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Africa-Programme

WORKING PAPER N° 194

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Bielefeld 1993
ISSN 0936-3408
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1. Introduction

The 'nation', once a repository of positive values irrespective of the quantities of blood shed because of it, the unit and subject of "self-determination", and its political shape, the 'nation-state', once praised as the vehicle of democracy and modernization, are gradually becoming outdated in parts of the industrialized world. Some of their functions are taken over by supra-national or infra-national (regional) institutions. 1)

In other areas of the world, the ethnic principle (which is the one which inspires the "nation"-state as distinct from forms of states based on other definitions of collective identity) now is used to redraw political maps, a process which is accompanied by different levels of violence, ranging from the atrocities in former Yugoslavia to peaceful separations like that of Czekia and Slovakia.

Somalia, which, because of its high degree of cultural and linguistic ("ethnic") homogeneity has been called the only true nation-state of Africa, has now been fragmented along clan and sub-clan lines, well below the level of integration commonly referred to as national.

1) This paper was originally prepared for the conference on 'Ethnicity and cultural pluralism in the Horn of Africa' which was planned for June 14-18, 1993 in Addis Ababa. After organizers of this conference had been sacked from Addis Ababa university and the conference postponed indefinitely, a version of this paper was read at the 'Seminar within the framework of the 19th Congress of the Union of Oromo Students in Europe', Berlin, 16th July 1993.
Ethiopia is in the process of splitting into two new entities based on quite conflicting definitions of identity. Eritrea is shaped along the contours of a former colony and derives much of its collective integration from political experience shared by its citizens who belong to a plurality of ethnic groups.

Ethiopia 'proper', i.e. former Ethiopia minus Eritrea, is being restructured, if that process continues successfully, as a kind of federation of units based on the ethnic principle. As some of the nationalities which constitute the new Ethiopia are represented in Eritrea as well, the two principles of organisation can be shown to be incompatible if pursued to their logical conclusion. It is therefore to be hoped that logic be mollified by pragmatism.

Two ethnicities to which appeal is made to give shape to two major constituent units of Ethiopia shall be examined with some detail, namely Oromo and Somali.

Of special interest are the numerous groups, defined by genealogy or locality, which are Oromo by one set of criteria (language, former political affiliation) and Somali by another set of criteria (clanship, religious affiliation). Recently, local wars have been waged in eastern and southern Ethiopia in this broad area of double or unclear ethnic affiliation. For many small groups of Eastern Cushites the alternative of having to be either 'Oromo' or 'Somali' is a rather artificial, imposed one.

This example shows that the principle of basing administrative boundaries on ethnic distributions has to be mollified and modified to accommodate people who do not fit into the simplified categories used for this purpose. Otherwise peace is at the stake.

2. Some linguistic and historical data about Oromo and Somali

It is not the task of ethnologists or linguists to determine who is an Oromo and who a Somali. People are recruited into groups regarded as belonging to one of these wider categories in a number of ways, most frequently by birth and patrilineal descent reckoning, or they can come as strangers and be affiliated to a certain lineage and clan. This can occur with individuals or groups, even whole lineages who attach themselves to new wider genealogies like a branch which is cut from one tree and grafted into another, and it can take place gradually - guests becoming brothers first metaphorically and then in a more and more binding sense - or by a formal decision. To the degree that these processes are intentional it is the intention of the people concerned that matter, the intentions of those who want to be accepted and those who accept, and not the classifications by outsiders who apply linguistic or ethnological or historical criteria to categorize people.
But data of this kind, linguistic and cultural similarities and historical traditions, are not only available to the foreign scholar but also, although possibly in different perceptions accompanied by different interpretations, to the bearers of the cultures and the speakers of the languages themselves and to the social environment of these bearers and speakers. There such data might form the raw materials on which claims on the plausibility of affiliations are based and which is molded by local interpretation into historical traditions of changing shapes. The least one can expect from academic findings about cultures and languages is that they form an interesting contrast to the local views about such matters, a background for the analysis of the latter, a comparative dimension, a framework for reference which helps to describe the ways in which other views diverge from it. Another way in which Western scholarship becomes relevant to processes of self-identification and identification of others in African societies is through the re-import and concepts derived from research in Africa into Africa and the use of such concepts in African political discourse. When discussing possible territorial incorporations and political alliances, an OLF representative once mentioned "Cushites" to us. We were discussing in the Oromo language, but "Cushites" and "Cushitic" came across in English, and Europe is, of course, where these concepts hail from. Although derived from a biblical name, the term refers to a fairly recent linguistic classification by Western scholars. Also the self-identification as "Oromo" and the modern nationalist discourse about Oromo is inextricably interwoven with what Western scholars have written about Oromo.

This discussion about "Cushites" had been occasioned by a new map with new territorial boundaries within Ethiopia and the office where we were talking was overrun the next day by an opposing militia with a different map in their minds and a different way to classify people. Also academic classifications are used to legitimize bloody warfare and there is no way to relegate such categories back into the ivory tower.

When discussing linguistic categories one has to resist the temptation to equate them with populations, to equate languages with people. Languages can be adopted by new groups of speakers and the present speakers of a language may only to a small proportion of their ancestry be derived from those whom linguists believe to have spoken some ancestral form of that language. The following refers to relationships between languages; the speakers of these languages may be related in quite different ways: by genealogical links which cut across linguistic categories and historical, religious, economic, ideological and other affiliations which have little to do with language.

Oromo and Somali, which in itself has variants whose differences go well beyond mutual intelligibility, both belong to the same subbranch of a branch of the Cushitic language family, they are both Lowland Eastern Cushitic (Andrzejewski 1964, Lewis, H.S. 1966, Bender 1976:14, Schlee 1989:31ff). While Oromo (apart from the incorporation of Amharic
loanwords in some areas) is pretty uniform throughout its area of distribution in Ethiopia and Kenya, the Somali dialects (or rather languages?) differ considerably from each other. Standard Somali derives from the northern dialects which have a fairly wide territorial distribution with low internal differentiation, which points to a relatively recent expansion. The southern forms of Somali are fragmented into smaller bits which differ more sharply from each other. They stretch from the Benadir coast to Lake Turkana (Lake Rudolph) in Kenya where we find the westernmost Somaloid language, Rendille. Rendille, usually described as Somaloid or Somali-like, would certainly have been classified as a Somali dialect if it had been found spoken in Somalia or in the neighbourhood of other Somali dialects. But as it stands, it is an outlier separated from other Somali dialects by a wedge of Oromo speakers stretching south from Ethiopia (Fleming 1964, Lamberti 1983, Schlee 1987). The southern forms of Somali also comprise Rahanweyn and Garreh Kofar, two of the three languages spoken by different clusters of the Garre, to whom we shall come back below. The third language of the Garre is Oromo. Rahanweyn and Garreh Kofar are very similar to each other but neatly kept apart by their speakers.

If we link this distribution of languages and dialects with other kind of data, namely cultural comparisons, oral traditions and scattered references in written sources, the following picture of Oromo/Somaloid interaction over the past centuries emerges:

Before the Oromo expansion in the 16th century northern Kenya and the adjoining lowland areas of southern Ethiopia were inhabited by pastoral nomads who spoke related Somaloid dialects. They had generation-set systems of the *gada* type (by no means an Oromo invention but distributed in independent forms throughout the cultures of Lowland Eastern Cushitic speakers) and shared, apart from that, a complex of cultural features which I have called the PRS (Proto-Rendille-Somali) culture because derivates of it have been inherited by the Rendille in the extreme west and some (but not all) Somali in the east in addition to a variety of groups in between. The PRS complex had at its core a complicated set of rules about how to treat camels, which actions to perform with them (training for the first time, castrating, sacrificing them or other animals for them, exchanging them in various forms of loans) on which dates. And the appropriate dates for such actions were determined by a calendar which treated solar and lunar cycles independently from each other as empirically observed, without linking them artificially by intercalary days or months.

This cluster of PRS peoples then underwent processes of differentiation which have led to the ethnogenesis of the groups we find in the area now. As these processes cut across clan lines, we still find the same clans again and again in the different ethnic groups.
The factors which created these new ethnic differences by affecting some PRS and others not, were the Oromo expansion from the north, which led several PRS groups to adopt Oromo speech and thus drove the above mentioned wedge of Oromo speakers between the Rendille and the speakers of other Somali dialects, and Islam, which was a key element in the development of a modern Somali identity (Schlee 1989).

This sudden expansion of the Oromo language, which was accompanied by other forms of cultural dynamics and went much beyond any possible biological increase of the original Oromo, has at its root some aspects of military organisation:

The Boran, who were not the first Oromo group to expand south from the Ethiopian Highlands (there were the 'Warr Day' before them) but the one who left the deepest imprint on southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, must have had a re-organisation of their gada system in the early part of the 16th century. Gada systems have a tendency to get out of step. Because of the rigidity of their prescribed generation length, which never corresponds quite to actual reproductive behaviour no matter how many artificial measures from delayed marriages to infanticide are taken to achieve such a correspondence, many people are either too young or too old to fit well into the age grades into which they are promoted. When these people in their turn have children, such differences between formalised age grade role and actual age accumulate through the generations, so that in the end people are not yet born when they should marry or would-be warriors are grey-bearded and decrepit.

Immediately after the reform of their gada system, the correspondence between ideal and actual ages was high among the Boran and they were in the position to recruit substantial numbers of able-bodied young men into their warrior age grade (raaba), which gave them an edge over their neighbours (Haberland 1963, Legesse 1973).

The Boran share a ritualized killer complex with other Eastern Cushitic societies. Killings have to be performed in connection with certain promotion ceremonies. While among the Rendille this requirement can be fulfilled by shooting birds with bows and arrows and the Gabbra youths hunt small rodents (*hantuut*, jerboa, *Jaculus sp.*, *Gerbillus sp.*), the Boran raaba used to go on war expeditions which aimed also at raiding cattle but primarily at obtaining the severed genitals of slain male enemies (of any age or size from an embryo or baby boy to an old man) as trophies (Schlee 1989:38, 89f, 125f). In the 16th century the Abyssinian monk Bahrey reports about the "Galla" (of whom the "Boran" were a moiety)
that warriors who had not achieved the killer status were not allowed to shave their hair so that it grew into a thick mob and they were plagued by lice. This is a reason he gives for the ferocity of those warriors (Schleicher 1893:27f, Guidi 1907, Beckingham and Huntingford 1954:122, Huntingford 1955:69). 2)

Only recently, in the Last Gum Gaayo, a gada assembly held in 1988, the Boran have started to discuss how to abandon the requirement to kill and how to replace it by other proofs of maturity (Shongolo 1992).

As a new age-set was promoted into the raaba grade once in eight years, the neighbours of the Boran were exposed to a periodic form of terror. Among Somaloid groups there is a cycle of traditions about a long migration by which these peoples wanted to flee from the Boran, called Kedi Guur in Somali. Other Somaloid people avoided being victimized by the Boran by submitting to them and accepting a relationship called tiriso which involved ritual tributes and military assistance. Thus the Warr Libin alliance was formed, headed by the Boran. The Warr Dasse, 'people of the mats', the camel nomads of Somaloid origin who have mat-covered semi-spherical tents rather than grass huts like the cattle-keeping Boran, had a junior status in this alliance. Also some of the groups who at first had tried to flee from the Boran later accepted this status (Schlee 1989).

3. Recent events in southern Oromia (Sidamo Province)

In May 1991 Mengistu's soldiers fled through Boranland south into Kenya. After their departure there was a period of statelessness in the area. Disputes were solved locally by councils of elders and nobody seemed to miss the state very much. This anarchic idyl was over in November 1991 when the state entered the area again, not so much as a political agent but as a bone of contention. Various ethnically based political movements which anticipated that statehood might be re-established sooner or later, started to fight about a share in it.

The main opponents in this war were the OLF, which was identified with the Boran, and the OALF (Oromo Abo Liberation Front) which was made up of Gabbra and Garre who belonged to the Worr Dasse peoples traditionally under Boran hegemony. The EPRDF forces were confined to the major towns and were fending mainly for their own security.

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2) For the role of age-sets for warfare among the Boran see Baxter 1979. There is a recent thesis about these institutions among the Guji Oromo by Berisso (1991). These and many other works confirm the strong and time honoured links between killing and status among the Oromo.
The situation was complicated by warlords with gangs or armies of various sizes, who sided with the Garre or pursued their own unstated interests. One of them was the former Somali president Mohamed Siad Barre who had 6,000 men in the area. His aim might have been to make his allies indebted to him and to establish rights of residence in Ethiopia for his militia and his Marrehan tribe in case they might be ousted from Somalia altogether. At least local opinion interpreted his moves in such a way.

For the combatants themselves the war was about wells and grazing areas, while for the leaders, who were aware of the wider political framework, it was a struggle for representation in the emerging new order in Ethiopia, in which the regional subunits are to be shaped along ethnic lines.

It is interesting to note that the Oromo Abo Liberation Front or its Garre nucleus until recently was called Somali Abo Liberation Front. "Abol!" is a form of address in the Oromo language, roughly meaning "hey man!" Somali Abo are thus those Somali who say "abol!", i.e. Oromo-speaking Somali. "Oromo Abo", however, is a mere pleonasm.

In 1978, during the Ogadeen war, the SALF had been fighting on the Somali side for the incorporation of the Somali areas of Ethiopia into Somalia. Now that Somalia had ceased to be an entity anyone would like to join, the Somali Abo had reaffiliated themselves to become Oromo Abo and were now struggling for a special status within emerging Oromia. In the meantime, after these attempts have been frustrated, it appears that the OALF has split. One part remains the OALF while another has reverted to call itself SALF and is now attempting to transfer a slice of Oromia to the Somali province of Ethiopia.

4. Current concepts of being Oromo

The switching back and forth of the Garre between "Oromo" and "Somali" as wider identifications shows that it is far from clear who is an Oromo.

The OLF with its nationalism may have had a long history elsewhere, in other parts of Ethiopia and in exile (Zitelmann (1990)), but its ideology definitely had not made much progress in Boranland throughout the Mengistu period. The term 'Oromo' was simply unknown to many ordinary people. One was Boran or Garre or Gabbra.

It may have become clear from our historical sketch that the heavy gada symbolism of the OLF (which uses the term abba gada for 'president', raaba for its military wing etc.) is hardly suitable to evoke feelings of belonging among those groups, like the Garre and Gabbra, who perceive themselves as the offspring of the victims of these traditional in-
stitutions glorified by the OLF. The OLF would have to take this into account if it wants to
give plausibility to its claim to represent all Oromo as defined by the linguistic criterion, i.e.
all speakers of the Oromo language.

Some case histories and quotations from elders' meetings help to illustrate the role such
criteria of identification play in the local discourse.

4.1. Language as a dimension of identity

According to Boran elders\(^3\), Mohammed Haji Hassan Gababa, a Boran-speaking Garre
from a line of Garre chiefs, one of the prominent OALF leaders, was appointed a regional
representative for the Moiyale\(^4\) Kiflagari (District) by OLF leaders in Addis Ababa in
1991. There was some hurry involved because they had to name their representatives to the
new EPRDF government. Among the qualifications which Mohammed Haji Hassan claimed
for this position were that he was born in Moiyale and that his mother tongue is Boran. He
did not mention that he was a Garre although at that stage the OLF officials would not have
regarded the Boran and the Garre as different ethnic groups with conflicting political aims.

In August 1991, Boran delegates to Addis Ababa questioned OLF officials on this appoint-
ment.

   Elder: Who appointed Mohammed?
   OLF Official\(^5\): We did.
   Elder: Why?
   Official: Because he speaks fluently Oromiffa and was born in Oromoland.
   Elder: Are you sure he is an Oromo?
   Official: Yes.
   Elder: Tell us which tribes make up the Oromo!

The official read them all, including Boran, from a list. Garre was not among them.

   Elder: Have you ever heard of Garre as Oromo?

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3) Interview by A.S. with Chaachu Ifo and other Boran elders in Moiyale, September 1991. We here use Moiyale
   for the Ethiopian town and Moyale for the town on the Kenyan side in accordance with the spelling on most
   maps.

4) see note 3

5) Our information could not be cross-checked with OLF representatives and therefore does not claim historical
   truth. All we want to illustrate is how people talk about such matters in Moiyale.
Official: No.

Elder: Then this man is a Garre, not an Oromo. He speaks our language because he has none of his own. He lives on our land because he has none of his own. Mohammed, his father and his grandfather have always taken advantage of political crises to claim our land and to claim to represent us. Whenever they do this, they never consult us. But as the Boran say "Lubbu d’ossani, awwaal ees geesani?" (If you conceal death, where are you going to hold the burial?). In the end we find out about their intrigues. Their family has a long history of false claims on Boran territory since the times of Mene-lík and Haile Selassie. When the Derg removed Haile Selassie, the same Mohammed addressed us, saying, "we are one". Elsewhere and without our knowledge he then claimed our land of the nine great wells (tula saglaan) for the Garre.

The OLF position in this discussion which stresses the common language rather than the tribal differences, can be stated thus in the words of Chaachu Ifo⁶:

"For many years the Sidam [in the generalized sense of non-Oromo Ethiopians from the north] have suppressed our language and culture. They enslaved Oromo people. What is unjust, never lasts. Our culture and language remained intact during one hundred years of suppression. We are all one people. It is the common language which unites all Oromo groups."

Language as an identifying feature also played a major role in the re-naming of the SALF as OALF when it was registered in Ethiopia. According to Boran elders, Hajj Sirraaj, the head of the OALF explained this process thus in a meeting in Yabello, 5.10.1991:

"We were Somali Abo when we were in Somalia [to where they had to withdraw after the 1978 war]. Most of our members were Oromo speaking people from Ethiopia. Our party was accepted and registered in Somalia.

Back in Ethiopia we wanted to have our party registered here. In Addis, we were asked for the name of our party. We said "Somali Abo". The Government officials replied: "The only Somali people living in Ethiopia we know are the Ogadeen of Hararghe. How can you also be Somali?" We discussed the matter and later decided to change our party’s name to "Oromo Abo".

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⁶ In a meeting on Moiyale, 23.10.1991
In Somalia the Somali Abo were made up of members of many groups, of Arsi [like himself], Boran, Garre and Gabbra. As soon as the OALF was registered in Ethiopia, the Boran and many Arsi broke away and joined the OLF and other Oromo parties."

That certain Garre claim to be Oromo and are accepted as such should not obscure the fact that afaan Oromo is not the only language spoken by Garre. There are speakers of two closely related but distinct Somali dialects, Rahanweyn and Garreh Kofar among the Garre each of whom form coresident clusters. A high degree of bilingualism and multilingualism allows intercommunication but primary linguistic affiliation (mother tongue) is mostly very clear. These linguistic divisions cut across the clan spectrum of the Garre (The moieties Tuf and Kuranjo and the clans in which these subdivide) so that we find different languages spoken by all or most of the single clans. This shows how little language has to do with ethnicity among the Garre. Such a grid of classification in which language plays a minor role necessarily has to lead to different categories from a language based classification. This does not facilitate agreement on the question 'who is an Oromo?'

4.2. Religion

In the recent war between Boran and the Gabbra/Garre, the alarm cry of the latter was wa islaani badee, wa kuffaari islaam balleesee! - 'the Muslims are lost, the unbelievers have destroyed the Muslims!' In the inverse situation, when the Gabbra and Garre had made inroads on the Boran, the alarm cry was wa Boraani badde! Thus it appears, that a religious identification on the side of the Gabbra and Garre is mirrored by an ethnic identification on the side of the Boran. This situation is vaguely reminiscent of the current war in Bosnia, where two of the groups which are party to the conflict, are referred to by ethnonyms (Serbs and Croats) while the third is known by a religious label (Muslims). But just like these ethnonyms have a religious element of definition (Serbs = 'Orthodox', Croats = 'Catholics', no matter how nominal this affiliation may be and how little of the religion is practiced), also the question whether being Boran encompasses adherence to a Boran religion ('What is your religion?' - 'Boran') or whether it can be combined with any religion, is far from clear. Different people answer this question differently.

Wario Duuba, a Boran elder7), states quite definitely that to be a proper Boran one has to adhere to the traditional Boran religion:

7) Interview by A.S. with Wario Duuba, Boran, Moiyale 16.10.1991
"We have a religion (aimaanuti\(^8\)) of our own. We did not copy from other peoples' religion. Like other religions we also have one great God. Some people call us 'infidels with pointed pigtais' (kufaar guutu qonyee, an allusion to their hairstyle). They have got their religion and we have got ours. If we examine the relationship between God and man among the Boran and compare it to that of the so-called Saffar (Somali, implying: Muslims), we see that their God takes the lives of people and livestock among them and our God does so among us. But their deaths are sometimes much more numerous than ours. Our God has multiplied our herds and made us self-reliant. Theirs has been feeding them in small rations and therefore they have to move from place to place, from village to town very frequently. In general, our God is kinder and more merciful to us than their God to them."

In fact there are many Boran who are Muslims, but with the identification of Boranness with the traditional religion and of Islam with the enemies, namely the Somali, their position has become somewhat uneasy. *At ya saffarte?* - 'have you become a Somali?' is the common way to inquire whether somebody has converted to Islam\(^9\). And it has happened that Boran Muslims have been asked: "Why do you still go to the mosque? Don't you see what Muslims are doing to us?"

On November 16, 1991 six Boran elders were confronted at the entrance of the Moyale mosque by Boran youths who threatened to beat them up. Most of the Boran men who used to go for prayers to the mosque had stopped doing so as clashes between Boran and Garre intensified.

The official OLF position, however, is that being Oromo can be combined with any religion. In spite of their strong traditionalist symbolism, they want to keep Christians and Muslims in their fold. Goolisa Rooba\(^{10}\) explains:

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8) Both of the words the Boran use for 'religion' are of Arabic origin: *aimaanuti* (*imaana*) and *diini*. No matter how hard they try to assert their separateness, the terminology they use for this assertion has a wider currency and stems from just that Arabo-Islamic culture from which they want to set themselves apart. Similar observations have been made with regard to Oromo concepts of 'law'. (Schlee 1991)

9) The identification of a religion with the ethnicity which dominates in being associated with it in a given area is a wide-spread phenomenon. In northern Cameroon to convert to Islam is called 'becoming Fulani' and in Indonesia conversion to Christianity was called 'becoming Dutch'.

10) Goolisa Rooba is an OLF delegate. He spoke at a meeting in Mega, 9.12.1991.

The transcription used here is the one which has been well established among Kenyan Boran for many years. When Oromo movements in Ethiopia took their celebrated "landmark" (Gama 1993) to write *afa'an Oromo* in Latin characters in November 1991, they preferred (for some unstated reason, probably ignorance) to invent a Latin alphabet (i.e. a set of correspondences of Latin characters or combinations thereof to Oromo sounds) of their own, rather than consulting their Kenyan brethren who - in the absence of a competing writing system like Amharic - had never written *afa'an Oromo* in another script than the Latin one.
Oromoos islaamalle hín qabdi, Kristinaalle hín qabdi, Kristinaan "aimaanuti", Islaamummaan "aimaanuti".

"Also the Oromo have Muslims and they have also Christians. Christianity is a 'religion', Islam is a 'religion'."

"Oromo", which until recently was just as new a concept to his listeners as 'religion', which he tries to explain here, is thus offered as a wider identification of a secular kind to the Boran audience. What follows is a secular prayer, if there can be such a thing, by Goolisa Rooba:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oromoos naga</th>
<th>Peace to Oromo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Odaan naga</td>
<td>Peace to the Oda tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oduun Oromo chufti naga</td>
<td>Peaceful are all news about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oromo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Œda baali naga</td>
<td>Peace to the leaves of the oda tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baale Gobba chufti naga</td>
<td>Peace to all of Baale and Gobba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilu Abbaboorer chufti naga</td>
<td>Peace to all of Ilu Abbaboore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolloo Wallag naga</td>
<td>Peace to Wollo and Wallaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jidduu Moggaan naga</td>
<td>Peace to the centre and the outskirts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garaan Oromo chufti naga</td>
<td>Peace to all of the Oromo heartland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raaba Gadaan naga</td>
<td>Peace to the warrior age-set and the gada assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadamojjitin ta rooba nagaya</td>
<td>Peace and rain at the retirement of elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arero gooron naga</td>
<td>Peace to venerable Arero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liban diidi naga</td>
<td>Peace to the plain of Liban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa'a nami Oromoos naga</td>
<td>Peace to the cattle and the people of Oromo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafti Oromoos naga</td>
<td>Peace to the land of the Oromo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oduun laf Oromoos naga</td>
<td>Of peace speak the reports about Oromoland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundi odaa tokoc</td>
<td>There is just one stem to the land oda tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundi isa him madda</td>
<td>There is a spring under it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hím mirga, hín gabbata</td>
<td>It becomes stronger and thicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirgeet gabbise</td>
<td>The strength makes it thicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromo chufti hundi gabbata</td>
<td>The stem of all Oromo broadens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromoos tak taate</td>
<td>The Oromo have become one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most conspicuous differences are that here we write ch for c (glottalized palatal), c for ch (palatal fricative) and d' for dh (glottalized dental), t' for x (glottalized dental stop).

Other differences with Oromo writings from Ethiopia are dialectal rather than due to the writing system.
'Peace to all religions' is an essential element of the constant appeal to unity. If the political unity is to be derived from a common language and cultural heritage, religion has to be relegated to the non-political sphere if not the private sphere. The Oromo belief system, however, is closely intertwined with the gada system and the aada, the customary law, and also Islam derives its law, the shari'a from religious sources, or claims to do so. (There is a long debate among Muslim and Orientalist scholars about the problem of legal interpretation of revealed texts and the actual sources of law as it historically developed which we cannot summarize here. See e.g. Rahman 1966). Both belief systems therefore have political implications and do not lend themselves easily to the incorporation in a secular state. To denounce religious differences or the emphasis on these as a colonial plot does not solve the problem how inherently political religions, a category which includes the traditional Oromo beliefs and customs, can coexist peacefully in the public sphere. One possible solution is subordination. One can subordinate the shari'a to the aada (Islamic states do the opposite) and apply the latter to cases involving Muslims and non-Muslims. This is what Hajji Wario Guraca, a Boran retired senior chief and businessman from Moyale (Kenya) - the business community of Moyale was heavily involved in the conflict in southern Ethiopia on both sides - proposed at a meeting in Mega on December 10, 1991. Hajji Wario, obviously enough, is a Muslim, but this does not prevent him from saying:

I request you by the grace of Islam as the religion of peace, understanding and love to restore peace. We all know very well that not the shari'a of Islam but the aada Borana is the common law and the bond shared by all communities in southern Ethiopia. Since we were born we have been under several governments. Before modern government, the Boran were the only government operating in a wide region of the Horn of Africa. They have well defined gada institutions. Modern government met different communities, all abiding by the aada Borana. Many modern governments have come and gone, but the Boran are still here with us. Where are the
Italians? Where are the British? Where are the Sidam? Some of these modern governments attempted to suppress the *aada Borana*, but it has survived to this day because we all acknowledge it, be you a Garre, a Guji or a Sidam. It has meaning and relevance to all of us.

We have almost everything in common except for the minor difference of religion. Some follow Boran customs, others Islam and yet others Christianity. Religious differences have never been the cause of any past conflicts in this part of Ethiopia.

Today the state law is not effective, but we have our own law, familiar to us, the *aada seera Borana* which you all know. We have lived with it for centuries. The Oromo [meaning the OLF] have at once embraced this *aada* and incorporated it in their constitution.

Another solution to the problem of the coexistence of different religions would not be to subordinate one of them to the other but to subordinate all of them to the secular state in which 'religion' becomes a specialized department which is useful for certain functions. Such a tendency also became visible at the same meeting, when a Gabbra Miigo from Kenya, T'uuulic Guyyo, urged the assembly to solve their disputes peacefully through dialogue and to take an oath of peace. "Let the Muslims use their Qur'an and the Christians swear by the Bible. Let the traditional Boran take the oath by the power of the rituals of the *Abba Gada* and the *Qaalu*\(^\text{11}\)\). The oath was taken in just this form, with all 'religions' on an equal footing and in service of the common welfare, but to no avail. The real escalation of the war came only afterwards and even T'uuulic Guyyo himself is no longer known for an entirely peaceful role. He now is in a Kenyan prison because of his involvement in the murder of the family of a Somali trader from Moyale who was believed to support the Boran fighters in Ethiopia.

There is evidence that all the protagonists of peace at that Mega meeting, including the 'arbitrators' from Kenya, were in fact logistically supporting one or the other side.

In fact, in the recent conflict, religious differences did not play a minor role at all. They were used to declare the war a holy war, *jihad*, on the side of the Garre and Gabbra, so that all Muslims in the area would feel obliged to join. (The Ajuran and Degodia Somali, however, did not heed this appeal.)

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\(^{11}\) *Abba Gada* - 'Father of the Gada' is the highest office of the politically leading age grade. *Qaalu*, often spelled *qalitu*, is a priestly office which is passed on in certain lineages. (Haberland 1963, Legesse 1973)
"You worthless lot, hit the infidels and seek reconciliation afterwards!" - is a saying attributed to Garre elders inciting their youths.

Apart from the legitimation of war, religion was used as an instrument of war. Both sides carried out their respective rituals in preparation for battle.

In January 1992, the Boran planned to attack an area occupied by the Garre, with whom they finally clashed at Chana Leele, in the Ballaal area of the Wachille region. Before the clash they spent several days holding sacrifices and feasting. Garre scouts observed this and reported it to their elders. The Gabbra and Garre then slaughtered several camels and the sheikhs read the Qurʾān and sprinkled the war party with water on which the Qurʾān had been read (talishi from Arabic: tallil - 'poured' from talla - 'he poured')

In the ensuing battle the Gabbra and Garre were badly routed. 179 Gabbra and Garre were killed, 11 wounded and 206 guns were seized by the Boran, among whom there were only two casualties and about eight wounded.

One of the Garre survivors is reported to have commented: "We read the Qurʾān for seven good days and were blessed by prominent sheikhs just before we set off. The Boran, too, were performing their pagan sacrifices. It remains a riddle why God had listened to the pagans and failed to listen to us."

How religious re-affiliation can affect interethnic relationships can best be studied at the Gabbra case:

Until the early 1960's The Gabbra Miigo in Ethiopia were traditionalists. In the awake of the Ogadeen war, many of them joined hands with the Garre and took part in the fight. The Boran pushed them further east to the fringes of their territory beyond Wachile. Many of the Gabbra families migrated into western Somalia and to south western parts such as Dolo, Filtu and Sufu.

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12) I thank Dr. Mokhtar Ahmed for this etymological suggestion.
13) Interview by A.S. with Abduub Jillo, Boran, in Moiyle, 21.1.1992
While in Somalia, they were assimilated into the Garre and Marrehan. They were all
converted to Islam. After the war they returned to Goomole, their traditional home-
land. They brought with them the Islamic culture. Many of those who had learnt the
Qur'ān, built shades and taught the Qur'ān to their children. Islam spread very fast
and their children soon learnt the Qur'ān. Many of their youths travelled to Moyale
and into Garre settlements to the east to learn more of the ahādith and tafsir (interpre-
tation of the Qur'ān. Thus they abandoned their traditional religion. The few,
especially the aged members of the community who stuck to the traditional belief
system found it difficult to perform and conduct the traditional rituals. The Boran at
once realized this. They were sure the Gabbra had abandoned their traditional rituals
and at once occupied most of their holy grounds where they used to hold their annual
rituals.

The Boran were displeased towards Gabbra becoming Saffar (Somali). The strong
fraternal relationship was broken. The Gabbra have turned alien and have sought
alliance with the Saffar, traditional enemies of the Boran. Now the tribal animosities
have been reawakened. While ill-feeling was prevailing between the two commu-
nities, new tension was caused by the new development of the mushrooming political
parties after the fall of Mengistu. The Gabbra readily proved their strong wish for
alliance with the Saffar communities. They at once took the side of the Garre and
joined the Oromo Abo party. Now the old wound of the Boran was reopened and
they had to take immediate action by declaring war against the Gabbra Miigo who
had also turned enemy. This was one major factor that led to the bitter hostilities
between the Boran and the Gabbra Miigo.14)

5. Traditional ethnic hierarchies and the idea of emancipation of subordinate groups

The general picture emerging from earlier research which has been carried out in a more
peaceful period (Schlee 1989, based on field studies between 1974 and 1984) is that the
period between the establishment of Boran hegemony and the last turn of the century, when
the Ethiopians from the north and the British from the south divided the area up between
them, is not seen in an entirely negative light. The hegemony of the Boran might have been
established by the terrors of ritualized warfare, but once it was established, it provided a
framework for peace and prosperity.

14) Interview by A.S. with Hassan Sora, a Gabbra elder, Moyale, 27.11.1991.
The Somaloid clans of the area were affiliated by a kind of collective adoption to Boran clans and had to take gifts at regular intervals to the qaalu of their respective Boran moiety, Sabbo or Gona, in return for a blessing which was believed to be indispensable for the continuation of the normal course of life (women would have remained sterile or would have given birth to blind children and blood rather than milk would have come out of the udders of cows without it). These tributes, however, were a light burden.

About Hassan Buro, whom the oral traditions of the Sakuye claim as the ancestor of one of their lineages, it is said that he was a poor man who largely subsisted with his family by hunting and gathering. He might have lived around 1650. He had only one camel which in the course of time gave birth to four more.

Then his wife asked one day: "We have got wealth now, but do you know what is going on in the country?" "I do not." "Look for the tail hairs of a giraffe bull, bleached with age, white, white!" She sewed a garment ... of the skin of a gerenuk antelope. They filled a milk container with honey, took the giraffe tail hair and took all this to the qaalu (Schlee 1989:119).

The Garre became, when they entered into the tiriso relationship with the Boran, affiliated with the Karrayyu clan in the Sabbo moiety. They had to take on their muuda ("annointing") journeys to the qaalu a loading camel, an ox of cattle and a billy goat. The Ajuran were affiliated with the other moiety, Gona, but Sabbo had a much more prominent position as a host to the new dependents. The Sakuye at later times, when they had been established as pastoralists, took there a young male camel, a billy goat, a ram and firesticks. The Waat, an endogamous hunter and gatherer caste, brought the qaalu white ostrich feathers and a leather container full of honey.

Again and again loading camels are mentioned as gifts which are taken by the Worr Dasse, the 'people of the mats', to the qaalu of Karrayyu. This has to do with an element of mutual dependence which is introduced into this relationship by the rule that the qaalu may not drink water which has been transported on a donkey. To quench this thirst, the Gabbra Malbe phratry Alganna, segments of which originate from Karrayyu while other segments of it are affiliated to Karrayyu by tiriso, send him eight young camel bulls in every Friday-year in which they hold an age-set promotion. One such time, a man of Gaar, another

15) Some eastern groups, however, claim affiliation to Nonifu, a clan of the Gona moiety.
16) Interview by G.S. with Waaqo D'iriba, Boran, Marsabit, April 1980.
17) The PRS calendar has a cycle of seven years which are named like the days of the week.
phratry of the Gabbra Malbe, insisted on adding one young camel of his own. This generous action proved to be very propitious for him, since henceforth his camels have multiplied.\textsuperscript{18} Also the Ajuran, Garre\textsuperscript{19} and Sakuye\textsuperscript{20} are reported to have sent young camel bulls to their respective qaalus.

As a military alliance, the Worr Libin were successful in the 19th century wars against the Tana Orma and the Laikipiap Maasai. Also the northern Somali, mainly Darood, could only make substantial territorial gains at their expense after the Worr Libin had been weakened by colonial penetration (Schlee 1989:47f). To sum up: The relationship between the Worr Dasse and the Boran has been described as asymmetrical, with the Boran occupying a higher position, but not as oppressive or exploitative. It was characterized by mutual advantages. And, in comparison to many subsequent periods both in Kenya and in Ethiopia, it is remembered as a period of relative peace in which the customary order was still respected and conflicts solved by wise elders.

In the light of recent warlike events other aspects of this historical relationship are now stressed. All these aspects can also be discerned from our earlier findings, but more negative evaluations of history seem to receive a new emphasis as people suffer from the present decay of interethnic relationships.

It is hardly surprising that, given the ideological role religion (s. above) plays in the current conflict, the tiriso relationship is now reinterpreted as a form of religious oppression. It is highly doubtful, to which extent the PRS had already been exposed to Islamic influences at the time of the establishment of the Boran hegemony. Cultural evidence and the critical comparison of oral traditions (Schlee 1989:38ff, 54-92, 209-228) suggest that the core of PRS culture is clearly distinct from Arubo-Islamic culture (and other neighbouring cultures) and that many of the Islamic elements attributed to the ancestors of the Worr Dasse, including parts of their genealogies, are post hoc inventions. It is also clear that the Islamic affiliation of their ancestry is stressed by those peoples who today are Muslims, while the non-Muslim peoples deriving from the PRS, the Rendille and the Gabbra Malbe of the Marsabit/Mega area, do not claim that their ancestors were Muslims, although both kinds of tradition agree that these people derive from a common source and that the ancestors in question were the same people.

\textsuperscript{18} Interview by G.S. with Waato Katelo, Gabbra, Alganna, May 1980 near Dukana.

\textsuperscript{19} Interview by G.S. with Mu’allim Mukhtar, Garre, June 1980 in Meri.

\textsuperscript{20} Interview by G.S. with Waaqo D’iriba, Boran Marsabit, April 1980.
It is therefore interesting to compare statements by Muslims, collected at a time of war between "Muslims" and "infidels", as it was phrased by many people, to traditions about the same events which have been Islamized to a lesser degree.

Sheikh Saalah Aliou, Garre,\(^{21}\) states:

> When the Boran established the tiriso relationship with the Gabbra, they forced them to give up Islam. *Dulo chabsa, dulacu lakkisa!* - "Break the water bottles [for the ablutions] and stop to pray!" To have some replacement for the religion they had to give up, the Gabbra then, in emulation of the Boran, made their five ritual drums.

The Gabbra Malbe, who still refer to their society as "the five drums" (*dibbe shanaan*), view this history somewhat differently. For them, the establishment of the five drums, ideally one for each phratry, and of the customs associated with these drums, took place in the search of ritual strength when they were confronted by the Boran threat and was inspired by a Muslim sheikh who said that the Gabbra, illiterate as they were, would not be able to cope with the Book and should adopt these rituals instead. One might object that a sheikh who makes such a suggestion cannot have been much of a Muslim and one will find a definitely pre-Islamic core under a thin Islamic varnish in Gabbra ritual, but this does not affect the fact that for the customs of the five drums are an anti-Boran institution inspired by Islam. These customs, which mark cycles from the lunar month to the 14 or 21 year *gada* (generation-set) periods, correspond to Islamic practices neither in their timing nor in their content. That they are nevertheless regarded as inspired by Islam is all the more remarkable since the Gabbra Malbe are not Muslims - but it is Islam which they regard as the nearest equivalent to their own system of beliefs and practices, and an equivalent of a wider currency which has a high cultural prestige and is a real counterweight to the unifying influence of the dominant Boran. (cf. Schlee 1989:126-144, esp. 133f about the establishment of Gabbra ritual in contradistinction to the Boran, 1989:17, 54-92 on customs associated with the "five drums").

Before the establishment of their new ritual order, the Gabbra claim, they were "fools", they panicked, stampeded like wild animals (Schlee 1989:127). They were on the run from the Boran. After instructing them about their new rituals, however, the Muslim sheikh could assure them: "You do not need to be afraid of anything, I have strengthened your belly, you are not afraid of anything, stay!" (Schlee 1989:137)

We may summarize the contrasting views about the genesis of Gabbra rituals by Muslim Garre and by Gabbra themselves in tabular form.

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Muslim view:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time level</th>
<th>event</th>
<th>belief system steering the action</th>
<th>aim of action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>before tiriso</td>
<td>(an idealized static stage)</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after tiriso</td>
<td>establishment of the rituals of the &quot;five drums&quot;</td>
<td><em>aada Borana</em>, the customs of the Boran as an inspiring model</td>
<td>adaption to the Boran, acceptance by the Boran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gabbra View:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time level</th>
<th>event</th>
<th>belief system steering the action</th>
<th>aim of action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>before tiriso</td>
<td>flight of Gabbra from the Boran</td>
<td>ignorance, fear, &quot;like animals&quot;</td>
<td>evasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>establishment of the rituals of the &quot;five drums&quot;</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>strengthening against the Boran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiriso</td>
<td>incorporation under Boran hegemony, i.e. tiriso</td>
<td><em>aada Gabbra</em>: Gabbra customs, the &quot;five drums&quot; and the independent beliefs and practices associated with them</td>
<td>relative independence, partnership with the Boran, albeit in an inferior position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question whether the Somaloid peoples of the area like the Gabbra, Garre, Sakuye and Ajuran were Muslims before their association with the Boran, has some implications for their relationship with the Boran and for their status as "Somali", because the modern Muslim Somali claim - on as shaky grounds as scores of peoples in Africa - to derive from the Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet, and to have always been Muslims.
If they were original Muslims who only "forgot" Islam during the 380 years or so of the Boran hegemony, they have to perceive the Islamization of the recent decades as a re-Islamization. It would also mean that the guilt for any shortcomings of their fathers and grandfathers in the obedience to Islam can be externalized: it can be safely attributed to the Boran to whose pagan practices one had to adjust.

The length to which the Somaloid Worr Dasse had gone to assimilate to the Boran was great indeed. The older and more knowledgeable informants admit that all these groups had *med‘ic* (fur rings from non-Islamic sacrifices and *arbor* (ivory bracelets as killer’s insignia, implying that they shared the non-Islamic achievement complex with trophy taking and all), i.e. were practically "pagans" until some decades ago.

Only the young people have become so sure of their Muslim identity that they flatly deny ever to have been anything else but Muslims. The problem about how to explain away this "pagan" period and to whom to shift the guilt for it, therefore does not arise for them.

An aspect of the tiriso relationship, which is certainly perceived as humiliating from a Muslim perspective, is that it granted the Boran access to the wives of their dependents.

> Often the Boran chose the most beautiful women of a Gabbra settlement. When a Gabbra husband found a Boran horse tied in front of this hut, he had to sleep elsewhere.\(^{22}\)

To perceive this as brutal interference with Muslim female chastity, may, however, be an anachronism. Although virginity in a bride was regarded essential, a married woman was allowed to have lovers. The Worr Dasse took each other’s wives as *jaalto* (woman friend) just as the Boran did, not only with regard to Worr Dasse women but also with regard to the wives of other Boran. Even Worr Dasse men are reported to have had Boran *jaalto*, which is quite conformous with the logic of the tiriso relationship as a form of collective adoption whereby two lineages become "brothers". And it is to the wives of real or classical factory brothers that one has privileged access.

As it was not asymmetrical, this relationship involving sexual rights may not have been perceived as humiliating at the time when it was practiced, but only appear so in retrospection.

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\(^{22}\) Interview by G.S. with Mohammed Raasa, Sakuye, Dabel, January 1992.
Hospitality also had to be practiced with regard to food. A host might have been honoured by his role. Now, however, also this aspect of the tiriso relationship is described in negative terms, and the Boran are depicted as demanding:

*Chiicho mogole gaala gafuud’a!*

"Bring a milk container as big as the thigh of a camel!"²³

As has already been illustrated in the case of the qaalu who is not allowed to drink water which has been transported on the back of donkeys and therefore needs loading camels, although camels are not raised locally but have to be provided by the Worr Dasse of the southern lowlands, one aspect of the tiriso relationship is that it established a mutual dependence. We also find such instances of dependence of the Boran on their tiriso dependents in the ritual field, where certain paraphernalia for Boran rituals have to be provided by Worr Dasse.

It was the duty and the privilege of the Garre to provide the Abba Gada of the Boran with a banner called Baqala Faaji. In older times it was provided by Ali Abdi (of the lineage Reer Mug). Ali Daayo (Odomay), Shabba Aliou (Banna) and Abdi Ali (Kilia). Then, four subsequent Abba Gada took it from the Qaalic Uruble lineage of the Birkaya clan of the Garre. These four Abba Gada were Bule Dabassa (1929-36), Aga Adi (1936-44), Guyyo Boru (1944-52) and Mad Galma (1952-60).

When handed over in the way described as proper, the Baqala Faaji is taken by 7x7 youths. These 49 raaba are awaited by their Garre hosts and preparations have been done for them: an ox has been castrated and fattened, water and firewood has been stored. Then they come singing the ceremonial t’unne song and settle outside the village as nyaacis ('people to be fed'). When the cattle is driven in in the evening, they follow it singing into the village and move through the cattle enclosure.

At night they slaughter their ox and spend the night feasting. In the morning each of them gets a fur ring (med’ic) to be worn around the wrist from the hide of the ox. The women of the village have already prepared oil which has been perfumed with gay and fit’o (aromatic parts of plants) and smear the oil on the gamme (tonsures) of the raaba, having embellished themselves for this action.

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Two of the leaders of the raaba are then called aside - one from the Digalu clan, the other from Matt'ari. The two parts of the Baqala Faaji, Baqala (a white cloth) and Faaji (a red cloth), are then wrapped in marduuf (cotton cloth) and handed to them with blessings. The two will take the Baqala Faaji to the yaa, the gada settlement, without showing it to anybody else.

On a later occasion, the godiyya ceremony when the raaba are shaved and promoted to a status of senior warriorhood, the Baqala Faaji is tied to a pole and held up, while the raaba dance the d'okisu dance around it. It is exposed to the eyes of the public only on this occasion.

It was the Abba Gada Jaldes Liban (1960-68) who neglected the proper way to receive the Baqala Faaji and thereby brought misfortune to his gada period. He did not take it from the Garre but got some appropriate cloth from northern Somali traders (Ejjii), the family of Warame Garweyn who lived in the Bandarsalaam settlement of Moiyale and bought the cloths from Ali Sigaara ('Cigarette' Ali, and old northern Somali pioneer trader from Kenya). Jaldes Liban did not undergo the trouble of collecting the cloths himself, but sent his deputy, Jaldes Jillo with two men. They tied it unceremonially to the saddle of one of their mules and went with it.

Devastating droughts and the shifita wars of the 60s are believed to be a consequence of this disregard for the Baqala Faaji and the Garre. Jaldes Liban himself was killed by shifita.

6. Conclusions

It has been shown that the Oromo/Somali relationship is by no ways a clear one of simple and mutually exclusive categories. There are Oromo speakers who claim Somali genealogies, there are webs of inter-clan ties between "original" Oromo and people of Somali and Somaloid origin, there is ritual cooperation and interdependence. The relationship is far more complicated than anything administrators ever dream of.

Any reasonable policy dealing with territorial divisions and the rights of people to be politically represented in a given territory will have to take into account that people have been living in ethnically mixed settings since times immemorial. Any new order based on the notion of a homogeneous nation state will here be even more inappropriate than it has been in Europe, from where it has been imported. Group rights will have to be respected by
forms of minority representation, but also the freedom of the individual to change his affiliation and to seek acceptance into another community has to be maintained. Otherwise the principle of territorial subdivisions along ethnic lines might end up in a system reminiscent of apartheid and bantustans.

Whether or not after all the atrocities which have happened, a peaceful coexistence of Boran, Garre and Gabbra will be possible in the future, remains doubtful. The following story about the Man and the Snake, told by a Garre elder, strikes some sad notes. But negative examples are there to point to what needs to be overcome.

Once during a prolonged drought a man went in search of pasture and water. He came to the land of a snake. He requested the snake to let him migrate to this land with plenty of pasture and water. After discussing over the possibilities of a man/snake relationship, they somehow agreed to live together amicably in the land of the snake.

The man had a herd of cattle. They got water at a certain well. Near the well grew a large oda tree with wide branches. Some of its roots lay bare. On one of these roots the snake rested every day. The cattle, whenever they came to drink water, were scared by the sight of the snake resting on the large root. The man knew this but could not do anything about it. One day he said to himself, "how can this beast scare away my cows every time they drink the water. Today I will get rid of it and live without worries in this land". On the other hand the snake had always been on the alert knowing very well that Man and Snake cannot live together in peace.

The man drove the cattle to the well. He saw the snake resting quietly as usual. He came close and thinking the snake was asleep, raised his hand axe and with all its weight he hit the root cutting through it, missing the snake which had slipped away. He had violated the agreement he made himself. Enmity was created between the two. In revenge, the snake bit the son of the man not long after.

The son of the man died and his father buried him near the well under the oda tree not far from where the snake used to rest. The relationship was severed and the man moved away from that area.

After some time the man approached the snake again to reconcile. The snake insisted that it would not be possible. But the man continued to persuade it to agree to restore relations of goodwill. In the end the snake asked: "Hey man, as I see this root of the oda tree and as you see this grave of your son, would it be possible for peace to prevail?" The man agreed it would be possible if both will agree with honesty. In the
end they reconciled and lived in peace for a while. One day the snake got into the well and waited for the man to come and draw the water for his herd. The man came and went hurriedly into the well. The snake bit him and he died instantly.

_Garrtiin gaal isii ka Borani tiffatu arga, Boraniillen Tula Laee ka Garrtiin fud'attu arga, nageenni hinum tola?_
- "As the Garre are watching their camels tended by the Boran and as the Boran are watching the Laee Wells taken over by the Garre, will peace be possible?"  

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