of her cubs. She fled with the two cubs and came to a crowded well. Men spotted her from a distance, and rushed at her with spears and killed one of the two cubs. To save the last cub and her life she thought of taking a short-cut, and decided to jump over a cliff. Her pursuers saw her and waited for her at the bottom of the cliff.

¹⁷The burden camel of an old man is usually late for pasture in the morning, for the old man is busy arbitrating people from the early morning. He takes out his camel for pasture around 10.00 O'clock in the morning. Mediin is the Somali name for such lonely camel belonging to an elderly person.

She saved her life, but her last cub was killed there. Empty handed she went to her husband and recounted how at every stage the cubs met their death. The husband was so furious that he gave her a heavy blow with his hand and killed her. When his anger cooled down, he very much regretted his action and said:

"Two courses of action were open to me:

- I could have gone with her and saved her and the children from the attacks.
- Not to have killed my wife, for she would have born me other cubs in the future."

Natural Calamity

66.

The Drought-Stricken Family and Their Three Children

There was drought. Children in a family were so hungry that the wife insisted that out of some sheep they had, one should be killed. The husband yielded after a long persuasion. The wife goes into the barn to bring out a lamb. Meanwhile the children, one belches, the second farts, and the third defecates. He then calls his wife and says - "He who belched is not dead, he who defecated- his stomach is not empty, he who farted is not dead. So you Xawaa, may your barn get lost! come out of my lambs." She comes back setting free the lamb. The three sounds heard, alas! were the last agony of death for the kids. The long time hunger had killed them all.

67.

The Woman Who Refused Her Camel Sold

A man was living with some alien people in a village and he had some camel. His wife's dress was worn out and to buy her a new dress, he thought of taking one of his camel to the market. His wife however was totally against this idea. She threatened she would come out naked, if he drove any camel to the market. Whenever he attempted to drive out one camel. She shouted from inside the house that she would come out naked. And the truth was that she was really naked. The village people however were so tired of her threats that they one day decided to keep her in her house by force and allow the husband to drive one camel to the market and sell and buy her clothes. They did so and the man took the camel to the market and sold it for cheap. With the little money he wanted to buy everything for his wife. The shopkeeper however only gave him few yards of plain cloth that his money was worth. He took what he was given and went into the town. Some time later he very much regretted the fact that he lost his worthy camel for a worthless sheet of cloth. He remembered that the shopkeeper had a cigarette in his mouth, but he could not identify his shop. He run in the town saying:

"Town! will you be quite for a while so that I may find my plunderer? You fire-mouthed man, where are you?". By the fire-mouthed he meant the smoker shopkeeper.

His wondering in the town brought him to a man who was peacefully smoking in front of his hut. He asked the man to pay him back his money or give him more clothes. The man, surprised tried to convince him he was not the shopkeeper, but he would not listen. The wife of the smoker man persuaded her husband to get rid of the man, and he hit the speaker with a machet and killed him. So, the camel seller died there.

His wife was impatient about the delay of her husband and she shouted to the villagers that she would come out naked if they did not bring her husband. Some young men were sent to the town and after a tedious search they discovered that the man was killed, and could not identify his killer. They only brought home, the piece of cloth he had bought and gave it to his wife. The wife received the cloth and said. "Thank God that cattle finisher died. When this cloth is worn out, God knows then."

That bastardess did not even mourn her husband for she loved camel so much.

68.

The Father Who For Sook His Two Daughters

The mother of two girls died. Then the father brought them up as orphans. When people used to flee from draught, he used to carry them on his shoulders, and they used to deficate on him. For their sake he used to gather wood and sale. Somehow, he brought up the girls. He then said to them, "Beloved daughters, now you have grown up. I will marry a women that will kindle the fire for ~~me~~. Beloved

daughters, do not quarrel with the woman I am going to marry, work for her, and let her be your mother."

When he got married, soon, they began to cause her difficulties. There was a very severe draught (abaara ladiin.) There was hunger in the family. Then his wife said: "Man, either you go and throw away your daughters or you divorce me." He then said, "I would not divorce you, I would instead let them be eaten by hyenas."

The youngest of the two girls who had "put" her ear, was listening, and she said to the women:

"Big mouthed! may your goats get lost!

May my father leave you in the lurch during draught

May you labour (for birth) in the worst of draughts

So, you go away, and get lost! (Not us)

Then she said, (the wife), "Man! may I leave this household or will you go and foresake this daughters? "Let it be morning and I will take them and leave them at the forest of the town that has been fled because of the Butti (a man eating woman who usually sucks out its victim's blood. Often she has a sympathetic daughter who hosts strangers without the knowledge of her mother) only keep quite tonight. They passed the night and then he said, "Seynaba you, father, follow (take care of) the cattle today, Maryama, you follow the goats. "It was the fasting mouth. Then he said, "Let us go daughters! you will go (with me) to gather sticks for yourselves. As they followed him and he led them, he brought them to the forest that had been fled for fear of the Butti. "Gather sticks," he said,

"and come to me at the bottom of that tree, so that the hyena won't eat you." As soon as they turned their faces to the sticks, he slipped out of their sight _____ jaf! (the sound of his escape.) ("May the hyena eat you!", the informant's remark). When darkness had fallen, they came to the tree and called 'Father! Father! "nag!" (sound signal- ling emptiness). Everything around them was soon confusing.

The elder one (Maryama) said:

"Oh Allah! may you (her father) be tied in the jungle of a geeljire (A Camel herd)*

"Oh! Allah, may you (her father) be tied to where there are no girls (where there is no sympathy.)

* The "Geel-jire" in the nomadic economy is a tough camel-herd often away with his camel from the camp. He is subject to all kinds of hardship and unsympathetic. A proverb in the language says of him: Geeridu Wexay Ku wanaagsaa tahay nimaadan a good iyo geel jire "It is only good to hear of death when it concerns someone you do not know, and/or a geel-jire (a camel herd)." Apparently, despite his care for the most valuable cattle in their economy, when it comes to social status he is nobody.

Seynaba then saw a girl from afar. The girl was staying with some goats. Then she said to her sister, "Let us go and tell our plight to that girl." They came and told her and asked her to lodge them for the night. The girl then said to them, "My mother had become a butti¹⁷ when she gave birth to her sixth child. It is when all the other five died that she became so. If she sees you she will eat you. For tonight I will lodge you. There are twenty nine rooms there. I will hide you in the thirtieth room. The girl hid them according to the promise.

The bastardess (the butti) came home carrying a youth she had killed and flopped him in front of the door. The butti entered her house and said, "I smell girls' kidneys! I smell girls' kidneys!"¹⁸. Her daughter said, "it is me mother, what is wrong with you? Do you want to eat me? People have broken off from this Allah's land for your sake. Shame on you mother!" The butti mother then replied, "Let me first suck this youth. I will then turn the house upside down".

Then the mother said, "Oh! my dear Shukri (her daughter's name) please insert the madaraash¹⁹ for me in the fire. When the madaraash

¹⁷The cage in this story of the woman who became a Butti after the birth of five children, could be a justifiable factor for those women who assume this character.

¹⁸In another version of the same story the Butti smells girls' breasts.

¹⁹An iron tube whose end is made of wood. After it is red hot in the fire it is driven into the victim's anus; then butti sucks out the fat of her prey.

was red-hot she drove it through the youth - jug! (sound made by the insertion). She took the Madaraash to her mouth and sucked the youth empty. When she was full, "she fell with sleep", saying to her daughter, "sniff carefully around tonight, nothing is far away from the household tonight." The girl then said, "Ee; old lady! I will make a big fire tonight and make the star Shukria Shuura my company. She then piled all kinds of thorn and wood, and made the fire - Walalac! (the bright blaze of the fire) She put the Madaraash into the fire and said, "The only One! my Allah, may I not be denied what I beg of three!" The mother, into whose ears the words dropped responded in anger saying:

"Are you begging Allah for me (for me to be harmed)?"

"No", she said, "I am only begging the star up the sky. - saying:-

'O ye' the star of the sky! You are given responsibility

The responsibility of the rain - you are given

(They were in a drought period.)

Oh Allah! bring us rain.

Bring us rain that says, neyney! (sound made by rain)

Bring us rain that has neyla (lambs)

Bring us rain that could finish for us half the bald old men.

Bring us rain that could grow for us half the youth

(of our land)

Bring us flood that could carry off the butti

(by now the butti has slept)

The girl then said, "I will sniff around as you bade me, and left. A moment later she whispered to the girls. "The Madaraash has turned 'white' (red-hot, in English) come, run to me." They run after her with great fear. The mother then said to her daughter, "Daughter my bottom has loosened, lift off my dress and turn it on my face (apparently the fat she has sucked, and the fire she has been sleeping by has caused her great inconvenience, and she was no more in control of her bowl movement.) At this moment, the daughter, helped by the other girls drove the burning Madaraash through the anus of her mother. Then the butti said:

'Oh! Allah! I flew from strangers and flew to
strangers (others)
My inside is cut oh! Shukri!
And there is no more telling of me.

The daughter signalled the other two girls by her hands and said to them: "Come and hold her head for me, I will smash out her eyes." She then took two big heavy fire woods and smashed out her mother's eyes. "My two organs, dear Shukri!" cried the mother. "May your two organs and twenty others of yours get burned? How many a hero-youth to his household have you swallowed his fat," The mother then cried, "Mother,²⁰ I have a will to leave you; I became a butti on my sixth birth giving (on my sixth child), if you are exempted of that mark, I am not a butti.

²⁰The word Hooyo whose meaning is mother can be used by both parent and child to address each other. The same is true for aabo which is 'father.'

Whenever people ask you why you became a butti, tell them that a leopard's spots never leave him.²¹ The girl then said, "In the name of Allah and the Yaasiin (a surah - chapter in the Qoran) and the protection of Allah I plea not to become a butti. The girl then took a knife and skinned off her mother's face (such skin taken off from one's face is called Sar-waji! Sar =cut. "Waji" = face.) The girls then cut the butti's meat into pieces and stuffed it in a hole.

Two men on a journey came by the butti dwelling. They were ready with their spears and shields. When they could hear no sound in the vicinity they said to each other, "the butti is either out to eat something, or something has befallen her."

They cautiously approached the butti's house and met the girls. They enquired of the butti and they told them of her death. They could not believe it. The (the girls) said to them, "We will show you her corpse." Each man gripped his spear and shield firmly. They saw her chopped to pieces. They (the men) pierced her hand (the butti's) with their spear and took it. They also took away the three girls. When the men reached their areas, the two orphan girls were given to two men as wives. The bitti's daughter was given to an old man.²²

²¹It is also a proverb in the language.

²²Apparently, the young men were afraid she would turn a butti if they married her.

She told the people "five gardhas²³ should be written for me, five shiekhs should sit for me (reading the Qoraan to heal her)." This way she was guarded against becoming a butti

The hand of the butti that was brought was waved in the abandoned town, and men shouted, "come back everybody, the butti has been killed. This way the town became a town, and the husbands of the orphan girls became kings. The two orphan sisters then sang:

The sea had swallowed us and we were choked by
water And we passed through (experience) the house
of a butti And there it is! Allah has saved us from
all.

The men then said to them, "you should love and lead your family like orphans who love their families."

The old man (their father who had abandoned them) came to the town where his daughters were living, driven from his area by famine and drought. He flopped in front of the house of the younger daughter. baldhaq! (clumsy sound made by the falling old man). Then he said, "Father!²⁴ give me alms, and stop the hunger behind me." She covered

²³A piece of leather inside which are sewn some Quanic verses for medicine assumed to be having a healing power.

²⁴See footnote No. 20. p

her face on the side that was facing the old man. She brought him much food in a Xeero (wooden dish)"ee!"²⁵ take it." He then said, "Be rich father, be rich father!" he said. She called the other "you (Naa)"²⁶ come here, I will show you something." The other one brought a dhiil (a wooden container for milk) of milk and a Xeero of porridge. Then they said to him, "You (ee yaahe!) old man, which land did you come from? He then, said, "I came from a land abandoned for severe famine and drought." The two men (the husbands) were called, and they came and took hold of their sides, and looked at him (the old man) like this (a look of wonder). He who had (was married to) Mar yama threw a blanket on him (the old man) and said, "ee (you) take it you will bring it for us on a doomsday night"²⁷, he said to him. He who had (was married to) Seynaba also gave him a mattress and a lavalava (macawiis, in Somali). Then the old man said to him (to Synaba's husband):

"Father! you, that boy who knew me and revered me May they call you king in many towns?"

The one who had a Seynaba was called Dheeg.²⁸ Then Seynaba said:

²⁵ee, = "eeya" a term used for addressing an old man or an old woman.

²⁶Naa = expression used for addressing, girls and women in general.

²⁷It is an alm and so will be to my credit on the day of the last judgement

²⁸See key for the sound "dh".

"Uncle (a common address of respect used for nay male elder) listen to me I will "drum" (sing, by throwing some verses) a little bit for you".

"For whom are you drumming?" he said.

"I am drumming for Dheeq, who had one day relieved us of great clamity.

Oh! my Dheeq! traveller to every land may the Daarood

(a big tribal division) flourish by you.

You who flattened the mountain that people feared

(the land the butti dwelled)

The breaker of the enemy and the avenger! may you have many children"

(Seynaba apparently is alluding to what they passed through, in case the old man understands)

The old man begging all day, ended up at his daughters' gate. Seynaba then said (to her sister), "Without us telling him, let us make him quit begging - it is shame on us. We will tell him that we will give him food on Waqfi (permanent religious promise to fulfil some decision). One night they discussed (daughters and father). They threw out every thing he had with him (probably things he uses for begging). They said to him, "We will give you food and clothing on Waqfi do not beg." When the daughters told their husbands (about their plan), they built him a small shop. They said to him, "We gave you for Waqfi" The old man's life improved. He then said:

"Oh you big-handed (generous) he blessed"

I once married a lady, and two orphans that I

had raised, they rose against her (disagreed with her).

Those days when people broke-off (fled)
from the butti I brought them near a forest.

(Obviously, now that he is relieved of the begging he has the leisure
to talk of himself)

Then, they said to him, "What happened to the daughters?"

"I never asked! They would not have brought me any
closer than you strangers have done." he said.

Then they said to him, "Surely those were evil-possessed, good of
you that you made them be eaten by hyenas."

The mothers told (the girls) the little kids (theirs) who used
to take food to the old man to say, "take the food and may you die
with it! you had made hyenas eat our mothers!" Every time the old
man says Cajab! (It is surprising!). On some other days the kids
said to him, "The giver of our mothers to hyenas, may you die with it
(the food). Then he knew and was scared. "Keep your dinner." He
said. And then he said, "By the promise of Allah this is Maryama
and this is Seynaba. Why did Allah let me in through their gates?"
Then he said:

You (Allah) who revives the dead (he had assumed the
girls had died)

Dheeg my son I am gone, good bye!

He left. Then the two girls run after him.

Wait for us! Wait for us!

He who big-mouthed (their step-mother) had abandoned, wait
for us!

He who, under whose care people die in draught

Wait for us! Wait for us.

Then he waited for them. They then said to him "We were only testing to see whether you were our father. It was the flying evil-spirit (that led him in his wrong doing in abandoning them) that brought you to us. Go back to the house. Let us burry you peacefully and honarbly at your death. You won't die elsewhere." Then he said to them.

Father! I am a person fallen-off from a rift,
I am a person who abandoned his children,
I am a person whom Allah by passed wisdom,
I am person whose akhiro is spoiled.
akhiro, (assuming the verdict on the Day of judgement
for him would be going to hell).
May you not die! May you not see any peril!
I am a person who can't take a pace.
And don't take me by the path I took you
Father! I have gone astray and you have brought me
back and so let's go!

They brought him back and told him to wait for his death there. That way he died, and the girls he had made the hyena eat them, buried him.

69. The Drought Stricken Family that ate a Donkey

It was a severe drought and a family was forced to kill and eat a donkey (usually not eaten by Muslims as it is considered Xaaraam- unclean). Everybody in the family ate to his fill. Only the mother who was busy sorting out the food ate last. While she was eating, a fly came and rested on one of her cheeks. Without speaking, she pointed the fly to her husband. He was angry and said "Is the fly going to share with us the donkey?" He slowly lifted a big club of his and clubbed his wife till she was half-dead. The fly flew away, and the woman very much regretted her tongue.

70. The Husband who Killed his Wife on What was not there

The couple fell ill in a small hut. No visitors came to them. They moved to a house in a town. There, the husband got a little better and started helping his wife. He got a job. She too got well after sometime. One day he told her of an imaginary achievement of his. He told her he will burn a field and that land would be full of fertile pasture, and on it will browse a deer. He will kill the deer and make good hide out of its skin. He will also kill a Summal (a fat sheep). He asked her whether or not she would drink the fat-tail of that Summal. She said she will not drink, and in the bitter argument that ensued, he killed his wife. She must have nagged him to kill a sheep for her; for it was a period of drought and she was ill.

NB: The couple in the story are of the Gabooye low-caste group. faithlessness, greed, malice, irreligiousness are some traits the so-called noble Somalis label them with. Tumaal and Midqaan are craftsmen groups, also looked down upon.

71.

The Man and The Klipspringer

There was drought. A man finds a sleeping Klipspringer (Calakud) under a shade. He runs to his wife and tells her to put the cooking pot on fire, and asks her to come with him with a knife and a container. They come to the spot and the Klipspringer, hearing the sound runs off. He then says to his wife, "The Klipspringer is not the fortune of the Wara wara, go and take the pot off the hearth for us." So, the pot was taken off the hearth, and they were empty handed.

72.

The Two Girls and The Butti

A fool and a clever girl once herded together goats. They were both carrying their little brothers. In their absence, their village migrated to another area. The girls then begged of Allah to turn the goats into pebbles, for they had no where to take them and were, themselves helpless. Allah accepted their demands and the goats were turned into pebbles.

They then saw another girl with some goats from a distance. They went to her and acquainted her with their plight, and begged her to lodge them for the night. The new girl told them that she could not, for her mother was Butti, and her father a lion. The girls begged too again and then she consented to take them home. She told them that she would hide them in the animals' pen to avoid

the discovery of her Butti mother.

The Butti came and sniffing around, said she smelt the smell of girls' breasts. Her daughter replied that there was no other girl other than herself in the vicinity. The daughter asked her mother that she wanted a sheep to be killed for them that night. The mother - Butti agreed and said she would go to the animal pen and pull out a sheep. The daughter rushed to take that responsibility, fearing her mother would discover her guests. She told her mother to boil water for the meat while she fetched the sheep to be killed. The sheep was brought and killed and the meat was cooked. The Butti's daughter secretly took some meat to the girls hidden in the barn. The clever girl, before eating for herself fed her little brother. The foolish girl ate all that was given her for herself.

In the morning when the Butti's daughter came to wake them up, the clever girl had already woken. The foolish girl, was awoken, and she cried, "Where is my belt?", thinking that she was at her mother's house. The Butti mother heard this and came out. When the guest girls saw her they run out of the barn for their lives. The Butti, ran after them and caught them easily. She wanted to eat them, but her daughter pleaded to save them, telling her mother that they would help them fetch water and wood. The mother saved them, and on the next day, sent them for wood and water. They brought the water and the wood. On the second day, the Butti again told them to go, leaving behind their little brothers. The clever girl said she will not leave her brother behind and took him with her. The foolish girl left her brother behind. When they were in the forest

the clever girl decided to escape and did. The Butti, who saw her from afar run after her and she could not over take her. The foolish girl came back and was given to eat the testicles of her little brother, as meat. The Butti had killed him and cooked him in her absence.

In her flight, the clever girl came across a lion that forced her to baby-sit his children. He gave her animal fat and animal stomach for food.

The clever girl also escaped from the lion in his absence. When he came and did not find her, he persued her. Her found her perched on a long palm tree, at the bottom of which was a well. The lion begged the girl to lift hin up by a rope. She sent him down a rope and he started climbing it up. When he was midway, the clever girl cut the rope and the lion feel into the well. He died there.

The clever girl stayed on the palm-tree and fed on the dates. A bird came and begged her for some date. The clever girl told the bird that she was ready to give her the dates provided she went and told her plight to her father and mother. The bird complied and was given the date fruits. The bird flew to the clever girl's village and sang the girl's plight to her father. He ignored her and chased her away. To the mother too she sang and she chased her away. On a second trail the mother understood the Lird's message, which she interpreted to the rest of the family. The clever girl's father, mother and her younger brother all came to the palm tree under

the guidance of the bird. They then heard her story, and she was brought down from the tree. They all went back to their home happily.

73. The Butti who ate the Newly Married Woman

A recently married lady told her husband's people that she would go to her kins to look for gifts (dhibaad)²⁹ and left. On the way, a woman met her and shouted after her, addressing her by the name of the clan she belonged to. She waited for her. When the latter caught up, she jumped at the traveller's throat, fell her to the ground and sucked her blood empty. The blood-sucker was a Butti. The Butti dressed in the young woman's dress and went to her village. On the gate, she was met by an old man who was the father-in-law of the deceased. Taking her for his daughter-in-law, he asked her why she came back from her journey so soon. The Butti then replied that it was holiday, and she would make her journey the coming month.

At night, the Butti, pausing as the young wife slept with her husband. She deepened her two long nails into his throat and sucked his blood empty. Then she shouted in the middle of the night and when people gathered at her hut, she told them that a lion had killed her husband. The dying man witnessed that there was not even a cat in the hut, save his wife herself.

²⁹ Gift given to a married daughter by her relatives, mostly sought when she is needy. She is supposed to bring the gift to her house and she is often proud of sharing it with her husband and children.

On the morrow, the dead man was burried, but the villagers were skeptical about the cause of their man's death. The woman refused to mourn her husband officially by wearing the white dress woman wear on such occasion. They did not however, want to come to a hasty conclusion about her being a Butti. They wanted to give her another chance. One day, a sister of the deceased man, gave her small daughter to the Butti to take care of her, while she was away to fetch wood. The Butti sucked the blood out of the little girl, and hid her corpse in a large bread basket. The mother of the baby came back and asked for her daughter. The Butti told her that she was asleep. Thrice, the mother asked for her daughter and she was given the same reply. At last, the Butti told the mother that her daughter was eaten by a cat, and that her corpse was in the bread basket. From then onwards, nobody doubted the lady that paused as the young wife; was a Butti, and the villagers decided to kill her. Some people suggested that she should first be made to confess her identity and crimes publicly. She confessed that she was a Butti and that she was responsible for the deaths of the new wife, her husband and the child. She also told the villagers that she had medicine that could transform her to a Butti or a human being as the need arose.

The villagers then dug a large hole and built a big, big, fire in it. They then hanged the Butti from a tree over the hole, cut the rope she was hanged with, and let her fall into the burning fire. In no time, she was roasted down to ashes.

74. The Butti and the Four Marriage Seeking Girls

There used to live a woman in Banka Geri, a forest place undwelled by other human beings. The woman had a daughter. Because the woman was a Butti people had deserted her long ago. She used to eat people. In that forest, it rained not for many seasons.

Four marriage seeking girls, thinking that the forest was dwelt went to it. The girls were dressed in the traditional way - they wore bracelets called sindiroo, gool and beautiful belts called dhacle, dooque and gurmuusi, all made from various types of decorated threads and fibres. They also wore sandal shoes made traditionally. The girls reached the forest in the absence of the Butti and met her daughter who asked them their mission. They answered her they were marriage seekers. The daughter hid them somewhere in the house.

The mother Butti came home carrying a youth she had killed and dropped the body in the middle of the house. The Butti, when she hunts for people transforms herself into a human being, at other times, smearing some herbs on her body, she turns into any wild animal.

The Butti, as soon as she came in told her daughter that she smelt the smell of girls' breasts. Her daughter answered that it was her own breasts. The mother said, "The smell is much pleasanter than that of yours." The daughter convinced her mother there was nothing in the house. The Butti then set to work to chop the body

she brought into pieces, drank the fat, ate some of the meat, stored the rest and slept flay by the firse-side.

A man on horse back arrived and proposed marriage to the daughter of the Butti and asked her if she would cooperate in killing her man-eater mother. He also promissed her that the other girls too would be married. She agreed. Then they boiled the fat stored from the dead body of the boy, and poured it through the ears and noses of the sleeping Butti. She died. At her death, nature too reacted. The sky poured down a stormy rain covering all the land from horizon to horizon. The bright day, turned into a cloudy rainy day. It was then proclaimed everywhere:

The long eared butti has died

The land now is safe and in peace

The villagers who had deserted the area in fear of the Butti, started to come back. Horses and burden camels were brought. The villagers arrived and covered the whole forest with huts and cattle.

The five girls, the Butti's daughter and the other four were divided among five men in marriage. First, the four girls were married to four men without much ado. The daughter of Dhegdheer, (the long-eared) the Butti, remained controversial for a while. Then an old man, (as all oldmen are pythons, who lived longer and are full of wisdom) suggested that a young man marry her, as she will doubtless bring forth three courageous sons, who won't hesitate to crush down whatever is in their way.³⁰ As expected, she gave

³⁰The Somalis believe that children begot from fools or such extraordinary mothers as the Butti are either clever or courageous.

birth to the three sons. As a leopard's spots never desert him, the Butti's daughter took to practising Buttism after her third son.³¹ She started eating children herding goats. The villagers were at great loss in finding the scourage finishing the children. At last, that same old man who advised in her marriage, suggested that this lady be followed to the grazing areas where children graze the goats. This was done and the followers one day saw the little herders in great turmoil - running around screaming in great fright. One of the followers soon spotted the Butti sucking the blood of a small daughter she had pinned to the ground. He came with his gun over her, and told her to get lost off this land. The followers then went back to the village and disclosed the mystery of the children's death. That old man, when he heard this suggested that the mother of the three young and beautiful children should not be killed, but simply be chased out of the land by horse. In her flight, the Butti passed through the land of the Hawiyaas, through the Daakhata valley upto the highlands. All on her way she fed on children. At last she met an Orgobo³² man who was himself a man eater. They agreed to marry, and live in caves, and continued eating people until the lady got pregnant and could no more go out hunting people with him.

³¹In another version the daughters becomes Butti after her fifth child.

³²A small nationality living around Harrar, distinct in their dresses and language from the Oromos they are surrounded by.

One day, when the husband was walking alone in the hills, (now turned man) he came across some men travellers with whom there was an elderly lady. The man-eater, introducing himself also as a traveller asked them to have sympathy on a fellow traveller whose wife was on a birth labor. He needed, he said, a woman to act as mid-wife to his wife and begged the men to persuade the lady with them for him. He said his wife was labouring under the shade of a tree not far away. The men agreed to his request and they let the lady go with him. The tree he mentioned was never nearby! He travelled for quite a long distance before he brought her to their cave.

The lady guest soon began her job and helped the Butti deliver a son. Her husband then run into the forest and in no time came back with the body of a human being and damped it in front of the cave, saying it was for his wife.³³ The mid-wife lady was paralysed with fear. When the man-eaters were through with their prey, the Butti asked the mid-wife too, to be killed for her. Her husband told her that he won't break the promise between him and the men that had given him the lady. He then brought the lady a sheep, told her to kill it in the name of Allah, eat what she could

³³ Customarily, women are fed lovingly after giving birth and this continues through the 40 days of confinement period, (to replace the lost blood and strengthen the lady, it is believed.)

from the meat and carry the rest in her Oli (large leather bag) to her home. He told her he would accompany her to the nearest place where he could hear the voices of her people, and then come back. On the way, he asked her to promise him not to utter a word to anybody about what she saw. She promised, and he too was true to his word in bringing her close to her folk. She was burdened with the meat in her Oli.

The lady did not keep her mouth shut. She told her folk that the man they had sent her with was a beast, and that she was ready to lead the way to his cave, so that he be killed. Several men followed her with arms, and she brought them to the cave where they only found the Butti and her baby. They killed them both! The husband was saved by the promise. Promises should not be broken. The tell ends there.

75.

The Man was married to Two Wives

A man had two wives. A fool and a clever. The fool was ugly. The clever was beautiful. The clever was barren. The fool was fertile. The clever told her husband that she will not stay with him because her co-wife gives birth while she does not. Her husband consoled her saying that the fool was only there to herd their cattle, and that now, he would publicise that she (the clever) was pregnant and that she should carry a stone on her belly under her cloth. After some time the husband announced that both his wives

had given birth. (the fool was already pregnant). He caught a crow and gave to the clever, so that when it cried in her bed, people would take it for her newly born.

After sometime, he bade the fool go and herd the goats, she said she would take her baby with her, but he discarded her from doing so. She took the goats to pasture. Meanwhile the husband and the clever wife agreed on a conspiracy. The fool's baby was taken to the clever's house. He then brought that crow, killed it, and smeared its blood on the walls of the hut. In the evening when the fool came with the goats she saw her husband crouched in the middle of the hut, and in a mourring mood. She also saw the blood, and guessed that her baby was eaten by a beast. Her husband, lamentingly assured her that it was really eaten by beast. She wailed and complained why he had refused allowing her to take her baby with her when she had asked for it in the morning. Somehow he consoled her that the boy was fated for what happened and that way she was quietened. Nobody could tell her the whereabouts of her baby.

The fool then recited the following:

A house that is often in need of ropes.
Kins that ever demand for unity,
children that often need to be cared for,
A village that often needs repairing and constructing
And from a husband that often beats,
I prefer herding my goats!

The fool's brother demanded for a meeting³⁴ to discuss his sister's baby, allegedly eaten by a beast. In the meeting he said:

"You were all here in the village, her baby was not eaten by a beast, no human being killed it, nor was it taken to the graves, whatever did you do to the boy? I demand that you produce the boy?"³⁵

The fool's husband told the meeting that she had abandoned the child and that he had collected it, lest it died under her care, fool as she is. The meeting then asked two small babies to be brought, one of which was the fool's. The elders held the babies to the fool and asked her to identify her baby. She was told that her husband had killed a crow to fool her. The husband then said to his brother-in-law.

"If she identifies her baby rightly, I am in the wrong; if not, you are!"

The brother then brought his sister and said to her.

"If you fail to identify your baby, I will slaughter you and no one would claim your blood wealth or me."³⁶

³⁴The Shir in the Somali society is a general meeting (of judiciary nature) of a clan, a village or of groups.

³⁵The brother's concern for his sister is what custom demands. The girl has no right to her father's property, but could enjoy the support of her agenates.

³⁶If close relatives kill each other blood wealth cannot be claimed.

When the time to choose came, the fool was asked to lay her hand on her baby. She then said, "My son is not here, it has been eaten by a beast and is dead!"

The brother then said in utter dismay:

"Brother-in-law, pardon me; and I owe you a payment for the moral injury I inflicted; henceforth, let my sister be your goat-herd. This is my word, and I swear to divorce my wife, if I fail to respect it."

He then said to his sister:

"Go and herd his goats!"

That way, the clever possessed the baby. The son grew up for her, and was of age to herd her goats.

Whenever the boy took the cattle for pasture, his foster mother used to say to him:

"That fool has four heads of cattle, you know: do not you water them for her!"

He used to say "ok mother" and used to separate the fool's cows from theirs. But the boy was very much pestered by the gossip that the fool was his real mother. Things went on like this until the boy reached puberty.

One evening, he rushed to the fool's hut and said.

"Mother, you are the one who had born me. Let me tell you what to do. Tomorrow, plant your hut in a separate clearing from the other huts."

36b Goat-herding is often associated with the fool's job. Perhaps because goats are easier to herd- they often do not go far, and are not so notorious. They are often busy grazing.

She woke up in the morning dismantled the hut, and sometime later drove her cows to the well and said to the men who were watering the cattle:

"I am a lonely woman whose son had died, may you please water my cattle?"

Her real son who was down the well, motioned her to keep silent, reassuring her that she was no more sonless. He then sang, the work song sang when throwing water out of the well into the channel from which the cattle drink. In no time, he flooded the channel, assembled the cattle and told his mother to go back home and fix the hut. He tactfully hid his mother's cows in the herd, to avoid the suspicion of people around, and made them drink from the water.

The fool went back to the village and started fixing her hut. The village women mocked at her saying:

"This is a wonder! whoever could have put some sense in the fool's mind today? She has dismantled her hut and is fixing it in a cleaner clearing."

She finished constructing the hut.

It was time of drought. In the evening the boy came to her hut. People who saw him asked:

"Elias, we wonder what you are upto?"

He responded he did not do anything wrong. They told him that he had watered the fool's cows that day, and that he has been of use to her.

Elias, that same evening went back to the fool's hut and said to her:

"Mother! tomorrow I will set out for a journey and I will be away for a month. On the day of my coming back, be ready

with a big dish of minced meat with ghee, boil tea,
and when I arrive, tell the villagers that your son
has arrived."

He was away for a month, and when he came his burden camel was full of
everything - salt, rice, sugar and sorghum. He did not take the
burden Camel to where he was expected, instead, he turned it to the
house of the fool. After seating the camel he said:

"He who is human is that who gave birth (to someone)
A camel's hump is that which is got by plunder
And so my mother, the fool
come and unload all this wealth."

That way she became his real mother.

76.

Muxumud The Fool

A fool once wanted to marry. A woman asked him why he
didn't marry upto now. He then asked her how people marry. She then
asked him if he ever saw some signs that men often see before marriage
during nights. He then told her that his father, when he (the fool)
was four years after 15 used to ask him to sleep outside, to gaurd
the cattle against predatory animals, then he said he wished to have
a lady by him. The girl that talked to this fool that evening was
his niece. She then told him to tell his father that, that evening
he would go to Cibaado Abdulahi, to help her milk her cows. She
promised she would show the fool the good of women. He then told his
father and folk to release the calves to the cows, as he wanted to

finish milking their cows and then go to Cibaado, to help that evening. He also declared to be given the porridge for dinner soon, for he wanted to go to Cibaado. When he was through he rushed to Cibaado and demanded that she immediately begin her lessons. When he had left his home his people had flattered him saying the fool was ready for marriage.

When he came in, she first asked him to milk the cows which he did in a short while. She then told a sister and a brother of hers to watch the house and the cattle as she would go to a dance. She then took the fool to another room and told him they would discuss their marriage that evening, as there was no one nearby. In the discussion she asked him how many oxen there were in the cattle, and he told her that they were 12. She then said she would teach him the good of women, but told him to take out two of the best oxen from the barn on the morrow. He promised, but demanded what she promised to show. They then slept together in the house. Cibaado put off the oil lamp and asked him to do on her what men do on women. She said, "you have long enough shouted for woman - come on now!" She untied her dress knotted at the shoulders and exposed her breasts and asked if Muxanmed knew what they were. He replied he knew them, as they were the things by which women swore. He then caressed her and shouted:-

"Allah! Allah! oh Cibaado my dear niece, I know that I had missed this world's paradise for long. Why don't you show this thing to me every evening."

She then said she would show him something better ~~of~~ by tomorrow he sold some of their cattle and asked his people to present the bride price for her.

The next thing she did was to throw off her dress and lie on the bed with her belly up. She then asked if Muxummud knew the thing that was fixed there. He said he knew it, threw off his lava lava and said, "The one I have is its father." She then asked him to show her how both sit side by side. He said he would, and mounted in Cibaado. Whenever he woke up in excitement in the middle of the night he asked her:

"Cibaado, is that thing still there?"

She then told him that he was a fool and that he should, early at dawn take a gourd of water and go into the forest and take bath.³⁷ He wondered why she wanted to burden him with gourd full of water at this hour of night. He told himself he would wake up when the sun was out. She stood and cleansed herself, he too got up and rushed to his house. He sped to his mother's hut calling, "Mother! Mother!" She responded. You know, for the fool nothing is hidden. He asked his mother to give him a gourd of water, threw off his garment and poured the water over his body, head to foot.

³⁷The Islamic obligation to take bath after sexual acts to cleanse oneself of Qasl (Arabic)

He dressed and rushed to Cibaado - You know, once a fool sees something he overdoes it. He asked her to release the calves to the cows, for he wanted to milk for her. He addressed Cibaado as, "she who possessed the good thing." She too admired him secretly. She soon gave him the Dhiil - (the milking container). He took the dabar (a leather rope used for tying the hind legs of cows when being milked) and fastened together the hind legs. The fool is always full of strength twide he milked each cow Xaw! Xaw! and he was through. When he milked all the cows he said:

"Oh Cibaado

The next year of plenty,

Today's evening - coming,

The next bright moon, I wish to play with you."

He then told her he was going back to his home, but begged if she could offer him a bit, of that thing.

"You fool," she said, "I only wanted you to know about women through my deliverance the last night; go back to your people and say the following:

"Like the sky in a rainy season and like an enemy that entered a village.

I swear by Allah, oh! Cadar the burden has increased."

She told him to create commotion after saying this, and plunder the cattle.

He took a big stick and stood in front of the cattle, he also called for Cadar, a sister of his, and proudly recited the words his beloved had given him. Meanwhile, he was beating and driving some oxen. His folk asked each other why Muxummed, the fool was beating the cattle today. Someone shouted to him, "Oh, Muxummed the celibate, stop beating the cattle, what new thing has come upon you today?"

He drove out two oxen and chased them to Cibaado's barn, shouting from afar that she open the gate of the barn for him. She shouted back asking him why he was beating the oxen this morning, and chased back the oxen to where he had brought them from, and called him to her side and asked him be cool. It is she who sent him you know, but she pretends. He then sat by her side and said.

"You know dear neice, it is that place you had shown me! You think one can do without it. That's why I created havoc in the family. The two nights I was away from you, sleep not, I did; nor did I swallow anything by way of food."

She then told him to go back to his folk and cool them, and say to them:-

"Things won't remain as they are,
The cow wouldn't forever lead the calf
A white cow will turn white (by what I'm going to do)
And a red goat would turn white."

She again told him that if he wanted that thing, he will have to shift half the cattle in their barn to hers. She again told

him to go and say the following to his people:

"Oh! Allah! I wish to get a little girl to eat
That I could suck like the tobacco,
That I could chew like "chat" and hallucinate,
Oh Allah, the Almighty drop me from the sky,
That girl of my dreams."

When he went and uttered those stanzas, his folk understood that Muxummed the celibate had bred the idea of marriage in his mind, and they decided to give him his share of the cattle.

When he took his share his mother summoned and told him to, if he thought of marriage, get married to a girl of noble descent, and from the knowledgables. She also suggested to him that he marry from her clan. He then complained to his mother that he had been deprived of that 'paradise-on-earth' thing upto this age. So he said he would like his bride price to be taken fro him to the house of "the possessor of the good thing."

His relatives now took the responsibility and took to Cibaado's house twelve cattle, a burden camel and a gun. The girl he called 'the possessor of the good thing' was legally bethrothed to him. That was the last day for Muxummud in his family - he shifted to the girl's house.

On the morrow of his dadab gal³⁸ people asked him how the night was. He answered them that he was in an uninterrupted paradise.

³⁸Some 3-7 days given to the couple to enjoy together before the actual marriage takes place. Sex is permissable but almost impossible on account of the undilated organ of the girl.

The youth did not let him go at that; they asked him how else he had passed the night.

He told them he has had three things which he never had in his life:-

- (1) A sweet sleeping mat (hide) without any dust or dirt.
- (2) A sweet Xawsa (like tea or coffee) and
- (3) A sweet girl.

He continued, "I had three sour things":-

- (1) Sour life, because I had no wife,
- (2) A sour mother and,
- (3) A sour Xawsa

When strange things happen to you, you don't proclaim it, you hide it. The fool had told everything he said to the youth, to his wife as well.

Whenever Muxummud went to his cattle or farm he told his wife,

"Cibaado, make sure you hide that thing carefully, don't give it to anyone else."

His wife used to stimulate him to work harder by telling him that she won't give it to anyone but him.

When the rainy season came and all was in plenty, the fool's relatives decided to effect the marriage of the couple.

The clever Cibaado however, told Muxumud to go and get more cattle from his people for the marriage. He took three oxen by force from his people and gave them to the brother or Cibaado who took them to the market and came back with the necessary goods for the wedding.

Relatives contributed pillows, leather-mats, especially the well decorated type called harkawaali, and he was wed lovishly.

Every evening young men asked him about his experience with his wife, and he often answered that it was a non-stop paradise on earth. They asked him about the tea-cup bought him and the box, which he said was more beautiful than others - he was a fool.

Questions about his wife were never stopped by the young men. One day he told them that he could not disverginate the girl, and that he needed his cousins' help.³⁹ They threatened to open his belly if they found that girl virgin. The answer from Muxumud for several mornings was negative. The girl was then told ladies would be assembled for her. It was discovered that she was like the earth.⁴⁰ This was after the wedding, and it was not normal. The fact is that clever women usually hoodwind such foolish men to escape from pain. It's often the man's duty to conquer, and for the girl to resist on wedding evenings.

³⁹ It's customary that if the bridegroom fails to disverginate the bride his cousins would come to his help.

⁴⁰ Bride's virginity is witnessed by an assembly of elderly ladies. The bride who was sewed up during infabulation many years back is ceermonially slightly opened by a chosen old lady. The opening is just enough for bridegroom to find his way. The witnessing ceremony is very essential as regards the mother's reputation, who is also among the group.

Six of Muxammed's cousins were carefully chosen to deal with the girl in behalf of their foolish and weak kin. The six of them took a blade and went into Cibaado's room, operated on her organ slightly, and alternately, slept with her for the whole night. That way, she was made a woman.

After that Cibaado got pregnant, but Muxummad the fool did not improve much. Whenever she went out to fetch water or wood he reminded her not to forget or lose that thing in the forest; and at her coming back, his first question was, "Are you carrying that thing?" Whenever he came home and found her grinding or pounding sorghum for porridge, he asked her whether that thing was safe at its place, and never first, for Xawsa (type of coffee).

Cibaado's friends mocked her about her husband, and often times incited her to be divorced. They wondered whatever good she saw in such a fool that puts her to shame publicly. Cibaado, who was then in her last months of pregnancy replied her friends in the following words:

"Even if he may be there to plough the farm
for us,
Even if he is there to tend for the cattle,
Even if he is there to clean the barn of dung,
He's a fool, and we won't be better off without him."

Cibaado gave birth to a son, and Muxummed slaved in the family more than ever. Some months later, Cibaado was pregnant with her second child; and only few days later, the elders announced that

the village would be moved to another pasture area. Muxummed brought his burden camel and loaded the already dismantled nomadic hut and other household things on the camel, and Cibaado took the rein and he remained, behind, as the custom is for men to drive the livestock after the trek.

The caravan didn't go far when Muxummed called after his wife:-

"Cibaado! Cibaado! just wait for me a moment I know I've to go back for the cattle, but just a moment!"

Cibaado's women friends then said, "It's his usual folly, we know ! why don't you wait for him?" He caught up and said,

"It's really nothing else, I only wanted to remind you whether you have brought along that thing with you, or whether you forgot it there."

This was among her friends, but now were surprised to hear it, but Cibaado could take it no more.

"Muxammed the fool! In vain have I tried to make you stop this folly and filthy language of yours. Be assured that I shall say good-bye to you once I am rid of this child in me; you fool!"

He retorted:-

"As long as you are alive, I won't stop chanting that question. Do you think any man ever foregets his "thing?"

Muxummed dis not care a damn for Cibaado's parents, brothers and sisters who were travelling in this trek. When they reached, their destination and the village was settled, one of Cibaado's brothers came to her and said:

"Oh dear sister! why did you marry this man, knowing very well that he was a fool from the very beginning"

She then told him to say the following to their father when he comes in the evening. She did not hide from her brother that she wanted to get rid of this fool. In the evening, when the cattle was in a milked, and the whole family was just lounging in front of the huts the boy uttered the following:

"It is chilly and very cold,
Our goordheer (the long-necked Cibaado) is locked in a room.

In mount Qundura and in a very cold place,
And in a room, our Qoordheer is locked!"

Cibaado was a poetess, it was only fate that yoked her to a fool. On the second day too asked her brother to say the following:

"Whoever is born with her, and,
To whoever she become a wife,
Care for Cibaado, she's as good as a boy."

This time the father asked what he meant by it, and the boy referred him to his sister. The father called for her but she could not come, as she was carrying two children; one on her lap and the other inside herself. The father then sent the boy to help and she came to him and said:

"Father, I've no respect with this man, except my physical and spiritual deterioration. So I wish something were done for me."

The brother, who had for himself alone decided to kill this fool, without revealing his wish, told his father that he deeply resented this

man's stay with his sister. The father asked him why, and he replied, this time deciding not to conceal his desire.

"Shamelessly he often asks her whether she has that "thing" wherever she might be: on a journey, among friends, or even when she is among ~~elders~~ elders like you. So father, I know he is our kin, but he has grown excessively intolerable. Leave him for us - me and my sister; and we know how to get rid of him."

On another day, the elders proclaimed and asked for a young man to go on a reconnaissance journey for the next pasture land. Cibaado's brother volunteered to take the mission.

After the journey, he came back to his sister before meeting the elders and told her that he had seen the hole of a python and a deadly reptile called abris.⁴¹ He told her he would tell the elders to settle the village there; and emphasized that she and her husband pitch their hut there.

The caravan started and the village was settled at the place chosen by Cibaado's brother. Cibaado too made sure her hut was constructed at where her brother had pointed out. Muxammed was soon ready with fences for the cattle. The women folk too were ready with their hearth. It was then announced that water should be fetched for the village, Muxammed the fool snatched a huge water jar made of wood and marched off without even waiting for the burden camels. He brought the water and asked his wife to make him Xawsa. People ate whatever was available and the men put on their shoes. Muxummud the fool then said to his wife

"Cibaado, how about that thing, is it available today?"

⁴¹Eight legged reptile deadly poisonous. Its victim could only utter ab, the first syllable of its name and never reaches ris, the second syllable.

When people left her house, Cibaado swore to her husband that if she does not stop him from his filthy language, she would not be called a human being.

The cows were milked and dinner was eaten. Usually, in the first night in a new area every man sleeps in the clearing in front of his hut. Only women and children sleep in the huts. Accordingly, Cibaado and her children slept inside and Muxummed slept with his father and brother-in-laws. But when it was close to mid-night Muxummed sneaked into his wife's hut, lacerated a shabby curtain she had tied across, and mounted on the poor pregnant lady. She then shouted for help. Those who heard only said, it was that husband of her she hated, and no help went to her. He boasted he would not let her free till morning, however she shouted and fretted. In fact, he became so violent that he started calling her names and even beating her.

True to his word, he never let her doze, even for a minute. By dawn she was extremely exhausted and about then, the waa! of a prematurely born baby was heard from her hut. What was born was a baby boy that died instantly and was burried right away.

Cibaado's brother suggested to the elders that the grass around the area was exhausted and hence the need for another reconnaissance and another trek. He was entrusted, and it took him no time to come and inform the elders of the pasturland he spotted. It was agreed the caravan would start the next day.

You remember the house of Cibaado was built near a python hole. Her brother had carefully studied the timing of this reptile. It only used to come and stay in its hole on alternate days. Luckily, the day she was to come and lie in her hole was the day the elders decided the village should move out. The brother informed this happy coincidence to his sister.

In the morning, after breakfast the village was ready for the trek. The convoy of camels one after the other in a straight line looked like a moving forest.

When the caravan was out into the plane, here was Muxummed shouting after his wife to wait for him. She cursed him to go to hell and turned him a deaf ear and continued her journey. Again he called after and this time too she begged Allah to finish him off. When he called the third time and she cursed him, she thought of her brother who was beside her and felt confident. She thought of putting her plan into practice. Her brother too told her to wait for him; but she was preoccupied by some poems she was reciting to her women friends that she continued her journey.

Cibaado told her friends that she would recite a poem she had composed when she married this fool. In it, she told them she complained about her fate.

Oh my pals and age-mates,
I am shrouded in a grave
I am dying, pals and
Beg of you to recite the Qur'aan on me
An anti-hill, I took for a house,
Crumbled, it did - on me!
Oh pals! pray for me and bless me.
Bless me, so that I get my age-mate
I wish I had died in infancy for my parents⁴²
So that I carry errands for father at heaven,⁴³
Oh! dear age-mates what happened to me is a story in itself.
I've been fated to dig the devils' grave⁴⁴
A road that passes through Dig and Warder
I can't refrain from it, as dwell my friends, there,
Thus you see me crying from a distance,
Like a sole tree in the plane of Giri.

He friends too threw back some sympathetic verses hinting that they would feel sorry if she left them too. They arrived at the place of settlement. Soon Muxummed fenced for the cattle, the ladies

⁴²It is believed in Islam that death in infancy leads straight to paradise

⁴³Obviously her father is dead

⁴⁴Only mad people do so.

helping each other pitched their huts, and in matters of hours, the men were drinking xawaa. Muxummed, after belching twice asked his wife if that thing would be ready for the night. Cibaado replied, "Hee! Hee! Muxummed I forgot that thing in the old village we had left this morning."

Muxummed jumped and called for his brother-in-law Cabdullaahi, telling him that the most important thing in the family had been forgotten in the deserted village, and that he should go with him to find it. The brother, showing a false sympathy consented.

They started all the way down, when Muxummed told Cabdullaahi to wait for him a while, as he had forgotten something at home. He ran back shouting Cibaado's name. She heard him from afar and cursed him. When he arrived panting, he asked her where exactly she had left the thing, what mark he should look for to pin-point the thing. She told him that he would find it open-mouthed in a hole a little above where the hut was. She told him that grass had grown around it, but it would be easy to locate it, as its redness would glitter from a distance. She also told him he had to look deep inside. "Before bringing it home," she said "make sure you quench your thirst of it very well. My brother too would help you find it. Only when you are well satisfied, should you knot it in the edge of your cloth and bring it home."

When he reached there, from afar he saw something open-mouthed.

He then shouted to his brother-in-law,

"Oh my Cabdullaahi, this is not a sight you should witness, please go back a little while and wait for me."

Cabdullaahi withdrew, and the fool ran at full speed towards the target, and when he was near it, threw his cloth off and squatted over the python's mouth. He deeped his penis moaning and sighing.

The python clutched his hind part and sucked him in. She sucked him and sucked him till his heart and whole being turned different. Only then, did he realize his killer, and in his last words:

"This killer! it has killed me!
She bade me kiss snakes and pythons
She told me to carry it in my lap
Take care of women, Oh! men,
For once if they press you to their side,
They don't let you go free, till they suck you empty."

The brother-in-law was watching this drama form far off. When he mad sure that the man was dead, he rushed to his sister and told of the success of their plot. He also told her to wail, saying the man was eaten by a beast.

"O! O! O! he has been broken to enemies

My man has been eaten by a beast!"

The village assembled and men were sent to collect the corpse, led by Cabdullahi, and Muxummed was burried.

Cibaado then, saying "a fool is never a kin!" just to save her face allowed a she-camel to be killed on his funeral. She also recited a dirge at his funeral, explaining how her future is darkened by the loss of her 'beloved' husband.

Muxummed's mother who was also his aunt never believed her son's death was guiltless. She complained publicly that it was when Cibaado wanted to kill him that she deliberately and consistently called him a fool. She took Muxummed's children from her and left the village for good, advising Cibaado to be better woman now that her foolish husband was dead.

77.

The Greedy Vulture

A vulture once came to a place where some men were butchering an animal. The vulture told ~~mae~~ one of the men that he was sent by his mother to beg for a piece of meat for its baking stone. The piece of meat was given him and he flew with it, ate it and came back. He was again thrown another piece of meat with which he perched on a tree and ate it instantly. He came for the third time and was given another piece. On the fourth time when he was thrown another piece he did not even fly with it. He started eating it near to where the men were butchering the animal. One of the men took a bone and hurled it at the vulture; it hit its neck and killed it. That is what agreed results in.

78.

The Woman and The Burden Camel

A woman came across a fire. She then said, "How nice would it have been to grill meat on it." Her husband then said. If you agree to carry our house tomorrow when the village migrates, I'll kill our burden camel for you." She answered, "If you would kill it for us, load the house on me." He then slaughtered the burden camel. It was then announced that the village should migrate, or else people would die of thirst. The husband then said, "The village is going to migrate this morning come ready to be loaded."⁴⁵ She came, and he loaded her. He then told her to follow the caravan, as he would go ahead and reserve for them a place without black ants to pitch the tent on. She said "alright", and he went. When he came to where the caravan was to be unloaded, he asked the people where the woman he had laden that morning was. They answered, she was not with them. He then went back to where his previous house was. When he arrived there he said to the woman, "Had I not loaded you this morning, whatever are you doing here?" When she answered him not, he jostled her with his hankool, and said, "Ay, you get - up! get up!"

When she could not get up, and he discovered she was dead, he unloaded the house from her. He then went to the village, came with a burden camel and loaded his house.

⁴⁵The loading of a house refers to the nomadic house when migrating, they usually dismantle it and load it on burden camels.

Another woman who had gone with the villagers came back to the deserted village hoping to find the tail of the burden camel the couple had killed the other day. When she came, she came across a python lying in the deserted village. She picked it and put it in her cloth went off. The python then moved in her cloth. The woman then said, "camel's tail! camel's tail why all this movement? Be at rest till I put you in a boiling pot." She did not stop till she put it in a boiling pot. She then invited all the women telling them that she was observing Xawa and Faduma.⁴⁶ When it was about ready, one woman came, uncovered the pot's lid, deeped her finger in and sucked it. She dropped dead, gab! The host then said to the other women, "He! you women make sure everyone of you get from the sauce, don't you see, how X too (dead) has fallen off unconscious due to the delicious fat excess in the sauce?" All the women, wanting to taste the sauce, dropped their fingers and tasted; and all died, save one.

79.

The Miserly Man

There was a miserly man. He would not leave his wife prepare food, nor milk the cows without his close supervision. He always thought she would take everything for herself.

⁴⁶ Areligious observance often held by women in reverence of the Prophet's daughter.

One evening, porridge was cooked for dinner and it was time to milk the cows. He demanded that the porridge pot be tied on his back while he milked the cows. His wife tied the pot on his back and he went to milk the cows. Milking the cows with a pot of porridge was not at all easy for him. The whole pot spilled on him and he shouted loudly to his wife for help. She was not far off for she was holding the calf of the cow he was milking. He said to her:

"Wife, smear the porridge off my body and smear it on my body."

80.

The Miserly Man with Twelve Cows

There was a miserly man. He had twelve milk cows. The wife used to produce butter from the milk, take it to the market and cover the family's needs in clothing etc. The miserly man asked his wife one day to present him with the outcome of the butter. She told him how the money was dispensed with; which he could not take as true, and demanded for the whereabouts of the butter. Whenever she prepared food he wanted to make sure he saw how much of the grain she used, he took half the raw food with him when milking. At times he took the cooked food with him while milking, to make sure his wife did not eat alone. That way he milked all the twelve cows and only when he was through did he give her the food; always condemning her for her greediness. As she could not tolerate him she left him. He was there to care for the children and the cows. One day he

came across a beautiful girl and asked her where she was going. She told him she was going to his own house. He told her of his intention to marry her. She told him she had ten habits- that she ate ten times daily, and at night, she said that at times she was used to drinking dough, and at other times bake and eat a lot of bread. All her ten habits were composed of eating (contrary to his miserliness) she also told him that she was used to roaming about. She also told him three things he should not do.

1. Not to starve her while she is in birth confinement
2. Not to beat her and
3. That she should often stay at home. Then he

married her and her extravagance was so frightening that people were surprised at what kept his silent.

One day he decided to take her to the farm with him for he needed her help. His aim was to test how far she could resist hunger despite her prodigious appetite. During that busy day she tried to create all kinds of pretexts to come back to the village. "I closed the door on an item that belongs to a lady," or "someone has called my name," when no one did. He at last let her go, knowing very well her desire. She went home and as usual drank dough, baked and ate a lot of injera. At night the man kept ready three big gourds. When she had stomach pain in the night he left her deficate on the three gourds, and they were filled. Early morning he let her carry the three gourds to her people accompanying her. He asked her to break it in front of them. Her brother who was so ashamed by the baseness of his sister and hanged himself,

unable to stand such shame. The man divorced the lady there.

81.

The Lion's Share

Nine hyenas and a lion went on a raid. They found ten camels that were astray. The other animals asked the lion to divide what they found among themselves. He then told them to be ten by giving them a scabie-infected she camel and said he would be ten with the remaining best nine which he took for himself. With sorrow and fear they departed. When the animals were some distance away from the lion, the leader of the hyenas (Weer) told the others that they were badly wronged in the distribution and suggested going back, to tell the lion of how he had wronged them. The others agreed and they all came to where the lion was. The Weer voiced the unfair decision of the lion. In no time he was slapped and one of his eyes flew out. One among the hyenas suggested that the lion also take that one she-camel that had been given them. When the lion asked the cause of this gesture, the speaker replied that it was the fallen out eye of the Weer that made him speak so.

82.

The Hyena and the Lion

A lion borrowed a she-camel from a hyena. When dry season came, the hyena asked the lion to pay his debt. The lion told him to wait for the rainy season. The hyena refused to accept the proposal. The lion then insulted the hyena and then prompted him to try violence, if he could. The hyena then said:

If I go up that hill and bring ten of my kins,
And if I stand on the other hill and bring another ten,
And if I send an alarm to the long-necked ones,
And the sons of gayuun gocoyo⁴⁷ come rushing,
I swear by Allah, my she camel will be won back.

⁴⁷ A clan of the hyena.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name Abdul-Kadir Haji Jama

Signature _____

Place and date of Submission: June 14, 1982, I.L.S.