

**PASTORALISTS, ETHNICITY  
AND THE STATE IN  
ETHIOPIA**

*Edited by Richard Hogg*



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## Table of Contents

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Contributors	iv
Preface	vi
Acknowledgements	ix
Abbreviations	x
Introduction	
<i>Richard Hogg</i>	1
Chapter 1 Returnees in Moyale District, Southern Ethiopia: New Means for an Old Inter-Ethnic Game	
<i>Marco Bassi</i>	23
Chapter 2 Development Interventions and Pastoral Dynamics in Southern Ethiopia	
<i>Johan Helland</i>	55
Chapter 3 From Traditional Nomadic Context to Contemporary Sedentarization: Past Relations Between the Isaq and Gadabursi Clans of Northern Somalia and South-East Ethiopia	
<i>Ahmed Farah</i>	81
Chapter 4 Changing Land Use and Resource Conflict Among Somali Pastoralists in the Haud of South-East Ethiopia	
<i>Richard Hogg</i>	105
Chapter 5 Resource Use Conflict in the Middle Awash Valley of Ethiopia: The Crisis of Afar Pastoralism	
<i>Ali Said</i>	123
Chapter 6 Arbore Inter-Tribal Relations: An Historical Account	
<i>Ayalew Gebre</i>	143
Appendix	
Diary of a Drought: The Borana of Southern Ethiopia, 1990-1993	
<i>Claudia Futterknecht</i>	169

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## Contributors

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**Marco Bassi** who carried out field research among Borana in southern Ethiopia between 1989 and 1990 received his Ph.D. in 1992 at the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples. He subsequently worked among Dassanetch pastoralists in south-west Ethiopia. He has published several articles on Borana.

**Ahmed Yusuf Farah** is currently working as a consultant for UNDP in Addis Ababa. He obtained his Ph.D. in social anthropology from LSE in London in 1989. His thesis has been published by Uppsala University as 'The Milk of the Boswellia Forests: Frankincense Production Among the Pastoral Somali' (1994). Of his many development reports, 'Somalia: The Roots of Reconciliation' a consultancy report produced for ACTIONAID (UK) with I.M. Lewis was translated into German and published in Germany in 1994.

**Claudia Futterknecht** holds a Ph. D in anthropology from Austria. She has carried out field research among Borana and Afar pastoralists. Between 1989-1993 she was project manager for CARE's Southern Rangelands Project based in Yavello. She is currently working for CARE among Afar and Kereyu pastoralists in the Upper Awash Valley.

**Ayalew Gebre** is currently studying for his Ph.D at the Institute of Social Studies at the Hague. He carried out field research among Arbore between 1992 and 1993 while studying for his M.A. in Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University. He is a full time staff member of the Sociology Department and one time acting Dean of the College of Social Sciences at Addis Ababa University.

**Johan Helland** is a social anthropologist and staff member of the Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen, Norway. He has lived and worked for many years in Ethiopia, where he has carried out research among Borana and Afar pastoralists. He is best known for his 'Five Essays on the Study of Pastoralists and Development of Pastoralism' published by the University of Bergen in 1980. He returned to southern Ethiopia most recently in 1988/89 to carry out research on Borana.

**Richard Hogg** is a social anthropologist trained at Manchester University (UK). He has published extensively on the problems of pastoral development in East Africa. He is currently working with the British NGO, FARM-Africa, in Addis Ababa. He has carried out field research among Borana, Somali and Turkana pastoralists. Between 1988-93 he was socio-economic adviser to the Ethiopian Third Livestock Development Project in the southern and south-east rangelands of the country.

**Ali Said** holds a B.Sc from Alemaya University and an M.Sc. From the Agricultural University of Norway, which he obtained in 1992. As part of his M.Sc. degree he carried out field research among Afar in the Middle Awash valley in 1991/92. He is currently working as a Research Associate in the Food Security Research Project in the Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, Addis Ababa.

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## Abbreviations

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Only the more common abbreviations used in the book are mentioned below. Others will be clear in the context in which they are used.

AAU	-	Addis Ababa University
ALF	-	Afar Liberation Front
EPPG	-	Emergency Prevention and Preparedness Group (of UNDP)
EPRDF	-	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETB	-	Ethiopian Birr
EWWCA	-	Ethiopian Water Works Construction Authority
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GOs	-	Government Organisations
IIED	-	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILCA	-	International Livestock Centre for Africa
ISS	-	Institute of Social Studies
LMB	-	Livestock and Meat Board
LSE	-	London School of Economics and Political Science
MAADE	-	Middle Awash Agricultural Development Enterprise
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODI	-	Overseas Development Institute
RRC	-	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
TLDP	-	Third Livestock Development Programme
TPLF	-	Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRISD	-	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNSO	-	United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	-	World Food Programme
WSSA	-	Water Supplies and Sewerage Authority

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## Introduction

Richard Hogg

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*One day, when Tilly was riding through an uncleared part of the shamba ... a red Masai stepped out of the bushes and raised his travelling spear. Her pony stopped dead and snorted at him in surprise. This was some way from Masai country and she had never before seen a warrior so far from his native plains ... She returned his greeting. 'This is my bwana's shamba. What do you want?' 'I want to be your cook,' the warrior replied.*

*Elspeth Huxley (1959)*

### Pastoral Paradigms

To the modern mind pastoralists are an anachronism: the ochre coloured Maasai warrior, referred to by Elspeth Huxley in her memories of Kenya before World War I, doomed to extinction. Yet pastoralism as a way of life has endured for thousands of years. While the modern world has brought new pressures and also challenges to this way of life, there is no reason to believe that it will not, in one form or another, survive these tribulations. As Elspeth Huxley recounts, while there were many Maasai employed on her parent's farm near Thika, they continued to invest in livestock and to be involved in their pastoral economy. One of the main difficulties in discussing pastoralism has been that the debate has been hi-jacked either by romantics (often anthropologists) who idealise the pastoral way of life or pessimists (mainly range ecologists and economists) who talk of overgrazing, range degradation and desertification as the inevitable consequences of a pastoral way of life. Currently, the debate has shifted from anthropologists challenging the range ecologists

## Chapter 1

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### Returnees in Moyale District, Southern Ethiopia: New Means for an Old Inter-ethnic Game<sup>1</sup>

Marco Bassi

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The large numbers of refugees, returnees and displaced peoples in the Horn of Africa testifies to the current crisis in East African pastoralism. The creation of concentrations of destitute pastoralists is primarily related to armed conflicts rooted in colonial and post-colonial state policies, recurrent droughts and competition over scarce resources<sup>3</sup>. Prior to the 1990s states in the Horn of Africa were directly involved in the conflicts either with their regular troops, or by supporting and organizing militias and guerilla activities based on ethnic identity. During the 1990s, in line with post-Cold War trends towards the ethnicization of such conflicts, large numbers of destitute pastoralists were forced to move in order to seek relief as a consequence of either inter-clan conflicts in Somalia or of local inter-ethnic warfare in Ethiopia.

These recent clan and inter-ethnic conflicts are related both to national political processes and to international aid agency policies<sup>4</sup>. This is the case of the Borana and Garri described in this chapter, whose affiliation to pro-Ethiopia and pro-Somali factions during the 1960s and the 1970s was largely determined by a long-standing dispute over

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1 All information presented in this chapter is updated to November 1993.

2 On returnees movements in the Horn cfr. UNRISD (1993).

3 This is especially the case for the infrastructure and services sectors, as in the case of the Second and Third Livestock Projects in southern Ethiopia, which were both seriously hampered by military and social upheavals (Solomon Desta 1993:26)

4 In Somalia access to state power is a primary war cause, with a direct engagement of UN in the conflict.

access to pastoral resources<sup>5</sup>. The present confrontation between these two ethnic groups is still largely motivated by the same dispute, but placed in the post-*Derg* context of Ethiopian state reconstruction based on ethnic lines.

When large numbers of 'refugees', 'displaced' or 'returnees' find themselves without the means to survive, international and national agencies become involved in funding, coordinating and implementing relief and rehabilitation activities<sup>6</sup>. However, because of the emergency nature of these interventions<sup>7</sup>, these agencies often ignore local knowledge systems and practices, so fuelling decades-old inter-ethnic divisions. International aid becomes just a new resource to be manipulated by local groups in the interests of old political and economic cleavages. The following case study is concerned with the effects of aid and changing state policies on Boran/Garri-Gabbara Migo relations in the Moyale district of Southern Ethiopia. It argues that international aid has exacerbated deep rooted inter-ethnic conflicts over access to pastoral resources in the area, and the inter-ethnic competition for the scarce resources is now reformulated and reframed in a new state context.

### The Borana, The Garri and The Gabbra

The Borana are an Oromo group whose economy is mainly based on cattle pastoralism. Most of them still practise their traditional religion.

5 There is an analogy with Ngok Dinka/Humr conflict in South Kordofan (Sudan) described by Mohamed Salih, where motivations related to the wider civil war between North and South Sudan overlap with a long-standing inter-ethnic confrontation regarding the 18th and 19th century slave trade and the more recent competition over pastoral resources (1993:16).

6 UNHCR, which has the international mandate to assist refugees, returnees and displaced, is usually the main donor, implementing the operations through GOs and NGOs. The coordination of all activities is normally made in cooperation with the appropriate and specialized national agencies.

7 Refugees and returnees affairs have been described in terms of 'permanent emergency' (UNRISD 1993:1).

All Borana oral historians agree that the Borana expanded from *Liiban*, the area between the Ganale and the Dawa river, into *Dirree*<sup>8</sup>, to the south-west of the Dawa river<sup>9</sup>, during the *gadaa* Abbae Babbo<sup>10</sup>, which roughly corresponds to the period 1656-1664<sup>11</sup> (see map 2 for main localities mentioned in the text). With this movement the Borana displaced the Wardai<sup>12</sup>, another Oromo group living in the area at the time. In Borana songs and poetry *Dirree* is referred to as *Tulaa Sallan*, meaning the 'nine deep wells', that is the nine most important group of wells in the area<sup>13</sup>. Later the Borana expanded from their Ethiopian heartland into Northern Kenya. By the 19th century they had established a network of alliances which included both the Garri and the Gabbra<sup>14</sup>. From the second half of the 19th century, however, they began to suffer from repeated raids from Somali to the east, which forced them eventually to retire from their easternmost territories in Kenya.

In Ethiopia, Somali groups started to encroach into the easternmost part of Borana grazing areas from the end of the 19th century. Böttego's map based on his 1892-93 expedition clearly shows the Borana occupying nearly the whole of *Liiban*, with the exclusion only of the southern corner close to the Dawa-Ganale confluence (Böttego

8 The name has been adopted as a district name in Borana province (Sidamo region). The southern part of the area between the two rivers followed under the Dolo Oddo district in the same province. In this paper the italic style has been used to distinguish the traditional geographical category from the administrative district.

9 *Dirree* has also been adopted as a district name, in Arero province (Sidamo region), smaller than the area traditionally referred to as *Dirree*. In this paper the italic style has been used to distinguish the traditional geographical category from the administrative district.

10 I heard the story from different Borana elders, but it is also reported by several travellers and historians, i.e. Vannutelli and Citerni (1899:159) and Goto (1972:29 and 43).

11 Borana chronology is based on the famous *gadaa* generation system, described by Asmaron Legesse (1973) and Baxter (1978). The chronology proposed by Asmaron Legesse (1973:191) has been slightly adjusted taking into consideration the intercalary month (Bassi 1988).

12 They can possibly be identified with one of the moieties of the Orma Oromo, living on the lower Tana river valley in Kenya.

13 The nine tula groups of wells are the following: Melbana, Irdaar (also called Egdar), Goof, Lei, Dhaas, Weebi, Wachile, Higo and Gayo. The last two have recently lost economical relevance, due to a drop in the water available.

14 More details in E.R. Turton (1969) and Goto (1972). See also Schlee (1989: 38-9).

1895:map II)<sup>15</sup>. The Borana claim that due to intensive raiding by Somali after the death of Menelik II (1913) they were temporarily forced to leave the eastern fringe of their territory<sup>16</sup>. But it was mainly during the Italian occupation that various Somali groups were given the opportunity to permanently occupy large parts of the eastern Borana pastures<sup>17</sup>. Borana oral tradition is confirmed by the 1939 *Africa Italiana Orientale* map, showing the Degodia (a Somali clan) occupying a wide bend of the Ganale at approximately 41° east (Dardano 1939) in *Liiban*; the same area occupied by Borana as late as the time of Böttego's expedition (Böttego 1895:map II).

The Garri are a Muslim pastoral group speaking both Somali and Oromo. They are genealogically related to the Hawiya clan-family of the Somali. Having expanded southwards earlier than other Hawiya clans, they have been classified by Colucci as belonging to the Pre-Hawiya clan-family (Colucci 1924:87 and 90)<sup>18</sup>. Their economy is primarily based on camel and small stock pastoralism, but they also keep cattle wherever the environment allows. Trade is an important economic activity (Getachew 1983:11-14). The Garri have historically found themselves squeezed between the Borana and other Somali clans. In their struggle for survival they have managed to establish cultural, sociological and trade linkages with both groups (Getachew 1983:17-21), alternating between peaceful relations and outbreaks of conflict.

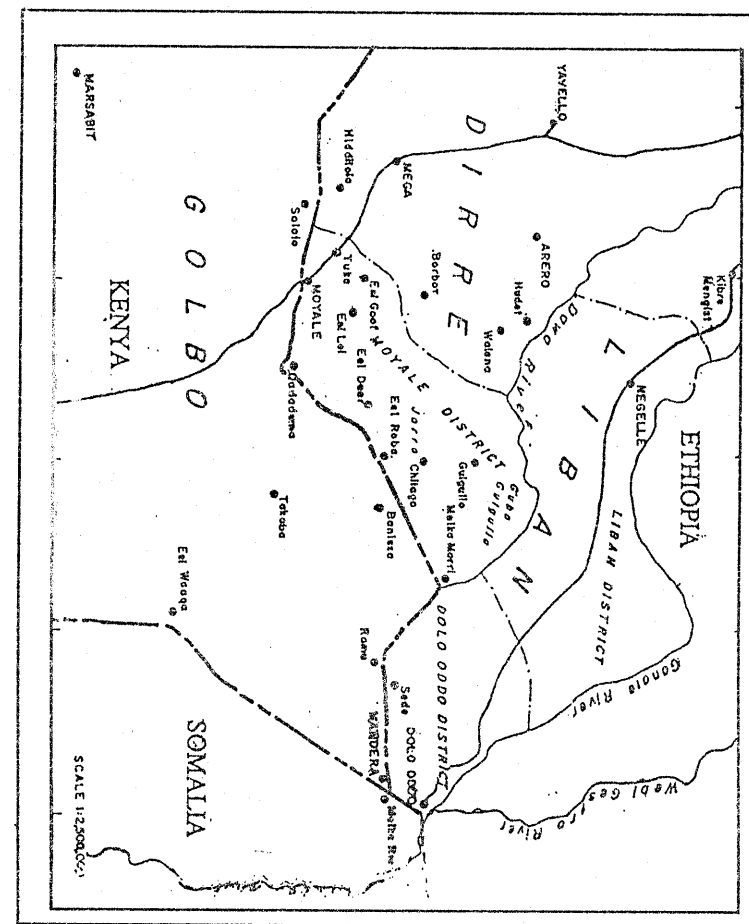
The Garri are divided into territorial sections as well as into genealogical segments (moieties, clans, sub-clans, etc.). The same genealogical segments cut-across territorial divisions (Colucci 1924:114). The

15 At the beginning of the 20th century Gwinn reports a general south-western movement of Somali and their arrival in the area between the Ganale and the Dawa rivers under the pressure of both Abyssinian and the Mullah's raids (Gwinn 1911:123). This movement might have brought Somali groups into what is now Dolo Oddo district.

16 The looting was started by a group of elephant hunters who had gone to Borana from the North. Being well armed they started to rob the pastoralists. Hodson, who wrote at length about them, states them to be Tigre, a name having no reference to the Tigre country in north Ethiopia (1927:71).

17 Most Muslim pastoral groups, especially Somali but also Oromo, supported the Italian troops by joining the so called Banda, the military units formed by indigenous troops.

18 Colucci's classification has been accepted by most other scholars, including Lewis (1955:27), Haberland (1963:146) and Getachew (1983:5).



Map 2: Main Localities

first territorial section is found in Somalia, in Audegle district (Barile 1935:32-3; Lewis 1955:27). This group, speaking only the Somali language, is known in Ethiopia as Garri Kofar. The second territorial section, the Garri Gallana, have their territory in Kenya, roughly in the area between Melka Ree and Ramu to the north and Eel Waaqa to the south. The Garri Liiban are to the west of the Garri Gallana, living both in Kenya, in an area including Takaba and Banissa and along the border up to Qadaduma, and in Ethiopia, in eastern *Dirree*.

The Garri Gallana and Liiban can speak both Somali and Oromo, but while the Garri Liiban tend to speak Oromo, the Garri Gallana prefer to use Somali as their first language (Zaphiro 1909:71; Haberland 1963:147)<sup>19</sup>.

The Gabbra are an Oromo-speaking pastoral group whose economy is based on camel and small stock pastoralism. They also keep cattle. Most of them live in the Kenyan lowlands traditionally known as *Golboo*<sup>20</sup>, between Lake Turkana to the west and the Garri area to the east, with Marsabit Mountain to the south. The Gabbra are also found in pockets in the Ethiopian Borana highlands. They are divided into five politically autonomous units, called phratries by Torry, who trace their ancestry to different neighbouring ethnic groups (Torry 1978:187-8). Another classification provided by Haberland (1963:170) divides the eastern Gabbra, Migo, from the western Gabbra, Malbe. While the Malbe have maintained very good relations with the Borana, the Gabbra Migo have generally supported the Garri in their conflict with the Borana. This alliance has been encouraged by the recent Islamization of the Gabbra<sup>21</sup>.

19 Ioan Lewis indicates a fourth group, spelled 'Gurra' and classified as Somali by Böttego (1895:105-12) and other authors, speaking Oromo as their main language, living between the Webi Gestro and the Webi Mana (Lewis 1955:27). Haberland, however, clearly differentiates the 'Gurra' from the Garri (1963:338). Böttego spells the Garri proper as 'Garra' (1895:340). According to other sources the Gurra should be considered proper Oromo, as suggested by Citerni who participated to Böttego expedition (Citerni 1913:87).

20 It is an Oromo-Borana term derived from *golba-iti*, meaning valley, place without mountains, space between (Leus 1988:260), or 'place without tall trees'. It is used to indicate the lowlands south of the escarpment which roughly separates Ethiopia from Kenya.

21 At the beginning of the 1960s Haberland writes that in one generation's time there would be no trace of the old religion (1963:142).

## From Diplomatic to Armed Confrontation

The inter-relationship of these three pastoral groups is characterized by continuous competition over water points and grazing land. The attempt by the Garri to gain access to new pastoral resources in Borana-controlled territories and the attempt by the Gabbra to strengthen their rights to the resources they jointly exploit with the Borana have been the *leit-motiv* of their historical relations over the last century.

The early relations between the Borana, the Garri and the Gabbra are described by Zaphiro, a Greek selected by the British to chart the frontier<sup>22</sup> between British East Africa and Ethiopia (Clerk 1908:42). He writes that when the Borana took possession of the highlands<sup>23</sup> they commenced to raid the Garri. After a period of war the Garri submitted and accepted to pay yearly tribute to the *qaalluu* of the Sabbo moiety<sup>24</sup>, with the understanding that no Borana should inhabit Garri country. Later on, however, many Borana went as far as Eel Waaqa by means of friendly relations and intermarriage with Garri (Zaphiro 1909:71).

The term 'tribute', which is often used in the literature to express the relations between Borana and their 'vassals' exaggerates the degree of inequality. As Haberland emphasizes, the use of the term in the context of Borana inter-ethnic relations cannot be compared with the taxes and other obligations paid by feudal lords in Ethiopia to the Emperor (Haberland 1963:141-2). The payment is better described in terms of ritual gift, symbolically representing the alliance between the Borana and each 'tribute giving' ethnic group. As in the case of the *muuda* pilgrimages to the *qaalluu* made by the Borana themselves, the gift givers are blessed by the *qaalluu*, hence participating in the *Nagaa*

22 The 1907 treaty stipulated that the frontier between Ethiopia and British East Africa would be demarcated on the ground.

23 This is probably the war of expansion already mentioned at the expense of the Wardai, in the 17th century.

24 The *qaalluu* are ritual dignitaries whose title is hereditary. The Borana have five *qaalluu*, the major two of which are each associated with one of the exogamous moieties called Sabho and Gona.



*Booranaa*<sup>25</sup>, the Peace of the Borana, implying, among other things, a ban on feuds and intra-tribal fighting.

Before the end of the 19th century the lowlands to the west of Garri territory were inhabited by the Borana and the Gabbra together. Zaphiro, in fact, reports that for the past two generations the Borana had been living in *Golboo*, raising camels and goats (1908:47)<sup>26</sup>. During the dry seasons the Gabbra were allowed access to some Borana water points in the highlands (Zaphiro 1908:46). Like the Garri, the Gabbra were paying symbolic tribute to the Borana *qaalluu* (Haberland 1963:141 and 143) to stress the alliance between the two groups. Their relations, however, were perceived by Borana as asymmetric, the Gabbra being considered of inferior status to Borana (Gwynn 1911:124; Haberland 1963:142-3). The Gabbra living among the Garri were also found to occupy a similar status (Gwynn 1911:124).

The partitioning of the area under the Borana sphere of influence between Ethiopia and British East Africa put an end to Borana regional supremacy<sup>27</sup>. The Borana were divided from their clients, the former being assigned to Ethiopian rule, the Garri and the Gabbra to British East Africa<sup>28</sup>. The Borana of Eel Waaqa and Golboo in Kenya were forced to return to the highlands (Zaphiro 1909:71)<sup>29</sup>. The British Administration assigned a distinct tribal territory to the Gabbra (Haberland 1963:143).

The new situation gave rise to the diplomatic phase of the confrontation for control of land between the Borana and the Garri. Already in 1907 the border officials had been called to Addis Ababa with Borana elders. The reason was that the Garri were claiming territory as

25 The concept has been presented by Baxter in several papers (1965, 1978, 1990).

26 This statement is confirmed by Haberland, who writes that the Gabbra were distributed in the Borana territory, with the largest concentration to the south of the border, between Moyale and Lake Turkana (1963:143).

27 The Borana were perfectly aware of the consequences of the treaty. The Borana *qaalluu* strongly complained to Zaphiro, showing a very sharp understanding of the new political developments (Zaphiro 1908:47-8).

28 The payment of symbolic gifts to the Borana *qaalluu* by the so called 'vassal' groups, including Garri and Gabbra, was interrupted (Haberland 1963:143).

29 Zaphiro estimates that nearly half of the population to the north of the frontier were born in Eel Waaqa and Golbo (Zaphiro 1909:71). He probably refers to some of the Borana localities in the highlands rather than to Borana territory as a whole.

far north as Gulgullo and Biddem in Ethiopia, whilst the Borana were claiming Eel Roba, Gebel Udder<sup>30</sup> and Takaba<sup>31</sup> on the Kenyan side (Holer 1907:74)<sup>32</sup>. Evidently, the separation of these two ethnic groups between two different states had made access to cross-border grazing lands increasingly difficult<sup>33</sup>. Guba Gulgullo<sup>34</sup>, in fact, is indicated by Zaphiro as an area traditionally utilized by the Garri Liiban (1909:71)<sup>35</sup>. The presence of the Borana in 'Chokorso', to the north-west of Chilanko, hence in eastern Dirree, is testified by Gwynn (1911:134). Similarly, the Borana were using pastoral resources in Kenya. Zaphiro, in fact, mentions that despite the massive movement to the highlands they managed to keep camels and goats both in Golboo, in the area assigned to the Gabbra, and in places such as Takaba and Jarra (Zaphiro 1908:47), in Garri country.

During the 20th century the Garri managed to expand their presence in Ethiopia. Haberland writes that from 1924 a great number of Garri settled in Ethiopia (1963:338). Getachew mentions that the movement of many Garri from Kenya to Ethiopia was led by Gababa Mohammed Guracha (1983:39). Borana oral sources claim that the Garri at first stayed in Qadaduma, a place which, in 1908, was regarded by Zaphiro as a Borana area (Zaphiro 1908:47)<sup>36</sup>. According to Borana oral sources Hassan, Gababa's son, established good relations with Musse Sawa, *Ras Desta Damtew's*<sup>37</sup> assistant, who had built a

30 I could not identify Biddem and Gebel Udder.

31 Spelled Takubba in the source.

32 Eel Roba is now on the Ethiopian side. There was a border re-adjustment.

33 This was probably an attempt to restrict each ethnic group to its side of the border. In a letter to Sir Edward Grey, Holer writes: '(...) the Borana, seeing that they are to be left on the Abyssinia side of the line (...) (Holer 1907:81).

34 The Africa Orientale Italiana map places 'Gulgullo' midway between Chilanko and the Dawa river to the north. Guba Gulgullo, literally 'on top of Gulgullo' is a higher area to the north-west (Dardano 1939). These places are also reported in the same position on a I.G.M. map (1938), but Gulgullo is spelled Ara Galgallo. 'Gulgullo' possibly being the English spelling for 'Galgallo'.

35 Haberland mentions that before 1924 part of the Garri were living in Ethiopia to the east of Borbor, therefore in the area around and north of Jarra and Eel Roba, more or less in agreement with the British sources, and in 'Gilbabo' (1963:338).

36 The Garri, instead, were inhabiting the area to the south of Qadaduma (Zaphiro 1909:71). In another passage it is mentioned that the Borana were permanently in Qadaduma, whereas the Garri were utilizing the water sources only during the dry season.

trade road between Nagelle and the Garri area<sup>38</sup>. Because of this friendship Hassan Gababa received the military title *grazmatch* ('Commander of the left wing') just before the Italian invasion.

According to Borana oral information during the Italian occupation the Garri were able to win control over eastern Dirree pastoral resources, including important water points such as Eel Deer<sup>39</sup>.

In 1941, Hassan Gababa was imprisoned by the British. After his release, 3 years later, he went to Addis Ababa (Getachew 1983:41) to meet Emperor Haile Salassie. As a result of the trip the Governor of Sidamo Region appointed him as administrator for Wachile *mekkettel wereda* (sub-district)<sup>40 41</sup>. The Borana assert that Hassan took the opportunity to allow the Garri into Wachile and other areas from which they were previously excluded. This version is confirmed by Haberland, affirming that after long negotiations with Ethiopian authorities the Borana areas of Wachile and Walena were assigned to the Garri (Haberland 1963:338). From that period to the 1974 revolution the Borana have regularly sent letters of complaint to Emperor Haile Salassie<sup>42</sup>.

From the 1960s the phase of diplomatic confrontation between the Borana and the Garri gave way to armed conflict in the form of a Somali irredentist movement in the south-east of Ethiopia. Immediately after the independence of Somalia, political relations with both Ethiopia and Kenya became increasingly tense, with border clashes occurring as early as 1960 (Lewis 1963:153). The Somali government started to support guerrilla activities, the so called *Shifta* movement, both in south-eastern Ethiopia (Hararge, Bale and Sidamo provinces) and in north-eastern Kenya. In Ethiopia this movement involved not

37 Ras Desta was Governor of Sidamo and Borana Province for a long period before the Italian occupation.

38 Elephant hunting and ivory trade were still very intensive.

39 Analogously, Somali groups such as the Marrehan and the Degodia had an opportunity to expand into Liiban.

40 At that time the administrative set-up was a *toklai-gisaat* (governorship or region), hierarchically divided into *awraja* (provinces), *wereda* (districts) and, eventually, into *mekkete wereda* (sub-districts). Borana province was part of Sidamo region.

41 Symmetrically a Borana, Halake Guyo, was assigned as administrator of Chilanko, in Garri country.

42 Oral information by Borana elders.

only the Somali, but also the Muslim Oromo, particularly the Arsi, who took the opportunity to rebel against the central government. In Borana province (Sidamo region) guerrilla activities started in 1963. In the first phase Borana were sympathetic to the irredentists, but soon they switched sides. As mentioned by Markakis, they 'were armed by the imperial regime in the early 1960s to help stem the westward advance of the Somali in southern Sidamo province' (1993:14).

The Garri fought both in Kenya and Ethiopia. In Borana province decisive clashes occurred in 1969, with the Borana playing a decisive military role in defeating the Garri guerrillas. During the 1970s the guerrilla movement became more organized and militarily more effective, under the coordination of the WSLF (Western Somali Liberation Front), an organization based in Mogadishu with the objective of establishing Somali sovereignty over Hararge region, and other parts of south and eastern Ethiopia. Military training for guerrillas was organized in Somalia. It is probably at this time that the Gabbra Migo became increasingly involved in the guerrilla campaign.

In 1976 the Muslim Oromo founded the Somali Abbo Liberation Front (SALF), a movement closely allied to the WSLF (Lewis 1980:414), to differentiate themselves from the Somali proper<sup>43</sup>. The SALF forces were soon active in Borana province. In 1977 the WSLF and SALF fighters were supported by the invading Somali regular troops, which were defeated only in 1978 by the Ethiopian regular army<sup>44</sup>. The Borana, again, played an important military role, flanking the Ethiopian troops against the SALF guerrillas.

The Borana decision to support the central government against the Garri and Somali can largely be explained in terms of local inter-ethnic competition over pastoral resources. The Borana, in fact, shared with these other groups a similar anti-government sentiment. Being neither Christian nor Muslim they had no religious reason to side with Ethiopia. Rather, they were afraid to lose their land to Muslim pastoralists if Somalia won the war. The intrusion by the Garri into Wachile and Walena after World War II had been a warning to them. A Somali

43 Very few Muslim Borana supported the SALF.

44 The Ethiopian army was supported by Cuban soldiers and USSR military advisers.

victory would have seen the Degodia and the Marrehan (two Somali clans) expand their grazing areas into *Liiban* district, the Garri into *Dirree*, and the Gabbra Migo take over key Boran wells in *Dirree*.

After the Somali war many Garri and Gabbra Migo were forced to seek refuge in Somalia and, to a lesser extent, in Kenya<sup>45</sup>. Many stayed in refugees camps and irrigation schemes along the Juba river, where more than 200,000 Somali and Oromo refugees had concentrated. Other Garri and Gabbra Migo stayed in Ethiopia and some continued to use pastoral resources jointly with the Borana: the Garri in Wachile, Eel Lei and further east, the Gabbra scattered in several localities all over Boranaland.

#### From Repatriation to the 1991-92 War

Due to civil war and to conflicts between local Somali clans, especially Marrehan, within the refugee camps in Somalia, life became increasingly insecure for many refugees. From 1986-7 large groups of refugees started to return home to Borana province assisted by UNHCR. Returnees were sent to several sites scattered throughout Borana province, via Nagelle, the provincial administrative capital, where they received a rehabilitation grant of 1,150 ETB per family<sup>46</sup>, a ration card for nearly one year, and agricultural implements and other provisions from UNHCR. The reception sites were decided on the basis of the returnees' statements about their ethnic identity and place of origin. The Garri were sent to new settlements in Eel Lei, Chamoq, Hudet, Chilanko, Katame, Moyale, Qadaduma, Eel Deer, Melka Mensa, Jarra, and Melka Marri. The Gabbra were also sent to settlements in the Borana area. Already at this early stage some disagreements arose between the returnees and the local administrators, who were mostly Borana, over returnees' claims. For example, the Garri were not allowed to return to Eel Goof as they had requested, as only Gabbra and Borana returnees were settled there.

45 By 1981 there were up to 600,000 refugees in Somalia (UNRISD 1993:3). Another source indicates 1,500,000 Ogadenian refugees in Somalia and 400,000 in the neighboring states (Mohamed Dolal 1992:187).

46 Later on the amount was progressively reduced.

From the end of 1990, and especially after the fall of Mogadishu at the beginning of 1991, the flow of returnees and Somali refugees into Ethiopia greatly increased (UNRISD 1993:3). Between February and March 1991, 30,000 Ethiopian returnees from Somalia were found in Suftu camp and 100,000 in Dolo-Oddo<sup>47</sup>. A small grant<sup>48</sup> was offered for spontaneous return to the area of origin, plus a one-month food ration and a ration card for 11 months. Many of the refugees claimed to have originally come from Moyale district. Destination sites were the outskirts of Moyale town, Tuka, Eel Lei, Eel Goof, Qadaduma, Chilanko, Hudet, Wachile, Arero. There were also some Somali citizens, settled in Qadaduma and some Somali Marrehan<sup>49</sup>, settled in *Liiban* district near Hudet.

This great increase in the flow of returnees combined with the destabilising effects of local drought and the collapse of the Derg regime in 1991 which had flooded the area with cheap automatic guns, eventually resulted in armed conflict described as 'the biggest humanitarian catastrophe in the region's history' (TLDP 1992). Below I try to summarize in chronological order the main events leading to this conflict.

- A power vacuum occurs between the fall of the *Derg*, in May 1991, and the arrival of EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) forces in the area, in June 1991. For many months afterwards there is instability in the area.
- In July 1991 Garri returnees move with their camels into several Borana areas, both in *Liiban* and in *Dirree*, including an important Borana ceremonial site near to Arero, Arda Jila<sup>50</sup>. Such an intrusion was interpreted by the Borana as an explicit attempt to take over their pastoral resources.
- In September 1991, in preparation for national elections to be held

47 Data obtained from various NGO documentation. A similar situation was reported in the camps in Northern Ogaden, with 600,000 refugees and 100,000 returnees in June 1992 according to UNHCR figures (UNRISD 1993:3).

48 100 ETB per family plus 50 ETB per each family member besides the first two adults.

49 Including ex-soldiers of Siad Barre.

50 The information was provided by Borana elders. Arda Jila literally means 'the site of the ceremony'. Here it refers to the site where an important *gadaa* ceremony is held.

in June 1992, the OALF (Oromo Abbo Liberation Front) opens offices in Yavello, Moyale and Mega<sup>51</sup>. The Borana note that the insignia on the OALF flag is the same as that of the Somali Abbo Liberation Front, the organisation which in the 1970s attempted to take control over Borana areas. They also observe that the main support for the party comes from Gabbra Migo in Yavello and Garri and Gabbra Migo returnees in Moyale, that is exactly the same people that the Borana have been fighting with during the 1970s. The opening of the OALF offices had therefore strengthened the Borana interpretation that there was a concerted effort to undermine their control of pastoral resources in parts of their territory. A demonstration is organized in Yavello in order to close down the offices, and meetings are held in Yavello between Borana and Gabbra elders to avoid conflict. Some Gabbra openly claim ownership rights to Borana wells and threaten the Borana with taking over control in Dirree, with the Islamic brothers' support<sup>52</sup>. The OALF leader agrees to close his offices<sup>53</sup>.

- Tension, however, is running very high and in the second half of November 1991 a serious clash occurs between Borana and Gabbra in Yavello town and in a village close to the town where the Gabbra had gathered, which results in many Gabbra casualties. Many Gabbra flee to Finchawa, in the Gujji-Oromo country; a protracted armed conflict starts between Borana and Gujji as well.
- By the beginning of 1992 the war has extended to Moyale district, where the combined Garri and Gabbra Migo forces fight against the Borana.
- In April 1992 EPRDF succeed in organizing peace talks, but the *abbaa gadaa* of the Borana is shot on his way home (EPPG 1992a:1)<sup>54</sup>. As reported by EPPG, since then and up to June 1992 Borana are attacked by the Garri-Gabbra Migo 6-8 times, with serious clashes

51 They are the three largest towns in Dirree.

52 Personal communication by elders in Yavello.

53 Oral information by Borana elders.

54 He is a very prestigious traditional leader, the symbolic guide of all the Borana. He managed to escape.

at the end of June<sup>55</sup>. The Garri-Gabbra forces are reinforced by returning Garri and Gabbra from Somalia and are probably financially supported and equipped by allied Marrehan and Islamic interests (EPPG 1992a:1).

- In July 1992 Jaatani Ali, a prestigious Borana member of the fallen *Derg* administration and former administrator of Borana region, is murdered in Nairobi.
- The war coincides with a serious drought in 1991 and 1992. The concentration of cattle in 'safe havens' leads, in combination with the drought, to serious overgrazing and almost total loss of live-stock in these areas<sup>56</sup>. The inhabitants of the conflict areas flee to Kenya, mostly to Walda and Banissa<sup>57</sup>, two new refugee camps assisted by UNHCR-Kenya and other organizations<sup>58</sup>. The remaining population is assisted with intensive food relief in their own home areas by CARE International and Norwegian Church Aid.

Everything appears to indicate that the 1991-92 war was just the most recent violent episode in a long standing inter-ethnic dispute over pastoral resources between competing ethnic groups. The massive return of returnees and refugees promoted by UNHCR had merely been the trigger for renewed confrontation between them.

### A New Wave of Returnees and the Somali Claim

From December 1992 to July 1993 UNHCR, in collaboration with the

55 The battle started on June 26 in Chirecha, expanding to Tuka and Hiddilola before being stopped by EPRDF intervention. About 200 Garri-Gabra have been killed (EPPG 1992a:1).

56 In Melbana area, to the south of Mega, where I was in 1990 and in 1993, the loss was over 90 per cent.

57 At first the Borana moved to Sololo. They were later taken to Walda (EPPG 1992a:1). The Garri and the Gabbra fled both to Walda and to Banissa.

58 Official figures varies from organization to organization and from time to time. In July 1992 in Walda there were 38,000 registered (EPPG 1992a:2). In Banissa, in August 1992, 35,000 Garri were registered. In the same period 48,600 Garri and 10,800 Borana were further assisted in Moyale shelter (EPPG 1992b:2). The EPPG's own estimation was lower than the reported population (EPPG 1992b:2-3) and in a later registration by UNHCR/Banissa 18,322 people were found in Banissa (Addis Ababa 1993:2).

concerned national agencies and local administrators, assisted the repatriation of 44,294 people from Walda camp inside Kenya to Moyale district<sup>59</sup>. The returnees were settled in Dukiso, Eel Lei, Eel Goof, Ardha Olla, and various localities around Moyale (Moyale town outskirts) (Addis Ababa 1993:Annex 1)<sup>60</sup>.

Table 1 shows the estimated Moyale district population by various localities, according to UNHCR documentation updated to June 1993<sup>61</sup>.

Table 1: Estimated Moyale District Population According to UNHCR, June 1993

Location	Inhabitants	Kenyan Refugees	Total
Moyale Town	44,470		
Moyale outskirts	21,693		
Eel Lei	14,531		
Eel Gof	8,909		
Chilanko	4,000		
Qadaduma	4,208	3,200 Adjuran	
Katama	1,800	1,400 Adjuran	
Dukiso	4,049		
Ardha Olla	2,203		
Tuka	11,624		
Others	7,953		
Total	125,440	5,100	130,540

The left-hand column includes residents and returnees, that is, all people who are legitimately considered as belonging to the district. The comparison with the 1984 census is interesting. According to the latter, in fact, the population in Moyale district was about 27,000,

59 Some of the refugees had already returned home spontaneously.

60 By November 1993 the repatriation of about 18,000 people from Banissa camp had not yet been implemented due to security problems.

61 Data provided by UNHCR office, Addis Ababa in September 1993.

which, at a natural rate of increase of 2.9 per cent (EPPG 1992b:1), would have meant a population of less than 33,000 people in 1993. It means that returnees exceed the residents by about 280 per cent<sup>62</sup>. Even considering a large measure of under-reporting during the 1984 census, and UNHCR over-estimation of the 1993 population through double counting, it is evident that many people technically not belonging to the district have joined the 'returnee' group. During the 1970s, in fact, the environment simply could not have sustained such a large number of people. Even through the 1980s, after the refugees departure, national and international organizations have been repeatedly forced to assist with food distribution and rehabilitation programmes for between 1,000 and 1,500 destitute Borana families in Dollolo Makala and associated centres (RRC, UNICEF and Band Aid 1989). In the same period the Garri and the Gabbra Migo had the opportunity to split their polygynous or extended families, placing some members in the rural areas in the eastern part of Moyale district and others in the cross-border assisted camps. Rural herders could, in this way, get indirect access to food distributed in the camps<sup>63</sup>.

It was feasible in the early 1990s for Kenyan Garri and Gabbra, and Garri from Somalia, to join the Ethiopian refugee/returnee group. They could, in fact, easily be accepted by the Ethiopian Garri by exploiting their kinship links. Regarding acceptance by authorities in the camps it can be noted that UNHCR registration and repatriation procedures were based simply on each individual's own statement of identity<sup>64</sup>. Although the Garri Kofar could potentially be identified because most do not speak Oromo, the Garri Liiban and the Garri Gallana can speak both Oromo and Somali, while the Gabbra all speak Oromo.

62 In fact out of a total of 125,440 people only 33,000 have been in Moyale district through the 1980s. The difference, some 92,440 people, have come into the district between 1986 and 1993.

63 Cross-border trade of grain from UNHCR refugees camps in Somalia to Ethiopian rural areas and of livestock in the opposite direction remained substantial throughout the 1980s (UNRISD 1993:13).

64 For example, the phenomena of double registration and double 'repatriation', in order to get the rehabilitation grant twice, was very common already in the 1980s. Similarly, external pastoralists may have joined the group with false statements.

Pastoralists from Kenya and Somalia are likely to have joined the Ethiopian refugees/returnees group in various phases. Already in the late 70s many guerrillas are said to have entered Ethiopia from Somalia and Kenya. Under economic stress they may have chosen to join the Ethiopian refugees in order to be assisted in the camps. In the late 1980s the incentive of the repatriation grant no doubt opened the way for the 'return' of people not originally belonging to Borana province. Later on, when the grant was reduced, food rations could still play an important role for poor pastoralists. The serious Somali crisis, the 1991-92 drought and occasional clashes in Kenya were further reasons for Kenyan and Somali citizens to be registered in the new camps<sup>65</sup>. The status of returnee anyway assures, at least in theory, long-term assistance by UN and other agencies, with special emphasis on food security, health care, school facilities, future participation in development initiatives and hence access to natural resources.

The individual motivations of pastoralists also overlap with old political goals based on ethnic lines. By transferring as many Garri-Gabbra 'returnees' as possible into the administrative units of Borana zone<sup>66</sup> the old goal of getting access to Borana-controlled resources may, in fact, be achieved. Such a strategy can only be explained in the framework of the post-Derg decentralization of the Ethiopian state (Doornbos, Cliffe, Abdel Ghaffar and Markakis 1992:4). The new largely ethnically based regions will have a large measure of autonomy over land use and land allocations within their respective regions. However, the regional borders are still a source of potential conflict. Region Five (Somali) has already officially claimed Moyale and Liiban districts and other areas temporarily assigned to Region Four (Oromiyaa). The regional affiliation of Moyale district will greatly influence the destinies of the three ethnic groups. If it is assigned to Region Four, the Borana are likely to maintain control over

65 Suftu, Dolo Oddo and, later on, Banissa and Walda.

66 At the end of the 1980s the old administrative organisation of the south was rearranged, with the establishment of Borana Administrative Region. The new region included the former districts of both Borana and Arero provinces of Sidamo region. After the fall of Mengistu, Borana Administrative Region, with minor adjustments, has been renamed Borana Administrative Zone, a subdivision of Region 4 (Oromiyaa).

their wells and surrounding pastures, otherwise they will probably lose these resources to the Garri and Gabbra Migo<sup>67</sup>.

The proclamation on the establishment of the Regions, published in the *Negarit Gazeta* (1991)<sup>68</sup>, indicates that the regional affiliation of disputed administrative units will depend on the results of the 1994 national census. In controversial cases the councils of the two regions may jointly agree a solution. The organization of a local referendum is one of the possibilities which are presently being talked about<sup>69</sup>. In both cases, census or referendum, the presence of many 'returnees' in the district is likely to influence greatly the final outcome. The Garri, with their dual Oromo and Somali identity, will, in fact, play a crucial political role<sup>70</sup>. Again, as in the 1960s and 1970s, the Somali objective of territorial expansion overlaps with the specific Garri-Gabbra Migo desire to get a larger share of Borana pastoral resources. In the present context, however, the dispute is placed within an inter-regional rather than international arena for settlement.

The conflicting Oromo and Somali interests over where the border should be drawn between their respective regions have affected the OALF. The Garri, who form the majority of the party, have for long felt under-represented. During a recent internal party crisis the OALF Arsi Oromo leader, Siraji Haji Isaq, was temporarily suspended from the Council of Representative in Addis Ababa. He was formally reinstated in April 1992 flanked by Sheik Ibrahim Abdallah, a Garri representative who had previously been living in Somalia. It is reported, however, that presently Siraji is only partially involved in national politics. The crisis and the change of OALF leadership may well indicate a shift in party policy from a pro-Oromo (Arsi) to a pro-Somali (Garri) orientation.

By 1993 the 1984 Moyale district population, which was already unable to sustain itself, had grown about four times. Such an extraor-

67 The same applies to the Borana and other Somali groups in Liiban district.

68 The *Negarit Gazeta* is the Ethiopian official gazette of laws, orders and notices.

69 The referendum has already been experimented with elsewhere by Region 4.

70 The Garri may not present a compact front. Those who have been staying in Borana area living side by side with the Borana may well chose an Oromo identity, while the returnees, mostly affiliated to the OALF, are likely to support the Somali claim.



dinary demographic increase in only ten years can only be maintained by means of food relief. We can therefore conclude that international aid is part of regional and local political strategies.

The experts employed by international and national humanitarian organizations tend to base their planning on interviews with local political leaders and government officials. Very seldom does the planning process reach down to the grassroots<sup>71</sup>. The local administrators have considerable institutional means at their disposal to exercise pressure on the formulation and implementation of relief and rehabilitation plans. In Moyale district all activities related to the returnees and refugees are coordinated by the Moyale Task Force, a body formed by representatives of the responsible international and national agencies and all government organisations and non-governmental organisations implementing activities<sup>72</sup>. The Task Force is chaired by the local District Officer.

Local politicians are thus, informally and formally, enabled to address international aid agencies on the basis of their own political strategies. Such an opportunity gives them enormous influence over poor pastoral families facing serious survival problems. It is probably not by chance that the largest concentration of returnees is found in Moyale district, where Garri and Gabbra candidates won the election under the banner of the Oromo Abbo Liberation Front (EPPG:1992a:1).

That the manipulation of international aid has become a new instrument in an old inter-ethnic game fought over control of natural resources will become increasingly apparent in the next section, which discusses UNHCR rehabilitation plans for 'returnees' in the area, and the likely impact of these plans on traditional Boran resource management strategies.

71 The problem has been pin-pointed at the 1992 Symposium for the Horn of Africa on the Social and Economic Aspects of Mass Voluntary Return Movements of refugees: 'It is unlikely that this information will be gained from brief field visits by overworked and inexperienced staff.' (UNRISD 1993:21).

72 ARA (Administration for Refugees Affairs), RRC (Relief and Rehabilitation Commission) and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) play the major role.

## Borana Land Tenure and Pastoral Practices

Despite a growing involvement by the Borana in agriculture, especially after the 1983-4 drought, pastoralism is still the dominant economic activity in the area. The Dawa and Ganale, the two permanent rivers in the region, are only found in the north-eastern corner of Boranaland. Over much of the rest of the area, except in the extreme west, the Borana must rely on a large number of traditional wells<sup>73</sup> for watering their stock during the dry season<sup>74</sup>. In *Dirree*, wells are found in areas where the aquifers are reasonably close to the surface. A group of wells, hereafter called 'well complex', and the surrounding area of grazing commanded by such a complex, is called *madda* in Boran (Hogg 1993:69). The relatively short distances between well complexes – normally between 20 and 40 km<sup>75</sup> – in combination with Borana herding practices allows for a highly efficient form of cattle pastoralism in *Dirree*<sup>76</sup>.

Helland (1980:60-1) and Upton (1986:23) suggest that dry season water supply is probably the critical limiting factor determining livestock carrying capacity. Consequently, the Borana management system mainly regulates ownership of and access to permanent water points, especially wells, rather than the pastures themselves. The people utilizing a particular well complex live in small villages dispersed throughout the *madda*<sup>77</sup>. Their livestock can graze freely throughout the rangeland<sup>78</sup> and, if conditions are favorable, they usually cultivate a small plot near to the village. With the exception of the more intensively cultivated areas around the main towns, such as Yavello, Arero,

73 Borana traditional wells may be more than 40 meters deep. They have been admired by many travellers since the end of the 19th century (Smith 1897; Vannutelli and Citerni 1899; Hodson 1927). Technical details on structure and water productivity are given in ILCA reports (Donaldson 1983; Cossins 1983).

74 The critical importance of these 'deep' wells has been underlined by Helland (1980:62-3).

75 Maps of the well complexes are provided by Helland (1980:74) and Cossins (1983:6-7).

76 On the rangeland see Helland (1980), Cossins (1983) and Upton (1986).

77 The villages are mostly situated within a 16 km radius of the wells, a distance which allows the cattle to go to and back from water in a day (Upton 1986:23).

78 With the exception of cultivated plots and limited 'reserve' areas (Hogg 1993:70).

Mega, Hiddilola and Moyale<sup>79</sup>, land for cultivation is easily available<sup>80</sup> and plots are not subject to permanent ownership rights<sup>81</sup>. As access to wells indirectly means access to the surrounding pastures and farm plots, rights in land are indirectly defined in terms of rights in wells.

### Rights in Wells

Well digging or re-digging<sup>82</sup>, which requires considerable labour investment<sup>83</sup>, is normatively distinguished from, but related to, the rules regulating access to and utilization of wells.

The work required in digging the well is promoted and coordinated by the *konfii*<sup>84</sup>. After termination of the work he, or his heir, will be considered the *abbaa eelaa* ('father of the well'). The *konfii* slaughters the first heifer at the well site. Other animals will be contributed by other lineages or by the associated clan. Each successive heifer, or cash of an equivalent value, is alternatively provided by members of each clan or lineage contributing to the well excavation.

During the dry season Borana cattle are watered every third day. Consequently, the utilization of wells is characterized by a three day rotation, each day being utilized by different herding units. Ideally each day of utilization should be assigned to a different clan which institutionally participated in the excavation. The daily utilization of the well is ordered by reference to set positions, each position being assigned to a different herding unit. All positions, with the exception of the second and the last, are reserved for those who originally

79 Urban centers have grown up, since the incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian Empire at the turn of the last century, in those 'better watered' places suited to agriculture. While some cultivation may always have been practiced by Borana the major impetus came from the Amhara who settled in the area after Menelik's conquest.

80 The limiting factor is rather the availability of oxen for ploughing.

81 Land is neither sold nor inherited.

82 During the rainy season earth tends to fall into the wells. If not regularly maintained the wells will soon become unusable.

83 In the past it was the mobilization of manpower and the heifers, bulls or oxen necessary to feed the workers which was particularly burdensome. More recently, due to the availability of machinery for hire and the possibility of paying daily workers in cash, cash contributions are becoming an increasingly important part of the work.

84 In case of re-digging the *konfii* should obtain permission from the *abbaa gofa* ('father of the collapsed well').

invested in the well digging. A particular position in the watering roster therefore indicates the nature of that individual's clan's title to the well.

Ownership, however, does not imply exclusive rights of access. The second and the last positions in the watering roster are always reserved for people who did not participate in the original well investment and who may belong to different descent sections or even to different ethnic groups<sup>85</sup>. Position two must be given either to a traditional leader (*hayyuu*), to a member of a defined group of clans (*sunsum*) or to in-laws (*soddaa*). The latter should preferably be a real in-law or somebody holding ownership rights, or, secondarily, in a classificatory sense, any person belonging to the wife-giving moiety of the *abbaa eelaa*. The last position is reserved for a person in an emergency. Rights of access inherent in positions second and last are only temporary and not inheritable; they are lost when the well-user leaves.

The work needed to operate a well is jointly provided by all herding units utilizing it on a given day<sup>86</sup>. Regular maintenance work is jointly undertaken by all well users<sup>87</sup>.

### Division of the Herd

In order to allow for the different needs of their livestock Borana split their herds into *loon warraa* (lactating cattle) and *loon fooraa* (dry cattle). The lactating cattle are kept at the main village, providing milk to the residents. The dry cattle mainly consist of those animals either temporarily dry or beef cattle. *Warraa* herds always have priority over *fooraa* herds regarding both access to water and to pastures. The *fooraa* herds are kept in mobile satellite camps by young herders. During the rains they are ideally sent to the lowlands, where highly nutritive seasonal grasses become available. During the dry season they tend to return

85 Any person belonging to any ethnic group can anyway utilize a well by joining the herding unit of a person enjoying rights of access.

86 The manpower requirement is high, water being lifted by a human chain of up to 20 men or more.

87 The coordination of all activities regarding a given well and problems of access are discussed at the *kora eelaa* ('assembly of the well') (Bassi 1992:329-30; app. 1).



to their home *maddas*. Due to high demand by the *warraa* herds, *fooraa* herds are not allowed to be watered at many of the well complexes. Among the nine deep well complexes in *Dirree*, *fooraa* herds are only allowed to water at *Irdaar*, *Dhaas*, *Weebi*, *Eel Goof* and *Eel Lei*<sup>88</sup>.

### UNHCR/RRC Rehabilitation Plans

The returnees settled in Moyale district have mainly been assisted by food relief and health care<sup>89</sup>. It is, however, planned to shift from relief to rehabilitation. For this purpose RRC (Relief and Rehabilitation Commission), in collaboration with other agencies, has elaborated a proposal based on joint UNHCR/ARA and joint RRC/UNHCR/ARRA/WFP/WSSA missions between April and June 1993 (Addis Ababa, 1993). The proposal includes two major components, the repatriation of the 18,322 refugees still living in Banissa camp<sup>90</sup> and the rehabilitation of 85,273 returnees and displaced in Moyale and Arero districts (Addis Ababa, 1993:3).

The rehabilitation programme is intended to be coordinated by RRC and includes the following major sectors: health care, water supply, school rehabilitation, grinding mills, agriculture and road rehabilitation. Food will continue to be distributed for one year to Banissa returnees and for 6 months to the others (1993: annex 8). The agricultural component is the most relevant one, with a requested budget of US\$ 3,306,290. It includes the distribution of various agricultural in-

88 Data collected in the field in 1989-90.

89 International agencies, particularly UNHCR, are the major donors: RRC and ARA and UNHCR are all playing a coordinating role with EPPG entrusted to perform a monitoring role. Food distribution is implemented by Mekane Yesus, a national NGO, assisted by ARA staff. Medicines Sans Frontières has been assisting the Ministry of Health in health care provision, by rebuilding damaged infrastructure, providing medical equipment and drugs and running feeding centers; AICF (Action International Contre la Faim) has recently installed two motor pumps in Eel Goof and Eel Lei and EWWCA has built a water system for Moyale town by pumping water from Eel Goof aquifers.

90 The repatriation is to be implemented by ARA complemented by UNHCR: the returnees are to be settled in 9 localities in Moyale and Arero districts, with large numbers in Chilanko (10,140), Eel Deer (2,202), Hudet (2,202) and Wachile (2,164) (Addis Ababa 1993:7 and Annex 1).

puts<sup>91</sup> to all sites except Moyale town and a restocking programme (1993:12, annexes 3,4 and 5). Clearly, the main objective of the programme is to settle pastoralists by promoting agriculture<sup>92</sup>, a common strategy in East Africa after drought<sup>93</sup>. In this specific case past experience of the area must place a serious question mark over the sustainability of the proposal.

The potentiality for agriculture in the Borana area has been discussed in detail in *Ecological Map of South Western Sidamo* (Assefa, Bille and Corra 1984), an ILCA (International Livestock Centre for Africa) study which, unfortunately, was not extended beyond 39° east, including only the western corner of Moyale district. This publication suggests that some expansion of agriculture should be allowed, but only within specific limits and under certain conditions (Assefa, Bille and Corra 1984:28). From the climatic point of view only in the sub-humid (annual rainfall around 900mm) and in the upper semi-arid zone (annual rainfall around 650 mm) (Assefa, Bille and Corra 1984:19-20) may agriculture be expected to be successful, with possibilities of crop failure in the latter zone (Assefa, Bille and Corra 1984:6). The same limits are indicated by Bille in his climatological study which includes the whole of Moyale district. He claims that, given the bimodal pattern of rainfall in the area and the high variability and irregular spatial distribution of annual rainfall, 'limited cropping could be tested in these areas with a rainfall over 700 mm, and may be possible, with an accepted risk of total failure in some years, in areas defined by the 600 mm isohet' (Bille 1983:27).

On the basis of the likely isohyets drawn by Bille (1983:12) - which are only approximate for lack of reliable data - in Moyale district there is no sub-humid area, while only the area around Moyale town itself falls within the upper semi-arid category, with a yearly rainfall higher than 600 mm. Areas such as Wachile, which are intended for agricul-

91 Hand tools, oxen, seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.

92 The restocking programme, limited to one goat, one ewe and one heifer per family to half of the assisted people (1993:annex 5 and 6), cannot be seriously taken into consideration for reconstituting a viable herd within the suggested rehabilitation time.

93 Hogg observes how government policies emphasizing settlement and agriculture have encouraged population and livestock concentration causing increased desertification (1987:47) and vulnerability to drought (1987:57).

tural expansion under the rehabilitation plan, are well below the limit<sup>94</sup>. Eel Goof and Eel Lei, where large numbers of pastoralists have been settled, are just on the limit, but the composition of the tree and shrub communities<sup>95</sup> corresponds to the vegetation of the lower semi-arid zone as described in the 1984 ILCA publication referred to above, hence outside the recommended climatic zones<sup>96</sup>.

An ILCA environmental study of Eel Goof and Eel Lei shows that the area is intensely eroded (Bille, Assefa and Corra 1983:26) because of over-utilization which has lasted for centuries, 'long enough for all top soils to be destroyed and washed away' (Bille, Assefa and Corra 1983:18). Bush clearance and direct soil exposure to water runoff, associated with cultivation, can only accelerate the process of land degradation.

The Borana Integrated Rehabilitation Project<sup>97</sup>, which started life as a relief project in 1981, offers an interesting example of a similar approach to the proposed RRC rehabilitation plan in the same environment. The rehabilitation component of the project started in 1985, with the intention of encouraging settlement based on crop farming (BAND AID, UNICEF and RRC 1989:1)<sup>98</sup>. By 1986, 1,540 families living in Dollolo Makala (500 families) and another six settlements, had been assisted<sup>99</sup>. By 1988, in spite of the location of all the sites in either the sub-humid or upper semi-arid zones as defined by ILCA (1984), it was evident that the over US\$ 750,000 provided by the donors<sup>100</sup> through

94 During 1981 and 1982, two exceptionally rainy years, Wachile received respectively 399 and 551 mm. Moyale, which is characterized by a 704mm average annual rainfall, in the same years received respectively 1,144 and 2,512 mm. (Haile Selassie and Bille 1983:10; 12).

95 In Eel Goof and Eel Lei *Commiphora* spp. and *Acacia bussei* are dominant (Bille, Assefa Eshete and Corra 1983:21).

96 The optimism shown by some development experts regarding the potentiality for agriculture in Eel Goof and Eel Lei may be the result of exceptional post-drought rains in the area.

97 During the initial phases it was known as Dollolo Makala Project.

98 Like the present RRC rehabilitation proposal, assistance entailed the distribution of hand tools, seeds, oxen and other agricultural inputs and the installation of a mechanized water system. In the early days a tractor was also used (BAND AID, UNICEF and RRC 1989: 47-50).

99 These six settlements are Gonbissa, Mio, Chobi Mena, Argane and Tuka (two sites).

100 Major donors were Band Aid, UNICEF, the Italian, Swiss, Japanese and British governments (1989:24).

RRC had failed to achieve the desired objective. The agricultural activities, in fact, 'were not producing any measure of food sufficiency' and the families remained on food rations provided by NCA (Norwegian Church Aid) (BAND AID, UNICEF and RRC 1989:i). Even the livestock distributed to farmers were dying at an excessive rate (BAND AID, UNICEF and RRC 1989:i). An evaluation carried out by BAND AID, UNICEF and RRC, concluded that 'the strategy of settling nomads (and turning them into farmers) which underlies the project, is not workable, considering agro-climatic, land, and cultural factors' (BAND AID, UNICEF and RRC: 1989:i). In 1993 I visited Dollolo Makala. Only a few huts of the old settlement were remaining. I was told that most of the people had moved to the new assisted camps around Moyale. If this is the result with only 1,500 families settled in a 'better watered' area, what can be expected of the 11,858 families to be settled by RRC in an even less suitable area?

### Replacing Traditional Rights

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the repatriation and rehabilitation proposal does not lie in the technical aspects of the plan, but rather in the implications for resource use and inter-ethnic conflict.

Historical sources indicate that during the last century the Garri have progressively achieved greater access to Borana-controlled pastoral resources. In the first phase this was achieved by using diplomacy. Later they failed with direct military action. Now they have apparently succeeded by using international aid. In the face of this, the Borana in fact are reported to have retreated to the east of the Moyale-Wachile road, abandoning important well complexes such as Eel Goof and Eel Lei<sup>101</sup>. This may have a potentially devastating impact on Borana adaptive strategies.

Borana herd management is based on wide ranging access to pastoral resources. Eel Goof and Eel Lei are two out of the five well complexes to which *fooraa* (dry cattle) herds could traditionally be sent

101 Personal communication by UN officials and Borana pastoralists.

during the dry season. The permanent loss of these wells or even their environmental degradation, will seriously affect the viability of the Borana pastoral system.

There is little doubt that the 1991-92 war, with its terribly destructive effects on all those living in the southern rangelands, was partly caused by UNHCR repatriation operations in the area over the last decade. In spite of that experience, the lesson has still not been learnt. Repatriation policy has still not changed. More and more Garri and Gabbra Migo returnees are being brought to live in Borana areas<sup>102</sup>. If the operation is successfully completed it will lead to the permanent replacement of one ethnic group by another.

At the end of 1993 an extremely tense situation prevailed in Moyale and *Liiban* districts. Borana pastoralists, in retaliation for the massive resettlement of Garri and Gabbra Migo in their territory, prevented the implementation of the repatriation programme in Banissa camp, and warned UNHCR officials not to take returnees to Wachile and Hudet. The situation is likely to deteriorate further over the coming years as Borana livestock herds build up to their pre-drought population levels<sup>103</sup>.

## Conclusion

### An Alternative Policy

The present impasse in *Dirree* has its roots in long-standing inter-ethnic competition over pastoral resources between competing pastoral groups. Whatever the political choices facing government and humanitarian organisations, what is certain is that it is extremely difficult to differentiate residents from returnees and real from infiltrated returnees. In this context the role that international and national agen-

102 One of the first UNHCR conditions for assisting refugees to repatriate is: 'there must have taken place a 'substantial and permanent' change in the conditions which led to the original refugee flow' (UNRISD 1993:13).

103 Already in the 1960s Haberland had commented how the handover of Wachile and Walena Borana territory to the Garri had exacerbated already difficult inter-relations between the two groups (1963:146).

cies can play should not be underestimated. Above all their interventions should avoid:

- degradation of natural resources, which in the long run will lead to increased poverty and food dependency;
- further inter-ethnic conflict, which is the main cause of both the present crisis and of the failure of previous development projects in the region.

These goals can hopefully be achieved if development and rehabilitation activities:

- are based on a sound knowledge of the environment and of the existing production system;
- preserve long-established and efficient mechanisms of control over the exploitation of natural resources;
- are based on a broad inter-ethnic consensus.

History shows that Garri, Gabbra and the Borana can live peacefully together. Firstly, they speak the same language. Second, they have been jointly exploiting pastoral resources at least since the end of the 19th century. Third, intermarriage between Borana and Garri is common.

As there cannot be any development without inter-ethnic peace, solutions have to be found to the current inter-ethnic conflict over access to local resources. Traditional rights over resources are a key issue. In the early 1960s Haberland wrote that the Garri who had gone to Wachile continued to consider themselves temporary users of Borana-owned wells (1963:146)<sup>104</sup>. The basic relation between investment in well digging and ownership rights and the distinction between ownership rights and temporary right of access was therefore recognized by the Garri pastoralists. For many years the Garri and Gabbra have utilized wells and pastures in common with the Borana and it is possible that at some point the former have even contributed

104 He added that the Garri were failing to maintain the wells, which were progressively collapsing unless the Borana carried out the work (1963:146).

to the maintenance of these wells. There is therefore a sound historical basis to promote dialogue between these groups.

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## Chapter 2

# Development Interventions and Pastoral Dynamics in Southern Ethiopia

Johan Helland<sup>1</sup>

There are two opposed views in the literature on the natural resource management capabilities of pastoralists. On the one hand, pastoralists have been blamed for destroying the environment on which they depend by accumulating excessive numbers of animals and overexploiting the pastures. According to this view pastoralism damages the environment, due largely to the pastoralists' irrational fondness for large numbers of animals. Alternatively, pastoralism has been seen as a dynamic adaptation to a difficult environment, providing pastoralists with a comparatively high standard of living on the basis of marginal resources. According to this perspective, environmental damage is not due to any internal processes in pastoral society but is caused by external factors: these may be restrictions on movement or reductions in territory, or any number of external interferences ranging from bans on bush burning (a common practice in many pastoral societies to encourage grass growth) to the dismantling of local decision-making institutions. This view of pastoralism has nurtured the idea that pastoral systems have survived over time because pastoralists somehow manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. A corollary of this view is that pastoralism does not cause large-scale or permanent environmental damage.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this essay was presented at a seminar on 'Improved Natural Resource Management-the role of the state versus that of the local community' in November, 1993 at the University of Roskilde, Denmark