University of Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

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A Comparative Study of Expressive Cultures in the Indian Ocean: Belonging, Kinship, and Cultural Heritage in Banaadiri Poetry and Indian Ocean Texts

by

Ayan Abdi Salaad

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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In this project, I compare the ways that an Indian Ocean cultural identity emerges from the oral poetry of the Banaadiri people, a coastal community in southern Somalia and Indian Ocean prose and novels. In particular, I explore the ways that this Indian Ocean identity is co-constitutive with local kinship identities. This project works with oral and written literature; literature in Somali, English and Italian literature in translation. Working with anthropology, theories around material culture and writings about Islands, Oceans and coasts allows me draw on the interactions between these different oral and written literatures. Throughout the thesis, I use a comparative methodology where I contrast Banaadiri oral songs with globally circulating Indian Ocean novels and other fiction to explore ideas around belonging, kinship and cultural heritage. I break down the barriers between orality and literacy and explore ideas around reception culture, performance, delivery and meaning. I use a range of approaches including close reading, close listening, textual and performance analysis. An emphasis on listening and on voice is a way of refreshing attention to the works from this region, both those that are oral but also scribal texts that seek to allow the expression of certain voices. I interrogate what constitutes belonging and community in different forms of literature in the context of the Indian Ocean. I explore how selected poets and writers who deal with these concepts, which are usually linked to the idea of nationhood, importantly focus on different forms of 'belonging' which are not framed around patriotism and nationalism but rather around kinship, relationships, vocation and craft.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Ayan Salaad

Title of thesis: A Comparative Study of Expressive Cultures in the Indian Ocean: belonging, kinship and cultural heritage in Banaadiri poetry and Indian Ocean texts

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

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Introduction

1.1 Somali studies

This thesis which compares the literature of the Banaadiri community of coastal Somalia with Indian Ocean novels and texts explores ideas of community, belonging and kinship. I explore how selected poets and writers who deal with these concepts, which are usually linked to the idea of nationhood, importantly focus on different forms of 'belonging' which are not framed around patriotism and nationalism but rather around kinship, relationships, vocation and craft. I enact a shift in scholarly approach and literary focus away from the nation-state structure and analyse Banaadiri oral poems and Indian ocean fiction through the material cultures of the Indian Ocean world. This approach is particularly significant and distinctive when we consider the conventional approaches that have framed discussions of Somalia and its cultural character in the years since the Somali conflict. I outline below in broad terms the current state of knowledge within Somali studies.

Somali society is marked more by plurality than uniformity. It is constituted by coastal communities, nomadic pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and agriculturalists as well as different clans, and sub-clans.[1] Although many Somali people aspire to be part of a 'Greater Somalia' which involves uniting the five territories inhabited by 'ethnic' Somalis – former British Somaliland, former Italian Somaliland, former French Somaliland, the Ogaden in Ethiopia and the north-eastern province of Kenya- these territories have never been united under a single polity.[2] Moreover, the Somali nation-state, created post-independence, unites only two of the ethnic Somali inhabited territories, and is at odds with the decentralised political organisation of Somali

[1] Both Abdi M. Kusow and Abdalla Omar Mansur's articles in *The Invention of Somalia* are also very useful in challenging this idea that Somali society was homogenous and unified.
[2] Brian J. Hesse, 'Introduction: The myth of "Somalia"', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 28 (2010), 247-259, (p. 247).

peoples. Abdalla Omar Mansur, Professor of Somali language and literature, states that 'nearly 60% of the entire population can be classified as nomadic' pastoralists who favour traditional local over central forms of governance and have stronger clan attachments than primordial attachment to a particular land.[3]

The outbreak of the Somali civil war in 1991 and the dissolution of the Somali nation-state had a tremendous impact on the way that Somalia was represented in the academic sphere. Scholarship from the 1990s predominantly focuses on the disintegration of the Somali nation, the breakdown of state institutions and the subsequent displacement of the Somali people both within the region and across the globe. Books such as *The Road to Zero: Somalia's Self-Destruction* (1992), *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone* (1995) and *Somalia: a nation driven to despair* (1996) are indicative titles.

Terrence Lyons and Ahmed Ismail Samatar in their work *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (1995) and Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe in his book *The Collapse of the Somali State: The impact of the Colonial legacy* (1994) discusses the lawlessness, anarchy and violence, which began to descend on Somalia after the collapse of the state. Lyons and Samatar bring their expertise in conflict resolution and political economics to focus on clan-based conflict, which began as a result of the power vacuum created by the breakdown of the Siad Barre regime and the proper channels of governance. Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, professor of Information systems, explores the way that the colonial legacy played a major role in the collapse of the modern Somali nation-state. Other publications from the 1990s from academics, journalists and writers such as Alice Bettis Hashim, Anna Simons and Mohammed Osman Omar have also focused on the dissolution of the State, and the subsequent destruction of civil society, infrastructure and law and order.[4]

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[3] Abdalla Omar Mansur, 'Contrary to a Nation: The Cancer of the Somali State', in *The Invention of Somalia*, ed. by Ali Jimale Ahmed (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1995), pp. 107-116 (p. 108).

[4] See Alice Bettis Hashim, The fallen state: dissonance, dictatorship, and death in Somalia (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), Anna Simons, Networks of Dissolution: Somalia undone (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995) and Mohamed Osman Omar, The Road to Zero: Somalia's self-destruction: personal reminiscences (London: HAAN Associates, 1992).

Scholarship from the 2000s has attempted to challenge this prevailing idea that the disintegration of the Somali state equates with the complete disintegration of Somali society by focusing on alternative and more localised systems of governance. The journalist Mary Harper argues in *Getting Somalia Wrong? Faith, War and Hope in a Shattered State* that since the fall of Siad Barre, and the central government, many forms of local authority have emerged. She cites both the northern territory of the former Republic of Somalia, the self-declared Somaliland, and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland as examples of 'viable political units'.[5] Economists Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford and Alex Nowrasteh's article for the Independent Institute, a renowned think tank, is another example of recent scholarship challenging the idea that Somalia is a 'failed' state. They point out that when centralised law deteriorated, Somali people returned to more traditional customary laws called *xeer*. The *xeer* is a legal system which 'focuses on the restitution of victims, not the punishment of criminals' (Powell et al. 2006). Development and economic anthropologist Peter D. Little's study into the Somali economy shows that many industries such as the livestock, money communications and telecommunications have actually thrived and grown since the fall of the centralised government.

If we look at Somalia exclusively through the prism of the nation-state and the associated lexis of territory, legislation and politics, limited narratives emerge: the prevailing one being that the end of the Somali nation-state equates with the end of Somali governance, economy, culture and society. Furthermore, a focus on territory leads to a landlocked approach 'fixated on the sedentary, static and terrestrially rooted rather than processes of flow, hybridity and mobile routes'.[6] Although the nation-state framework may work as a lens to analyse certain politicised narratives, it is limited.

This thesis explores the literature of the *reer Xamar* people who refer to themselves as 'Banaadiri' and live in the largest of the Banaadir stone walls in Mogadishu or *Xamar* as it is

[5] Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong?: faith and war in a shattered state* (London: Zed Books, 2012) p.
[6] Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, '"A perfect and absolute blank": Human Geographies of Water Worlds' in *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), pp. 3-19 (p. 11).

commonly referred to by residents of the city. Although the oral poems have been collected from the *reer Xamar* people in particular, many of the ideas around Indian ocean culture, identity and heritage that emerge from the literature is reflective of the Banaadiri people as a whole on account of them sharing the same cross-cultural maritime Indian Ocean history. The Banaadiri people live on the Banaadir coast of Southern Somalia, which stretches 'geographically from Warsheikh to Kismayu, but culturally from Warsheikh to Baraawe— a distance of approximately 300km – in a mixture of ports and once thriving and sophisticated city-states, interspersed with small and sometimes remote fishing villages'.[7] The largest port settlements on the Banaadir coast are 'Muqdisho (Mogadishu), Marka and Baraawe (Brava)' while some of the other smaller village settlements include 'Jesira, Danaane, Gandershe, Jilib-Marka, Munghiye, and Torre'.[8] The 'name "Benadir" is derived from the Persian word *Bendar* which means "ports" and signifies the coastal areas where goods are exchanged'.[9] Persian and Arab geographers 'applied the term Banaadir to the East African coast of southern Somalia in the same way that they applied *Sawahil* (coastal) to the East African coast further south (from today's Kenya to northern Mozambique)'.[10] The history of the Banaadiri coast is in many ways the same history as that of the Swahili coast. Mohamed M. Kassim states that the Banaadiri coast is 'closely intertwined in all its economic, cultural, and historical evolution to the Swahili coast' and that

> most coastal historians agree that the Banadir coast is the first Swahili settlement on the East African coast settled around the 9th and 10th centuries. Tradition, coastal chroniclers, and Arab geographers suggest that the first settlers came from the Persian Gulf. Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that there was also a Bantu population in the nearby fertile river valleys of the Jubba and Shabelli. The Swahili culture that evolved in this coast was the result of

[7] Anita Sylvia Adam, 'Benadiri People of Somalia: with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, SOAS, 2011), p. 9.
[8] Adam, p. 9.
[9] Mohamed M. Kassim, 'Aspects of the Benadir Cultural History: The Case of the Bravan Ulama' in *The Invention of Somalia*, ed by Ali Jimale Ahmed (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1993), pp. 29-42 (p. 29).
[10] Adam, p. 9.

> the contact between this Arab-Islamic civilization on the coast with the Bantu culture of the hinterland.[11]

Scholarship strongly suggests that Swahili was spoken throughout the Banaadiri coast of Somalia. Communities such as the Bravanese of Brava and the Bajunis of Kismayo both continue to speak a dialect of Swahili, Kibajuni and Chimwiini respectively. While these two communities have preserved their Swahili language and culture, the 'native inhabitants of Mogadishu and Merka have retained the Swahili culture, traditions and personal names'.[12] The 'origin of the place names of Mukadisho (*mui wa mwisho* = the end city), Shangani (on the sand), Marika and Kismayu (*kisima iu* = upper well) indicates that these were all Swahili cities'.[13] When Somali speaking nomads migrated to the Banaadir coast, this led to the spread of 'linguistic Somalization' and the gradual erosion of the 'Swahili language in the cities of Warsheikh, Mogadishu and Merka'.[14]

The Banaadiri people played an integral role as 'cultural brokers' within the Indian Ocean maritime trade network which began in 800 AD and declined in the 1500s. This network connected multiple regions: Africa, South East Asia, the Persian Gulf states and the Indian subcontinent. This maritime network, which many historians have argued was the 'first global economy', predated colonialism and the creation of the nation-state, and was primarily a system of exchanging goods between communities who lived on the coasts of the Indian Ocean basin.[15] The flow of water became a conduit for the flow of people, objects and ideas in multiple directions, making the Indian Ocean an arena of open dialogue between people of many cultures and religions. Historical and anthropological research shows that 'the Arab-Persian immigration reached the Benaadir coast in successive waves'.[16] The Banaadiri community were

[11] Kassim, p. 30.
[12] Kassim, p. 30.
[13] Kassim, p. 30.
[14] Kassim, p. 30.
[15] Sheriff Abdul provides very detailed explanations of the ways in which the maritime trade network operated using dhows within the monsoon seasons.
[16] Kassim, p. 30.

'intermediaries' between traders and merchants who came to the Banaadir coast from other parts of the Indian Ocean world and people from the Somali interior. Anthropologist John Middleton explains that 'most of the Indian Ocean trade was between very distant partners, of different languages, cultures, and forms of entrepreneurial organisation'.[17] These 'distant traders' from Arabia and Asia and those from the African hinterland 'rarely, if ever, came into direct contact but dealt indirectly with one another' through intermediaries which on the Banaadir coast took the form of the Banaadiri people and on the wider East African coast, Swahili merchants.[18]

Middleton argues that East African coastal merchants and brokers established commercial networks which on the 'African side included hunters and gathers (for ivory and forest products), pastoralists (for hides and skins), and in the more distant interior collectors and providers of slaves, ivory, gold, rock crystal and other items'[19]. On the 'Asian side there was the need to find both traders who wanted things from Africa as well as those who could supply cloth of many kinds and subtle varieties, beads of many kinds and colors, pottery and porcelain'.[20] The Banaadiri people were responsible for cultivating strong relationships of trust both with traders from the African interior as well as those from Asia and the Arabian Peninsula, who often lived in distant countries, and as such were central to the Indian Ocean's rich history of cultural encounter and exchange.

1.2 The Indian Ocean as Method

Professor of African literature Isabel Hofmeyr argues that the Indian Ocean is a domain that offers academic scholarship on Africa, South Asia and the Middle East 'rich possibilities for working beyond the templates of the nation-state and area studies' because it brings to the fore and

[17] John Middleton, *African merchants of the Indian Ocean: Swahili of the East African coast* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), p. 81.
[18] Middleton, *African merchants of the Indian Ocean*, p. 79.
[19] Middleton, African merchants of the Indian Ocean, pp. 82-83.
[20] Middleton, *African merchants of the Indian Ocean*, pp. 82-83.

'makes visible a range of lateral networks' that promote mobility, transnationalism and the cross-cultural exchange of culture and ideas.[21] Hofmeyr contends that the Indian Ocean provides an 'ideal arena from which to discuss transnationalism within the Global South' given that 'much contemporary work on transnationalism operates on North-South axes and invokes older categories of empire and nation, of the dominating global and the resistant local'.[22] However, 'these categories – domination and resistance, colonizer and colonized – arise from post-independence revisions of colonial history'.[23] The Indian Ocean on the other hand is 'a complicating sea'; a space which operates on a different paradigm to the colonial/post-colonial rubric.[24]

Hofmeyr argues the Indian Ocean promotes a 'desegregating approach' that offers academic scholarship new ways of thinking about 'crosscutting transnational interactions in more productive ways'.[25] In diaspora scholarship, the Indian Ocean has complicated approaches that reinforce the racial categories of empire by focusing on the movement of communities from peripheries to centres— From India to Britain, Algeria to France or the Caribbean to Britain. Analysing diaspora through the lens of the Indian Ocean has enabled understanding of the importance of other trajectories. Focusing on East African migration to India, or Chinese migration to East Africa tells us about 'what such outward flows mean for politics back on the mainland'.[26]

The Indian Ocean's desegregated approach to comparative literary scholarship on Africa, South Asia and the Middle East entails a reconceptualisation of ideas around belonging, history, tradition, and culture. Hofmeyr's discussion draws on Indian Ocean writers such as Amitav Gosh and Abdulrazak Gurnah, whose novels complicate simple binaries such as colonizer/colonized, metropole/centre and native/outsider, by exploring the nuanced and complicated forms of

[21] Isabel Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea: the Indian Ocean as Method', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 32 (2012), 584-590, (p. 584).
[22] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 589.
[23] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 589.
[24] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 590.
[25] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 587.
[26] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 587.

belonging fostered in the Indian Ocean world. Hofmeyr states that Gurnah's 'work on Zanzibar similarly charts a series of overlapping transnational vectors: old trading diasporas, Muslim networks, slavery, waning British Imperialism, Zanzibari independence and the African-Arab violence that followed it' while Ghosh's novels explore 'a layered archive of the different forms of sovereignty that accumulate around the Indian Ocean littoral'.[27]

Furthermore, Hofmeyr explores the ways that tracing the movement of print culture and technology across the Indian Ocean through networks that span South Asia, East African and the Middle East reveals 'different trajectories for global histories of print' to the dominant Eurocentric ones.[28] These print ventures are 'invested in ideals of social reform and religious philanthropy' that do not 'conform to the model of print capitalism'.[29] Moreover, the publications that emerge from these networks create transnational textual forms through which readers across the Indian Ocean world could engage with each other.

In this thesis, I use the Indian Ocean as a means through which to interrogate what constitutes identity and community in both oral and scribal literatures from this region. The Indian Ocean allows the interrogation of forms of 'belonging' that operate beyond and beneath the nation-state framework, which are not framed around patriotism and nationalism but rather around kinship, vocation and craft. In this project, the Indian Ocean is not only a context or space through which to analyse transnational networks but also a mode of analyses in itself. Throughout the thesis I examine the emergence of many forms of an 'Indian Ocean cultural identity' in the oral poetry of the Banaadiri people. Through exploring different modes of material culture that are discussed in the Banaadiri songs, such as cloth, henna tattoos, and jewelry made from coinage, I assess the ways that Indian Ocean cultural identities are co-constitutive with local kinship identities.

[27] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 589.
[28] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 586.
[29] Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea', p. 586.

1.3 Fluid ontologies

The sea has often been represented as an unknowable 'non-territory', a space to plunder for resources and sustenance, a surface for transportation or a means of connecting nations. In addition, the materiality of the sea has rendered it as an 'other' to our nominative experience of stable and solid spaces, meaning 'the physical liveliness of oceans and seas are often reduced to romantic metaphors in paintings, novels and other literary and art sources'.[30] Human geographers such as Kimberley Peters, Philip Steinberg and Jon Anderson have challenged the representation of the sea as 'a perfect absolute blank'.[31] Instead of seeing the sea and ocean as a space of 'difference', the 'other' in a 'land- ocean binary', they argue that we need to think about the sea as a space in its own right.[32] They advocate a 'wet ontology'; a theoretical framework which looks to the materiality of the ocean as a 'voluminous', fluctuating space, as a means to challenge the flat ontologies inherent in geographical studies which present a world 'divided into fixed, hierarchical strata and scales'.[33] Using a 'wet ontology' involves thinking *with* the sea as a theoretical tool and viewing the sea as intrinsically *part of* social-cultural, economic and political processes, rather than merely as a conceptual tool for understanding or a mere site of such socio-cultural phenomena.[34] As Steinberg suggests, we need to approach the sea as 'a space that is not so much *known* as experienced; less a space that we live *on* (or, more often, gaze at) than one that we live *in*; less a two-dimensional surface than a four-dimensional sphere; a space that we think *from'*.[35]

This thesis follows in the footsteps of recent scholarship in geography, history and literary studies by shifting the sea from the margins to the centre of academic vision; exploring ideas of

[30] Anderson and Peters, p. 4.
[31] A phrase borrowed from Lewis Carroll's crew in *The Hunting of the Snark*.
[32] Philip E. Steinberg, 'Foreword: On Thalassography', in *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), pp. xiii-xvii (p. xiii).
[33] Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters, 'Wet ontologies, fluid spaces: giving depth to volume through oceanic thinking', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33 (2015), 247-264, (p. 248).
[34] Steinberg and Peters, p. 248.
[35] Philip Steinberg, p. xiv.

community, traditions, and belonging with attention to the materiality of the sea. In the oral poems and texts analysed in this project, the sea is not a 'material or metaphorical void' but a space in its own right, which is both, filled with human stories but also *fills* human stories.[36] I follow the works of other scholars in both privileging the wet, and in wanting to break the idea of the binary of land/sea. Michael Pearson defines the coastal area as 'amphibious' places which 'lack definition' and 'boundaries'; zones characterised by 'fungibility' and the 'interchangeability, of land and sea'.[37] Coastal or littoral people, often referred to as both 'shore folk' and 'sea nomads' also exhibit this same amphibiousness, defined by both the land and sea.[38] John Middleton captures this when discussing the Swahili people[39]:

> Part of the coast is the sea: the two cannot be separated. The Swahili are a maritime people and the stretches of lagoon, creek and open sea beyond the reefs are as much part of their environment as are the coastlands. The sea, rivers, and lagoons are not merely stretches but highly productive food resources divided into territories that are owned by families and protected by spirits just as are stretches of land.[40]

The Banaadiri community, like Swahili communities, have a lifestyle and culture which reflects their geographical position on the coast as dual inhabitants of both land and sea.[41] Both the sea and shore are integral to the Banaadiri community: many men from this community are fishermen, and yearly traditional festivities such *shirka* and *maanyo galka* occur in the sea or on

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[36] Anderson and Peters, p. 4
[37] Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems', *Journal of World History*, 17 (2006), 353-373 (p. 355).
[38] Pearson, p. 356.
[39] John Middleton argues that during the height of the Indian Ocean trade the Banaadiri coast of Somalia was part of a wide Swahili coast and Mogadishu, Brava, and Kismayo were important Swahili trading ports. The remnants of this Indian Ocean history is evident by the fact that some 'archaic forms' of Swahili are still spoken in these Somali port cities.
[40] John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili: an African Mercantile Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 9.
[41] Anita Adams argues that the Banaadiri community have a different social identity to that of Somalis who live in the interior because they were exposed to the 'intellectual and religious currents that washed over their shore.'

the coast. These East African communities have long lived with a sensibility of what academics are more recently defining as a 'fluid ontology'. Anderson and Peters argue that a move towards a 'fluid ontology' does not place water worlds as 'a perfect and absolute *bounded* space to study, in opposition to the attention paid to the land' but rather it 'alerts us also to the ways in which the land and air fluidity merge and mix with water worlds too'.[42] It means acknowledging that the sea is 'intrinsically *connected* to and *absorbed within* a broader network of spaces (earth and air) which are also, likewise, porous, open and convergent with each other'.[43] A 'fluid ontology' understands land and water as 'part of a "meshwork" of natures integrated into human experience'.[44] Similarly Jean-Claude Penrad uses the to and fro movement of the 'ressac', — which refers to the movement of the waves as it hits the shore and then returns on itself to sea, — as a way to elucidate the perpetual influence of both the sea and land on the littoral communities that populate the Indian ocean rim.[45] This thesis will also enact a pendulum-like movement, looking from the shore to the sea and the sea to the shore. I do so by turning more specifically to Kamau Brathwaite's idea of 'tidalectics' as a tool to bring a more certain and detailed literary sensibility to a research field that is—implicitly and explicitly—forming around the idea of 'fluid ontology'.[46] Brathwaite rejects the traditional epistemologies of dialectics and instead advocates a more cyclical model of reasoning and conceptualising inspired by the movement and rhythm of the sea. [47] Brathwaite states that 'in the culture of circle "success" moves outward from the centre to circumference and back again: a tidal dialectic: an ital dialectic: continuum across the peristyle'.[48] Like the movement of the ocean, Brathwaite argues that communities that follow a 'tidalectics' measure success and advancement not through a

[42] Anderson and Peters, p. 12.
[43] Anderson and Peters, p. 12.
[44] Anderson and Peters, p. 12.
[45] Jean-Claude Penrad, 'Societies of the ressac: the mainland meets the ocean', in *Continuity and Autonomy in Swahili communities: inland influences and strategies of self-determination*, ed. by David Parkin (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994), pp. 41-48 (p. 41).
[46] Kamau Brathwaite, 'Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms', in *Missile and Capsule*, ed. by Jurgen Martini (Bremen: University of Bremen, 1983), pp. 9-54 (p. 42).
[47] Brathwaite, p. 42.
[48] Brathwaite, p. 42.

continuous linear progress (a dialectice of thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis) but rather find value and meaning through a continuous backwards and forwards movement.[49]

Brathwaite's 'tidalectics' has inspired the structure and rhythm of my thesis and the ways that I cycle between the different methodologies. The scholarship from the different disciplines are not only used as a means of elucidating ideas around kinship, identity and culture that emerge from the Indian Ocean oral songs and novels; I also move back and forth in a tidalectics movement between anthropological and ethnographic work on material culture, —both my own extensive oral interviews and those from eminent scholars, — and my comparative readings as a means to create a cultural literacy which makes the oral poems accessible to a wider readership. I show that in order to understand these Indian Ocean literatures, it is important to engage with the cultural and material contexts in which they are performed and so my literary analysis of the oral and scribal literature in turn speaks back to the anthropological and ethnographic work and works on material culture. My ambition is to bring the complex customs and traditions discussed in these works to life and foster a deeper understanding of them through a direct engagement with oral expressive culture. My methods allow me to interrogate the narratives around identity, community and heritage that emerge from material practices and shows how literature can be used as a critical framework through which to complicate anthropological and ethnographic discourse.

1.4 Mapping oral expressive culture in the Indian Ocean and comparative methodologies

Throughout the thesis, I use a comparative methodology where I contrast Banaadiri oral songs with Indian Ocean texts. This methodology allows me to explore the nuances of what constitutes

[49] Brathwaite, p. 42.

an 'Indian Ocean identity' and the ways that this identity may present itself in different literary contexts. It also enables me to map the ways that an 'Indian Ocean' identity may be co-constitutive with national and local kinship identities.

Scholarship on Indian Ocean literature has tended to focus on written texts. Academics such as Meg Samuelson and Maria Olaussen have explored ideas of cosmopolitanism, migration and the Indian Ocean trading arena in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels. Isabel Hofmeyr's work on print culture in the Indian Ocean focuses on written texts to highlight a public sphere across port cities in the region. She explored the print trajectories in major cities in Southern and East Africa where different diasporic groups from across the Indian Ocean intersected and created 'multilingual, multi-racial, and multireligious printing ventures'.[50] She reveals these communities produced a stream of print culture in the form of 'periodicals, pamphlets, leaflets, and tracts' which traversed the port cities dotted around the Indian Ocean rim; reflecting their transoceanic schemes and creating 'maritime markets of faith, ideology, and information'.[51]

Through tracing these Indian ocean print cultures, Hofmeyr offers different global histories of print and books to the dominant Europeanised trajectories; ones which follow a 'south/south axis' rather than a 'north/south axis'.[52] She shows that in cities such as Bombay, Madras, Zanzibar and Durban, an educated elite were engaging in a 'network of textual exchange and circulation which built on sustained and invented forms of universalism across the Indian Ocean'.[53]

Although tracing the histories of print culture provides one of way of mapping the stories of communities in the Indian Ocean, it follows the trajectory of a particular stratum: an elite, literate, political, mobile, and highly educated sub-section of the community. Through following the trajectories of print culture, Hofmeyr highlights the stories and narratives of literate

[50] Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press: experiments in slow reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 33.
[51] Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press,* p. 33.
[52] Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Indian Ocean Lives and Letters', *English in Africa*, 35 (2008), 11-25 (p. 12).
[53] Hofmeyr, 'Indian Ocean Lives and Letters', p. 12.

communities while inadvertently silencing the stories and narratives of Indian Ocean communities who have a more oral than textual tradition. Through focusing on oral expressive culture in both oral and scribal Indian Ocean literature, this thesis follows a different trajectory; promoting the stories of people from a wide cross section of communities: the stories of spinners and weavers of cloth, coastal women, fishermen, and merchants.

A focus on oral expressive culture in Banaadiri oral poems and Indian Ocean texts maps cultural transoceanic networks, and allows me to explore ideas of community, tradition and cultural heritage. This is particularly relevant to consider given that 'before the 1950s, the Somali language was not used to any appreciable extent as a vehicle for written, as opposed to oral, literature' and a Somali standardised written script was not introduced until 1972.[54] Although written literature is a modern phenomenon in Somalia, there is a long history of oral literature:

> There was a thriving oral literature, which was truly oral in the sense that its composition, memorization, transmission and dissemination all took place without recourse at any stage to writing or any other technology of communication and memory storage. Many of its genres were such as are commonly found in oral literatures all over the world: poetic texts for work and dance songs, tales and anecdotes for adults, and animal fables for children.[55]

The comparative methodology used in this thesis highlights that orality, expressive culture and voice are not only important in the context of Banaadiri oral poems but also in globally circulating Indian Ocean texts. Cristina Ali Farah, Amitav Ghosh, and Yvoonne Adhiambo Owuor are all novelists and scribal writers who privilege orality or oral narrative structures in their works. Amitav Ghosh is highly alert to the diversity and intersections between South Asian languages in

[54] B. W. Andrzejewski, 'The literary culture of the Somali people', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 23 (2011), 9-7 (p. 9).
[55] Andrzejewski, p. 9.

his writing, while Cristina Ali Farah's literary voice is 'profoundly shaped by the African oral tradition'.[56] When asked in an interview about the oral story-telling quality of her work, Cristina Ali Farah asserts that she was looking for a mode of story-telling that 'could embody the throbbing power of the voice'.[57] Owuor is a melodic and lyrical writer and her novel, *The Dragonfly Sea*, is filled with the sounds of the Indian Ocean world: from Swahili proverbs and authorisms, Hindi songs from Bollywood movies, Sufi poetry, and music in the form of Taraab, Bangla, Kora and classical Persian. Moreover, Owuor, Ghosh and Ali Farah's fiction are brimming with voices. They use a polyphonic method in their literature which involves multiple narrators and voices within one narrative. The same story is often told from different narrators; each inflecting the story with their own perspective, linguistic register, dialect and accent. A focus on oral expressive culture in both oral poems and written texts enables an analysis that values the qualities of voice and listening even within a textual analysis. It breaks down the barriers between orality and literacy through the use of a range of analytical approaches including close reading, close listening, textual and performance analysis.

Furthermore, this comparative methodology has a synergistic effect; allowing the researcher to use both the oral and written texts as a means to challenge, extend and enrich one another. Many of the Banaadiri oral songs that I analyse are short but highly intricate and deeply layered. Reading these alongside the global Indian Ocean novels and texts allows the reader to draw out many of the deeper, more rooted ideas about identity and culture. Through using literary global texts, I am able to explore many of the distinctive ideas around community, identity and culture that are embedded in the oral songs. Conversely, using intricate oral songs to analyse elaborate Indian Ocean novels brings a particularity to these expansive texts. This comparative approach allows the researcher to hone in on particular themes such as weaving or embodiment

[56] Giovanna Bellesia-Contuzzi and Victoria Offredi Poletto, 'Translator's Preface' in Farah, Ubax Cristina Ali, *Little Mother: a novel*, trans by Giovanna Bellesia-Contuzzi and Victoria Offredi Poletto (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. xi-xii (p. xi).
[57] Claire Jacobson, 'Between two worlds: An exclusive interview with Ubah Cristina Ali Farah', *Asymptote*, 15 May 2017, p. 1.

and explore how through these specific topics, ideas about community, identity and culture are presented.

In addition to its methodological distinctiveness, this project will also leave an oral legacy in the form of an archive, consisting of recordings of the Banaadiri poetry discussed in the project in addition to oral interviews with all of the writers and poets. Throughout this project, I have documented, translated and analysed Banaadiri oral poetry in order to preserve this rich oral tradition. I have been working with both oral poets in the Banaadiri community and academics in the British Library to archive this poetry and once this project has been completed, I will be holding an exhibition so that members of the general public can listen to the sounds of the Indian Ocean world. Archiving these oral poems will prove to be an invaluable way of preserving Somali heritage and culture.

1.5 Banaadiri oral poetry: *hees* and *geeraar*

In this project, I collect, translate and analyse two different types of Banaadiri oral poetry: *hees* and *geeraar*. Scholarship on Somali poetry has tended to focus on northern pastoral poetry or the poetry of people from a nomadic pastoralist background. Axmed Cali Aboxor contends that 'Somali oral poetry, particularly the northern pastoral poetry, is generally divided into two categories, classical and modern'.[58] Moreover, classical poetry is 'further divided into *maanso* and *heeso* categories'.[59] While both *maanso* and *heeso* share similarities such as that they are both metrical and alliterative, there are stark difference between them. Aboxor states 'the *maanso* category, denoting serious, poetry, includes the genres of *gabbay*, *geeraar* and *jiifto*, all composed by male adults and all dealing with important political and social matters'.[60] In contrast,

[58] Axmed Cali Abokor, Somali Pastoral Work Songs: the Poetic Voice of the Politically Powerless (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1990), p. 19.
[59] Aboxor, p. 19.
[60] Aboxor, p. 19.

'the *heeso* or "song" category, which is characterized as "non-serious" or "trivial", consists of recreational and work songs'.[61] *Heeso* are 'normally associated with rhythmic activities and composed as well as performed by women or young men'.[62] Linguist Martin Orwin, further elucidates that *maanso* is a category of poetry 'whose composer is known, which is composed prior to performance and must be presented verbatim', whereas *hees* is a category of poetry 'that is generally performed in association with work or dance; the composers of hees are not generally known and there is not the expectation of verbatim performance'. [63] Orwin also argues that the differences between these two types of poetry are also informed by questions of status. *Hees* poems are considered of less status than *maanso*. Orwin asserts that 'it may be assumed that it is the status of the person composing and/or performing that leads to the types of poems themselves being regarded as of greater or lesser status'.[64] *Hees* tends to be performed by women and younger men, who have less social and political power, whereas *maanso* tends to be composed and performed by older men.

The Banaadiri *heeso* and *geeraar* that I collected as part of this thesis complicate the rigid separation between *maanso* and *hees* that is proposed in scholarship on the poetry of people from a nomadic pastoralist background. I show that although in nomadic pastoralist traditions, *hees* may be a genre of oral poetry that is merely perceived as trivial or an entertaining form of expressive culture used to accompany labour, in Banaadir culture, *hees* is a genre of poetry that carries significant social and cultural functions and conveys important messages. Both of the *heeso*, 'Shaqo' and 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', that I analyse in thesis explore important issues around Banaadiri Indian Ocean identity, community-making and cultural heritage. 'Shaqo' shows the way that a female work song can be an alternative way to document the Banaadiri people's cloth manufacture and its importance to both Somali and Indian Ocean textile industries. 'Waa

[61] Aboxor, p. 20.
[62] Aboxor, p. 20.
[63] Martin Orwin, 'On the Concept of "Definitive Text" in Somali Poetry', *Oral Tradition*, 20 (2005), 278-299 (p. 281).
[64] Orwin, p. 286.

Guuriheeynnaa' is a song composed to preserve and promote traditional Banaadiri wedding customs both within the Banaadiri community and wider Somalia. Similarly, the archive of *heeso* that I collected as part of this project also challenges the idea of *heeso* as a frivolous and unimportant form of Somali oral poetry. These songs act as cultural artefacts preserving and expressing the Banaadiri people's littoral culture and history. They are sung by both men and women of all ages and cover a wide cross-section of purposes: weaving songs, and fishing songs as well as, religious praise songs, lullabies, and songs to celebrate traditions such as weddings.

The Banaadiri *geeraar* used in this thesis also challenges the strict division between *maanso* and *hees* which is suggested in academic literature on Somali poetry. In the nomadic pastoralist tradition, the *maanso* category of poetry deal with important political or social issues. The *geeraar* in particular has historically been used for war and conflict. Linguist B.W Andrzejewski and anthropologist I. M. Lewis in their book *Somali Poetry: an introduction* state in relation to *geeraar* that 'in the old days, when one clan declared war on another, the challenge to fight at an appointed place was usually delivered in this form'.[65] Moreover, it was 'chanted to pour insults and abuse on one's opponents before the battle, and to raise the morale of one's own warriors'.[66] Moreover, the *geeraar* can also be used to express other serious issues. Aboxor contends that the *gabay* is 'usually employed in serious argumentative debates between individuals or groups', the *geeraar* is usually used in relation to 'feuds and wars and boasts the accomplishments of good warriors, and the praising of horses and camels' whereas the *jiifto* is 'employed for the expression of deep feelings related to religious teachings or the exposition of man's deep melancholy'.[67] However, 'the distinction of topics among all these genres is not excusive but inclusive, as any one of the three can be used for most of the stated functions'.[68] While this scholarship suggests that the *geeraar* is performed in particular political and social situations such as in times of war and conflict, and in arguments between individuals and clan

[65] B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry: an introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 49.
[66] Andrzejewski and Lewis, p. 49.
[67] Abokor, pp. 19- 20.
[68] Abokor, p. 20.

groups and that the *hees* is the poetic genre used to support labour and work, the Banaadiri *geeraar* analysed in this thesis were composed to support fishing labour. It is through the *geeraarro* that the fishermen entertain themselves while on the fishing boat, to praise the fish that they hunt, to congratulate themselves when they have a successful fishing trip and to commiserate when they have a bad fishing expedition. This highlights that the *geeraar* and *hees* serve different purposes within the Banaadiri coastal community to people from a nomadic pastoralist background.

Throughout his article 'On the concept of "Definitive Text" in Somali Poetry', Orwin explores 'the idea of a "correct" version' in the *maanso* and *hees* categories of Somali poetry. He argues that there exists 'a definitive text' of *maanso* because when they are 'performed the composer must be acknowledged and the reciter must present the poem verbatim, without change'.[69] In contrast, 'although *heeso* must have been composed by individual artists at some point in the past, they have become part of the heritage of the people as whole' and as such 'may be performed without mentioning anything of their compositional context, and, as part of this general heritage, may be changed, something which is not possible with *maanso'*.[70]

Orwin argues it is not only the 'extratextual characteristics' of the *maanso* poems that support the 'concept of the definitive text' but also 'some intratextual characteristics'.[71] He explains that both the language and structure used in a *maanso* poem 'underpins the idea of it being a coherent and individuated definitive text'.[72] It has a coherent structure consisting of three sections: '*arar*, *dhexdhexaad*, and *gebaggebo*, which we might translate as "introduction", "middle section", and "end," respectively'.[73] Orwin argues that the *maanso* poem is an 'individuated product' that can be meaningful in its original social/political/cultural/historical context but also in different social/political/cultural/historical contexts.[74] The self-contained

[69] Orwin, p. 287.
[70] Orwin, p. 287.
[71] Orwin, p. 288.
[72] Orwin, p. 289.
[73] Orwin, p. 289.
[74] Orwin, p. 289.

coherent nature of the *maanso* poem allows it to exceed 'both the original context of its composition and the related context-specific expectation of listeners who are present at the time and place of its original composition and performance'.[75]

In this thesis, I show that that although in the Banaadiri tradition *hees* maybe a category of Somali poetry that does not have 'a definitive text', there is a strong sense of cultural continuity through the melody. *Hees* consists of three parts: *miraha* (the words), *Laxanka* (the melody), and *Muusika* (the music).[76] As Orwin argues, in the genre of *hees*, the *miraha* can be completely or somewhat changed so a person can take an established song, change/modify the words and then perform it.[77] Although this means that there is no formal established mode of ownership of a song, different forms of layered ownership emerge through the use of the melody. Each person who takes the song and uses the same melody becomes part of the process of innovating and modernising the song. Moreover, through the passing of a particular melody from generation to generation, a mode of cultural continuation is carried out. The words of the *hees* may change to suit a different audience and social, political or cultural context but the melody remains the same. Therefore, all the performers through the generations take part in an extra-textual form of network with those who have sung the songs before them.

1.6 The Banaadiri performers and composers of the *heeso* and *geeraarro*

1.6.1 Aisha Karama Saed

Both of the versions of '*Shaqo'* and '*Waa Guuriheeynnaa'* that I analyse in this project were performed by Aisha Karama Saed in her home in Harrow. I was particularly grateful that Aisha

[75] Orwin, p. 291.
[76] Personal Interview with Mohamed Maclow Nuur, 4 December 2014.
[77] Personal Interview with Sharif Maye Osman, 24 June 2017.

performed these songs as her mother, Faduma Qaasim Hilowle, the famous singer, had performed a version of both songs on Somali television in the 1980s and was thereby the main person responsible for publicising them. It is important that recognition is given to both women and their role in promoting Banaadiri song and culture. A brief biography of Faduma Qaasim Hilowle's life and career follows Aisha Karama's biography.

Aisha Karama Saed was born on the 11th July 1972 in the *Boondheere* district of Mogadishu, Somalia. She was born into an illustrious family known for their contribution to Somali arts and culture; her grandfather was the famous patriot and singer, Qaasim Hilowle, renowned for composing and singing *heesaha jacayl* (love songs) and *heesaha waddani* (nationalist songs). Although he was a carpenter by trade, he garnered a large following as a young man through his weekly performances of his nationalist songs in an open market, *Suuq Aflershe*, in *Boondheere.*[78]

During colonisation, Qaasim Hilowle used his nationalist songs to gather support for organisations such as the Somali Youth League and to encourage Somali people to unite together to overthrow the colonial powers and gain independence.[79] Post- independence, he used his songs to support the governments of Somalia. When Radio Mogadishu was established, Qaasim Hilowle was among the first group of singers, musicians and entertainers to be employed there. He quickly rose to become a popular performer and singer on Radio Mogadishu and subsequently in the National Theatre of Somalia when it was opened in 1967. Qaasim used his songs as a means of fostering a love for Somalia among his followers and listeners. He also played an important role in promoting and celebrating Somali folk dance. He brought together a troupe of dancers to perform on stage and facilitated their learning of different folk dances from across the regions of Somalia. This troupe went on to gain national acclaim and receive funding from the government to perform folk dances throughout Somalia. Qaasim Hilowle was honoured by President Siad Barre for being a patriot and for his services to Somali music and culture with *Billad Qalin* (a silver

[78] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed 4 March 2019.
[79] The Somali Youth League were the first Somali political party and played an instrumental role in Somalia's road to independence.

medal) in Mogadishu Stadium. He was the first person from the Banaadiri region to receive such a distinction as a singer and entertainer.[80]

Aisha began singing at a young age. As someone who came from a family of singers and entertainers, Aisha regularly participated in the singing competitions that were held between secondary school students each year across Somalia.[81] From the age of seven, she would sing as part of the chorus of the praise songs that her mother performed and recorded. Faduma Qassim had great confidence in Aisha's ability to sing and she was given an even greater role in supporting her mother's work as she got older. Aisha would often record some of the praise songs composed for her mother to sing and whenever her mother could not perform at a wedding, Aisha would perform in her place. In 1989, she sang in her first play, a Banaadiri drama called *Jezaarka Jaceylka* in which she performed three songs and worked alongside eminent Banaadiri artists such as Luul Jeylaani and Aweys Qamiis.[82]

Although Aisha has chosen not to follow in her grandfather and mother's footsteps in pursuing a career in singing and performance on a large scale, she has continued her mother's legacy by composing and singing praise and prayer songs for weddings. She also regularly participates in Banaadiri cultural festivities and events in the UK to commemorate poets, singers and musicians where she sings her mother's songs to honour her.[83]

1.6.2 Faduma Qaasim Hilowle

Faduma Qaasim Hilowle was born on the 7th October 1949 in the *Boondheere* district of Mogadishu and gave her first public performance when she was only seven years old. She sang

[80] Personal Interview Aisha Karama Saed. 4 March 2019.
[81] Aisha Karama Saed went to *Wiilwaal* primary school and *Shekh Yusuf Al-Kawneyn* secondary school in Mogadishu.
[82] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed 4 March 2019.
[83] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.

'*Caafimaad*', composed by her father, in a small theatre called Duuna, which is inside the Ex Fiera next to the National Theatre.[84]

Faduma began working in Radio Mogadishu when she was 16 and would sing the opening song for the afternoon segment of the radio. She also anchored a show called '*Imaqashii Imadadaali'* which was an entertainment programme that played songs and discussed stories, music, and entertainment news.[85] She would also record many of the latest or popular songs so that they could be broadcast on radio Mogadishu. Faduma Qassim was famous for singing a range of *heeso*, which included *heesaha waddani* (nationalist songs) *heesaha dhaqanka* (cultural songs), *heesaha ammaanta* (praise songs), and *heesaha jacayl* (love songs).[86]

Faduma Qassim was part of a troupe called *Hooyada Fanka Soomaaliyeed Hobala Waaberi* which was funded by the government to promote Somali culture through performing concerts and plays in the National Theatre in Mogadishu. The troupe performed in many Somali cultural festivals and concerts and also in events to welcome heads of states and foreign dignitaries to Somalia. As a member of the *Waaberi* troupe, Faduma was sent abroad by the Somali government to represent Somalia in cultural festivals, seminars, and radio programmes in different countries around the world as means of celebrating and further strengthening the ties between Somalia and other countries. She would sing in the native language of the many countries that she visited, including Arabic, Italian, Chinese, Swahili and English.[87]

Faduma Qaasim also worked with *Libaaxyada Maaweeliska Banaadiri*, (the lions of Benaadir entertainment**),** a Banaadiri troupe who promoted the performing arts heritage of the Benaadir region. Along with her troupe, Faduma would not only regularly perform in the National Theatre of Somalia but also toured throughout Somalia performing their plays; exhibiting and teaching their Banaadiri culture and arts to audiences in different cities from Southern Somalia,

[84] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[85] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[86] Faduma was also famous for singing *heesaha ammaanta* (praise songs) in wedding for people from all over Somalia. She would sing regionally specific cultural wedding songs to suit each bride and groom.
[87] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.

through central Somalia to the northern regions.[88] When there were no theatres or large venues in a particular city, they would perform outside in a large open space.[89]

In tribute to her extraordinary contribution to Somali arts and culture, Faduma was given the nickname '*Feynuuska Faanka*'.[90] *Faynuuska* was the name for the gas lanterns that were used before electricity in Somalia and *Faanka* is a term used to refer to the arts. She was named '*Feynuuska Faanka*' to signify not only that she was 'a light in the arts' but also that she lit the way for many other artists and entertainers who came after her.[91] Faduma Qassim remains one of the most acclaimed singers of the Banaadiri coast as well as wider Somali society.[92]

1.6.3 Ali Osman 'Drog'

Both 'Shaqo' and 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' were composed by Ali Osman 'Drog', a distinguished Banaadiri *Abwaan*.[93] Although his father was a weaver of *Alindga,* known as the Futa Benaadir in the Global North, he came from the same lineage as many other eminent Banaadiri *Abwaans*, such as Aweys Geedow Aw Diinle and Macow Aw Diinle.[94]

Ali Osman 'Drog' was famous for composing many of the *heeso*, *gabbay*, and *geeraar* for the Banaadiri plays that were being performed in the National Theatre in Mogadishu. When it came to *heeso* in particular, he tended to compose the words or lyrics of *heesaha dhaqanka oo Banaadiriga* (Banaadiri cultural songs), *heesaha ammaanta* (praise songs), *heesaha jacayl* (love songs) and *heesaha dua* (prayer songs). Although he had a prodigious gift for creating a myriad of

[88] They travelled through the different regions of Somalia from the South until the north; performing in cities such as Afgooye, Marca, Baido, Beledweyne, Jowhar, Galkayo, Bura, Berbera and Sheikh
[89] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[90] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[91] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[92] Faduma Qaasim Hilowle died on the 5th of October 2011 in London. Her funeral prayer was attended by thousands of Somali people who travelled from all over the UK and abroad to pay their respects to someone who had touched their lives deeply through her music and performances.
[93] *Abwaan* is a Somali term used to refer to a gifted wiseman who possesses the immense creative skills to be able to compose poems, plays and/or other forms of literature. Aweys Geedow Diinleh, Dr Rafi, Ali, Macow O'diinleh, Mohammed Nuur Dhanaanow were some of the other prominent Banaadiri *Abwaans*.
[94] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.

different types and genres of poetry, he was not literate and so worked closely with a scribe, Muhammed Kitaara.[95]

Ali Osman 'Drog' and Faduma Qaasim Hilowle developed a special working relationship. He would spend many afternoons in her home composing the praise songs which Muhammed Kitaara would scribe and then Faduma Qaasim Hilowle would record for people's weddings.[96]

1.6.4 Haji Malaakh Haji

All of the fishing *geeraarro* that I have recorded and translated for this project were provided by Haji Mehdi Haji, better known by the Banaadiri community in Mogadishu as Haji Malaakh Haji. *Malaakh* is a term used in the South of Somalia to refer to the king of a clan. Although Haji Malaakh Haji is not a *Malaakh*, he comes from a lineage where many of his forefathers were the Malaakh of the Morshe clan including both his father and grandfather. The *Malaakh* has a tremendous amount of authority and responsibility within the clan. This responsibility includes resolving conflicts, arranging marriages and dealing with disputes around divorce as well as a myriad of other things. Thus, Haji Malaakh Haji's family are held in high esteem by their entire community and seen as '*garsoorka dhaqanka'* which translates as the 'mediator' or 'judge' of the culture or tradition.[97]

In addition to coming from a lineage that produced many *Malaakhyo*, Haji Malaakh Haji also came from a long line of fishermen; his father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all men who made their living from fishing.[98] He was born in 1959 in the Xamar Weyne district of Mogadishu, where he still lives. His house is on the coast across from a hill called Abu Hussein from where the boats depart every afternoon to do their fishing.[99] Haji began his work as a

[95] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[96] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 4 March 2019.
[97] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.
[98] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed and Haji Malaakh Haji, 18 April 2019.
[99] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed and Haji Malaakh Haji, 18 April 2019.

fisherman when he was 13 years old and has garnered a reputation among the Banaadiri people of Mogadishu for his knowledge and expertise of the sea. Through the many years that Haji has worked as a fisherman, he has not only learnt the skills needed to be a successful fisherman but also a considerable number of fishing *geeraarro* used to support the labour. As a boy training to become a fisherman, Haji was privy to the many fishing *geeraar* that his father, grandfather and the other older fishermen performed throughout the entire fishing journey. This included *geeraar* to prepare themselves before they board the fishing boat, to encourage themselves as they fish, to praise themselves when they catch lots fish, and to console themselves when they catch only a few.[100]

1.6.5 Asha Malaakh Haji

Although Haji Malaakh Haji performed the *geeraarro*, both Haji and his younger sister Asha explained the cultural traditions discussed in the *geeraarro* and the contexts in which they are performed. It is important that I honour Asha's part in explaining Banaadiri fishing customs and traditions by briefly outlining her biography and career highlights. Asha, like Haji, was born in Xamar Weyne and lives in the same building as her brother on the coast of Mogadishu. Although Asha, on account of being a woman, was not able to learn to fish, she was able to continue her family's fishing legacy in other ways. Asha owns a number of boats, which she makes a living from by employing fishermen to catch fish on her behalf and sell them at the market.[101] She has also been instrumental in supporting many other women in her community who seek to make a living from the sea. In Banaadiri culture, there has always been a social stigma around women fishing. Thus prior to the civil war, the wives of fishermen relied on their husbands' labour for their household income. However, after the civil war broke out, a lot of men were either killed or caught up in the conflict and so women had to become the breadwinners. Asha has taught

[100] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.
[101] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.

Banaadiri women, who live in Mogadishu, how to sew a fishing net so that they can use it to catch fish to sell at markets and make an income. Although it is still not socially acceptable for Banaadiri women to travel on a boat and fish in the deep sea, using a net enables them to fish in the waters close to the shore. Thus, Asha has been integral to women carving out a living within the male-dominated world of fishing.

Many of the poet performers and interlocutors mentioned above were instrumental to my translation practice. Interviewing these members of the Banaadiri community helped me to become more connected to the oral poems and informed my translations. It taught me that the poems were not only cultural artefacts used to preserve their heritage but a continued part of their lived reality. The oral poems are used by the community in their day to day life to support traditions and customs, different types of labour and to express their cultural identity. Thus, by speaking both formally and informally to the poet performers and interlocutors, I gained a cultural literacy through which to access the significance of each of the *heeso* and *geeraarro* and to understand their enduring importance within the Banaadiri community.

Chapter 1 Cultural and linguistic translations of Banaadiri oral poetry

1.1 My relationship to Somali

The Somali language is my mother tongue. As a Somali person who was born and raised in the diaspora, I mostly experienced Somali as an oral rather than written language. The first words I wrote and read were in English but the first words I heard and spoke were in Somali. My childhood was filled with the sounds of Somalia's rich oral tradition. As a young child, my mother would sing Somali lullabies to me to soothe me to sleep, Somali nursery rhymes to entertain me and my sibling and I would play traditional Somali children's games which involved song. My earliest memories are of sitting on a stool next to my aunt who was regaling me with Somali folktales to keep me entertained while she made traditional flat bread on the stove. *Diindiin iyo Dawaco*, (Tortoise and Fox), *Dhegdheer* (Long Ear), and *Caraweelo* (Arawelo) are a few of the many stories that I was told growing up. My love of stories and literature led me to study English Literature for my BA. Through my MA at SOAS, I explored Somali in a textual form. Although I already knew how to read Somali, it provided me with the opportunity to learn the language's complex grammar and syntax. I also began to read and translate excerpts of newspaper articles, oral poetry and folk stories. I wrote my MA dissertation on Faarax M. J. Cawl's novel *Aqoondarro Waa u Nacab Jacayl* 'Ignorance is the Enemy of Love', the first novel to be published in the Somali orthography. Given this background, I experience and translate the *heeso* and *geeraarro* as an 'insider', as well as, a scholar.

1.2 The purpose of my translation

I took the decision to translate the *heeso* and *geeraarro* as part of my undertaking to produce rigorous scholarship on their expression of ideas of community, identity and culture. In particular, I wanted to assess the ways that Indian Ocean identities may emerge from the oral poems and how this identity may be co-constitutive with local Banaadiri kinship identities. I thus consciously focused my translation on conveying meaning rather than aesthetic form. I did this by conducting a translation of the entire *hees* or *geeraar* with a focus on gaining a deep understanding of each line. My motivation for undertaking the translation of these *heeso* and *geeraarro* also extended beyond support my own scholarly research as I also wanted to make this form and tradition accessible to future literary scholars working on Banaadiri poems or on Indian Ocean expressive cultural forms. In the footnotes, I meticulously identified and explained the poetic techniques used in the oral poems such as personification, word-play, and imagery which I recognised would not be reproduced in the English due to specific cultural or linguistic connotation. I also explained any Banaadiri traditions or customs mentioned or alluded to in the *geeraar* or *hees* which would not be familiar or possibly intelligible to a non-Somali speaker.

As a scholar and a translator, I found that there was a symbiotic relationship between my translation process and my academic work— in the sense that my translation process supported my literary analysis and my literary analysis fed back into my translation process. The painstaking hours that I spent reading, listening, thinking, and translating each word of the *hees* or *geeraar* helped me when it came to analysing the oral poems in my chapters. It meant that I could identify where the composer had used a particular word precisely because it had a plurality of meaning. I could explore the play on words that was often present in the *heeso* and the *geeraar* as well as the plethora of connotations that one word carried. Moreover, my translation work made me feel that I was not merely a listener, hearing the poems as an outsider, but somebody who was already deeply immersed in the oral poems. It helped me to explore each poem's distinctive rhythm, the ideas around Indian Ocean materiality, embodiment and ecologies that were being conveyed through the words and to unpack the beautiful imagery intricately woven into the poems. In turn, conducting my literary analysis led me to go back to my translations and

rigorously question the translation choices that I made where there was more than one possible 'correct translation' and to make changes based on further contemplation.

1.3 Transcribing the oral poems and exploring dialect differences

Aisha Karama transcribed both of the *hees* and *geeraar* poems because there were certain words in the Banaadiri dialect that I was not familiar with and I wanted to make sure that the poems were written accurately. Although I was raised in a household where both the Northern Somali dialects and a form of the Banaadir dialect are spoken, there were many terms that were unfamiliar to me on account of being born in the diaspora and speaking an amalgamation of both dialects. After Aisha and Malaaq performed the oral poems, I had a discussion with each of them about the context, and significance of the *hees* and *geeraar* respectively. In these interviews, we would then go through each-line of the oral poems and I would ask them to explain any words that were specific to the Banaadiri dialect.

African linguist Mauro Tosco argues that the Somali people divide their dialects into two groups: 'Maxaatiri Somali and May Somali'.[102] He states that 'the Maxaatiri speakers, by far the vast majority of all Somalis, occupy the dry parts of the country, are (or were) typically engaged in nomadic or semi-nomadic camel-breeding and are nearly all considered to be descendants of Samaale, or "pure" Somali'.[103] In contrast 'the May varieties are spoken by the sedentary and mainly agriculturalist population living in the area between the Webi Shabeelle and the Juba river in the South.' Most of the 'May speakers belong to the Rahanweyn clanic confederation and are considered by other Somali to be "Sab" ("low-caste")'.[104]

[102] Mauro Tosco, 'The unity and diversity of Somali dialectal variants', in *The Harmonization and Standardization of Kenyan Languages: orthography and other aspects* ed. by Nathan Oyori Ogechi, Jane A. Ngala Oduor and Peter Iribemwangi (Cape Town: Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society, 2012), pp. 263-280 (p. 268).
[103] Tosco, p, 268.
[104] Tosco, p, 268.

Linguist, Marcello Lamberti, provides a more elaborate classification of Somali dialects. He argues that 'in contrast to most African countries the Somali Democratic Republic presents a considerable linguistic homogeneity'.[105] Although there are a few 'linguistic minorities', 'they are limited to small territories, while the Somali language is the unchallenged medium all over the country'.[106] However, despite Somalia's linguistic homogeneity, the Somali language is not a 'homogeneous idiom and consists of several dialects'.[107] Lamberti divides the dialects spoken in Somalia into five or six dialectal groups. These consist of the 'Northern Somali dialects', which 'supply the official language of the Somali Democratic Republic', the 'Benaadir dialects', which 'are spoken along the coast of Southern Somalia', the 'Ashraaf dialects', which are 'spoken only in Mogadishu's Shangaani quarter and in the district of Merka', the 'May dialects, which are the usual medium of the former Upper Juba, of Lower Shabelle and partially of Lower Juba' and the 'Digil dialects, which are scattered here and there all over the May-speaking territory'.[108] Lamberti further divides each of the dialect classification into subgroups. He subdivides the 'Benaadir dialects' into three northern Benaadir dialects, '*Af-Abgaal*', '*Af-Ajuraan*', '*Af-Gaaljacal*' and two Southern Benaadir dialects, '*Af-Xamari*' and '*Af-Bimaal*'.[109]

Lamberti's rich and detailed classification system, while criticised by Ehret and Nuux (1984), supports the distinctiveness of the dialect of the Banaadiri coastal communities. The oral songs used in this project are in *Af-Xamari*, a Benaadir dialect 'spoken only in the oldest part of the town of Mogadishu, i.e. *Xamar-Weyne*'.[110] In the footnotes of my translation of each of the *heeso*, I discuss and explain a number of words that have a specific meaning in *Af-Xamari*, which would not be known to someone who was not familiar with that dialect. In 'Shaqo' there is the noun *hed* which was not a word that I had come across before and so after looking in two

[105] Marcello Lamberti, *Map of Somali Dialects in the Somali Democratic Republic* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1986), p. 13.
[106] Lamberti, p. 13.
[107] Lamberti, p. 13.
[108] Lamberti, pp. 13-14.
[109] Lamberti, pp. 17-18.
[110] Lamberti, p. 18.

dictionaries I learnt that it had two opposing meanings. It could mean 'death' or 'something to eat.' After having a discussion with various members of the Somali community, both within the Banaadiri community and outside of it, I learnt the two meanings are regionally specific. For people from the northern regions of Somalia who speak the Northern Somali dialects *hed* means 'death' but for people from the Banaadiri regions and who speak *Af-Xamari* dialect in particular *hed* could mean 'something to eat'. Moreover, through my community discussions, I learnt that *hed* means more than merely 'something to eat'. *Hed* is a term which refers to the means through which individuals gain all the necessities to life such as an income, clothes, a house, and food. I felt that the word 'livelihood' in English was very close in meaning to *hed* as a 'livelihood' is also the means of securing all the things that are necessary in life. In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' there are the words *gumud*, and *gambaalo*. In stanza two, the word *gumud* is used; a Banaadiri word which can refer to elbows, knee caps, or ankles. I found through my discussions with Aisha that this was a word specific to the Af-*Xamari* dialect and that the closest sounding word in 'Northern Somali dialects', is *gummud*, which means 'stump of amputated limb'. In the final stanza, the word *gambo* is used which in 'Northern Somali dialects' means 'head-scarf, or 'head-kerchief' but within the Banaadiri dialect *gambaalo* is a word for a cloth that can be used to cover the head, body and shoulders. In the fishing oral poems, there are a couple of terms exclusive to the *Af-Xamari* dialect. In *geeraar* 3, there is the word *heer*, which I was not familiar with, but discovered through my interviews that it has the same meaning as *reer*; a term that I have heard used often. *Reer* is a noun which can mean 'family', 'household' 'home, 'lineage', 'clan', 'tribe', 'ethnic group' or 'folk'. As in this context, it was not referring to a particular 'family' or 'clan group' but rather to a group of people who make a living from the sea, I translated it as 'folk'. Thus '*heer maanyo*' became 'sea folk'. In *geeraar* seven, there was the word *mina*. I had never come across this word before and I couldn't find it in either of the dictionaries. However, through my interviews with Haji Malaaq and his family, I found out it was a conjunction in the *Af-Xamari* dialect which is very similar to *haddi*, a conjunction, that can mean 'if', 'when', or 'while'. In the context of the *geeraar*, I translated it as 'if' because it is being used to introduce a conditional clause.

1.4 Translation stage one

After the recording and interviewing sessions with Aisha Karama or Haji Malaaq, I typed up the written transcript of the *hees* or *geeraar* after listening to the recording and ensuring that the written transcript reflected the words in the recorded oral poem. It was also at this point of the translation process that I intuitively began to structure the written transcript of the *hees* and *geeraar* to look like a poem on paper. When Aisha Karama is transcribing the oral poems, her aim is just to write the words on paper and they appear without breaks; through conducting a lot of close- listening work, I developed a written verse form to reflect the oral shape of each of the poems. I listened to where each line ended, and which lines were repeated together and I then transcribed this speech rhythm in stanzas. Although both *geeraar* and *hees* are oral poems, and therefore creating a written verse form to reflect the oral shape was not necessary for a literary analysis, I found it was helpful for this purpose: it allowed me to draw out the aesthetic beauty of the oral poems, the changes in the rhythm, the alliteration, the repetition and the thematic trajectory. Listening to 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' I realised that four ideas were conveyed through each stanza and so structured the poem into quatrains. For instance, 'Gabar iyoone garoob, /Gogoshan intii soo gableeyeen/Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa/Waa guuriheeynna. Listening to the oral recording of 'Shaqo' whilst reading the written transcript revealed discrepancies. While in the transcription of 'Shaqo' Aisha had constructed each stanza into couplets, in the oral recording each line was repeated and each alternative line had a repeated half-line following the repeated entire line. For example, Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha/ Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha/ Hooyaalada iyo dambiisha'. I changed the written transcript to reflect this pattern. I found listening to the *hees* whilst reading the written transcript also enriched my translations. It allowed me to appreciate more fully the body of these poems, both thematically (they are about women's and men's bodies) and formally (the words and rhythms of the songs support the body in performing physical labour and cultural practices). I would then begin a translation of the entire

hees with a focus on gaining a deep understanding of each line of the song. At this point of the translation, I would spend around five to six hours on each verse, going through it meticulously and using a dictionary to look up each word even if I already understood its meaning. I consulted two dictionaries for my translations. The first dictionary was the third edition of the R. David Zorc and Madina M. Osman's *Somali -English Dictionary with English Index* (1993) which was published by a US publishing house. This dictionary not only provided meanings for each of the words but also detailed grammatical information, synonyms, antonyms and alternates or variants of the same form. The second dictionary was the *Qaamuuska Af-Soomaliga* (2012) edited by Annarita Puglielli iyo Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur and published by RomaTrE- press. This is a Somali to Somali dictionary and was very useful when I wanted a deeper understanding of a particular word. I also referred to Martin Orwin's *Colloquial Somali: a complete language course* (1995) when I wanted clarification on Somali grammar. I annotated each word/ line of the poem with different possible meanings, and associations, and then deliberated on the different possible translations and annotated the poem with any further clarifications before I began to make translation decisions. In the preliminary stage of my translations, the page was a mind map with the poem in the middle and the annotations in comment boxes (see appendix A). In the next part of my translation processes, I went through the poem and translated it line by line. While undertaking the first stage of the translation processes, I would annotate the oral poems with any further questions that surfaced in preparation for my next interview with the poet or musician.

I will now turn to the significant translation decisions that I made when I undertook the first stage of my translation of 'Shaqo', 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' and the fishing *geeraar*. In 'Shaqo' the first significant translation decision that I had to make regarded the word *roon* in the lines 'Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa. / Hurdo manoo roonaa. Ka soo hadaafnay. Hooyaalade'. When I looked up the word *roon* in the dictionary, it re-affirmed my own knowledge that the adjective had two potential and closely related meanings. It could mean something that

was 'good', or 'excellent', or it could mean something that was 'better', or 'superior'.[111] I determined that 'better' or 'superior' conveyed the comparative impetus of the verse. The word *roon* describes the fact that *hawl* – the 'work' discussed in the line before – is 'better' or 'superior' for the Banaadiri person than *hurdo*, 'sleep'. I decided to use the word 'better' rather than 'superior' because it captures the more colloquial connotation of the word *roon*.

In the lines 'Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha. / Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daalimeeynaa. Hooyaalade', the most important translation decisions that I made were with regards to how I translated the words *falki* and *dal*. *Falki* is a verb which can mean to 'plait' or 'weave'. I chose the word 'weave' because it describes the manufacture of a 'mat' and 'basket' to which the *hees* refers. As 'plait' is not a verb used in the English language in relation to the making of a 'mat' or 'basket', I felt 'weave' was the best possible translation. *Dal* is a noun which has a few possible closely related meanings in English. The Zorc and Osman translates it as 'country', 'land', 'territory or 'state'.[112] I felt that 'territory' or 'state' were not suitable because they were politicalized terms and the song was not using the term in a political sense. I chose to translate *dal* as 'country' rather than 'land' because the song was talking about Somalia as more than merely a 'land'. In the *hees*, it states 'Dibcigii dalkeen waaye', which discusses the fact that Banaadiri people's weaving is integral to the 'character' of Somalia and thus *dalkeen* is referring to a more holistic vision of Somalia which encompasses things such as the economy and government but also the culture, traditions, and customs. For these reasons, 'country' was the word best suited to translate *dal* in this context.

In the lines 'Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa. / Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise. Hooyaalade', I spent a lot of time working on translating the words *kordhi* and *kaalintiise*. The word *kordhi* is a verb which the Zorc and Osman dictionary translates as to 'increase', 'raise', 'add to', 'cause to grow', 'develop' and 'exaggerate'.[113] In the context of the *hees,* it is being used in

[111] R. David Zorc and Madina M. Osman, *Somali-English Dictionary with English Index*, 3rd edn (Kensington, MD: Dunwoody Press, 1993), p. 344.
[112] Zorc and Osman, p. 81.
[113] Zorc and Osman, p. 240.

relation to the sewing of a hat and thus 'increasing' and 'adding to' were the only two viable choice from the number of translation options. In the end I chose to use 'adding to' rather than 'increasing' as the latter suggests that the Banaadiri woman is speeding up the processes of sewing rather than adding to the existing needlework on a hat so that every member of the Banaadiri community can have a role in completing the sewing. The dictionary translates *kaalin* into two words 'allotted' or 'designated' and 'task', 'job', 'contribution', 'role' or 'function'.[114] I chose 'allotted' rather than 'designated' because it is closer to the Somali meaning: 'allot' suggests that something has been divided into equal parts and these equal parts have been distributed whereas 'designation' refers to giving someone a specific role. When the *hees* states 'Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise', it is referring to the fact that the Banaadiri woman creates enough needlework so that every member of the community can take an equal share of the work. In the context in which the *hees* used *kaalin*, the translations of 'contribution' and 'function' didn't make sense. I felt 'role' was the best translation over 'job' or 'task' because it suggests having a function within a wider society, or organisation and this captures the impetus of the *hees*, which is about the creation of a community identity through cultural production rather than a specific employment or work.

In the lines 'Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa', I struggled with the words *shaaci* and *Sharaf* but eventually found a successful way of translating both into English. *Shaaci* is a verb which the dictionary translates as to 'spread', 'diffuse', 'propagate', 'divulge', and 'cause to glare'.[115] It is often used when something is advertised. I initially translated it as 'promote' because in the context of the *hees* it is used to encourage the making of the traditional hats by the Banaadiri women. However, I realised that while 'promote' captures the 'advancing' part of the meaning, it doesn't capture the 'spreading' and 'disseminating' part of the meaning of *shaaci.* In the end I chose 'propagating' because it captures both 'spreading' and 'promoting'. *Sharaf* as a noun has two meanings. It can mean 'beauty', 'grace', and 'splendour' or it can mean 'prestige',

[114] Zorc and Osman, p. 277.
[115] Zorc and Osman, p. 370.

'nobility', 'honour', 'pride' and 'reputation'.[116] Although there is a play on the dual meaning of *sharaf* in the *hees*, it is not directly being used to denote an aesthetic quality. In the context of the verse, I felt 'reputation' was the best fitting translation because it is something that can be generated through work. In the *hees*, the Banaadiri woman generate a 'reputation' through 'propagating' the making of the Banaadiri hats both within the Banaadiri, and Somali community as well as the wider world.

In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', the first significant translation decision that I made related to the words *gabar* and *garoob* in the opening lines 'Gabar iyoone garoob'. *Gabar* has a few closely related meanings: girl, daughter or maiden. As the song was being sung by the women at the *meel fadhiisis* to welcome the female congregation I knew that *gabar* in this context was not referring to a specific familial relationship in the form of 'daughter'. I translated *gabar* as 'maiden' rather 'girl' because I could tell from the entire phrase 'Gabar iyoone garoob' that the song was contrasting *gabar* with *garoob* to highlight the difference in marital status of the women who have come together to take part in the wedding tradition. In Somali *garoob* is a word which can mean either a female divorcee or a widow. In the English language there is no one word for both female divorcees, and widows. The name of a man or women who has lost a spouse are very similar, widow for women and widower for male and the word 'divorcee' is not gendered and so refers to both men and women. I couldn't find a one-word equivalent of *garoob* in English and so translated it in a few words as 'a previously married woman'. The words *gabar,* '*a maiden*' and *garoob* 'a previously married woman' capture the juxtaposition and emphasise that all women irrespective of their marriage statuses were welcome to participate in the wedding celebrations.

I found it challenging to translate the verse 'Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa'. *Gacaltooyo* is a noun which refers to an affection or close personal relationship between people. *Qabnaa* is the general present tense of the verb *qab*, which can mean to 'have', 'hold' or 'possess'.[117] I translated *qab*, as to 'have' rather than 'hold' or 'possess' because it is the most regular

[116] Zorc and Osman, p. 373.
[117] Zorc and Osman, p. 318.

expression used in relation to the word 'affection'. The verse 'Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa' can be translated as 'we have affection for him/her/them' depending on the context. I was confused by who the *hees* was suggesting had the close relationship. I initially thought it was talking about the affection that the close female kin of the bride have for the female guests that attended the *meel fadhiisis.* However, after listening to the entire verse, I realised that while the first two lines focus on the female kinship group at the *meel fadhiisis,* the last two lines focus on the bride. Thus, *gacaltooyo* was actually discussing the 'affection' that the female kinship group who have congregated at the *meel fadhiisis* have for the bride. So, I translated 'Gogoshan intii soo gableeyeene/Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa' as 'Those of us who have attended this meeting, have affection for the bride.' Although if translated literally '*Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa*', means 'we have affection for her', I chose to use the word 'bride' rather than the personal pronoun 'her' because when the song is being performed in the context of the *meel fadhiisis*, it is clear that they are referring to the bride. However, this would not be clear in a translation without the use of the word 'bride.'

The next major translation decision was with regards to the word *golaha* in the phrase 'Gabdhahan golaha jooga'. *Golaha* is the noun *gole* with the definitive article. *Gole* can be used to refer to a place where people come together to meet or where an event is held such as a 'chamber', 'hall', 'meeting place' or 'an enclosure'.[118] It can also mean a body of people such as a 'council', 'committee' or 'national assembly'.[119] In the context in which the *hees* used *golaha,* I knew it was referring to the former rather than the latter meaning. I found many of the place definitions of *golaha* were quite specific and as the *meel fadhiisis* did not have be held in a specific place, I chose to translate it as the 'meeting place'.

In *geeraar* four, I made a few significant translation decisions. In the first line, 'Tartabooy ii Tartiibso hee taago', I looked for an equivalent of the word *Tartabooy* in English but couldn't find anything appropriate so kept it in the Somali in my translations. *Tartabo* is the name of a fish,

[118] Zorc and Osman, p. 164.
[119] Zorc and Osman, p. 164.

but the fact that there doesn't seem to be an equivalent in English could mean that it is native only to the Indian Ocean and Red Sea or is given a more generic name in English and other languages. *Tartiibi* is a verb which the Zorc and Osman dictionary translates as 'proceed slowly', 'go calmly', or 'do moderately'.[120] Although those are three viable translations of the verb, none of them made sense in the context of the oral poem and so I translated it as 'slow down'. *Taago* is being used in the same way as the verb *is taag* which means 'stop'. 'Both *Tartiibso* and *taago* are imperative verbs forms that indicate the fisherman is commanding the fish. In the third and fourth lines, I spent a lot of time translating the words *Tol*, *Tirada* and *toosiha. Tol* is a noun which the dictionary translated as 'kinsman', 'distant relative', 'clan', 'tribe', or 'decent group'.[121] I translated it as 'kinsman' because it conveys that the specific *Tartabo* being spoken to in the poem and the other *Tartabo* fish that have already been caught are kin. As the term in this context is referring to the *Tartabo* species of fish, I felt 'descent group' and 'distant relative' would not be suitable translations. Furthermore, I didn't translate *tol* as 'clan' or 'tribe' because they both refer to a group of inter-related families or communities linked by blood lines rather than one closely related group. I struggled to translate the word *Tirada* and *toosiha* for different reasons. *Tiro* is a noun which has multiple closely related meanings: 'number', 'quantity', 'sum', 'total', 'counting', 'calculation', 'mathematics' and 'account'.[122] In the context of the line, only 'quantity', 'number', 'sum' or 'total' made sense. However, it was difficult to choose between these four viable translation options as they would all work perfectly in the context of the line. After much thought and deliberation, I chose to translate it as 'number' because the *geeraar* refers to a specific number of fishes: 'seventy'. I felt that 'quantity' is often used to refer to a general, rather than a specific, amount; and the terms 'total' or 'sum' tend to be used to refer to the total amount resulting from the addition of two or more numbers, amounts, or items *Toosi* as a verb can mean 'straighten', 'correct', 'direct', 'raise', and 'erect'.[123] Although these were the translations offered

[120] Zorc and Osman, p. 388.
[121] Zorc and Osman, p. 395.
[122] Zorc and Osman, p. 394.
[123] Zorc and Osman, p. 396.

by the Zorc and Osman dictionary, through my interviews I found that *Toosi* was being used in the same way as the verb *buuxi* which means 'fill'. The line suggests that the fisherman will 'fill' his existing pile of fish or increase the number of fish that he has with this *Tartabo* that he is attempting to catch. I translated *Toosi* as 'raise' because on the one hand it is a verb which means to 'increase' the amount of something, it also carries the secondary meaning of making something upright or straight that *Toosi* also carries.

The last two lines of *geeraar* two were also interesting to translate. The lines are as follows: 'Macaantiisa oo aan soo maqlayee/Ma ka maarmo inaan masruufto'. In the first line *macaan* is a noun which the Zorc and Osman dictionary translates as 'sweet flavour', and 'sweetness' but I knew it could also mean 'delicious'.[124] In the poem, it is being used to describe the fish so I initially translated it as 'deliciousness' because 'sweet' tends to be used to refer to something sugary or saccharine rather than something savoury. However, in the context of the verse it sounded awkward and laboured. I then re-translated it as 'sweet flavour' because the term 'sweet' not only sounded more melodic but also has a particular resonance of something fresh and light and thus could be used to describe fish. *Tiisa* is a possessive suffix that is attached to a feminine noun which can mean 'his' or 'its'. In this context, it is attached to *macaan* and because it refers to lots of different fish found in the Somali sea rather than specific fish kept as pets, I translated the word as 'it' rather than 'his'. The particle *soo* indicates movement towards the speaker or person referred to. *Maqal* as a verb translates as 'hear'. The *oo* is a conjunction that can join a relative clause and depending on the head noun it would be introducing a restrictive or non-restrictive relative clause. In the context of the *geeraar*, the conjunction *oo* was being used to introduce restrictive clause. I translated it as 'that'. I contemplated three viable translation options for the entire line: its sweet flavour that I heard of, its sweet flavour that I heard about, I have heard about its sweet flavour. Although the first two are more literal translations, I felt the third one captured the meaning and flowed better in English. The second

[124] Zorc and Osman, p. 266.

line 'Ma ka maarmo inaan masruufto' was difficult to translate into English. It begins with *ma* which is a negative particle and *Ka maaran* is a verb which means 'do without' or 'manage without'. The *in* introduces an in-clause in a complex sentence in Somali. In English, this is the sort of clause that is introduced by the word 'that'. The subject verbal pronoun *aan* is added to the word *in* making *inaan*. *Masruufo* is a verb which can be translated as 'spend money for food', 'pay living expenses' or 'provide for'.[125] I initially thought the line was suggesting that the fish was so delicious that the fishermen couldn't help but make a living from it. So, I translated it as 'I cannot manage without making a living from it.' However, after listening back to my interview with Haji Malaaq and Caasha Malaaq, I realised that the line was discussing the fact that the fishermen found the fish so delicious that they wanted to eat it all and thus could not spare any to sell to make their living. I found doing a translation that both captured the meaning but didn't feel awkward quite difficult. I deliberated over translating it as 'I want to eat it' which conveyed the implied meaning behind the words but I felt that it was too far from a literal meaning of the words in Somali. In the end, I chose to translate it as 'I cannot do without it, even though it pays for the living expenses' which although was not poetic did convey the meaning effectively.

Another important translation decision that I made when working with the fishing poems was in *geeraar* eight with regards to the words, *ballanbaaji*, *ballankeeyga* and *gaarsii*. *Ballanbaaji* is a verb which the dictionary translates as 'break a previous promise' or 'get out of a promise'.[126] I translated it as 'break a promise' because 'get out of a promise' is very colloquial and the poem uses it in a more formal way. Interestingly, while the term *ballan* in the verb *ballanbaaji* means 'promise', *ballan* as a noun can mean different things, 'promise', 'meeting', 'appointment', and 'rendezvous'.[127] In this particular context, 'appointment' is the most suitable translation because the *geeraar* implies that the fisherman wants to inform 'Barqad la gab' that he wishes to set up an appointment to sell the *Baalgaduud* fish that he has caught. *Gaarsii* is a verb which can mean

[125] Zorc and Osman, p. 284.
[126] Zorc and Osman, p. 29.
[127] Zorc and Osman, p. 29.

'bring', 'make someone reach', 'convey', 'inflict', 'inform', and 'promote'.[128] In this context, I translated it as 'convey' because it was a perfect fit for *gaarsii* as both verbs can mean to 'communicate' a message or information but can also refer to something being transported or travelling.'

I would also deconstruct any pronoun and preposition clusters used in the *heeso and geeraarro.* In the Somali language, the same pronoun and preposition clusters can mean different things in different contexts and it was essential for me to understand which of a defined set of possible meanings the context demanded. In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', I had to deconstruct and translate the preposition cluster *ugu* in the verse 'Guulle ugu soo gargaaray. *Ugu* combines two preverbal preposition particles *u* and *ku.* Depending on the context, *u* can mean 'to', 'towards', 'for', and 'on 'behalf', whereas *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to' 'into', 'onto', 'upon', 'with', 'by means of', 'using'. I initially translated 'Guulle ugu soo gargaaray' as 'God supported it for her' but felt this was awkward for a translation of a poem. I changed it slightly to 'God supported her with it' as this was an accurate yet more fluid translation. I felt that this change made it clear in English yet didn't compromise the meaning from the Somali. I also deconstructed and translated the cluster *loo* in the verse 'Geniyaal oo dahab ah Gumuddeeda hoos luqunta loo geliyaa'. Although I was already familiar with the pronoun and preposition cluster *loo*, I still deconstructed it to make sure that I was translating it correctly. *Loo* is comprised of *la* and *u*. As discussed earlier, *u* is a preverbal preposition particle which can mean 'to', 'towards', 'for', and 'on 'behalf'. '*La*' is the impersonal pronoun but can be rendered as the passive when translated into English. There is, however, no passive construction in the Somali language. For example, '*waa la dhisay'* is translated as 'it was built' in English but literally means 'one built it' in Somali. I translated the verse with *loo* in the *hees* as 'Guineas that are gold are put on her ankles until the neck for her.'

I struggled with translating *geeraar* nine because of the complex pronoun and preposition clusters and conjunction used in the poem. The first line was quite straightforward: 'Keenoow

[128] Zorc and Osman, p. 147.

waxba ma keenin'. *Keenoow* comes from the verb *Keen* which means to 'bring'. The term *Keenoow* is being used here in a playful way to refer to a fisherman who is known for always catching fish. I translated it as 'The Bringer' because although it doesn't have the same playful sound as in the Somali, it does convey the meaning as a sort of title or nickname that can be used to refer to a particular person. *Waxba* is a term that can mean 'anything', 'nothing', or 'none at all'.[129] In this particular context I translated it as 'anything' because the other two options didn't make sense. *Ma* is a negative particle. I translated the first line as 'The Bringer did not bring anything'. The second line in this *geeraar* was more complicated to translate: 'Maxaa loo karihaa oo kurta loogu shubaa "kaalayey" la yiraah'. *Maxaa* is a question word which means 'what'. *Kari* is a verb which means 'cook' and *shub* is a verb which means 'pour'. In the *geeraar*, both these verbs are in the general present tense. *Kur* can have many meanings but, in this context, it is a noun which refers to 'small wooden bowl'. *Kaalay* is an imperative which means 'come'. *Yiri* is a verb which means 'to say' and is only used with direct speech. Thus, when it is used in relation to a phrase, command or sentence said by someone, this phrase, command or sentence is a direct quotation of what that person said. So '"kaalayey" la yiraah' literally means 'one says "come".' The first pronoun and preposition cluster used in the *geeraar* is *loo* which comprises of the impersonal pronoun *la* which in this context translates as 'one' and the preverbal preposition particle *u* which can mean 'to' or 'for'. The second cluster in the sentence was *loogu* which also consists of the impersonal pronoun and preverbal preposition particle, *la* and *u* as well as another preverbal preposition particle *ku* which can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to', 'onto', 'upon', 'with', 'by means of', and 'using'. I initially translated this second line in the *geeraar* as 'What does one cook for them which one pours in the small wooden bowl for them and/to say "come".**'** I deconstructed the pronoun and preposition cluster *loo* to mean 'one' and 'for' and the *loogu* cluster as *la*, 'one', *u* 'for' and *ku* as 'in'. I initially thought that the conjunction *oo* was being used to join a relative clause in this *geeraar* so translated it as 'which'. However, I felt that my

[129] Zorc and Osman, p. 413.

translated line was clunky and didn't capture the clarity and fluidity of the Somali. After- re-reading the *geeraar*, I realised that there was no relative clause and that the *oo* was being used to join two clauses and so translated it as 'and'. I then spent more time deconstructing the clusters and trying out different options, which brought me to: 'What does one cook for them and pour in the small wooden bowl to say 'come.' Although the impersonal pronoun *la* in *loogu* still translated as 'one', and the preverbal preposition particle *ku* meant 'in', I found that the *u* in this context actually meant 'to' rather than 'for.' Although the final 'to' in my English translation is not in the Somali, it is implied. The line suggests it is through the gesture of pouring the cooked fish into the bowl that the call to gather the family together is made.

1.5 Translation stage two

When I reached the second stage of my translation processes, I had already made most of the major translation decisions with regards to the words used in the *hees*. I then focused on more nuanced aspects of translation that I may have overlooked. Although most of the time this tended to involve small details, they still made a major difference when it came to analysing the *heeso*. In 'Shaqo', I initially translated the line 'Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa' as 'I am adding to the sewing of hats'. However, on closer inspection I realised that the *hees* had used the singular for hat *koofiyad* rather than the plural *koofiyado* so I should have translated it as 'I am adding to the sewing of a hat'. Even though this seems a miniscule point, it was very important because in the *hees* the singular hat can be understood as a metaphor for the oneness of the Banaadiri community.

Another example of a change that I made to my translation of 'Shaqo' pertains to the line 'Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey'. When I initially listened to this line in the recording, I thought the last word was *dunteenna*; *dun* is a noun which means thread and *teenna* is a possessive suffix which translates as the inclusive 'our' in English. However, when I listened to the lines a few times, I realised that it was *duntaneey* which comprises of *dun*, the demonstrative suffix *tan* which

is the equivalent of 'this' in the English language and *eey* which is the feminine vocative. I translated the entire line as 'this thread and the spinning wheel'. It was important that I made this correction because the use of *duntaneey* (this thread) rather than *dunteenna* (our thread) not only gave a particularity to this rendition of the *hees* which has been re-imagined and re-performed in different contexts but also more accurately reflects the history of imported and exported cotton in Somalia. Edward Alpers argues that in Somalia, prior to the nineteenth century, raw cotton was imported from India. However, from the early nineteenth century cotton was planted in the riverine areas between the Jubba and Shabeelle rivers, and the product was used to make cloth such as the Futa Benaadir and also exported to other parts of the Indian Ocean world. Thus, the cotton thread used in Benaadiri people's weaving was not exclusively from the Benaadir region, or even Somalia.

I also made some changes to my translations of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' in the second stage of the translation processes. I found it challenging to translate the word *guuriheeynnaa*, in the lines 'Waa guuriheeynnaa', which is a significant sentence because it is also the name of the *hees*. The verb *guuriheeynnaa* comes from the infinitive or verb root *guuris* which I had only known to mean two things. The first meaning is 'to marry off', 'arrange a marriage', or 'give in marriage', and the second meaning means to 'move' or 'drive people to migrate'. As 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' is a *hees* sung during the Banaadiri wedding custom called the *meel fadhiisis*, I assumed that the verb *guuris* related to marrying the bride and groom and so initially translated it as 'we will wed them'. However, through extensive interviews with Aisha Karama on Banaadiri wedding traditions, I found out that *guuris* was also a Banaadiri wedding tradition where the family and friends and neighbours of the bride and groom escort them to their marital home after the wedding ceremony and that the *hees* was referring to this custom when it used the verb *guuris*. After my interviews, I changed my translation of '*Waa guuriheeynnaa'* to 'we are taking her to the marital home'. I did not decide on 'we are taking them to the marital home' because although *guuris* is a tradition that both the bride and groom take part in, albeit separately, the *meel*

fadhiisis is a female only tradition and so only the bride would be present when the *hees* was being sung.

An example of a change I made to the fishing poems in this stage of the translation process relates to the line 'Tolkaa toddobaatan aa la tifay' in *geeraar* four. I initially translated this as 'Seventy of the kinsmen were plucked'. However, after re-considering the recording of the *geeraar*, I realised that it was *tolkaa* rather than *tolka*. Although a slightly different suffix on a noun may not appear to be significant, it renders a completely different meaning to the noun. The *ka* suffix ending on the noun *tol* is the definite article which makes 'the kinsmen', whereas, *kaa* is a possessive suffix added to *tol* which translates as 'your kinsmen'. So, the entire line translated was actually 'Seventy of your kinsmen were plucked'. The use of *tolkaa,* 'your kinsmen', in the line serves not only to emphasise the kinship between the *Tartabo* fish being spoken to in the poem and the other *Tartabo* fishes that have already been caught but also the kinship that exists between the fishermen who hunt these fish.

I also made changes to my translations of *geeraar* seven which is as follows 'Kun iyo Kow mina lisku keeno /Kabiir la'aan wax la keeni maayo.' *Kun iyo Kow* means 'a thousand and one'. As mentioned earlier *mina* is a conjunction which can mean 'if', 'when', or 'while'. In this context, I translated it as 'if' because it is being used to introduce a conditional clause. *Isku* in this context can be translated as 'together', 'with each other', 'altogether'. In this line, 'together' is the best suited translation. *Keen* is a verb which means 'bring'. In the second part of the sentence, *kabiir* technically means 'a senior student in Koranic school who acts as assistant to the teacher' but in this context it is being used to refer to a wiseman.[130] *La'aan* is a noun which the dictionary translates as 'lack (of)', or 'state of being without' but in the context of the line it meant 'without'.[131] *La* is an impersonal pronoun that can mean 'one', 'someone', 'you', 'they' or 'people' but can be used to render the passive sentence when translated into English. In this context, I felt 'one' was the most fitting translation. *Wax* is a noun which the Zorc and Osman dictionary

[130] Zorc and Osman, p. 229.
[131] Zorc and Osman, p. 249.

translates as ‘thing’, ‘matter’, ‘something’, ‘anything’, ‘whatever’, ‘object’, ‘item’, ‘event’, and ‘occurrence’.[132] In the *geeraar*, *wax* is being used to refer to unspecified objects so ‘event’, ‘occurrence’ and ‘matter’ didn’t make sense. Out of the other viable translation options, ‘anything’ emerged as the best translation because it captured the meanings from the Somali which is referring to unspecified objects as well as emphasising the importance of wisdom. In the final part of the *geeraar*, the negative of the present progressive is formed through the use of *keeni* the infinitive of the verb *keen* and the auxiliary form *maayo*. I initially translated the entire *geeraar* as ‘if we bring together a thousand and one, without a wiseman, one can’t bring anything.’ However, this translation didn’t capture the lyricism from the Somali so I re-translated the final part of the clause ‘wax la keeni maayo’ as ‘nothing can be brought.’ In my re-translation, *la* rendered the passive sentence in the English rather than the impersonal pronoun ‘one’. Although my translation was not in the negative of the present progressive in keeping with the Somali, it did convey the meaning from the Somali effectively.

It is in this second stage of the translation processes that I looked through the *hees* and *geeraar* to ensure that the tense of each of the lines was translated correctly. There were a few instances when I was translating ‘Shaqo’ where I had incorrectly conveyed the tense from Somali to English. I initially translated ‘Hilmaami maayaa’ as ‘I do not forget it’ and ‘Ka daali meeynaa’ as 'we do not tire from it’ but realised after closer examination that these two lines of the *hees* were in the negative of the present progressive but I had translated them in the negative of the general past. So ‘Hilmaami maayaa’ was actually ‘I am not forgetting it’ and ‘Ka daali meeynaa’ was 'we are not tiring from it’. This particular tense highlights that the Banaadiri woman is actively choosing not to forget this song and thus continues to perpetuate the stories of Banaadiri women’s labour. If I had used the negative general past tense, it would have suggested that this was something that they had habitually not done in the past rather than something which they are continuing not to do.

[132] Zorc and Osman, p. 412.

In this second translation stage, I also paid particular attention to the poetic qualities of the *hees* and *geeraar*. This generated the footnotes on the use of imagery, alliteration, and repetition. I found that listening to the recording of the *hees* while conducting this part of the translation, amplified alliteration and imagery. The footnotes identify a play on words and explain the different uses of imagery throughout the *hees*. For example, in 'Shaqo', I discussed the play on the word *shiid* in the line, 'Shiidka muufo waa shaacihaayee.' In the context in which the song uses *shiid*, the noun refers to the 'millstone' or 'grinding stone' used to make Somali home-made flat bread. However, *shiid* can also refer to a mass colourful cloth that is worn by Somali women. It is clear that the composer of 'Shaqo' has played on the dual meaning of this word. When in the *hees* the Banaadiri woman states 'Shiidka muufo waa shaacihaayee', she is encouraging the use of the flat bread grinding stone so that more women take on this labour but through the play on the duality of the word, she also continues to promote the manufacture of the Futa Benaadir.

I also explored the use of imagery in the fishing *geeraar*. In *geeraar* one, I discussed the use of a metaphor in the line 'Hirgalmadiisa waa hirka maanyo'. *Hir* is a noun which refers to the up and down movements of the sea and translates in English as 'wave' and *maanyo* is a noun which translates as 'sea'. *Hargal* as a verb means 'get into the shade' but as a noun it refers to a time between Dhuhr and Asr when people in Somalia take shade from the heat and take a nap or rest. Initially, I translated 'Hirgalmadiisa waa hirka maanyo' as 'he takes his shade in the waves of the sea' but after listening again to the oral recording of the *geeraar*, I realised that it was using a metaphor to suggest an inextricable link between the bird and the sea. The bird didn't just take a siesta in the sea but rather the bird's siesta *was* the sea. The metaphor suggests that the waves of the sea presents all that a siesta or a rest means for the bird and so therefore the bird's intensive relationship to the sea becomes a metaphor for a siesta itself. I wanted the translated line in English to reflect the metaphor in the Somali and so translated it as 'His siesta is the waves of the sea'. I found 'siesta' to be a good translation fit for *Hargal* because they are both nouns used to refer to a rest or sleep taken after lunch, especially in hot countries. I felt that my translation successfully articulates the way this large bird experiences the sea as its natural environment.

While there were instances such as the example above where I was able successfully to translate imagery from Somali to English, there were also instances where this was not possible. In the final two lines of *geeraar* one, it states 'Halbaroow hal aan waa hubaa /Hawl ninkeed ma hurto.' 'Sailor, I am sure of one thing, /a man's work is unavoidable.' *Halbaroow* is a seaman who commands the sea and teaches other men about the sea. I chose to translate it as 'sailor' because in my interview with Haji Malaaq, he explained that it was the seamen who controlled the *baxaar* and when I looked in the Zorc and Osman dictionary *baxaar* referred to the sea but also a 'sailor.' I also felt that the 'sailor' was a suitable translation for *baxaar* because experienced sailors of any rank were expected to teach inexperienced sailors the ropes. *Hal* in this context, means the number 'one' while *hub* is a verb which can mean 'be sure', 'make certain', and 'ascertain'. In the context of this line, 'ascertain' does not make sense. I chose to translate it as 'to be sure' because it is more colloquial than 'to be certain' as a translation choice. In this first line, the fisherman uses the sailor as a figure of authority through which to make a proclamation, 'Sailor, I am sure of one thing'. In the second line, 'Hawl ninkeed ma hurto', I translated *hawl* as 'work' because that is the way it is most commonly meant in Somali. *Nin* is a noun which can mean either 'man' or 'husband' and in the context of the *geeraar* means the latter. When the *geeraar* states 'Hawl ninkeed', it personifies *hawl* 'work 'by suggesting that it has a *nin* 'a husband'. Through this personification, it highlights the commitment that the fisherman has to his work by suggesting that he is married to it. *Hurti* as a noun translates as 'superfluidity', 'avoidable', 'dispensable', 'superfluous'. I chose to translate *hurtaa* as 'unavoidable' because it conveys the meaning from the Somali which suggests that the fishermen's work cannot be avoided or ignored. Although the *geeraar* conveys a message of the importance of work to the fishermen through personification, it was not possible for me to carry this personification into the English translation. A literal translation would have been 'work's husband is unavoidable' which would not make sense in English. Instead, I translated it as 'a man's work is unavoidable' which did not convey the image, but did coherently convey the meaning.

1.6 Translation Exercises

Once I had a full 'working' translation, I did an exercise where I translated some of my complex English translations back into Somali. It was through this process that I ensured that my translations captured every part of the poem. I was able to see where I had —for example— incorrectly translated a demonstrative suffix (used the word 'this' rather than 'that'). I was also able to correct where I had translated the definite article in the absolute rather than a subject case. When I was translating the *hees* 'Waa guuriheeynnaa', I asked Mohamed Hassan "Alto", a connoisseur and a translator of Somali poetry, to also translate the *hees* (see appendix B). We then compared our translations. Although there were similarities in the way that we both translated the *hees* there were also differences which generated a robust discussion. I learnt that while I translate the *hees* as close to the Somali words as possible, using one word in English language where one word is used in Somali, Mohamed Hassan is bolder in his moves away from a close translation.

For instance, Alto translated the phrase 'gibilka nuurayo' as 'the glowing and shining decorated skin' whereas I translated it as 'the glowing skin'. Alto felt *nuurayo* in context of the verse should be translated as both 'shining' and 'glowing' because it was referring to a 'shine' or 'light' that was being emitted through the skin. However, I felt his use of 'shining' in addition to 'glowing' was superfluous. Although both of the dictionaries that I consulted define the verb *nuur* as something which emits 'light' or 'shine', I decided to translate it as 'glowing' because when *nuurayo* is used in everyday Somali speech to refer to someone, it is used to convey something which is happening within the interior of the body that is then emitted through its exterior. It may that they are healthy and this health is radiated through their skin or that they are religious and this holiness permeates their skin. In the English language the verb 'glowing' is often used in the same way. When someone exudes health or a woman is pregnant, they are said to be 'glowing'. As 'glow' also connotates emitting light, I felt that it was sufficient to translate *nuurayo* without adding 'shining'. Moreover, while I had translated 'gibilka nuurayo' as close to the meaning in

Somali as possible, Alto had decided to add an additional word to his translation in the form of 'decorated'. He thought that this phrase as well as the next one in the *hees* refer to the henna designs on the bride's skin and so added the word to convey the meaning clearer in English. However, I knew from my interview with Aisha Karama that 'gibilka nuurayo' refers to the anointing and cleansing ritual of the bride's body which takes place before the henna party. The 'glowing skin' was the result of the herbs and spices used during the anointing ritual which in the *hees* can be understood to draw out the Banaadiri bride's Indian Ocean heritage from within her body and emit it through her skin. This was one of many examples of when having a cultural literacy of the *heeso* was necessary to translate it effectively.

Alto and I also discussed the way that we had translated 'Gacantooda ku saareen' differently. This verse refers to the way that the young women have decorated the bride's skin with the henna designs during the henna party called the *cillaan saar* tradition. I translated it as 'put it on with their hand', whereas Alto translated it as 'have manually made and neatly blueprinted it'. Although Alto's translation was very far from a literal translation, he felt it conveyed crucial information about the henna tattooing tradition. For instance, he thought that adding 'manually made' highlighted that the designs were applied using their hands rather than an electronic device. I took issue with 'Alto's' use of 'blueprinted' to refer to the way that the henna designs are applied because it suggests that they are etched using an original model which is then manifested on the bride's skin. However, I knew from my own interviews with Aisha Karama as well as research into henna designs in the Indian Ocean world that this was not the case. In the context of Indian Ocean communities' henna designs are influenced by patterns, flowers or plants that are local to each country as well as those patterns and designs that are brought each year from people migrating from different countries as a result of the Indian Ocean trade network. Thus, these designs would change every year depending on the fashion and the henna artist draws them without a plan, which meant that no two brides would have identical henna designs on their bodies.

I chose to translate 'Gacantooda ku saareen' as close to the meaning in Somali as possible because I felt that those specific words were deliberately being used as a form of imagery to convey a powerful message. *Gacan* is a noun which means 'hand' and *tooda* is a possessive suffix for 'their' which makes *Gacantooda* 'their hand'. *Saar* is a verb which means 'put on top of', or 'place'. I translated it as 'put it on' rather than 'place it on' because place is to put (an object or person) in a specific location while put is to place something somewhere. As the henna designs are not put on a specific area of the bride's body but usually all over it, it made more sense to use 'put it on'. The preverbal preposition particle *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to' 'into', 'onto', 'upon', 'with', 'by means of', or 'using'.[133] Out of these viable forms only three made sense in the context of the verse: 'with', 'by means of' and 'using'. I chose to translate it as 'with' because that is the most regular expression of this preposition and for this reason the most appropriate. The phrase 'Gacantooda ku saareen' was being used to explain the way that the women who were present at the *meel fadhiisis* had beautified the bride's skin in preparation for her wedding celebrations. Although the beginning of the verse uses the plural word for girls *Gabdhahan* to show that the anointing and henna placing ritual are collective cultural practices performed by the younger generation of the bride's female kin, the singular rather than plural is used for 'hand' to refer to the way they carry out these customs. In the *hees* it is *gacantooda* 'their hand' rather than *gacmohooda* 'their hands' that undertake the traditional cleansing and anointing customs and the henna adornment, which suggests that through undertaking these traditions the female kinship group become one body. I found this comparative translation exercise very useful as it showed that there is always more than one way of translating the same *hees* and it forced me to explain and endorse my decisions and practice.

1.7 Translation theory

[133] Zorc and Osman, p. 241.

When I determined that the practice of translating Somali oral works into English would be central to my doctoral research, I did not initially consider European translation theory as a body of work that I would engage with. The conceptual nature of this work seemed at odds with the functional nature of my practical translation work. However, after reading classic works by Walter Benjamin and Lawrence Venuti on translation theory, I found that these not only helped me to gain a deeper understanding of translation processes, but also honed and supported my practice. Their writings resonated with my work and informed my methodologies. They became integral to the way that I thought about cultural heritage, the impact of language choices on meaning, and the difficulties of translating culture across languages. They also taught me the importance of translating meaning rather than language, the way that the audience or readership informs the translation, and the translator's role as a bridge between cultures.

In his seminal essay 'The Task of the Translator: An introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens', Benjamin contends that translations are tasked to express 'the central reciprocal relationship between languages'.[134] He puts forward the idea of a 'pure language' in which despite the 'mutually exclusive' differences between two languages, the complementary 'intentions' of these languages can be communicated.[135] A 'pure language' is achievable because 'languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express'.[136] He uses the terms *Brot* and *pain* which both mean bread, in German and French respectively, to elucidate his idea of a 'pure language'. Although these two words refer to the same 'intended object', their 'mode of intention' is different because they have a different cultural resonance.[137] The word *Brot* means something different to a German than the word *pain* means to a French person. Benjamin argues that the task of the translator **'**consists in finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original' and his/her

[134] Benjamin, p. 77.
[135] Benjamin, p. 78.
[136] Benjamin, p. 77.
[137] Benjamin, p, 78.

translations 'instead of resembling the meaning of the original', must 'incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language'.[138] Thus, for Benjamin, the role of the translator is important because until s/he releases a pure language through his/her translation, 'it remains hidden in the languages'.[139] Conscious of Benjamin's framework, there were times that I managed to 'incorporate the original's mode of signification'. An example of this is when I translated *geeraar* seven: 'Kun iyo Kow mina lisku keeno/Kabiir la'aan wax la keeni maayo'. While the other eight fishing *geeraarro* all refer to fishing in some way, either through referring to a sea creature or a seaman from history, *geeraar* seven sounds more like a generic proverb that can be applied to lots of different contexts. I found that when I translated it with the idea of the intended object in mind, I was also focused on carrying across into the English the short pithy feel of a general truth that was being conveyed in Somali so that it still sounded like a proverb: 'If we bring together a thousand and one, without a wiseman, nothing can be brought'. Moreover, I was able to translate some of the alliteration from the Somali into the English. In the Somali the letter 'k' is translation throughout the *geeraar* whereas in the English translation I managed to alliteration the letter 'b' through the word 'bring' and 'brought'. Even though I wasn't able to translate the lyricism of the Somali, I did manage to convey some of it through this alliteration. It wasn't possible to translate the meaning of *geeraar* seven word for word but, through my translation process, and the awareness I bought to it via Benjamin's essay I crafted the 'intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language'; an 'echo of the original' and in such a way that the original and the translation become 'recognizable as fragments of a greater language'.

Benjamin also argues that translation exists both distinctly and also in connection with the original; emerging from its 'afterlife' but also giving the original 'continued life.'.[140] My

[138] Benjamin, pp. 79-81.
[139] Benjamin, p. 78.
[140] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of The Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 75-83 (p. 76).

translations and their accompanying footnotes bring to the fore the oral poems as both archaic and living; of the past and now; 'objects' that are to respected as a historical cultural artefact but also open to change as they are retold in the present. Through translating these poems into English, I have contributed to the dynamic cultural heritage of the originals. The poems addressed in this work support a labouring life or traditional practice known exclusively by members of the Banaadiri community who perform these labours in their day to day lives. When a version of both 'Shaqo' and 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' were broadcast on Somali Television in the 1980s they became known to the wider Somali community. Through my translations, these oral poems will become accessible to a wider population and build a bridge between two different cultures.

Lawrence Venuti's work also closely informed my translation methodologies. Venuti argues that 'translation is fundamentally a localizing practice' and that 'far from reproducing the source text, a translation rather transforms it by inscribing an interpretation that reflects what is intelligible and interesting to receptors'.[141] He contends that 'the transformation occurs even when the translator tries to maintain a fairly strict formal and semantic correspondence'.[142] The 'complex of meanings, values, and functions that the source text comes to support in its originary culture insures that any translation will at once fall short of and exceed whatever correspondence a translator hopes to establish by supporting different meanings, values, and functions for its receptors'.[143] From the onset, I realised that my translations would be an 'interpretation' rather than a reproduction of the original text as they needed to work through a myriad of cultural references to Banaadiri and Somali customs and traditions, such as the *meel fadhiisis* and the *cillaan saar*, that are not fully translatable into English. In keeping with Venuti's ideas, I translated the beautifully evocative imagery used in the *hees* 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', 'Gibilka nuurayo/Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan'. The phrase 'Giir giirka fuulo' describes the henna designs that adorn the bride's skin during the *meel fadhiisis* tradition. The dictionary defines the noun *giir* as

[141] Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013) p. 193. ProQuest Ebook Central.
[142] Venuti, p. 193.
[143] Venuti, p. 193.

something that is 'two-coloured' or 'spotted with colour' such as something that is 'dappled' or 'piebald'.[144] *Fuul* is a verb which means 'get on top of' or 'climb up'.[145] Thus 'Giir giirka fuulo' suggests that the henna designs were layered on top of one another and so intricately etched on the bride's skin that it gave the illusion that her skin was piebald or dappled. I initially translated 'Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan' as 'dappled upon the dappled and this reddish-brown'. However, although this literal translation conveyed the meaning of the line, I felt that the listener or reader wouldn't necessarily know that the line was alluding to the henna designs on the bride's skin. I felt that one of the most powerful things about the imagery used in this line was that although the verse did not directly reference the henna designs, through the use of the vivid language and the context in which it is sung, Somali speakers would know that it was alluding to it. I decided to change my translation to 'this reddish brown and layered dappled design' so that the words in English would also convey that it was referring to the henna designs. I didn't use the literal translation because as Venuti argues translation is a transformation rather than a reproduction of the original text that 'reflects what is intelligible and interesting to receptors'.[146]

Translation work has become an important part of this project. In addition to the poems I have referenced in the thesis, I have translated many others to accompany a collection of recordings of Banaadiri poetry that will be archived in the British Library. Translation was also a fundamental part of the oral interviews that I conducted with the poets, singers, musicians and other esteemed figures within the Banaadiri community. I would write the interview questions in English and then translate them into Somali and then translate back into English when I had conducted the interviews in Somali. Importantly, translation has not merely been functionally adjacent to the work of this thesis but a foundational and integral part of its methodology. In my literary analysis, I have engaged with the concept and practice of translation in different forms. I analysed texts in translation, such Cristina Ali Farah's 'A Dhow is Crossing the Sea', which was

[144] Zorc and Osman, p. 162.
[145] Zorc and Osman, p. 145.
[146] Venuti, p. 193.

originally written in Italian, as well as texts written in English but with excerpts in different languages such as Yvonne Adhiambo Owoor's *The Dragonfly Sea.*

Through my engagement with literary works I also came to consider the limits as well as the capacity of translation. In Cristina Ali Farah's 'A Dhow is Crossing the Sea', the work is set out in the format of two prose columns: one for the story in Italian and one for the translated English version. Through this format she highlights that although a version of the story can be translated, it cannot be replicated entirely into another language and awareness of the parallel existence of two stories in circulation remains important. Similarly, in Owoor's *The Dragonfly Sea*, there are entire passages in Kiswahili, Mandarin, Turkish and Arabic which are not translated. Instead, the reader attempts to decipher their meaning through the context, and this effort is an important part of the reading experience. Owour draws attention in these passages to the fact that not every story can be translated and that there are particular cultural terms or processes that resist translation. Farah's 'A Dhow is Crossing the Sea' also explores the idea of un-transability as a theme. In this work, a group of Somali migrants struggle to translate their Somali refuge and civil war experiences from Somali into the Italian language. Instead they create a tree of associated words to try to build a bridge between Somali and Italian.

The idea of literary work as a mode of translation also informs this thesis. The *geeraarro* and *heeso* are forms of expressive culture that have been translated and retranslated by the different generations of people that have used it in their labour and cultural traditions. In some way, these oral pieces can be seen as translations of the work they express, carrying the traces of labouring bodies at sea or weaving. These pieces of literature also translate the way that women's bodies carry cultural meaning; both fluid and harmonious as well as contested and uneven embodied forms of knowledge. In this way, the oral poems are translations of kinship, labour, and cultural relations that can be understood as part of a continuous heritage of the group who create and perform them, but also a form of knowledge that becomes part of a wider cultural heritage as it is received by and connects to other audiences in the diaspora and working in other languages.

Both the oral poems and written texts explored in this thesis show the way that literary forms translate cultural expressions which are neither fixed nor totally in flux. They reveal the way that literature is a representation and an interpretation of a culture which is both certain and uncertain simultaneously. Banaadiri *hees* in particular is a genre of poetry which represents both history as well as modernity. A sense of tradition is imparted and continued through the use of the same melody in each rendering of a song. However, the different iterations of *miraha* (the words), which can be subject to slight or complete changes, means that the *hees* is also a literary form in a state of flux. Recognising the complexity of tradition and movement in the oral poetry allows greater understanding of written texts as also a combination of fixity and flux. In Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Circle of Reason*, we are introduced to a plethora of characters who take it in turns to tell their stories in their own voice; the reader gets to know one set of characters, only for them to disappear and to be introduced to a whole new set of characters and new narrative threads. This structure means that the reader becomes heavily invested in the one constant character, Alu Bose, and his negotiation of the different types of communities that he encounters in his village in Bangladesh as well as the many other countries that he visits. A Dhow is Crossing the Sea fluctuates differently. It does not fit into one literary genre, but plays across various narrative forms, constantly shifting from being a memoir, to a prose, to a history and then poetry. The transient and fixed nature of the literary form of *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* in many ways reflects the way that a sense of community is created in the text. Many of the Somali refugees make lasting connections in transient moments, on a migrant boat, on the journey to escape the civil war and in weekly asylum seeker meetings. Moreover, Ali Farah often merges Somali oral poetry and songs within her Italian text show the way that many of her protagonists are caught between wanting to be rooted in their new homes in the diaspora and also being drawn back to their histories and memories of Somalia. Owuor's novel *The Dragonfly Sea* is another literary form which is defined by stability and fluidity in yet another way. It is a novel brimming with the voices and sounds of the Indian Ocean world: Swahili aphorism, Persian and sufi poetry, Bollywood movies in Hindi, as well as taraab, Kora and rai music. Owuor juxtaposes the worldliness and ever-

changing community of the Indian Ocean with the insular community of Pate Island which remains parochial despite the constant departure and arrival of residents. These different literary forms translate both a fluctuating and fixed idea of community which brings together and strengthens local and regional Indian Ocean kinship ties. Thus, my research has engaged with the multidimensionality of translation as theory, practice, cross-cultural bridge, thematic concern, a possibility for overcoming difference and also a way of marking the limits of that overcoming

Shaqo

Hooyaalaadanaay li hingaadihaayee,[147]

Hooyaalaadanaay li hingaadihaayee

Hooyaalaay li hingaadihaayee

Heekii hore.[148]

The previous song.

Heeskii hore.

The previous song.

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. Hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa.[149]

The man who has his work finds a livelihood.

Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa.

The man who has his work finds a livelihood.

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[147] This is a sound used to begin oral Somali poems and thus I have chosen not to translate it into English.

[148] *Heeska* means 'the song' but the *kii* definite article ending suggests that the song is one already known to the performer and listener. *Hore* in this context means 'previous', or 'former' '. *Hilmaan* is a verb which means 'forget.'

[149] By *hawl* the author means work in the sense of some sort of labour or toil. *Ninka* means 'the man'; the *ii* ending refers to a man that is already known to the performer and listener. In this instance, it signifies the universal; man refers to hu*man*. *Hed* in the Banaadiri dialect refers to something which enables someone to gain all the necessities in life such as an income, clothes, a house, and food. I felt that the word 'livelihood' in English was very close in meaning to *hed* as a 'livelihood' is also the means of securing all the things that are necessary in life.

Hooyaalaa hed waa helaayaa.

Finds a livelihood.

Hurdo manoo roona. Ka soo hadaafnay[150] . Hooyaalaadee

Sleep is not better for us. We have slowly walked from it.

Hurdo manoo roona. Ka soo hadaafnay . Hooyaalaadee

Sleep is not better for us. We have slowly walked from it.

Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha.[151]

Weave the mat and the basket for me.

Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha.

Weave the mat and the basket for me.

Hooyaalaa iyo dambiisha.

And the basket.

[150] *Roon* is an adjective which means 'good', 'excellent', 'better off', or 'better than'. I felt in the context of the *hees*, it meant 'better' as there was a comparative nature to it in the sense that 'hawshiis' 'his work' is better for him than *hurdo*, 'sleep'. The word *roon* carries a more powerful meaning in Somali than when it is translated into English. In Somali, it is used to convey that something is a better fit for you, or better for your wellbeing. In this instance, it suggests that work or labour is better for the wellbeing of the Banaadiri people than sleep. *Hadaaf* is a verb which means to 'walk slowly'. This suggests that they have slowly dragged themselves from their slumber in order to work.

[151] *Darin* is a noun which means 'mat' and *dambiil* means 'basket'. The conjunction *ii* translates as 'and'. It is used by Banaadiri people instead of *iyo*. The pronoun and preposition cluster *ii* can mean 'to me' or 'for me'. In the context of this line, it means 'for me'. The word *soo* cannot be directly translated into English. It is a word which indicates movement towards the speaker or return after an action is performed.

Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daali meeynaa. Hooyaalaadee. [152]

It is the character of our country. We are not tiring from it.

Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daali meeynaa. Hooyaalaadee

It is the character of our country. We are not tiring from it.

Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa.[153]

I am adding to the sewing of a hat.

Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa.

I am adding to the sewing of a hat.

Hooyaalaa aan tolayaa.

I am sewing.

Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise. Hooyaalaadee[154]

I am making it sufficient for every person to have his allotted role.

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[152] *Dibcigii* is an Arabic loan word which means 'character' or 'nature'. *Dal* is generally translated into English as 'country' but it has associations of 'land', 'territory' and 'state.' *Daal* is a verb which means to 'tire' or to get 'fatigued'.
[153] *Kordhi* is a verb meaning to 'increase', 'raise', 'add to', 'cause to grow', 'develop' and 'exaggerate.' I chose to translate it as 'adding to' because it best conveyed the meaning from the Somali which was stating that the Banaadiri woman was adding to the existing sewing needlework so that every member of their community can take part in the sewing of a hat. In this instance, it is used in the general present tense *kordhihaa* to highlight the perpetual nature of the sewing. There is a play on the word *tol*. In this context *tol* is used as a verb which can be translated into English as to 'sew' or 'bind together' but as a noun it can also mean 'kingsman', 'distant relative', 'clan' 'tribe' or 'descent group'. *Koofiyad* means 'a hat.'
[154] In Somali *kaafi* is a verb but when translated into English the closet translation is the adjective 'sufficient' or the adverb 'enough'. It can literally be translated as 'sufficing' but as 'I am sufficing' does not make sense in English, I translated it as 'I am making it sufficient'. *Nimba* literally means 'every man' but in this context it means 'every person'. Similar to the way that in English 'man' can refer to 'mankind' or 'human'. *Kaalin* combines two things 'allotted' or 'designated' and also 'task', 'job', 'contribution', 'role' or 'function'. In this context, I felt that 'allotted role' was the best translation.

Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise. Hooyaalaadee

I am making it sufficient for every person to have his allotted role.

Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa.[155]

I am propagating it. I make a reputation for it.

Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa.

I am propagating it. I make a reputation for it.

Hooyaalaa. Sharaf aan u yeelaa.

Hooyaalada. I honour it.

Shiidka muufo waa shaacihaayee. Hooyaalaadee [156]

I am propagating the flat bread grinding stone.

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[155] *Shaaci* is a verb which can mean to 'spread', 'propagate', and 'diffuse'. I chose to translate it as 'propagating' because it captures both the 'spreading' and 'promoting' nature of the meaning which is being conveyed through the song. *Yeel* is a verb which can mean 'act', 'do' or 'make'. In the context of the *hees*, it means 'make' because it refers to the way that the Banaadiri woman creates a reputation for the traditional hats that they wove by 'propgating' the manunfacture of it. *Sharaf* is a noun which has two meanings. It can mean 'beauty', 'grace', and 'splendour' or it can mean 'prestige', 'nobility', 'honour' and 'reputation'. In the context of the verse, I felt 'reputation' was the best way to translate *sharaf* because it was referring to the way that the Banaadiri woman through 'propagating' the making of the hats would cultivate a standing for it within the Banaadiri, and Somali community as well as the wider world. *Sharaf* is a word that tends to be used in relation to a person rather than an object in everyday Somali speech as a means to refer to their 'honour' or 'reputation'. When the Banaadiri woman uses the word *sharaf* in relation to her textile production, she personifies it and brings it to life.

[156] The noun *shiid* in this context refers to the 'millstone' or 'grinding stone' which is used to make Somali flat bread. However, *shiid* as a noun can also mean a mass colourful cloth or fabric that is generally used by women. The author plays on the word *shiid* here to reinforce the important role that the Somali Banaadiri woman plays in promoting Banaadiri textile production.

Sheygii la doonaa lagu shiidahaayee . Hooyaalaadee[157]

Mixing the item, one wants with it

Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey.[158]

This thread and the spinning wheel.

Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey.

This thread and the spinning wheel.

Hooyaalaa iyo duntaneey.

and this thread.

Marodii la doonaa lagu daabacaayee. Hooyaalaadee [159]

Embroidering the cloth, one wants with it.

Marodii la doonaa lagu daabacaayee. Hooyaalaadee

Embroidering the cloth, one wants with it.

Hooyaaladaanay li hingaadihaayee

Hooyaaladaanay li hingaadihaayee

[157] *Shey* can be translated as 'thing', article' or 'item'. The *gii* definite article ending highlights that the listener can use the bread grinding stone to make something familiar to them.
[158] *Dun* is a noun which means 'thread' . The demonstrative suffix *tan* is equivalent to 'this' in the English language and *eey* is the feminine vocative. *Dolaawga jiidaayo* is a spinning wheel.
[159] *Maro* means 'cloth'. Again the *dii* definite article ending highlights that they are discussing a particular cloth. In this case, it is the Banaadiri cloth. There is a play on the word *daabac*. In the context of the line, the verb *daabacayaa* refers to 'embroidering' but it can also mean 'printing', or 'publishing.'

Hooyaalaay li hingaadihaayee

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. Hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. Hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. Hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it

Waa Guuriheeynnaa

Gabar iyoone garoob,[160]	A maiden and a previously married woman,
Gogoshan intii soo gableeyeen[161]	Those of us who have attended this meeting,
Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa.[162]	have affection for the bride.
Waa guuriheeynnaa.[163]	We are taking her to the marital home.
Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa	We have affection for the bride.
Waa guuriheeynnaa	We are taking her to the marital home.
Gabar iyoone garoob,	A maiden and a previously married woman,
Gogoshan intii soo gableeyeen	Those who have attended this meeting,
Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa.	have affection for the bride.
Waa guuriheeynnaa.	We are taking her to the marital home.
Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa	We have affection for the bride.
Waa guuriheeynnaa	We are taking her to the marital home.
Gibilka nuurayo[164]	The glowing skin,

[160] *Garoob* means a woman who has previously been married so encapsulates both a 'divorcee' and 'widow'. The word *Iyoone* is the way that Banaadiri people say 'and' in everyday speech. The word *gabar* can mean 'a girl', 'a maiden' or 'a virgin'. It is most commonly used in day to day Somali speech to refer to 'a girl' but I have chosen the translation of 'a maiden' because in the context of this song it is being juxtaposed with the 'garoob', the previously married woman.
[161] *Gogol* as a noun refers to a 'meeting' or a 'discussion'. Interestingly as a verb *gogol* refers to the 'spreading out' of something (mats, cloth, material) upon which people can sit or lie on. In the song it implies that the meeting is taking place on the floor and the group are sitting on a large cloth, or material or mats. Soo is a directional word which refers to movement in the direction of the speaker or 'towards the speaker.' *Gableeyeene* means attended.
[162] *Gacaltooyo* refers to 'affection' or a 'close personal relationship'. The preverbal preposition *u* comes before the verb in the sentence and can mean 'to' or 'for'. In this context, it means 'for'. The verb *qab* can mean to 'have', 'hold' or 'possess'. *Qabnaa* is the general present tense of the verb *qab*. This line literally means 'We have affection for her' but I have used the word bride instead because when the song is being performed it is clear that they are referring to the bride. I want to reflect this clarity in the translation.
[163] *Guuriheeynna* derives from the verb *guur* which can mean 'to move' or 'drive people to migrate'. *Guuriheeynna* means to take the bride or groom or both to the marital home. In a different context *guuri* can also mean 'arrange a marriage', 'give in marriage' or 'marry off.' There author is playing on the multiple meanings embedded in this word.
[164] When the author states 'gibilka nuurayo' 'The glowing skin', he is referring to the anointing and cleansing ritual of the bride's body which takes place a few days before the wedding ceremonies begin. *Gibil* means 'skin' or 'complexion'. Although *nuur* in the dictionary is a verb which means to 'give light', or 'shine', I translated it as 'glow' as it is referring to the way that the anointing ritual draws out the Banaadiri bride's Indian Ocean heritage from within her body and emits it through her skin.

Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan[165]	this reddish brown and layered dappled
Gabdhahan golaha jooga[166]	design, these girls at the meeting place,
Gacantooda ku saareen[167]	put it on with their hand.
Gabdhahan golaha jooga	these girls at the meeting place,
Gacantooda ku saareen	put it on with their hand.
Gibilka nuurayo	The glowing skin,
Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan	this reddish-brown and layered dappled
Gabdhahan golaha jooga	design, these girls at the meeting place,
Gacantooda ku saareen	put it on with their hand.
Gabdhahan golaha jooga	these girls at the meeting place,
Gacantooda ku saareen	put it on with their hand.
Geniyaal oo dahab ah[168]	Guineas that are gold
Gumuddeeda hoos luqunta loo geliyaa.[169]	were put on her ankles until the neck for her.
Waa gaartayee.[170]	She achieved it.
Guulle ugu soo gargaaray.[171]	God supported her with it.

[165] *Giir* refers to a 'dappled', 'piebald' or 'two coloured item'. *Fuul* is a verb which means 'get on top of' or 'climb up'. *Guduud* is a noun which can mean both 'red' or reddish-brown depending on the context. As the author is referring to the henna design on the bride's skin, I have translated it as 'reddish-brown'. The demonstrative suffix *kan* attached to the word g*aduud* is the equivalent of the English word for 'this'.

[166] *Gabdho* means 'girls'. *Gabdhahan* means 'these girls.' *Gole* has a myriad of meanings. It can mean 'enclosure', 'chamber', 'verandah', 'meeting place', 'council', 'committee', 'national assembly', 'contest' and 'match'. In the context of the song, which is performed at a wedding celebration, it means 'meeting place'. *Joog* is a verb which is used in relation to only people or animals and means to 'be present', or 'be located' or 'remain at.'

[167] *Gacan* means 'hand'. *Gacantooda* means 'their hand'. *Saar* is a verb which means 'put on top of', or 'place'. The preverbal preposition particle *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to' 'into', 'onto', 'upon', 'with', 'by means of', 'using'.

[168] *Geni* is a noun which refers to the 'Guinea'. The conjuction *oo* in this context is the head of a relative or subordinate clause and depending on the context can mean 'which,' 'that', 'who' or 'while.' In the context of this line, I translated it as 'that'. *Dahab* means 'gold' and *ah* is the general present reduced paradigm form of the verb '*yahay*', 'to be'.

[169] *Hoos* can mean the 'lower part', 'underneath', 'bottom', 'under', 'below', 'down', 'low', 'lower', 'inferior'. *Luqun* is 'a neck'. *Gumud* is a Banaadiri word that refers to the elbows, knees flap, and ankles. When the author says 'Gumuddeeda hoos' he refers to her ankles. *Geli* is a verb which means 'put in', 'put on', 'put into', 'insert', 'cause to enter'. The pronoun and preposition cluster *loo* is a made from the impersonal pronoun *la* which can mean 'one', 'someone', 'you', 'they', 'people' and the preverbal preposition particle *u* which can mean 'to', 'for' or 'on behalf'.

[170] *Gaar* is a verb which means 'reach', 'attain', or 'achieve'.

[171] *Guulle* literally means 'giver of victory'. When Somali people use the word *Guulle* they are referring to 'God'. The preposition cluster *ugu* combines two preverbal preposition particles *u* and *ku* . Depending on the context, *u* can mean 'to', 'towards', 'for', and 'on 'behalf', whereas *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to' 'into', 'onto', 'upon', 'with', 'by means of', 'using'. *Gargaar* is a verb which means to 'help', or 'support'.

Waa gaartayee	She achieved it.
Guulle ugu soo gargaaray.	God supported her with it.
Geniyaal oo dahab ah	Guineas that are gold
Gumuddeeda hoos luqunta loo geliyaa.	are put on her ankles until the neck for her.
Waa gaartayee.	She achieved it.
Guulle ugu soo gargaaray.	God supported her with it.
Waa gaartayee.	She achieved it.
Guulle ugu soo gargaaray.	God supported her with it.
Gambaaladaan guntanee.[172]	This knotted cloth,
Garbasaar xarirkan garabka fuulo[173]	This silk shawl on top of the shoulder,
Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye[174]	It is the law that is previous
Ka gaarsan maynee[175]	We do not divert from it.
Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye	It is the law that is previous
Ka gaarsan maynee	We do not divert from it.

[172] *Gambaala* is a Banaadiri word for a cloth that can be used to cover the head, body and shoulders. *Guntan* is a verb which means 'be knotted', or 'get tied into a knot.'

[173] *Garbasaar* is a noun which literally consists of two words *garbo* (shoulders) and *saar* (put on top of, or 'place'). *Garbasaar* refers to 'a women's stole or shawl' which covers her sholders. *Xariir* is a noun which means 'silk'. *Garab* is a noun which means 'shoulder'. *Fuul* is a verb which means 'get on top of' or 'climb up'.

[174] *Qaanuun* is a noun which can mean 'rule', 'law', 'ordinance', or 'regulation' and derives from Arabic word for law. The author of the poem changed the spelling from *qaanuun* to *gaanuun* to keep with the alliteration of *g* which features throughout the poem. The conjuction *oo* in this context is the head of a relative or subordinate clause and translates as 'that'. *Hore* is an adjective which depending on the context of the sentence can mean 'first', 'former', 'previous', earlier', 'forth', 'fro', 'forwards', or 'before'. I have chosen 'previous' as it best suits this context and reflects the old traditions that the song is referring to. *Waaye* is a verbless declarative which can mean either 'he is', 'she is' or 'it is' depending on the context of the sentence.

[175] The preverbal preposition particles *ka* can mean 'at', 'from', 'off', 'away', 'out of', 'against', 'across', 'about' or 'concerning' depending on the context of the sentence. *Maynee* is another way of saying negative.

Gambaaladaan guntanee	This knotted cloth,
Garbasaar xarirkan garabka fuulo	This silk shawl on top of the shoulder,
Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye	It is the law that is previous
Ka gaarsan maynee	We do not divert from it.

Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye	It is the law that is previous
Ka gaarsan maynee	We do not divert from it.

Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa	We have affection for the bride.
Waa guuriheeynnaa	We are taking her to the marital home.

Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa	We have affection for the bride.
Waa guuriheeynnaa	We are taking her to the marital home.

Fishing Geeraarro

***Geeraar* 1 –** This *geeraar* is recited as the fishermen prepare to get on the fishing boat called *Saddexleey*. It is called *Saddexleey* because it carries (*saddex*) three people.

Haandooli ma heeso[176]	A *Haandooli* does not sing,
Haad qabona ma hayaado,[177]	Just as a hunger crazed man does not dance,
Haadka Haadka u weyn Haandooli la yiraah[178]	The largest bird is called *Haandooli*,
Haadkiisa labaadna madaxa hir ku	And his second bird has a mark on the head
leeyahay[179]	His siesta is the waves of the sea.
Hirgalmadiisa waa hirka maanyo[180]	His food is one camel.
Hungurgikiisa waa hal geel.[181]	Sailor, I am sure of one thing,
Halbaroow hal aan waa hubaa[182]	a man's work is unavoidable.

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[176] *Haandoli* is a large animal with wings that resides in the deep sea. It is known for being incredibly fast. *Hees* is a verb which means to 'perform a song' or 'sing'. *Ma* is a negative particle.

[177] I had not come across the verb *hayaado* before. Through my oral interviews, I found that it meant the same as the verbs *ciyaar* and *dheel* which mean to 'play around' or 'dance'. I chose to translate it as 'dance' rather than 'play around' because I felt that this was more in keeping with the first sentence which was discussing the fact that the *Haandoli* doesn't sing. The phrase *Haad qabo* means a crazy man. In the *geeraar*, it is discussing a man who has gone crazy with hunger.

[178] *Haad* is a noun which means 'bird'. *Weyn* is an adjective, which can mean 'big', 'large', or 'great' and *u* in this particular context is a superlative. In the context of the line, 'largest' is the most suitable translation because the *geeraar* is describing the size of the bird and 'largest' is a superlative adjective which is confined to physical size, whereas, both 'biggest' and 'greatest' can describe something physical or metaphysical. *La* is the impersonal pronoun in Somali but can be used to render the passive sentence when translated into English. There is, however, no passive construction in the Somali language. For example, *waa la dhisay* is translated as 'it was built' in English but literally means 'one built it' in Somali.

[179] *Haadkiisa labaadne* refers to a very large bird which travels all over Somalia. The possessive suffix *kiisa* is attached to a masculine noun which can mean 'his' or 'its'. In this line it is attached to the masculine noun *haad* and indicates that this bird is related to the bird mentioned in the first two lines. *Madax* is a noun which can mean 'head', 'official', 'chief' and 'boss'. In this context, the *geeraar* is discussing the 'head' of the bird and *hir* refers to a 'mark' on the bird's head. However, there is clearly a play on the word *hir* because it can also be used to refer to 'waves', 'surge', or 'tides'. The preverbal preposition particle *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to', 'into', 'onto', 'upon', 'with regard to', 'with', 'by means of', and 'using' depending on the context. *Leeyahay*, in this particular context, can mean 'I have/own' or 'he has/owns'. This line in the *geeraar* was in the third person singular and I chose to translate it as 'he has' rather than 'he owns' because it was referring to a mark on the bird's head.

[180] *Hir* is a noun which refers to the up and down movements of the sea and often translates as 'wave' in English. *Maanyo* is a noun which means 'sea' and *waa* is an existential particle used to make simple declarative statements. *Hirka maanyo* is in the genitive case to indicate possession. *Hargal* as a verb means 'get into the shade'. As a noun it refers to a time between dhuhr and asr when people in Somalia take shade from the heat and take a rest or sleep.

[181] *Hunguri* is a noun which can mean 'throat', 'larynx', 'gullet', 'oesophagus', 'nutriment' or 'food'. I translated it as 'food' because the *geeraar* is discussing what this large bird eats rather than how it eats it. *Geel* means 'a camel.' *Hal* has lots of different meanings: 'place', 'spot', or a 'location' as well as a 'matter' or 'affair'. In this particular context though it means, the number 'one'. There is a play on the word *hal* because it can also mean 'a female camel'. In Banaadiri folklore, it is said that camel herders in the countryside fear this bird because it is known to steal and eat a whole camel.

[182] *Hal* in this context also means the number 'one' and *aan* is the verbal subject pronoun for the first person singular. *Hub* is a verb which can mean 'be sure', 'make certain', and 'ascertain'. In the context of this line, 'ascertain' does not make sense. I chose to translate it as 'to be sure' rather than 'to be certain' because that is the way that it tends to be used in everyday Somali speech. *Halbaroow* is a seaman who

Hawl ninkeed ma hurto.[183]

***Geeraar* 2 –**While the fishermen are on the boat on their way to the hunt the fish, they recite this *geeraar* to entertain themselves and have fun.

Muumbo Sare, Meyla Moole	*Muumbo Sare*, *Meyla Moole*,
Markaboow iyo Maytaruumbo[184]	*Markaboow* and *Maytaruumbo*,
Macaantiisa oo aan soo maqlayee.[185]	I have heard about its sweet flavour,
Ma ka maarmo inaan masruufto[186]	I cannot do without it, even though it pays for the living expenses.

***Geeraar* 3 –** This *geeraar* is said for when the fishing net called Milgo is being used to catch fish

Madaa Caashoow ma moogtahay?[187]	Do you know Madaa Cashoow?
Macalinkii heer maanyo waayo[188]	He is the teacher of sea folk.
Milgadiisa maarifka waa mirjisaa[189]	His net strangles *maarifka*

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commands the sea and teaches other men about it. I chose to translate it as 'sailor' because in my interview with Haji Malaaq, he said it was the seamen who controlled the *baxaar* and when I looked in the Zorc and Osman dictionary *baxaar* refers to the sea but also a 'sailor.' Also experienced sailors of any rank were expected to teach inexperienced sailors the ropes.

[183] *Hawl* is a noun which means 'work', 'labour', 'toil', 'task', 'duty', or 'activity'. I have translated *hawl* as 'work' because that is the way it is most commonly meant in Somali. *Nin* is a noun which means either 'man' or 'husband.' *Hurti* as a noun means 'superfluidity', 'avoidable', 'dispensable', 'superfluous'. I chose to translate *hurtaa* as 'unavoidable' because it conveys the meaning from the Somali which suggests that the fishermen's work cannot be avoided or ignored.

[184] *Muumbo Sare, Meyla Moole, Markaboow* and *Maytaruumbo* are the names of different fish found in the Somali Sea and *iyo* is a word used as a conjunction to join nouns or noun phrases together and means 'and.'

[185] *Macaan* as a noun can mean 'sweet flavour', 'deliciousness' or 'sweetness'. In this context, I translated it as 'sweet flavour'. The possessive suffix *tiisa* is attached to a feminine noun which can mean 'his' or 'its'. In this context, it is attached to *macaan* and because it refers to lots of different fish found in the Somali sea rather than specific fish kept as pets, I translated it as 'it' rather than 'his'. The particle *soo* indicates movement towards the speaker or person referred to. *Maqal* as a verb translates as 'hear'. The oo is a conjunction that can join a relative clause and depending on the head noun it would be introducing a restrictive or non-restrictive relative clause. As in the *geeraar* the conjunction 'oo' was being used to introduce a non-restrictive clause, I translated it as 'that'

[186]*Ma* is a negative particle and *ka maaran* is a verb which means 'do without' or 'manage without'. *In* introduces an in clause in a complex sentence. In English, this is the sort of clause that is introduced by the word 'that'. The subject verbal pronoun *aan* is added to the word *in* making *inaan*. *Masruufo* is a verb which can be translated as 'spend money for food', 'pay living expenses' or 'provide'.

[187] *Madaa Caashoow* was a Banaadiri fisherman famous for creating a fishing net called *Milgo*. '*Ma'* is an 'interrogative' question marker and *og* is an adjective which can mean 'aware', 'knowing', 'informed', 'in the know', 'having knowledge of'. *Tahay* can mean 'you are' or 'she is'.

[188] *Macallin* means teacher and specifically a 'male teacher'. The *kii* definite article suffix shows that the teacher that is being spoken about has previously been referred to in conversation. *Heer* has the same meaning as *reer* which can mean 'family', 'household' 'home, 'lineage', 'clan', 'tribe', nationality', 'ethnic group' or 'folk'. In this particular context, it refers to a group of people who make a living from the sea so I translated it as 'folk'. *Maanyo* in this context means 'sea'.

[189] *Milgo* is a 'fishing net'. *Maarifka* is a type of fish. *Mirji* is a verb which means 'strangle'. The fishing net is being personified.

Macalinkii heer maanyo waayo	He is the teacher of sea folk.

***Geeraar* 4 -** This *geeraar* is used to praising the fish when the fishermen are hunting them.

Tartabooy ii Tartiibso hee taago[190]	*Tartabo*, slow down for me and stand upright,
Tibtibtan wax ma kuu tarayso[191]	This jumping doesn't assist you,
Tolkaa toddobaatanaa la tifay[192]	Seventy of your kinsmen were plucked,
Tirada kugu toosiha[193]	I raise the number with you.

***Geeraar* 5** – After the fishermen return after a long day at sea, they would have something to eat and a rest, then would sit together on the coast and discuss what they had caught that day. Some people relay what happened that day through *sheeko* (stories) and others through *geeraarro*. This is one of *geeraar* said to encourage one another.

Sumeyn sabaabtayda loo sarsarey	I waited for *Sumeyn* cut up for my sake,
aan sugay sir laygu sheegay[194]	Told to me in secret,

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[190] *Tartabo* is the name of a fish but the *geeraar* uses the vocative form *Tartabooy. Tartiibi* is a verb which can mean 'proceed slowly', 'go calmly', 'do moderately' and *Taago* is a verb which means 'stop.' Both *Tartiibso* and *taago* are imperatives verbs. The fish is being commanded. The pronoun and preposition cluster *ii* comprises of the pronoun *I*, 'me', and the preverbal preposition particle *u* which can mean either 'to' or 'for'. In this particular context it means 'for me'. In this context, *hee* is a conjunction used to join two verbs and so means 'and'.

[191] *Taan* is a demonstrative suffix for feminine nouns which means 'this'. In this context *kuma* is a pronoun and negative cluster comprised of *ku* (you) and *ma* (negative). This line literally means 'this jumping doesn't assist anything you'. *Tar* is a verb which can mean 'have the ability', 'affect', 'be of use', 'useful', 'assist', 'multiply', 'increase in numbers'. I translated it as 'assist' because it best conveys the meaning from the Somali which suggests that the fishes' attempts to escape by jumping doesn't benefit them.

[192] *Tol* is a noun which can mean 'kinsman', 'distant relative', 'clan', 'tribe', or 'decent group'. When the *geeraar* uses *tol* in this line, it is referring to the *Tartabo* species of fish and thus 'decent group' and 'distant relative' would not be suitable translations in this context. I translated it as 'kinsman' because it conveys that the specific *Tartabo* being spoken to at that moment in the poem and the other *Tartabo* fish that have already been caught are kin. I didn't translate *tol* as 'clan' or 'tribe' because they both refer to a group of inter-related families or communities linked by blood lines rather than one closely related group. *Kaa* is a possessive added to masculine nouns denoting a relative or a part of the body and means 'your'. *Toddobaatan* means 'seventy'. *Tifay* is a verb which can mean 'pluck' or 'pull out fibres'. I translated it as 'plucked' because this is a verb that is often used to describe the way that fish are extracted from the sea. *La* is the impersonal pronoun in Somali but is often used to render the passive sentence when translated into English.

[193] *Tiro* is a noun which can mean lots of different things in different contexts. In this particular context, it can mean 'quantity', 'number', 'sum' or 'total'. I translated it as 'number' over the other viable options, 'quantity', 'sum' and 'total' because the *geeraar* refers to a specified number of fishes. I felt 'quantity' refers to a general amount whereas 'total' or 'sum' refers to an overall number. *kugu* is a pronoun and preposition which can mean 'with you' or you and at/in/using'. In this context, it means 'with you'. *Toosi* as a verb can mean 'straighten', 'correct', 'direct', 'raise', and 'erect'. I translated *toosi* as 'raise' because on the one hand 'raise' is a verb which means to 'increase' the amount of something, but it also carries the secondary meaning of making something upright or straight that *toosi* also carries.

[194] *Sabab* is a noun which can mean 'reason', 'excuse', 'cause', 'basis', or 'motive'. In this context, it is being used in the same way as *dartay* which means 'for my sake' so I translated it as this. *tayda* is a possessive suffix for 'my' which is attached to feminine nouns. *Sar* is a verb which means 'slit', 'make a small cut in', or

Sagaal beri oon ka soonay.[195]	Which we were deprived of for nine days
Sabar saan leh maahinoo?[196]	Isn't this having patience?

***Geeraar* 6** - When the Banaadiri community and Eyle people who are cattle raisers meet at a commercial market to exchange their goods. They say this *geeraar* as a form of commentary**.**

Saafida soor ambiyaale waaye[197]	*The Saafi* is food of the prophets,
Sagaar-gaadka sidee la yeelaa?[198]	What to do about the dik-dik hunter?
Nimaan soomin oo aan salaadin sedkiisa waa sadaqo[199]	A man, who doesn't fast and who doesn't pray, his allotted portion is charity.
Salaad Eeboow niyo waaye[200]	O God, prayer is intention.

'lance'. In this context, *sar* refers to the way the fish was cut into narrow cuts so I translated it as 'cut'. *Loo* is a pronoun and preposition cluster consisting of *la* and *u*. *La* is the impersonal pronoun but is often, as is the case here, used to structure a passive sentence when translated into English and *u* is a preverbal preposition particle which can mean either 'to' or 'for'. *Sug* is a verb which means 'wait for' or 'expect'. *Sir* is a noun which means 'secret', or 'secrecy'. The pronoun and preposition cluster *iigu* is comprised of the pronoun *i* which means 'me', the preverbal preposition particles *u*, which can mean 'to' or for', and *ku*, which can mean 'at' 'in' 'by means of' or another *u*. In this context, the cluster consisting of *i*, *u* and *ku* translates respectively as 'me', 'to' and 'in'. *Sheeg* is a verb which means 'tell', 'say', 'relate', 'report', or 'reveal'.

[195] *Sagaal* is a noun which means 'nine'. *Beri* is a noun which can mean 'time', 'day', 'time', and 'period'. In this context, it means 'days' because it is being used to express the nine days that they have not eaten *Sumeyn*. In this context, *oon* is a conjunction and the subject verbal pronoun. The preverbal preposition particle *ka* can mean 'at' 'from', 'about', 'off', 'away', 'out of'; 'against', 'across', 'about' or 'concerning'. In this context, 'from' is the only translation that makes sense. *Soon* as a verb means 'fast'.

[196] *Sabar* means 'patience'. *San* can mean 'thus', 'like this' or 'this way'. In this context, it means 'like this'. *Leh* can be translated as 'owning', possessing', 'having', or 'with'. In this context, *leh* is 'having' because 'owning' and 'possessing' are used in relation to objects not human traits. *Maahinoo*? is similar to *Sow ma aha*? and means 'is it not?' or 'isn't? This sentence literally means 'Isn't having patience like this?'

[197] *Saafi* is the name of a fish species which is used to treat many diseases. *Soor* as a noun can mean 'food' (in general) or 'porridge of maize, sorghum or other grains'. Ambiyaale or *Ambiyo* is a noun which means 'prophets'. *Waaye*, in this context, is a verbless declarative which can be translated as 'he/she/it is'. This line suggests that the prophets, who were the most holy and revered men, loved *saafi* fish because it treated many diseases.

[198] *Sagaaro* is a 'dik-dik', a 'small antelope', found in the bushlands of Eastern and Southern Africa. *Gaad* as a verb can mean 'stalk', 'creep up on', 'ambush', 'take by surprise'. By *sagaar-gaadka*, they are referring to the hunter of the dik-dik. *Yeel* as a verb can be translated as 'act', or 'do', 'obey', 'cause', 'accept', 'grant'. *Sidee* is used to ask 'how' in Somali and literally means 'which way'.

[199] *Nin* can mean a 'man' or 'a husband'. In this context, it discussing a 'man'. In this context, *aan* is the negative word used in a negative relative clause. *Nin* is the head noun and '*aan'* is attached to it: *nimaan*. *Soon* is a verb which means 'fast'. *Salaad* is a noun which means 'prayer' and refers to the regular Muslim prayers. In this context, it is used as a verb and means 'pray'. Both *soomin* and *salaadin* are the negative imperative verb forms. *Sed* is a noun which means 'share', 'allotted portion', or 'provisions'. The possessive suffix *kiisa* is attached to the masculine noun *sed* which can mean 'his' or 'its'. I translated *sedkiisa* as 'allotted portion' because this conveys the meaning which refers to the portion specifically designated to the dik-dik hunter. *Sadaqo* is a noun which can be translated as 'alms', 'charity', or 'contribution to the poor. I translated it as charity rather than alms because 'alms' is quite an antiquated term which denotes a sense of something ancient/long-standing, but now not in practise.' Also, charity is the most common way that *sadaqo* is translated in English.

[200] *Eebbe* means 'God'. *Eebbow* is God and a vocative. As mentioned before *salaad* is a noun which means 'prayer'. *Niyo* is a noun which can mean 'mind', 'thought'; 'intent', 'intention', 'spirit', 'feeling.' In this

When they come back after a fishing expedition, they recite different *geeraar* depending on whether they had a successful or unsuccessful day.

***Geeraar* 7** – The fishermen recite this *geeraar* when they have had a successful fishing expedition.

Kun iyo Kow mina isku keeno[201]	If we bring together a thousand and one,
Kabiir la'aan wax la keeni maayo[202]	without a wiseman, nothing can be brought

***Geeraar* 8-** The fishermen recite this *geeraar* when they find Baalgaduud fish.

Baalgaduud ballanbaaji maayo[203]	Baalgaduud doesn't break a promise.
Barqad la gab ballankeeyga gaarsii[204]	Convey my appointment to *Barqad la gab*.

***Geeraar* 9 –** This *geeraar* is recited when they have an unsuccessful fishing expedition.

context, I translated it as 'intention' because the line in Somali discusses the fact that prayer is something that a person needs to intend for it to happen.

[201] *Kow* means 'one' and is used only in counting. *Kun* means a 'thousand' and *iyo* is a word used as a conjunction to join nouns or noun phrases together and means 'and.' I had never come across the word *mina* before and I couldn't find it in both the dictionaries that I use. However, through my interviews with Haji Malaaq and his family, I found out that it meant the same thing as *haddii* which is a conjunction that can mean 'if', 'when', or 'while'. In this context, I translated it as 'if' because it is being used to introduce a conditional clause. *Isku* is a combination of the reflexive pronoun *is* and the verbal adposition *ku* and can be translated as 'together', 'with each other', 'altogether'. In this line, '*together'* is the best suited translation. *Keen* is a verb which means 'bring'.

[202] *Kabiir* technically means 'a senior student in Koranic school who acts as assistant to the teacher' but in this context it is being used to refer to a 'wiseman'. The noun *la'aan'* can mean 'lack (of)', or 'state of being without'. I have translated it as 'without' because that is the most suitable translation when it is used with *kabiir*. *Wax* is a noun which can mean 'thing', 'matter', 'something', 'anything', 'whatever', 'object', 'item', 'event', and 'occurrence'. *Keeni* is the infinitive verb form of the verb '*keen'*.

[203] *Baalgaduud* is the name of a fish. *Ballanbaaji* is a verb which means 'break a previous promise' or 'get out of a promise'. I translated *ballanbaaji* as 'break a promise' because it conveys the formal nature of the verb in Somali, whereas, 'get out of a promise' is very colloquial.

[204] *Barqad la gab* was an Arab man who lived among the Banaadiri people and was expert in the sea. As a noun *ballan* can mean 'promise', 'meeting', 'appointment', 'rendezvous'. In this context, 'appointment' is the most suitable translation. *Gaarsii* is a verb which can mean 'bring', 'make', 'reach' 'convey', 'inflict', 'inform', and 'promote'. In this context, 'convey' was the perfect translation for *gaarsii* because both verbs have connotations of things being transported or travelling.'

Keenoow waxba ma keenin[205]	The Bringer did not bring anything,
Maxaa loo karihaa oo kurta loogu shubaa 'kaalayey' la yiraah[206]	What does one cook for them and pour in the small wooden bowl to say "come".

[205] *Keen* is a verb which means 'bring'. *Keenow* is a nickname which translates as 'The Bringer' and in this context suggest that the fisherman always brings fish back from his fishing expeditions. *Waxba* can mean 'anything', 'nothing', or 'none at all'. In this context 'anything' is the only translation that makes sense. *Ma* is a negative particle and *Keenin* is the negative imperative form of the verb *keen*.

[206] *Maxaa* is a question word which means 'what'. The pronoun and preposition cluster *loo* consists of the impersonal pronoun *la* and the preverbal preposition particle *u* which can mean either 'to' or 'for'. In this particular context, it means 'to'. *Kari* and *shub* are verbs which translate as 'cook' and 'pour' respectively. *Kur* is a noun which in this context refers to 'small wooden bowl'. *Loogu* is a pronoun and a preverbal preposition cluster comprised of *la* + *u*+ *ku.* In this context, *la* translates as 'one' and *u* as 'for'. The preverbal preposition particle *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'onto' 'upon', 'with', 'by means of' or 'using'. In this context, it translates as 'in' or 'into'. *Kaalay* is an imperative which means 'come'. *Yiri* is a verb which means 'to say'. The phrase '"Kaalayey" la yiraah', in the *hees*, literally translates as 'one says "come".'

Chapter 2 Spinning and weaving: material expressions of Indian Ocean identities in literature

In this chapter I explore the way that a work song called 'Shaqo' reveals the importance of women's labour to the Banaadiri people, the Somali nation and the wider Indian Ocean textile industry. I argue that in 'Shaqo', the Banaadiri woman's role as the spinner of cotton in the manufacture of the Futa Benaadir, and as the weaver of hats, mats and baskets, is importantly also generative of strong kinship networks, not only within the Banaadiri community but within the Somali nation and across the wider Indian Ocean world. I read Amitav Ghosh's 1986 novel *The Circle of Reason* to bring into relief many of the ideas around regionally-specific identity, community and culture which emerge from 'Shaqo'. I argue that in both *The Circle of Reason* and 'Shaqo' spinning and weaving are presented as integral to the creation of stories about belonging, place and commonality and their links to each other. However, while in *The Circle of Reason,* the stories created through weaving promote the individual, self-actualization, and exclusivity, the stories created through weaving and spinning in 'Shaqo' promote collective identity, kinship and inclusivity.

2.1 Communicating culture through cloth

In the first part of this chapter, I explore how in many cultures across the globe textiles and woven cloth powerfully express cultural identity and community ties. Professor of textiles, Beverly Gordon, argues that for a millennia cloth and textiles have been used by different cultures to articulate important messages about their cultural identity. Gordon asserts that 'text was literally

made part of cloth through weaving, embroidery, and once the technology allowed, printing'.[207] These communicative textiles expressed social and cultural messages about a particular nation, community or group to the wider world. In 19th century England, a type of communicative textile, the handkerchief, was used as a means to convey British values and culture. On many occasions, the commemorative handkerchief was used to celebrate and didactically communicate the grandeur of Britain, the British monarchy and the British Empire. Gordon explains that 'these printed cloths were issued in limited runs to comment on topical political issues or recognize important events such as the coronation of Queen Victoria (1838), the commissioning of a warship, or the opening of a world's fair or exposition'.[208] An example of a popular commemorative handkerchief was the one produced for the Great Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 which 'depicts crowds of well-dressed English people in front of the glass building, bordered by indigenous people from various parts of the British Empire'.[209] The Great Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 exhibition was organized by Henry Cole and Prince Albert and exhibited manufactured goods from Britain as well as all over the British empire. Through this particular handkerchief, a message was being conveyed about the greatness of British art, industry and Empire to the rest of the world. During the Second World War in both America and England, communicative handkerchiefs were used as a means to articulate patriotism and to create a unified national identity. Messages such as 'Into Battle', 'On to Berlin' or images of battleships, tanks, fighter planes or the 'ubiquitous "V" that stood for Victory' were printed on silk or rayon squares worn as women's headscarves as a means to cultivate a sense of solidarity amongst the British and American people as well as between those at 'home' and those on the war front.[210] The fact that these patriotic messages and images were printed on a cloth that was worn as a type

[207] Beverly Gordon, *Textiles: the whole story: uses, meanings, significance (*London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), p. 217.
[208] Gordon, p. 219.
[209] Gordon, p. 219.
[210] Gordon, p. 220.

of headdress by women in their everyday lives meant that ideas of British and American solidarity, nationalism and patriotism were woven into the everyday signifying world.

It is not only in the global north that cloth or textiles are used as a means to express cultural norms, values or heritage. In Africa, cloths which bear an image and text are used to communicate a range of proverbs and are consciously utilized as a means to convey messages about cultural traditions. In her book *Kanga: The Cloth that Speaks*, Sharifa Zawawi, linguist in Swahili and Arabic languages and cultures, explores the cultural ideas and customs conveyed by the Kanga, a cloth worn by Swahili speaking people along the East African coast. Kangas are worn by both men and women and are comprised of 'two rectangles of cotton cloth, one worn as a dress fastened above the breasts, the other as a headdress and shawl covering the shoulders'.[211] Zawawi contends that 'on the one hand, the *kanga* provides a practical, attractive, comfortable form of dress for a tropical climate; on the other hand, it is a century's old communicative device'.[212] The inscriptions on the cloth refer to a range of topics such as politics, national identity, religious festivities, family relationships, love and marriage. Through her study of 750 Kangas, Zawawi argues that as both as a material object and verbal artifact, Kangas are 'carriers of past and present Swahili attitudes and values': they 'reproduce, reaffirm and preserve Swahili cultural traditions'.[213] Many Kangas are handed down through generations and thus they carry Swahili oral and written traditions from the past into the present. Each Kanga with its proverbial inscriptions and message provides a gateway into Swahili customs, and traditions past and present. Moreover, Kangas also function as archives which show the changing social, political economic mores in Swahili culture.

However, the Kanga cloth, not only reflects Swahili culture but a wider Indian Ocean cultural identity. Cultural anthropologist, Phyllis Ressler points out that the Kanga cloth was not only made and traded on the Swahili coast but all over the Indian Ocean rim: in Lamu, the Rift

[211] Sharifa Zawawi, *Kanga: The Cloth that speaks* (New York: Azaniya Hills Press, 2005), p.vii.
[212] Zawawi, p. vii.
[213] Zawawi, p. ix.

Valley, Nairobi, the Comoros Islands, Dar es Salam, Mozambique, Oman and Dubai. She argues that the Kanga is a 'clear example of co-production in which elements of the design and use are drawn from a global exchange of ideas and trade over centuries'.[214] Each of the countries where the Kanga was manufactured, traded or used made a cultural contribution to the designs and symbol of the cloth. Ressler contends that 'analysis of elements of the Kanga design most dramatically reveal the extent of the co-production of this textile', and 'the rich extent to which it has assimilated cultural symbols' from all over the Indian Ocean world.[215] One of the earliest Kangas, the Kisutu, used as traditional wedding dress in Lamu and Kenya, has 'a sari like design with wide borders on either end and a small patterns in the center panel [Sic]'.[216] The 'kisutu does not include text and originally was black with red and white patterns'.[217] In Lamu the colours of the kisutu are 'significant for weddings; red indicates the brides' virginity; black the pain of de-flowering; white the color of the male seed which she will receive for the first time'.[218] The Kangas with the tie-dye designs on them derive from 'the Indian Rajasthani resist dye technique, called *Bandhani*' and 'by some accounts the Kanga name was taken from these spots which resemble the Guinea fowl or Kanga bird in Swahili'.[219] The striped Kangas are modelled on Omani cloth popular with traders who exported it to Zanzibar. Moreover, the same designs on Kanga cloths can signify different things among the numerous Indian Ocean cultures. The Kanga often bears a 'Persian/Kashmiri boteh', borrowed 'from 17th century floral and tree of life designs in Mughal textiles'.[220] In India, this symbol is called 'the mango design and is a fertility symbol' whereas in east Africa this same symbol is 'seen as a cashew shape and represents wealth and fertility'.[221]

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[214] Phyllis Ressler, 'The Kanga, A Cloth That Reveals-Co-production of Culture in Africa and the Indian Ocean Region' *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings,* 2012 1-8 (p. 2).
[215] Ressler, p. 4.
[216] Ressler, p. 6.
[217] Ressler, p. 6.
[218] Ressler, p. 6.
[219] Ressler, p. 7.
[220] Ressler, p. 5.
[221] Ressler, p. 5.

In her research into the Kanga cloth, Ressler shows that 'cultural life does not make place in a vacuum' but rather that 'things, ideas, and practices emerge from a broader world of influences'.[222] Ressler demonstrates the ways in which Kanga comprises a collage of influences from the different cultures that make up the Indian Ocean world as well as an important example of co-production. She explores the ways that the Kanga as a material object is testament to the rich cultural exchange between communities on the East African Swahili coast and communities within the wider Indian Ocean world. She argues that in each country the kanga is made and worn it is shaped by local culture and local use. In its varying patterns Kanga articulates cultural encounters and exchanges, as well as the way that these cross-cultural designs signify something specific in each of these cultures. Ressler shows how the Kanga reflects both a shared regional Indian Ocean culture as well as a strong local cultural identity.

2.2 Weaving community ties

Importantly, it is not only through the woven cloth but also through the weaving process that communities are able to express their cultural identity and forge community links. Exploring the role of weaving in the Mayan people, an indigenous community of Mesoamerica in Guatemala, Jodi Martin argues that both the woven cloth and the weaving process are material expressions of Mayan culture identity. Mayan women and men are able to articulate 'the symbols and signs of their culture' through weaving particular patterns, designs and emblems.[223] Through weaving 'iconographic images' such as the 'tree of life, corn plants, flowers, animals, birds, volcanoes, and people' onto their traditional clothes, the Mayan weavers are able to reproduce the 'Mayan world' and create a 'Mayan epistemology' which is taught from generation to generation of

[222] Ressler, p. 2.
[223] Jodi Martin, 'Contextualizing the Debate on Weaving Groups and Development: Mayan Weaving and the Changing Politics of Identity in Guatemala', *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology*, 1, 11 (2003), 66-69 (p. 67).

weavers.[224] The Mayan weaver's 'choices of images, designs, motifs and colours speak of a family, community, and cultural history'.[225] Martin explores how weaving as a 'cultural symbol has been used to express the changing politics of Mayan identity and thus illustrate that like culture, these expressions of identity are not static, but instead a dynamic means of communicating cultural experiences within specific social, political, and historical contexts'.[226]

Beverly Gordon further discusses how it is not just the production of a particular traditional cloth that forges a community but the actual act of making a textile that fosters a sense of community spirit among a group of weavers, as the 'shared fiberwork' forges powerful bonds between them.[227] Gordon explores Quilting Bees, a community practice which traditionally occurred in European-based cultures, where women come together to converse, socialise, and make textiles. Quilting Bees occur when a woman, who has finished making the piecing for a quilt top, calls together a group of women from the community to put in the quilting stitches. They 'usually entailed six to eight individuals who sat close to one another around a quilting frame and worked steadily for a number of hours'.[228] Quilting Bees create strong connections among the women in communities as they come together both for support and companionship in completing their quilts.

Gordon also discusses a particular weaving bee, the waulking bees, carried out by women living on the Hebridean Islands off the coast of Scotland which involved singing as a central component. Waulking is a technique where the newly woven woollen or tweed cloth is soaked and thumped rhythmically in order to shrink and soften it. As waulking is a laborious undertaking, the women of the community come together and use their strength, skill and songs to complete it. Gordon notes how the women of the

[224] Martin, p. 67.
[225] Martin, p. 67.
[226] Martin, p. 66.
[227] Gordon, p. 131.
[228] Gordon, p. 133.

> community would gather around a long trestle, pounding long lengths of fabric with their hands and feet. They had to work in unison and throw their full body weight into the effort, and the songs helped them keep up their energy and maintain a steady rhythm. There were separate specialists to lead the waulking, the singing, and the accompanying consecration ceremonies, and each developed its own repertoire of anecdotes and music. [229]

These waulking bees cultivate a strong sense of camaraderie among the women of the Hebridean Islands as it demands them to work and sing as a single entity in order to rhythmically soak and beat the wool or the tweed to create a finished product. Each specialist works harmoniously rather than individually to enrich and enable the holistic endeavour.

While this communal singing and weaving in Europe fosters community links, in the Somali nomadic pastoral tradition women sing while weaving to express their resistance to social structures that subordinate them. Axmed Cali Abokor asserts that in Somali nomadic communities, the commonly held belief is that 'since women are weaker in terms of strength than men, they ought to be lower in status than men'.[230] These beliefs mean that women are not allowed to express their thoughts or feelings as openly as their male counterparts. Abokor argues that 'specifically, women are not socially permitted to talk about anything concerning the relations between men and women'.[231] However, 'since open arguments and confrontations between the sexes are socially avoided, women usually employ singing in working situations as appropriate forums to express their feeling, transmitting messages through their songs'.[232] The women's singing while they undertake household labour, such as weaving, would be heard by their larger pastoral kinship network which include both men and women. The domestic settings

[229] Gordon, p. 133-134.
[230] Axmed Cali Abokor, Somali Pastoral Work Songs: the Poetic Voice of the Politically Powerless (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1990), p. 14.
[231] Abokor, p. 14.
[232] Abokor, p. 21.

function as 'socially accepted communicative events' which provide pastoral women a 'safe and licensed freedom of expression not permitted elsewhere'.[233]

An example of a weaving context where Somali nomadic pastoral women come together to sing is when they make the *kebed*, a woven fibre mat which northern Somali nomads use to cover their portable home. Axmed Cartan Xaange explains that a group of women would go into the bush to collect the fibres needed to make the woven mat and then manufacture them into thread. Once the fibre thread is produced, the women begin to weave the *kebed*. Xaange states while 'the women are engaged in weaving the *kebed*, they sing lively work songs to ease the physical labour as well as to entertain themselves'.[234] These communal weaving networks provided pastoral women with the opportunity to develop and utilise their collective voice and thereby to express their opinions on social issues occurring in their wider community. Axmed Cali Abokor contends that 'since pastoral women by convention are not allowed to discuss certain social matters openly with men, they employ the singing of poetry as a mechanism to make their voices heard and to introduce change in the existing order'. [235] However, although singing while undertaking weaving labour allows Somali pastoral women to criticize and make slight modification to their living conditions, it doesn't allow them to completely overhaul the patriarchal structures embedded within their society. This is because 'men tend not to treat the messages conveyed through this manner seriously, because they consider songs as "play" and thus socially meaningless when they are composed by women in a working situation'.[236] Thus, when pastoral women make the kebed, they 'employ the singing situation as forums to which social conflicts are brought, discussed and solved without undermining existing social relationships'.[237]

[233] Abokor, p. 78.
[234] Axmed Cartan Xaange, *Folk Songs from Somalia*, ed. by Annarita Puglielli (Rome: Roma Tre-Press, 2014), p 38.
[235] Abokor, p. 57.
[236] Abokor, p. 21.
[237] Abokor, p. 57.

In the next section of this chapter**,** I show how imaginative literature also presents this symbiotic relationship between the process of weaving, identity formation and women's textile labour, allowing literary characters to speak to wider communal and social structures within which they are otherwise silent.

2.3 Women speaking through their looms in literature

Classical literature abounds with stories of women working at their looms. These stories have been told and retold in many ways and have attracted diverse interpretations. Literary scholarship has suggested that women in classical literature use weaving as a means for self-expression and 'signification'. [238] Kathryn Sullivan Kruger asserts in 'Greek literature these scenes of weaving often depict explosive moments wherein women transform a domestic art into a tool that allows them to write their own texts of resistance'. [239] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the incarcerated and silenced Philomela weaves the story of her rape by Tereus into her tapestry, which is sent to her sister. Although physically unable to speak, the loom provides Philomela the means through which to represent and avenge her rape. Once Procne receives Philomela tapestry, she is able to free Philomela and together they plan their revenge on Tereus. Arachne uses her weaving to challenge Athena and her Olympian tradition. Arachne's tapestry, which depicts scenes where the Greek gods defile and abuse mortal women, similarly 'signifies a protest against this phallogocentric power'. [240] Arachne's punishment is to be transmogrified into a spider and to spend eternity spinning meaningless webs. Athena 'denies her the ability to create art, the ability to signify through weaving'.[241] In Homer's *Odyssey,* Penelope weaves and unweaves a burial

[238] Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: the Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), p. 55.
[239] Kruger, p. 57.
[240] Kruger, p. 66.
[241] Kruger, p. 67.

shroud for her elderly father in-law in a ruse to forestall remarrying any of her suitors, allowing her to remain faithful to her missing husband, Odysseus.

Kathryn Kruger argues that in European classical literature there is a distinction between weaving as a process and the woven textile. Although both are modes of 'signification', a means through which the weaver can articulate messages, they signifying differently.[242] Kruger asserts that weaving is 'process-oriented', something which occurs over a time span and thus is a 'metaphor for speech'; whereas the woven textile is 'product-oriented', once completed it is permanent and thus becomes a 'metaphor for something written'. [243] In classical literature it is through the weaving process rather than the woven textile that the women of Greek and Roman classical tradition are interpreted as sometimes speaking, sometimes silent figures of commentary and resistance. Although through the woven textile they are able to create 'texts of resistance' to rival the scripts imposed upon them, it is through the weaving process that they are able to articulate a perpetual narrative which frames them as the subject rather than object of their own stories.[244]

In Ovid's 'Metamorphoses', both Philomela and her sister Procne live in a patriarchal Athenian society where they lack agency and the space to assert themselves. The scene when Philomela weaves is the only scene in the 'Philomela myth' where a female character is able to speak and narrate her own story. It is through her weaving that Philomela challenges her position in society, so 'that instead of remaining an object or body used, silenced, and discarded, she becomes a subject, an artist reclaiming her voice, and her forbidden story'.[245] Once Procne reads her sister's textile she is able to free her sister and together they plan their revenge on Tereus. While Philomela weaves she is able to create a perpetual narrative to rival the one that is imposed upon her by the patriarchal society of ancient Greece but once she completes her textile, she again loses the ability to speak. Her message becomes a fixed text encapsulated in a textile rather

[242] Kruger, p.55.
[243] Kruger, p. 55.
[244] Kruger, p. 57.
[245] Kruger, p. 60.

than a perpetual oral one presented in the weaving process. After Philomela and Procne exact their revenge on Tereus, they return to the status of objects rather than subjects of their story. They are transformed into birds and relegated to an eternal speechless existence.

This wider context of weaving as both a physical and material endeavour that empowers women to give voice to their own, otherwise silenced, identity and that of their local situation, as well as to situate their own experience and expression within a collective framework, is instructive to the main part of this chapter. I will begin by discussing the fact that southern Somalia's textile industry has been not been well-documented in written archives and comment on the ways that recent scholarship in anthropology has begun to develop this research area with a focus in textile production on the Banaadir coast.

2.4 Southern Somalia's textile industry

Indian Ocean historian Edward Alpers argues that despite the emergence of recent academic scholarship on African textiles, there has been little documentation of African textiles outside of West Africa. Alpers points out that although southern Somalia has a 'history of cotton textile manufacture dating back hundreds of years', little has been documented about this traditional textile production.[246] On examining historical archives, in particular the works of the 14th century Arab traveler Ibn Battuta and 19th century European explorers Charles Guillain, Georges Revoil, and Lieut W. Christopher, Alpers traces the neglect of the historical trajectory of cotton textile production despite the fact that it is an industry that began in 1238 and continues until this present day in Mogadishu. Alpers notes that according 'to Muqdisho oral tradition, "The establishment of the industry is associated with the construction of the jamac (Friday) mosque in

[246] Edward A. Alpers, *East Africa and the Indian Ocean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers 2009), p. 79.

Xamarweyn," which is dated by an inscription above the door by which one enters the minaret to 1 Muharram 636/14 August 1238'.[247] He summarises the insufficiency of documentary records by commenting that **'**For more than five centuries after Ibn Battuta's visit, however, we have not a single notice of the cotton textile industry of the Benaadir coast**.'**[248]

Recent scholarship has begun to fill this gap through exploring the role that different types of textile production played in the economies of both Somalia and the wider Indian Ocean rim. Anthropologist Sarah Fees discusses the Futa Benaadir also known locally as 'toob benadir, tomonyo, benadiri or alindi', a cloth spun and woven by the Banaadiri community on the coast of southern Somalia.[249] While most of the goods exported by the Banaadiri people on the Somali coast were from the interior, goods such as 'ivory', aromatics and later 'grain', the Futa Benaadir was solely manufactured and exported by the Banaadiri people.[250] The production of the cloth was 'concentrated in and around the three major port towns of Mogadishu, Brava, and Merca' with weavers producing '50, 000 to 360, 000 pieces annually'.[251] The Futa Benaadir was essential to the intertwined textile economies of Somalia and the wider Indian Ocean world. Some of the finer quality cloth was sold locally. Banaadiri 'women wore a large piece knotted behind the shoulder and tucked at the waist (*guntino*), and sometimes an additional wrapper over the shoulders' whereas Banaadiri 'men used one piece as a hip-wrap and, means permitted, another attached at the shoulder toga-style'.[252] Fee contends that 'up to two-thirds of *futa benadir* were exported by sea: up to northern Somalia, down to Kismayu, Mombasa, and Zanzibar, and out to coastal Arabia'.[253] In addition, 'a great quantity of coarser stuffs moved by caravan to the interior, as far as Luuq and perhaps southern Ethiopia and Berbera'.[254] As the Futa Benaadir was much

[247] Alpers, p. 79.
[248] Alpers, p. 79.
[249] Sarah Fee, 'Futa Benadir: A Somali Tradition within the Folds of the Western Indian Ocean' in *Africa interweave: textiles diasporas,* ed. by Susan Cooksey (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida, 2011), pp. 120-127 (p,121).
[250] Fee, p. 122.
[251] Fee, P. 121.
[252] Fee, p. 122.
[253] Fee, p.122.
[254] Fee, p. 122.

valued in the interior, it 'played a critical role in enticing its inhabitants to release the ivory, gums, and grains that foreign traders sought' which contributed to Indian Ocean economic development.[255]

Somali language and culture scholar Alessandra Vianello explores the importance of the manufacture of skullcaps called *Makofiya* in the port town of Brava. Vianello argues that these Bravanese skullcaps were 'a kind of headgear exceeding common along the whole East African coast, which could be found from the Comoro Islands to Somalia and Djibouti'.[256] However, while the making of the skullcaps in the rest of the Swahili coast was a man's job, in Brava 'the sewing of skullcaps was typically a woman's job and arguably the most widespread of all economic activities carried out by women'.[257] Vianello asserts that 'the Bravanese ladies sold the skullcaps locally or in Mogadishu; to some shopkeepers they supplied regularly'.[258] *Makofiya* is worn by most adult men in Brava. Vianello states 'young men were given their first *ikofiya* on the occasion of their wedding; all men wear their best caps when going to the mosque on Fridays'.[259] Moreover, 'old, well-worn caps, bleached by the sun and by repeated washing, covered the heads of most working men: the many eyelets allowed air to pass through the cap and kept the head cool under the sun, while the close-fitting edge absorbed most of the sweat from their foreheads'.[260] However, it was not just in Brava that the *Makofiya* was worn and revered. Vianello explains that 'after independence, these embroidered skullcaps became a kind of badge of office for all senior Somali politicians'.[261] Vianello shows the way that skullcaps were popular along the Banaadiri coast, in wider Somalia and across the Indian Ocean.

Although Fees and Vianello's work make a great contribution to understanding Banaadiri, Somali and the Indian Ocean's textile industries, their work is clearly an anthropological

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[255] Fee, p. 122.
[256] Alessandra Vianello, 'Brava's skullcaps (Makofiya Ya Stunru)', *Halabuur: Journal of Somali Literature and Culture*, 4 (2009), 37-39 (p. 37).
[257] Vianello, p. 37.
[258] Vianello, p. 38.
[259] Vianello, p. 38.
[260] Vianello, p. 38.
[261] Vianello, p. 37.

intervention and does not account for the literary contribution made possible by this textile production and vice versa. Through examining an oral poem, I show how Banaadiri textile production which is not well documented in historical archives can be recorded and analyzed through a different medium. My focus is on 'Shaqo' a Banaadiri *hees* work song, composed by Ali Osman Drog, traditionally performed by women while they spin, sew and weave and made famous by Faduma Qaasim Hilowle. In this chapter, I work with a performance of this work song performed by Faduma Qaasim Hilowle's daughter, Aisha Karama in her home in London. By reading this *hees* in relation to the representation of the cloth industry in Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason*, I draw out the significance of weaving and the textile economy to ideas of identity, culture, and community in the Indian Ocean. Amitav Ghosh is a preeminent novelist of the Indian Ocean world and arguably the most prominent global Anglophone writer of the region. He has won a plethora of literary awards for his novels which have been translated into over twenty languages.[262] In most of his books, the Indian Ocean is the cultural geographical locale: *In an Antique Land,* The *Hungry Tide*, *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire* etc. Ghosh discusses the importance of the cultural geographies of the Indian Ocean to his work in an interview:

> This was never a conscious choice. But now, when I look back on my work, I see that I have been involved with journeys across the Indian Ocean from the very beginning. The central episode of The Circle of Reason, my first book, was about a group of people from Kerala going to the Gulf, and I was working in Kerala while I wrote it. At the time I was attached to the Centre for Developmental Studies in Trivandrum. However, that was merely how the connections with the Indian Ocean world started. It was not intentional, but sometimes things are intentional without being intentional. Though it was never part of a planned venture and did not begin as a conscious project, I realise in hindsight that this is really what always interested me most: the

[262] Amitav, Ghosh, https://www.amitavghosh.com/ [accessed 7 April 2020].

> Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the connections and the cross-connections between these regions.[263]

While Amitav Ghosh is a world-renowned Indian Ocean writer and *The Circle of Reason* is a novel that circulates in global markets, 'Shaqo' has travelled the world through a different trajectory. It is an oral song passed down from generation to generation of Banaadiri women and in 1988 a version of the song was performed by Faduma Qaasim Hilowle on Somali Television where it was broadcast to the whole of Somalia. Using *The Circle of Reason* as a comparative tool for reading 'Shaqo' brings to the fore many of the oral song's intricate and subtle ideas around belonging, place and commonality.

2.5 Shaqo and *The Circle of Reason*

'Shaqo' explores the way that the making of a cloth, can facilitate the creation of stories about the importance of Banaadiri women's labour. In particular, the *hees* focuses on the woman's dual role as the spinner of both cotton and stories. When it came to making the Futa Benaadir cloth, men and women have clearly gender- demarcated roles. French explorer George Revoil's work on his travels in Somalia in the late nineteenth century explains how the various processes involved were divided as

> the ginning of the raw cotton was accomplished by rolling the bolls between two wooden cylinders, after which it was carded by beating so that it resembled cotton packing, and then worked into twists before being spun into thread by women. Once the raw cotton had been processed into thread, it became the province of men and boys. The boys were responsible for winding the thread into skeins, which they did by taking the bobbin in one hand and making a

[263] Mahmood Kooria, 'Between the Walls of Archives and Horizons of Imagination: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh', *Itinerario*, 36 (2012), 7-18 (p. 10).

> figure eight with the thread around a small wooden fork. Next the skeins of thread were tied to the loom heddles as warp threads and sized with a paste of maize flour which was applied with a brush made of couch-grass. Finally, the heddles were attached to the loom, "which is almost touching the ground, while the operator is seated in a hole.[264]

While the men and boys in the family manufactured the thread into cloth, it was the responsibility of the Banaadiri woman to spin the cotton into thread.

Classicist Maria C. Pantelia differentiates between the role of the spinner and weaver in conveying messages. She argues 'the art of weaving produces a fabric which often bears a design and has the potential for conveying a concrete message'.[265] Whereas, 'spinning produces only the thread, that is, the raw material which makes weaving possible and, most importantly, allows the weaver to speak and express herself through the specific artifact [*sic*] she produces on her loom'.[266] In other words, the weaver produces a fabric through which a message can be conveyed, whereas the spinner makes the thread which facilitates multiple weavers to articulate multiple stories.

From the onset of the *hees*, the Banaadiri woman is positioned as the center of the community's cloth manufacture. She highlights the importance of work to the Banaadiri people in the lines 'Hawshiis niinkii haysto hed waa helaayaa'/ 'Hurdo manoo roonaa. Ka soo hadaafnay,' 'the man who has work finds something to eat. /Sleep is not good for us. We have slowly left it'. Although the noun *ninka* 'the man' is used in the first line, the *ii* ending refers to a man who is already known to the performer and listener. In this instance, it signifies the universal man, the hu*man*. So, the Banaadiri woman speaks directly to her community as a whole; encouraging them to work collectively on the manufacture of cloth and household goods. It is interesting to note that the word *hed* is used in relation to the benefits yielded from labour. It literally means

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[264] Revoil 1885 cited in Alpers Edward A. Alpers, *East Africa and the Indian Ocean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers 2009), p. 81.
[265] Maria C. Pantelia, 'Spinning and Weaving: ideas of Domestic Order in Homer', *The American Journal of Philology* 114 (1993), 493-501 (p.494).
[266] Pantelia, p.494.

'something to eat' but also has connotations of 'sustenance' and 'nourishment'. The Banaadiri woman, repeating the phrase 'hed waa helaayaa', emphasises the fact that the labour, which provides a livelihood to the Banaadiri community, also nourishes and sustains their spirit. In the line 'Hurdo manoo roonaa. Ka soo hadaafnay,' 'Sleep is not good for us. We have slowly left it,' the female performer of the *hees* argues that the Banaadiri people's work is so nourishing that it is more enticing to them than their sleep. The word *roon* is used because it carries powerful connotations in the Somali language. Although when translated into English in this context *roon* means good, in Somali it is used to convey something that is a better fit for you or better for your wellbeing. The Banaadiri woman suggests that labour is better for the collective well-being of the Banaadiri people than sleep. Through the use of the verb *hadaaf* which means to 'walk slowly' or 'drag along', the *hees* suggests that the benefits of work are so immense that it lures the Banaadiri people from their sleep and induces them to work.

Throughout 'Shaqo', the Banaadiri woman, as the spinner of cotton, makes it possible for the community to articulate multiple stories about the importance of women's labour to their community as well as Somalia and the Indian Ocean world. The female performer instructs women to continue their weaving: 'Darinta iisoo falki iyo dambiisha 'Weave the mat and the basket for me'. Interestingly, the singer does not merely encourage these women to weave mats and baskets but to undertake this weaving specifically 'for her'. The pronoun and preposition cluster *ii* in this context means 'for me' and the word *soo*, which cannot be directly translated into English, indicates movement towards the speaker or return after an action is performed. Through these nuanced signifiers, the performer draws the community towards her and presents the Banaadiri woman as the manager of the community's cloth production. She continues to speak to the community of Banaadiri female weavers in the next line, 'Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daalimeeynee.' 'It is the character of our country. We will not get tired from it.' *Dibcigii* is an Arabic loan word which translates as 'the character' or 'the nature' and *dal* translates as 'country'. In Somali poetry, the sound that is alliterated is 'often picked from a prominent or important

word in the poem'.[267] The 'da' sound is taken from the word *dalkeen* 'our country' and alliterated throughout the middle section of the *hees* with *darinta* 'the mat', *dambiisha* the basket, and *dibcigii* 'the character' to emphasise the importance of Banaadiri labour to Somalia. The Banaadiri female performer suggests that their weaving is so important to Somalia that it is considered 'Dibcigii dalkeen' 'the character of our country', and thus essential to the fabric of the country. Moreover, she highlights that their weaving is distinctive to Somalia which in turn makes Somalia distinctive to the wider world. When the *hees* states 'Ka daalimeeynee', 'We will not get tired from it', the singer suggests that that no matter how strenuous and difficult the weaving labour proves to be, Banaadiri women weavers are immune to feeling fatigued because they are motivated by its importance to their country. She presents Banaadiri women's weaving as a form of labour that energizes rather than tires as it is intrinsic to the building of Somalia.

In '*Shaqo*', the Banaadiri woman is presented as being responsible for increasing and developing her community's cloth production. In the *hees*, the singer states 'Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa/Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise. Hooyaalade': 'I am adding to the sewing of a hat. I am making it sufficient for every person to have his allotted role.' *Kordhi* is a verb which can mean to 'increase', 'raise', 'add to', 'cause to grow', 'develop' and 'exaggerate', however, when the performer states 'Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa,' I am adding to the sewing of a hat.', she does not literally mean that she will increase the amount of sewing that she does but rather that through increasing the amount of cotton that she spins into thread, she will increase the amount of weaving that the Banaadiri communities are able to complete. The recognition of the dependence of sewing and weaving on spinning is threaded into her song so that this primary activity and its female labour is directly related to the production of the cloth and the value of this practice. In the line 'Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise', *kaafi* is a verb which means 'be sufficient' or 'be enough' and *nimba* literally means 'every man', but in this situation it means 'every person'. The word *kaalin* combines two words in English 'allotted' or 'designated' and also

[267] Martin Orwin, 'Alliteration in Somali poetry', in *Alliteration in Culture*, ed. by Johnathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 219.230. (p. 224).

'task', 'job' 'contribution', 'role' or 'function'. In this line, the Banaadiri woman speaks directly to her community informing them that she will ensure every member of the community has a part to play in their textile production. She will make it so that every member of the community has enough thread to weave a story about this forgotten textile industry, and thereby to create an archive of stories.

The Circle of Reason, like 'Shaqo', explores the way that the making of a cloth can facilitate the creation of stories. However, while 'Shaqo' focuses on exploring stories about the importance of Banaadiri women's textile labour to the Banaadiri community, Somalia and the wider Indian Ocean world, *The Circle of Reason* focuses on the role of cloth production in creating a wider intertwined Indian Ocean community. The novel was inspired by Ghosh's work as an anthropologist and his thesis on the cotton trade. There are large anthropological sections in the novel which explore in detail the ways that historically the making of cloth brought together and forged the many countries and communities of the Indian Ocean world:

> The Silk Route from China, running through central Asia and Persia to the ports of the Mediterranean and from there to the markets of Africa and Europe, bound continents together for more centuries than we can count. It spawned empires and epics, cities and romances. Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo were just journeymen following paths that had been made safe and tame over centuries by unknown, unsung traders, armed with nothing more than bundles of cloth. It was the hunger for Indian chintzes and calicos, brocades and muslins that led to the foundation of the first European settlements in India. All through those centuries cloth, in its richness and variety, bound the Mediterranean to Asia, India to Africa, the Arab world to Europe, in equal, bountiful trade. [268]

However, although the anthropological parts of the novel recognize the importance of cloth production to the creation of an Indian Ocean community, as a work of fiction *The Circle of*

[268] Amitav Ghosh, *The Circle of Reason* 1986 *(*London: John Murray, 2011), p. 66.

Reason privileges the story of an individual weaver. The novel focuses on the protagonist Alu Bose and the way that weaving enables him to grow and develop as an individual. After the death of his parents, Alu moves to Lalpukur, a small provincial town in Bangladesh to live with his uncle Balaram and aunt Toru-debi. In the beginning of the novel, Alu is presented as a quiet, apathetic boy who lacks any interest in the world. Alu 'betrayed no emotion about anything at all'.[269] He was 'completely impassive'.[270] Balaram, his uncle, is so deeply concerned about Alu's muteness and all-consuming apathy that he arranges for him to become the apprentice of a master weaver called Shombhu Debnath. When Alu begins weaving, the reader witnesses the indifferent and apathetic boy transformed into a passionate and enthusiastic young man. He spends days at the loom undertaking 'painstaking, eye-crossing work' undeterred by the complexity involved in learning different types of weaves.[271]

Working on the loom, Alu is able to find his voice, in a re-gendered reworking of the classical texts of the global north. In *The Circle of Reason*, the loom is a 'dictionaryglossary-thesaurus', teeming with words: 'the loom has given language more words, more metaphor, more idiom than all the world's armies of pen-wielders'.[272] For the boy who 'never said a word', weaving provides him with the vehicle to speak volumes.[273] It is through his weaving that he is finally able to articulate his unspoken love for Shombhu Debnath's daughter, Maya. While the reader is aware from the onset that Alu's awkwardness and silence around Maya pertains to his suppressed feeling for her, it is only when Alu begins weaving that he is able to express these feeling to her. He creates a beautiful image of both of them together using the Jamdani weave: 'He called out to her and pushed the heddle up so that she could see the figures fresh upon the cloth'.[274] Once Maya sees the cloth, Alu is finally able to break the silence around his love for her.

[269] Ghosh, p. 30
[270] Ghosh, p. 30
[271] Ghosh, p. 86.
[272] Ghosh, p. 87.
[273] Ghosh, p. 61.
[274] Ghosh, p. 96.

However, weaving not only provides Alu with a material language to express his thoughts and feelings but it also gives him the language to become a storyteller and create a world through cloth. In *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh shows that 'the weaver, in making cloth, makes words, too, and trespassing on the territory of the poets gives names to things the eye can't see'.[275] In the novel weaving is a transformative creative endeavor, which allows Alu to become an equivalent of the novelist in terms of creating his own world: 'man at the loom is the finest example of Mechanical man; a creature who makes his own world as no other can, with his mind'.[276] Shombhu Debnath teaches Alu how to weave the intricate and complex Jamdani weave. He starts him on 'the classic patterns, the butis of jamdani: the simple star, the tara-buti, and the heart-shaped pan-buti'.[277] However Alu soon becomes such an expert at the Jamdani weave that he can take the 'carelessly drawn pattern' that Shombhu leaves on his loom every week and bring it to life in cloth: 'from those tattered messages Alu put together the lotus, poddo-buti, and the intricate ghor-buti, row after row of figured houses, abstractions of shelter and peace'.[278] After months of practice at the loom, Debnath challenges Alu to use his skill to re-create his environment. At the time in which Alu begins to weave, Bangladesh is entrenched in a war and the Indian village of Lalpukur, which shares a border with Bangladesh, experiences this war second-hand. The small village is rattled by the sounds of gunfire and bombs every night and the large population of refugees who travel to Lalpukur to escape the war in Bangladesh. Initially, Alu contemplates re-creating his surroundings in his weaving but realizes that the intricate and delicate Jamdani weave is not compatible with narratives of war: 'Bomb-buti? Too dull, too easy, bottles and scraps and hints of blood. Refugee-buti? Too much corrugated iron and leaning tin sheets. Some angles were impossible with a kamthakur. War-buti?' Too much chaos; the loom demands order'.[279] Instead, Alu uses the Jamdani weave to find beauty in the destruction and

[275] Ghosh, p. 87.
[276] Ghosh, p. 65.
[277] Ghosh, p. 94.
[278] Ghosh, p. 94.
[279] Ghosh, p. 95.

create his story of the village. He focuses on the one positive thing that has occurred in the village during the tumultuous times which is that the school head-master, Bhudeb Roy, has toured the village on an elephant to celebrate his career change into politics. Alu recreates his version of this in cloth by depicting 'six yards of majestic howdah'd elephants, trunks curled over villages, lords of the world'.[280]

'Shaqo' shows the way that an oral poem can be an alternative means through which to preserve and archive the histories of weaving within the Banaadiri community. Although written historiography has not adequately documented southern Somalia's rich textile industry, through performing this oral work song the Banaadiri woman facilitates a multitude of narratives about this important textile trade. For the Banaadiri woman performing this *hees*, the importance of the Banaadiri weaving to both the Indian Ocean and Somali textile industry is not encapsulated by the completed mat, basket, hat or Futa Benaadir cloth but rather through a celebration of the perpetual spinning or weaving of these items.

The Futa Benaadir textile production had to adapt and change to survive a fluctuating textile market. Traditionally the Futa Benaadir 'had been exclusively plain white'.[281] However, by the last decade of the nineteenth century, 'plain white *futa Benaadir* had been completely replaced by *merikan*, as the grey sheeting manufactured in the United States was known, done up in the standard dimensions of its indigenous predecessor so that it could be worn as the traditional wrapped garment'.[282] Thus, in order to adapt to the changing demand for cloth in the Somali textile industry, Banaadiri weavers changed their cloth production from exclusively white to coloured cloths. Alpers states 'coterminous with the sudden domination of *merikan* and the impending destruction of the Benaadir weaving industry was the strategic carving out of a new market both locally and especially among the interior peoples for a new style of *futa Benaadir* which ensured its survival to the present'.[283] Banaadiri weavers began to incorporate coloured

[280] Ghosh, p. 95
[281] Alpers, p. 88.
[282] Alpers, p.86.
[283] Alpers, pp. 87-88.

threads from India and the Persian Gulf into the making of the Futa Benaadir cloth. Alpers states that the Futa Benaadir began to be produced in 'vivid colors, the most popular of which were yellow, blue, and red'.[284] Moreover, another Futa Benaadir cloth was produced: 'a shorter, finer type of cloth than the traditional *futa* which had red, yellow, and black bands at the ends and was adorned with fringe'.[285] Coloured Futa Benaadir was especially popular in the interior and helped the textile industry to survive. The patrons of the cloth in the interior preferred the colored Futa Benaadir made by the Banaadiri people as opposed to imported coloured cloth because it was stronger, better quality, had less sizing and the sizing didn't have the strong odour associated with some imported cloth. Alpers argues that 'it appears that established taste for the feel and smell of *futa Benaadir* was the critical element in preserving a vital domestic market for locally produced cotton textiles'.[286]

'Shaqo', like the Futa Benaadir, has been adapted and changed throughout history which has ensured it survival. Throughout 'Shaqo' the focus is on the Banaadiri woman as the spinner and the way she enables community and continuity by ensuring there is enough cotton to sew and weave. The spinning process is symbolic of the spoken language and stands for the importance of spinning oral stories about the importance of the Banaadiri people's textile production to the Banaadir coast, Somalia and the wider Indian Ocean world. Both the woven cloth and historiography are fixed and linear, whereas spinning cotton and the oral poem are ever changing and thus perpetual. While conventional historiography works to bring together different sources to construct an over-arching cohesive narrative, the *hees* tends to revel in the multiple and the variable. The oral poem 'continuously repositions itself with respect to a tradition made up of alternative narrative possibilities' which means that 'there are diverse "versions" and "variants' of a single song which exist, as it were, in an implicit dialogue with each other'.[287] Each

[284] Alpers, p. 88.
[285] Alpers, p. 88.
[286] Alpers, p. 91.
[287] Laura M. Slatkin, 'Composition by Theme and the Metis of the Odyssey', in *Reading the Odyssey: selected interpretive essay*, ed. by Seth L. Schein (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 223-237 (p. 226).

performer of the '*Shaqo*' reimagines this song in a slightly different way to the former thereby creating a plethora of Banaadiri stories. When the Banaadiri woman commands the community to "weave the mat and the basket" she inherently encourages them to perpetuate these oral stories in order to create enduring narratives of their presence on the coast.

In the beginning of 'Shaqo', the Banaadiri woman repeats 'Heeskii hore' 'The previous song' to highlight from the onset that 'Shaqo' is not contemporary but a new rendition of an older song. Subtleties of translation become significant here. The Banaadiri woman plays on the word *hore* which in this context means 'previous' or 'former' but also has connotations of something old or older. Through the use of *hore* the Banaadiri woman evokes a feeling that this *hees* is not only part of their contemporary labour production but also part of their history. It suggests that 'Shaqo' is a form of expressive culture taught from generation to generation to help drive and thereby preserve their textile production. This is further compounded by the *kii* definite article ending on the word *hees*. The word *heeskii* rather than *heeska* is used to refer to the song suggesting a form already known to both the performer and the listeners. After repeating 'Heeskii hore' 'The previous song', the performer states 'Heeskii hore wayaa. Hilmaammi maayaa', 'It is the previous song. I am not going to forget it' to highlight that the continuation of this song is choice made by the community to support the preservation of their cloth production. When singing this version of 'Shaqo', Aisha raised the pitch of her voice when she sang the word *Hilmaammi'* to emphasise that this song will not be forgotten but constantly remembered through different re-imaginings. The Banaadiri woman emphasizes that 'Shaqo' is a familiar song which is being remembered and refreshed through this performance.

Indeed, whenever 'Shaqo' is performed, it is not only remembered but re-imagined. Comparing Asha Karama's version of the song with that of her late mother, Faduma Qaasim Hilowle, who made the song famous through performing it on Somali television in the 1980s, reveals the differences that can occur when the song is re-imagined. Faduma Qaasim Hilowle's version has two extra verses. The first additional verse is as follows 'Haasaawe beenaat hal ma noo tarayee/Waa haybiheynaa wixii noo habboonee. Hooyaalade'. 'False small talk is not of use to

us/ We are enquiring into what is suitable for us.' In the first line, 'Haasaawe beenaat hal ma noo tarayee, *Haasaawe* is a noun which refers to informal 'conversations' or 'chats' about inconsequential matters and *beenaat*, derives from and, has the same meaning as the noun *been*, which means 'lies' or 'false'. *Hal* is the number 'one' but in this context the word *wax* is also implied and so *hal* actually translates as 'one thing'. This line literally means 'False small talk is not assisting one thing for us' and emphasises that disingenuous small talk is a waste of time for the Banaadiri community. There is a play on the verb *tar*, which in this context means 'be of use', 'useful', or 'assist', but can also mean 'multiply' or 'increase in numbers'. This particular verb has been used to highlight that frivolous activities such as chitchat do not assist or benefit the Banaadiri community in any respect nor does it increase anything that they possess. In the line, *Waa haybiheynaa wixii noo habboonee, Hooyaalade*, 'We are enquiring into what is suitable for us', the verb *haybi* translates as 'enquire' and *habboon* is an adjective which can mean 'suitable', 'appropriate', 'correct', or 'rightful'. This line suggests that the Banaadiri community are turning away from trivial interests and looking into what is right for them as a community. In Faduma Qaasim Hilowle's version, this verse comes straight after the verse where the Banaadiri women extols the importance of their labour and explains the way that community as a whole have abandoned their sleep in order to work. This additional verse is in synergy with the first verse. It highlights that in addition to forsaking sleep, the community have also forsaken frivolous activities such as 'Haasaawe beenaat' 'False small talk' in order to undertake their cloth production.

The other additional verse in Faduma Qaasim Hilowle's version concludes the *hees*. When Faduma performed this version of the *hees* on Somali television, it was the first time that this traditional Banaadiri work song was broadcast to a national audience. The *hees* primarily explores women's labour, and the contributions it makes to the wider Banaadiri community, as well as the Somali and Indian ocean textile trade. In Faduma's performance of this final verse of the *hees* on Somali television she further connected the Banaadiri women's textile labour to the wider Somali community. Her words spoke to what connected them all which is their shared nationality as Somali people and their faith in Islam and the words of the Koran. The verse is as follows,

'Dalkeenna Soomalia iyo dadkiisa/ 'Diinta Quraanka ay duggaashadaan, hooyaalaadee/ Deelka Quraanka ay ku duceysadaan, hooyaalaadee', 'Our country, Somalia, and its people/ They shelter in the religion of the Koran/ They pray with the *deel* of the Koran'. In the first line, a strong sense of nationalism is evoked through the words 'Dalkeenna Soomalia iyo dadkiisa', 'Our country, Somalia, and its people' to bring together the listeners of the *hees* on Somali national television and to highlight their collective identity. The next line continues to discuss what unites them: 'Diinta Quraanka ay duggaashadaan, hooyaalaadee', 'They shelter in the religion of the Koran'. In this line *duggal* means 'shelter' and the entire line suggests Somalia and all of its people find shelter and protection from the difficulties and dangers of life in their shared religion. In the final line of this verse, 'Deelka Quraanka ay ku duceysadaan, hooyaalaadee', *deel* is a letter of the Arabic alphabet and *duceyso* means 'pray for oneself'. This line suggests that the Somali people pray for themselves through the words of the Koran. The verse is in the general present to show that Somali people are constantly unified by finding shelter in their religion and the Koran.

2.6 Spinning and weaving kinship

In Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason,* community weaving renders an exclusive form of kinship. Each weaving method is exclusive to a particular caste. Shombhu heralds from the Debnath's who are known as weavers of coarse cotton. For the Debnaths, weaving was merely a means of making an income. There was not much of a 'technique' to their weaving as they viewed it as 'mere drudgery'.[288] They would throw 'the shuttle one way and another for years without end until their spines collapsed'.[289] Shombhu grows up hearing stories about the legendary Boshaks and their skilled 'gossamer weaves' and decides to forsake his family's weaving in pursuit of learning the

[288] Ghosh, p. 78.
[289] Ghosh, p. 78.

Boshaks' way.[290] The Boshaks, a community of weavers who live in Tangail, have a particular way of weaving that is known to be intrinsic to their cultural identity. Growing up, 'Shombhu, like all the other children in his hamlet, had heard tales and legends about the Boshaks of Tangail, near Dhaka'.[291] The legend of the Boshaks was that 'for centuries they had ruled continents with their gossamer weavers'.[292] However, 'it was not only for their weaving that they were legendary, it was also for the secretiveness with which they hoarded the trade and craft secrets of their caste'.[293] The Boshaks see their highly skilled method of 'gossamer weaves' as exclusive to their cultural identity.[294] It is a cultural legacy taught to them from generation to generation: a 'Boshak could no more teach an outsider than another man could give away his family's best land'.[295] On the rare occasion when an outsider does learn their weaving technique, they have to relinquish all ties to their former lives and are subsumed into the caste: 'they married Boshak girls, lived in their houses, ate their food, and surrendered every memory of their lives outside'. [296] In order for Shombhu Debnath to join the Boshaks' community and learn their way of weaving, he needs to forsake his own family and caste and pretend to be an orphan. Shombhu works with them for years, 'for nothing but his food and a few clothes'.[297] As times goes on, Shombhu becomes completely assimilated into the Boshaks' world: he 'forgot his hamlet; he had no family left but the master-weaver's'.[298] However, when Shombhu's real identity is revealed, he is banished by the master weaver and has to return to his home in Noakhali. When he arrives back in his hamlet, Shombhu tries to teach his family the Boshaks way of weaving but they are not interested: 'We know what we know, they said when he tried to teach them the secrets of jamdani, and we want to know no more'.[299] *The Circle of Reason* shows the way that weaving in the novel does not bring

[290] Ghosh, p. 78.
[291] Ghosh, p. 78.
[292] Ghosh, p. 78.
[293] Ghosh, p. 78.
[294] Ghosh, p. 78.
[295] Ghosh, pp. 78-79.
[296] Ghosh, p. 79.
[297] Ghosh, p. 79.
[298] Ghosh, p. 79.
[299] Ghosh, p. 80.

people together but rather sets them apart. Each caste or family lineage is renowned for a particular way of weaving and they are not open to learning the weaving method of a different caste, nor are people from other castes welcome to learn their weaving method.

In 'Shaqo', like in *The Circle of Reason*, the manufacture of cloth and woven goods is presented as essential to the creation and maintenance of a community identity. Throughout the song, the multiple threads spun by the Banaadiri woman from the cotton not only allows the community to articulate multiple stories about their coastal history but also binds them together as a community. When the Banaadiri woman asserts 'Waa *kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa/Waa kaafihaaye nimba kaalintiise*.' 'I am adding to the sewing of a hat. I am making it sufficient for every person to have his allotted role', she plays on the duality of the words *kordhi* and *tol.* The word *kordhi* means both to 'increase' as well as 'develop' and 'grow' and the word *tol*, as a verb means to 'sew' or 'bind together' but as a noun means 'kin', 'relative' or 'clan'. In '*Shaqo'* it is through working together to manufacture the Futa Benaadir, and other sewn and woven clothes and goods, that the Banaadiri people become 'kin'. The Banaadiri woman suggests that that through increasing the manufacturing of the cotton into thread, the Banaadiri woman develops and grows the Banaadiri cloth textile industry, and further develops the Banaadiri kinships together. Furthermore, the singular word for hat— *koofiyad* rather than the plural *koofiyado* — is used as a metaphor for the uniformity of the Banaadiri community. The Banaadiri woman will spin enough cotton so that each person in the community has a role in weaving this *one hat.* With its many threads being woven into one single item, the hat represents the way that all the Banaadiri people come together to make one community. This image of the thread binding the community mirrors the role that the Banaadiri textile industry played in forging links between communities both within Somalia and across the Indian Ocean. Banaadiri people would weave clothes, hats, throws, baskets and mats which would be traded with Somali people of the interior in exchange for milk and meat, and with traders from other parts of the Indian Ocean for other resources.[300]

[300] Interview with Aisha Karma.

The Circle of Reason is filled with tightly wound, knotted weaves. Each weaving method is exclusive and tightly bound to a particular caste or community. 'Shaqo', in contrast, crafts a loose weave. Weaving is an inclusive cultural practice which draws everyone who hears the song into the production of the Futa Benaadir, and other woven or sewn goods. Initially the listeners of 'Shaqo' were the Banaadiri family unit, however, once it began to be broadcast on Somali radio and television it was heard by the entire nation. The audience, rather than unravelling the story, are active collaborators in the weaving of these Banaadiri stories. Throughout 'Shaqo', the Banaadiri woman constantly entreats the listener to get involved in the manufacture of stories about labour. Although it is the Banaadiri woman's role primarily to promote Banaadiri stories, throughout the song she invites the listener to participate. She commands the listener 'Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha//Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daali meeynaa','Weave the mat and the basket for me/It is the character of our county. We will not get tired from it.' Through the constant use of inclusive pronouns, she entreats the listener to become involved in the weaving of the Futa Benaadir in order to be part of building the Somali nation. Moreover, she also encourages the listener to get involved in promoting the flat bread grinding stone: 'Shiidka muufo waa shaacihaayee/sheygii la doonaa lagu shiidahaayee', I am promoting the flat bread grinding stone/mixing the item one wants with it. *Shey* can be translated as a 'thing', 'article' or 'item' but the *gii* definite article ending suggests the article or item is one known already to the listener, intimating an established communal voice. When the Banaadiri woman asserts 'Sheygii la doona lagu shiidahaayee', she suggests that the listener can use the bread grinding stone to make something familiar to them. Through encouraging the listener to participate in this way, she also indirectly encourages them to make cloth. Although *shiid* in this context refers to the 'millstone' or 'grinding stone' which is used to make flat bread, it can also mean a mass colourful cloth or fabric that is generally used by women. Through playing on the duality of the noun *shiid*, the Banaadiri woman encourages the listener to participate in weaving even when discussing other types of labour. She encourages the listener to use the spinning wheel and thread to make a range of different cloth: 'Dolaawgaa jiidaayo iyo duntaneey /maradii la doonaa lagu

daabacaayee', 'This thread and the spinning wheel' /embroidering the cloth one wants with it.' The Banaadiri woman plays on the verb *daabac* which in this context refers to 'embroidering' but can also mean 'printing' or 'publishing'. Thus, the Banaadiri woman deploys a number of linguistic strategies to entreat the listener to engage in the spreading and 'publishing' of stories about the manufacture of the Futa Benaadir, as well as other woven goods and to make them feel that they are already part of this process.

The rhythm, repetition and melody of 'Shaqo' also draws the listener into the work song and the manufacture of household goods, as well as the Futa Benaadir. The melody of the *hees* has a soothing and hypnotic quality which is similar to that of a lullaby. Once 'Shaqo' begins, the listener cannot help but be enthralled until it concludes. Even when the beat of the song increases and decreases to support the labour of spinning cotton or weaving in the home, it happens so slowly that it does not disrupt the soothing nature of the song. The repetition is simple and constant. The first line is repeated, followed by a repeated half line and then the second line is repeated. For instance,

> Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa/ Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa/ Hooyaalaa hed waa helaayaa/ Hurdo manoo roona. Ka soo hadaafnay. Hooyaalaadee/ Hurdo manoo roona. Ka soo hadaafnay. Hooyaalaadee.

This steady and continuous repetition creates a feeling of predictability which means that listeners can begin to anticipate the words of the song and join in the singing. Moreover, the song begins with the words 'Hooyaalaadanaay li hingaadihaayee, /Hooyaalaadanaay li hingaadihaayee/ Hooyaalaay li hingaadihaayee'. These words have no inherent meaning in Somali but are used to indicate that someone is about to recite a form of poetry. It gives the audience the time to prepare to hear a poem and to sit quietly in anticipation of the performance. While in most poems these words are used to introduce and conclude, in 'Shaqo' the phrase is woven throughout. Many of the lines end with the word 'Hooyaalaadee' and all of the repeated half lines

begin with 'Hooyaalaa' which means that the song constantly speaks to the listener throughout the performance. Thus, both the words of the *hees* as well as the melody and rhythm draw the listener into this work song and its message of promoting and propagating the Banaadiri textile industry.

2.7 Beauty and labour

In *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh shows the way that weaving can be a beautiful craft which borders on an art form. When twelve-year-old Shombhu travels from his village in the Noakhali mainland to Tangail to join the Boshak master-weaver's family, he yearns to learn their legendary way of weaving. The Debnaths' method of weaving involved much toil and little technique, whereas when Shombhu Debnath apprentices himself with the Boshaks, he learns to weave a complicated and sophisticated cloth. While the Debnaths use cotton to weave 'thick white cloth, checked lungis, coarse cotton gamchas, and suchlike in great bulk', the Boshaks use cotton to weave beautifully elaborate 'gossamer weaves' which they use to make the 'jamdani', a highly-prized and intricately designed fine muslin clothe.[301] Living with them, Shombhu

> learnt to size and to warp; with the master-weaver's sons he learnt the secrets of punching Jacquard index cards. He learnt the intricacies of their jamdani inlay techniques. He even learnt to make the fine bamboo reeds which were the centerpieces of their jamdani looms, the only one which could hold fine silk yarn without tearing it. That was a skill few even among the

[301] Ghosh, pp. 78-79.
Jamdani was woven in Dhaka, Bangladesh for centuries but gained ascendency when it received patronage during the Mughal empire of the 16th -18th centuries. The name Jamdani reflects the Mughal influence as it is made up of two Persian compound words 'jam' meaning flower and 'dan' meaning vase. The name alludes to the beautiful floral motifs that adorn the fabric. The Jamdani is considered to be one of the most time and labour-intensive forms of hand loom weaving. One Jamdani Saree can take anywhere between a between a month to a year to weave. Jamdani weavers are craftsmen who individually hand sew each of the intricate patterns and motifs on the loom.

> Boshaks could boast of, for it was the preserve of a wandering caste of boatmen and bangle-makers called Bede. [302]

It is through weaving the Jamdani with the Boshaks that Shombhu Debnath is able to create beauty and art. From the Boshaks, he learns about 'muslins as fine as mountain springs, invisible under the surface of the clearest water; shabnam muslins, which when spread on grass melted into the morning dew'.[303] This 'cloth which was thin air, fifteen yards of it no heavier than two handfuls of rice, and yet denser than the thickest wool, with four hundred warp threads to the inch'.[304] Moreover, the beauty and exquisite designs of their weaving are reflected in the music that the Boshaks create while they work. Shombhu states that 'they all sang, he and the master-weaver's sons and everyone else, they sang as they worked in their tin-roofed shed, each at their own loom, taking their beat from the rhythmic clatter of fly-shuttles and the tinkling of needle-weights hanging on Jacquard looms'.[305] They sing 'melancholy, throbbing songs of love and longing' that mirrors the passion and love that they have for their work.[306] After he is exiled and forced to return to Noakhali, Shombhu is haunted by the Boshaks' way of creating beautiful intricate weaves, sumptuous cloth and moving songs. Faced with the prospect of returning to his family's way of manufacturing the 'coarse cotton', Shombhu forgoes weaving in pursuit of a life as a singing wanderer and it is not until he gains Alu as an apprentice that he begins to weave again as a passion.[307] For Shombhu Debnath 'beauty doesn't exist; it is made like words or forts, by speakers and listeners, warriors and defenders, weavers and wearers'.[308]

'Shaqo' also shows the way that textile production can be a means through which to craft a communal aesthetic that exceeds the material cloth itself. In the *hees*, the Banaadir woman states

[302] Ghosh, p.79.
[303] Ghosh, pp. 83-84.
[304] Ghosh, p. 84.
[305] Ghosh, p. 79.
[306] Ghosh, p. 79.
[307] Ghosh, p. 78.
[308] Ghosh, p. 96.

'Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa', 'I am propagating it. I make a reputation for it'. *Shaaci* is a verb which combines two meanings 'spreading' and 'promoting'. The Banaadiri woman, as the spinner of stories about the people's manufacture of cloth and woven goods must *shaaci*, 'spread' and 'promote' these stories among the wider Somali and Indian Ocean communities. The constant repetition of the personal pronoun '*aan'* highlights that it is the sole responsibility of the woman to *shaaci* 'propagate' both the cloth and the stories woven into the cloth so that they have *sharaf*, 'a reputation'. As she promotes these stories, she raises the status of her community's labour: 'Sharaf aan u yeelaa', 'I make a reputation for it.' The *hees* suggests that when the Banaadiri woman propagates the community's textile production, she cultivates a standing and appreciation for it within the Banaadiri, and Somali community, as well as the wider Indian Ocean world. Moreover, when the woman states 'Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa', 'I am propagating it. I make a reputation for it', she also suggests that she beautifies her community's textile production. The term *sharaf* has a myriad of meanings. It can mean 'honour', 'prestige' and 'nobility' but it also has connotations of 'beauty' 'grace' and 'splendor'. She emphasises the importance of advocating the beauty and grandeur of mats, baskets, hats and the Futa Benaadir and the stories woven through them by not only repeating the phrase 'Sharaf aan u yeelaa' but also raising the pitch of her voice when singing the words *shaacihaayee* and *sharaf*. The word *sharaf* tends to be used in relation to a person rather than an object in everyday Somali speech as a means to refer to their 'honour' or 'reputation' or the way that someone may honour them. When the Banaadiri woman states 'sharaf aan u yeelaa', she suggests that by promoting the textile production through this work song she personifies and brings its beauty to life. In 'Shaqo', the Banaadiri woman as 'the spinner' of both cotton and Banaadiri coastal stories is instrumental in transforming the community's labor into a collective cultural production.

'Shaqo', like the weaving of the Jamdani in *The Circle of Reason,* is set to beautiful, evocative and emotive melody, which captivates the reader and draws them into the intricate spinning and weaving process used to make the Futa Benaadir, as well as mats, baskets, and hats. Even though the listener cannot physically see the weaving process, through the emotion

wrought through the song, they are able to imagine and thereby participate in the devotion embedded in weaving their traditional cloth and goods. However, while the Boshaks' singing primarily functions as a means to mirror the beauty of the Jamdani weaving, the singing in 'Shaqo' mainly functions as a tool to drive the making of Banaadiri textile labour. Somali studies scholar Axmed Cali Aboxor, in his work on Somali pastoral work songs, argues that 'songs which accompany the rhythmic movements of work are essential to the accomplishment of gestures involved in work'.[309] He argues that because traditional household labour like the weaving of mats can be arduous, 'the singing of poetry helps, among other things, to lessen the burden of the work and encourage its continuation'.[310] Moreover, the words of the song directly relate to the labour being undertaken, and 'usually concern the tools of the work, either in admiration or in complaint if they fail to produce the requires results'.[311] Abokor argues that it is both the 'rhythmic movement and its musical pattern as well as the forceful ideas embodied in the verbal element' which make the work 'more attractive and artistic'.[312] This attractiveness in turn makes the work more enjoyable and encourages 'the performers to work harder and together'.[313] '*Shaqo'* is set to a slow melodious beat which imitates the long fluid movements involved in spinning cotton, sewing hats and weaving the Futa Benaadir, mats and baskets. The steady beat of the melody of this work song, promotes the steady pace of their labour and sets a communal pace. The words of the song and melody work in a synergy which support the Banaadiri worker to keep the symbiosis between the warp and weft when undertaking spinning, weaving and sewing work in the home.

'Shaqo' ends with an image of an unfinished weave: 'Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey/maradii la doonaa lagu daabacaayee', 'this thread and the spinning wheel/embroidering the cloth one wants with it.' *Dolaawga jiidaayo* refers to 'the spinning wheel'

[309] Abokor, p. 26.
[310] Abokor, p. 57.
[311] Abokor, p.57.
[312] Abokor, p.26.
[313] Abokor, p. 26.

that Banaadiri women use to spin cotton fibre into thread and *duntan* means 'this thread'. The *eey* suffix attached to *duntan* shows that the noun phrase 'Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey' is in the vocative form. It suggests that when the Banaadiri female performer sings these words, she speaks directly to the tools of her labour. She tells her spinning wheel and thread about the infinite number of clothes that can be made using them: 'maradii la doonaa lagu daabacaayee', 'embroidering the cloth one wants with it'. The *dii* definite article ending on the word *maro*, 'cloth' suggests that people can make a cloth that is familiar to them thereby highlighting that Banaadiri women's work, as the spinners of cotton, is vital to and part of her community's textile labour.

In Greek literature, the unfinished weave represents a transient state. While Arachne and Philomela's stories end soon after they complete their tapestries, Penelope and Helen are able to postpone their destiny by prolonging the weaving process. As Kruger asserts

> for Helen, the shuttle represents an ideal symbol for herself "as pawn to be shuttled back and forth between men," between two sides, two possibilities, two lives. By keeping the shuttle in action, she suspends certainty, for the tapestry remains incomplete – and her destiny undecided – as long as the war continues. The shuttle also constitutes an apt metaphor for Penelope, as its movement is akin to the flux between day and night, between weaving and unravelling.[314]

In 'Shaqo' the unfinished weave also represents a transient state and the Banaadiri community's continuous textile manufacture. The entire work song is set in the general present tense to highlight the unending need to manufacture Banaadiri textiles and the continuity across time of Banaadiri stories. The Banaadiri woman states 'Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa' 'I am increasing the sewing of a hat', 'Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise'. 'I am sufficing it for each person to make his contribution'. While the weaving and sewing remains dynamic, more stories

[314] Kruger, p. 79.

about the Banaadiri coast can be told and perpetuated. By ending the poem with this incomplete weave, 'Shaqo' suggests that the contribution of the Banaadiri women to the process of clothmaking and in turn the contribution to their community to both the Indian Ocean and the Somali nation has not ended. It is unending.

Both 'Shaqo' and *The Circle of Reason* explore the way that the making of cloth can facilitate the creation of stories about belonging, kinship and identity. In 'Shaqo' the manufacture of cloth and woven goods is presented as inherent to the creation and maintenance of a community identity. The *hees* explores the way that the Banaadiri woman as the spinner of cotton creates the conditions for the entire community to articulate multiple stories about the importance of their textile production and their cultural identities to their community as well as to the wider connected communities of Somalia and the Indian Ocean world. 'Shaqo' affirms the role and contribution of the Banaadiri woman by suggesting that the threads spun from their cotton both increases the amount of weaving, sewing and embroidering that the Banaadiri people are able to complete and binds them together as a community. Similarly, *The Circle of Reason* shows the way that cloth has created an Indian Ocean trade network and through this network, a regional Indian Ocean community. In 'Shaqo', the making of cloth is an inclusive cultural practice as the Banaadiri woman draws everyone who hears the song into the production of the Futa Benaadir and other woven or sewn goods. In contrast, despite the anthropological sections of *The Circle of Reason* that highlight the connection between cloth and community making in the Indian Ocean world, in the novel's main story, weaving renders a closed kinship and an individual, exclusive connection. The Debnaths' way of weaving coarse cotton for bulk purchase and the Boshaks' method of weaving bespoke intricate and delicate muslins are both exclusive to their particular castes and others are not allowed to learn their weaving techniques. Thus, in *The Circle of Reason*, weaving does not draw people together beyond their caste grouping; it thereby confirms social division and sets them apart. However, through the protagonist, Alu, Ghosh shows that weaving can be a cultural activity unbound from caste. Alu's weaving allows him to find his voice and a sense of selfhood as well as the potential to bring into being new communities that

cross boundaries of caste, and class. Like the Banaadiri woman, the loom not only provides Alu with the material language to articulate who he understands himself to be but it also allows him to become a storyteller, to create a world through cloth and to shape that world in connection with others.

Chapter 3 Embodiment and memories: literary articulations of coastal women and manifestations of India Ocean cultures

This chapter examines the way that two pieces of Indian Ocean fiction, a Banaadiri wedding song 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' and Cristina Ali Farah's published work *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* explore ideas of kinship, identity and heritage for coastal women. I assess how both works express the kinship between coastal women and the ways in which their Indian Ocean and local cultural identities become embodied forms of knowledge. I argue that in both literary works, women's bodies carry cultural meaning. However, while in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', it is through women's bodies that Banaadiri Indian Ocean culture is expressed, affirmed and continued, in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, coastal women's bodies attest to a more uneven and contested Indian Ocean and diasporic heritage which registers historical losses as well as their everyday lived realities.

'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' is a song composed by Ali Osman Drog to promote and preserve traditional Banaadiri wedding customs both within the Banaadiri community and wider Somalia. It was made famous by Faadumo Qaasin Hilowle who performed it on Somali television in 1984.[315] In this chapter, I focus on a performance of this wedding song by Faduma Qassim's daughter, Aisha Karama in her home in London. Although the lyrics to 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' are contemporary, the melody of the *hees* has long been and remains well-known within Banaadiri communities both locally and globally. The people of *Xamar Weyne* and *Shingani* used it for songs to praise their sheiks, wedding songs to praise brides, and songs to convey messages to each other.[316] Ali Osman Drog chose this particular melody so that the *hees* 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa'

[315] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

[316] Personal interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

would resonate with as many people as possible and so that his version would, in turn, become well-known.[317]

In the first part of this chapter, I provide a detailed context for 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' by outlining Banaadiri wedding customs. My readings of this *hees* will be framed by a detailed engagement with cultural practices and histories in order to build a cultural literacy which allows these pieces of literature to become accessible to a wider readership. Although 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' is sung during a particular ceremony that forms part of a Banaadiri wedding, the *meel fadhiisis*, the *hees* references many of the other ceremonies that come together to create the wedding celebration. It thus provides a poetic condensation of what the wedding traditions signify as a whole. It is important to a reading of the song to gain an understanding of these traditions, the way that they cultivate a strong kinship between Banaadiri people and how the community both embody and perform their culture during these ceremonies.

3.1 Banaadiri wedding customs

The main Banaadiri wedding celebrations are the *cillaan saar*, *meel fadhiisis, nikaax, waaq dhacin, guuris* and the *shaash saar.* Banaadiri wedding traditions take place over a three-day period except for the *shaash saar* which takes place seven days after the *guuris* tradition.[318]

The *cillaan saar*, is a pre-wedding, woman-only tradition attended by the younger generation of the bride's family and her friends where henna is put on the bride's body to beautify her for the wedding day. The tradition provides an opportunity for the bride's sisters, cousins and her friends to celebrate her impending marriage. While the bride's body is being adorned with henna designs, the guests sing traditional songs.[319]

[317] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.
[318] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018
[319] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

The day after the *cillaan saar* is the *meel fadhiisis,* another woman-only celebration in which the older generation of female family members –the mothers, grandmothers and married women – come together to celebrate and bless the bride. These female guests wear the traditional cloths that their community weaves and which reflect their *Hiddo iyo dhaqan* **(**tradition/heritage and culture) called *Alindi* or known more globally as the *Futa Benaadir*. The bride wears a *guntiino* and a *garbasaar* made from *Subaacal Xariir*: one piece of the *Subaacal Xariir* cloth is knotted around her body and the other is put over her shoulders and she is covered in gold.[320]

The *meel fadhiisis* begins with the female guests taking the *Subaacal Xariir* and covering the bride's head and shoulders with it. They burn *cuud* (incense made of granules of ground grain) and/or *luubaan* (frankincense) around the bride's head. They then recite a surah from the Quran called Al-Fatiha and make supplications for the bride. After this they begin to perform a traditional dance called *Aw Barqadle* (Aw Barkhadle) which is also an act of praying for the bride to have a successful marriage. Finally, they perform a form of supplication called *Alla Bari* where they pray to Allah s.w.t for the bride and her married life. After the older generation of women finish praying and blessing the bride, the younger generation of female members of the bride's family and the bride's friends, who are also dressed in *Subaacal Xariir*, join the *meel fadhiisis* celebration. They sit either side of the bride and all the women collectively sing 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' to uplift and celebrate the bride and show their support for her impending nuptials.[321]

The day after the *meel fadhiisis* is the *nikaax*, an Islamic legal marriage contract where the groom and bride agree to be husband and wife. After the *nikaax,* a wedding lunch called *waaq dhacin* is served to all the male and female wedding guests. Before and after lunch, the guests perform a range of different dances including *Gulaalacow*, *Wal Cuud Wal Camber*, *Shiribka*, *Sharax* and *Kabeeby*. These dances will differ depending on where the wedding guests are from

[320] Personal interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.
[321] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

and will reflect their local heritage. On the evening of this day after the *waaq dhacin* celebration, the *guuris* ceremony will take place.[322]

Guuris is a custom where the family, friends and neighbours of the bride and groom sing traditional songs and perform dances while they escort the couple to the marital home after the wedding ceremony. [323] The *Guuris* tradition begins with the bride returning to her parents' home where she is dressed and beautified by her friends. They dress her in two pieces of *garays* cloth, one knotted around her body and the other acts as a veil and covers her shoulders and head. She is sprayed with *sandal* (sandalwood), *catar* (a type of oriental perfume), and *uunsi* and her hair is infused with *catar*. The bride and groom are then escorted separately to the marital home with the bride going first.[324]

Traditionally, every Banaadiri bride and groom would have been taken on a particular route to their marital home where they would travel along the coast on a road that goes from *Xamar Weyne* to *Liido*. Even if the journey from the wedding venue to the marital home was on the opposite end of the city, they would go out of their way to go through this coastal road. This is an indication of the way in which the sea and coast play an integral role in the lives of the Banaadiri people and how important specific place-making is to the couple's journey together. Although in present times, the bride and groom and their family and friends travel in cars, traditionally the bride would be carried on the back of several women called the *Koobirow*, who were from a lower social economic class but attached to families; the wedding party would walk alongside her. The Koobirow women would take it in turns to carry the bride on their back. The only time that the bride's feet would be allowed to touch the floor on the journey from her parent's home to the marital home was when she was being moved from one *Koobirow* to the next. The groom would make the journey from his parent's home to the marital house on foot

[322] Personal interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.
[323] Communities that herald from a nomadic pastoralist background also practice this tradition but it is called *Gelbis*.
[324] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

with his family and friends alongside him. When close to the marital home, the groom would also be put on the back of a male relative but for the purpose of being thrown up in the air three times by his male relatives and friends to celebrate the fact that he was becoming a man. Once the groom reached the marital home, he is refused access by the *Koobirows* until he has paid them for their labour in carrying his bride home. These wedding traditions help bring the Banaadiri people together as a community and provide an opportunity for them to express their located and distinctive culture and heritage. In particular, the *meel fadhiisis* ceremony reveals the way that Banaadiri women come together as kin to celebrate the bride and how through their traditional practices they embody and perform their cultural attachments.[325]

In the next part of the chapter, I take these ideas of coastal heritage, female kinship, and embodiment of culture, that emerge from the *meel fadhiisis* tradition forward into a close analysis of the *hees* 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa'. I use my anthropological readings of the song to bring some of the literary effects of the story into relief. My literary critical understanding of the story allows me to illuminate the poetics of the song as well as the ideas of community and embodiment that emerge from it. I then compare 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' to Cristina Ali Farah's *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, another Indian Ocean literary work, to interrogate what constitutes female kinship, coastal identity, cultural heritage and the ties between these in a different Indian Ocean literary context. It seems important to begin my comparative analysis of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' and *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* by articulating how these two pieces of expressive culture differ in form.

3.2 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' and *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*

Despite the cultural literacy needed to fully understand the situational intricacies of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', it is a relatively easy piece of literature for the listener to engage with. It is a

[325] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

melodic and rhythmic oral song which from the onset draws the listener in. As a *hees* that is sung for and by a local community, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' promotes social cohesion: each stanza of the song explores the way that the community of women at the *meel fadhiisis* work together as a single unit for a common purpose: to celebrate the wedding of their kin and share their cultural knowledge through the *meel fadhiisis* wedding tradition. The form of the *hees* lends itself to this cohesion. Throughout 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', the female kin at the *meel fadhiisis* are integral to creating the rhythm of the melody by beating the drum and clapping to create a continuous up-beat tempo which sets the rhythm for the main singer of the *hees*. Moreover, it is not only through creating the rhythm of the *hees* that female kinship group work together cohesively but also through the repetition. Each stanza is sung by a main singer in the *meel fadhiisis* ceremony, but the last two lines of each stanza are then sung back to the main singer by the entire female congregation. This collaborative way of singing the *hees*, makes the stanzas of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' blend in to each other beautifully creating a collective female celebratory practice.

While the evocative and lyrical nature of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' draws the listener of the *hees* into the song, *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* is a work of fiction that confounds the reader from its beginning. The entire work challenges the readers' impulse to engage with fiction in a logical or conclusive way. *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* is a fiction that is both about disjunction and shaped by disjunction. All of the stories within this literary work are about disconnection, precariousness and isolation against which individuals make gestures of connection. The stories in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea,* include a granddaughter mourning the loss of an estranged grandmother who died in Eyl, the granddaughter's memories of her childhood in Mogadishu, a group of Somali asylum seekers working on a project on memory and un-translatable words in Italy, the story of the daughter of a Somali seaman who lived in Cambodia, and the stories of Somali women who have made treacherous journeys through land and sea from Somalia to Italy. Where in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' the female kinship group all come together and move in the same direction for a common purpose, in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, the female characters are all pulling in different

directions. They are all in a state of transit; trying to decide where they want to settle. The grandmother does not want to be mourning her husband in Eyl Badey or eating fish in Mogadishu but living in her 'village, up in the mountains' of Eyl Dawaad.[326] The granddaughter living in Italy wants to re-experience her childhood years in Somalia. The women who are part of the 'Somali asylum seeker' project on memory in Italy are constantly reliving the treacherous journeys that they made across land and sea from Somalia to Italy.[327] They may have a stable life in Italy but their memories keep them in a constant state of transition. The form of *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* also lends itself to this disjunction. The literary text does not fit into one literary genre; it constantly shifts form from memoir, to prose, to history, to poetry. Moreover, the entire work does not run smoothly but is divided into ten vignettes. Each vignette tells a different story and although the stories in each of the vignettes share many of the same themes and ideas, they never completely connect or end with a resolution. Instead each story ends on a moment of uncertainty or alienation before moving on to the next one.

'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' begins with a close-knit community of Banaadiri women who have all come together for a common purpose: to celebrate a Banaadiri bride and her impending wedding. The first line of the *hees*, 'Gabar iyoone garoob' 'A maiden and a previously married woman,' welcomes the range of different women who make up the wedding party. *Gabar* refers to a young unmarried girl whereas *garoob* refers to a divorcee or widow, an older more experienced woman. Through addressing both the *gabar and garoob,* the *hees* creates this inviting atmosphere where all women of different ages and life experiences are welcome. These women are referred to in relation to their marital status rather than their age to emphasise the importance of marriage in the Banaadiri tradition. The second line in the stanza speaks to the reason that they have gathered together, 'Gogoshan intii soo gableeyeen/Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa.' 'Those of us who have attended this meeting, have affection for the bride.' *Gacaltooyo* refers to a platonic 'affection' or 'close relationship' between family members, relatives, or

[326] Farah, p. 19.
[327] Farah, p. 21.

friends and thus highlights that there is a strong kinship between the female guests and the bride. The *hees* makes it clear from the onset that the women have congregated together because of this kinship and that they want to celebrate the bride's impending nuptials with her. The *hees* plays on the word *gogol* which in the context of the song is a noun which means 'meeting place' but as a verb refers to the 'spreading out' of something on the ground, usually mats, cloth or a material, which people can sit or lie on. During the *meel fadhiisis* custom, traditionally guests would sit on mats on the floor and the bride would sit on a chair above them. Through the use of the word *gogol* the *hees* creates an image of intimacy in the listener's mind; one where women sit side by side on the floor in a form of kinship to celebrate the close bond they collectively feel for the bride.

This idea of Banaadiri female kinships continues through to the final line of the first stanza, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', 'We are taking her to the marital home'. The word *guuri* has a dual meaning. On one level, it can mean to 'arrange a marriage' or 'marry off': It highlights that although the female guests have come together because they have a personal affection for the bride and want to celebrate her wedding nuptials, they also have an impersonal duty in ensuring that all the wedding customs are carried out properly. It shows that the Banaadiri wedding is not only about the bride and groom but also about the community and that the female guests are not mere spectators of the wedding celebration but actively involved in the cultural practice. This is further compounded by the second meaning of *guuri* which refers to the Banaadiri tradition where the bride and groom are escorted by friends and family members to the marital home. As mentioned earlier during the *guuris* ceremony the bride would be carried by the *Koobirows* who each would take it in turns to carry the bride on their back until they reach the marital home, while the rest of the wedding party, friends and neighbours sing cultural songs and perform cultural dances. Thus, when the *hees* states 'Gabar iyoone garoob/Gogoshan intii soo gableeyeen/Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa/Waa guuriheeynnaa' 'A maiden and a previously married woman, / Those of us who have attended this meeting, have affection for the bride/We are taking her to the marital home,' it articulates the important role that the Banaadiri community have in

participating in the wedding traditions and ensuring that all of the various customs are carried out right up until the *guuris* when they would ensure that the bride is literally carried to her new home to begin her married life.

While 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' depicts a singular neatly bound female kinship network, one where the women work together in a cohesive group to support the bride and exchange cultural knowledge, A *Dhow is Crossing the Sea* explores a plethora of tenuous disjointed female kinships with loosely overlapping stories and experiences. The first vignette begins with one of these female kinships: a granddaughter mourning the loss of a grandmother with whom she has had an estranged and tenuous relationship for many years. The protagonist in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* opens her story with the seemingly dispassionate line 'when my grandmother died I had not seen her for many years, and that's why I did not cry when she died in Eyl'.[328] Although the narrator has not seen or spoken to her grandmother since she has moved to Europe, on the night of her death, she dreams of her grandmother. She states:

> In the dream my grandmother was rinsing her fabrics in the sea and she was serious, as serious as she had always been when alive. When I woke up I remembered her, serious as she was, straight and hard like a tree trunk, her *guntiino* tight around her waist, a red headkerchief tied behind her nape. It was a memory that resembled a photograph, a posed photograph, for my grandmother was very still, motionless on a long pole with the sea all around her, even though she has always hated the sea.[329]

The granddaughter realising that it was 'not quite right' to have no connection with her grandmother prompts this memory/vision of her grandmother, but this dream is also 'not quite right'.[330] She states 'I thought of the link and thought that perhaps it was not quite right to have

[328] Ubax Cristina Ali Farah, '*Un Sambuco attraversa il mare* (A Dhow is Crossing the Sea)', *Wasafiri*, June 2011, p. 18.
[329] Farah, p. 18.
[330] Farah, p. 18.

no link at all, and that for my grandmother to appear in my dream after such a long time was not quite right'.[331] The memory is not a vivid recollection of her grandmother's life in Somalia but a two-dimensional flashback which resembles 'a posed photograph' with the grandmother standing 'motionless on a long pole with the sea all around her, even though she had always hated the sea'.[332] Her dream of her grandmother surrounded by the sea is not only a hollow image but one that the protagonist immediately recognises as problematic because of her knowledge of her grandmother's deep hatred of the sea. In many ways the grandmother's 'serious' and 'hard' demeanour in the sea reflects the way that the grandmother is resisting being remembered in this way.[333]

We learn from the narrative that the grandmother was from Eyl, a port city in the Nugal region of Somalia, which is comprised of two settlements: Eyl Badey, which is on the coast, and Eyl Dawaad, which is more inland and is surrounded by mountains. Her husband was 'a young trader' who travelled on dhows which traded goods with other countries in the Indian Ocean world.[334] Indeed, Eyl Badey was an important trade port during the height of the Indian Ocean trade network: 'boats would set off from Eyl Badey laden down with their cargo of hides and cattle and return full of dates and rice'.[335] The reader learns through the protagonist's dream that while the grandmother was 'pregnant with her first daughter', her husband died in a 'shipwrecked' dhow and that subsequently, or probably consequently - the grandmother rejects the Indian Ocean, and everything associated with it.[336]

It is Eyl Dawaad, with its 'cattle', 'abundance of milk', 'mountains' and a more contained body of water in the form of 'a stream', which she chooses to define her after the loss of her husband to the ocean.[337] She chose a village, 'up in the mountains' because it has 'nothing to do

[331] Farah, p. 18.
[332] Farah, p. 18.
[333] Farah, p. 18.
[334] Farah, p. 19.
[335] Farah, p. 19.
[336] Farah, p. 19.
[337] Farah, p. 19.

with the sea'.[338] After her husband dies at sea, she would rarely leave Eyl to visit her family in Mogadishu, another important Indian Ocean coastal city because she 'never wanted to leave her home, never wanted to leave the cool village in the hills, rich in water and cattle'.[339] So complete is her rejection of the sea and embrace of herself as 'an inland woman', that she 'would not eat the creatures of the sea'; only accepting 'milk and a little rice'.[340]

As *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* progresses it becomes increasingly evident to the reader that the granddaughter's dream of her grandmother is more about the narrator herself and her childhood memories rather than the way that the grandmother defined herself. Throughout *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, whenever the protagonist thinks of coastal Eyl it is through her grandmother, and when she thinks of her grandmother it is through coastal Eyl- as if the two are so deeply entangled as to be co-constitutive. In the dream, her thoughts of Eyl Badey and its history as a cross-cultural trade hub take form through her grandmother holding her first born girl against her chest, grieving 'her young husband who had been shipwrecked on the dhow' and singing her lament into a well-known song about the dhows: '*doon bad mareysa, badda doon baa mareysa, mayddi bay sittaa, mayddi iyo malmal bay sittaa*, a dhow is crossing the sea, carrying incense and perfumes, carrying incense and perfumes'.[341] Eyl's illustrious history as a port city from which dhows carried goods to other countries across the Indian Ocean takes meaning through the stories she heard about her grandmother as a young widow in mourning. Moreover, whenever the protagonist visualises her grandmother, it is through the sight and sounds of the very sea she sought to define herself against. She states 'I called out to her, and once again I saw the Ocean like I had seen it as a child and once again heard the demons that lurk around the cliffs hissing out my name'.[342] She best remembers her grandmother through the smells of goods that were exchanged through the Indian Ocean trade network: 'Her *guntiino* had the scent of sugar

[338] Farah, p. 19.
[339] Farah, p. 19.
[340] Farah, p. 19.
[341] Farah, p. 19.
[342] Farah, p. 18.

and resin, her skin that of sesame oil'.[343] 'Sugar', 'resin', and 'sesame oil' were highly coveted products that were traded amongst countries across Indian Ocean rim.[344]

By the end of the vignettes about the grandmother and granddaughter, the reader understands that the grandmother's association with Eyl's Indian Ocean history is an uncomfortable and unchosen imposition of memory by a granddaughter whose belonging to Eyl is mediated through these memories. Despite her grandmother rejecting Eyl Badey and its coastal history, the granddaughter imposes it upon her by continuing to remember coastal Eyl through her grandmother and her grandmother through coastal Eyl. It is through these memories that the granddaughter continues to clutch onto a sense of belonging to a place that she left as a child and has not returned to. The grandmother's story is not a developed tale driven by progression. She is trapped in a memory, in a singular frame, frozen in a state of perpetual widowhood. In contrast, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' is a song that focuses on a bride in the midst of her wedding and is characterised by vibrancy, movement and development. The grandmother's imposed embodiment of the Indian Ocean is brought into fuller relief when contrasted with 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa's' evocation of a chosen embodiment of the Indian Ocean world through local wedding customs.

3.3 Women's bodies as mediums of Indian Ocean culture

In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', Banaadiri women actively choose to embody their Indian Ocean heritage through enacting traditional wedding practices where their Indian Ocean and Banaadiri cultural identity is shown through their skin. In *Waa Guuriheeynnaa',* it is on the body of the Banaadiri bride that cultural traditions are etched. The second stanza of the *hees* shifts the narrative from talking about the community of women who have gathered together to celebrate the bride and

[343] Farah, p. 19.
[344] Farah, p. 19.

her wedding to the bride herself. The first two lines of the second stanza describe the bride's body, 'Gibilka nuurayo/Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan', 'The glowing skin, this reddish brown and layered dappled design'. When the *hees* states 'gibilka nuurayo', it is referring to the bride's luminous skin. The second line in this stanza 'Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan' refers to the henna design that adorns the bride's body. Although the *hees*, does not directly use the word henna, which in Somali is *cillaan,* the use of the evocative phrase 'Giir giirka fuulo' refers to the 'two-coloured', or 'dappled' design and *guduudkan* refers to the colour of the henna designs, so it is clear to the listener of the song that the women at the *meel fadhiisis* are singing about the henna designs that decorate the bride's body.

Both the bride's luminous skin and the intricate henna designs tattooed on her body are testament to two traditional Banaadiri wedding customs. The phrase 'Gibilka nuurayo' refers to the anointing and cleansing ritual of the bride's body which takes place a few days before the wedding ceremonies and which is designed to make the bride's skin glow. During this custom, the bride's friends will come to her home to begin a ritual to beautify her for the wedding day. It will involve anointing and cleansing her body with a mixture made from *timir* (dates), *cusbur* (beautifying dye similar to henna), *huruud* (saffron), and *qasil* (ground up powdered leaves of the Gob tree).[345] The bride's body will be massaged with this mixture and then washed a few times in the days preceding the *cillaan saar* tradition. The 'Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan' refers to the *cillan saar* tradition which is the henna party. During this tradition*,* friends decorate the bride with henna to beautify her for the wedding. The bride wears a *guntiino* (woman's body cloth) and a *garbasaar* (cloth for shoulders) made from two pieces of *garays* cloth: one is knotted around her body and the other is put over her shoulders.

It is not only Banaadiri cultural traditions that are written on and reflected through the Banaadiri bride's body.[346] Amina A. Issa, director of the department of Museums and Antiquities

[345] Personal interview with Aisha Karama Saed, 21 March 2018.

[346] Virginia Lulling in her article 'Continuities and Changes: Marriage in Southern Somalia and the Diaspora' explores the ways in which Indian ocean customs and traditions used by the Banaadir culture of the Reer Xamar of Mogadishu influences the ways that weddings were performed by the Geledi and Wa'dan clans of

in Zanzibar, has written about the ways that 'wedding rites and ceremonies' in one Indian Ocean port city reflect a wider Indian Ocean cultural influence.[347] In her article 'Wedding Ceremonies and cultural exchange in an Indian Ocean port city: the case of Zanzibar Town', Issa explores the way that the '*singo',* an important pre-wedding process where a bride-to-be is anointed, rubbed and massaged to beautify her for the wedding day, was influenced in this location by the movement of both goods and people from the western Indian Ocean.[348]

Issa argues that although in Zanzibar, the *singo* 'process has always involved massaging (kusinga) the bride to make her skin soft, clean and attractive, using pleasant and sweet-smelling cleansing materials', prior to the Indian Ocean trade network gaining ascendency, local materials were mainly used.[349] Traditionally 'coconut milk' and 'maize chunks' were used to scrub and massage the bride.[350] However, with the dominance of the Indian Ocean trade network, many of the materials used for the *singo* in Zanzibar came from all over the Indian Ocean world. Dried cloves which were introduced to Zanzibar in the 1800s from Mauritius and Reunion Island were 'pounded into brown powder' and 'thickened with strong coconut milk to make a paste' they were used in the *Singo* ritual 'to soften the skin, reduce body ordour and keep the body clean'.[351] Moreover, from the 1850s, when British imperial connections prompted ever greater numbers of Indian women to migrate to Zanzibar 'scented and aromatic flowers and plants such as jasmine, *asumini* or *mauwa maulidi*, *pompia*, *vilua*, *pachori*, *pakanga*, and roses were brought and planted in many areas'.[352] These aromatic flowers and plants were dried and ground into a powder which was added to the clove powder to make the paste used for the *singo*. Other 'perfumes that were

Afgooye in Southern Somalia. The Geledi are one of the Digil clans, and for centuries have settled in Afgooye which was an important node on the caravan route between Mogadishu and the Southern Somalia interior. The article shows that the influence that the Indian Ocean has on the Banaadiri customs and traditions has permeated into inland communities that live close to the Banaadiri people.

[347] Amina A. Issa, 'Wedding ceremonies and cultural exchange in an Indian Ocean port city: the case of Zanzibar Town', *Social Dynamics*, 38 (2012), 467-478 (p. 468).

[348] Issa, p. 472.

[349] Issa, p. 472.

[350] Issa, p. 472.

[351] Issa, p. 472.

[352] Issa, p. 473.

made locally in Oman and Yemen were imported to Zanzibar and were used for the same purposes'.[353] Issa argues that in addition to the *singo* paste used to rub and massage the skin, a paste called *liwa* made from sandalwood imported from India, Comoro, and northern Madagascar is applied to bride's face to protect the skin from the sun and lighten her complexion. The *singo* tradition is performed in many other Indian Ocean countries where many of the same materials are used. Issa argues that the clove paste was not only used in the *singo* rituals in Zanzibar but in Comoro and northern Madagascar as well. Moreover, the *liwa* is also used in India, Mombasa, and Lamu to beautify the bride prior to her wedding day.

The *singo* tradition is not the only Banaadiri tradition that is also practised in the wider Indian Ocean world. Issa states that 'the same practice of beautifying brides with henna has long been observed throughout many western Ocean towns and in Muslim countries'.[354] The henna application process involves using the leaves of the henna tree which have been 'dried in the sun', 'pounded into powder' and then 'mixed with warm water, black tea, lemon juice, tamarind juice or clove liquid to make the paste', and then used 'to stain the finger- and toenails, palms of the hands and soles of the feet in various patterns with a dull orange-red colour, dark red or even black'.[355] In East Africa and the Middle East, there is a tradition called the *Lailat al henna*, the *henna* night, where female family members and friends come together one evening to apply the henna on the bride and have a pre-wedding celebration. In 'Persia, the custom remains whereby three days before the wedding day, the bride is taken to female beauticians for ritual hair removal' and 'two days before, the henna is sent by the groom's parents to the bride's house'.[356] While in India, on the Mehndi day, the henna day, 'turmeric paste is placed on the bride's skin for the purpose of improving and brightening her complexion' and later that same day 'henna is applied to her hands and feet'.[357]

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[353] Issa, p. 473.
[354] Issa, p. 474.
[355] Issa, p. 474.
[356] Issa, pp. 474-475.
[357] Issa, p. 475.

In addition to the bridal henna application revealing a shared Indian Ocean custom, henna designs that adorn the bride also reflect a heritage of cross-cultural exchange. Issa states that in urban Zanzibar up until the early 1980s henna 'patterns were inspired by local flowers and plants' which included the 'dates leaves', 'the lotus' and the 'jasmine leaf' as well as patterns that were 'adopted from *khanga'* cloth that was worn by many women on the East African coast.[358] However, from the late 1980s the henna designs 'from the Gulf and India were introduced' into Zanzibar resulting in designs amalgamating Gulf 'geometric patterns', Indian 'intricate' floral patterns and traditional Zanzibari designs.[359]

There is an abundance of scholarship in anthropology and sociology on tattooing, scarification and other forms of body elaborations. Most of this explores the ways that tattoos and other body embellishments are not merely decorative but a means through which ideas about community and identity are reflected. In 'Written in the Flesh', Sociologist Pasi Falk compares tattoos and other body elaborations in 'tribal societies' and 'western' societies and the various ways that they signify culture.[360] Other seminal texts in anthropology such as Victoria Ebin's *The Body Decorated* and Robert Brain's *The Decorated Body* conduct cross-cultural surveys into tattooing, scarification, painting and adornment techniques and the important role that play in myths, religious rituals, sexual rites, aesthetics and society as a means expressing culture.

Anthropologist Jennifer Biddle argues that when academics explore inscriptions of identity they assume 'the existence of an ontologically prior, pre-cultural and thus natural medium (body or surface of skin)'.[361] Biddle argues that this 'inscriptive model' is problematic because it presents culture as 'literally superficial' something which occurs 'on the "surface" of an already assumed stable, unified and natural "thing" as well as presenting 'culture as inherently distinct from this pre-given "natural" material'.[362] Rather 'than assuming that "skin" provides a

[358] Issa, p. 475.
[359] Issa, p. 475.
[360] Pasi Falk, 'Written in the Flesh', *Body & Society*, 1 (1995), 95-105 (p. 96).
[361] Jennifer Biddle, 'Inscribing identity: Skin as country in the Central Desert', in *Thinking Through the Skin*, ed. by Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (London: Routledge 2001), pp. 177-193 (p. 177).
[362] Biddle, p. 177.

natural surface for cultural elaboration, or that discrete, individual bodies pre-exist the social', Biddle argues that 'the "skin" itself may well be involved in the production of the very distinction we call "human"'.[363] The skin is a form of material culture in its own right. In her article 'Inscribing identity: Skin as country in the Central Desert' Biddle explores the way that 'skin' in the Warlpiri Aboriginal community 'provides the medium through which women regularly can and do transform into the object world'.[364] Throughout the article Jennifer Biddle contests and disrupts 'notions of the "human body" and' also 'refigures the role "skin" inscription plays from the superficial to the constitutive in the production of cultural identities and differences'.[365]

This idea that the skin is not a nominative medium upon which cultural identity is written but a form of material culture which produces cultural identity in its own right is reflected in the *hees* 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa'. The second stanza begins by discussing the bride's skin, 'Gibilka nuurayo/Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan', 'The glowing skin, this reddish brown and layered dappled design' 'The shining skin/this reddish brown and layered dappled design'. The nature of the bride's skin is described before the henna designs that adorn it. In the context of Banaadiri wedding traditions the bride's skin is a cultural medium rather than a black canvas or 'natural' surface upon which culture is inscribed or elaborated. The rendition of the song highlights this idea that culture is something which is created through the body rather just written-upon it. In the recording when Asha Karama sings the second stanza, she raises the pitch of her voice when

[363] Biddle, p. 177.
[364] Biddle, p. 178.
[365] Biddle, p. 178. Contemporary scholarship from the beginning of the millennium on tattooing, scarification and other forms of body elaborations has shifted the focus from looking at them exclusively through the lens of signification and something that happens *on* the skin to also seeing body elaborations as something that happens *in* the skin and *within* the body. Sociologist Lee Baron also argues that tattoos are images that can be used as a means to articulate on the flesh things that are happening within the consciousness. In particular he explores the ways that people can carry their past memories into their present day to day lives through tattoos which consist of an image which acts as an 'anchor point' in someone's biography and 'can serve as a literal evocative version of the temporal memory state.' For Baron the tattoo is transformative because 'once inscribed it becomes a part of the body and the self, fixing a memory or an emotion' perpetually and that can be 'recalled on viewing the tattoo.' Social anthropologist Paul Connerton explores the ways tattooing, scarification and other forms of body decoration are inextricably linked to the selfhood of a person because 'the skin is taken to be a metonym for the person'.

singing the word *nuurayo*. It is through *nuurayo,* the glow or 'shine' emitted through the skin rather than *gibilka '*th*e* skin' or 'the complexion' which is emphasised through the singing of this *hees* highlighting the importance of the anointing tradition as an important form of material culture, not just an effect on the woman's body.

Moreover, through singing about a detailed material practice in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', the woman's body emerges as a generative expression of an Indian Ocean cultural identity. While *gibil* means 'skin' or 'complexion' and thus refers to the surface of the skin, *nuur* is a verb which refers to the interior of the skin. *Nuur* means to emit 'light' or 'to shine' but this 'light' or 'shine' comes from *within* the body. When Somali people use the word *nuurayo* to describe someone, it is usually because of something which is happening within the body. For example, it may be that they are healthy, and this health is radiated through their skin or that they are religious and this holiness permeates their skin. The *hees* suggests that when the Indian Ocean herbs, spices and fruits are rubbed on the bride's skin they penetrate it and bring to the surface the Banaadiri peoples' Indian Ocean heritage. 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' shows that the Banaadiri bride's body is not a bordered, bounded self-contained unit but something which can be recognised as an embodied expression of the Banaadiri community's Indian Ocean heritage. Through the use of vivid language, the *hees* highlights that throughout the Banaadiri wedding celebrations the bride's body acts as a moving embodied form of material culture which attest to the Banaadiri people's heritage as part of the Indian Ocean world with its history of cross-cultural exchange of materials and customs.

However, in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' it is not just through the cleansing ritual that the bride's skin produces a particular kind of cultural identity. The *hees* suggests that the bride's henna designs are not *on* the skin but *part* of her skin: 'Giir giirka fuulo iyo guduudkan', 'The glowing skin, this reddish brown and layered dappled design'. *Giir,* like its English translation 'dappled' and 'piebald', is a term often used in relation to the way that animal's skin tends naturally to be a patch work of two different colours or one colour but then extensively marked with round patches or round spots of a different colour; for example, the coats of horses, or the

male goat. Through the use of the word *giir,* the *hees* highlights the way that the reddish-brown, *guduudkan*, designs of the henna are decorated all over the bride's body to such an extent that they become part of her skin. The henna designs are long-winding images that stretch across the bride's hands, arms, soles of feet, legs, and back and once the bride is dressed, her skin is so dominated by the colours and designs of the henna that it would give the impression to an onlooker that it is the natural design of her skin.

'Giir giirka fuulo' is a beautiful evocative phrase used in the *hees* to refer to the layering of the henna designs; one layer incorporating images and symbols native to the Banaadiri coast and another showing symbols and designs brought over from different parts of the Indian Ocean world. These patterns are not positioned side by side but rather on top of one another: *Fuul* is a verb which means to 'get on top of' or 'climb up'. Describing the bride's body as a layering of designs, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' evokes a Banaadiri heritage that is inextricable from Indian Ocean cultural exchange. When the bride is sitting in the *meel fadhiisis* her skin would be covered by layer upon layer of designs and the guests would be unable to identify the Banaadiri designs from those that come from other parts of the Indian Ocean world.

As the second stanza unfolds it becomes clear that although 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' explores the various ways that the bride's Indian Ocean and Banaadiri heritage is materialised through her skin, the focus is on the way that the community of women present at the *meel fadhiisis* are part of creating these cultural identities. Repeating 'Gabdhahan golaha jooga/Gacantooda ku saareen' *'*these girls at the meeting place, put it on with their hand' emphasises the female kin at the *meel fadhiisis* as instrumental in creating their cultural heritage. Through the use of the plural of the word for girls *gabdhahan*, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' alludes to the fact that the anointing and henna placing ritual are collective cultural practices performed by the younger generation of the bride's female kin. The singular rather than plural is used for 'hand'. It is *gacantooda* 'their hand' rather than *gacmohooda* 'their hands' that undertake the rituals to show that through undertaking the cleansing and anointing ritual followed by the

adornment of the henna designs on the bride's body, the female kin become 'one'. They morph into one body united through these cultural practices.

The final two lines in the stanza also show the way that although the ritual anointing and henna adorning are part of the Banaadiri people's heritage and have been performed for centuries, every performance is particular and specific as well as cohesive. The henna tattoos are temporary skin elaborations that are constantly re-applied at every wedding celebration and it is the process of application rather than designs that emerge as significant. As Amina A. Issa discusses in her article, henna tattoos in the Indian Ocean world kept changing to reflect the different waves of migration of people and with them spices, plants and flowers in different port cities. 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' captures this in the final lines of the second stanza by highlighting that it is *'*Gabdhahan golaha jooga' *'*these' particular girls present at this particular 'meeting place' that were responsible for the anointing ritual and adapting the henna designs to reflect the different spices and scents and popular new symbols and patterns brought over from the wider Indian Ocean world in addition to incorporating some herbs and spices, as well as henna designs native to the Banaadiri coast. 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' highlights that it is the responsibility of the women at every *meel fadhiisis* ceremony to perform the anointing and henna ritual in such a way that it carefully negotiates both heritage and ritual as well as contemporaneous and specificity.

Whilst 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' shows that women's skin can be produced in such a way to become a medium through which Indian Ocean Banaadiri heritage is expressed, *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* disrupts the notion that women's bodies carry their culture in an unproblematic way. *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* is filled with stories about displaced women either psychologically displaced - the case of the grandmother who rejects the sea after the death of her husband- or physically displaced -women who have been forced to migrate due to the civil war. We learn that the granddaughter, like her grandmother grew up in a Somali coastal city: Mogadishu. She states 'the sound of the ocean, its crashing roar, is the leitmotiv of my

childhood'.[366] However, while her memories of Eyl are of a fully functioning port city, her memories of Mogadishu are from the years preceding the civil war when the entire city was beginning to disintegrate and break-down. She describes the loss of a place to which belonging was simple and easy and how 'over a period of time, the natural habitat of the coast had been torn apart and ravaged. Resources swept away, the balance broken. You could get smeared with tar while walking on the beach or cut yourself on an aluminium sheet'.[367]

When describing the city where she grew up there is a disjunction between the language used to convey the memory and its actual substance. She refers to it as 'my Mogadishu of 'white houses, white as clean-picked bones, similar to wrecks left on the coast'.[368] Although she attempts to romanticise her memories of Mogadishu through the use of evocative and lyrical language, the actual memory itself challenges this by revealing images of violence and death which bely this language. The 'white houses' which fill coastal Mogadishu are compared to human remains, 'clean-picked bones', and the destruction of a ship, 'wrecks left on the coast'.[369] Similar to the way that her grandmother resists being remembered in a disingenuous way in the dream where she is surrounded by water, Mogadishu in her memory also resists the protagonists nostalgic shroud through revealing the destruction that was occurring in the years preceding the civil war.

The way in which nature is made to yield to human need becomes sharply focused when the narrator discusses a tragedy in which 'a large part of the coral reef was destroyed', to 'make way for wider ships'.[370] At the same time, a new 'hyper-modern automated slaughter house' was installed where the blood from the slaughtering of cattle was channelled into the sea: 'from the shattered reef, driven by the smell of blood, ravenous sharks swam raging in, pushing right up to the beach'.[371] The 'ocean, once swelling with sponges and shells, full of pools rainbowed with

[366] Farah, p. 20.
[367] Farah, p. 20.
[368] Farah, p. 19.
[369] Farah, p. 19.
[370] Farah, p. 20.
[371] Farah, p. 20.

butterfly fish, now only threw back amputated bodies and the smell of death'.[372] The destruction of the coastline foreshadows the destruction of Somalia during the civil war and the 'amputated bodies and the smell of death' the immense death toll caused by the bloody conflict.[373]

It is this corrosive and destructive coastal history which burrows into the narrator's body causing it to metamorphose. The 'molten lead' ocean deforms her 'heart' and in the sea 'her feet would turn into roots of water and iodine' and her bones 'grow from salt and silica'.[374] These painful memories of the sea inscribe themselves so deeply in the body that even years later when she is living in Italy and decides to see the coast in Sabaudia, she has a visceral reaction to it. She expects the Italian sea to be as destructive and all-consuming as the ocean from of her childhood; 'thinking the tide would swell in a matter of hours'.[375] She tells her husband and son 'don't put your towel near the water, or the sea will sweep it away.' However, she soon learns that 'in Italy', 'waves don't swallow everything up'.[376]

All the same, in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea,* the protagonist is not the only woman who carries the coast and the sea through her body as painful memories. She also discusses a project that she worked on when she moved to Italy with a 'group of Somali asylum seekers' on 'memory'.[377] During the project one of the female participants tells the story of her 'long' and treacherous journey from Somalia to Italy through exploring its impact on her body. During the journey, her 'shoes split open', tearing 'at the skin of ankles'.[378] She 'has nothing to replace them, so she wraps her feet in cloth and bark, wraps them tight and walks across damp ground, dry ground, walks across everything'.[379] However, after a while her feet 'wrappings get wet, so she frees her feet for a little while, wrings the rags out, slips her bruised and numbed feet into two

[372] Farah, p. 20.
[373] Farah, p. 20.
[374] Farah, p. 20.
[375] Farah, p. 21.
[376] Farah, p. 21.
[377] Farah, p. 21.
[378] Farah, p. 22.
[379] Farah, p. 22.

plastic bags, then fills the bags with dried leaves and cloth'.[380] By the end of this gruelling journey her feet are 'bruised', 'numbed' and 'lump-swollen'.[381]

When this young woman joins the project on 'memory' in Italy, 'many years have gone by since she entered the journey' but she can still feel the remnants of that traumatic journey in her feet.[382] She 'can still feel something lodged deep in the sole of her foot, inside, right inside her foot'.[383] She would often use a 'blade, or pliers, or something sharp' to try to extract 'thorns and glass shards that she can feel lodged deep in her feet'.[384] Although there are no real 'thorns' and 'glass shards' in her feet, the journey from Somalia to Italy was so arduous and traumatic that the trauma has become psychologically carved into her body.[385] It is part of her skin and body and thus part of her. *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* shows women's bodies carrying a different form of coastal and Indian Ocean culture to 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa'; one defined by isolation, disconnection and everyday lived trauma rather than unity, cohesion and cultural heritage.

3.4 Material culture: Adornment versus necessity

In the third stanza of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', the community of women at the *meel fadhiisis* continue an age-old tradition performed in many different Indian Ocean communities where a bride is adorned in an abundance of gold jewellery made from coinage. However, although many Indian Ocean communities enact this cultural practice; it signifies something different within each different community context. Art historian, Prita Meier, explores the way that material culture can be framed to mean different things in different contexts. She states that 'when material culture is moved from one setting to another, its translation is a complex space and moment of

[380] Farah, p. 22.
[381] Farah, p. 22.
[382] Farah, pp. 21-22.
[383] Farah, p. 22.
[384] Farah, p. 22.
[385] Farah, p. 22.

reinvention'.[386] Focusing on material culture in the East African cities of Lamu and Mombasa, Meier explores 'the transformations of local collecting and display strategies from the late nineteenth century to the present and how objects in motion in such fluid borderlands as the Swahili coast allow for a careful consideration of the power of thing-ness to represent and give presence to social values and meanings'.[387]

Meier argues that during the nineteenth century, the people of Lamu and Mombasa used material culture to 'create an Afro-Indian Ocean mercantile aesthetic' to resist or challenge 'the growing authority of the British Empire and Sultanate of Zanzibar'.[388] In 'coastal East Africa key spaces for articulating and projecting a sophisticated sense of self were and are the interior visualities of domestic architecture'.[389] Through using imported objects such as Chinese and Persian porcelain bowls and inserting them into the local architecture, the people of Lamu and Mombasa used the private space of their homes to 'cultivate a unique visual culture celebrating oceanic mercantile and cultural exchange'.[390] Meier argues that through using these imported materials in their homes for visual display, they disregard 'the original context of their production' and 'the very erasure of their utilitarian use value makes such affective spaces embodiments of sea-fairing mobility and local ideas of the sacred'.[391] Moreover, they used 'layered assemblages of prestige objects' such as 'locally constructed prestige chairs', 'wood ornaments' and 'imported porcelain' as a means to challenge 'the western exhibitionary complex' which used single material objects to represent entire cultures or peoples as 'an attempt to police the imagined differences between peoples'.[392] Meier states that 'such spaces fragmented the "purity" of place, as the layering of diverse cultural vignettes and forms created a montage of diverse temporal and cultural sites'.[393]

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[386] Prita Meier, 'Objects on the Edge: Swahili Coast logics of Display', *African Arts*, 42 (2009), 8-23 (p. 8).
[387] Meier, p. 9.
[388] Meier, pp. 9-10.
[389] Meier, p. 10.
[390] Meier, p. 10.
[391] Meier, p. 13.
[392] Meier, pp. 8-11.
[393] Meier, p. 21.

However once Kenya gained independence, these same 'layered assemblages of prestige objects' that had previously signified the multiplicity of transoceanic culture were curated to articulate a unified Swahili identity within the post-colonial nation-state of Kenya.[394] The 'Lamu and Mombasa branches of the National Museums of Kenya' incorporated 'coastal objects into the larger framework of national heritage through institutional display'.[395] Meier argues that 'objects initiate crossings from one schema and system of signification to another, from the past to the contemporary home and into the national museum'.[396] Given that the 'government of the modern nation of Kenya is predicated on a citizenry whose identity is a permanent joint between a particular culture and a stable territory', she illustrates how 'the visual culture, performances, and arts of personal adornment once marking cosmopolitan privilege are now reconstituted to celebrate "Swahiliness" as a stable ethnic marker'.[397] In this way, Meier explores the issue of objects and meaning and 'how an object transforms itself from sacred rarity and commodity into family heirloom and national heritage says much about the mobility of objects to present and represent multiple meanings at once and hints at the very confusion objects give rise to, since the "same" thing means many things at once'.[398]

Throughout the Indian Ocean world, coins were a material object that signified more than currency. The most well-known currency used in the Indian Ocean was the Maria Theresa Thaler, a coin minted in 1741 for the Empress who ruled Hungary, Austria and Bohemia. Historians and archaeologists argue that from the beginning of the 19th century, the Maria Theresa Thaler was one of the most widely circulated coins in the world. Independent scholar and archaeological artist Clara Semple contends that the Maria Theresa Thaler flowed 'out of Europe across the Mediterranean to Egypt and into the Red Sea and North and East Africa'.[399] It was used as a

[394] Meier, p. 11.
[395] Meier, p. 15
[396] Meier, p. 17.
[397] Meier, p. 21.
[398] Meier, p. 17.
[399] Clara Semple, *A Silver Legend: The Story of the Maria Theresa Thaler* (Manchester: Barzan Publishing Limited, 2005), p. 1.

currency and a form of commodity, assessed in terms of the current rate of silver and traded for goods and products across the world.

However, the Maria Theresa Thaler was not only revered as a form of currency but also a form of jewellery. Semple argues that the 'role played by the thaler in the traditional jewellery and costume of many of the countries of Africa and Arabia was almost as important as its function as currency'.[400] The' East African countries of the Sudan, Ethiopian, Eritrea and Somalia knew the Maria Theresa Thaler as currency from the late eighteenth century and, as in the Arabian Peninsula, coveted it as an ornament and as a source of silver for jewellery'.[401] The 'coin itself was a coveted component in the necklaces, belts and headdresses worn by women who believed it to have protective or amuletic properties'.[402] Semple states that the 'Maria Theresa Thaler was considered to have healing powers when worn on the body and was believed to be particularly effective at driving away evil spirits or djinns'.[403] It was thought that 'the "evil eye" was drawn to the bright shining disc and thereby deflected from the person wearing the thaler'.[404] Moreover, 'Thalers also formed a vital part of dowry payments at a time of betrothal and were easily converted into the wedding jewellery that formed an indispensable part of the bridewealth in many societies'.[405]

In many Indian Ocean communities, gold jewellery made from coins has an important function for brides that is beyond the decorative. Patricia W. Romero, a historian who specialises in African women's history, explores the importance of gold jewellery to women in the many ethnic groups that come together to make up Lamu, a 'highly stratified' Indian Ocean island off the coast of Kenya, which included the 'Bohra Indians, Afro-Arabs and the Hadramis'.[406] For the Bohra Indians women of Lamu, gold jewellery was important because it provided a financial

[400] Semple, p. 107.
[401] Semple, p. 125.
[402] Semple, p. 5.
[403] Semple, p. 114.
[404] Semple, p. 114.
[405] Semple, p. 5.
[406] Patricia W. Romero, 'Possible Sources for the Origin of Gold as an economic and Social Vehicle for Women in Lamu (Kenya)', *Journal of the International African Institute*, 57 (1987), 364-376 (p. 364).

security net for them. Romero argues that although the Bohra Indians had converted to Islam when they first migrated to Lamu, some of their Hindu customs endured. One of these customs was that from their birth, the parents of daughters would save to purchase gold jewellery for them. Romero states when a Bohra 'woman comes to her marriage she has all the gold jewellery that her parents can afford to give her' and 'the husband is expected to provide bridewealth – negotiated – in the form of gold and perhaps jewels'.[407] It was important for Bohra women to collect as much gold as possible because, in keeping with their Hindu ancestors, women in their community 'do not own the furniture, nor usually the house in which they live'.[408] Historically, Hindu women did not inherit any wealth or property from their husbands: 'a devoted wife was supposed to throw herself on her husband's funeral bier and burn with his body, but not all did'.[409] Romero asserts 'the 'only "insurance policy" Hindu widows had was the jewellery they brought to their marriage, plus whatever gifts their husbands bestowed on them during his lifetime'.[410] Similarly, gold jewellery provided economic security and acted as a 'life insurance' for Bohra Indians women in case of widowhood.[411]

While for the women in the Bohra Indian community gold jewellery was predominately seen as an economic support system, the Lamu Afro-Arab and Hadrami women consider gold jewellery as an economic commodity with 'social implications'.[412] Despite members of the Lamu Hadrami community being significantly less wealthy than the Bohra Indians, gold jewellery was also integral to brides in their community. Romero asserts that 'as the Hadrami community prospered', their daughters would wear more gold jewellery on display which in turn would mean that they would rise 'socially in the eyes of the old Afro-Arab community'.[413]

[407] Romero, p. 368.
[408] Romero, p. 369.
[409] Romero, p. 366.
[410] Romero, p. 366.
[411] Romero, p. 369.
[412] Romero, p. 369.
[413] Romero, p. 370.

Although in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' the Banaadiri women at the *meel fadhiisis,* continue this Indian Ocean tradition of women wearing gold jewellery made from coinage, it is for different purposes than providing a financial security net or as a vehicle for social climbing. The third stanza focuses on way that the female community at the *meel fadhiisis* celebrate the Banaadiri bride-to-be by working together to adorn her in gold jewellery made from guineas: 'Geniyaal oo dahab ah/Gumuddeeda hoos luqunta loo geliyaa. /Waa gaartayee. /Guulle ugu soo gargaaray.' 'Guineas that are gold are put on her ankles until the neck. /She achieved it. /God supported her with it.' *Geli* is a verb which means 'put in', 'put on', 'put into', 'insert', 'cause to enter'. This stanza from the onset focuses on the Banaadiri women working together to place the gold all over the bride's body and highlights that it is an important cultural practice within Banaadiri wedding traditions. Although when the *hees* states 'Geniyaal oo dahab ah/Gumuddeeda hoos luqunta loo geliyaa.' it literally means 'Guineas that are gold are put on her ankles and neck' the *hees* actually suggests that the community of women work their way up from her ankles *to* her neck putting the jewellery all over her body. It creates a decadent image in the listener's mind of a bride being covered from head to toe in an abundance of gold jewellery.

When the Banaadiri women at the *meel fadhiis* adorn the bride in gold jewellery made from coinage, the gold jewellery becomes imbued with new forms of signification. It becomes a means through which to transform the Banaadiri woman into a bride. It is through the community putting this gold coinage jewellery on her body that she gains a higher status and worth. The *hees* illustrates this when the second part of the stanza is repeated 'Waa gaartayee/Guulle ugu soo gargaaray', 'She achieved it. /God supported her with it.' There is a play on the word *gaar* which as a verb means to 'reach', 'attain', or 'achieve' but which also as a noun can mean 'singularity' 'specialness' and 'individuality. It suggests that the Banaadiri woman, through wearing the gold coinage jewellery, reaches a special or unique stage of womanhood and thus becomes worthy of becoming a bride. Furthermore, through the gold jewellery she becomes a celestial figure. The lines 'Guulle ugu soo gargaaray.' 'God supported her with it' are repeated in the *hees*. *Guulle* literally means 'giver of victory' and when Somali people use the word *Guulle*,

they are referring to 'God'. *Gargaar* means to 'help', 'aid', 'assistance', or 'support'. The *hees* suggests that that gold coinage jewellery that she wears has been sanctified by God and ordained especially for her. Through wearing the jewellery, she is elevated to an almost saint-like position.

In traditional Banaadiri weddings, the bride would be covered in gold jewellery. She would wear specific items which was commonly worn by the Banaadiri community *such* as the *luqundhajis* (a short necklace or choker necklace), *Xirsiilow* (gold with a particular design), *Gabalaalow* (a large necklace that covers the chest), *Buufbuuflow* (gold bangles). It was usually the groom's responsibility to provide the gold but in situations where the groom is not affluent, the bride would borrow her mother or grandmother's jewellery for the day. In many cases the gold that a bride wears would usually be an amalgamation of both family heirlooms (her grandmother and mother's jewellery) preserved from generation to generation and new pieces bought specially for the bride to wear on her wedding day.[414] Thus, the Banaadiri bride's adornment symbolizes both her familial legacy and the new chapter in her adult life on which she is about to embark.

In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', the gold jewellery made of guineas not only transforms the Banaadiri woman into a bride, but the Banaadiri bride through wearing this jewellery also transforms it by imbuing it with new meaning. When the Banaadiri bride wears the gold coinage jewellery, composed of family heirlooms and new modern pieces, she transforms it from a currency or a mode of aesthetic decoration into a form of material culture through which both the Banaadiri people's heritage and their future can be reflected. It is only once they are put on the bride's body that they can take on this new role. The bride's body becomes a moving living museum through which the women at the *meel fadhiisis* can see their heritage and future embodied in the gold coinage jewellery. Moreover, through singing while adorning the bride, the gold coinage necklaces are brought to life. The sounds of the *hees* mingle with the sounds of the gold coins jewellery clattering every time that the bride moves during the wedding celebration.

[414] Asha Karama interview on Banaadiri wedding customs.

'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' is performed in a warm and safe environment; a space where the female kinship group feel comfortable enough to come together to celebrate another woman who is their kin. When the women at the *meel fadhiisis* dress the bride according to her cultural heritage, it is about adornment and enhancement. They use the henna, silk cloth and gold to draw out her combined Indian Ocean and Banaadiri cultural identities. In *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea,* on the other hand, there are no safe spaces. The Somali civil war created an environment where neighbour turned on neighbour causing the 'implosion' of all safe spaces.[415] As a result, throughout *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea,* whenever a woman reaches out to dress another woman it is not about adornment or enhancement but about restoring a basic humanity to someone who has not only undergone immense physical and mental trauma but also lost their home and cultural identity. While in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', the fact that the female congregation and bride remain unnamed serves to emphasise a sense of community and oneness, in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* the women's anonymity reflects a deep-rooted sense of isolation. In many ways the women's anonymity in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* suggests that this work of fiction is the only 'safe space' for these women's stories to emerge.

A Dhow is Crossing the Sea is a piece of fiction filled with stories about women who have made perilous journeys on land and sea from Somalia to Italy. In the story about the unnamed woman who experiences acute physical injury to her feet during her long 'journey towards the sea' because 'she has no proper shoes', it is another unnamed woman who 'like her has entered the journey' and that helps her.[416] She 'gets to a crossroads' and 'at that crossroads stands a woman' and 'this woman sees her with these bruised, lump-swollen feet wrapped in plastic and cloth', and 'opens her rucksack and digs out a pair of shoes for her, a pair of shoes from her own rucksack'.[417] Although there are no words exchanged between these two women, through the medium of worn 'shoes' they show they understand each other perfectly.[418] When the woman

[415] Farah, p. 23.
[416] Farah, p. 22.
[417] Farah, p. 22.
[418] Farah, p. 22.

gives the other woman her 'shoes', she not only provides practical support but also demonstrates empathy.[419] She shows that she understands the pain, trauma and alienation that she is undergoing and it is this empathy and complete understanding of her situation which fortifies the other women in the long journey into the diaspora.

In another of the human stories intertwined in this narrative, a woman named Dahobo saves a woman, who subsequently becomes her closest friend, when they are 'shipwrecked together in the ocean' during the journey from Somalia to Italy.[420] When the dhow that Dahabo and her friend were on capsizes, many of the passengers drown. However, Dahabo survives because she had learned to swim in the river of the coastal city, where she was born: 'Baidoa'.[421] Dahabo hears her soon to-be-best friend call out to her and proceeds to rescue her from drowning by helping her to reach some rocks where they are rescued by 'the patrol boats'.[422] When Dahabo and her friend were extracted from the sea, they were 'freezing' and so 'the patrol men' remove their water drenched clothes.[423] Dahabo feels 'ashamed because she wasn't wearing her bra' and thus feels exposed in front of these men.[424] She states 'her breasts no longer were a young woman's breasts and there she was, no bra, in front of the patrol men.[425] Even after years have passed since the capsizing of her dhow, she ruminates over this and advises other women that 'if any one of them should ever journey across the sea, whether on a dhow or otherwise, she'd better remember to put on her bra'.[426] In this story the 'bra' becomes more than an object which supports and cover a woman's breasts.[427] It is a material object that becomes imbued with the power to offer strength and dignity to the wearer. Dabobo suggests that women

[419] Farah, p. 22.
[420] Farah, p. 23.
[421] Farah, p. 23.
[422] Farah, pp. 24.
[423] Farah, p. 24.
[424] Farah, p. 24.
[425] Farah, p. 24.
[426] Farah, p. 24.
[427] Farah, p. 24.

can survive the hardship and treacherous journeys from Somalia into the diaspora if they only wear a bra.

'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' and *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* depict two contrasting types of female communities. While 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' explores an established female kinship, who are celebrating their long-standing bonds, in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, the women are strangers who create tenuous connections to survive the civil war's legacy of trauma, isolation and alienation. However, what both works of fiction share in common is that they both explore how women use material culture as an act of female community making. In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' it is through the rituals where they cleanse the bride's skin with herbs and spices, or place the gold jewellery or henna all over her body that the Banaadiri women articulate their kinship. These rituals require them to work in symbiosis and harmony; each leaning on the other to ensure that their cultural heritage is expressed and continued. Conversely, in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* it is through the sharing of old shoes, or advice about the wearing of a bra that the women are able to create bonds where they can be vulnerable with one another in an overwhelmingly precarious, alienating and harsh environment.

3.5 Creating bridges between cultures

In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' the traditional cloth that the women wear on their bodies is also part a ritual which promotes female community making. In the fourth and final stanza of the *hees*, the female congregation as a collective celebrate a silk cloth, called *Subaacal Xariir*, that the bride and the younger generation of women wear during the *meel fadhiisis* tradition. As mentioned earlier the *Subaacal Xariir* plays an important part in the *meel fadhiisis* as the tradition begins with the female guests covering the bride's head and shoulders with the silk cloth before various incenses are burned around the bride's head and prayers and supplications are performed.

The presence of silk within this *hees* signifies a local wedding celebration that bridges localised and regional Indian Ocean materialities. Silk in east Africa has historically been inextricably linked to the Indian Ocean World. Anthropologists argue that a significant amount of the silk cloth worn in East Africa was imported from other parts of the Indian Ocean world such as India and Oman.[428] Furthermore, even the silk cloth that was woven on the Swahili coast and the wider east African region predominantly relied on raw fibre imported from China, India and Southern Arabia through the Indian Ocean trade network.

Anthropologist Sarah Fee has worked extensively on textiles in East Africa and textile trade between East Africa and the wider Indian Ocean world. In her most recent work, she explores the way that pure silk and cotton and silk blend clothes 'handcrafted in western India, and in the Southern Arabian nation of Oman' have been instrumental in building 'commercial and socio-political networks' in East Africa.[429] In her article '"Cloth with Names": Luxury Textile Imports in Eastern Africa, c. 1800-1885' Fee argues that trading elites in East Africa which included both Swahili traders and Indian merchants used silk cloth as gifts to create and maintain trading partners in the East African interior. They would gift the many rulers that they encountered on the journeys into the interior luxury silk or silk blend clothes 'in return for permission and protection to trade in, or simply cross, their territory'.[430] Moreover Fee asserts while 'merchants employed' these luxury cloths to 'create and sustain social relations on which trade depended',

[428] Sarah Fee in her article '" Cloths with Names": Luxury Textile Imports in Eastern Africa, c. 1800-1885' asserts that 'Kachchh's major port town of Mandvi' in the Indian state of Gujrat was home to a large numbers of silk weavers that produced a specific silk blend cloth for export to East Africa. Whereas 'eastern Africa's plain-weave silks' likely came 'primarily – or solely – from' Surat, another city in Gujrat in western India. Fee states that 'in the nineteenth century, Surat was a rising cloth manufacturing town with longstanding, dense and growing links to Zanzibar.' The 'luxury cloth *kumbisa mpunga* appears on African packing lists from 1870, and points to the Koombees, a highly skilled Hindu weaving caste of Surat.' However, Asia did not have a monopoly on silk and other luxury cloths imported into East Africa. Fee argues that 'a significant share of luxury cloth', striped cotton and silk cloth, was 'woven in, and shipped, from Oman in southern Arabia.' This cloth was called 'Muscat Cloth'. She states that 'over the course of the nineteenth century this Omani-made "coloured cloth" overtook Kachchhi-made varieties, both in stature and in import volume'.

[429] Sarah Fee, '"Cloth with Names": luxury textile imports in eastern Africa, c. 1800-1885', *Textile History*, 48 (2017), 49-84 (p. 49).

[430] Fee, '"Cloth with Names"', p. 77.

'leaders – and ultimately the wider population – relied on them to mark and expand their own networks'.[431] Fee argues that after having received these luxury silk cloths, leaders in the East African interior would redistribute them to members of their family as well as their followers to strengthen the ties between them.

However, it was not only through imported cloth that the Indian Ocean played an important role in silk textile trade in East Africa. The Indian Ocean was also integral to silk cloth that was traditionally woven in East Africa. In her article on 'historic silk brocades of highland Madagascar' known as '*akotifahana'*, Fee explores the ways that the *akotifahana* cloth, woven entirely from sumptuous silk 'in the Merina Kingdom of Madagascar's central highlands', was influenced by India and Southern Arabia which 'the island enjoyed strong commercial ties from medieval times'. [432] Fee notes that silk imported from these countries that were part of the Indian Ocean trade network were in high demand in Merina but 'rather than dampen local weaving, textile imports stimulated production and innovation'.[433] Throughout her article, Fee explores the ways that '*akotifahana* production grew from professional weavers' ongoing experimentations' with imported Indian and Southern Arabian 'fibers, dyes, and patterns in response to a phenomenal expansion in trade and wealth and changing consumer demand'.[434]

This connecting of the regional Indian Ocean world with local communities in East Africa through silk cloth is also evident in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa'. The final stanza of the *hees* begins by

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[431] Fee, '"Cloth with Names"', p. 80.
[432] Sarah Fee, 'The shape of fashion: the historic silk brocades (akotifahana) of highland Madagascar', *African Arts*, 46 (2013), 26-39 (p. 26).
[433] Fee, 'The Shape of fashion', p. 31.
[434] Fee, The Shape of fashion', p. 26.
The 'term *akotifahana* (*akoty* + *fahana*) itself suggests that Merina weavers were originally attempting to emulate the patterning of an Indian *Bombyx* cloth'. Fee states that '*Fahana* in Malagasy means "weft", while *akoty* (acoustis) was the name of the primarily silk textile imported from Gujarat in the late 1700s'. Although the *akotifahana* cloth was originally made using 'indigenous silk, from the cocoons of the endemic *Borocera* moth' species 'special efforts seem to have been aimed at producing a finer, glossier fiber' initially through the use of silk floss from Oman in Southern Arabia and later 'Chinese silk' called '*Bombyx mori'* was used in order to produce an 'unparalleled glossy surface'. Moreover 'Omani silk floss proved more than a raw material' as it influenced the reshaping and innovating of 'Merina *Bombyx* weaving'. Firstly, it 'likely contributed to the shift in color palette, away from the historic four-part scheme'. Secondly, 'the fringe finishing characteristic of Merina silks of the mid-nineteenth century – a woven end band with balled fringe – may likewise be traced with some certainty to southern Arabian influence'.

discussing the *Subaacal Xarir,* a cloth made either exclusively of silk or a silk blend referred in the *hees* as 'Gambaaladaan', 'this cloth'. In wider Somali society *Gambo* refers to a head-cloth, 'head-scarf' or 'kerchief' worn by women but in Banaadiri culture it is a cloth used to cover the entire body from head to foot. When the *hees* states 'Gambaaladaan', it refers to the way that women at the *meel fadhiisis* are not only wearing a small amount of the silk cloth on their head to signify their heritage but a copious amount which covers their entire body. They are literally drenched in the silk cloth and thus drenched in their Indian Ocean heritage.

However, it is not only their Indian Ocean heritage that women in 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' celebrate through wearing the *Subaacal Xariir*. The women depicted in the oral song take the *Subaacal Xariir* and its rich Indian Ocean tradition and they render it in such a way that they can also celebrate their Somali heritage. When in the stanza it states 'Gambaaladaan guntanee/Garbasaar xarirkan garabka fuulo' 'This knotted cloth, /This silk shawl on top of the shoulder' it refers to the traditional way that Somali women wore cloth in the form of a *guntiino* and a *garbasaar*. *Guntiino* is 'a long-stretched cloth that is tied over the shoulder and draped around the waist' while *garbasaar*, refers to 'a women's stole or shawl' which covers her shoulders and was traditionally worn by married women.[435] Thus, through taking the *Subaacal Xariir, a* cloth from the Indian Ocean world and wearing it a tradition Somali way, the women in the *hees* honour both their Indian Ocean and Somali heritage through creating a material expression of their dual heritage.

While anthropological scholarship shows the way that silk imported from the wider Indian Ocean world into East Africa was instrumental in building networks in the male world of commerce, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' shows the ways that the wearing of the *Subaacal Xariir* creates deep bonds between women at an intimate wedding celebration. In the first line of the stanza where it states 'Gambaaladaan guntanee', the focus of the line is on *'*guntanee'. *Guntan* is a verb which means 'be knotted', 'get tied into a knot' or 'wrapped around'. When in the *hees* it states

[435] Personal interview with Aisha Karama 21 March 2018.

'Gambaaladaan guntanee' 'This knotted cloth' it highlights that during the *meel fadhiisis* ceremony the women would knot or tie the *Subaacal Xariir* around the bride's as well as each other's bodies. Through this collective community practice of tying the *Subaacal Xariir* around each other's bodies, they also create ties between each other as kin.

Moreover, they support each other in continuing their heritage through the wearing of the *garbasaar*. The second line of the stanza states 'Garbasaar xarirkan garabka fuulo' 'This silk shawl on top of the shoulder' refers to the way that the community of women at the *meel fadhiisis* take the *garbasar* and cover the bride's head and shoulders with it. *Garbasaar* consists of two words *garbo* (shoulders) and *saar* (put on top of, or 'place'). Through its name, it highlights that is should be worn on the shoulders but they reinforce this when they state 'garabka fuulo' in the *hees*. *Garab* is a noun which means 'shoulder' and *fuul* is a verb which means 'get on top of' or 'climb up', to emphasis the physical act and choice that they make in 'putting' the cloth on their shoulders. They make a distinction between the g*arbasaar* the material item that is supposed to be worn on the shoulders and the choice they make in continuing to put it on their shoulders in every wedding from the past to the present. While the first line of the stanza is in the past tense, this line is the general present to highlight they are continuing to perpetuate their Indian Ocean and Somali heritage every time that they place the *Subaacal Xariir* on their shoulders.

The closing two lines of the final stanza continues to consolidate the Banaadiri people's interconnected Indian Ocean and Somali heritage. The *hees* states *'*Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye/ Ka gaarsan maynee'. It is the law that is previous /We do not divert from it'. *Gaanuun* derives from the Arabic loan word *qaanuun* which means 'rule', 'law', 'or 'regulation'. The composer of the *hees* changed the spelling from *qaanuun* to *gaanuun* to fit into the rhyming scheme and the alliteration of 'g' sound throughout the Banaadiri song. The choice of an Arabic loan word is deliberate; the composer could have chosen other Somali words for law or rule such as *sharci* or *xeer.* Instead, the composer bends an Arabic work to fit into this Banaadiri song, mirroring the way that the women at the *meel fadhiisis* have taken the *Subaacal Xariir* and tied or wrapped it in

a Somali style. *Hore* is an adjective, which depending on the context of the sentence, can mean 'former', 'previous', earlier', 'forth', 'fro', 'forwards', or 'before'. When in the *hees* it states 'Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye', it highlights that the wearing of the *Subaacal Xariir* is not merely a tradition or culture but a 'previous' or 'former' 'law' something which they are enforced or obliged to do. There is a juxtaposition between this line which discusses the fact that the wearing of the *Subaacal Xariir* is a previous 'law' and the final line of the *hees* which is about choosing to continue the tradition into the present times. The final line of the stanza is 'Ka gaarsan maynee', 'We do not divert from it'. *Gaarsan* is a Banaadiri word which means 'divert'. They *hees* ends with this powerful image of the female congregation and the bride choosing not to divert from their tradition of wearing the *Subaacal Xariir.*

While 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' articulates the way that Indian Ocean and Somali culture are interlaced through Banaadiri wedding traditions, *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* expresses the distance between the Somali and Italian culture. Through the project on 'memory' that the protagonist works on with a 'group of Somali asylum seekers', she encounters many 'young' Somali people who have been forced to leave Somalia and migrate to Italy due to the civil war.[436] During the project the group members find themselves 'reflecting on how many Italian words did not have an equivalent in Somali and how, conversely, many Somali words existed that were impossible to translate into Italian'.[437] Words such as 'adventure' which in Italian is defined as 'an enterprise that is risky but enticing because of its unknown outcome and possible uncommon experiences' but which in the Somali language does not have an 'equivalent term'.[438] The closest words are '*sursuur'* which means 'danger', '*dalmar'* which means 'to journey across foreign lands' and '*badmar'* which means 'to journey across the sea'.[439] The 'group of Somali asylum seekers' decide to 'start a workshop on words', a 'workshop' on 'untranslatable' words.[440]

[436] Farah, p. 21.
[437] Farah, p. 21.
[438] Farah, p. 21.
[439] Farah, p. 21.
[440] Farah, p. 21.

Although the workshop is framed as being on words and the un-transability between the Somali and Italian language, it is actually about much more. As Somali refugees who live in Italy, these young people have a unique experience which cannot be articulated exclusively in the Somali or Italian language. Through this workshop the young migrants work between the Somali and Italian cultures to build a 'tree', 'an association of ideas starting from an un-translatable word'. The protagonist relates how 'we could find words that just touched the surface, taking us into directions we had not foreseen'.[441] Through this 'tree' of ideas and associations, the young migrants attempt to create a lexis to articulate their migrant experience. The workshop on 'words' becomes a linguistic tool to create meaning from what they have experienced and what they continue to experience as members of the Somali diaspora living in Italy.

This disjunction between East African and Italian culture continues in the tenth and final vignette of *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* which focuses on the return of the Aksum obelisk from Rome, Italy to Axum, Ethiopia. The city of Axum was important to Ethiopian history because it was the birth place of the 'the Axumite Kingdom'.[442] Ayele Bekerie argues that 'the Aksumite kingdom' was one of the 'great states' in 'world history' and that the leaders of Aksum were 'powerful rulers' who established relations and trade links with Rome, Alexandria, Meroe, the Persians and 'other significant powers of the period'.[443] Haile Mariam, the General Manager of the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage of Ethiopia states that 'the development of the Axumite kingdom was a crucial turning point in the cultural, political and environment history of Ethiopia' and 'a number of impressive pre-Christian monarchic obelisks still survive in and around the ancient town of Axum' which bear witness to this ancient Axumite civilisation.[444] However, during the conquest of Ethiopia in 1935 by Italy 'one of the obelisks was removed from

[441] Farah, p. 21.
[442] Haile Mariam, 'The Cultural benefits of the return of the Axum Obelisk', *Museum International*, 61 (2009), 48-51 (p. 48).
[443] Ayele Bekerie, 'The Rise of the Aksum Obelisk is the Rise of Ethiopian History', *Horn of Africa: an independent Journal*, 23 (2005), 85-101 (p. 91).
[444] Mariam, pp. 48-49.

Axum by personal order of Benito Mussolini and was relocated to Piazza Capena in Rome'.[445] Although in '1947 Italy signed a peace accord with the United Nations' which 'obliged Italy to return the obelisk to Ethiopia' it was only in 2005, after many years of political and technical discussion that the 'full restoration and restitution of the stele of Axum to its original location' was achieved.[446]

While the Somali migrants use a workshop on words as a means to create a bridge between the Somali and Italian cultures in the final section of *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, Cristina Ali Farah explores how Ethiopia and Italy have been in a state of contention over the Aksum 'obelisk'. [447] She begins by discussing that the way that the return of the Aksum obelisk has led to years of unfruitful meetings and talks between the Italian and Ethiopian government: 'they're hard lumps that won't melt,/ your words, they are throat-knots/ drawing out arguments & quarrels'.[448] Farah suggests that the 'hard lumps that won't melt' and the 'throat-knots' refers to the way the Italian government have tried to suppress the voices of the Ethiopian people and its government when they have requested the return of the obelisk.[449]

Where the Somali migrants' 'tree' of associations has connotations of a living thing which yields life, the Aksum obelisk is a monolithic inanimate structure which is associated with death and decay. In the third stanza it states 'on the shore I will gather flowers of spray/white & unyielding like bones & city walls/don't let them bring to me your torn-up body circumcised monolith, head & chest & shin bone'.[450] The 'flowers' that are brought to commemorate the obelisk reflect images of death and incarceration, 'white & unyielding like bones & city walls' while the obelisk, which has been reassembled in Ethiopia, is still violently 'torn-up' and 'circumcised' and lies in various pieces 'head', 'chest' and 'shin bone'.[451] Cristina Ali Farah

[445] Mariam, p. 49.
[446] Mariam, p. 49.
[447] Farah, p, 24.
[448] Farah, p. 24.
[449] Farah, p. 24.
[450] Farah, p. 24.
[451] Farah, p. 24.

suggests that the Aksum obelisk is an object which rather than bringing different culture together emphasises the disparity between them. It subtly alludes to the fact that while Italy is the colonial and the centre, Ethiopia is the colonized and the metropole and thus all their interactions are characterised by violence. This poem like many of the other stories in *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* does not reconcile itself but ends with an image of uncertainty: 'what's left is a scar, gashed open in the concrete/traced and erased in front of the colonies/the memorial stone in the hold, the teeming sea'.[452]

While *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* ends on an image of uncertainty, 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' comes full circle by ending with an image of assurance through repeating the second part of the first stanza: 'Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa/Waa Guuriheeynnaa', 'we have affection for the bride/We are taking her to the marital home.' They repeat these lines at the end of the *hees* to reaffirm the reason that they have congregate together at the *meel fadhiisis.* As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the second half of each stanza would be repeated by the entire female congregation to highlight the important themes of the *hees.* In stanza one, the women at the *meel fadhiisis* repeat 'Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa/ Waa guuriheeynnaa' 'we have affection for the bride. /We are taking her to the marital home' to highlight the love and affection they have for the bride and the duty that they feel as her kin in ensuring that she performs all the traditional wedding practices until she reaches the marital home. In stanza two, they emphasise the important role that the community of women at the *meel fadhiisis* play in the Banaadiri and Indian Ocean traditions of anointing and cleansing the bride's skin and the *cillaan saar*, henna application tradition when they repeat 'Gabdhahan golaha joogaa gacantooda ku saareen', 'these girls at the meeting place, put it on with their hand'. In the third stanza, they celebrate the bride and highlight that she is worthy of the gold jewellery that they have put on her body because it is ordained by God when they repeat 'Waa gaartayee. /Guulle ugu soo gargaaray, 'She achieved it. God supported her with it.' In the final stanza, they highlight that the silk cloth that they knot around their body is not only

[452] Farah, p. 24.

a part of their history but also something which they chose to continue: *'*Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye/ ka gaarsan maynee', 'It is the law that is previous /We do not divert from it'. Thus, the women at the *meel fadhiisis* through repeat singing the final two lines of each stanza highlight the importance of kinship in preserving cultural traditions, the role played by the female Banaadiri community in continuing Indian Ocean traditions, and the importance of wearing particular objects such as gold jewellery and traditional cloth in preserving and continuing the Banaadiri people's Indian Ocean heritage.

Chapter 4

Environment and heritage: literary depictions of littoral communities and their Indian ocean ecologies

This chapter compares Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's 2019 novel *The Dragonfly Sea* with nine Banaadiri fishing *geeraarro*. I explore the ways in which ideas of labour, kinship, and cultural heritage are presented in the fishing poems created over generations by an Indian Ocean coastal community as compared to a novel based on an Indian Ocean island community, written by a Kenyan writer, and published by a major US publishing house. I asses the differing ways that these works explore the relationship between littoral communities and Indian Ocean ecologies. I begin by arguing that in form and language both *The Dragonfly Sea* and the Banaadiri fishing *geeraarro* reflect the distinctive ecologies of the Indian Ocean world. Moreover, I contend that both impart a heritage that is connected to the ecologies of the Indian Ocean world. I argue that while the fishing *geeraarro* produce heritage by blending the Banaadiri fishermen's ecological sea stories with their fishing labour in the present, *The Dragonfly Sea* explores the problematic nature of single ancestral heritages associated with bloodlines.

4.1 Banaadiri fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea*

Both the fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea* are literary works that blur the boundaries between real-life and fiction. *The Dragonfly Sea* is a fictional work inspired by the real-life story of a young woman from Pate Island who was awarded a scholarship to study in China on account of being the descendent of a Chinese Ming-dynasty sailor who had survived the shipwreck of Admiral Zheng He's Armada. In the 1400s, Zheng led a large armada 'with 300 ships and as many

as 30,000 troops under his command' to the Middle East, South-East Asia and Africa to extend the maritime and commercial interests of China throughout the Indian Ocean world. [453] In 2010, Chinese archaeologists travelled to the coast of Kenya to excavate a shipwreck that historians 'believed to have been part of Zheng's armada, which reached the coastal town of Malindi in 1418'.[454] It was suspected that the wreck would be found near the Lamu archipelago, where pieces of Ming-era ceramics have already surfaced. In addition to leaving a material legacy on the Kenyan coast, Admiral Zheng He's shipwrecked armada also resulted in a human one. In 2002 Chinese experts went to the Lamu Island to carry out DNA testing on the inhabitants to look for Chinese ancestry and 'a young Kenyan woman, Mwamaka Shirafu', and her family was found to be of Chinese descent.[455] Mwamaka Shirafu was subsequently granted a scholarship to study Chinese medicine in China. Yvonne Owuor makes it clear in the '*Author's Note*' that even though the novel is 'inspired by this historical incident', 'it is *not* this young woman's story.' She states 'though the story incorporates current news and historical events, this is a work of fiction.' In *The Dragonfly Sea*, Yvonne Owour provides a literary retelling of real-life events that centres on the journeys and relationships of her protagonist, Ayaana, who discovers through DNA tests that she is the descendant of a Ming-dynasty sailor.

While in *The Dragonfly Sea*, real-life historical events provide the inspiration for a fictionized story, in the fishing *geeraarro* folktales about sea-creatures and historical seamen are integral to the everyday life of a Banaadiri fishing family who use them to support their livelihoods as fishermen. These Banaadiri fishermen begin reciting their poems as they prepare to board the *Saddexleey* on the coast of Mogadishu, and continue to recite them whilst they travel to the fishing locations, throughout the time that they use their fishing nets to catch the fish, whilst they bring in fish, and during their journeys back to the coast. When they return, they use the fishing *geeraarro* to express whether they have had a successful or unsuccessful fishing expedition and to

[453] Zoe Murphy, 'Zheng He: Symbol of China's "peaceful rise"', *BBC News*, 28 July 2010 < https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-10767321 > [Accessed 20 June 2019]
[454] Murphy.
[455] Murphy.

barter and trade their fish in the market. The fishing *geeraarro* are highly imaginative and creative poems, brimming with stories which reference both fictionalised historical sea figures, and sea-creatures from folktales. Stories may focus on sea creatures, such as *Haandoli*, a large animal with wings that resides in the deep sea, and who is known through folktales to be both ferocious and fast, or be centred on stories about seamen and their immense fishing skills, both Banaadiri and from other parts of the Indian Ocean world.

This chapter compares the representation of a coastal and an island community that connect to a shared littoral Indian Ocean culture. Indian Ocean historian, Michael N. Pearson, in his article 'Littoral Society: the concept and the problems' argues that 'we can go around the shores of an ocean, or a sea, or indeed the whole world, and identify societies that have more in common with other littoral societies than they do with their inland neighbours'.[456] He contends that

> location on the shore transcends differing influences from an inland that is very diverse, both in geographic and cultural terms, so that the shore folk have more in common with other shore folk thousands of kilometres away on some other shore of the ocean than they do with those in their immediate hinterland.[457]

Pearson argues that both fishermen and Island communities are littoral people. He states that because fishermen 'live on the shore, but work on the sea: they are very precisely littoral' and islands are places 'where we are most likely to find littoral societies'.[458] He draws attention to how on smaller islands in particular 'there would be nothing but coastal people, for the sea permeates the whole area'.[459] Pearson argues for three criteria that define a littoral society. Firstly, that they

[456] Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems', *Journal of World History*, 17 (2006), 353-373 (p.353).
[457] Pearson, pp. 353-354.
[458] Pearson, pp. 356-358.
[459] Pearson, p. 358.

must live 'on or near the shore', and the second and third criteria is that their occupation and culture reflects the 'classic characteristics of littoral society – that is, a symbiosis between land and sea'.[460] Although many littoral societies live on the shore, in terms of the 'other two criteria, occupation and culture, definition is more difficult, and things change over time'.[461] However, in general Pearson argues that littoral communities are 'amphibious, moving easily between land and sea'.[462] He refers to Jean-Claude Penrad's image of the ressac which consists of 'the threefold violent movement of the waves, turning back on themselves as they crash against the shore' to illuminate the amphibious nature of littoral communities.[463] Pearson argues that Penrad 'uses this image to elucidate the way in which the to-and-fro movements of the Indian Ocean mirror coastal and inland influences that keep coming back at each other just as do waves'.[464] Thus, Pearson shows the way that their geographical location between land and sea and their shared littoral culture means that the community that perform the fishing *geeraarro* and the ones in the novel have more in common with each than with the cultures of their immediate hinterlands.

Bringing Pearson's idea of the littoral to the poems and the novel highlights their central theme of departure and return. In *The Dragonfly Sea* this consists of journeys that characters make from Pate Island to other parts of the Indian Ocean world (Zanzibar, the Middle East, Yemen, China,) and back again while in fishing *geeraarro* these comprise of local journeys that the fishermen make every day from the coast into the sea and back onto the shore. Moreover, the fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea* both explore the stories of littoral communities who live on the shore but are deeply connected to the sea. In *The Dragonfly Sea,* the protagonists, Ayaana, Munira and Muhidin all come from families who make a living from the sea. Muhidin Baadwi Mlingoti is the 'descendent of Pate Island fishermen and boatbuilders': 'his late father, and his father before him, had been sea keepers – they had read the water in all its seasons, and had kept

[460] Pearson, p. 354.
[461] Pearson, p. 356.
[462] Pearson, p. 359.
[463] Pearson, p. 359.
[464] Pearson, p. 359.

its rites and rituals'.[465] Even though Muhidin's family had died before he could learn about the sea from them, 'he had retained an instinct for the calling', indicating that heritage is more than ancestry alone.[466] Munira and her daughter Ayaana come from a 'patrician family' who own a successful sea trade business in which 'ancient, intricate, and extended business tentacles' touched 'most port cities of the world'.[467] However, we learn early in the novel that when Munira has Ayaana out of wedlock, they are both disowned from this family: Munira 'had accepted her amputation from a deep and wide genealogy that had for centuries opened for their family access to secret spaces and places of the world'.[468] When they are 'broken off' from their family, Munira and Ayaana become 'consigned to nowhere'.[469] However, despite being disowned, they are still live a littoral life lifestyle connected to both the sea and the shore. Through Ayaana, Munira and Muhidin, Owuor shows that heritage is something that transcends ancestry.

The fishing *geeraar* also focus on a littoral community. They were recorded from Haji Malaakh Haji, a man renowned among the Banaadiri people for his prowess as a seaman and, who came from a long line of fishermen going back three centuries.[470] His family have always resided and still to this day reside in the Xamar Weyne district of Mogadishu, on the coast across from the Abu Hussein jabal from where the fishing boats depart every afternoon.[471] Haji Malaakh Haji was taught these *geeraarro* as a young boy by his father who in turn inherited them from his own father. Importantly, fishing skills and the fishing knowledge encoded in the songs have been passed down from father to son for generations in his family almost as a seamless body of cultural knowledge.[472]

The Dragonfly Sea and the fishing *geeraarro* are very different in form. The fishing *geeraarro* are nine short and concise oral poems. Each poem can either be read individually to

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[465] Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, *The Dragonfly Sea* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), pp.8, 18.
[466] Owuor, p. 18.
[467] Owuor, p. 21.
[468] Owuor, p. 32.
[469][469] Owuor, p. 32.
[470] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed and Haji Malaakh Haji, 18 April 2019.
[471] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed and Haji Malaakh Haji, 18 April 2019.
[472] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 1 June 2019.

explore a particular part of the fishing expedition or read collectively to explore the entire fishing journey from before the fishermen embark on their fishing trips to long after they return. Through each of the *geeraar*, the fishermen explore a different sea story focused on a particular sea creature or seaman. The short length of the *geeraarro* and the variety of different stories told through them is perfectly in tune with their purpose which is to enthuse and entertain the Banaadiri fishermen during their work fishing which can be both monotonous and laborious. In contrast, *The Dragonfly Sea* is an expansive and elaborate novel which spans close to five hundred pages. The length of the novel and the evocative nature of the language means that that reader becomes invested in Ayaana's journey from girlhood to womanhood, and the burgeoning relationships between herself and the other characters in the novel. The reader lives vicariously through Ayaana; undertaking with her the journey across three continents and experiencing her highs and lows.

Despite the stark differences in their length and mode of address, both *The Dragonfly Sea* and the fishing *geeraarro* reflect the ecologies of the Indian Ocean world in their form and language. Throughout the fishing *geeraarro* there is a steady increase and then decrease in the rhythm and tempo of the poems which in many ways mirrors the ebbs and flows of sea tides. An example of this is *geeraar* two which states 'Muumbo Sare/ Meyla Moole/Markaboow iyo/Maytaruumbo/ Macaantiisa oo aan soo maqlayee/Ma ka maarmo inaan masruufto'. The first part of the *geeraar* lists the names of the different fish, and consists of short clauses with four syllables which creates a linguistic sense of something building whereas the final two clauses are longer with nine or ten syllables and thereby creates a feeling of slowing down. The language of the fishing *geeraar* also captures the Indian Ocean ecologies of the fishermen that use them every day to support their labour. From evocative images of sea creatures taking solace in the waves of the sea, to references to Indian Ocean seamen such as *Barqad la gab*, an expert Arab seaman who lived among the Banaadiri people, to the fish native to the waters of the East African coast, the *geeraar* pay homage to the habitats and lived experiences of the Banaadiri fishermen.

The Dragonfly Sea, like the fishing *geeraarro*, uses a form and language that explores Indian Ocean ecologies. Instead of having boldly marked titles or numbers to demarcate the different chapters, Owuor lets the texts from the different chapters run into one another, reflecting the cascading rhythm of the sea. Even though *The Dragonfly Sea* is written in prose rather than poetry, it is an incredibly lyrical and poetic prose. Each section of the book is prefaced with a Kiswahili proverb, or anthropism that establishes indigenous cultural knowledge as its framework. Through her writing, she provides a feast for the senses and the reader is able to experience the sights, sounds and smells of Pate Island. We hear the muezzins' Adhan, calls to prayer, the sounds of the sea, the murmurs of the tide, we smell the rose water, lavender, jasmine, and sandalwood that Ayaana's mother, Munira, uses to beautify the female residents of the island. Through Owuor's vivid language the reader is able to imagine Ayaana's mangrove hideout, the panoramic sea views that greet Muhidin every morning from his balcony and taste the 'cardamom, cloves and cinnamon' in his coffee. Throughout the entire novel, Owour's language is evocative and highlights the intimacy between the characters and their natural environments. Both Munira and Ayaana spend a significant time outside

> Seeking roses, borrowing roses, scents that bled tenderness. Munira's heart-gaze sought beauty as a desiccated soul craves water. Yearning for loveliness, she built on color until the greens became green they were created to be. She trusted scent; it was for her an unfiltered presence, and therefore truth. She tended flowers and herbs, tugging and caressing at excesses until the plants revealed their essential core in perfect aromas that evoked a particular way of seeing. This was also one of Ayaana's many pastimes, which included counting ripples on ponds and the sea, anticipating swells, watching rocks in the sea turn to shadow just before sunset, and befriending pointy-eared island cats with their large prescient eyes.[473]

[473] Owuor, pp. 33-34.

The lush language used in the passage above, 'roses', 'scents', 'beauty', 'greens', 'flowers' 'herbs' and 'plants', presents Pate Island as a place of abundance and it is through this fertile landscape that Munira gains solace in her life as an outcast.[474] When Munira creates scents from flowers and herbs that grow in Pate, she becomes a creator of an alternative world filled with beauty. She uses the natural colours and aromas of the flowers and plants and accentuates them in the scents and oils that she manufactures. Munira yearns for the allure and beauty emitted from the flowers to counteract her bleak existence in Pate Island where she has been disowned by her family and estranged from wider Pate society. She forages and chooses roses in particular because when blended together they emit a fragrance which creates an ambience of 'tenderness'.[475] Working on these flowers and herbs, creates for Munira a different 'way of seeing' the world.[476] The fragrances that she produces provide a fresh presence in her life and restores the trust that she has lost in humanity. Ayaana also gains comfort in immersing herself in the ecologies of Pate Island. She has experienced abandonment at a tender age: her father abandons her before she is even born and her extended family when she is a baby. Ayaana enjoys doing the same things every day in the natural landscape of Pate Island: 'counting ripples on ponds and the sea, anticipating swells, watching rocks in the sea turn to shadow just before sunset' because she can depend on their reliability.[477] Through the predictable rhythms and movements of the sea, Ayaana finds a sense of stability and consistency which she lacks in her general life.

4.2 Banaadiri Indian Ocean ecologies: *Shirka* and *maanyo galka*

[474] Owuor, pp. 33-34.
[475] Owuor, p. 33.
[476] Owuor, p. 34.
[477] Owuor, p. 34.

The close relationship between Banaadiri coastal communities and their natural ecologies is significant as illustrated in their cultural practices. Once a year the Banaadiri community of Mogadishu have a tradition called *Shirka* as part of the *dabshid* festivities which translates as 'light a fire', and marks the Somali Solar New Year.[478] Anthropologist Virginia Luling states 'the Somalis use not one but two systems of time reckoning (to which the Gregorian calendar is now added as a third)'.[479] The first 'one is the Islamic lunar calendar, which is used for religious festivals' and the 'other is the indigenous solar calendar, which, since it is in fixed relationship to the seasons, regulates the farmers' and herders' year'.[480] The *dabshid* tradition celebrates the beginning of the indigenous solar calendar and has another name Neyrus which derives from the Persian *Nowruz* and suggests the tradition has Persian origins.[481] In the afternoon of the Somali solar new year, Banaadiri men in Mogadishu engage in a festival called *Shirka* which translates as 'the meeting' where they celebrate what had has taken place over that year. The men come from the different districts in Mogadishu in which they reside, *Shangaani, Waaberi, Shibis, Boondheere, Cabdulcasiis, Xamar Jajab* and congregate in *Xamar Weyne*. [482] They form groups according to their lineage and engage in mock combat and banter 'carrying long sticks that they thrust up and down in rhythm as they chant and shuffle through the designated streets of the neighbourhood'.[483] The different clan groups use oral poetry, in particular *hees* and *geeraar*, to boast about their reputations as well as to direct teasing insults and banter at the other clan groups.[484]

On the morning of the *Shirka*, Banaadiri women take part in a celebratory custom called *maanyo galka* which roughly translates as 'the entering of a sea'. After praying the Fajr prayer, the first of the Islamic prayers performed at dawn, Banaadiri women of all ages get dressed in

[478] Anita Sylvia Adam, 'Benadiri People of Somalia: with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, SOAS, 2011), p. 177.
[479] Virginia Luling, *Somali Sultanate: the Geledi city-state over 150 years* (London: HAAN, 2002), p. 240.
[480] Luling, pp. 240-241.
[481] Luling, p. 241.
[482] Personal interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.
[483] Adam, p. 178.
[484] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.

new clothes.[485] Married women wear a new *garays* and *shaash* and unmarried women wear a *baati* dress.[486] The women then congregate at the shore of the sea closest to them. This may be *Maanyo Morshse, Maanyo Ayey, Secconda Lido* or another part of the shore depending on the district that the women live in.[487] The Banaadiri women walk into the sea singing *heeso*, beating the drums and dancing and this continues while they are in the sea.[488] Through enacting this *maanyo galka* tradition, women show their jubilation and celebrate the coming of the Somali new year. Both the *shirka* and *maanya galka* continue today, although they have become a much smaller affair on account of the instability and fear caused by the civil war.[489] It is important to my reading of the fishing poems to show that there is a long history of Banaadiri people engaging with their natural ecologies through their cultural practices. These cultural practices, where they connect with their natural ecologies, enable them to foster a sense of community, reinforce a sense of identity and continue a cultural legacy.

4.3 Literary Ecologies of the Indian Ocean

In literary studies, there has been a recent turn in attention to both the materialities and ecologies of the sea that have long existed as important areas of enquiry in anthropology. Isabel Hofmeyr has collated and introduced a collection of articles for the journal, *English Studies in Africa*, which explores 'oceanic literary ecologies' in the context of the Indian Ocean world.[490] These articles contribute to a critical mode of Ocean studies which explores the materiality, depth and breadth of the ocean, as well as the intersections between human and non-human aspects of

[485] Personal Interview with Asha Karama Saed, 6 August 2018.
[486] *Garays* is a thin, light, brightly coloured cloth while *baati* is a tie-dyed or coloured cloth. *Shaash* refers to a married woman's silk headscarf.
[487] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.
[488] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.
[489] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 4 December 2019.
[490] Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Literary Ecologies of the Indian Ocean', *English Studies in Africa*, 62 (2019), 1-7 (p. 1).

the ocean ecology. Hofmeyr argues that in literary studies 'discussions of oceans and literary ecologies have hence shifted from surface to depth providing a range of perspectives and angles of vision'.[491] This has produced a rich array of scholarship such as 'amphibious aesthetics; littoral form; monsoon assemblages; heavy waters; hydropoetics; underwater aesthetics; trans-corporeality; and sea ontologies, all concepts which push us closer to a material engagement with water'.[492]

There is a tradition of writers engaging with ecologies of the Indian Ocean world. From childhood, Mauritian writer Carl De Souza was exposed to the various different ecological environments of the Mascarene Islands ranging from the countryside, to urban areas and coastal regions and this knowledge of the natural world is a central theme in his literature. In De Souza's literature, representations of the environment are key to the creation of characters, and are also given character. When describing the natural environments De Souza characterises it as a live force that imparts on humans, 'it is there, prowling. It surges from time to time, revealing to humans their true nature'.[493] As Hofmeyr states 'the flora and fauna of Mauritius appear as minor "characters" in his work with the mango, jambul and banyan tree featuring in the plot development of his narratives'.[494] Sugar plantations, the sea, and cyclones are the main recurring ecologies in his work. In his 1993 novel *The Englishman's Blood*, he explores sugar cane fields and the economic and human issues surrounding sugar production. In his writings, the unpredictability and mystery of the sea is used to emphasis the instability of the characters' lives. His novel, *Jettisoned*, tells the story of a group of Chinese youths who attempt to escape a Maoist regime by travelling on a crowded fishing boat to Haiti enroute to the United States. In the novel, the fierceness of the sea brings to the fore the fierceness of the other obstacles that the youths need to overcome – 'political, social and economic'— on their journeys to gain entry into the States.[495]

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[491] Hofmeyr, p. 3.
[492] Hofmeyr, p. 2.
[493] Carl de Souza, 'Carl de Souza Discusses Ecology in His Work', *English Studies in Africa*, 62 (2019), 40-44 (p. 41).
[494] Hofmeyr, p. 5.
[495] De Souza, p. 41.

In her essay for this special issue, Lindsey Collen explores what she calls a 'broken ecology'; a fracture between characters and their natural environments.[496] She argues that this ecological fracture between human and nature leads to secondarily and tertiary fractures: ecologically fractures within the characters themselves due to 'slavery of wage labour', as well as being split 'socially into warring groups or classes'.[497] Collen's first novel, *There is a Tide*, tells the story of two unemployed sugarcane workers, Gandhi and Tikay, who use a slow burning device to set a planation alight in the hope that this will lead the manager of the cane fields to hire them to harvest the sugarcane before it ferments. They borrow a boat and go fishing in order to have an alibi when the sugarcane catches fire however because they are unable to read the signs that a cyclone is coming, they die at sea. Collen's novel argues that because Gandhi is not a fisherman who makes a living from nature but rather a cane labourer who is 'only able to work by selling part of himself (his strength, muscle power, capacity), by the hour', he is not only 'fractured from mother earth' but also fractured within himself.[498] Moreover, the sugarcane plantations are run by the ruling class and thus Gandhi and Tikay are also 'fractured socially from an exploiting, dominating, warring class'.[499] Collen shows that when characters in her novels become estranged from their natural ecologies, work becomes a form of slave labour which leads to further estrangement.

Both the fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea* can also be read as part of this tradition of literature exploring Indian Ocean ecologies. However, while Collen explores a 'broken ecology' where the characters are estranged from their environment by being forced into a form of slave labour, the fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea* explores a community of people who live in synergy with their natural ecologies. In the fishing *geeraarro*, the sea is presented, first and foremost, as a place of labour. *Geeraar* one is recited by Banaadiri fishermen as they prepare to

[496] Lindsey Collen, 'Lindsey Collen Looks at Ecology in Her Novels', *English Studies in Africa*, 62 (2019), 45-49 (p. 45).
[497] Collen, p. 45.
[498] Collen, p. 47.
[499] Collen, p. 47.

go out to sea on the *Saddexleey*, a fishing boat. The *Saddexleey* carries three (*saddex*) fishermen: *Naaquuda*, the driver of the fishing boat, *Saaranji*, the reader of the map and navigator and *Baxriya*, the man who does the actual fishing work.[500] In addition to these three fishermen, a young boy called *Yaa Uleed* also accompanies the fishermen on the *Saddexleey*.[501] The fishermen recite this oral poem before they embark on their fishing expedition to prepare themselves for the arduous work ahead and the dangers they may encounter at sea. *Geeraar* one begins with a simile to highlight the importance of sea labour to Banaadiri fishermen: 'Haandooli ma heeso/ Haad qabona ma hayaado', 'A Haandooli does not sing, / Just as a hunger crazed man does not dance'. A *Haandooli* is a large sea creature with wings that resides in the deep sea and is known for being incredibly fast. It cannot live outside water and uses his wings to glide through the sea. When the *geeraar* states 'Haandooli ma heeso' it highlights that the *Haandoli* is not a frivolous sea creature but one that is threatening to the fishermen and thus suggests that fishing can be a dangerous undertaking. The next line 'Haad qabona ma hayaado' compares this fierce sea creature with a 'hunger crazed' fishermen. The phrase 'Haad qabo' in the context of the poem actually means a 'crazy man' but in this case refers to someone who has gone crazy with hunger. *Hayaado* is a verb which in this context means to 'dance'. Through the use of this simile the *geeraar* suggests that although the sea can be a dangerous place filled with sea creatures such as the *Haandooli*, a hungry fisherman is an equally formidable figure, equipped to face these obstacles.

The middle section of *geeraar* one focuses on bird-like creatures and the second line in particular describes the *Haandooli*: 'Haadka u weyn Haandooli la yiirah', 'The largest bird is called *Haandooli*'. *Haad* is a noun which means 'bird' and in particular is used to refer to large species of birds. The preposition *u* in this particular context is a superlative and *weyn* is an adjective, which can mean 'big', 'large', or 'great'. So, the line literally means the 'the largest bird of the birds is

[500] Personal interview with Aisha Karama Saed and Haji Malaakh Haji, 18 April 2019.
[501] The *Yaa Uleed*'s main role during the fishing expedition is to extract and throw out any water that comes into the boat while they are in the sea. When the boat returns after a fishing expedition, the *Yaa Uleed* is also responsible for *Qalfeed* the cleansing of the boat from algae and sea greens.

called *Haandooli*'. Through the use of the superlative, the line highlights that even among the bird-like sea creatures, the *Haandooli* stands out in its distinctiveness and grandeur. The third, fourth and fifth lines of the g*eeraar* describes a large amphibious bird: 'Haadkiisa labaadne madaxa hir ku leeyahay/Hirgalmadiisa waa hirka maanyo', Hungurgikiisa waa hal geel', 'And its second bird has a mark on the head / His siesta is the waves of the sea /His food is one camel.' The *geeraar* suggests that there is a kinship between the bird being described and the *Haandooli* the bird-like sea creature mentioned in the first two lines. In the phrase 'Haadkiisa labaadne'*, kiisa* is a possessive suffix which is attached to the masculine noun *haad* and is being used to indicate that the bird being described belongs to the *Haandooli*. When the *geeraar* states 'Haadkiisa labaadne madaxa hir ku leeyahay', it describes the physical features of this large bird. There is a play on the word *hir* which can mean 'sign', badge, 'insignia' or 'mark,' and in the context of the *geeraar* is being used to refer to a 'mark' on the bird's head as well as the upwards and downwards movements of the sea 'waves'. Through this play on words, the *geeraar* suggests that the surges and movements of the sea are engraved or 'marked' on the bird's body. This inextricable relationship between the bird and the sea continues with the next two lines 'Hirgalmadiisa waa hirka maanyo/ Hungurgikiisa waa hal geel'. 'His siesta is the waves of the sea /His food is one camel'. 'Hungurgikiisa waa hal geel' refers to Banaadiri folklore which relates how this bird steals a whole camel from headers in the countryside and hides it in mountains under the sea. The *geeraar* plays on the dual meaning of *hunguri* which refers to the 'gullet' or 'esophagus', as well as 'food' to indicate the way that the bird carries the camel in its beak to eat later. There is also a play on the word *hal,* which in this context means the number 'one', but can also refer to a female camel. The metaphor in the next line 'Hirgalmadiisa waa hirka maanyo', explores the way that the bird would take shade from the sun's heat in the waves of the sea. *Hargal* as a verb means 'get into the shade' and as a noun refers to a time between dhuhr and asr when people in Somalia take shade from the sunshine and take a rest. Thus, the *geeraar* highlights how the creature connects seascapes and landscapes, merging them through the rhythms of its gigantic appetite.

Through reciting this *geeraar* which focuses on these gigantic birds and bird-like creatures that the Banaadiri fishermen may encounter in the sea, the fishermen also speak to each other as they acknowledge their shared situation and connection to tradition. These amphibious sea creatures mirror the Banaadiri fishermen who spend as many hours at sea as they do on the shore. Moreover, when the *geeraar* states 'Haadkiisa labaadne madaxa hir ku leeyahay', it not only highlights the kinship between these two birds but also the kinship between the three Banaadiri fishermen who are about to board the *Saddexleey.* This sense of collaborative endeavour reinforces their familial ties so that the fishermen work with synergy; preparing for whatever hazard or dangerous sea creatures that they may encounter. The *geeraar* moves full circle and ends by reinforcing the importance of work to the Banaadiri fishermen: 'Halbaroow hal aan waa hubaa /Hawl ninkeed ma hurto'. 'Sailor, I am sure of one thing/a man's work is unavoidable'. In the line, 'Halbaroow hal aan waa hubaa', the fishermen speak directly to *Halbaroow*, a sailor or seaman who controls the *baxar*, sea, and is responsible for teaching other men about the sea. When they speak to *Halbaroow,* they are using him as a figure of the sea to swear by or through which to make a proclamation. In the final lines of the *geeraar*, 'Hawl ninkeed ma hurto', *hurti* is a noun which means 'avoidable', 'dispensable' or 'superfluous' which when used with '*ma'* becomes a negative statement to show that sea labour is unavoidable and indispensable to the Banaadiri fishermen. When they personify the noun *hawl,* which can refer to 'work', 'labour', 'toil', or a 'task', and suggest that *hawl* is the spouse of a man, they emphasise that for the fisherman work is a more than mere labour. It is a form of life-long commitment. It highlights that despite the many dangers of the sea and how arduous the work, they will continue to go out to fish every day.

While *geeraar* one highlights that fishing is a serious form of labour, many of the *geeraar* also show that fishing can be a joyful experience. G*eeraar* two is a fishing poem which the fishermen recite to entertain themselves and have fun while they are travelling on their boats to a fishing location in the Somali sea. They begin by stating the names of the fish that they are hoping to catch that day: 'Muumbo Sare, Meyla Moole, Markaboow iyo Maytaruumbo'. The fishermen

recite the names of these fish to invoke them. Through their words they manifest an abundance of fish to materialise in the sea when they spread their fishing nets. The next line, 'Macaantiisa oo aan soo maqlayee', 'I have heard about its sweet flavour', suggests that these fish are renowned within the community for their flavour and that long before the fishermen had tasted them for themselves, they had heard about them. The *geeraar* ends with the playful line 'Ma ka maarmo inaan masruufto', 'I cannot do without it, even though it pays for the living expenses.' *Ka maaran* is a verb which means 'do without' or 'manage without' and *masruufto* is a verb which refers to the money used to pay for someone's living expenses. The line suggests that although they should sell the fish at the market to make the money to cover their living expenses, the sweet flavour of the fish has such an allure for the Banaadiri fishermen that they will not be able to resist eating them all. The playful nature of the entire g*eeraar,* which would be constantly repeated by the fishermen throughout the boat journey, highlights that the singing and songs associated with Banaadiri fishing can work to stress its nature as a convivial experience.

In *The Dragonfly Sea*, the sea is far more than a place of labour. For Ayaana, Munira and Muhidin, outcasts within the Pate Island community, it is through Pate sea ecologies that they find a sense of belonging. Munira was born into an illustrious East African trading family who had lived in Pate Island for generations. However, when she has her daughter, Ayaana, out of wedlock, the family leave Pate and Munira is cut off from a 'deep and wide genealogy that had for centuries opened for their family access to secret spaces and places of the world'.[502] As a consequence, Munira and Ayaana live as pariahs; shunned by the Pate town community and continually insulted and slighted. Ayaana suffers tremendously because she is unable to understand the reason behind the mistreatment of both herself and her mother. She is hounded by both her peers and their parents and cannot find a way of belonging to the only community she then knows as home. In one traumatic incident, she is playing on the skipping rope of one of her classmates when their father yells '"*Wee! Mwana kidonda"* – Child of the wound!' and

[502] Owuor, p. 32.

proceeds to break 'a twig from the nearby shrub with which to threaten her'.[503] Ayaana's special relationship, almost kinship, with the sea is partly a reaction to finding no place to belong on land and an escape from the name-calling of the island community. The sea becomes her refuge and place of joy. She spends hours 'playing in white-froth waters', diving, singing and laughing.[504] Ayaana 'used to twirl in the ocean's shallows and sing a loud song of children at ease'.[505] In the sea, she finds 'solitude and wordlessness' because when 'under water she did not need to worry about labelling things in order to contain them'.[506] The sea puts her troubles into perspective and connects her to a world larger than Pate: 'the sea had many eyes, and, now hers were another pair. A passing fish stared. A human looked back'.[507]

The ecologies of the sea also act a refuge for Muhidin who, like Ayaana, has had a lot of destructive human relationships. Muhidin is orphaned as a young child 'when a Likoni South Coast ferry sank with his parents and five siblings'.[508] He is put under the care of his uncle Hamid, a 'master boatmen, and his wife, Zainab,' who use him as a 'punching bag and an indentured servant'.[509] He is subjected to both verbal and physical abuse by his uncle who would constantly use slurs such as 'Abd' and 'kuffar' and 'thrash' him while 'Aunt Zainab just looked at the bleeding boy as she slurped down heavily sugared ginger coffee'.[510] This trauma creates an alienation within Muhidin that bleeds into adulthood: 'this was the face of loneliness, then, the substance of his present disquiet'.[511] It is during a four-day fishing trip with his uncle that Muhidin has a spiritual awakening at sea. As a result of constant threats by his uncle, 'terror-stricken fourteen-year-old' Muhidin falls into 'a state of high concentration, inside of which whispering, as if from the Source of Life, bubbled forth'.[512] He hears a 'palpable sea-song' which penetrates 'his young

[503] Owuor, p. 31.
[504] Owuor, pp. 17-18.
[505] Owuor, p. 16.
[506] Owuor, pp. 19-20.
[507] Owuor, p. 20.
[508] Owuor, p. 9.
[509] Owuor, p. 9.
[510] Owuor, p. 11.
[511] Owuor, p. 11.
[512] Owuor, p. 9.

heart' and proceeds to 'shatter and scatter as portions of infinite sun across chilled worlds'.[513] It is this experience that later in life compels 'Muhidin into the sea's service', where he works 'nonstop, an enchanted captive'.[514] Moreover, when he gets married for the first time to Raziya, a woman from a socially elite family, the sea would again prove to be a haven for him. Raziya's father an 'erudite man' who 'had almost studied at Oxford University' was constantly seeking to improve his 'rough-hewn fisherman son-in-law'.[515] So Muhidin 'took to spending days and nights at sea to avoid being near the house'.[516] When after two years of trying to mould Muhidin, Raziya's father bribes him to divorce his daughter, it is the sea which provides Muhidin with an escape and the means to carve out a successful career as a seaman.

It is through their affinity for the sea that Ayaana and Muhidin find a connection. When Munira asks Muhidin how Ayaana found him, he responds that they had found each other through 'the sea'.[517] Ayaana would hide in a 'mangrove hideout' near the sea watching dhows with passengers make their way to Pate Island waiting for a father that she has never known: 'every day, in secret, she went to and stood by the portals of this sea, her sea. She was waiting for Someone'.[518] She uses her imagination to manifest him; demanding 'that he reveal himself in a tangible form'.[519] Muhidin becomes the father figure that Ayaana craves. As Muhidin watches Ayaana playing in the sea every dawn from his balcony, he gains vicarious enjoyment from listening to her laughing and singing in the sea: 'somewhere in the water, the child laughed again. Her glee crinkled Muhidin's eyes'.[520] In Ayaana, Muhidin sees someone who is deeply connected to the sea like him. He 'knew how the sea was with certain people, how it needed them, and they it. It was like that for him'.[521] We learn that from a young age he would explore the sea. He 'had

[513] Owuor, p. 9.
[514] Owuor, p. 9.
[515] Owuor, p. 26.
[516] Owuor, p. 27.
[517] Owuor, p. 57.
[518] Owuor, p. 3.
[519] Owuor, p. 19.
[520] Owuor, p. 16.
[521] Owuor, p. 18.

been one of only seven who could dive in the middle of the night to find fish, oysters and crabs from the deep with only lanterns on boats to light their way'.[522] When Muhidin returns to Pate Island he has relinquished his life as a seaman, but he still has a deep connection with the sea. He would often wake up, 'only to find himself in the water at night, without knowing how he had left his bed and house to reach the tides'.[523] It is through their shared association to the sea that Muhidin and Ayaana create a bond.

Muhidin and Munira also develop a strong bond through their connection to the sea. When Munira comes back to Pate Island as an unwed mother, her family try to salvage the situation by attempting to marry her to a divorced man. However, when Munira refuses, she is shunned by her entire family. Her father tells her that she has 'squandered' her right to their 'name' and moves 'his harbourage business and household five kilometres away, to Zanzibar'.[524] Munira is abandoned in Pate with her Ayaana and is given a different name, '*kidonda* – a walking wound'.[525] In the Pate community, 'her name became a byword for faults, a caution used to threaten bold or rebellious girls'.[526] Munira is constantly verbally attacked by the inhabitants of the island who view her choice to be a single unmarried mother as a rejection of their social norms. It is the sea that proves to be a sanctuary for her: 'at night, she wandered over to a cove or sought out one of four large sea-facing rocks from which to look out at dark horizons'.[527] When facing the Pate community, Munira wears a fierce impenetrable façade, but when near the sea she is able remove her mask; 'she could implant secret dreams, safe from the jagged, gnashing teeth of an unappeasable world'.[528] Muhidin first encounters Munira during his nightly visits to the sea: 'two years into his return to Pate, Muhidin, wandering in the darkness, had sighted a fluid shadow under the Silverlight moon'.[529] The sea reveals them to be kindred spirits: 'their sea-

[522] Owuor, pp. 18-19.
[523] Owuor, p. 19.
[524] Owuor, p. 22.
[525] Owuor, p. 22.
[526] Owuor, p. 22.
[527] Owuor, p. 22.
[528] Owuor, p. 22.
[529] Owuor, p. 22.

sprayed shadows crisscrossed, merged, and separated again: two isolations tiptoeing on an ocean's boundaries, ears titled inward, straining toward unknown phantoms and old promises that tempted them into an interiority where they could rest'.[530] Even though neither of them acknowledges the other, they feel an inexplicable pull towards one another like the magnetic pull of the tides by the moon and sun. This is most apparent when one night, 'while trying to strip himself of the ocean's hold on his soul – he had, again, woken up to find himself in the water – Muhidin had run towards Munira's house for no reason'.[531] They both resist their connection but the more they seek solace in the sea, the more it binds them together. Thus, in *The Dragonfly Sea*, Owuor shows the fragile nature of human relationships. Ayaana, Muhidin, and Munira have all been abandoned, or disowned by their kin but through another form of attachment; one connected to place rather than people, they manage to find a sense of belonging. It is this connection with the sea ecologies of Pate island that provides them sustenance, refuge and the means to make different forms of human relationships.

Both the fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea* also discuss another form of kinship that develops through the sea; the kinship between littoral communities and sea creatures. The fishing *geeraar* in particular explore the relationship between fishermen and the fish that they pursue. *Geeraar* four is recited by fishermen to praise the *Tartabo* when they are hunting them. *Tartabo* is a fish known to be difficult to catch and so this *geeraar* is performed by a fisherman to entertain himself while he strives to catch this fish.[532] It begins with the fisherman speaking directly to the *Tartabo: '*Tartabooy ii Tartiibso hee taago' 'Tartabo, slow down for me and stand upright.' Through the use of the vocative form of the *Tartabo*, '*Tartabooy'*, the fisherman creates a link between himself and the fish. In the Somali tradition, the vocative form of someone's name is often used as a form of endearment; to show that the person being addressed is dear to the speaker. So, the fishermen create a feeling of familiarity between himself and the *Tartabo* fish

[530] Owuor, pp. 22-23.
[531] Owuor, p. 23.
[532] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Haji Malaakh, 1 June 2019.

and highlights the affection with which he holds this species of fish. Both the verbs *tartiibso* and *taago* are the imperatives form. *Taag* is a verb which can mean to 'stand upright', 'raise' or 'erect'. *Tartiibi* is a verb which can mean 'proceed slowly', 'go calmly', 'do moderately', when someone is told *tartiibso*, it is usually for their own benefit. They may be told *tartiibso* because they are acting rashly or doing something too fast. However, in this *geeraar*, *tartiibso* is proceeded by the pronoun and preposition cluster *ii* which in this particular context means 'for me'. The fisherman is telling the fish to slow its movements and stand erect so that he can catch it more easily. This playful way of addressing the fish continues into the next line 'Tibtibtan wax ma kuu tarayso' 'This jumping doesn't assist you'. *Tibtibtan* is not an actual word but rather refers to the way that the fish moves. When the net is laid out for the *Tartabo,* it often eludes capture because of its jumping movements.[533] The verb *tar* in this context means 'be of use', 'assist', and 'useful'. When the *geeraar* states 'Tibtibtan wax ma kuu tarayso', it conveys to the fish that his attempts at escape are futile. The third line of the *geeraar* is 'Tolkaa toddobaatanaa la tifay', 'Seventy of your kinsmen were plucked'. *Tol*, a noun which can mean 'kinsman', 'distant relative', 'clan', 'tribe', or 'decent group', tends to be used exclusively to refer to humans. Thus, when the fisherman says 'tolkaa' 'your kinsmen' to the *Tartabo,* he is anthropomorphising the fish by imbuing it with human characteristics. The fisherman shows that he views it as equal; a worthy adversary who challenges his fishing prowess. *Tifay* is a verb which means 'pluck' or 'pull out fibers' and is being used to describe the way that many other *Tartabo* fish have already been extracted from the sea. When the fisherman states 'Tolkaa toddobaatan aa la tifay', he conveys to this fish in jest that he is a highly skilled fishermen who has caught many of his species. Through these *geeraarro*, we learn that although the fishermen are hunting the fish, they also have a deep affinity with them. Banaadiri fishermen would spend most of their days in the sea and so over the course of time they would know as much about the specifies fish that they hunt as they would

[533] Personal Interview with Haji Malaakh Haji and Asha Malaakh Haji, 1 June 2019.

their families.[534] This is reflected in this fishing poem where they are presented as having an enduring bond; respected adversaries bound together by their relationship of predator and prey.

The Dragonfly Sea, like the fishing *geeraarro*, imbue sea creatures with specific meaning and qualities. However, in the novel they also take on a symbolism that helps gives coherences and unity to the narrative and is emblematic of certain themes. In particular many of the sea creatures act as 'harbingers – birds borne on the *matlai*, moon-drunk dragonflies, and dolphin schools, a sea lion, the changing seasons of earth'.[535] In the first paragraph of the novel, we are introduced to dragonflies. We are told that these 'water-chasing dragonflies' that originate from 'Northern India' had 'hitched a ride on a sedate "in-between seasons" morning wind' called the *Matlai* and had settled on the coast of Pate Island.[536] The migration of the dragonflies from India to East Africa foreshadows another form of Indian Ocean migration that Ayaana undertakes later in the novel from Pate Island to China. Moreover, when Ayaana and Lai Jin sees these dragonflies on the ship, the transient presence of these dragonflies reminds Lai Jin of the transient nature of Ayaana's presence on his ship. Towards the end of the novel, another sea creature acts as an augur to signal Ayaana's return home. A Pate Island captain and his crew find a 'Cape sea lion' in their fishing nets and bring it on to the island's shores.[537] This sea lion which 'belonged to the farthest of seas' is understood among the community to be a 'harbinger'.[538] Soon after the capture of this sea lion, Ayaana reappears on the 'archipelago that held her island'.[539]

4.4 Indian Ocean heritages

[534] Personal Interview with Aisha Karama Saed and Haji Malaakh Haji, 18 April 2019.
[535] Owuor, p. 68.
[536] Owuor, p. 2.
[537] Owuor. P. 412.
[538] Owuor, p. 412.
[539] Owuor. P. 412.

Social anthropologist Burkhard Schnepel, in 'Travelling Pasts: an introduction', explores the politics of cultural heritage in the context of the Indian Ocean world. He argues that heritage is socially constructed 'out of a great reservoir of possible historical events, processes, persons and material remnants' and the heritagization of the past is 'prone to contestations and negotiations between a number of remembrances, who have different, if not diametrically opposed interests and aims'.[540] Ultimately Schnepel argues that heritage is something 'which is produced, not given'.[541] Moreover, he challenges dominant discourses in heritage studies which suggest that heritage is something that simply needs to be preserved. He states that 'preservation discourses tend to forget or neglect what those things that seem to be in need of preserving mean to whom and what they do for whom'.[542] Instead he suggests a collaboration between scholars such as social anthologists who explore heritage politics today and historians and archaeologists who work on heritage in the context of the past. Schnepel endorses Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's definition of heritage: 'Despite a discourse of conservation, preservation, restoration, reclamation, recovery, recuperation, revitalization, and regeneration, heritage produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past'. [543] In support of plurality, heterogeneity and constructivism, Schnepel reformulates Kirshenblatt-Gimblett' 'heritage produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past' to 'heritage produces something new in the present that has recourse to *contested pasts'*.[544]

Historian Tansen Sen explores the ways that emigrants from Sihiu city in Guandong Province in the People's Republic of China, who settled in India and in the Malay Peninsula during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, preserved heritage through producing 'something new in

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[540] Burkhard Schnepel, 'Travelling Pasts: An introduction', in *Travelling Pasts: The Politics of Cultural Heritage in the Indian Ocean Word* ed. by Burkhard Schnepel and Tansen Sen (Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 1-18 (p. 3).
[541] Schnepel, p. 3.
[542] Schnepel, p. 5.
[543] Kirshenblatt- Gimblett, B. 'Theorizing Heritage', *Ethnomusicology*, 39 (1995), 367-380 (pp. 369-370), quoted in Burkhard Schnepel, 'Travelling Pasts: An introduction', in *Travelling Pasts: The Politics of Cultural Heritage in the Indian Ocean Word* ed. by Burkhard Schnepel and Tansen Sen (Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 1-18 (p. 4).
[544] Schnepel, p. 7.

the present that has recourse in the [pasts]'.[545] In Sen's case study, 'the "pasts" are not of a singular entity (the city of Sihui or the migrant group) but of several entangled entities – localized Buddhism, Sihui city, migrants from the area now residing in Malaysia and Kolkata, etc – and their manifold histories'.[546] In particular, Sen explores the ways that two buddhas, Ruan and Liang, worshiped and venerated by the Sihui communities in Malaysia and Kolkata., India helped to preserve their 'distinct sub-regional/speech group identity' as well as create new linkages with their countries of residence.

Sen shows the ways that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'emigrants from the Sihui region carried with them the local beliefs, practices and symbols of their cultural heritage in order to remain connected to their ancestral homeland'.[547] While the Sihui migrants sought to preserve their heritage, they also produced something new by blending their ancestral memories and religious and cultural beliefs with experiences in their countries of settlement. This meant that they were able to preserve their speech group identity whilst simultaneously creating new identities and heritages. Similarly, in Sihui city which had lost some of its sites of heritage due to political upheaval, they sought recourse to the 'pasts of its emigrant populations'.[548] It is because of a shared ancestry that the Sihui communities in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries invest in cultural institutions such as the Ruan Liang temples and renew connections with the city of Sihui and its current inhabitants.

In both *The Dragonfly Sea* and the fishing *geeraarro*, this idea of heritage as producing 'something new in the present that has recourse to the past' or 'contested pasts' is significant. Both pieces of literature explore heritage through the specific ecologies of the Indian Ocean world. In *The Dragon Fly Sea,* Muhidin has a metaphysical connection to the sea: 'He could name

[545] Tansen Sen, 'Temple Heritage of a Chinese Migrant Community: Movement, Connectivity, and Identity in the Maritime World', in *Travelling Pasts: The Politics of Cultural Heritage in the Indian Ocean Word* ed. by Burkhard Schnepel and Tansen Sen (Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 133-167 (p. 134).
[546] Sen, p. 134.
[547] Sen, p. 163.
[548] Sen, p. 164.

swells, tides and currents by look or sensation' alone.[549] Muhidin teaches Ayaana this sea knowledge which has been passed down through his family for generations. He begins by instructing her on how to 'read water'.[550] He teaches 'how, with the other senses as well as touch, she could discover dimensions in liquid, place, space and timelessness; how to tell the mood of water, and discern some of its intentions; how to intuit with inner eyes'.[551] As a result of these lessons, Ayaana's intuition in regards to the sea deepens. Through 'conservations with water, feeling the currents on her skin and tasting its salt on her tongue,' Ayaana learns to anticipate the changes in tides and senses routes hidden deep within the sea.[552] Muhidin also enlists the help of another seamen, Fundi Almazi Mehdi, to further develop Ayaana's knowledge of the sea. Mehdi, is an 'almost mute shipbuilder and long-ago wind-whistler' who has a rare gift of being able to 'summon sea winds by intent and melody'.[553] When Ayaana meets Mehdi in the novel he has retired from wind-whistling, yet still he was 'sometimes heard to whistle to the memory of sea winds'.[554] Through Mehdi, Ayaana learns 'something of what the winds desired, heard the variety of their refrains, and felt in these something of what Almazi Mehdi had known to whistle to summon them'.[555] Mehdi also teaches Ayaana about the different varieties of boats and how they are made. When Ayaana tells Mehdi that she wants to one day navigate a ship, he gifts her with a compass from his years as a seaman. When Muhdin and Mehdi instruct Ayaana in their knowledge of the sea, it is not about preserving or conserving a past heritage but rather about ensuring its use in the present and thereby keeping it alive and relevant.

The fishing *geeraarro,* like *The Dragonfly Sea*, also teach heritage through exploring the ecologies of the sea. As mentioned earlier, the fishing *geeraarro* have been passed down from father to son in Haji Malaakh Haji's family for at least four generations. Even though these

[549] Owuor, p. 19.
[550] Owuor, p. 43.
[551] Owuor, p. 46.
[552] Owuor, p. 46.
[553] Owuor, p. 24.
[554] Owuor, p. 25.
[555] Owuor, p. 46.

geeraarro were created many years ago, they are used in the present to continue to support the fishing labour of the family. *Geeraar* two is recited when the fishermen are in the deep sea using a fishing net called *Milgo* to catch fish. It begins with a question, 'Madaa Caashoow ma moogtahay?,' 'Do you know Madaa Cashoow?' Madaa Caashoow was a Banaadiri fishermen famous for revolutionising the way that Banaadiri people fish by creating the first fishing net used in the community. Before this, the Banaadiri community would fish using a *fiilaa* (a fishing rod) which only had the capacity to catch one fish at a time. Thus, *Madaa Caashoow* was responsible for advancing Banaadiri fishing considerably by increasing the amount of fish they could catch every day. Thus, when the *geeraar* states 'Madaa Caashoow ma moogtahay?', it is asking a rhetorical question. The reciter of the *geeraar* does not expect to elicit an answer but rather wants to emphasise that Madaa Cashoow is a well-known figure among the Banaadiri fishing community. This is further compounded by the next line 'Macalinkii heer maanyo waayo', 'He is the teacher of sea folk'. The noun *heer maanyo* means 'sea people' or 'sea folk' and, in the context of the *geeraar,* refers specifically to the fishing families within the Banaadiri community. *Macallinka* means 'the teacher' but the *kii* definite article ending highlights that he is a teacher well known to both the speaker and listener. This definite article ending has been used in the *geeraar* to further emphasise that Madaa Cashoow is a not merely 'a teacher', one of many, but the one teacher known and revered by them all. The next line explains the reason for his renown 'Milgadiisa maarifka waa mirjisaa', 'His net strangles maarifka'. *Maarif* is a type of fish and *mirji* is a verb which means 'strangle'. *Milgo* is a noun which means a fishing net, but the line discusses '*Milgadiisa*' 'his fishing net'. It is Madaa Caashoow's fishing net that is personified to highlight its power and strength. The personification suggests that his fishing net catches many fish through mimicking a strangling action; enveloping the fish in the net, squeezing them in and then constricting it so that they can't escape. The *geeraar* ends by repeating 'Macalinkii heer maanyo waayo' to reassert *Madaa Caashoow*'s importance to the Banaadiri fishing community. Through referring to *Madaa Caashoow*, a figure from their history, when they use the *Milgo* in the present, they show gratitude to this fishing net which has made their fishing endeavours easier and more

efficient. Thus, every time the Banaadiri fishermen perform this *geeraar*, they transform the mundane daily task of spreading the fishing nets out into an honouring ceremony.

In *The Dragonfly Sea,* Muhidin does not only teach Ayaana about his Indian Ocean heritage through sea ecologies but also teaches her about Pate Island's Indian Ocean heritage through the cultural ecologies of the Indian ocean world. The first time that Muhidin teaches Ayaana, he shows her a map and asks her to locate Pate Island. She realises that 'on the map she looked at, there was no place marker for Pate Island'.[556] Through his lesson, Muhidin teaches Ayaana that, as an Island, Pate is a small place which can be 'rendered invisible'.[557] However, by exploring Pate in the context of its Indian Ocean history, he transforms its cartographic insignificance and reveals it as a cross-cultural hub. Muhidin introduces Ayaana to the music that people on Pate Island listen to which comes from all over the Indian Ocean world: 'Algerian *rai*, Bangla, *kora*, the symphonies of Gholam-Reza Minbashian and Mehdi Hosseini, and every sample of *taarab* they could get their hands on'.[558] Together, Muhidin and Ayaana, watch movies from India and Egypt, read poetry in Kufic script, an old calligraphic form of the various Arabic scripts and explore classical Persian poetry such as Hafiz's poetry; 'first in broken Farsi, followed his Kiswahili translation'.[559] Even when Muhidin teaches Ayaana traditional academic subjects such as 'basic classical mathematics, geography, history poetry, astronomy' these are 'mediated' through the languages of the Indian Ocean 'Kiswahili, English, sailor Portuguese, Arabic, Old Persian, and some Gujarati'.[560]

This dense weave of languages, cultures, and worldviews that infuse this place in terms of its pluralised heritage is set against the narrow and dispossessing norms of Pate's dominant social code. During Ayaana's childhood years in Pate Island, she is constantly abused by the insular island community. She is called a 'curs-ed child' and they use 'words as blows': 'the child of a snake is a snake'.[561] Ayaana is isolated by her school fellows, and taunted by their parents. Thus,

[556] Owuor, p. 43.
[557] Owuor, p. 43.
[558] Owuor, p. 44.
[559] Owuor, p. 44.
[560] Owuor, p. 43.
[561] Owuor, pp. 28-29.

when Muhidin teaches Ayaana about Pate Island's Indian Ocean heritage, he juxtaposes this small-minded Island culture with an Indian Ocean worldliness. Moreover, through a recourse to Pate's Indian Ocean history, Muhidin shows Ayaana a world outside the confines of Pate Island and prepares her for the journey that she will undertake later in the novel across the Indian Ocean from Pate Island, to China, to Turkey and back to China and then a return Pate Island.

While Muhidin teaches Ayaana about the cultural ecologies of the Indian Ocean world through music, poetry and films, the fishing *geeraarro* reflect the cultural ecologies of the Indian Ocean world through exploring the trade and exchange that was instrumental to Indian Ocean trade network. *Geeraar* six is an example of the poetry that is used by the Banaadiri fishermen during their banter with the Eyle people, an inland community who are cattle raisers, while they exchange their goods at a commercial market. It begins with the line, 'Saafida soor ambiyaale waaye', 'The Saafi is food of the prophets'. *Saafi* is the name of a fish species used to treat many diseases and *ambiyo* is a noun which means 'prophets'. When the *geeraar* states 'Saafida soor ambiyaale waaye', it elevates the status of the *Saafi* to a holy food, suggesting that the prophets, the most revered men in Islamic tradition, ate this species of fish. The next lines juxtapose the holiness of the prophets and the *Saafi* with Sagaar-gaadka. *Sagaaro* is a 'dik-dik', a 'small antelope', found in the bushlands of Eastern and Southern Africa and *gaad* in this context is a verb that can mean 'stalk', 'creep up on', 'ambush', 'take by surprise'. By '*sagaar-gaadka'*, the *geeraar* refers to the hunter of the dik-dik. It is commonly believed among the Banaadiri people that *Sagaaro* was an animal that drank its own urine and that as a result the prophets did not eat it. When they ask 'Sagaar-gaadka sidee la yeelaa? 'What to do about the dik-dik hunter?', it is a rhetorical question which suggests that nothing can be done for someone who undertakes the lowly labour of hunting dik-diks. The next line continues to suggest that the 'sagaar-gaadka' is someone who is unholy, 'Nimaan soomin oo aan salaadin sedkiisa waa sadaqo', 'A man, who doesn't fast and who doesn't pray, his allotted portion is charity'. *Sadaqo* is a noun which can be translated as 'charity', or 'contribution to the poor' and *sed* is a noun which means 'share', 'allotted portion', or 'provisions'. This line suggests that the dik-dik hunter does not fulfil two of

the five fundamental pillars of Islam, prayer and fasting and as a result when a Banaadiri fishermen buys/trades with the 'sagaar-gaadka' the money that he gives him is like a form of charity to a less fortunate person. The final line of the *geeraar* is an invocation to God 'Salaad Eeboow niyo waaye', 'O God, prayer is intention'. This line highlights that prayer is something that needs to come from a person's intentions and cannot be forced by other people. The *geeraar* ends with this invocation to God to intercede and support the intentions of the Eyle people.

Although this *geeraar* was traditionally used by Banaadiri fishermen when specially selling or trading the *saafi* fish with the Eyle people at market, it is now used when trading any type of fish that they catch. However, through a recourse to a history when they would catch a species of fish that was so revered for its healing properties that even the prophets would eat it, they elevate both themselves and their labour in the present. In the *geeraar*, the Banaadiri fishermen continually juxtapose their labour which is presented as sacred and blessed with the labour of the dik-dik hunter which is presented as lowly and immoral. Moreover, when they invoke the prophets, 'Saafida soor ambiyaale waaye', 'The Saafi is food of the prophets', the fishermen suggest that their labour not only nourishes someone's body but also increases their religious spirit. Through this *geeraar*, the fishermen elevate themselves by suggesting the Banaadiri people as a whole are pious people in contrast to the Eyle people. When the third line of the *geeraar* states 'Nimaan soomin oo aan salaadin sedkiisa waa sadaqo', 'A man, who doesn't fast and who doesn't pray, his allotted portion is charity', it not only directly refers to the 'sagaar-gaadka' and suggests that the dik-dik hunter does not perform the prayers and fasts Islamically obligated on all Muslims but it also indirectly suggests that the Banaadiri fishermen in contrast fulfils all these religious obligations. In the final line of the *geeraar*, 'Salaad Eeboow niyo waaye', 'O God, prayer is intention', the Banaadiri fishermen again reinforces the idea of religious and moral superiority by praying *for* rather than *with* the Eyle people.

When Ayaana is identified as the descendant of a Ming-dynasty sailor and offered a scholarship to study at a university in China, she tries to bring her sensual Pate Island ecologies

with her through materials and memories.[562] She packs 'five small brown plastic bottles: rose essence, rose-hip-seed oil, orange-blossom attar, jasmine oil and thick clove cream'.[563] In addition to this, she carries 'her mother's prayer mat', 'her calligraphy pens', 'two packs of henna', 'Mehdi's compass', 'Muhidin's map, into which she had attached Mzee Kitwana's dry rose petal' and 'two sets of *lesos*, printed with the aphorism *Siri ya maisha ni ujasiri* – Courage is the secret of life'.[564] Throughout her time on the *Qingrui*, the ship she travels on to China, she applies the fragrances herbs and oils from Pate Island as if to restore her continuity with the place: 'she had spent the day in her cabin, painting her feet, washing her body and hair with her Pate Island oils'.[565] Moreover, Ayaana also tries to remember and recreate the ecologies of Pate Island on the ship by sharing her stories of the island with her fellow travellers. She describes Pate Island to Delaksha and Nioreg: 'Her face softened as she clothed her island in her mother's scents and the Almighty's stars'.[566] While listening to Ayaana, 'her listeners glimpsed Muhidin and Munira, witnessed the surge of Pate's moonlight from a sand dune, and smelled a jasmine-infused night'.[567] She also shares with Lai Jin 'the stories of Pate that she had lived, and that she had heard' while she decorates his skin with henna from Pate island. [568] She discusses the dragonflies that arrive on Pate Island every monsoon season and describes Pate Island: '"My town lives inside the ghost of a city that was the center of the world," she said. "Many come to stay"'.[569] Ayaana's stories about Pate are so evocative that the island becomes seen as an 'antidote to desecrated worlds' and when she finished 'her remembering, there was silence'.[570] Through a recourse to her Pate Island heritage, Ayaana not only draws Lai Jin, Delaksha and Nioreg into her past life but also brings Pate to life on the *Qingrui*: 'She inscribed Pate there with her voice. Transferring

[562] Owuor, p. 155.
[563] Owuor, p. 171.
[564] Owuor, pp. 170-171.
[565] Owuor, p. 241.
[566] Owuor, p. 247.
[567] Owuor, p. 247.
[568] Owuor, p. 242.
[569] Owuor, p. 242.
[570] Owuor, p. 247.

memory'.[571] Despite the fact that Lai Jin, Delaksha and Nioreg have not been to Pate Island at this point in the novel, through sharing her stories about its ecologies, Ayaana shares her heritage with them.

While Ayaana carries her Pate heritage on the *Qingru* through memories and stories about the Islands ecologies that she shares with her fellow travellers, the fishing *geeraarro* also carry the ecologies of the sea onto the shore long after the fishermen have finished fishing. *Geeraar* five is a poem that the fishermen perform after returning to the coast from a long day toiling at sea. When the fishermen return home, they would have something to eat and a rest, and then would sit together on the coast and discuss what they had caught that day. Some people would relay what happened that day through *sheeko* (stories) and others through *geeraar*. This is one *geeraar* said to encourage one another; 'Sumeyn sabaabtayda loo sarsarey aan sugay/ sir laygu sheegay/Sagaal beri oon ka soonnay/ Sabar saan leh maahinoo?' 'I waited for Sumeyn cut up for my sake/ told to me in secret/ Which we were deprived of for nine days/ Isn't this having patience?' This *geeraar* tells the story of a fisherman who was promised *Sumeyn* fish that would be gutted and cut up in preparation for him. He patiently waited for his fish for nine days only to be told that the people, who were entrusted to deliver the fish to him, cooked and ate it themselves. Even after being told this, he does not protest and instead practises resignation and patience. When Banaadiri fishermen perform this *geeraar* in the present, it is used to console and support one another on the days that they may find the fishing more challenging or when their nets do not yield as many fish. The first line 'Sumeyn sabaabtayda loo sarsarey aan sugay,' creates a connection between the speaker and the *Sumeyn* fish. *Sabab* is a noun which can mean 'reason', 'excuse', 'cause', 'basis', or 'motive' but in this context it is being used in the same way as *dartay* which means 'for my sake'. *Sar* is a verb which means 'slit', 'make a small cut in', or 'lance' and refers to the way that the fish was cut into narrow cuts. This entire line suggests that the fisherman has been waiting for a *Sumeyn* fish that has been especially prepared just for him. The

[571] Owuor, p. 242.

next lines, states 'sir la iigu sheegay' uses the verb *sheeg* which means 'tell', 'say', 'relate', or 'reveal' and the noun *sir* which means 'secret', or 'secrecy' to suggests that this fish is so highly coveted among the community that when it is found a sense of secrecy needs to shrouds it. The next line 'Sagaal beri oon ka soonnay' reflects a deep sense of deprivation. *Soon* is a verb which means 'fast' and tends to be used in relation to the Muslim form of worship which involves not eating or drinking from dawn to dusk. The *geeraar* is not suggesting that the fisherman has literally been fasting, but rather that his deprivation of the *Sumeyn* fish for nine days is like a religious sacrifice. However, despite the sacrifice he has remained patient: 'Sabar saan leh maahinoo' Isn't this having patience? When the speaker asks this rhetorical question, he does not expect an answer but instead invites silent agreement from the listener. The alliterated words in the *geeraar*, 'sugay' 'waited', 'sagaal', nine', 'soonnay', 'fasted', 'sabar', 'patience', emphasises the importance of fortitude and perseverance.

In *The Dragonfly Sea,* when the Chinese delegates choose Ayaana to travel back to China, they hope to produce 'something new in the present that has recourse to the past'. The officials 'sought someone to bring home the spirit of those who had "entered the dark" far from home, these *xunnan*, these *kesi* who had waited six hundred years for this day'.[572] It is through Ayaana that they hope to recreate in the present day the memory of Admiral Zheng He, and the shared history between China and Kenya. She travels throughout China on a tour; giving speeches in different cities and regions in front of hundreds of people on Admiral Zheng He and the history between China and Pate Island. During these speeches, Ayaana explains to the spectators that 'fate had betrothed her small island to an immense nation'.[573] She uses 'words she had carefully prepared and rehearsed' and would refer to 'common sailor ancestors, to Tang and Ming dynasty ceramics, to distinctive crescent tombs'.[574] Through her role as the 'Descendent', Ayaana hopes to act as a bridge between Pate Island and China.

[572] Owuor, p. 154.
[573] Owuor, p. 269.
[574] Owuor, p. 269.

While in Sen's case study the Sihui community are able to blend their Chinese ancestral memories with their new experiences in India and Malaysia; preserving their heritage whilst simultaneously creating new identities, in *The Dragonfly Sea*, Ayaana is not allowed to blend her Pate Island ancestral histories with her new experiences in China. As soon as Ayaana reaches China, her Pate Island heritage is silenced. Teacher Ruolan tells her to 'imagine the things she would see from now on only in Mandarin' and this becomes her reality.[575] Ayaana is subsumed by the Chinese language and culture classes: 'every day there were Mandarin lessons to go to, at night, she attached herself to earphones attached to a disk loaded with Mandarin phrases and their visual histories'.[576] She is told that '"You are Chinese"' by the many people that she meets on her tours and 'her opinions of China and being Chinese' are constantly sought.[577] Whenever Ayaana gives her speeches, she outwardly exhibits her assimilation into Chinese culture, 'swathed in Chinese dress', but she speaks 'in a voice to which she was still a stranger'.[578] Yet, even though Ayaana is forced to suppress her Pate Island heritage in terms of outward expression, it pervades her dreams: 'after nine months of performing "the Descendant", Ayaana began to dream she was hiding inside Muhidin's Bombay cupboard, and Muhidin was outside, starving off the assaults of phantoms'.[579] Ayaana is forced to commemorate her Chinese heritage at the expense of her Pate Island one.

When Ayaana's Pate heritage is suppressed, her connection to its Island ecologies also diminish. She feels that Pate 'had become an ephemeral place she inhabited, which refused to guarantee its endurance'.[580] Ayaana 'missed the golden skimmers. She missed her anticipation of their arrival. She missed how they summoned the rain and the warm *matlai*'. Over the years that Ayana spends in China, she loses her ability to both read and speak to the sea: 'she wandered

[575] Owuor, p. 258.
[576] Owuor, p. 267.
[577] Owuor, pp. 268- 269.
[578] Owuor, p. 268.
[579] Owuor, p. 272.
[580] Owuor, p. 386.

onward, belonging to nonthinking nothingness, and trying to remember the sea, only the sea'.[581] Although she enrols on a nautical science degree and learns to navigate the sea using the most high tech equipment, she realises that 'learning about the sea is not the same as being with the sea'.[582] Moreover on the odd occasion that she encounters the ocean, it reflects her internal fractures: 'Glimpse of ocean in portions; as if it too had been taken and smashed into manageable pieces'.[583] Thus, through taking on the role of the 'Descendant' and suppressing her history in Pate, Ayaana also loses her ability to engage with the ecologies of the island.[584]

The reader realises that despite the Chinese governments wish to commemorate Zheng He, their vision is more about preservation and remembrance rather than creating 'something new in the present that has recourse to the past'. Ayaana is treated as a 'Chinese artefact' or an 'heirloom' – an object rather a subject.[585] This is compounded for her when she is invited by a classmate to a party, only to be met with 'thirty people waiting for her' with their cameras: 'flashes of light, the forced selfies, the rubbed skin – made her recognise the mere novelty that she was, something to display to family and neighbours'.[586] Moreover, when Ayaana travels to inland China, 'where many of the tens of thousands of Ming-dynasty sailors' who travelled to East Africa came from, she is introduced to 'many possible relatives'. Ayaana feels that 'with time and distance from official eyes, something meaningful could have evolved' between herself and these relatives.[587] However, the visit proves to be a staged photo opportunity, where she is made into a spectacle: 'four putative aunties touched her hair and rubbed her skin'. [588] Ultimately Ayaana realises that she does not want to be merely seen as an 'heirloom'. She tells Lai Jin "This nation. I am not its Descendant" and decides to return home to Pate Island.[589]

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[581] Owuor, p. 361.
[582] Owuor, p. 358.
[583] Owuor, p. 380.
[584] Owuor, p. 272.
[585] Owuor, p. 275.
[586] Owuor, p. 269.
[587] Owuor, p. 269.
[588] Owuor, p. 269.
[589] Owuor, p. 393.

While in *The Dragonfly Sea* Ayaana is unable to blend her Pate Island heritages with her new experiences in China because she is confronted with the demands of a homogenous heritage which is not her lived inheritance, the *geeraar* blend the Banaadiri fishermen's sea heritages with their present fishing endeavours effortlessly. *Geeraar* eight is a poem performed when the Banaadiri fishermen have a successful day of labour and catch a particular specifies of fish called *Baalgaduud.* The first line of the *geeraar* is 'Baalgaduud ballanbaaji maayo', 'Baalgaduud doesn't break a promise'. *Ballanbaaji* is a verb which means 'break a previous promise' or 'get out of a promise'. In this *geeraar*, the *Baalgaduud* is personified to emphasise the abundance of this species; both in present times as well as historically. In particular, the personification suggests that the *Baalgaduud* is so reliable during its season that throughout history whenever this fisherman spreads his nets, he would catch it. The next lines move from extoling the *Baalgaduud* to discussing a historical figure 'Barqad la gab ballankeeyga gaarsii' 'Convey my appointment to *Barqad la gab*'. *Barqad la gab* was an Arab man who travelled to the Banaadiri coast through the Indian Ocean trade network from the Arabian Peninsula many centuries ago. He then settled on the Banaadiri coast and garnered a reputation for being an excellent fisherman. Through referring to this historical figure who was renown among the Banaadiri fishing community for his fishing prowess, the fisherman suggests that he too has become an expert fisherman. He evokes *Barqad la gab* from his heritage, to create an affinity between their talents and boast about his fishing skills in the present.

Even when the *geeraarro* do not explore sea ecologies, they continue to support labour in the present through a recourse to stories from the past. *Geeraar* seven, like *geeraar* eight, is a fishing poem used by the fishermen in contemporary times to praise themselves when they have a successful day fishing. The celebratory g*eeraar* is as follows 'Kun iyo Kow mina lisku keeno/Kabiir la'aan wax la keeni maayo' 'If we bring together a thousand and one, /without a wiseman, nothing can be brought.' Through this *geeraar* the fisherman extols his own virtues as well as that of his ancestors. The number *kun iyo kow* means *'*a thousand one' and is being used to refer to an amount of people. This particular number has been used because it alliterates with

the word *kabiir* which is the most important word in the poem. *Kabiir* technically means 'a senior student in Koranic school who acts as assistant to the teacher' but in this context, it is being used to refer to a 'wiseman'. *La'aan* is a noun that can mean 'lack (of)', or 'state of being without'. In the *geeraar*, the *Kabiir* refers to the fisherman reciting the *geeraar* in the present as well as the long line of expert fishermen that came before him. It suggests that both the fishermen and his ancestors were 'wisemen' who were able to catch a large number of fish. Moreover, the *geeraar* suggests that these fishermen were so gifted that even if a thousand and one people went fishing together without their presence, they would not catch any fish. When the fisherman recites this *geeraar*, he bolsters his own ego whilst simultaneously paying homage to his ancestors; suggesting that their skills as fisherman outweighs that of even a thousand and one fishermen combined.

Geeraar nine is a poem that Banaadiri fishmen perform when they have had an unsuccessful day fishing. The *geeraar* states 'Keenoow waxba ma keenin/ Maxaa loo karihaa oo kurta loogu shubaa "kaalayey" la yiraah', The Bringer did not bring anything, /What does one cook for them and pour in the small wooden bowl to say "come"'. *Keen* is a verb which means 'bring' and *Keenow* is a nickname used for someone who always brings something. In this context of the *geeraar*, this nickname is being used to refer to a fisherman who always brings back fish from his fishing expeditions. *Waxba* can mean 'anything', 'nothing', or 'none at all'. The first line of the poem highlights that even though this fisherman is known for being a talented fisherman, on this particular day, he has not bought any fish home. The second line highlights the importance of the fish that he catches to his family: 'Maxaa loo karihaa oo kurta loogu shubaa "kaalayey" la yiraah?' *Kur* is a noun, which in this context refers to 'small wooden bowl' while the verb *shub* and *kari* mean 'pour' and 'cook' respectively. This line asks the listener what will the family cook and feed themselves with now that there is no fish. The *geeraar* suggests that the fish is not only something that feeds an entire family but also something that draws families together at mealtimes. *Kaalay* is an imperative which means 'come' and *yiri* is a verb which means 'to say'. So '"Kaalayey" la yiraah' literally means 'one says "come".' The *geeraar* uses fishing stories from the

past to support their current fishing endeavours. The first line 'Keenoow waxba ma keenin' 'The Bringer did not bring anything', shows that although the fishermen did not catch any fish today, he will tomorrow because he is known as *Keenoow*, 'The Bringer' and has a reputation for catching lots of fish. In the final line, 'Maxaa loo karihaa oo kurta loogu shubaa "kaalayey" la yiraah', 'What does one cook for them and pour in the small wooden bowl to say "come"' highlights the importance of the labour of the fishermen to bring the family together to both eat and bond. When the fishermen recite this fishing poem in the present, they use the image of the family eating fish together from the past to console themselves but also to motivate themselves in the present. Thus, through performing an old fishing poem crafted in the past, the Banaadiri fishermen supports and comfort himself after difficult or unsuccessful fishing expeditions.

A comparative reading of *The Dragonfly Sea* and the fishing *geeraarro* enables a fruitful discussion concerning expressions of Indian Ocean heritages despite their significant differences in terms of mode of authorship, audience and form. Both the novel and the poems centre on and explore the co-dependence between Indian Ocean littoral communities and their environmental ecosystems. Even though both focus on representing people with a genealogy of sea labourers, heritage is presented most powerfully as a connection to the shared natural world rather than as an ancestral sensibility. In both *The Dragonfly Sea* and the fishing *geeraarro*, inheritance is framed as a connection forged to a specific place, the ecologies of Pate and the Banaadiri coast respectively, rather than as a given relation to people. In the narrative of *The Dragonfly Sea*, Muhidin, Munira and Ayaana have all been disinherited from their familial ties but their sense of place and of belonging survives through a deep connection to the environment of Pate Island. This sense of a shared belonging forged through an intimate connection to a place is also echoed in the fishing *geeraarro*. Although in this case, the oral poems are themselves a tangible cultural inheritance passed down from father to son. These differently inflected connections between labour, heritage and kinship in the novel and the *geeraarro* help provoke a careful consideration of what constitutes an Indian Ocean cultural heritage.

Both the fishing *geeraarro* and *The Dragonfly Sea* show that heritage is an act of cultural labour as much as an inheritance. In relation to the fishing *geeraarro,* this heritage is produced in the close connection between labour and kinship as the Banaadiri fishermen keep stories about their labouring lives alive across generations in such a way that this heritage not only records their labour but supports it and becomes part of its fabric. The fishing *geeraarro* present a continuous idealized form of heritage that is passed from father to son for generations in a seamless uninterrupted transmission of localized stories about historical fishermen, mythical sea creatures and fish. These stories are told in a singular voice and serve a common purpose; to support the fishermen to complete their labour every day. As inherited stories that emphasise the importance of hard work, fishing skills, resilience, and patience, the fishing *geeraarro* provide an almost archetypal model cultural heritage. *The Dragonfly Sea* is a novel which problematises the idea of heritage as inheritance. In many ways, it is a critique of the notion of a singular originary cultural heritage connected to ancestry or bloodlines which is presented through the fishing *geeraarro*. Arguably, *The Dragonfly Sea* shows that in order for a singular unified and continuous ancestral heritage to be maintained, other stories which explore contested, fractured or multiple cultural heritages need to be suppressed. In the novel when Ayaana, already dispossessed from her familial and known ancestral inheritances on account of her illegitimate birth, is sent to China to commemorate Zheng He on account of the discovery of her bloodline inheritance to which she has no lived connection, her labours to learn the language and place of her lost kin are unable to forge a meaningful sense of heritage for her. Ayaana is also forced to suppress her Pate Island and African identities, her island memories and her connection to Pate's natural ecology in order to claim her Chinese ancestry. It is in Ayaana's connections to others who are unmoored by grief or disinheritance and who, like her, experience the inheritance of place as a belonging to a natural rather than human environment that she experiences kinship. For Ayaana, Muhidin and Munira, it is through a shared experience of a Pate's natural landscape that they find a sense of belonging and solace whereas Ayaana, along with the other passengers on the *Qingrui*, find that the ship provides them with a space to create a tacit community around their shared feelings of loneliness

and vulnerability. Reading *The Dragonfly Sea* and the fishing *geeraarro* alongside one another complicates the idealization of heritage as singular, cohesive and ancestral by highlighting its multiple, contested, and constructed dimensions.

Conclusion

This thesis begins with the current and lived connections informing a long history of the Banaadiri people as conduits between hinterlands and Ocean networks. I documented and translated over twenty-five Banaadiri oral poems including traditional work songs, cultural poems performed during festivals as well as love and wedding songs. My work with the poems allowed me to understand and assess how this oral literary form co-constitutes an Indian Ocean identity with local kinship identities. In particular, my thesis has focused on the significance of material cultures to literary evocations of these co-constitutive identities: the manufacture of cotton cloth, the adorning a bride's body with jewellery and silk clothes, and refugees sharing shoes, which all highlight the body as a medium of material culture. The links between these tangible material cultures and their intangible echoes that signal belonging to a particular community and place include a female kinship group coming together to beautify a bride and ensure cultural practices are enacted, scars on a refugee's body from their journey escaping the Somali civil war, and a young girl's lived experience of belonging as a connection to the Island ecologies that nurtured and fostered growth in her.

In both the song 'Shaqo' and Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Circle of Reason* the spinning and weaving of cotton are presented as integral to the creation of stories about kinship, belonging and cultural identity. 'Shaqo' shows the way that an oral poem can offer an alternative means through which to preserve and archive the histories of cloth manufacture within the Banaadiri community. In the *hees*, the Banaadiri woman is the spinner of both cotton and stories and this tradition makes it possible for the entire Banaadiri community to articulate multiple stories about the Banaadiri coast and to create an archive of stories. In Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, the restrictive caste weavings of the Debnaths and the Boshaks is challenged by Alu's story. Weaving not only provides Alu with a material language to express his thoughts and feelings but it also gives him the language to become a storyteller and to create a world through cloth. While *The Circle of*

Reason tells a story in which weaving breaks a stultifying tradition to allow the emergence of an individual identity and more meaningful community connections, Shaqo sustains an established tradition of open community making. In 'Shaqo' it is through spinning and weaving that the Banaadiri woman creates stories about community, an inclusive cultural heritage and mutually co-constitutive local and Indian Ocean cultural identities. In both 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' and Cristina Ali Farah's prose work, *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea*, kinship networks between coastal women as well as Indian Ocean and local cultural identities are presented as embodied forms of knowledge. While 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa' depicts a singular neatly bound female kinship network coming together to support the bride and exchange cultural knowledge, A *Dhow is Crossing the Sea* explores a plethora of fragile disjointed female kinships with shared experiences of loss and displacement. In 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa', Banaadiri women actively choose to embody their Indian Ocean heritage through enacting traditional wedding practices where their Banaadiri Indian Ocean cultural identity is shown through their skin, and the materials they wear on their body, whereas, *A Dhow is Crossing the Sea* shows women's bodies involuntarily carrying a form of coastal and Indian Ocean culture which is defined by their past trauma of escaping the civil war and, their collective isolation and loss associated with being refugees in a new country. Both the fishing *geeraarro* and Yvonne Owuor's novel *The Dragonfly Sea* impart a heritage that is connected to the ecologies of the Indian Ocean world. The fishing *geeraarro* present an almost idealized form of Banaadiri Indian Ocean heritage which is bequeathed from father to son for generations in an uninterrupted stream of localised and localising stories about sea creatures and mythical seamen. In contrast, *The Dragonfly Sea* problematises the idea of a singular and linear Indian Ocean cultural heritage connected to ancestry or bloodlines presented through the fishing *geeraarro* by showing that heritage is socially constructed and that in order for certain ancestral stories to be maintained and preserved, other stories needed to be suppressed. *The Dragonfly Sea,* through the protagonist Ayaana supports a Pate Indian Ocean heritage which is multiple, contested and ever changing.

The Indian Ocean has long been a focus of multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary study in history, sociology, anthropology, economics and literature. Such work has concentrated on cross-cultural connections. Academic work on oral poetics from the Indian Ocean have been studied as part of local and regional ethnographic projects while literary scholarship within Indian Ocean studies has tended to focus on written texts and print culture. My project is a bridge between these two bodies of knowledge because it brings oral poetics fully into the remit of 'Indian Ocean literary studies'. Throughout my thesis, I have analysed the way that Indian Ocean cultural identities emerges from the oral poetry of the Banaadiri community. I used a comparative methodology to discuss this local oral poetry alongside globally circulating Indian Ocean texts. I broke down the barriers between orality and literacy by exploring orality, voice and expressive culture across both oral poems and written texts. This included engaging with oral narrative structures, melodic and lyrical narratives, story-telling, and different languages, dialect and accents. I explored the ways that orality, voice and expressive culture in both the oral poems and Indian Ocean texts present ideas around belonging kinship and heritage. Although there has been some anthropological and ethnographic scholarship on Southern Somalia's textile industry, Banaadiri wedding customs and cultural festivities, this thesis explores these traditions as part of a literary culture and shows the ways that oral literature gives them cultural status. Moreover, in Indian Ocean literary studies there has been a particular focus on exploring Southern Africa and South Asia's works as well as the trajectory of print culture between South Africa and South Asia. By looking at the literary evocations of material cultures, cloth production, wedding traditions, and natural ecologies, I have been able to bring less-acknowledged trajectories within Indian Ocean studies into focus. Extensions to the critical field include, but are not limited to, journeys from Somalia to Italy, from Bangladesh to India to the Persian Gulf and North Africa; from Pate Island, to China, to Turkey as well as across coastal Somalia: Mogadishu and Eyl.

The comparative methodology used in this thesis has brought writers who usually tend to be studied under particular methodologies or within defined fields of knowledge, — such as postcolonialism, diasporic literature or magical realism — under the wider lens of the Indian

Ocean world. Under this expanded framework of Indian Ocean literatures, different themes or ideas came to the foreground than the ones that have tended to dominate current academic scholarship on these writers. Much of the scholarship on Ali Farah's work has focused on themes such as the Somali refugee crisis, diasporic experiences, the Somali civil war, and the colonial/colonized relationship. Analysing Ali Farah's work under the lens of the Indian Ocean world has foregrounded: the kinship between coastal women, embodied forms of knowledge, expressive and material culture. Scholarship on Yvonne Owuor has tended to concentrate on her depiction of the Kenyan and East African political landscape in her first novel *Dust* and her short story 'Weight of Whispers'. This academic work has focused on histories of violence, political corruption, the legacy of colonialism, death and loss. In this thesis, I focus on her novel *The Dragonfly Sea* which centres on Pate Island and the constant rhythm of departure and return that defines littoral communities. Using the comparative methodology with *The Dragonfly Sea* enabled an exploration of a transient and moving culture, and sequential acts of belonging as a lived experience and a connection to a place rather than to people. Amitav Ghosh has established himself as one of the most significant writers of his generation and as a result he has been studied through many different academic lenses: postcolonialism, Indian literature, world literature, diaspora studies etc. While other scholars have concentrated on the theme of weaving briefly in order to look at concepts such as cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, nostalgia, my work on weaving in Ghosh's literature has stayed more fully with its materiality. My thesis's contribution to Ghosh's scholarship has been through a more sustained exploration of the significance of the materiality of weaving to the novel and the Indian Ocean world culture it evokes.

To date, Somali studies has predominantly focused on the history, culture and literature of Somali people from a nomadic pastoralist tradition in the form of traditional work songs such as milk churning and camel songs as well as folktales, lullabies and anti-imperialist poetry. Furthermore, communities from minority backgrounds have not received as much scholarly attention beyond a small amount of scholarship on the poetry of Bantu communities. This thesis makes a major contribution to the field of Somali studies in its documentation and analyses of the

literature of the Banaadiri people which has not been written about or even recognised in the academic sphere. Despite the Banaadiri people being a minority community, Somali arts and culture as a whole draw significantly on their artists and musicians. This includes troupes such as *Libaaxyada Maaweeliska Banaadiri*, (the lions of Benaadir entertainment**)** who promoted the performing arts heritage of the Benaadir region as well as the important work of individuals artists, singers and musicians, such as Ahmed Naaji Sacad and Faduma Qaasim Hilowle who performed nationally on radio Mogadishu and the national theatre of Somalia.

This thesis makes a contribution to Somali studies in various ways. Through an analysis of a traditional female work song, I was able to explore how Banaadiri women's textile production in the home, not only supports both Southern Somalia and the wider Indian Ocean's textile industry but offers an important subject for the expression of communal identities forged through domestic labour. In my chapter on female embodiment, I used a Banaadiri wedding song to explore ideas of female kinship networks, the embodiment of female cultural identities within wedding practices and Banaadiri women's material culture. I also outlined in detail the different Banaadiri female wedding celebrations which have not previously been written about in Somali studies scholarship. Similarly, my readings of Indian Ocean heritage through a close examination of nine Banaadiri fishing *geeraarro* bring academic attention to Banaadiri fishing labour traditions as well as annual festivals such as *shirka* and *maanya galka*. One of the key contributions of this project has been to detail and appreciate different forms of Somali poetry. It has explored Banaadiri *hees* and *geeraar* which shares similarities but is also distinctive from these genres of poetry in the nomadic pastoralist tradition.

For my work collecting, recording and translating Banaadiri oral poems, I collaborated with academics in the department of World and Traditional Music at the British Library in order to archive these oral poems. I plan to make these recordings available to the public through the British Library and thereby preserve an important part of Banaadiri and Somali expressive culture for future generations to access. Due to Somalia's collapsed infrastructure and the dispersal of large amounts of the population across the globe- including poets, musicians and artists, - this act

of archive creation for the oral tradition is important in relation to a rare and valuable form of Somali heritage and culture. As this archive will consist of sound recording as well as transcripts of the poems in Somali and translations in English, it will also support further scholarly work. This scholarship may be undertaken by students or academics in cultural studies researching Indian Ocean or Banaadiri cultures or traditions, those in anthropology or sociology looking to study Banaadiri labour, kinship networks or material culture, as well as literary scholars researching Banaadiri or Somali oral literary traditions, and linguists studying meter, or syntax in Somali coastal poetry.

Appendix A Fishing *geeraarro* preliminary translations

Fishing *Geeraarro* Preliminary Translations

***Geeraar* 1** – This *geeraar* is recited as the fishermen prepare to get on the fishing boat called *Saddexleey*. It is called *Saddexleey* because it carries (*saddex*) three people.

Haandooli ma heeso

Haad qabona ma hayaado

Haadka Haadka u weyn

Haandooli la yiirah

Haadkiisa Labaadne

Madaxa hir ku leeyahay

Commented [AS1]: *Haandoli* is a large animal with wings that resides in the deep sea. One of the fastest animals, he can't survive outside the sea.

Commented [AS2]:

The verb *haayado* has the meaning as the verb *dhool*. *Dhool* is a verb which means to 'play around', 'joke' or 'dance'.

Haad qabo refers to a man gone crazy with hunger.

This line suggests that when a man is hungry, he can't be playful or light hearted.

Commented [AS3]: *Haad* is a noun which means 'bird'.

Weyn is an adjective, which can mean 'big', 'large', or 'great'.

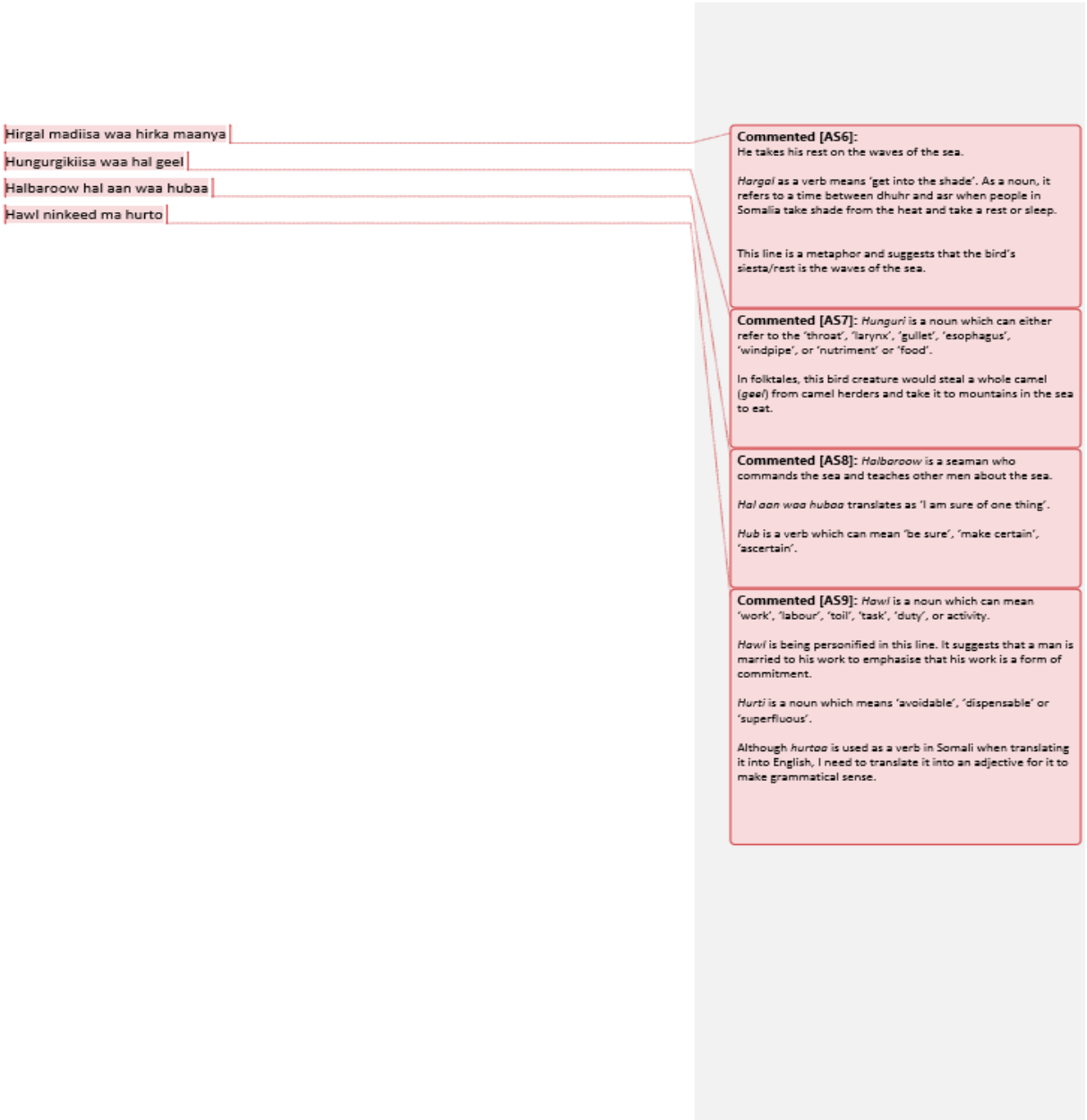
Repetition of *Haadka* for emphasis.

Commented [AS4]: This line discusses a large bird that lives in the wild.

Haadkiisa Labaad refers to the name of a very large bird that lives in the wild and can eat a whole camel (*geel*).

Commented [AS5]: *Madax* is a noun which can mean head, official, chief and boss.

Hir means the same thing as *calaamad* and can be translated as 'mark'.


Hirgal madiisa waa hirka maanya
Hungurgikiisa waa hal geel
Halbaroow hal aan waa hubaa
Hawl ninkeed ma hurto
Commented [AS6]:
He takes his rest on the waves of the sea.
Hargal as a verb means 'get into the shade'. As a noun, it refers to a time between dhuhr and asr when people in Somalia take shade from the heat and take a rest or sleep.
This line is a metaphor and suggests that the bird's siesta/rest is the waves of the sea.
Commented [AS7]: Hunguri is a noun which can either refer to the 'throat', 'larynx', 'gullet', 'esophagus', 'windpipe', or 'nutriment' or 'food'.
In folktales, this bird creature would steal a whole camel (geel) from camel herders and take it to mountains in the sea to eat.
Commented [AS8]: Halbaroow is a seaman who commands the sea and teaches other men about the sea.
Hal aan waa hubaa translates as 'I am sure of one thing'.
Hub is a verb which can mean 'be sure', 'make certain', 'ascertain'.
Commented [AS9]: Hawl is a noun which can mean 'work', 'labour', 'toil', 'task', 'duty', or activity.
Hawl is being personified in this line. It suggests that a man is married to his work to emphasise that his work is a form of commitment.
Hurti is a noun which means 'avoidable', 'dispensable' or 'superfluous'.
Although hurtaa is used as a verb in Somali when translating it into English, I need to translate it into an adjective for it to make grammatical sense.

***Geeraar* 2** –while the fishermen are on the boat on their way to the hunt the fish, they recite this *geeraar* to entertain themselves and have fun.

Muumbo Sare, Meyla Moole

Markaboow iyo Maytaruumbo

Macaantiisaa aan soo maqlayee

Ma ka maarmo inaan masruufto

Commented [AS10]: *Muumbo Sare, Meyla Moole, Markaboow* and *Maytaruumbo* are the names of fish.

Commented [AS11]: *Masruuf* as a noun means 'living expenses' or 'cost of maintenance'.

Banaadiri fishermen and their families usually eat the fish they catch and sell the surplus for money to cover their living expenses. However, in the *geeraar*, it suggests that he will not sell any of the fish and instead eat them all because they are so delicious.

Ka maarman is a verb which means 'manage without'.

***Geeraar* 3** – This *geeraar* is said for when the fishing net called Milgo is being used to catch fish

Madaa Caashoow ma moogtahay

Macalinkii heer maanyo waayo

Milgadiisa maarifka waa mirjisaa

Macalinkii heer maanyo waayo

Commented [AS12]:
Madaa Caashoow was a Banaadiri fishermen famous for revolutionising the way that Banaadiri people fish by creating the first fishing net used in the community. Before this the Banaadiri community used to fish using fishing rods.

Og is an adjective which can mean 'aware', knowing, informed, 'in the know', 'having knowledge of'

Commented [AS13]: *Macalliinka* means 'The teacher'. The *kii* suffix ending suggests that this particular teacher is known to both the speaker and the listener.

Heer maanyo are the people who live of the sea.

Commented [AS14]: *Maanyo* is a noun which can means 'sea', or 'song relating to the hunting of fish.'

Commented [AS15]: In this context, *milgo* means 'fishing net' but it can also mean 'scope', 'good point', etc – possible play on words.

Maarifa is a fish.

In this line, this is the personification of *milgo*. The line suggests that the fishing net is a living being capable of strangling fish.

***Geeraar* 4** - This *geeraar* is used to praising the fish when the fishermen are hunting them.

Tartabooy ii tartiibso hee taago

Tibtibtan wax ma kuu tarayso

Tolkaa toddobaatanaa la tifay

Tirada kugu toosiha

Commented [AS16]:
Tartabo is the name of a fish. The use of vocative form, *tartaboy*, signifies a form of endearment.

Tartiib is a noun which can mean 'slow', 'calm', 'gradually', or 'little by little'. *Tartibso* is a command to slow down.

Taagan is an adjective which can mean 'erect', 'fixed', 'standing', and 'upright'.

Commented [AS17]:
Tartabo is not an easy fish to catch in the net because it moves a lot.

Onomatopoeia - *Tibtitaan* evokes the sound that the fish makes as they move around in the nets.

Tar is a verb which can mean 'have the ability', 'affect', 'be of use', 'useful', 'assist', 'multiply', 'increase' in numbers'.

Wax is a noun which means 'thing', 'matter', 'something', 'anything', 'whatever', 'object', 'item', 'event', 'occurrence'. .

Commented [AS18]: *Tol* as a noun can mean 'kinsman', 'distant relative', 'tribe', 'clan', 'decent group'.

Tifay is a verb which means 'plucked' or 'pulled out fibres' suggesting that the fish were taken out of the sea one by one.

Toddobaatan means 'seventy'.

This line and the next is one sentence.

Commented [AS19]: *Tiro* is a noun which can mean 'number', 'quantity', 'sum', 'total', 'counting', 'calculation', or 'mathematics'.

Toosi as a verb can mean 'straighten', 'correct', 'direct', 'raise', and 'erect'.

***Geeraar* 5** – After the fishermen return after a long day at sea, they would have something to eat and a rest, then would sit together on the coast and discuss what they had caught that day. Some people relay what happened that day through *sheeko* (stories) and others through *geeraarro*. This is one of *geeraar* said to encourage one another.

Sumeyn sabaabteyda loo sarsarey

aan sugaayi sir la iigu sheegay

Sagaal beri oon ka soomnay

Sabar saan leh maahinoo.

Commented [AS20]: *Sumeyn* is a fish.

Sabab is a noun which can mean 'reason', 'excuse', 'cause', 'basis', or 'motive'. In this context, it is being used in the same way as *dartay* which means 'for my sake'.

Saray is a verb which means to 'slit', 'make a small cut in' or 'lance'.

The *geeraar* tells the story of a man who was told in secret that he would be given *sumeyn*. The fish would be caught and prepared especially for him. But he didn't receive it because the people who were entrusted with it took it for themselves.

Commented [AS21]: *Sir* is a noun which means 'secret' and 'secrecy'.

Sug is a verb which means 'wait for' or 'expect'.

Sheegay is a verb which can means 'tell', 'say', 'relate', 'report' or 'reveal'.

Commented [AS22]:
Sagaal means 'nine'.

Beri is a noun which can mean 'day', 'time', or 'period' depending on the context of the sentence.

Soon means 'fast'.

He was waiting for nine days for it.

Commented [AS23]: *Sabar* is a verb which means to 'show patience' or 'be patient'.

Saan can mean 'like this', or 'this way'

Leh can mean 'owning', 'possessing', 'having', 'with'.

Maahinoo means 'isn't.' It is the same as 'so ma aha'.

***Geeraar* 6** - -When the Banaadiri community and Eyle people who are cattle raisers meet at a commercial market to exchange their goods. They say this *geeraar* as a form of commentary.

Saafida soor ambiyaale waaye

Sagaar gaadka side la yeelaa

Nimaan soomin oo aan salaadin sadkiisa waa sadaqo

Salaad eeboow niyo waaye

Commented [AS24]: *Saafi* is the name of a fish that is used to heal many diseases.

Saafida means 'the fish'.

Ambiyaale means 'prophets'.

What is the relationship between the non-fasting and non-praying men?

Soor means food

The *Ambiyaale* liked this *saafida*.

Commented [AS25]: *Sagaara* is a 'dikdik' or a 'small antelope'.

The prophets did not eat *sagaar* because it was said it drank camel's urine.

Commented [AS26]:
Soom is a verb which means 'fasting'.

Salaad is a noun which means 'prayer', and refers in particular to Muslim prayers.

Sad is a noun which can mean 'share' or 'provisions'

Sadaqo is a noun that can mean 'alms', 'charity', or 'contribution to the poor'.

This line suggests that people who hunt the *sagaarka* are unholy people.

Commented [AS27]: *Eebbe* is a noun which means 'god'.

Eebbow is god and a vocative and translates as 'O God'.

Niyo is a noun which means 'mind', 'thought', 'intent', 'intention', 'spirit', or 'feeling'.

This line suggests that praying comes from an individual's intention. You can't make someone pray.

When they come back after a fishing expedition, they recite different *geeraar* depending on whether they had a successful or unsuccessful day.

Geeraar 7 – They recite this geeraar when they have had a successful fishing expedition.

Kun iyo Kow mina isku keeno

Kabiir la'aan wax la keeni mayo

Commented [AS28]: *Mina* like *haddi* is a conjunction which translates as 'if', 'when', or 'while' depending on the context.

Isku keen translates as 'bring together'.

Commented [AS29]: *Kun* means a 'thousand'. *Kow* means 'one'. It is only used for counting or telling time.

Commented [AS30]: *Kabiir* refers to a 'senior student in Koranic school who acts as assistant to the teacher.' However, in the context of the *geeraar*, it refers to a wisemen or a person with knowledge.

La'aan is a noun which means 'state of being without'.

When they say *Kabiir* are they referring to a specific man on the boat?

***Geeraar* 8- when they find Baalgaduud fish**

Baalgaduud ballanbaaji maayo

Barqad la gab ballankeeyga gaarsii

Commented [AS31]: *Baalgaduud* is the name of the fish.

Commented [AS32]: *Barqad la gab* is the name of a man.

Who was '*Barqad la gab*'? Was he an Arab man who lived among the Banaadiri people or a Banaadiri man who was an expert in the sea?

Ballan is noun which can mean 'promise', 'meeting', 'appointment' or 'rendezvous'.

Gaarsii is a verb which can mean to 'bring', 'make', 'reach', 'convey', 'inflict', or 'inform.'

In this context, it means 'inform'.

***Geeraar* 9** - When they have an unsuccessful fishing expedition

Keenoow waxba ma keenin

Maxaa loo karihaa oo kurta loogu shubaa

'Kaaliyey' la yiraa

Commented [AS33]:
Keen is a verb which means 'bring'.

Keenow is a nickname which translates as 'The Bringer' and in this context suggests that this fisherman always brings fish back from his fishing expeditions.

Waxba can mean 'anything', 'nothing', or 'none at all'.

Commented [AS34]: *Kari* is a verb which means 'cook'.

Kur as a noun has few meanings. It could mean a 'head', 'hill', 'mound', a 'small wooden bowl', or 'all' or 'the whole of' with a possessive pronoun. In this context of the *geeraar*, it is referring to 'a small wooden bowl'.

Shub as a verb means 'pour'.

Commented [AS35]: *Kaalay* is an imperative which means 'come'.

This literally translates as 'one says "come".'

The use of the impersonal pronoun *la* makes this line seem like it is speaking directly to the listener.

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Appendix B Mohamed Hassan's translation of 'Waa Guuriheeynnaa'

Gabar iyoone garoob
Gogoshaan intii soo gableeyeen,
Gacaltooyo aan u qabnaa
Waa guuriheeynnaa.

A maiden and a previously married woman,
For those of us who have attended this meeting
Have affection for the bride,
We arrange a celebrating marriage.

Gibilka nuuraayo
Giirgiirka fuulay iyo guduudkaan,
Gabdhahaan golaha joogaa
Gacantood ku saaree.

The glowing and the shinning decorated skin
This reddish-brown dye design,
These girls present at the meeting place
Have manually made and neatly blueprinted it.

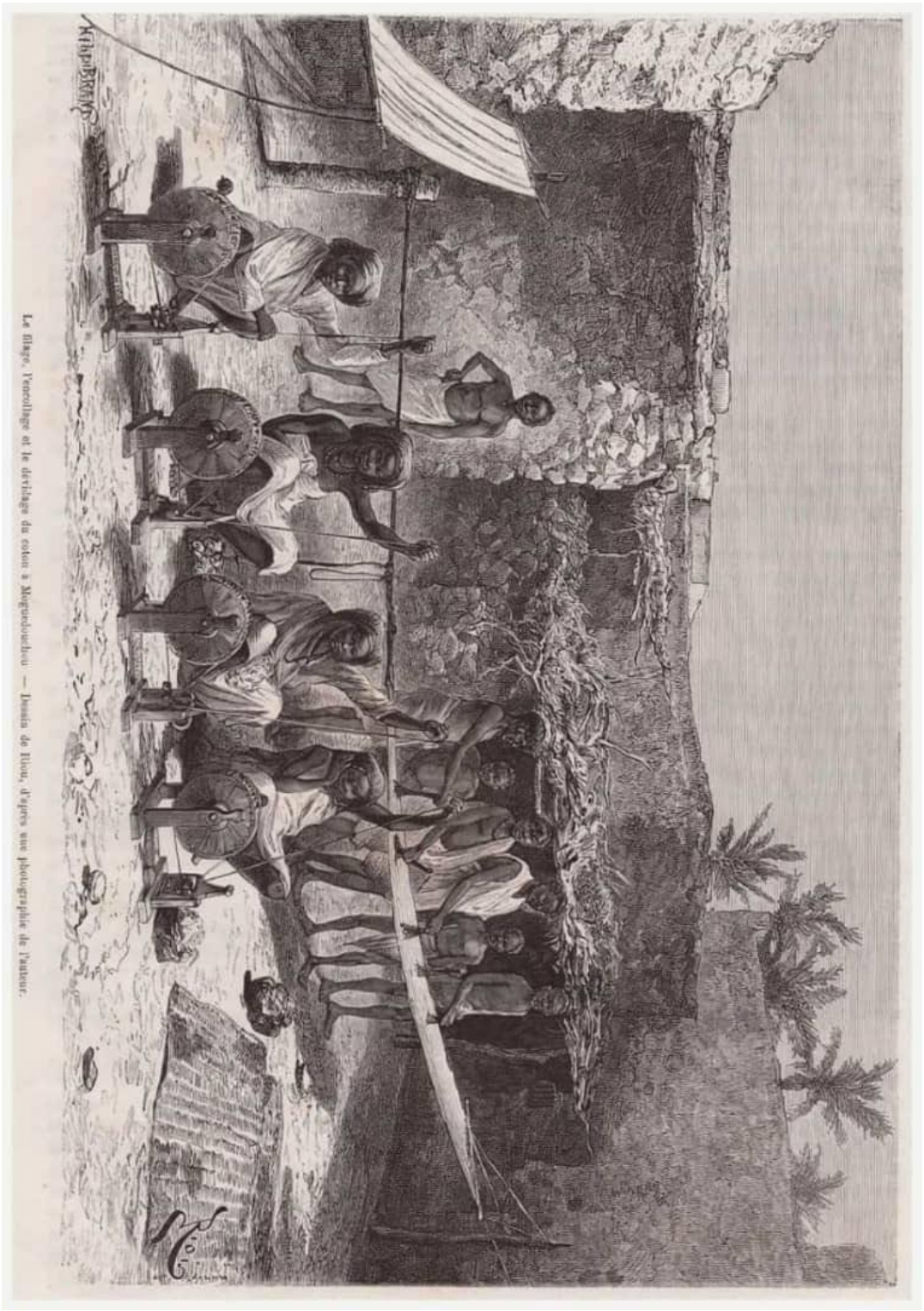
Geniyaalo oo dahab baa
Gummuddeeda hoos luqunta loo geliyey,
Waa u gaartayee Guullaa
Ugu soo gargaaree.

Guineas that are gold
Were placed at the bottom of her neck,
She achieved it
God supported her with it.

Gambaaladan guntanee
Garbasaar xariirkaan garabka fuulo,
Gaanuunkii oo hore waaye
Ee gargaarsan maynnee.

These headscarfs that are knotted
This silk-made shawl on top of the shoulder,
It is the customary law
That we do not follow the rules.

Appendix C Banaadiri women spinning cotton into thread



Le filage, l'encollage et le dévidage du coton à Mogueddouchou. — Dessin de Riou, d'après une photographie de l'auteur.

Appendix D Futa Benaadir cloths

Photo credit: www.xarrago.com

Appendix E Faduma Qaasim Hilowle's version of 'Shaqo'

Hooyaalaadanaay li hingaadihaayee,[590]

Hooyaalaadanaay li hingaadihaayee

Hooyaalaay li hingaadihaayee

Heekii hore.[591]

The previous song.

Heeskii hore.

The previous song.

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. Hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa.[592]

The man who has his work finds a livelihood.

Hawshiis ninkii haysto hed waa helaayaa.

The man who has his work finds a livelihood.

---

[590] This is a sound used to begin oral Somali poems and thus I have chosen not to translate it into English.

[591] *Heeska* means 'the song' but the *kii* definite article ending suggests that the song is one already known to the performer and listener. *Hore* in this context means 'previous', or 'former' '. *Hilmaan* is a verb which means 'forget.'

[592] By *hawl* the author means work in the sense of some sort of labour or toil. *Ninka* means 'the man'; the *ii* ending refers to a man that is already known to the performer and listener. In this instance, it signifies the universal; man refers to hu*man*. *Hed* in the Banaadiri dialect refers to something which enables someone to gain all the necessities in life such as an income, clothes, a house, and food. I felt that the word 'livelihood' in English was very close in meaning to *hed* as a 'livelihood' is also the means of securing all the things that are necessary in life.

Hooyaalaa hed waa helaayaa.

Finds a livelihood.

Hurdo ma noo roona. Ka soo hadaafnay[593] . Hooyaalaadee.

Sleep is not better for us. We have slowly walked from it.

Hurdo ma noo roona. Ka soo hadaafnay. Hooyaalaadee.

Sleep is not better for us. We have slowly walked from it.

Haasaawe beenaat hal ma noo tarayee.[594]

False small talk is not of use to us.

Haasaawe beenaat hal ma noo tarayee.

False small talk is not of use to us.

Hooyaalaa ma noo tarayee.

is not of use to us.

---

[593] *Roon* is an adjective which means 'good', 'excellent', 'better off', or 'better than'. I felt in the context of the *hees*, it meant 'better' as there was a comparative nature to it in the sense that *hawshiis* 'his work' is better for him than *hurdo*, 'sleep'. The word *roon* carries a more powerful meaning in Somali than when it is translated into English. In Somali, it is used to convey that something is a better fit for you, or better for your wellbeing. In this instance, it suggests that work or labour is better for the wellbeing of the Banaadiri people than sleep. *Hadaaf* is a verb which means to 'walk slowly'. This suggests that they have slowly dragged themselves from their slumber in order to work.

[594] *Haasaawe* is a noun which refers to informal 'conversations' or 'chats' about inconsequential matters. *Beenaat*, derives from and, has the same meaning as the noun *been* which means 'lies' or 'false'. *Tar* is a verb which can mean 'have the ability', 'have the affect, 'be of use' as well as 'useful', 'assist', 'multiply' or 'increase in numbers'. In this context, it means 'be of use' or 'assist'. *Hal* is the number 'one' but in this context *wax* is also implied. So *hal* actually translates as means 'one thing' and *ma* is a negative particle. The pronoun and preposition cluster n*oo* consists of the pronoun *na* 'us', and the preposition *u* which can mean 'to' or 'for'. In this context, *noo* means 'to us'. This line literally means 'False small talk is not assisting one thing for us' but that does not make sense so I translated it as 'False small talk is not of use to us'.

Waa haybiheynaa wixii noo habboonee. Hooyaalaadee[595]

We are enquiring into what is suitable for us.

Waa haybiheynaa wixii noo habboonee. Hooyaalaadee

We are enquiring into what is suitable for us.

Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha.[596]

Weave the mat and the basket for me.

Darinta ii soo falki ii dambiisha.

Weave the mat and the basket for me.

Hooyaalaa iyo dambiisha.

And the basket.

Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daali meeynaa. Hooyaalaadee.[597]

It is the character of our country. We are not tiring from it.

---

[595] The verb *haybi* translates as 'enquire'. *Habboon* is an adjective which can mean 'suitable', 'appropriate', 'correct', or 'rightful'. In this context, *habbon mean* what is right or good for the Banaadiri community in particular so I translated it as suitable. *Wixii* is a noun phrase which translates as 'the thing which', or 'what'. I felt that 'which' sounded better in this line. In this context, the pronoun and preposition *noo* means 'for us'.

[596] *Darin* is a noun which means 'mat' and *dambiil* means 'basket'. The conjunction *ii* translates as 'and'. It is used by Banaadiri people instead of iyo. The pronoun and preposition cluster *ii* can mean 'to me' or 'for me'. In the context of this line, it means 'for me'. The deictic *soo* cannot be directly translated into English. It is a word which indicates movement towards the speaker or return after an action is performed.

[597] *Dibcigii* is an Arabic loan word which means 'character' or 'nature'. *Dal* is generally translated into English as 'country' but it has associations of 'land', 'territory' and 'state.' *Daal* is a verb which means to 'tire' or to get 'fatigued'.

Dibcigii dalkeen waaye. Ka daali meeynaa. Hooyaalaadee.

It is the character of our country. We are not tiring from it.

Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa.[598]

I am adding to the sewing of a hat.

Waa kordhihaa koofiyad aan tolayaa.

I am adding to the sewing of a hat.

Hooyaalaa aan tolayaa.

I am sewing.

Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise. Hooyaalaadee.[599]

I am making it sufficient for every person to have his allotted role.

Waa kaafihaayee nimba kaalintiise. Hooyaalaadee.

I am making it sufficient for every person to have his allotted role.

---

[598] *Kordhi* is a verb meaning to 'increase', 'raise', 'add to', 'cause to grow', 'develop' and 'exaggerate.' I chose to translate it as 'adding to' because it best conveyed the meaning from the Somali which was stating that the Banaadiri woman was adding to the existing sewing needlework so that every member of their community can take part in the sewing of a hat.
In this instance, it is used in the general present tense *kordhihaa* to highlight the perpetual nature of the sewing. There is a play on the word *tol*. In this context *tol* is used as a verb which can be translated into English as to 'sew' or 'bind together' but as a noun it can also mean 'kingsman', 'distant relative', 'clan' 'tribe' or 'descent group'. *Koofiyad* means 'a hat.'

[599] In Somali *kaafi* is a verb but when translated into English the closet translation is the adjective 'sufficient' or the adverb 'enough'. It can literally be translated as 'sufficing' but as 'I am sufficing' does not make sense in English, I translated it as 'I am making it sufficient'. *Nimba* literally means 'every man' but in this context it means 'every person'. Similar to the way that in English 'man' can refer to 'mankind' or 'human'. *Kaalin* combines two things 'allotted' or 'designated' and also 'task', 'job', 'contribution', 'role' or 'function'. In this context, I felt that 'allotted role' was the best translation.

Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa.[600]

I am propagating it. I make a reputation for it.

Waa shaacihaayee. Sharaf aan u yeelaa.

I am propagating it. I make a reputation for it.

Hooyaalaa Sharaf aan u yeelaa.

Hooyaalada. I make a reputation for it

Shiidka muufo waa shaacihaayee. Hooyaalaadee.[601]

I am propagating the flat bread grinding stone.

Sheygii la doonaa lagu shiidahaayee . Hooyaalaadee.[602]

Mixing the item one wants with it

Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey.[603]

---

[600] *Shaaci* is a verb which can mean to 'spread', 'propagate', and 'diffuse'. I chose to translate it as 'propagating' because it captures both the 'spreading' and 'promoting' nature of the meaning which is being conveyed through the song. *Yeel* is a verb which can mean 'act', 'do' or 'make'. In the context of the *hees*, it means 'make' because it refers to the way that the Banaadiri woman creates a reputation for the traditional hats that they wove by 'propagating' the manufacture of it. *Sharaf* is a noun which has two meanings. It can mean 'beauty', 'grace', and 'splendour' or it can mean 'prestige', 'nobility', 'honour' and 'reputation'. In the context of the verse, I felt 'reputation' was the best way to translate *sharaf* because it was referring to the way that the Banaadiri woman through 'propagating' the making of the hats would cultivate a standing for it within the Banaadiri, and Somali community as well as the wider world. *Sharaf* is a word that tends to be used in relation to a person rather than an object in everyday Somali speech as a means to refer to their 'honour' or 'reputation'. When the Banaadiri woman uses the word *sharaf* in relation to her textile production, she personifies it and brings it to life.

[601] The noun *shiid* in this context refers to the 'millstone' or 'grinding stone' which is used to make Somali flat bread. However, *shiid* as a noun can also mean a mass colourful cloth or fabric that is generally used by women. The author plays on the word *shiid* here to reinforce the important role that the Somali Banaadiri woman plays in promoting Banaadiri textile production.

[602] *Shey* can be translated as 'thing', article' or 'item'. The *gii* definite article ending highlights that the listener can use the bread grinding stone to make something familiar to them.

[603] *Dun* is a noun which means 'thread'. The demonstrative suffix *tan* is equivalent to 'this' in the English language and *eey* is the feminine vocative. *Dolaawga jiidaayo* is a spinning wheel.

This thread and the spinning wheel.

Dolaawga jiidaayo iyo duntaneey.

This thread and the spinning wheel.

Hooyaalaa iyo duntaneey.

and this thread.

Marodii la doonaa lagu daabacaayee. Hooyaalaadee.[604]

Embroidering the cloth one wants with it.

Marodii la doonaa lagu daabacaayee. Hooyaalaadee.

Embroidering the cloth one wants with it.

Dalkeenna Soomalia iyo dadkiisa,[605]

Our country, Somalia, and its people,

Dalkeenna Soomalia iyo dadkiisa

Our country, Somalia, and its people,

[604] *Maro* means 'cloth'. Again, the *dii* definite article ending highlights that they are discussing a particular cloth. In this case, it is the Banaadiri cloth. There is a play on the word *daabac*. In the context of the line, the verb *daabacayaa* refers to 'embroidering' but it can also mean 'printing', or 'publishing.'

[605] In this context, the noun *dal* means 'country' and the possessive suffix *keenna*, which is the inclusive 'our', is attached to *dal* and so *dalkeenna* translates as 'our country'. The noun *dad* means 'people' and the possessive suffix *kiisa* is attached to masculine nouns and can mean 'his' or 'its'. In this context, *kiisa* means 'its' so *dadkiisa* translates as 'its people'.

Hooyaalaa iyo dadkiisa

Hooyaalada and its people,

Diinta Quraanka ay duggaashadaan, hooyaalaadee,[606]

They shelter in the religion of the Koran

Deelka Quraanka ay ku duceysadaan, hooyaalaadee[607]

They pray with the *deel* of the Koran.

Diinta Quraanka ay duggaashadaan, hooyaalaadee,

They shelter in the religion of the Koran

Deelka Quraanka ay ku duceysadaan, hooyaalaadee

They pray with the *deel* of the Koran.

Hooyaaladaanay li hingaadihaayee

Hooyaaladaanay li hingaadihaayee

Hooyaalaay li hingaadihaayee

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. hooyaalaadee

[606] In this context, the noun *diin* translates as 'religion' and *Quraanka* means 'the Koran'. *Diinta Quraanka* is a genitive construction to indicate the possession of the noun *diinta* by the noun *Quraanka*. So *Diinta Quraanka* translates as 'the religion of the Koran'. The noun *duggaal* is means 'shelter'.

[607] *Deel* is a letter of the Arabic alphabet and *duceyso* means 'pray for oneself'. *Deelka Quraanka* is another genitive construction which translates as 'the deel of the Koran'. The preverbal preposition particle *ku* can mean 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to', 'into', 'onto', 'upon', 'with regard to', 'with', 'by means of', and 'using'. In this context, it means 'with'.

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

Heeskii hore waayaa. Hilmaami maayaa. hooyaalaadee

It is the previous song. I am not forgetting it.

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