



**No Easy Way Out:
Traditional Authorities in Somaliland
and the Limits of Hybrid Political Orders**

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ABSTRACT

Somalia has been without effective state institutions since 1991. Over the past two decades, moderately effective state-like institutions have been rebuilt in Somaliland and Puntland in northern Somalia, but they do not enjoy international recognition and are limited in power and scope. This text concentrates on the integration of non-state actors, particularly traditional authorities, during the process of state-formation in Somaliland. Arguably, this integration has brought about a hybrid political system that functioned quite well during the first years of existence of Somaliland. Hybrid political systems are currently of great interest in various African settings, including the possibility of integrating traditional authorities into (local) government in South Sudan. These systems, however, mix modes of legitimacy of different political actors in a way that, in the long run, either undermines the democratic capabilities of modern states or seriously damages the credibility and effectiveness of traditional authorities. Thus, hybrid political systems may be a way to stabilize politics in a transitory phase (e.g., after civil war or independence) but they are not the easy way out of the dilemma that state institutions in many African states are weak, have only a very limited outreach and in many regards lack popular legitimacy.

INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the role of traditional authorities as important non-state actors in contemporary northern Somalia, including in the conflict between Puntland and Somaliland.¹ It explores a number of case studies to illustrate how relations of traditional authority have changed with the involvement of traditional leaders in “modern” state politics in Somaliland. The main argument presented here is that despite much emphasis on hybrid political systems in the African literature and beyond (Boege et al. 2008; Logan 2009) it still makes sense to distinguish different types of political actors in the Somali context with regard to their form of authority and mode of legitimacy.² Mixing legitimacies does, in the long run, rather prevent modern states from becoming effectively democratic and/or damages the credibility and effectiveness of traditional authorities. My argument builds on the Weberian distinction of rational, traditional and charismatic authority and their related modes of legitimacy (Weber 1956).³

The paper begins with a theoretical discussion of the key concepts of authority and legitimacy and links this discussion to the recent

resurgence of traditional authorities in Africa in general. It then provides an overview of how traditional authorities are conceptualised and have developed over time in northern Somalia. In its third part, the paper presents two case studies that illustrate the complex entanglement of traditional and state authorities in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland, and in Ceerigaabo, a town in the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland. The case studies show how the involvement of traditional authorities in state politics in the course of civil war, state collapse and partial political reconstruction has changed the modes of legitimacy upon which traditional authorities draw. State politics that concern access to state resources and positions of power in the government offered the possibility for traditional leaders to mobilise new forms of power. At the same time state politics have bound traditional authorities to military and political elites and distanced them from their followers. This has undermined their popular legitimacy, which originally was based on closeness to ‘their’ people.

The complicated relationship between traditional and state authorities suggests that the former are extremely influential, but also confronted with great challenges in northern Somalia as well as other settings characterised by hybrid political orders (see e.g. Fanthorpe 2005 for Liberia; Kyed 2008 for Mozambique; and Oomen 2005b for South Africa). Traditional authorities are to some degree able to successfully perform the functions that weak and/or emerging state institutions are not (yet) able to perform. But this comes with certain costs: First, traditional authorities will lose relevance for ordinary people, whom they actually are supposed to represent, the more they mingle with the state; second, a state system integrating traditional authorities will never be fully democratic. This counters the argument recently presented by Logan (2009), who claims that new hybrid political orders that combine

1 Details on the formation of Somaliland and Puntland and their conflict are provided further below.

2 This paper is based on field research that I conducted in northern Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland) between July and September 2002, and again, between September 2003 and November 2004. A first draft of the paper was presented at the 1-3 November, 2010 Conference in Copenhagen with the title: *Access to Justice and Security. Non-State Actors and Local Dynamics of Ordering*. This conference was organised by the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the International Development Law Organisation (IDLO). Revisions of the first draft are based on reviewer comments by DIIS researcher Helene Maria Kyed.

3 I use a German version of this text that was compiled posthumously.

traditional and state modes of governance can pave the way for 'real' democratisation.

IDEAL-TYPES OF AUTHORITY AND THE RESURGENCE OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES IN AFRICA

Weber (1956: 159) distinguishes between rational, traditional and charismatic authority. Rational authority dominates in modern state structures. These are based on bureaucracy that functions according to rules and laws that are considered rational and make the execution of authority calculable (ibid.: 160-66). Traditional authority is typical for medieval European and contemporary so-called 'tribal' societies.⁴ It builds on the personal relationship between ruler and ruled (ibid.: 167-78). Charismatic authority characterises (war-)leaders, kings, religious leaders, prophets and others who, in the eyes of their followers, have magic abilities at their disposal. The rules and laws under such conditions are made by the leader *ad hoc*, who frequently claims to follow divine revelations. Charismatic authority can transform into everyday charismatic authority if it becomes traditionalised and/or bureaucratised/legalised (ibid.: 179-88).⁵ Ideal types never exist in reality. Overlaps between the three forms of au-

thority are the norm (ibid.: 157). This, however, does not mean that two different kinds of authority are merged one-to-one. It rather means that within a political system, one type of authority dominates, but traces of another type of authority can be found as well.⁶

All three forms of authority are related to their own ideal typical modes of legitimacy. It is worth remembering that, in general, legitimate authority emanates from the voluntary compliance of the subjects to the authority of the ruler(s) (Weber 1956: 157; Oomen 2005b: 82). Legitimacy in modern states is usually "based on elections and embedded in constitutional and legal procedures and rules" (Lutz and Linder 2004: 13). The constituencies of state authorities consist of only loosely related persons who form an imagined community. The limits within which authorities and followers establish legitimate relationships are ultimately defined by law.⁷ Legislation aims at standardizing relations of authority and procedures of rule and administration irrespective of the personal characteristics of the office holder (Weber 1956: 166).⁸ Legitimacy in traditional contexts concerns closely knit groups such as villagers or relatives, is rooted in references to local history and culture, and depends essen-

4 Regarding the use of 'tradition' and 'traditional' in this paper, it must be recalled that both terms are derived from the Latin word *tradere*, which can be translated as "pass something (over), hand something (over)." This underlines the active and process-oriented aspect of tradition, in which the present is connected to the past in a dynamic way. Weber (1956: 167) found that new creations or reforms in the context of traditional authority have to *claim* historical precedence.

5 This is the case in certain religious communities, where, for instance, upon the death of the charismatic leader his or her designated heir or 'rebirth' is installed.

6 Patrimonialism, for instance, is an aspect of traditional authority that can be found in many post-colonial and post-soviet states around the globe.

7 This is related to a general characteristic of modernity, which is the "disembedding" of social relations from local contexts of interaction and the restructuring of these relations across indefinite spans of time and space (Giddens 1990: 21). With Luhmann (1988), one can argue that the functioning of state authority is based on trust in abstract systems, while the functioning of traditional authority is bound to the trust in the concrete person, i.e., in the abilities of the individual traditional leader and the social relations he (rarely she) controls.

8 Of course, persons whose behaviour is damaging to the position they hold can be removed, based on legal provisions.

tially on the skills and abilities of the person holding authority to satisfy his or her followers. Weber (ibid.: 170) emphasizes that the *will* of the followers to obey (*das Gehorchenwollen der Genossen*) and the fact that also the ruler is bound by tradition are central aspects of traditional authority. Similarly, Kurtz (2001: 49) observed that particularly in societies with no or weakly institutionalized positions of authority, leaders “must continually earn the support of their followers. If they fail, they are easily replaced”. With charismatic authority legitimacy constantly has to be earned by producing ‘miracles’ for the followers of the leader. If miracles fail to materialise or misery strikes the community the charismatic leader quickly loses his or her legitimacy (Weber ibid.: 179). In the everyday form of this type of authority, legitimacy is enshrined in certain beliefs and dogmas (ibid.: 182-83).

This basic distinction between types of authority is useful for understanding recent developments in Africa. While traditional authorities in the early post-colonial period were considered anachronistic institutions by local elites and most external observers, they have regained recognition since the early 1990s. This largely owes to the failure of the modern state to take hold in Africa, namely a modern state based on the Weberian definition of rational-bureaucratic legitimacy.⁹ Since the late 1990s, a considerable body of literature was produced on the resurgence of traditional authorities in countries such as Benin, Ghana, South Africa, Mozambique, Somalia and Sudan. It turned

⁹ It is doubtful that such modern states were ever in place in Africa. They hardly could have evolved out of the colonial states that were focused on the exploitation of natural resources and human labour. The colonial system of rule was usually based on force and violence, and even where indirect rule allowed more freedom for local forms of authority it was far from rational-bureaucratic.

out that in some cases, chiefs, elders and other traditional authorities had never ceased to be important. In other cases they came to the fore again in the light of state-weakness, state-collapse and/or state-reconstruction after crisis (see Lentz 1998; West and Kloeck-Jenson 1999; van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaaal 1999; Englebert 2002, 2005; Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2003; Nyamnjoh 2003; Fanthorpe 2005; Oomen 2005a; Gundel 2006; Kyed and Buur 2007; Leonardi 2007; Kyed 2008; Valsecchi 2008; Logan 2009).

Most of these authors, referred to above, argue that state and traditional authorities remain in a rather uneasy relationship. Traditional authorities are somewhat ‘betwixed and between’ governments and local constituencies (see particularly West and Kloeck-Jenson 1999). Some add that traditional authority usually features gerontocracy, patriarchy and undemocratic procedures (e.g. consensus instead of vote) and therefore interferes with the development of modern democracy (Fanthorpe 2005; Ntsebetza 2005). Recently, however, Logan (2009: 103) took issue with these positions and argued that traditional and state authorities are “two sides of the same coin”. She used survey data from 15 African countries (not including Somalia) to show that “Africans who live under these dual systems of authority do not draw a sharp distinction between hereditary chiefs and elected local government officials as most analysts would expect” (ibid.). She stressed that “Africans are thus creating for themselves, whether deliberately or by default, hybrid political systems that integrate the traditional systems with which they are deeply familiar and their newly minted electoral regimes” (ibid.: 123). She further argued that “hybridising political systems in these ways may well represent a positive step toward deepening democracy in Africa, rather than a step away from ‘true’ democracy” (ibid.: 123-24). The material on politics and relations

of traditional authority in Somaliland does not confirm Logan's rather general and optimistic findings. People in Somaliland, where I did extensive field research between 2002 and 2004 (and conducted shorter field visits until 2011), do differentiate between various forms of authority and their respective modes of legitimacy, and realize when the essence of, for instance, traditional authority is lost. They make such distinctions not in ideal-typical terms, like Weber, but in vernacular terms.

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES IN NORTHERN SOMALIA

The Somali expressions corresponding to the English 'traditional authority' are *hoggaamiye dhaqameed* (traditional leader/guide) or *madax dhaqameed* (traditional head).¹⁰ The most common traditional authorities are *oday* (pl. *odayaal*), which simply means elder. Generally, every Somali male can become an elder within his close family. The heads of lineages or diya-paying groups are usually called *caaqil* (pl. *cuqaal*).¹¹ The highest-ranking traditional authorities in northern Somalia are called *suldaan* (pl. *saladiin*), *garaad* (pl. *garaado*), *boqor* (pl. *boqoro*) and *ugaas* (pl. *ugaasyo*). In the past, *garaad* was most widespread among the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli, *suldaan* among Isaaq, *ugaas* among Ciise and Ogadeen, and *boqor* among Majeerteen.¹² The proliferation of posi-

tions of traditional authority since 1991 (see below) loosened the use of these titles, which in the early 21st century can be found among all clans inhabiting the region. *Isim* (pl. *Isimo*) is the generic term for the highest-ranking traditional authorities in Puntland.¹³

Elsewhere (Hoehne 2007) I outlined in detail how the roles and positions of traditional authorities have changed over time as a result of colonial and post-colonial politics, conflict and reconfigurations of political orders in the contemporary Somali context. It suffices to stress that in pre-colonial time traditional authorities held the position of *primus inter pares*. Northern Somali society was acephalous; permanent positions of power and state-like structures were absent. People lived as pastoral nomads. Political and social relations were regulated predominantly through solidarity within patrilineal groups (*tol*) and customary law (*xeer*). Alliances could also involve cross-clan or lineage alliances based on affinal ties, friendship, or simply common interests (Lewis 1961). Traditional authorities were involved in 'pastoral politics', which revolved around the negotiation of access to pasture and water and conflict settlement within and between rather small groups. Gradual changes were introduced by the colonial powers (the British in the northwest and the Italians in the northeast and the south). They integrated traditional authorities in their system of indirect rule or undermined and replaced independent traditional leaders with loyal colonial agents. After the unification of the British and the Italian territories to form the Somali Republic on 1 July 1960, the post-colonial Somali elite was eager to marginalise traditional authorities who

10 Names of Somali places, institutions, and persons in this text generally follow the Somali orthography. The Latin "c" stands for a sound close to the Arabic "ع" (ayn); "x" denotes "ح" (ha), as in, e.g., Cali or in Faarax.

11 A diya-paying group consists of one or more lineages whose members agree to pay and receive compensation together in case of homicide.

12 Common titles in central and southern Somalia are *beeldaje*, *malak* and *islam*.

13 The term may come originally from the Arabic word *isim*, which means "name". In the Somali context, it may have taken on the meaning of nomenclatura referring to the traditionally leading stratum of society.

were considered to be in the way of progress. Particularly the revolutionary socialist government under President Maxamed Siyaad Barre (1969-91) officially disregarded anything traditional. Nonetheless, traditional leaders continued to play a role as mediators between clans and lineages in the peripheral areas, particularly in the north. They gained new power in the course of the Somali civil war that escalated in north-western Somalia in the 1980s. The Somali National Movement (SNM) that was mostly supported of members of the Isaaq clan family began to fight the government in Mogadishu in 1982. The guerrillas had their basis in neighbouring Ethiopia.¹⁴ For money and manpower the guerrillas depended on the support of ordinary members of the Isaaq clan family (in Somalia, the Somali region of Ethiopia and the diaspora). This support was usually channelled through the hands of traditional authorities (Reno 2003: 24). Members of other clans in the northwest, such as the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli, who belonged to the Darood clan family, sided with the Somali government against the SNM.

In mid-1988, after hundreds of thousands of Isaaq had fled into Ethiopia from the bombardment of their towns by the government in Mogadishu, around four dozen traditional authorities formed a council called *guurti* to assist the SNM. The victory of the SNM over the Somali national army in the northwest in January 1991 was followed by the declaration of independence of the Republic of Somaliland in the borders of the former British protectorate. Before and after the declaration of independence, traditional authorities engaged in local conflict settlement and thereby built the

basis for the social and political reconstruction of Somaliland. The SNM *guurti* was institutionalised as “House of Elders”, one of the two chambers of parliament. It took its seat in the capital city Hargeysa (Renders 2007; Bradbury 2008: Chapter 4).¹⁵

The northeast came under the control of another Somali guerrilla organisation called Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). The people in the northeast did not wish to secede from Somalia. However, when it became clear that rebuilding of the collapsed state would take longer than expected, the SSDF together with influential traditional authorities in the region decided to establish Puntland as an autonomous regional state that, nonetheless, remains part of Somalia. Puntland was set up as administration of all Harti-territories in northern Somalia. Harti is an ancestor within the larger Darood clan family. It combines the members of the Majeerteen, Dhulbahante, Warsangeli and several smaller clans. Unlike in Somaliland, the position of traditional authorities in Puntland was not strongly institutionalised. But ordinary elders and *isimo* continued to act as conflict mediators and settlers at the local and the national levels on an *ad hoc* basis.

Somaliland and Puntland promoted opposed political visions. Somaliland wished to be recognised as an independent state. Puntland hoped to play a central role in a united but federal Somalia. The conflict between both political entities played out in the regions Sool, Sanaag and Togdheer. According to the government in Hargeysa, these regions were part of the former British Protectorate and therefore belonged to Somaliland. The government

¹⁴ Ethiopia was the ‘arch-enemy’ of Somalia and happily provided Somali guerillas fighting the government in Mogadishu with shelter.

¹⁵ Whenever the “House of Elders” of Somaliland will be mentioned in the following, I will write *Guurti* with capital “G” to distinguish it from the SNM *guurti* and other *ad hoc* elders councils.

in Garowe argued that the inhabitants of these regions were mostly Dhulbahante and Warsangeli, who were part of the Harti clan confederation represented by Puntland (Hoehne 2009). While the conflict since 2004 escalated several times on a military level, political but non-violent interference in the daily life of the borderlanders by the two centres in northern Somalia is the norm. This also concerns the instalment of traditional authorities, who, in the marginal regions Sool, Sanaag and Togadheer, are still highly influential actors (Hoehne 2010).

The following case studies from Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland, and from Ceerigaabo, the capital of the Sool region, exemplify how traditional authorities were increasingly drawn into 'state politics' which concern access to state resources and positions of power within formal state structures. This also requires taking a stand in the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland and therefore put traditional authorities at the forefront of political conflict.

Case I: Traditional authorities within the state apparatus

The role of traditional authorities in the Republic of Somaliland became institutionalised in the decade after the secession in 1991. Initially, traditional authorities chaired a number of small-scale peace conferences (Somali sing.: *shir*) to bring those clans in the north together again that had stood on different sides during the civil war. Traditional authorities were also highly influential at the national *shir* in Burco in 1991, where the Republic of Somaliland was founded. In the aftermath, they continued to settle conflicts that escalated within the SNM as well as between different clans and political factions.

The concrete role of the traditional authorities in the emerging state apparatus was inscribed in the National Charter (*Axdiga Qarameed*) adopted at the *shir* in Boorama in 1993

and in the Constitution of 2001. The National Charter introduced the bi-cameral parliament divided in a House of Elders (*Guurti*) and a House of Representatives. Each house had 75 members. The main task of the *Guurti*-members was keeping the peace in Somaliland. At the *shir* in Hargeysa in 1997 the number of members of the House of Representatives and of the *Guurti* was raised to 82 each. Article 61 of the Constitution of 2001 provides that the national elders in the *Guurti* enact laws concerning religion (*diinta*), culture/tradition (*dhaqanka*) and peace (*nabadgelyada*) as well as review laws already passed by the House of Representatives, with the exception of the budget. Moreover they advise and assist the government and enquire into the performance of its duties. *Guurti*-members receive a salary and allowances (Article 65) and enjoy immunity (Article 66). Besides these legal provisions, the weight an individual traditional leader could gain in Somaliland politics very much depended on his personal skills and social capital. This is illustrated by the contrasting fates of two famous traditional leaders in Somaliland, who made their career in the capital city. One was for 20 years the chairman of the *Guurti* and had participated in all major decisions concerning Somaliland. After he had died, he was celebrated as one of the big national heroes. The other was on the way to become a national hero but overestimated his power at one point, which led him to fall into disgrace.

Sheekh Ibraahim – a “pillar of freedom and peace”

Sheekh Ibraahim had been chairman of the SNM-*guurti* in the late 1980s in Ethiopia. He had participated in the declaration of independence of Somaliland and the peace conferences facilitating the new political beginning. From the establishment of the *Guurti* in 1993 to his death in 2004, he had been the chairman

of the House of Elders. On the one hand, his prestige derived from his descent. He belonged to a family of Sufi ‘saints’ within the Isaaq/Habar Awal/Sacad Muuse sub-clan. Moreover, his grandfather, Sheekh Madar, was considered the founder of Hargeysa, where he had established a Qadriya congregation in the mid-19th century.¹⁶ On the other hand, Sheekh Ibraahim was recognised as one of the most important elders supporting the SNM in the 1980s and as a decisive figure in the state-building process in Somaliland. Immediately after his death in a hospital in London on 23 July 2004, aged 83, where he had been for several months of treatment, Hargeysa’s main newspapers covered the *sheekh’s* life history in numerous articles. The Republican, the weekly English issue of Jamhuuriya, the most popular daily paper at that time, had the following heading on the first page: “Somaliland Lost Pillar of Freedom and Peace”. The article summarised the important roles played by the Sheekh Ibraahim. He had been among those elders who mobilised the people against the atrocities of the dictatorial regime in the 1980s. He had masterminded the reconciliation conferences leading to the declaration of the independence of Somaliland in early 1991, and he had persistently worked for peace and stability in the country ever since. Daahir Rayaale Kaahin, then president of Somaliland, announced a seven-day mourning (The Republican, 24-30 July 2004). Sheekh Ibraahim’s body returned four days after his death in London by plane to Somaliland; it was received by a huge crowd at Hargeysa International Airport. Together with hundreds of others I attended the state funeral that took

place in the compound of the *sheekh’s* family in Hargeysa the same day.

Sheekh Ibraahim had without doubt been a very important figure in the history of the Republic of Somaliland. His death had left a gap in the political landscape and Saleebaan Gaal, the chairman of the *Guurti* who succeeded the *sheekh*, was not by far as charismatic as his predecessor. Yet, the unanimous appreciation expressed after Sheekh Ibraahim’s death in July certainly had to do with the fact that one does not say anything bad about the dead. During his lifetime, Sheekh Ibraahim, like every politician, had also made himself enemies but had managed to keep them in check.

Boqor Buurmadow – from being a national peace maker to being accused of high treason

By contrast, the case of Boqor Cismaan Aw Maxamuud Buurmadow shows that celebrated traditional authorities could also ‘burn their hands’ by being involved in politics in Somaliland. The *boqor* belongs to the Isaaq/Habar Jeclo/Muuse Aboqor sub-clan. The clan-homeland (Somali sing.: *degaan*) of this group extends from the village of Ceelafweyn to the east. It is located in the Sanaag region, close to the Dhulbahante territories. He therefore belongs to “Habar Jeclo *bari*”, the “eastern Habar Jeclo”.¹⁷ His mother was Dhulbahante. Cismaan Aw Maxamuud was inaugurated *boqor* in 2000, as a relatively young man, in his late thirties. He did not come from a family of traditional authorities. His father had been a livestock trader. Cismaan finalised secondary school in 1979 and afterwards joined the anti-regime struggle first of the SSDF, and then,

16 One of Sheekh Ibraahim’s cousins, Sheekh Yuusuf Cali Sheekh Madar, had been chairman of the SNM from January 1982 to November 1983.

17 The “Habar Jeclo *galbeed*”, the “western Habar Jeclo” reside west of Burco; they consist of the branches of Maxamed Aboqor and Cimraan, among others.

in 1984, of the SNM. He participated in the fighting against the Somali national army in the Sanaag region in the late 1980s. In the decade before his inauguration (Somali sing.: *caleemo saar*) in 2000, Cismaan had been a businessman (Interview Boqor Cismaan Aw Maxamuud Buurmadow, Hargeysa, 24.07.2004).

Boqor Buurmadow, as he became known, earned fame throughout northern Somalia as a mediator between Cabdullahi Yuusuf and Cadde Muuse in the conflict over the presidency in Puntland between 2002 and 2003. Cabdullahi Yuusuf was the founding president of Puntland. He did not prepare elections and refused to step down after his term of office had officially ended in mid-2001. A group of traditional leaders therefore elected Jaamac Cali Jaamac as new president in November 2001. In reaction, Cabdullahi Yuusuf organised his sub-clan militia and chased the counter-president first out of Garoowe, the capital, and a few months later out of Puntland. However, General Cadde Muuse, a patrilineal relative of Jaamac Cali Jaamac, took up the struggle and continued to fight Cabdullahi Yuusuf, partly backed by Somaliland. Peace negotiations took place in late 2002 and early 2003. They were led by Boqor Buurmadow and Suldaan Siciid of the Warsangeli clan. Boqor Buurmadow knew both opponents from his time in the SSDF in the early 1980s. A peace agreement that guaranteed the stability of Puntland for the coming years was finally signed in May 2003. Since then, the *boqor* was considered a man with great influence in 'high politics' and with good connections to the governments of both Somaliland and Puntland.

The news that Boqor Buurmadow had been arrested on the evening of 27 January 2004 in a hotel room in Hargeysa, where he was staying with his wife, sent shock waves through Somaliland. The media in Puntland also reacted. Allpuntland.com, the main online news service covering Puntland and Somali issues from

a Puntland perspective, reported the arrest and stressed that "Boqor Osman [was] one of many traditional elders from north-west regions of Somalia who had been voicing their disagreement with [the Somaliland] government's policy and handling of the issue concerning Sool, Sanag and Ayn" (Allpuntland.com, 27 January 2004).¹⁸ The "issue" mentioned here was the acute confrontation between Somaliland and Puntland after Puntland police forces had occupied Laascaanood, the capital of Sool region, at the end of December 2003.

Boqor Buurmadow was charged with crimes "against the state and the existence of Somaliland as a separate independent country" (The Republican, 31 January-6 February 2004). Additionally, he was wanted for "false accusations" against the President of Somaliland" (ibid.). The basis for these allegations was two interviews that the *boqor* had given to Jamhuuriya. In the first interview of 23 January 2004, he had emphasised that the confrontation between Somaliland and Puntland over the control of Laascaanood and the Sool region could be solved peacefully, and that he was in contact with Cabdullahi Yuusuf, President of Puntland, in this regard (Jamhuuriya, 23 January 2004). The tone of this interview had been friendly. However, in his statements the *boqor* clearly generated the impression that he had a "master plan" that the governments did not have, particularly not the government in Hargeysa. The *boqor* gave a second interview on 26 January 2004, the day before his arrest. In this interview he changed his tone mark-

¹⁸This news report follows an anglicised version of Somali. More importantly, the terminology is strictly "Puntlandish": "Somaliland" is not mentioned; instead the text refers to the "north-west regions of Somalia". Moreover, the district of Buuhoodle is called "Ayn" (Cayn), which is the name the government in Garoowe had introduced for the area in the south of Togdheer region where mainly members of the Dhulbahante clan reside.

edly and accused President Daahir Rayaale Kaahin of Somaliland and his government for mismanaging the crisis in the Sool region and for going against the interests of Somaliland. Concretely, he stated that the government in Hargeysa tolerated the presence of Puntland forces in Somaliland and fighting within the country's borders. He also asserted that the government wanted to cut the regions Sool and Sanaag from the rest of Somaliland, and that the president had entered into a secret agreement with the government of Djibouti over the closure of the port of Berbera, so as to benefit the livestock export from Somaliland via the port of Djibouti (Jamhuuriya, 26 January 2004).¹⁹

The second interview triggered the arrest. The *boqor* was kept in prison, despite some interventions by elders from his sub-clan and demonstrations by his followers. He was brought before court at the end of February 2004. This was the first time ever a traditional authority was brought before court in the Republic of Somaliland (The Republican, 28 February-5 March 2004). The security situation in Hargeysa and in Ceelafweyn, the town from where the *boqor* originated, was very tense. In early March, members of the traditional leaders' lineage clashed with Somaliland forces in the Sanaag region. Several people died in the confrontation (Allpuntland.com, 4 March 2004). The judgement was finally issued in April 2004. Boqor Buurmadow was discharged of crimes against the state, but found guilty of having damaged the honour of the president.

¹⁹ Daahir Rayaale Kaahin belongs to the Gadabuursi clan. The Gadabuursi as well as the Ciise, who both are part of the Dir clan family, have a strong presence in Djibouti. President Kaahin was repeatedly accused during his term of office (2002-2010) to have a secret and probably anti-Somaliland agenda in cooperation with the government of Djibouti.

He was sentenced to six months probation, with the condition that he would go to prison for five years if he committed "any crime during the probation period" (The Republican, 10-16 April 2004: 1, 8). Critics argued that the court ruling was a political judgement to silence an independent-minded and influential personality. Others, however, thought that the whole affair was "a warning to other traditional leaders [not to play] politics but strictly play their traditional role" (ibid.: 8).

In the aftermath, Boqor Buurmadow kept a low public profile for some time. He had rented a house in Hargeysa and spent much time there, receiving relatives, friends or other persons, such as the author. I conducted several interviews with Boqor Buurmadow between July and October 2004, during which he positioned himself "in-between" with regard to (northern) Somali politics. He strived for influence and power in Somaliland, but also mentioned that he was a traditional leader for all who trusted in him, in Somaliland, Puntland and Somalia (interview Boqor Cismaan Aw Maxamuud Buurmadow, Hargeysa, 24.07.2004). In another interview he openly said that he favoured a unitary Somalia in the long run (interview Boqor Cismaan Aw Maxamuud Buurmadow, Hargeysa, 27.10.2004).

Boqor Buurmadow's case raises the question of what roles and powers traditional authorities can and should have in Somaliland. It also sheds light on the complicated relationship between the government in Hargeysa and the local constituencies of traditional authorities who wish to be both: involved in national politics and representatives of their people. In 2004 Boqor Buurmadow had the backing of his local followers, but no longer of the government. For many members of the *Guurti* in Hargeysa the situation was the other way around. They had been selected by the previous president of Somaliland, the late Maxamed Xaaji Ibraahim Cigaal, and by influential

figures in their own clans. These ‘top-down’ decisions did not always find the approval of the local constituencies of the *Guurti* members. This concerned particularly communities in the eastern regions of Somaliland that were geographically – but also politically – far from Hargeysa. An intellectual in Ceerigaabo, the capital of the Sanaag region, mentioned: “We call the national *Guurti* the funny members of parliament” (interview Axmed Bando, Ceerigaabo, 05.08.2002). He recalled that in 1993 messengers came to the region and asked for representatives from the local groups to be sent to the Boorama conference. Yet, there was no consensus among the locals in Ceerigaabo on the question of who should represent them. Some men just went to the *shir* in Boorama and became the elders of the region, but in the intellectual’s words, they were only “puppet representatives” (ibid.).

The two cases presented above illustrate that relations of traditional authority are subject to constant redefinition in their own specific contexts. This underlines that traditions are not static. The next case study concerns the double-inauguration of two traditional authorities for one sub-group that led to serious tensions in the local community. It shows how positions of traditional authorities are subject to political conflict between Somaliland and Puntland in the contested borderlands, comprising the regions Sool, (eastern) Sanaag and (southern) Togdheer/Cayn.

Case 2: Traditional authorities at the margins

Ceerigaabo is the capital of Sanaag region, where various Isaaq (Habar Yoonis and Habar Jeclo) and Darood/Harti (Dhulbahante and Warsangeli) clans reside together. The town was founded as seat of the British adminis-

tration in the 1930s, after the Dervish war.²⁰ In the 1980s, Ceerigaabo and Sanaag were drawn into the escalating civil war. At first, the SNM in the region operated at a very low level and clandestinely; open fighting escalated in early 1989 (interview Keysi Ismaaciil Muuse Wadaad, Ceerigaabo, 14.06.2004). Subsequently, many Isaaq who were opposed to the government of Maxamed Siyaad Barre left Ceerigaabo and the surrounding areas to the nearby Daallo Mountains and the countryside. There, some of them joined the SNM. The Darood/Harti clans, whose members predominantly supported Barre, stayed in their homes and fought against the guerrillas, together with the national army. When the SNM finally captured Ceerigaabo in February 1991, the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli fled to towns inhabited by patrilineal relatives, such as Bosaso and Laascaanood, or to the remote countryside.

In the aftermath of the civil war a number of small-scale peace conferences took place all over Sanaag. They culminated in a regional peace conference held in Ceerigaabo in early 1993. This paved the way for the members of the local Darood/Harti clans to come back and live together with the Isaaq again. Ceerigaabo was rebuilt, and in the late 1990s a Somaliland administration was set up there, dominated by Isaaq, but also integrating members of the other clans (Terlinden 2008: 54-59).

Although peaceful coexistence between the former foes characterized the situation in Ceerigaabo and the region in the early 2000s, politically the region remained split. Within

20 Between 1899 and 1920, a group of northern Somali, mostly Dhulbahante, but also some Warsangeli, Isaaq and Ogadeen, fought under the leadership of a religious man and poet called Sayid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan against the colonial powers in the region. Most Isaaq, however, sided with the British against the Dervishes. The fighting caused havoc throughout northern Somalia.

Ceerigaabo, the different clans did not live in seclusion. Members of Isaaq clans lived together with Warsangeli and Dhulbahante. Still, some neighbourhoods were predominantly inhabited by one group. Many Dhulbahante felt somewhat distanced from the local administration. They said that they were not strongly represented in the local police and military forces. This was confirmed also by non-Dhulbahante (interview Maxamed Cabdille Cilmi, Ceerigaabo, 26.04.2004). The relatively weak Somaliland administration for Sanaag region did also not enjoy their recognition, even if the Vice-Governor and the Vice-Commander of the police in the region were Dhulbahante. “These are just nominal positions [without real power]” and “They are just individuals” was what local Dhulbahante leaders answered when I mentioned these facts (interviews Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo 08.06.2004; Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed, Ceerigaabo, 10.06.2004). In the Warsangeli and Dhulbahante territories toward the east or the south of Sanaag, people rather sided with Puntland.

Most inhabitants of Ceerigaabo avoided speaking openly about politics and the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland. The reason was that they had experienced the hardships of war at a very intimate level. Traditionally, the Isaaq and Darood/Harti of Ceerigaabo and Sanaag are related through marriage. The dominant pattern is: Warsangeli and Dhulbahante intermarry with Habar Yoonis in southern Sanaag, and Dhulbahante intermarry with Habar Jeclo in eastern Sanaag.²¹ During the civil war families broke apart along the ‘Darood/Harti-Isaaq-divide’, and in-laws and neighbours fought each other. It took a long

21 Some Habar Yoonis and Habar Jeclo also intermarry with each other, as do some Dhulbahante and Warsangeli.

time to re-establish trust after violence had ravaged the closely-knit community built on mutual respect and cooperation.²² Arguably, these traumatic experiences are inscribed in the collective memory of the people living in Ceerigaabo and Sanaag. This distinguishes them from areas that are predominantly inhabited by members of one descent-group and that have not experienced internecine fighting during the late 1980s.²³ The result of these experiences was a “chosen amnesia” in everyday life.

This concept was developed by Buckley-Zistel (2006: 134) to capture the fact that people in Rwanda after the genocide remembered the violence of 1994, but “frequently replied that they could not recollect what caused the genocide”. In Buckley-Zistel’s view, chosen amnesia implies “that the memory [of violence] is still stored in the mind, even though the group does not (choose to) have access to it at present” (ibid.). What relates the Rwandan experience to the situation of people in Ceerigaabo is that in both places groups that have been engaged in killing each other had been closely related as neighbours and in-laws and had to live together in close proximity again after the fighting. Amnesia is chosen in order to facilitate co-existence. This was expressed by a young Warsangeli resident of Ceerigaabo:

22 One factor that strengthened the value of cooperation was that Ceerigaabo is surrounded by arable land. Many local families have gardens. Moreover, besides camels, sheep and goats also cows are herded near the town. This indicates that the ‘sedentary ethos’ is more developed in Ceerigaabo and surroundings compared to most other places in northern Somalia (apart from the area around Gabiley in western Somaliland and the port towns along the coast, from Berbera to Bosaso). I heard that horticulture in the area of Ceerigaabo had been introduced by the British.

23 Belonging to one clan family does of course not prevent internecine fighting, as the example of Burco shows. The town is mostly inhabited by Habar Jeclo and Habar Yoonis who both belong to the laaq clan-family. Members of these clans fought each other bitterly in 1994.

“People here want to forget [the fighting between 1988 and 1991]. The past is like ‘dirty laundry’; nobody wants to touch it” (interview with Axmed Af-Kalahaye and Cabdi Cali, Ceerigaabo, 28.06.2004). In a similar vein, ordinary people and government officials maintained a cool and distant attitude toward politics and avoided potentially divisive references to civil war experiences.

This ‘coolness’, however, was seriously disrupted by external interferences during the process of establishing a new *garaad* for the local Dhulbahante/Naaleeye Axmed sub-clan in early 2004. At first glance, the creation of a new *garaad* was nothing unusual. Among all Somali clans (also in southern Somalia) positions of traditional authority had been proliferating since the fall of the Somali government. The number of Dhulbahante *garaado* had increased from four before 1991 to more than ten in 2004. The new leaders brought new titles with them. In 2004, one found *boqor*, *ugaas* and even *suldaan* among Dhulbahante, in addition to the traditional title *garaad* (interview with Siciid Xaaji Nuur, Laascaanood 22.10.03). Upon closer examination, however, the events in Ceerigaabo in the first half of 2004 pointed to ongoing conflicts in the region that were highly significant for the situation of traditional authorities in Somaliland’s eastern periphery.

Two leaders for one lineage

Upon my arrival in Ceerigaabo on 26 April 2004, I heard that the process of establishing the new traditional leader was complicated. The Naaleeye Axmed were not united. Some even refused to establish any *garaad* and wished to call for a big *shir* in Xudun, the Naaleeye Axmed stronghold in the northern Sool region, bordering Sanaag (interview Maxamed Cabdille Cilmi, Ceerigaabo, 26.04.2004). One of the key figures in the process was

Maxamuud Saalax Nuur Fagadhe (Naaleeye Axmed/Cali Naaleeye), a ‘full-blood’ politician approximately in his late 60s and a former Foreign Minister of Somaliland whom I had met earlier in Hargeysa. Before the collapse of the Somali government he had been part of a reform movement called “Manifesto Group” demanding constitutional and political changes in Somalia in the late 1980s.

In Ceerigaabo, I met Fagadhe in a restaurant with ‘his’ candidate, Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe. Saleebaan was introduced to me as a former BBC correspondent in London. He had also worked for the Ministry of Information under Maxamed Siyaad Barre and much later in Somaliland. Finally, he had been a member of the SSDF as well as the SNM. He had worked for the guerrilla radios, first Radio Kulmis and then Radio Halgan. This of course was quite an interesting career, and now Fagadhe insisted that Saleebaan should become the new *garaad*. Fagadhe argued that to be eligible for *garaad*, a person has to have certain characteristics. “*Waa nin rag yaqaan, Rabi yaqaan iyo run yaqaan* (He [a *garaad*] is a man who knows men, God and truth).” Fagadhe continued: “He has to be a good speaker; he has to have a presence [charisma], a character; he has to be a man of substance; and he has to be loyal to Somaliland” (interview with Maxamuud Saalax Nuur Fagadhe and Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 27.04.2004). The last point astonished me. I asked why the new *garaad* had to be loyal to Somaliland and mentioned that a *garaad* is not a national politician. Fagadhe replied that the new *garaad* will be a politician. “The conflict between Somaliland and Puntland results in political problems here in the region, and therefore the *garaad* has to have a political position” (interview with Maxamuud Saalax Nuur Fagadhe and Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 27.04.2004). In Fagadhe’s view, the new leader should clearly be pro-Somaliland. When I asked if I could attend a

meeting at which members of the sub-clan discussed the issue, Fagadhe refused. He stressed that at this kind of meeting highly sensitive issues were discussed that must not be heard by outsiders.

The secrecy of the Naaleeye Axmed regarding the establishment of their new *garaad* worked. At least, I did not manage to gain more substantial information in the following weeks. Finally, it was announced that on 30 May 2004 Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe was to be installed as *garaad*. I received an invitation. On the morning of the 30th I went to the Hotel Sanaag, where the crowd was supposed to meet before accompanying the future traditional leader to the ceremonial place on the edge of town. On my way someone handed me an invitation card. At first I declined because I already had an invitation. The man insisted and explained that this card was “for the *caleemo saar* of the other *garaad*”. I was taken by surprise. This was the first time I heard about the installation of two *garaado* of Naaleeye Axmed on the very same day. One was Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe; the other was called Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed. Both belonged to the Aadan Naaleeye lineage of the Naaleeye Axmed sub-clan and were therefore distant relatives (I heard they were *ina adeer shanaad*: fifth [patrilineal] cousins). The first was considered to be the “Somaliland *garaad*”. He was supported by the local administration in Ceerigaabo, particularly by the influential mayor, Ismaaciil Xaaji Nuur of Habar Yoonis/Muuse Ismaaciil, and by the government in Hargeysa represented in Ceerigaabo through Fagadhe. The second was described by many Naaleeye Axmed in town as “the candidate of the people”. He allegedly was rather pro-Puntland. Those who did not like him stressed that he was a *wadaad*, which in this context meant *ikhwaan* or (former) “Al Itihad”, and in general

an Islamic fundamentalist.²⁴ In any case, the ‘double installation’ of two *garaado* from the same sub-clan and even from the same lineage was something extremely unusual.

Since I could not participate in both ceremonies at the same time, I decided to join the *caleemo saar* of Garaad Saleebaan. Later I had an opportunity to participate in a follow-up ceremony called *Allah bari* (begging Allah) of Garaad Cabdullahi. In the following paragraphs I outline the important political aspects involved with both events.

On 30 May, around 8 a.m., people gathered at the Hotel Sanaag, near the ‘government district’ of Ceerigaabo. Maxamuud Saalax Nuur Fagadhe was already there. A number of officials, such as the mayor, Ismaaciil Xaaji Nuur, and the vice-governor of Sanaag region, Cabdicasis Xasan Siciid, came soon. Around 9 a.m. the local ‘big men’ held a meeting. I heard that Fagadhe was asking for soldiers to guard the event. Afterwards I joined the men on their trip downtown to check the situation. By now I understood that they were worried about the coronation of the counter-*garaad* that was underway in the countryside close to Ceerigaabo. Fagadhe and the others referred to the other *garaad* and his supporters as *mucarad* (opposition). The local police commander reported that only a few people had gathered at the

24 Lewis (1961: 27-28) distinguished *wadaad* (pl.: *wadaado*) and *waranle*. *Wadaad* was typically an itinerant *sheekh* who took care of the religious education and matters among the nomads. *Waranle* meant “spear bearer” and described the category of “warrior”. Traditionally, religious men did not engage in fighting and depended on the protection of their armed relatives or hosts. Warriors, on the other hand, needed *wadaado* for spiritual guidance. In the 1990s and 2000s, however, this terminology had changed. *Wadaad* was frequently used as “euphemism” for religious fundamentalist, as *ikhwaan* (which literally means “brothers” and refers to those who hold views similar to the Muslim Brothers in Egypt) or Al Itihad. Al Itihad was an armed movement. A modern *wadaad*, thus, could also be a warrior.

place where Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed was to be installed. Ismaaciil, the mayor, was pleased. He said: “*Ceerigaabo way degen tahay* (Ceerigaabo is calm).”²⁵ When we returned to the Hotel Sanaag, more than 50 people had gathered there. Additionally, about ten cars stood ready to take the people along. Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe sat in the hotel lobby dressed in a white khamis with a pink shawl around his shoulders and a turban on his head. He was surrounded by several local traditional authorities. They were ‘posing’ for the photographers. The political officials and the police commander also joined the picture.

Around 11:30 a.m. most of the people jumped in the waiting cars and the parade took off from the hotel. It passed near the city centre, making maximum noise with horns honking and people shouting. The final destination was a place called *ceel* (Somali for “well”) next to the once very important well of Ceerigaabo that now, however, was closed. Along the way I spotted a few soldiers with Kalashnikovs on rooftops and along the street. The procession walked the last 200 meters on foot, with the future *garaad* taking the lead, surrounded by elders and people waving branches with green leaves. It stopped under a huge tree, where a provisional ‘camp’ had been established with mats on the ground and a table and chairs set up under the tree. Speakers and a microphone had also been arranged. An armed soldier sat in the tree. He was soon joined by a dozen teenage boys sitting on the branches above the future *garaad* and the honoraries. Fagadhe, the mayor, and a number of traditional authorities from various clans (mostly from Habar Yoonis and Habar Jecllo) delivered short speeches,

praising the candidate and advocating peace in the region. At least one-third of the crowd were women. Some of them were chanting songs to a monotonous drum beat, and a teenage girl sat on the ground and pretended to process milk in a traditional vessel called *haan*. She was ‘pretending’ because, as she told me, there was in fact no milk in the vessel. The performance was just part of the ritual. The event reached its climax with dozens of people approaching and greeting the future *garaad*. While shaking hands and expressing their good wishes, they ‘poured’ flowers, leaves and popcorn over the head of Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe. This was the essence of the rite called *caleemo saar* (verbally: putting on leaves).

During a *caleemo saar* a new leader is covered with leaves and flowers, and in the old days was showered with camel milk as a symbol of fertility and prosperity (*barwaaqo*). *Barwaaqo* is an important concept in the pastoral-nomadic culture of northern Somalia. It is used to describe a state of ultimate happiness, when humans and animals live in abundance, during the months of the long rainy season (Somali: *gu*). In this way, the *caleemo saar* is not only an expression of joy, but also a reminder that the traditional leader is responsible for the well-being of his people. After he was ‘showered’, Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe took the microphone and addressed his people. He thanked them and promised to work for peace in Ceerigaabo and Sanaag. The ceremony was over at around 1:30 p.m.; afterwards everybody went home.

The event was a display of Somaliland politics in ‘traditional clothing’. On the one hand, the location under a tree near a well, the girl pretending to churn butter from milk and the leaves and flowers poured over the newly elected *garaad*’s head referred to Somali pastoral-nomadic traditions and the concept of *barwaaqo*. On the other, the strong presence of members of the local Somaliland administra-

²⁵ This phrase was frequently used by people in Ceerigaabo to describe their town’s situation. The opposite would be ... *way kacaysan tahay* (“... is in upheaval”).

tion, the important role of Fagadhe, a national figure, and the presence of Somaliland soldiers along the way and at the ceremonial site pointed to the political character of Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe's *caleemo saar*. Moreover, the fact that the ceremony took place inside Ceerigaabo was another clear indicator of its strong backing by the local administration. The counter-*garaad* had to be crowned outside of town. However, the number of participants at Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe's *caleemo saar* was, with fewer than 100 people, rather moderate. This showed that the masses of the people had either gone elsewhere, i.e. to the instalment ceremony of the counter-*garaad*, or stayed away from both ceremonies.

In the afternoon of that day, Ceerigaabo returned to 'normal'. Most men sat with their friends, relatives and/or acquaintances and chewed *qaad*. On that particular day, many *qaad* circles all over town received *qaad* as a present from Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe. Before chewing with some men, I briefly went and visited the counter-*garaad*, Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed, in his house. The entrance was guarded by some men (yet without visible guns). Inside the house a few people were gathered. After having greeted the *garaad* I made an appointment for a later interview and left. A Naaleeye Axmed man who accompanied me along the way to the *garaad's* house mentioned that most people had joined the *caleemo saar* of Garaad Cabdullahi. This was confirmed by others, including non-Dhulbahante. Those who wanted to diminish the fact that more people had joined the counter-*garaad's* coronation stressed that mostly "women and children" had gone to Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed's *caleemo saar*. One Dhulbahante soldier serving in the local Somaliland forces commented ironically during a *qaad* session: "*Geela iyo dumarkaba waa la hiddo raaca* (Camels and women go with the culture)" (interview with Axmed Aadan

Xuseen, Ceerigaabo, 23.06.04). Cismaan, a young Warsangeli *wadaad* and employee in a local telecommunications company, summarised: "The *caleemo saar* of Garaad Cabdullahi was a traditional ceremony, the one of Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe was a political ceremony" (interview with Cismaan, Ceerigaabo 30.04.2004). This classification also became apparent at a later religious ceremony, the *Allah bari*, held by Garaad Cabdullahi, but here political elements were also apparent.

The *Allah bari* ceremony of Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamed Guuleed took place on 24 June 2004, roughly four weeks after the two parallel *caleemo saar* ceremonies. The aim was to "beg God" to bless the new *garaad* and his people. This event concluded the establishment of Garaad Cabdullahi.²⁶ Despite its seemingly purely religious and traditional character the event created tensions in Ceerigaabo. The local government had interdicted the ceremony, but Garaad Cabdullahi and his followers insisted on it. The night before the event rumours spread in town that soldiers might be dispatched to control the situation. In the morning I visited Garaad Cabdullahi in his house. He confirmed that the ceremony would be held. They had negotiated with the government and were now allowed to gather in the countryside, at a place called Ceelqorey some 40 minutes walking distance south of Ceerigaabo. It was the *degaan* of Dhulbahante/NaaleeyeAxmed and Habar Yoonis. I went there by car with several religious men and elders. We reached the place at around 10 a.m. About 30 people were already there, preparing the ceremony and the food for the following feast. A place under a tree had been covered with mats and seats had been arranged in a half circle. Nearby, a 'field

26 I did not hear of an *Allah bari* ceremony for Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe.

kitchen' had been established. Four camels and about 30 goats had been slaughtered at sunrise. Men and women were now busy preparing the meal for all the expected guests. Some men, particularly elders of neighbouring clans and sub-clans, had been specially invited, but basically everybody was allowed to come and get some food.

While observing the scene I had a conversation with some of the men with whom I had come. Talking about politics, one of the men stressed that he did not like the government in Hargeysa. Another man added, "I am Puntland; we are the same clan" (meaning: we are Harti). Later we talked about religion and, as usual, my pious Somali conversation partners tried to convince me that Islam was the best of all religions and that only Muslims had a real aim in life, namely, to reach paradise (*janna*). Afterwards I strolled through the camp and filmed and photographed the preparations, particularly the cooking of huge amounts of meat in impressive pots over an open fire. I came across a guard sitting next to a pile of already cooked meat. When he saw me filming, he briefly lifted a blanket next to him and showed me some Kalashnikovs hidden there. Another man quickly stepped by and said to the guard: "Don't show this, it is peace and the guns do not fit the picture of the *Allah bari*." I found this scene extremely informative. It clearly pointed to the tensions around the event between the local government and 'their' *garaad* on the one side, and the counter-*garaad* on the other.

The real event started shortly before the noon prayer. The elders and other honourable persons were seated on the chairs in a half circle. Garaad Cabdullahi, dressed in khamis, a cap on his head and with his long black beard,

sat in the centre.²⁷ Around 300 people had arrived by foot or in cars and trucks from Ceerigaabo and surroundings. Almost all of them were men. The few women on the scene were occupied with kitchen work. The ceremony was opened by a young man, who recited a long sura from the Quran. Subsequently a 'master of ceremonies' introduced the speakers. Traditional authorities from different clans residing in the Sanaag region spoke about the situation of the local people and begged Allah to give his blessing to the new *garaad*, to the land and to the people. The speakers as well as the audience included people from different clans. Habar Jecllo and Habar Yoonis sat next to Dhulbahante, Warsangeli and other smaller groups. One speech by an elderly man who had just returned from the diaspora was remarkably 'out of place'. He spoke angrily and lamented the destruction of the environment and moral decline of the Somali people over the past decades. The new *garaad* had the last word. He thanked the people and extensively (for ten minutes) begged the blessing of Allah. Then the people were called for the noon prayer, which was led by the *garaad*. After prayer lunch was served, and everybody received spaghetti and large amounts of meat. At 2 p.m. people began to head back home.

The event was enlightening in several regards. First, there were serious tensions surrounding it, yet the event itself happened in a peaceful atmosphere. No armed guards or soldiers were visible during the ceremony. Moreover, none of the speakers referred to the conflict over the establishment of the Naaleeye Axmed *garaado* or the Somaliland-Puntland conflict.

27 The beard was a clear sign of Garaad Cabdullahi's religious orientation as modern *wadaad* or *ikhwaan*. Full beards were rarely seen on Somali men until the early 1990s. A common nickname for religious fundamentalists in the early 2000s was *garweyne* (big-beard).

Second, a sizeable crowd attended the *Allah bari* of Garaad Cabdullahi, and they were not just “women and children” as some of the supporters of Garaad Saleebaan had claimed (see above). To the contrary, the majority were men from different clans including Warsangeli and Habar Jecllo. Third, Garaad Cabdullahi clearly displayed one of the characteristics of a traditional authority, which is leadership in spiritual matters. As Fagadhe had stressed, a *garaad* has to “know men, God and truth”. Garaad Cabdullahi certainly “knew God”. His “begging Allah” before the noon prayer was genuine and emotionally touching.

This *Allah bari* ceremony clearly accentuates the key difference between the two parallelly inaugurated leaders, which is: One is a religious man, the other a worldly politician. But for many people it was actually not just a question of deciding whether to support either Garaad Cabdullahi or Garaad Saleebaan Afqarshe. In fact, many Dhulbahante and others in Ceerigaabo stressed that the only “real” *garaad* for Naaleeye Axmed remained Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed, the leader of all Ugaadhyahan (including all Naaleeye Axmed) in Laascaanood, the capital of the neighbouring Sool region. This was a much discussed issue. Earlier, Fagadhe had stressed that the establishment of a separate Naaleeye Axmed *garaad* would deal a severe blow to Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed, whom he considered to be “ignorant” and “nomadic” (meaning uneducated), and who clearly was very close to Cabdullahi Yuusuf, the President of Puntland from 1998 to 2004. Others maintained that despite the newly elected *garaado* in Ceerigaabo, Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed remained the “original” *garaad* for the Dhulbahante groups from Laascaanood up to Ceerigaabo in the north.

Interestingly, I heard that the event at the end of May 2004 had not been the first attempt of members of the Naaleeye Axmed

to split from the line of Garaad Saleebaan in Laascaanood. In the 1950s Naaleeye Axmed had gathered in Xudun to elect a new *garaad*.²⁸ In those days, however, Garaad Maxamed, the father of Garaad Saleebaan, rode by horse to Xudun to convince “his people” to stay under his leadership. He succeeded. “People said: ‘If he [Garaad Maxamed] can solve our problems, we will support him’” (interview with Axmed Aadan Xuseen, Ceerigaabo, 23.06.04). This underlines that the power of any traditional leader among (northern) Somalis depends upon his personality and his skills in satisfying the needs of his followers. At the same time there are many different ways of articulating traditional authority in contemporary Somalia. A brief ‘comparison’ of the two *garaado* as personalities is instructive regarding the variation of ‘types’ of traditional authorities.

Different types of traditional authorities

In early June 2004 I visited the two new *garaado* in Ceerigaabo for longer interviews in their homes. With Garaad Cabdullahi I conducted one interview in his home on 10 June 2004, starting at 9 a.m. The *garaad* wore a white khamis and a cap. He in fact looked like a young *wadaad* or *ikhwaan*. His beard, hair and clothes were all perfectly in accordance with Islamist norms and he made a somewhat distanced impression. Garaad Cabdullahi was born in Ceerigaabo in 1960. His mother was from the Dir clan family (he did not specify from which clan). After middle school he started to work as a carpenter. In the late 1980s he became a businessman and spent some time in Mogadishu and other places in the south. For him, people in northern and southern Soma-

²⁸ I heard that in the 1950s, it was Daahir Afqarshe, the father of Saleebaan, who had been chosen as candidate.

lia were the same, apart from slight dialectical differences. He married a Dhulbahante/Naaleeye Axmed woman in 1989 and subsequently spent some time abroad, in Arab countries. His wife and children stayed in Laascaanood, but he now wanted them to settle in Ceerigaabo.

I asked why Naaleeye Axmed needed their own *garaad* and could not stay under the authority of Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed in Laascaanood. Garaad Cabdullahi argued that too many problems existed inside Naaleeye Axmed alone to be solved by one *garaad*. He added that recently even smaller groups within Dhulbahante/Ugaahyahan had created their own traditional leaders, and that Naaleeye Axmed were much more numerous than these other groups.²⁹ Still, Garaad Cabdullahi emphasized that he hoped to meet Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed in Laascaanood soon. "It is important that the different traditional leaders work together." When I mentioned the 'other' *garaad*, Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Garaad Cabdullahi was slightly embarrassed. He thought that the majority of the Dhulbahante in the area were on his side. In his view, the other *garaad* was created by the Somaliland administration.

Garaad Cabdullahi stressed that, politically, he was leading where the majority of his people would like to go. He argued that most Dhulbahante in Sanaag favoured the political orientation of Puntland with regard to the re-establishment of a united Somalia. As he put it, "*Danta beesha waan ku khasban ahay* (I am forced by the interests of my constituency)." But he quickly added that the political situation in the region was quite unstable. People can also follow their interests and turn to dif-

ferent sides. Still, particularly in the countryside, 'clan' and patrilineal descent guided people's orientations. Regarding the situation in Ceerigaabo the *garaad* maintained that Naaleeye Axmed were not so well integrated in the local administration. Not many Dhulbahante served as soldiers or policemen. The *garaad* demanded that the balance of power in town be changed to the benefit of his people (interview with Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed, Ceerigabo, 10.06.2004).

I observed that during our talk almost nobody else was in the house of the *garaad*. Only a few young boys were there who most probably belonged to the close family of the *garaad* and helped around the house. I wondered if anybody ever came to sit with and consult Garaad Cabdullahi. As a *wadaad* he did not chew *qaad*, which most probably discouraged many men of his clan from visiting him. *Qaad* is in fact a central means of forging social and political ties in northern Somalia (Hansen 2010). Influential figures are expected to regularly hand out *qaad* to their relatives and followers. Generosity, an important characteristic of any Somali leader, was traditionally expressed by slaughtering a goat for the guests. As the use of *qaad* has become endemic since the civil war in northern Somalia and the experience of living in refugee camps in Ethiopia in the late 1980s, generosity is mostly shown by inviting people for *qaad*.

I also visited Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe. I had three longer interviews with him in his house between 8 and 12 June 2004.³⁰ During the visits the *garaad* and I sat on the

29 In fact, the Naaleeye Axmed consisted of at least 11 lineages, including Aadan Naaleeye, Cali Naaleeye, Reer Cilmi, and Reer Jibril. Some of these again branched out into a great number of smaller sub-groups.

30 The imbalance in the number of interviews with the two *garaado* derived from my subjective impression that Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe had more to say. After the first interview we just continued to talk, whereas I felt that talking with Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamed Guleed had been 'exhaustive' after one interview session.

veranda or in one of his private rooms. On the first occasion the Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe lit a cigarette and began to complain that he had to work until midnight since he had been elected *garaad*.³¹ He stressed that “his people” don’t even respect privacy, as “civilized” people do. If they see him sitting alone and reading or writing they think he has a problem; they think he needs people around him to be happy. Saleebaan mentioned that he had lived a long time abroad and has a kind of Western lifestyle; he enjoys privacy. Now several men come every afternoon and want to talk with him. “They don’t even talk about real important problems. They talk about the war in Iraq, the death of Ronald Reagan or something else, but they ignore the problems right out their front doors” (interview with Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 08.06.2004). The *garaad* added that these men, for example, do not understand that education and health-care are of enormous importance for their children. Moreover, in case of conflict “they don’t ask who started the fighting and who was right or wrong; they just support ‘their boys’. This leads to an escalation of violence on a higher level and makes conflict settlement more complicated” (ibid.).

Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe went on to say that other people just came to gossip or wanted a bundle of *qaad*. Garaad Saleebaan mentioned that for the coronation ceremony (*caleemo saar*) on 30 May 2004 he had to pay

almost USD 3000 just for *qaad*.³² This contradicted past traditions:

In the old days, when they wanted to appoint a new *garaad*, the clan used to collect livestock so that the new leader would become independent and un-corruptible. He then could be generous and pay minor compensations for wrongs committed by anybody belonging to his own group from his own ‘pocket’; he also would invite guests and provide the meat. Now, in the urban context everything is different. If somebody wants to become *garaad* today he has to have money or he has to have alliances with the rich people of his clan. This is why the position of *garaad* has become politicized. Also, the problems he has to deal with are more political than social/family-related, as in the past. Today, in the absence of a strong government [in the periphery], a *garaad* has to keep his people together in the midst of conflict between Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia, in the face of military confrontations and against the background of interference by religious groups such as Al-Qaeda, *Timo Weyn* and so

31 During all our interviews, and also when I met Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe on other occasions, he smoked heavily. Once he mentioned that now, as *garaad*, he was supposed to stop smoking since it was not considered appropriate that a *garaad* smoked. Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe seemed to be unwilling to quit.

32 In fact, much *qaad* had been distributed in Ceerigaabo on 30 May in the name of Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe. The local price for a small bundle of *qaad* (*mijin*) was around USD 3. On average, a Somali man chewed two to three bundles at one sitting. USD 3000 would buy *qaad* for approximately 300-400 men. The statement of the *garaad* was quite credible, given the fact that he certainly had to give *qaad* to every male in the local and the regional administration as well as in the police and the armed forces in town to thank them for their support of his election.

forth.³³ The latter mix religion with politics and seek power in (northern) Somalia. You have to manoeuvre very carefully not to alienate anybody. The balance between the various religious sects is especially difficult. (interview with Salebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 10.04.2004)

Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, whose habitus was rather 'secular' and westernized, obviously was much occupied with the topic of sectarian splits within his sub-clan. He mentioned that the religious fundamentalists in northern Somalia received orders from outside (meaning: from the Arab Peninsula). During the discussions prior to his *caleemo saar* some of the *ikhwaan* inside Naaleeye Axmed had openly stated that they had "clear orders that one of them has to become *garaad*" (ibid.).³⁴

Then Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe started to talk about the situation in Ceerigaabo. He mentioned that the interest of his people is the peaceful coexistence between the different clans. "My interest is in Ceerigaabo; here we have to live together. Instead of thinking about clan structures I think about the place where I live. First comes peace in Sanaag, then we can think about Laascaanood, Garoowe, Hargeysa or Mogadishu" (ibid.). He stressed that reconciliation in Ceerigaabo after

33 *Timo Weyn* was an Islamic sect (within the larger Qadriya group) that had its centre near Yagori in central Somaliland. It followed its leader, Sheekh Maxamed Rabiic (who died in 2005). The sect's marker of distinction was a particular haircut. The hair was relatively long and parted accurately down the middle of the head. In contrast, other Somali men usually cut their hair very short. This was the sunna of the Prophet, in the eyes of most Somalis. The members of the *Timo Weyn* tariqa had a different opinion on this and several other religious matters.

34 It was difficult for me to assess this statement. It may also just have been an indirect attack against the counter-garaad, Garaad Cabdullahi, who was said to be *ikhwaan* and Al Itihad.

the civil war of 1988-1991 was still not complete. Therefore, his first priority as *garaad* was to "heal the wounds of the previous civil war" (ibid.). Regarding the situation of Dhulbahante in town he said: "Politics in Ceerigaabo is like a table with only three legs; the Dhulbahante are still not fully integrated" (interview with Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 08.06.2004).

I asked why Naaleeye Axmed needed a new *garaad*. Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe answered, "We have a new *garaad* now because of the tensions between Somaliland and Puntland. If anything happens, then the Isaaq and the Dhulbahante [in Ceerigaabo and Sanaag] will again clash. Naaleeye Axmed would be on the front line since they inhabit the borderlands between Isaaq and Dhulbahante" (interview with Salebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 10.04.2004). In my interpretation, Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe was suggesting that Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed in Laascaanood was leading his followers in support of Puntland and against Somaliland. If eventually the conflict between Hargeysa and Garoowe escalated violently, the Naaleeye Axmed in the Sanaag region would need an alternative leader – Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe himself – who could prevent the Dhulbahante in Ceerigaabo from once again getting involved in internecine fighting with the local Isaaq neighbours and in-laws

After Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe had elaborated extensively on his political positions and his "visions" as *garaad*, we talked about his personal background. He was born in Ceerigaabo in 1942. His grandfather had been a Dervish leader called Sheekh Cabdi

Afqarshe.³⁵ Sheekh Cabdi Afqarshe had been a member of the *khusuusi*, the leadership committee of the Dervishes. He was killed when the British bombarded a Dervish fortress in today's Sanaag region. After the Dervish war the *garaad's* father, Daahir, fled with his family to Berbera, where he joined the police force of the British Protectorate in 1935. After secondary school, Saleebaan went to Moscow in 1963, where he studied chemistry, physics and mathematics. When he came back to Somalia in 1967 he became a teacher at a secondary school in Mogadishu. Soon he joined the radio and became the head of the educational broadcasting service. Under Maxamed Siyaad Barre he was put in charge of the two Somali radio stations in Hargeysa and Mogadishu. In 1970 he was sent to East Berlin to edit the film about the "first anniversary of the revolution". But Saleebaan was already fed up with the new government. From East Berlin he escaped to West Berlin where a BBC correspondent waited for him. He was brought to London, where he stayed for several years and worked for the BBC Somali Service. In late 1978 he joined the Somali Salvation Front (SSF) in Ethiopia, which later, after several other groups had joined in, became the SSDF. Saleebaan said he knew Cabdullahi Yuusuf from the time they spent together in Moscow. He also was close to Mustafe Xaaji Nuur (Isaaq/Habar Awal), the first SSF chairman and also a member of the BBC Somali Service in London. They established Radio Kulmis, the guerrilla radio network, in Ethiopia. Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe mentioned that the Somali listeners were confused when the first anti-regime radio programme was broadcast in February 1979.

35 The nickname Afqarshe (literally: Mouth-Hider) refers to the clothing of the grandfather; he used to cover his mouth as Tuareg do. This was his style as a Dervish.

Most Somalis knew Saleebaan's and Mustafe's voices from the BBC. Some listeners contacted the BBC in London and asked if Radio Kulmis was a new BBC network.

After a while Saleebaan became "foreign secretary" of the SSDF. A young Majeerteen man called Cabdulqadir Faarax Bootaan took over Radio Kulmis. Later Saleebaan joined the SNM and worked for Radio Halgan. In retrospect he complained that within both guerrilla movements, clanism reigned. He argued that Maxamed Siyaad Barre had introduced a particular kind of narrow-minded clanism, an "illness", which Garaad Saleebaan called "Reer Diini". Reer Diini was the lineage of Maxamed Siyaad Barre within the Marrexaan clan. Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe further explained that later other Somalis were infected with this illness and within the SSDF, for instance, those belonging to Cabdullahi Yuusuf's close family, Reer Mahad, felt "more Diini" than the rest of the Majeerteen (interview with Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, Ceerigaabo, 12.06.04). Before Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe became *garaad* in Ceerigaabo, he had lived with his wife and children in Hargeysa. He was head of the Tender Commission there. Now he was thinking about moving to Ceerigaabo to be with "his people" (*ibid.*).³⁶

The contrast between the two *garaado* was already visible on the surface. The one, Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe, was a worldly, chain-smoking, Moscow-educated and later Western-oriented intellectual. He was more than 60 years old and had experienced and

36 Garaad Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe died on 15 June 2009. A summary of his life history was published online by Aadan Cige Cali (2009). This account confirmed all key biographical details I had gathered in Ceerigaabo in 2004. The only significant difference between the obituary and my interviews is that the obituary mentions that Saleebaan Daahir Afqarshe was born in Laascaanood, not in Ceerigaabo, as he had told me.

partly participated in the political upheavals in post-colonial Somalia. Of course he chewed *qaad* occasionally, as long as his health permitted, and most importantly, he was generous and gave *qaad* to others. The other, Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed, was an *ikhwaan*, a strict Muslim following a school of thought that was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood originally founded in Egypt in the 1920s. Apart from his strong religious orientation, which prohibited him from smoking and chewing *qaad*, he was rather a member of the ‘working class’ and relatively young. His political awakening had happened after the fall of the Somali government in early 1991, at least if the persistent rumours were true to some extent, which had it that Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed had fought with Al Itihad. His generosity was limited to inviting people for public feasting, as happened at the *Allah bari* ceremony.

Yet there were also important similarities between the two new Naaleeye Axmed *garaado*. Neither Garaad Saleebaan nor Garaad Cabdullahi was well-versed in ‘pastoral politics’. They were urban figures and their positions and orientations were strongly influenced by the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland. Nonetheless, as ‘good’ traditional leaders, they both emphasised that their main interest was with their people. Both mentioned that the position of the Dhulbahante in Ceerigaabo needed their attention, and that the members of the clan were not yet well integrated in the local political structures in Ceerigaabo.

The conflicts over the establishment of the two Naaleeye Axmed *garaado* in Ceerigaabo in May 2004 represented a local version of the larger conflict between Somaliland and Puntland. It was essentially a conflict over borderland constituencies. It concerned the Dhulbahante in Sanaag region, who are claimed as citizens by both Somaliland and Puntland. In the special setting of Ceerigaabo, where people

of different clans lived together, were closely related, and had co-existed for generations – but had fought each other for ‘clan reasons’ during the civil war in northern Somalia – the conflict over the election of a new Dhulbahante *garaad* was particularly dangerous. Although everybody knew that the disunity within Naaleeye Axmed over the installation of a new leader was related to the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland, rarely anybody ever mentioned that; all parties concerned tried to keep the tensions under control. This was, in my eyes, also the reason why the local Somaliland administration tolerated the installation of the counter-*garaad*, even though the administration was very unhappy about it. Any serious steps to prevent Garaad Cabdullahi’s *caleemo saar* or *Allah bari* by, for example, arresting the candidate or sending soldiers to prevent the ceremonies from happening, would most probably have caused an escalation in the conflict and could have set local Dhulbahante against local Isaaq.

The double installation furthermore illustrates more subtle conflict lines between ‘modern’ and ‘liberal’ interpretations of traditional authority on the one hand, and more conservative and religiously-oriented interpretations on the other hand. These were entangled with the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland in the particular setting, but also played a role beyond it. In Laascaanood, for instance, where all traditional authorities I met were clearly against Somaliland’s secession, the conflict between worldly and *ikhwaan* traditional authorities existed as well. There, Garaad Cabdiqani, an intellectual, cigarette-smoking, politically very experienced leader with a long history in Somalia already before the state collapse, represented the intellectual and worldly type. In contrast, two new *garaado*, Garaad Cabdisalaan (Dhulbahante /Maxamuud Garaad/Cumar Wacays) and Garaad Maxamuud (Dhulbahante/ Ugaadhyahan/Wacays Cab-

dulle), who had been installed in the early 2000s, conformed exactly to the same type as Garaad Cabdullahi Maxamuud Guuleed in Ceerigaabo, including the rumours about their former Al Itihad engagements.³⁷ A newly elected Warsangeli traditional leader in Laas Qoray was also said to be *ikhwaan*. Some people said that the recent coronations of *ikhwaan* as traditional authorities all over northern Somalia (but particularly among Warsangeli and Dhulbahante) followed a long-term political plan of the Islamists to take over power, after the military campaigns of Al Itihad in northern Somalia had failed in the early 1990s. The local conflicts over traditional authority should therefore be understood within a much broader context.

CONCLUSION

This paper underlined that traditional authorities are highly relevant non-state actors in northern Somalia, who influence and are influenced by the wider political developments in the region. From having been involved in pastoral politics in the pre-colonial past, they emerged as key actors in guerrilla and state politics in northern Somalia since the 1980s. They particularly shaped the social and political re-construction in the post-war and post-state collapse periods of first Somaliland and then Puntland. In this context, the *Guurti* in

Hargeysa, which is the ‘upper house’ in the bicameral parliament of Somaliland, deserves special mentioning. This *Guurti* and its long-term chairman until 2004, Sheekh Ibrahim, were the ‘backbone’ of the polity of Somaliland, particularly in the 1990s. Besides the elders in the *Guurti* also many other traditional leaders, particularly at the level of *saladiin* and *garaado*, got involved in national politics. Through this involvement individual leaders gained considerable influence and power. The case of Boqor Buurmadow, presented in this paper, however, illustrates that one could quickly fall from being a ‘national’ traditional authority to being a prisoner accused of high treason. Clearly, the elevated political roles of many traditional authorities in the absence of effective state structures in northern Somalia came with certain costs. The most obvious cost was the erosion of popular legitimacy. Many followers did not benefit from their leaders getting involved in ‘national’ politics. Rather they longed for effective guidance and ‘governance’ in everyday matters at the local level. Some authorities ‘burned their hands’ in politics. This led to conflicts over their person as well as tensions and splits among their constituencies.

In the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland, traditional authorities as group representatives had other possibilities. The traditional leaders there were in high demand since they were supposed to clarify the allegiance of their people to either Somaliland or Puntland. The case study from Ceerigaabo presented in this paper showed how particularly Hargeysa tried to ‘enlist’ the local Dhulbahante into its ‘camp’ by influencing the selection process of a new traditional authority. This, however, led to more confusion and serious political tensions at the local level, in an area where most people were busy keeping the fragile peace established after intensive internecine fighting until 1991. The burdening of local leaders with national politics, particularly

³⁷ There was also a third type of traditional leader, who could be called ‘nomadic’. The prototype of this was, at least among the Dhulbahante in Laascaanood, Garaad Saleebaan Garaad Maxamed. He was certainly not close to the *ikhwaan* type, but also less sophisticated, at least in state politics, than the intellectual type. He was a specialist in pastoral politics and made the impression of a man close to the ‘ordinary men’ of his clan. This did not save him from getting between the front lines within his sub-clan and with regard to the Somaliland-Puntland conflict.

with regard to the stand-off between Somaliland and Puntland, also eroded the popular legitimacy of the traditional authorities among the Dhulbahante, as the situation in Ceerigaabo showed.

The insights presented in this paper contradict Logan's (2009) claim that most Africans do not draw a sharp distinction between hereditary traditional authorities on the one hand and elected local government officials and state authorities on the other (ibid.: 103). The Somali case also questions her argument that the hybridisation of both forms of authority could pave the way for 'real' democratisation (ibid. 123-24). In my view, the problem is that traditional authority is a very general term. It comprises quite different 'kinds' of traditional authorities. In Africa, the spectrum goes from traditional kings and paramount chiefs to elders and authorities who become only active in special situations, for instance at war time. The first are usually found in hierarchical and sedentary societies. They who enjoy considerable power are sometimes venerated as "divine" beings. The last are typical for rather egalitarian, often pastoral-nomadic societies. Their status is one of *primus inter pares* and their power is rather limited. With this huge variety of actors referred to as traditional leaders, it could be argued that not all forms are easily integrated into or compatible with state structures. For instance traditional leaders in traditionally hierarchical and sedentary settings may more easily merge with equally hierarchical state structures. By contrast in the acephalous and still partly pastoral-nomadic context, such as in northern Somalia, the gap between the authority of an elder and that of a state official is much wider. Perhaps therefore, people also seem to make a clear distinction between these two different forms of authority.

The integration of some leading Isaaq elders into the SNM and their participation in the emerging political order of Somaliland did

work out for some time. However, the success of this integration seems to be short-lived, as I have suggested in this paper. In the long run traditional authorities in northern Somalia do not seem to qualify for a seamless integration into state structures. The hybrid system established in Somaliland in the early 1990s, bringing together traditional authorities and institutions of modern statehood did not succeed as intended. Rather it resulted in a change of the sources of legitimacy: Traditional authorities, at least those sitting in the *Guurti*, became increasingly like politicians and lost their popular appeal. This should be understood against the background of how politicians (*siyaasiin*) are viewed in Somaliland. They are seen as selfish and as lacking responsibility for the wider community. Moreover, they are regarded as igniting conflicts rather than working for peace, stability and social cohesion.

Still, in the countryside, away from 'state politics', many traditional authorities continue to work for the benefit of their people and, e.g., engage in conflict settlement among pastoral nomads. But the situation is again different in the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland. The accusation of being like a politician was in fact used against many traditional authorities among Dhulbahante in Ceerigaabo. One informant lamented: "Today the traditional authorities work for the government, and the politicians lead the clan; previously, both [types of] authorities were separated. Today they are mixed" (interview Sheekh Aboqor, Ceerigaabo, 12.05.2004).

Returning to Weber's ideal typical distinction, it is clear that rational authority, which is the basis of every modern state, cannot be bound by tradition and personal relations, as is the case with traditional authority. State institutions are legitimate as long as they follow the law that is in force in a given context at a given time, and as long as this law is considered legal and just by the concerned citizens. Traditional

authorities, by contrast, have to take care of their people. They have to consider the needs and the will of the majority of the extended family of a traditional leader. While the law is an impersonal measure, the will and needs of people are flexible and are expressed in close social relations. Bringing legal and traditional authority together either 'corrupts' the law, or makes relations of traditional authority 'sterile' and impersonal, which implies that such authority becomes ineffective in the eyes of the followers of a traditional leader. Against this background, hybridization can therefore not be seen as an easy way out of the dilemma that in many African settings the state institutions are weak, have only a very limited outreach and lack popular legitimacy. Hybridization can, however, be a short-term 'remedy' against (post-civil) war instability.

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