

**THE MILK OF THE BOSWELLIA FORESTS:  
FRANKINCENSE PRODUCTION AMONG THE PASTORAL SOMALI**

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**ABSTRACT**

The thesis is a study of the 'ownership', production and marketing of frankincense in Somalia. It considers first the various local and wider uses of frankincense, both industrial and non-industrial. It then examines the place of frankincense trees in the general classification of property in Somalia, with further consideration of the dominance of pastoral concepts in the frankincense sector and sedentary cultivation in northern Somalia. The thesis also analysis the organisation and social relations of frankincense production prior to 1969, and examines the subsequent transformations which have followed the introduction of cooperatives in this sector of the Somali economy.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study is the first anthropological work on the 'ownership', production and marketing of frankincense in Somalia. It is based on ten months' field research in the north-east frankincense region of Somalia in 1984/5. The frankincense collecting communities are sparsely distributed across a single ecological zone - the maritime escarpment which grows the frankincense bearing species in Bari and Erigavo regions. The fairly uniform culture of these communities allows us to treat this localised but important sector of the national economy as a unit of analysis. My command of the Somali language and my intensive knowledge of the economic groups in northern Somalia, permitted me to undertake a detailed sector analysis of the subject.

Of first importance, the study is a comparative analysis of the sedentary, localised economies of frankincense gathering and crop production, within the predominant pastoral system of northern Somalia. However, the thesis has a wider comparative relevance as well. For example, the account of the development of cooperatives is a contribution to the general anthropological literature on this important topic.

In the first chapter, and to a limited extent in the next one also, I examine written sources in the light of my field data. These first chapters deal with the current

uses of frankincense, both industrial and non-industrial, local and wider uses. They cover at some length, the importance of frankincense, partly because the subject is scarcely dealt with in the literature, with the sacred attributes of incense tending to obscure its other practical values.

Chapters three, four and five, deal with property in general. Although a limited account of the primary community resources in the northern region exists in the work of I.M. Lewis (1961), a comparative analysis of basic property categories has not been previously carried out. Chapters three and four show the dominance of the pastoral outlook and world view of the Somalis regardless of economic specialisation - a recognised predisposition but one that has not been adequately documented. As shown in chapter three, Somalis classify property into two broad categories: animate or pastoral wealth nool and inanimate or non-pastoral wealth mood. The tenacity of pastoral values is further illustrated in the fourth chapter where northern economic groups are shown to work on a camel standard. In the glorification of their respective economies, rival community poet spokesmen derive metaphors and images from the dominant pastoral culture. Thus frankincense collectors and sedentary cultivators in northern Somalia describe their primary sources of exploitation as important as camel herds are.

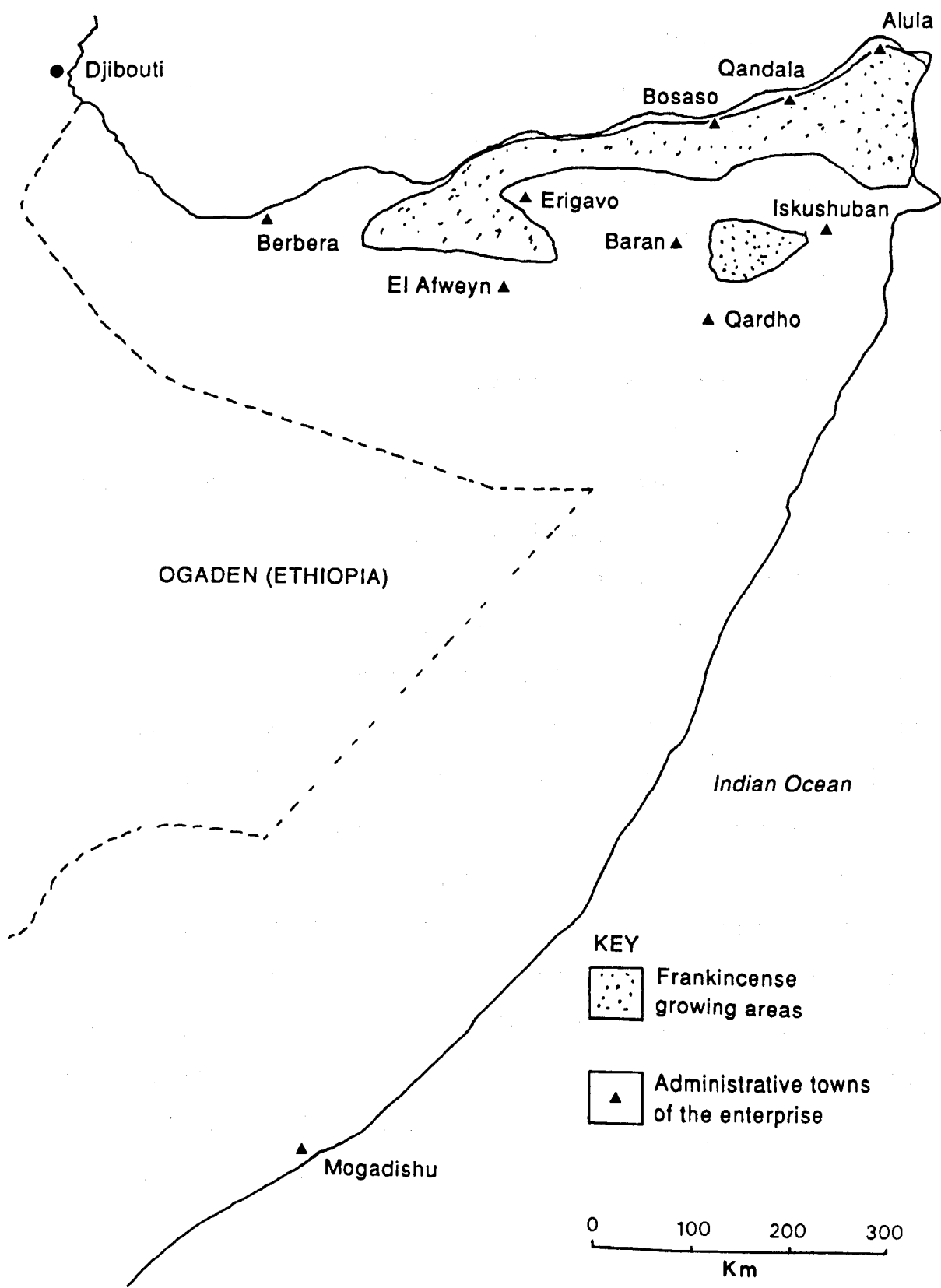
Chapter five provides new ethnographic material on the system of land use in the frankincense region of Somalia.

Pastoral and sedentary land use systems described by I.M. Lewis (1961) are compared with the frankincense tenurial pattern. Rental and share-cropping arrangements which are common in the exploitation of frankincense display unbalanced relations with respect to access to property between landless tenants and right-holders, groups who commonly belong to the same corporate lineage. These unbalanced relations regulating access to the community property are not found in other, more egalitarian economic groups in northern Somalia.

Chapter six deals with organisation of the production of frankincense. The chief unit of production is commonly an agnatic work party whose members co-labour in a particular season. They share the investment expenditure on an equal basis. This collective rule in the sphere of production is distinguished from the consumption domain where members are individually held responsible for the seasonal credits incurred by their households. Each individual pays family credits with his respective share from the final collective proceeds that are equally distributed after the total collective expenditure is deducted. In the past, these different economic patterns took place in a social context of exploitation between traders who were the source of credits and kin client producers. Agnatic solidarity is also very common in other economies in the north, but these are formally organised for particular purposes of collective interest. The cultivating nuclear or herding family is primarily the chief unit of production and consumption.

The last chapter accounts for the persistent failure of the cooperative development in the frankincense sector in Somalia. My analysis differs from the conventional theories which claim social organisation of underdeveloped societies as the facilitating or constraining factor in the development of an effective cooperative movement. I argue that economic differences and unbalanced relations between local traders and their kin client collectors is the main dysfunctional force that often fails the cooperative movement.

Figure 1: Map of Somalia showing frankincense growing areas and administrative towns of the enterprise



## CHAPTER ONE: SOMALIA AND THE FRANKINCENSE TRADE

### Major Types of Frankincense and their Source

As biblical products of ancient ritual use, frankincense may be thought to be a thing in the past which has little or no significance in modern times. Because of this I thought it might be useful to start the thesis with a chapter exploring the importance of frankincense trade for Somalia and its known industrial uses in modern times.

Nomenclature and taxonomy of the Somali and Arabian frankincense trees which are my main concern will be dealt with in sufficient detail in a later chapter. Somali frankincense bearing species that grow in the north-eastern region belong to the genus *Boswellia* of the Burseraceae family. According to the latest botanical evidence (M. Thulin and A.M. Warfa: 1987) only two frankincense bearing species are known to be found in the frankincense region of Somalia. 1) *Boswellia sacra* Fluckiger (synonymous with *Boswellia carteri* Bird.). This is the moxor species which yield an incense that is known locally as beeyo, and Somali type olibanum in the international trade jargon. 2) *Boswellia frereana* Birdw. Yagcar is the Somali name for this species. It produces incense that is known as meydi in Somalia, and luban lami in Arabia. This seems to be a localised species which is exploited only in the frankincense region of Somalia.

*Boswellia sacra* also grow in southern Arabia (Hadhramaut region in southern Yemen and Dhofar in Oman) where it may have been exploited since antiquity. Frankincense which may derive from *Boswellia sacra* and is referred to as 'Ogaden quality' in the international trade, is also produced in the Ogaden region in Ethiopia.

The ground distribution of the Yagcar species is characteristically described as between 5 and 60 km from the coast, while its upward distribution is said to extend from an elevation starting from near sea level to 750 m or more (Person et al: 1987).

The moxor plant population is much more widespread than maritime growing Yagcar. It extends from the coastal hills to about 200 km in the hinterland. In places where the coastline is steep and rocky, they can be found growing at sea level. The highest elevation where moxor trees are found growing is 1230 m.

Apart from Somalia and southern Arabia where small quantities of frankincense mostly for domestic use is produced, Ethiopia, Sudan and India rank as important incense producing countries. Ethiopia and Sudan produce frankincense which is internationally referred to as 'Eritrean type' *olibanum* that is derived from *Boswellia papyrifera* (Del) Host. The arid region in north-west India grow a species, *B. serrata*, which is a source of relatively inferior frankincense.

In addition to the frankincense bearing species, Somalia grows numerous *Commiphora* species the taxonomy of which is complex and little explored. Some of the most important gums that are commercially exploited are: Myrrh which comes from the dhidin tree, *Commiphora myrrh* (Nees) Engl. In Somali myrrh gum is known as malmal. *Opoponax xabag Xadi* and hagar or low grade myrrh is another important gum. Previous writers have described it as obtained from *C.erythrae* Engl.var.*glabreseens*. A species classified as *C.erythrae* is thought of as the true source of hagar. Frankincense bearing species, grow in territorially bounded collection areas xiji which are considered locally as fields. Characteristically they belong to a core of agnatic families, most commonly less than ten nuclear families that own one or more incense fields they inherited from the first ancestor holder from whom they trace descent over one to three generations.

*Commiphora* species are very widely distributed. They are located mainly in the dry inland areas, from Erigavo district in the north to the lower Juba in the south, with concentrations on areas closer to the Ethiopian and Kenyan borders. Important areas of collection include: Laas-caanood, Gaalkacaya, Dhuusamareeb, Bakool, Gedo, Xudur, Luuq, and Baydhaba. Since large quantities of *Commiphora* gums are produced across the border in neighbouring Ogaden and Wajir regions in Ethiopia and Kenya respectively, a considerable trans-border trade operates. Some sources suggest that more than half of Somali's myrrh exports originate in Ogaden in eastern Ethiopia.

Depending upon the method of production, two types of myrrh are produced. Hussul is superior and are larger pieces of gum which consists of collection from natural exudation that occurs when trees burst open after adequate rain. The gum that is harvested from the incision administered on the bark of the myrrh plant is known as zara.

Drake-Brokeman (1912: 302-305) distinguished two types of myrrh. An inferior quality known as guban malmal which is collected in the torrid coastal belt Guban, and a better quality called ogo malmal which is gathered in the interior Oogo. At present myrrh is not produced in the north-east frankincense region of Somalia although it is acknowledged to have been collected in the past.

Although Commiphora trees are exploited like frankincense plants, they are not subject to prescriptive rights similar to those pertaining to the more valuable Boswellias. Like pasturage and naturally occurring water, access to the exploitation of Commiphora plants is not restricted. Free access and part time exploitation by nomadic families are thought to cause considerable damage to the trees. Less concern for impurities and sometimes adulterating species lower the quality of the product, and harmful methods of tapping do considerable damage to the Commiphora populations.

As valuable export commodities, myrrh and other Commiphora gums are known to have been produced in Somalia together

with frankincense for centuries. This makes it difficult to explain the sharp distinction in the rights of 'ownership' of frankincense and Commiphora properties. Commercial frankincense is localised and is produced only in the north-eastern frankincense region. At present it is also more expensive than all the other natural gums that are widely distributed. While scarcity and value factors may explain the 'ownership' of frankincense and not other Commiphora plants at present, in the past when the relative value of frankincense and myrrh has not been as different as it is today, why frankincense became an object of acquisition is not an easy question to answer. Presumably the demand for frankincense may have been stable with time compared to myrrh and other Commiphora gums.

Direct exploitation by individual members of the joint holding agnatic unit, traditional share-cropping, and most commonly a wide-spreading seasonal rental arrangement constitute the major socio-economic forms in the exploitation of frankincense.

Frankincense production is a corporate enterprise. The chief unit of production is a work party which consists of two or more co-labourers. Less commonly it may consist of a father and his unmarried adult sons, two or more brothers residing in the area, patrilateral cousins and sometimes affines; but most commonly the work party consists of kinsmen who belong to the same 'dia-paying group' - a corporate unit which may consist of a lineage or alliance of small lineages whose members count four to eight

generations to a common ancestor and pay blood compensation dia corporately.

The exploitation of frankincense is seasonal and consists of regulated tapping cycles. About twelve successive tapping cycles which continue for a period of about ten months is acknowledged as ideal in the production of meydi incense. While about ten tapping cycles in a period of about eight months is thought good in the production of beeyo incense.

#### Marketing Policies of Previous Governments

Relations of economic exploitation seem to have obtained persistently between incense collectors and local merchants. Understandably this has provided a moral justification for governments to interfere in the sector, often in initiating less exploitative marketing organisations.

Written sources indicate that during their period of rule the Italians tried to introduce changes in the marketing of frankincense before independence in 1960. In 1930, the then Italian governor in Bosao introduced a marketing policy which ruled that goods must be sold at auction in local markets (cf Guidotti 1930: 10). Collectors in Baar-gaal village enthusiastically received the change as witnessed by a poem devoted to commemorate the event (see Chapter Seven) and lauding the benign colonial governor and

his policy. An enterprise known as 'Olibanum Inc.' was installed to improve marketing conditions. Unfortunately events in the Second World War caused the enterprise to fail.

Consequently the trade relapsed into the hands of the local traders. Local merchants dominated the trade in frankincense until 1948. In that year, according to an expatriate marketing report prepared for the civilian government preceding the present revolutionary regime, multinational enterprises (Seferian, Besse) developed interest in the trade and tried to install effective marketing organisation (cf. Hendrikson 1968: 22).

After a brief unsuccessful engagement, the multinational companies ceased their activities in Somalia in 1951. Hendrikson explains their failure as primarily due to the tenacity of the customary bond between the local incense collectors and their kin traders who were the source of essential credits. Hence the trade once more relapsed into the hands of the local traders.

With financial assistance from the Credito Somalo Bank, during the colonial period, a cooperative experiment was initiated in the frankincense producing districts in Bosaso region. A consortium known as 'Consorsio Incenso Migiurtinia Somalo' (CIMS) was founded in 1955. Like its predecessors, this cooperative scheme of change foundered in 1958 (ibid: 23).

In the British Somaliland Protectorate, the colonial administration's policy for the contiguous frankincense region, Erigavo, had been modest compared to the interventionist policy of Italian administration pursued in Bosaso region. The British however were not indifferent to the oppressive marketing system for the poor collectors, and considered the possibility of introducing public auctions in Aden for the frankincense imported from Somalia. The idea was later dropped, thus opting not to interfere in marketing principles as testified in an unpublished report (Peck, 1937). Before independence in 1960, the British built a much needed warehouse to be used by Somalis in Aden, and another store at Meydh village in Erigavo district. Somali merchants from Bosaso region under the Italian rule knew this store as the 'northern store'. Northern Somalis in the Britishland Protectorate were known as 'northerns' by Southern Somalis as they still are.

Apparently not reflecting on the past colonial experience in Bari region, the independent Somali civilian government that succeeded colonial rule, adopted a simliar strategy that sought to create effective marketing organisations thought to eliminate or reduce exploitation of frankincense collectors, among other objectives. A government enterprise, Entente Nationale Ammassi Motoaratura (ENAM) was set up. This parastatal organisation collapsed in 1963 as the previous marketing bodies in the colonial era had done. (cf. Henrikson, 1968: 25).

On March 30 1965 a decree was issued celebrating the institution of a public organisation named Ente Nazionale Incenso (ENI). Before the parliament approved the organisation started to function. It finally ceased operating for lack of parliamentary authorisation. (Ibid: 25).

The reviewed past strategies of the previous governments, particularly in Bosaso region during the colonial period, project a static model of development which can be described as a pendulum oscillating between short-lived government installed marketing organisations and a resolute private sector that emerged after the failure of each initiative.

Henrikson summarised the reasons for the frankincense sector's resistance to modernisation and change as follows: Quoting a 1965 FAO report prepared for the Somali government, he indicted bad management, problems of quality and quantity of the goods, lack of qualified workers to perform adequately grading and sorting, and over\_manning of the marketing organisations.

The agents of reform often failed to disrupt the traditional relations between the client incense collectors and their merchant kin.

Also they had not been able to provide credit and other services more desirable than those provided by the local merchants.

The monopoly often led to an informal market, and collectors found it profitable to sell superior

frankincense for higher prices to the private traders rather than to the public organisation which paid lower prices. The collectors sold unattractive inferior merchandise for the regulated price to the introduced organisations.

The collectors were claimed not to have become accustomed to money economy and therefore defaulted or delayed paying credits to Credito Somalo Bank.

Local state agents were not capable to carry out rational economic decisions, since important decisions were taken at higher levels. Decentralised administration encouraged embezzlement and fraud.

In the last chapter on cooperativisation in the present study, I argue that exploitation of frankincense collectors by local kin merchants acts as the most important factor that is restraining the development of an effective enterprise in the frankincense sector of Somalia. This implies that other dysfunctional variables quoted above could be considered as supplementary forces which contribute to undermine the development of a viable and dynamic enterprise.

### Aden Market

Before we look into the frankincense trade between Aden and the frankincense region in the north-eastern Somalia, it may be useful to glimpse the importance of the frankincense trade for the history of the nation. According to the

Somali historian A.A. Hersi, the north-eastern coasts of Somaliland derived their importance from the ancient trade of incense goods. Myrrh and frankincense were produced substantially in southern Arabia and the Red sea maritime coastal region of north-eastern Somalia. Valued for their medicinal, pleasant odour and sacred religious utility gums and resins of Somaliland were exported since ancient times to classical civilisations, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Persians and Macedonians. To acquire these esteemed aromatic forest products ancient peoples of these civilisations were reported to pay high prices and even periodically organised fabulous expeditions to reach these exotic goods in their original sources, southern Arabia and the Horn of Africa (A.A. Hersi, 1977: 44-46).

The goods northern Somalia traded for centuries are documented by I.M. Lewis. "For centuries the northern Somali coast has been linked with its Abyssinian hinterland, and with Arabia and the Far East. From about the tenth century and probably earlier, Muslim Arab and Persian settlers developed a string of commercial coastal centres, in part probably a legacy from classical times, exporting slaves and ivory from the Abyssinian hinterland and locally produced skins, hides, precious gums, ghee, and ostrich feathers. It was of course from the export of myrrh and frankincense that the Somali coast was most widely known in early times. But although Somaliland is still the world's main source of these gums, the export of hides and skins, and livestock on the hoof, chiefly to Aden, makes a far more important contribution to northern

Somali economy" (I.M. Lewis, 1962: 364).

The above quoted sources signify the importance of frankincense and Commiphora gums like myrrh for Somalia's early relations with the outside world. The frankincense trade is not only of importance for students of Somali history and culture, it also stimulates nostalgic feelings among Somalis, particularly the inhabitants of the frankincense region who because of the geographical location of their country are known as 'the people in the east' reer bari. A famous elder poet, X. Adan Afqalooc, who belongs to a frankincense holding clan in Erigavo region, commented on the historical importance of the frankincense trade in the opening remarks of a long poem which details the Somali culture in 1983. (See B1, appendix B for the Somali text.) The Somali texts of the translated poems in the study are compiled in Appendix B.

B1

Centuries past in the ancient history of the nation  
 The time we were known as the 'land of Punt' and prosperity  
 The Egyptian pharaohs were world power  
 They purchased ostrich feathers and our meydi incense  
 No commerce preceded the trade in frankincense merchandise  
 We pioneered the mercantile craft unknown to humanity  
 From those early times to the present mobile nomadic  
 tradition of the society  
 I haven't changed the traditional culture which I preach  
 and sustain.

The elder poet rightly claimed that the predominantly pastoral Somalis boast of an early mercantile culture. As the verse indicates, Somalis tend to be interested in accounts of the pharaonic Queen Hatshepsut's fabulous expedition to the Horn of Africa in the 15 century BC.

Ethnocentric but innocuous remarks claiming that Somalis pioneered the mercantile tradition, are typical of the Somali poets who glamorise any legitimate cause at their disposal, in this case, the glorification of the early incense trade.

The most longstanding and consequential of Somalia's ties with the outside world is considered to be that with Arabia. Since the frankincense trade was most important for the early interaction of the two societies, one may suggest that the aromatic trade is somehow implicated in the discourse on the origin of the Somalis. The authors of a recent work summarised the essence of this debate. In their words, "The absence, or paucity, of documentary historical evidence compels the student of early Somali history to rely on the evidence of archeology, anthropology, historical linguistics, oral tradition, and related fields. Although the application of methods of these disciplines to the Somali past is still in its infancy, it has already provided sufficient insights to revolutionise our understanding of ancient Somali history and, in particular, to overturn conventional interpretations of the origins and migrations of the Somali

people. Where once conventional wisdom held that the Somalis originated from the Red Sea, if not from across the sea in Southern Arabia, it is now all but certain that the ancestral home of the Somalis, along with related Cushitic peoples, has to be sought in the highlands of Southern Ethiopia. Where once it was held that the migration into the Somali coast of Arabian Muslim saints was central to the formation of Somali society, it now appears that the Arab factor other than the conversion to Islam is not pivotal or even crucial to the Somali past. Where once it was thought that the migration of the Somalis took a north-south direction the opposite now seems the case." (David D. Latin and Said S. Samatar, 1987: 4-5).

Despite the fact that recent writers minimise the implications of the Arab factor for the origin of the Somalis, apart from Islam, the Arabian influence on some areas of Somali culture is widely acknowledged. According to Hersi (1977), small-scale Arab migration resulted in some limited changes in ethnic composition of the populations on the Somali coast. This ethnic transformation has occurred most noticeably at the two peripheries where plural or mixed subcultures evolved. Thus we find Zeila'aawi' mixed culture at the ancient North-west port of Zeila and Benadir'i' culture along the Southern coast round Mogadishu - both sites of early Arab settlement. Islam and Arab settlers also introduced some Arab cultural elements, i.e. archaeological styles and techniques, satorial designs, household implements, foodstuffs and table etiquette, schooling and the written

literacy tradition in Arabic.

Moreover, Hersi argues that Arabian influence features in the economy and political sphere of the Somali society. Trade networks that connected coastal export centres and various inland trade routes, and the existence of many commerce words of Arabic provenance (e.g. such basic words as trader, profit, loss, debt, loan, etc.) in the Somali language testify to the former fact. Politically, the Arabian influence led to the emergence of centralised political institutions which were previously non-existent. For example, the emergence of the Ajuran state on the Banadir coast and the Adal state in the north-west round Zeila. (See I.M Lewis, 1988: 20-23, 33-39).

It is not my aim to contribute to the debate on the origin of the Somalis by pointing out the historical importance of the frankincense trade. Nor do I intend to imply that export of frankincense and myrrh has entirely been responsible for such developments. Nevertheless the widely acknowledged importance of the aromatic trade, the fact that Arabian and Somali systems of 'ownership' and exploitation of Boswellias are very similar, seem to constitute one area where the two cultures closely interacted: this suggests that historians and archeologists should carry out further research which might tell us more about the incense trade.

Livestock trade with Arabia, which is now the mainstay of the Somali economy, has also been suggested to be ancient,

though not as ancient as the frankincense trade. According to Swift, "This trade is very ancient. For centuries, Somali nomads have exchanged pastoral and wild products for agricultural and manufactured goods. Local exchange was part of a long distance trading network linking the north-east coast of Africa, Egypt, Persia and India. Indian cloth from Gujerat was sent to East Africa by the thirteenth century. Ports such as Zeila and Berbera on the north, and Mogadishu in the south, provided links between foreign traders, Somali local produce and caravans of goods from the interior of Africa. When Ibna Battuta travelled from Aden to Zeila and Mogadishu in January 1330 A.D., all three towns were rich from commerce in ivory, rhinoceros horn, gums, ostrich feathers, and hides and skins. In 1511 Jedda imported meat from Zeila and Berbera, and Indian cloth, glassbeads, raisins and dates were sent to Somalia from Aden, in return for ivory and slaves; northern Somali horses were traded for southern Somali goods" (Jeremy Swift, 1979: 448, citing Pires, 1944: 11).

In modern times, from the 19th century until after World War Two, Aden has been the major export emporium for Somali gums. (See Nigel Groom, 1981, for the frankincense trade). Merchants there processed and re-graded imported incense for export to the international consumers.

Following the occupation of Aden by the British in 1839 as a stopping station on the short route to India, a parallel livestock trade to Aden also became very important (cf. I.M. Lewis 1980: 40). This trade substantially increased

to the extent that in 1869 the northern Somali port of Berbera supplied all the livestock consumed by the British Garrison there and other inhabitants of Aden (cf. Jeremy Swift, 1979: 448-449). Exported live animals and indeed frankincense merchandise were exchanged for imported grain, sugar, dates, iron, beads, salt and especially cloth from America and India.

Using oral sources obtained from elders in the north-east frankincense region, the following account is a reconstruction of the unbalanced trade relations Somali merchants claim they experienced in Aden. Somali informants speak of oppression meted out against them by Arab patrons. This seems to suggest that the period concerned may be about the beginning of the twentieth century when an increasing number of local Yemenis joined the flourishing business in Aden which had earlier been dominated by Europeans, Indians and other aliens (for fuller details of the trade between Aden and northern Somalia see Gavin, 1975).

My account refers to the period between early twentieth century until 1977 when the present government severed diplomatic ties with the Yemen Democratic Republic because of its support to Ethiopia in the 1977-78 Ogaden War. I realise that the data is a one sided construction and tells us almost nothing about mercantile culture and specialisation in Aden at the time, and may also have limited historical value. However, given these limitations, I hope it will generate some useful

information which may enable us to compare the terms of trade that existed in Aden, with the well documented relations that operated between foreign merchants and Somali patrons in the major trading centres in Somalia.

Incense men in Erigavo district marked the closing of the incense harvesting season by this song which they sang, as they still do, when the goods were being finally packaged for transportation to major collection centres.

B2

I and incense are tired of each other

It is time that you (incense) move on to town stores and trading dhows

From the coastal export towns men escorted a blessing to the exported incense.

B3

So that the white and stocky Arabs may not defer your sale  
May Allah make them relish you the way they cherish amber.

Written sources indicate that marketing conditions for frankincense were disadvantageous in Aden. Somalis were often forced to sell frankincense at knock-down prices. In the absence of special stores, delay in selling fragile frankincense goods caused the deterioration of the quality of the product and consequent price reduction (cf. John Lawrie, 1954: 26).

Elders in the frankincense region state that prior to the

development of Aden as a commercial centre, frankincense was exported to the distant port of Bombay in India. Many elderly people still remember relatives lost in those hazardous journeys to Bombay. Such journeys are frequently mentioned in the Zeila'aawi' dance songs popular in Borama and the old city of Zeila. Captain S.B. Miles (1872: 65) mentioned the frankincense trade to India. He related that meydi incense was exported to Jedda and Yemeni ports, while Bedawi quality which corresponds to the beeyo type went to Bombay to be re-exported to Europe.

Despite their dissatisfaction with the prevailing marketing conditions, Somalis preferred to trade in Aden. First, because of its close proximity to the Somali northern Makhir Coast. Second, the dhows that plied between Somalia and external markets were not strong enough for distant ventures.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned factors, the ability of many Somalis to speak Arabic and their understanding of Islamic culture in general has indeed been a promoting factor for the development of trade between Aden and the northern region of Somalia. Literacy in Arabic was not only important in dealing with Aden merchants, it was also valuable for Somali merchants to run their local shops effectively. To infuse an aura of honesty in credit accounts provided for collectors, most traders in Bosaso district appended a sacred note in Arabic reading "Of all legitimate observers God is the one ultimately trustworthy", in the individual credit accounts for

clients. Traders non-literate in Arabic employed a religious man with a rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing to keep credit records and occasionally to calculate loss and profit accounts.

Today credit records of local traders do not contain sacred notes to affirm commercial honesty for gullible clients. However, most traders literate in Arabic still prefer to keep records in Arabic instead of Somali which has been written in the Latin script since 1972 and is widely used throughout the country.

Before the 1960s, when the British constructed a store to be used by Somalis in Aden, store installations were owned by non-Somalis. An assumed calculated reluctance of store owners to allow Somalis to store their goods for a time, and the fragile nature of frankincense which require protection from heat and moisture, is said to have impelled Somalis to sell their goods promptly without market speculation for knock-down prices.

Escorted by Somali brokers resident in Aden, Somalis approached Arab merchants. It is reported that in the process they had been subjected to degradation. For instance, a sale promotion call at the home of the Arab merchant is reported to have earned some Somalis an insult thrown against them, often by his children. In some cases, their knock on the door was deliberately not responded to.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, Yemeni

nationals in Aden may have monopolised the trade in frankincense because of awareness of or intimate knowledge of types of commercial frankincense, since a small quantity of frankincense has been produced in southern Yemen.

Some Somalis may have had regular patrons, but I was not able to obtain from the Somali informants the terms used to describe this relation, although as will be seen shortly patron-client relationship between small scale Somali traders in Aden and their kin clients did have a derogatory term.

Those Yemeni merchants who did a favour for Somalis by agreeing to buy their goods, usually obliged <sup>them</sup> to transport the goods to the trade store. Sometimes the purchase was not effected immediately and had to wait until such time the patron allows. This was seen as a ruthless tactic to reduce expectation and force the Somali customer to accept arbitrary low price. Moreover, in the event of purchase, frankincense packed in jute sacks or some other containers was slashed in the middle with a knife, ostensibly to display the goods for observation on the floor of the store. The customer not satisfied with the transaction was not in a position to terminate it, since his container had been damaged and goods spilled over the floor of the store.

Apart from the official duties, Aden merchants levied special payments upon their Somali clients. The most important tribute was known as Berberi (derived from the northern port of Berbera) which amounted 12.5 kg of free

incense for every 100 kg brought from the Somali customer. Another form of expedited free incense raajicad which differs from the former in amount was also exacted by Yemeni merchants in Aden. This is reported to have amounted to 6 kg of unpaid incense for a certain amount of purchased incense.

The service of the merchant staff also counted against Somalis who were said to be in a subordinate position against Arabs working in the store. It is said that the accountant was able to fiddle the sale price and hence deceive the vulnerable Somali. Similarly the sale's conductor was also able to hold back the weighing scale surreptitiously in order to extort extra unaccounted incense in the process.

Not infrequently, many Somalis were required to exchange the value of their goods in unpaid cash price for consumer items available at the time in the store of the Arab merchant. Although cash payments were not impossible, especially after the Second World War, and anyhow Somalis desired most of the exchange goods on offer, the barter practice denied some Somalis the choice to shop for suitable or worthy goods. In some cases, Arab merchants demanded to exchange incense for shoddy goods that may have expired or remained in store for a long time, expired dates, rice spoiled by water or low quality cloth. Thus Somalis acted as dumping ground for undesirable products that Arabs were keen to clear out.

Another mechanism used to swindle the Somali merchant involved making heavier weights so that they gave a false value favourable to the Arab purchaser. Because of these problems Somalis found it imperative to come to terms with merchant staff, usually by paying tips to avert the consequences of their deceptive tendencies.

Backdating cheques, or making them payable to an Arab crony who might demand or persuade the Somali to exchange the value of the cheque for goods in his store has also been reported to have occurred to many Somalis. Particularly interesting is a recent story told by a cooperative accountant in Erigavo. The Arab merchant who bought his frankincense in Aden in 1966 went to Egypt without settling accounts with the Somali client. After two months waiting for him to return, the Somali finally returned home. The indebted Arab fortunately came to Somalia to get frankincense in 1976. Anticipating the reprisal of the Somali, he remitted the standing debt to the regional account of the Somali shortly before his trip to the frankincense region of Somalia.

Somalis claim some sort of understanding existed between Aden merchants to maintain their superordinate position vis-a-vis Somali traders. For example, if a Somali got dissatisfied with a particular transaction, and hence tried to change to a different patron, he was rebuffed or told to return to the first dealer or else be subjected to a worse treatment.

After the 1950s most of the special tributes ceased and the scale of exploitation greatly diminished. Notwithstanding the British-constructed store mentioned earlier which did improve the situation, a small scale Somali community emerged as a result of the frankincense and livestock trade between northern Somalia and Aden before independence. Some of the Somalis living in Aden started as brokers mediating between Arabs and their kin traders from areas of their origin in Somalia.

Certainly Somalis preferred to trade with their kin traders in Aden. They could use the customary kin obligation to try to reduce exploitation, haggle on price, and moreover demand credits and other forms of assistance. Besides this, Somali traders were given a derogatory term dooxato literally 'rippers'. This refers to the practice mentioned earlier where incense packages were slashed in the middle to pour over the contents on the floor of the store for observation and evaluation, a practice detested by the Somalis.

At this point it may be of interest to note the position of the Somali brokers in Aden. With respect to kin obligations, they were expected to assist in getting satisfactory value for their products from Arabs whom they were powerless against. Since it was in their interest to sell the goods to obtain a commission, they had to try to convince kin owners, if they were not satisfied with a deal, to accept it.

The broker's persuasion and the owner's reluctance to accept a deal, sometimes developed into a heated argument if not a small scuffle. Hence Somalis vented anger and frustration against their kin brokers which might not be levelled against the powerful Arab merchants directly. We may say they were caught between conflicting forces, that is their desire to maintain the system which was their subsistence means and the moral assistance to their kin traders which they were not in a position to carry out satisfactorily.

In the chapter on frankincense production we will see how local traders employed some mechanisms of exploitation similar to those existing in Aden against their kin collectors in the frankincense producing areas in Somalia.

Writing on the relevance of the lineage organisation for modern commerce in northern Somalia, I.M. Lewis (1962) rightly argued that in northern Somalia, extensive political and economic links between the urban and rural society transpose the ties of agnatic solidarity on town life and in the sphere of commerce. Trade and trading villages are considered an integral part of the corporate interest of the lineages, and therefore must be promoted by using the pervasive idiom of agnation which serves as the foundation of collective interest.

Each lineage produces its rural entrepreneurs who seasonally or permanently operate retail and coffee shops that serve tea in the smaller rural villages in the

territory that is customarily associated with the group and generally dominated by its members. As Lewis explained success in trade by individual members is considered as a general well being of the lineage and I may say is valued as a source of pride in the intra-lineage competition for honour and excellence.

Traders and townspeople consider it a legitimate right to obtain the protection and support of their 'dia-paying group' which they are also customarily subject to patronise (see next chapter for further details of the importance of lineage in commerce and the social organisation of the Somali).

Institutions to organise long distance trade in the Horn which is inhabited by traditionally warring and antagonistic clans appeared very early in history. To bring the goods produced for trade in the hinterland to northern coastal export towns, the proprietors of the Somali camel caravan trade entered into a relationship of protection (trade patronage or *abbaan*) with prominent members of the hostile clans through whose territory they passed (cf I.M. Lewis, 1962: 380-381).

Gifts, wages or both, and sometimes a share in the profit, paid to the Somali patron, and the belief that a treaty entered in good faith ought to be binding on both parties, effectively extended the full protection of the abbaan's lineage to foreign traders. As Lewis explained it was the duty of the protecting lineage to avenge and demand full

compensation for any damages inflicted on the caravan by another lineage. Somali abbaans also looked after the general interest of foreign merchants and furthermore acted as 'agents', 'brokers', or 'care\_takers' maintaining order among the Somali customers in the northern coastal towns (Ibid: 381).

Despite isolated instances of reported extortion exacted by some Somali abbaans from foreign traders, perhaps the most significant effect of the trade patronage for the Arab and Indian merchants who earlier dominated the export trade in the major trading towns was the rigidity of the institution. Swift has suggested that the position of the abbaan was hereditary and not transferable (cf Jeremy Swift, 1979: 450). Consequently a foreign trader dissatisfied with the performance or integrity of the Somali abbaan was not able to terminate the relationship.

Since membership of a prominent social group and some positive qualities of the abbaan were considered by foreign merchants seeking protection, it is unlikely that many of them ended up in dealing with difficult Somali protectors. Albeit being introduced into the exclusive Somali clan system, it seems foreign traders were sympathetically and honestly treated by northern Somalis. Whether we consider this a lack of sophistication or a Somali character which saw foreigners as weak individuals who lack clan affiliation and therefore deserve protection, their apparently benign treatment sharply contrasts with the oppression Somalis claim to have been subjected to in Aden.

### Organisation of Marketing in Somalia Today

From 1971 the revolutionary government that came to power in 1969 organised frankincense collectors into local cooperatives. The frankincense sector became a specialised department in the National Trade Agency which had been created to handle imports and exports except livestock where a separate organisation, the Livestock Development Agency had been established to organise this important trade.

The frankincense enterprise which was set up to reform and modernise the traditional sector was placed under the sphere of the Union of the Somali Cooperative Movement (USCM) in 1984, because of stated privatisation policy, following the disappointing performance of the public organisations in general. Hence the enterprise took the title, Frankincense and Gums Development and Sales Agency. This organisation like its predecessors is the only one officially permitted to export frankincense, although private traders are currently allowed to export Commiphora gums, myrrh and opoponax and inferior qualities of frankincense.

There are nine district offices in the two frankincense regions, Bari and Sanaag. Each district office has warehouse facility for storing and processing frankincense prepared for export. Except Qardho district which is

exclusively beeyo producing and specialised in processing beeyo type of frankincense, all the other districts process meydi type of incense prior to shipment.

The organisation has five departments each with its director. The director with the general management form the organisation's management board. The headquarters are in Mogadishu. Exports are handled via offices in Mogadishu and Berbera, with beeyo and myrrh exported from the former and meydi from the latter.

The organisation has about 200 permanent staff, most of them working in district offices, employed as administrators, accountants, clerks, graders, storekeepers, etc. A considerable number of temporary staff and manual labour are recruited at times of peak activity. Including allowances, most of the permanent staff receive a salary within the range from 1,000-2,000 So. Shs. per month (equivalent to US \$11.1-22.2 at current official rate of exchange). This salary could barely sustain an average family living in a district town for two days. The gap between official wage and cost of living undermines workers' commitment to government employment, and encourages corruption and all sorts of subtle means of supplementing the meagre wages.

Other than administrative work, all other important tasks in the enterprise are performed in the traditional way. It is interesting to note that grading is supervised and evaluation of the purchased frankincense is done by local

employees of the organisation who were recruited from Aden where they acted as brokers or small scale traders. These introduced the system of grading in the frankincense sector of Somalia and now work in the districts of their ethnic groups. This illustrates that the most important technical duty of the organisation is still carried out by local experienced people not formally trained for the job, but who gained traditional knowledge early in their lives as collectors and acquired the technique of sorting raw goods from abroad in Aden.

Processing is manual and consists chiefly of hand picking operations, separating composite material by striking it with battons or cutting with knives. Separation of the bark is also effected by using a wide winnowing basket.

Sorting and grading is chiefly a women's task, though supervising men may initiate the process by sieving the raw or semi-processed incense into various sizes. They are part time recruits and at the time of the study earned 50 So. Shs for a certain amount of task, which may take one working day for the slow or new cleaner to complete. Besides the low pay, the job is difficult and dirty for the resin sticks to the body and skin, and the environment is smothered with incense dust whose effects are not yet known. There are no special clothes designed to protect them from the sticky resin, though women wear worn out clothes and paint their faces and hands with clay which facilitates washing off the sticky resin after work. Given this difficult and less rewarding task, it is not

surprising that women who do it are mainly the daughters of poor families raising some income for their families, or widowed women not supported by their husbands and not getting enough support from able close kin. Except those with no alternative means, who may stay some time in the job, those who manage to earn a small income just sufficient to start a shanty corner tea shop which is dominated by women, leave the task.

Meydi is processed into seven commercial grades. The first four grades are exported to Arabia. These most valuable grades are packaged in jute covered 25<sup>kg</sup>/<sub>kg</sub> cartons that are designed to prevent the fragile goods from getting pulverised during handling. Since meydi incense particularly the first two grades mushaad and mujarwal that consist of large pieces, are very expensive, they are handled with great care. Other commercial grades of meydi and beeyo are packaged in 50 kg jute sacks. In comparison beeyo tears are smaller and harder and therefore could endure rough handling more than fragile meydi products, though rough handling could cause blocking.

Information for the analysis of processing yield, description and standards of commercial frankincense, and the quantitative data on the international trade of frankincense and Commiphora gums have been derived from an expatriate marketing study carried out for the Somali government. It was written by J. Coulter, a marketing specialist in the Tropical Development and Research Institute in London in June 1987. The author visited the

major consumers of gum-resins, major trading centres and the Somali frankincense regions.

Quoting local expert opinion, Coulter estimated that on the average, meydi yields about 50% of the four most valuable grades, including 25% of mushaad and mujarwal. These figures were compared to those obtained for Erigavo in 1985 (29.4% and 12.9%) respectively, and those obtained in Djibouti (70-80% and 40-45%). It is also suggested that the low figures obtained in Erigavo are not unique and match those obtained in other districts where incense is processed, as well as the results of the deliveries to Berbera for the same year, 1985.

The high proportion of valuable grades noted in Djibouti is shown to contrast well with the low proportion obtained in Erigavo. This reflects a tendency for low grade material to be delivered to the official enterprise, while much of the superior grades are traded in the informal market which is discussed in detail in the last chapter.

On the basis of estimates offered by the organisation, yields provided by a store keeper in Mogadishu, and estimates calculated by the author for dispatches from Qardho in the period between January 1985 - June 1986, yields of beeyo, Grades 1 and 2, obtained in Qardho were 54-58%. The result is lower than the 70% given by the expert opinion, though the difference is narrower than the meydi. The corresponding figures for Mogadishu varied considerably from the other sources. This led Coulter to

conclude that there is no control system to permit processing yields to be checked against standards.

There is no regular grading system for Commiphora gums. Collectors bring ungraded gums to dealers. Manual processing is mainly done in Mogadishu where the products chiefly produced in central Somalia are exported. The gums are broadly categorised as cleaned or uncleaned, selected and unselected. Superior selected myrrh is described as transparent, sticky and crystalline upon breaking; unselected inferior myrrh appears as brown, opaque and conglomerate pieces mixed with bark and other impurities.

Lack of a reliable sorting system and the practice of adulterating species in a single shipment, has been suggested by Coulter to be primarily responsible for the quality problems which are reported to occur in exports destined for Europe and China.

Handling and packaging of Commiphora gums is not as delicate a matter as the meydi incense. Like olibanum, the gum is packaged in 75 kg jute sacks, though myrrh is thought to lose oil content which is an important factor for its value.

Private trade is legal and common in the natural Commiphora gums industry. Informal handling takes place in the form of underinvoicing or outright trafficking of these gums to avoid duties and financial regulations. In the case of frankincense, particularly the expensive meydi incense, the

first commercial grades are mostly exported illicitly.

Coulter described three reasons as the driving forces in the pervasive informal market. (1) The great difference between the official and informal exchange rates. He estimated that an illegal exporter can to date obtain about So. Shs. 150/ per US dollar of exports, while exports through the official system with 50% in hard currency and 50% in Shillings at the official rate of So Shs 90/ yield only So Shs 120/ per US dollar or export. (2) A tax of 17% on FOB value for all gum exports. (3) The need to obtain hard currency to import customer goods which traders commonly acknowledge to profit from them more than exported goods of frankincense and livestock.

Most of the illegally exported meydi goes to Djibouti for export to Arabia, while beeyo incense is exported to Aden and Djibouti. Myrrh mainly goes to Kenya and Djibouti.

Coulter stated that Somalis travelling to Saud Arabia and Djibouti often carry with them small quantities of meydi as part of their personal effects. At times large quantities are carried by presumably influential individuals who are permitted to export substantial quantities despite the monopoly.

Coulter's marketing study points out the ambiguity relating to the information on the trade of beeyo incense. On the one hand, Somali sources designate the public enterprise as the chief purchaser with small quantities falling into the

hands of the private traders. On the other hand, European buyers to date obtain most of their requirement from merchants in Djibouti and Aden.

Private dealers mainly handle Commiphora gums although the government for long aspired to integrate it to the entirely collectivised frankincense sector. Gum collectors, mainly nomads, sell to buyers in rural villages or transport the goods to Mogadishu. In some cases the gums are smuggled across the border to neighbouring countries.

#### International Trade

Official statistical data from the agency is unreliable. The unrecorded but substantial parallel trade and the fact that different species may be counted as a single species in a single shipment further complicate the matter.

~~Official~~ Coulter's report depends much on trade statistics, ~~but the lack of reliable data~~ may cause problems when estimating volume of trade for particular gums, as the following paragraph indicates.

Relevant statistics relating to important producing countries, major consumers and price patterns are shown in appendix A. The total estimated value of frankincense and gums that are annually exported from Somalia, US dollars 15.6 million, sharply contrasts with the average official figures for Somali gum exports, that is 2.8 million US dollar (including significant quantities of gum Arabic, in

the years 1984 and 1985).

As said earlier, exotic meydi incense is exploited only in the frankincense region of Somalia. Coulter estimated overall production at around 1000 tonnes per annum. Export volume, including no less than 500 tonnes of valuable chewing grades, is estimated at around 800-900 tonnes. The difference forms part of the locally traded inferior quality. Chief consumers are Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. Exports to those countries at present mainly pass through Djibouti. On average, meydi incense fetches an international price which is relatively higher than that for the other gums, with prices delivered to warehouse in Djibouti ranging from US dollar 1.75 to US dollar 40 per kg varying with quality.

Using official statistical data and informal trade figures obtained from Djibouti, Coulter detailed the volume of the meydi trade:

TABLE 1: Estimated Volume of the Meydi Trade

Exports by the agency for 1983-85, (Berbera office)	215 tonnes
Unofficial trade via Djibouti	550-650 tonnes
Allowance for other unofficial trade	35 tonnes
-----	
TOTAL	800-900 tonnes

Coulter explained that demand and the price for the superior chewing qualities of meydi have tremendously increased in oil rich Middle Eastern countries since the early 1970s, following the oil boom. The 1986 marketing pattern for meydi illustrates well the relations between demand and the vigour of the oil economy. Demand has fallen most likely due to the slump in the oil prices which adversely affected the price for the product.

Saudi Arabia is the chief market. It imports more than 80% of the total export value, with a high proportion of the most valuable chewing grades. Other significant markets are Egypt which mainly imports inferior and cheaper commercial grades Fas-saqiir, Shoooto, and Jimaanjim, most of it used as burning incense, and the Yemen Arab Republic.

Meydi is a prestige product and is valued in Saudi Arabia as a social commodity which is mainly consumed by women in the household during social gatherings (non-industrial uses of incense are covered in the next chapter).

Coulter explained that customers fall into two categories. Regular customers who are mainly Saudis and Yemenis resident in the country; and periodical pilgrimage including people visiting from other Arab countries for Haj 'obligatory pilgrimage made in accordance with the Islamic calendar' or Umrah 'non-obligatory pilgrimage made at any other convenient time', and who take home meydi as a gift par excellence and souvenir.

The Somali type olibanum beeyo is produced in large quantities in the frankincense region of Somalia and the contiguous Ogaden region. Exports from Somalia are estimated by Coulter not to exceed 150 tonnes a year, with international value of US dollar 40,000, (exempting those years in which ungraded beeyo is sold to China).

The chief markets are the ~~E~~EC countries where it is entirely consumed by the perfumery industry, and China where it has some medicinal uses.

Currently ~~E~~EC imports are estimated by Coulter at about 190 tonnes per annum, with some growth in consumption. The Somali produce is now mainly sent to the ~~E~~EC through Djibouti and Aden.

China's imports reached 1,657 tonnes in 1984, although most of the imports were of Eritrean olibanum. In 1983 and 1984 large quantities of ungraded 'Somali type' olibanum were purchased by China (300 and 100 tonnes respectively) from the Somali enterprise. Moreover, a small quantity of beeyo is sold to Dubei for chewing purposes, though meydi excels olibanum as a chewing material.

The international price for the Somali olibanum is about US dollar 6 per kg C&F in Europe for grade 1, and 3 dollars per kg for ungraded frankincense, although a lower price was reported for the Ogaden quality. The most widely traded olibanum is the Eritrean type. Eritrea and other parts of Ethiopia were the traditional sources of this

frankincense. However, in recent years because of migrant refugees from Ethiopia who had knowledge about the exploitation of frankincense, Sudan became a major supplier. Overall exports including informal trade are estimated by Coulter to exceed 2000 tonnes per annum.

China, North Africa, Europe and Latin America are the major markets. In China it is used as an ingredient in traditional pharmaceutical products, while in North African countries (Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), it is used as a chewing gum. In some Arab countries it is also used in traditional medicine. Mixed with water the solution is drunk by patients suffering from stomach ailments.

In Europe, Eritrea type olibanum is mainly used in church ritual. The bulk of the consumption takes place in countries with a substantial orthodox Christian population, i.e. Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Romania. Comparatively speaking Roman Catholic churches use less incense in ritual.

In Latin American countries the habit of burning incense is more widespread, as Coulter noted. Incense is burned not only in churches, it is also offered in various rites.

A greater proportion of the trade in olibanum is handled by dealers based in Hamburg, Marseilles and Jedda, as well as one dealer based in Geneva.

Coulter estimated the volume of the North African market within the range of 1,000 tonnes in 1984. Since then it has roughly halved due to import restrictions. The figures do not account for the informal imports into Egypt from Sudan, which are thought substantial but the author could not give an estimate. Saudi Arabia is estimated to consume 120 tonnes per annum, while Europe and Latin American markets are thought to absorb an estimated 500 tonnes per year. Most of China's olibanum imports (1,675 in 1984) were of the Eritrean type.

The domestic crisis of the 1970s in Ethiopia made the Eritrean type olibanum scarce and expensive. In 1981, Coulter reported that C&F prices in Hamburg reached around US dollar 5 per kg for white superior tears. Since then production has increased and prices decreased to a level comparatively lower than the price for the Somali type olibanum - roughly US dollar 1.50 - 2 per kg, depending on the quality of the product.

Of commercial importance is another type of frankincense that is produced in the arid areas of northern India. This is mainly used domestically for making incense sticks. Official export statistics for the years 1978/79 were 444 tonnes. Major markets are USA, Middle Eastern countries (especially Iraq, Oman and Syria), Hong Kong and Singapore. In those periods when Eritrea olibanum became scarce, Indian olibanum became much used instead, particularly for ritual purposes. The fragrance of the Ethiopian olibanum is superior to that of the Indian incense, and with the

recovery of production in Ethiopia, demand for the latter has declined so that in 1984/85 exports declined to 179 tonnes.

Substantial quantities of Indian olibanum are reported to be exported to Dubai, where it is chiefly burned to fumigate homes. Greater quantities are said to be bought by people from Oman which itself produces a small quantity of frankincense.

Annual world trade in Commiphora gums is estimated by Coulter to exceed 1500 tonnes per year. At least 70% of this is myrrh (including some hagar or low grade myrrh), the remainder being mostly opopanax. Somalia is the main supplier of these gums, although a greater proportion of its exports are thought to originate across the border in the Ogaden. Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen are other significant exporters. The latter two countries deal mainly with transhipped gums, and PDRY produces a small quantity of opopanax which is locally used.

China is the biggest consumer of Commiphora gums. It obtains them directly from suppliers in Africa or dealers in Hong Kong and Europe. Neither consumption nor the source has been stable over the years, with marked changes from year to year.

Other important markets are Europe, Saudi Arabia, India and Taiwan. In Europe the main consumer is the perfume

industry which is estimated to use 70 tonnes of myrrh and opopanax. Some of these gums have ritual use. For instance the incense that is burned in Roman Catholic churches contains myrrh.

The gums are also known to have some limited medical applications, e.g. their use in tooth pastes and mouth washes. In Saudi Arabia it is said that myrrh has the same use as olibanum. It is burned, or mixed with water as medicinal solution that is drunk. These natural forest products are mainly traded by dealers in Europe and Jedda, so that the quantities imported into these countries are often larger than the quantities actually consumed.

Coulter reported that producer prices varied between So Shs 120/ and 300/ depending on the purity and quality of the gum. The FOB international price for these gums in November 1986 was:

TABLE 2: The FOB International Price (November 1986) for major gums

Myrrh (similar to those for <u>beeyo</u> incense)	US dollar 6-7 per kg
Opopanax	" 3.5-4 " "
Hagar	" 3 " "

Manufacturers of wholesale ingredients, with a high concentration in the south of France in the city of Grasse and its neighbours, actually process the Somali type

olibanum, and other Commiphora gums (myrrh and opoponax). Two types of products, essential oils and extracts (either absolutes or resinoids) are prepared by these companies for resale to the manufacturers of perfume.

Distillation of the raw gum produces essential oil. Superior quality with a higher oil content is usually preferred for this process, i.e. first grade tears being ideal in the case of olibanum. Resinoids are produced by extraction of the gum with a hydrocarbon solvent, and absolutes by extraction of either the gum or the resinoid with alcohol. Inferior material i.e. ungraded olibanum is satisfactory in this process.

The essential oils are purchased by manufacturers of finished perfumery products, while resinoids are used in soaps and detergents, among the users are the multinationals such as Unilever and Proctor and Gamble.

On the basis of a consumption survey covering thirteen ingredient manufacturers, Coulter outlined the volume and trends of these products.

TABLE 3: Volume and Patterns of Consumption for the Traded Gums

Olibanum	190 tonnes
of which:	
No. 1 grade	50 tonnes
Ungraded	140 tonnes
Myrrh	70 tonnes

Coulter identified three factors which determine the demand for these gums in general. (1) Marketing strategies of major perfume and soap manufacturers. (2) The availability of synthetic substitutes, and (3) Adequacy of supply.

Currently demand for those gums is generally stable with variations between the different types. However, Coulter suggested that consumption is relatively small and therefore a crucial decision by one of the chief manufacturers regarding whether to use or exclude certain gum ingredients in a certain formulation could have a disproportionate effect on the overall consumption.

Synthetic perfumery ingredients stand as a major competitor for the derivatives of the natural gums. They have the advantage of being cheaper, possessing persistent and predictable olfactory and chemical properties. Moreover, they are immune to supply and quality problems that face natural products. Nevertheless, Coulter assumes that natural ingredients will continue to be used despite the competition as certain elements are difficult to reproduce exactly by synthetic substitutes.

Coulter noted that price is not considered as a major determinant of demand, since manufacturers may not opt to change formulations in response to short term price increase, although they may consider change in the case of

a substantial price increase.

European dealers in Hamburg and Marseille supply most of the ingredient manufacturers, although two of the largest consumers, Chauvet and Robertet, tend to purchase from local sources when supplies are available. In the past, dealers obtained olibanum from the frankincense agency in Somalia and from PDRY, but more recently Djibouti and Ethiopia have accounted for a greater proportion of shipments. For example, in 1985/86 the Somali government agency handled a negligible amount of the olibanum trade, so that almost all Somali exports are now run through the parallel market via Djibouti and the PDRY.

As mentioned by Coulter, European dealers and some of the consumers would like to receive goods close to their place of origin. But dealing with the public agency in Somalia and some Somali dealers is thought risky. Commitments relating to supply are reported not to be kept, claims for faulty goods are neglected if not rejected and, there are perennial problems relating to quality. This prompted an intermediary role to be assumed by the more efficient and experienced dealers in Djibouti and Aden.

China is the largest consumer of natural gum-resins, olibanum (mainly Eritrean type), myrrh and opoponax. Its demand seems to be increasing. Gums were included in China's imports since antiquity. As mentioned earlier they were used in the traditional pharmaceutical industry. Traditional medicine is still said to be popular in China,

which is exploring a limited export market.

Imports of myrrh in China have increased until 1984 but slowed down in the succeeding years, 1986/87, following the dissatisfaction with the quality of the Somali imports.

The 1971 official producer prices for the two types of frankincense in Somalia were similar, So Shs. 4.80 per kg for meydi first grade, and 4/per kg for first grade beeyo tears. Since then the price for meydi has dramatically increased, reaching So Shs 600/ per kg in 1985. This substantial price increase for the expensive meydi incense has largely come as a result of competition for the product from the parallel market. Informal price for meydi has increased from So Shs 250-1000/ during the time of the study, 1984/85.

Because of the large difference between the producer price and the market value of the product, the gums greatly benefit traders more than the actual producers even in the informal economy. Coulter reported that Somali traders who run the parallel market obtain roughly double the price paid to the collector (So Shs 900-1000/ per kg of meydi) in Djibouti.

At present the natural gum industry is the third most important source of foreign exchange after livestock and banana in the official account. This does not however, consider the remittances of the Somali workers in the Arab states which is thought to represent a substantial amount

of the country's total earnings, and is repatriated through unofficial channels. Officials of the frankincense and gums sales agency and development reasonably estimate the number of families which primarily depend upon incense gathering at about 10,000 families. The frankincense region, except underexploited marine resources, is short of exploitable resources, such as adequate pasturage and potential agricultural land. Therefore, the occurrence of commercial *Boswellia* forests, which is the most important sector in the natural gums industry, is crucial in terms of being a major source of subsistence for a large number of the regional population.

Generally speaking, frankincense men welcome the increase in their income brought about by the increased demand for frankincense. Many acknowledge their present living conditions to be much better than they have been in the past. However, the notion of rich frankincense collectors netting an overall income greater than that obtained by rich pastoral families is, I think, not applicable. A seasonal credit account from 65 collectors who are members of the Hodma cooperative branch in Erigavo district, showed that 19 collectors failed to repay all their seasonal debts, at the closing of the 1983/84 production season.

The big margin between the producer price and the actual market value of frankincense, price regulation and regular deductions brought about by cooperativisation which is discussed in a later chapter, and rampant increase in the price of imported footstuffs received on credit by the

collectors, are some of the important factors that erode the income realised by frankincense gatherers.

Insufficient and often unreliable rainfall which may have a negative impact on frankincense production, and the fact that there is a recess period of two to three months between one season and the next are some of the other perennial problems of the sector that variously effect the income of collectors.

Before the 1970s when the price of meydi incense had seen a tremendous increase due to expanded demand in the Arabian market, the Somali gum industry was of little significance to the national economy. Henrikson (1968) claimed that the revenue from natural gum exports never exceeded 1% of the total export trade value until 1960.

No longer categorised as 'others' in the export economy of the country, the natural gum industry has currently become the third most important source of foreign exchange, after livestock and banana exports. According to the 1980 official export statistics, the sector outpaced the banana crop to become the second export item, if only for that year alone.

The meydi incense which is the most valuable Somali frankincense is a prestige product and its demand seems to depend upon the health of the Saudi oil economy. Some of the other gums face competition from synthetic products. These facts portend future uncertainty for the natural gum industry. However, in the past, if the frankincense trade

was important for the history and culture of the Somali nation, today as the third largest export product, the sector has currently become vital for the country's economy.

## CHAPTER TWO: NON-INDUSTRIAL USES OF INCENSE IN SOMALIA AND ELSEWHERE

### Social Organisation of the Somali

The historical and present economic importance of frankincense for Somalia and its industrial uses were discussed in the first chapter. In the present chapter, I will look into some practical, medicinal and fumigatory applications, as well as its wider ceremonial uses in Somalia and elsewhere.

In the first chapter we mentioned the importance of lineage in the sphere of commerce. Moreover agnatic solidarity is an important feature among sedentary and pastoral economies in northern Somalia. Hence it is desirable to give a short account of the social organisation of the Somali before we proceed any further.

I.M. Lewis' (1961) study of 'pastoralism and politics among northern Somali', offers a penetrating account of the social organisation of the Somali society. Somalis have an all-pervasive and elaborate national genealogical chart which unites the total Somali population at the highest level.

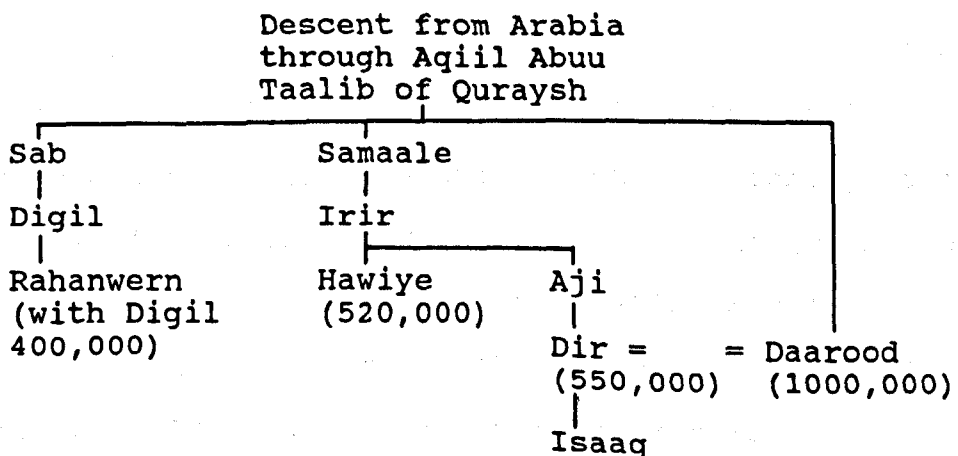
The highest level of grouping has been designated as 'clan-family' by I.M. Lewis. The total Somali population is divided into six major 'clan families' - the Dir, Isaaq,

Hawiye, Daarood, Digil and Raxanweyn. The first four 'clan-families' are predominantly pastoral clans practising the herding of stocks of camels, sheep and goats and cattle, in the semi-arid condition of the Horn. The remaining two 'clan-families', who are mainly settled in the wetter riverain region in southern Somalia, practice a relatively diversified economy of agro-pastoralism, and are characterised as chiefly agrarian groups.

At present, the pastoral 'clan families' are widely distributed throughout the country. They have a fairly uniform culture, and such minor cultural variations, as they occur, are attributed by Lewis to contact with other groups (cf. I.M. Lewis, 1961: 8).

The distinction between the dominant pastoral 'clan-families' and cultivating southern groups is further configured in the national genealogy. The former trace descent from a common ancestor, Samaale, while the latter are descended from Sab.

Figure 2: The Genealogical Chart of the Somali  
(Source: I.M. Lewis, 1961: 12)



The cultural and organisational difference between the chiefly agrarian southern groups and the pastoral 'clans' has been elaborately expounded by I.M. Lewis (1969: 59-79). In the south, cultivating groups are 'land-holding corporations' living in stable territories, and often of amalgamated groups of different ethnic origins that are at various stages of assimilation. Here there are formal offices and more or less stratified system of authority structure. These features are to a great extent lacked by northern pastoralists and their counterparts in the south. Local contiguity is not a significant principle of social cohesion and solidarity, and agnation provides the basis of corporate interest.

Somalis are devout Sunni Muslims who follow almost exclusively the Shaafi'ite School of Law, and not surprisingly trace descent, above the 'clan-family', to the founders of the Arabian Islam. As Lewis explained, this predisposition 'validates the Muslim practices and beliefs of the Somali' (I.M. Lewis, 1961: 129-130).

Some of the larger 'clan-families' number over a million souls, with a geneological span of no less than thirty named generations. Widely scattered geographically, this upper level of grouping is rather symbolic rather than a corporate political entity. Identification and loose cohesion is maintained through the common genealogical affiliation. Elders of the 'clan-family' avidly conserve

the history of the 'clan-family' and its relations with others.

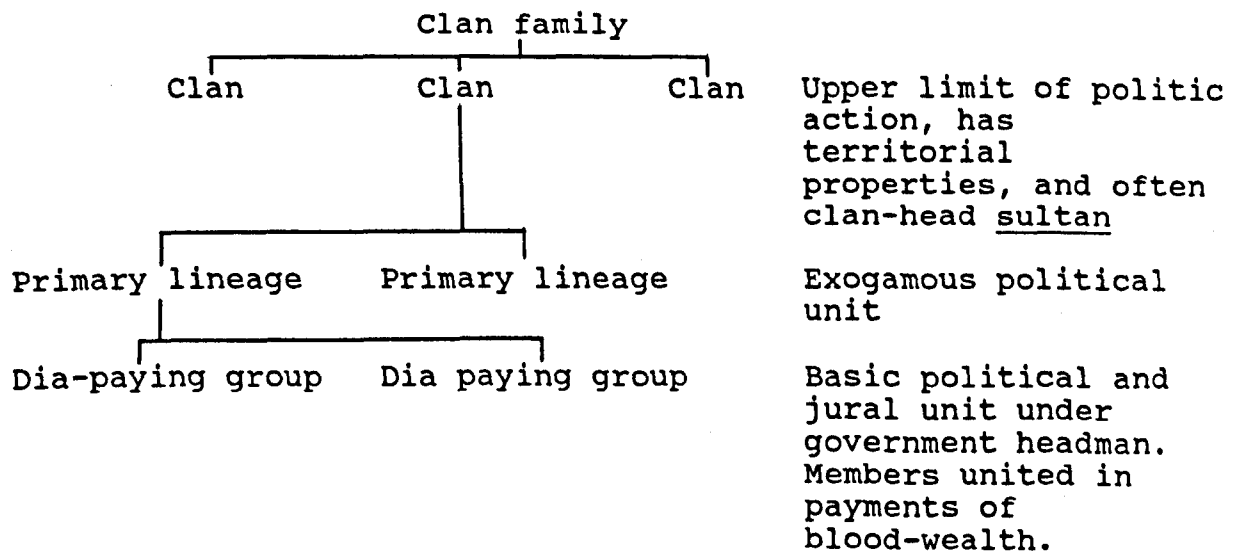
'Clan-family' is further segmented into different units, the largest and socially most important of which is the 'clan'. This grouping generally marks the upper limit of corporate political action, and, as Lewis described, has some territorial ties (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 5). Some of the larger 'clans' and 'sub-clans' have clan heads with rather nominal authority. Some clans count more than twenty generations to their founding ancestor.

Within the 'clan', the socially most important patrilineage is the 'primary lineage'. To the founding ancestor, a member may count between six to ten generations. Lewis designated the exogamy rule and the inclination of its members to identify themselves with this group as its chief characteristics (cf. I.M. Lewis, 1961: 6).

At the bottom of this elaborately segmented system, where every Somali is member of a large array of patrilineages, lies the 'dia-paying' group-corporate members tied together by collective responsibility to pay and receive blood compensation dia. This significant social unit has been described by I.M. Lewis (1961: 6-7) as the basic jural and political unit of the Somali society. It is a small lineage or alliance of small lineages, with a strength of between a few hundred to a few thousand members, and with a genealogical span of between four to eight generations.

The 'dia-paying' unit guarantees a pastoral Somali security of his life and property. Mobilising the existing strong ties of agnation and the binding contract which is emphasised at this level of grouping, law and order is most markedly maintained by elders in this patrilineage (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 5-6). Traditional group leaders, Akils, had been institutionalised by past governments, both colonial and independent civilian governments, in rather elusive attempts to introduce instituted authority in the nomadic world (cf. I.M. Lewis, 1961: 6-7).

Figure 3: Morphology of the Segmentary Lineage System of the Somali  
(Source: I.M. Lewis, 1961: 4)



Somalis are organised on the principle of patrilineal descent. The all-pervasive national genealogy, whose major points of cleavage are noted above, allows men to trace descent through males to a common ancestor. Thus kinship establishes a man's politico-jural position in the

community and his relations with others. To express the Somali political philosophy and its fundamental function, Lewis cited a much quoted local axiom - "what a person's address is in Europe, his genealogy is in Somaliland. By virtue of his genealogy of birth, each individual has an exact place in society and within a very wide range of agnatic kinship it is possible for each person to trace his precise connection with everyone else. Somali political philosophy is thus an evaluation of agnatic connection." (I.M. Lewis, 1961: 2).

Without undermining the principle of agnation tol as the basis of corporate function in the Somali society, a supplementary principle of contract xeer is utilised as an expedient cultural element that defines politico-jural cohesion (see I.M. Lewis, 1961: 161-196). Lewis noted that, "Every one is at once a member of a widely ramifying series of lineages and of a contractual group, with which he pays and receives blood wealth and which guarantees the security of his life and property." (I.M. Lewis, 1961: 186).

To redress the balance where there is disparity between the actual strength of the opposing patrilineages in competition for scarce and seasonally varying pastoral resources, Somalis utilise contractual alliance within the framework of the lineage system (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 192). They do not manipulate genealogy or resort to putative kinship to attain the desired relationship between social units. Existing matrilateral ties, but sometimes also

putative uterine kinship, are also employed for the same purpose - to redress the imbalance between the social units on the ground (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 156-158).

Using social function as a criterion, these important features of the social organisation of the Somali, led I.M. Lewis (1965) to argue that descent system, in the Somali case, has a primacy which it does not possess in other similarly organised societies, the Nuer, the Tiv, and Bedouin. For the latter societies, the fundamental corporate political entities are territorial groups, the existing lineage principle acts as a parallel system for the expression of the established territorial relationships (cf I.M. Lewis, 1965: 96). In contrast, among the pastoral Somali, local contiguity is not the fundamental principle of cohesion and collaboration. There are no stable territorial groups, and ties to a fixed territory are to a great extent lacking. This affords the principle of agnation a functional primacy.

Further variation in the descent systems of these patrilineal societies has been noted by I.M. Lewis (1965: 94), to corroborate the primacy of agnation among the Somali. Both the maximum genealogically defined politico-jural community (clan) and the range of politically important agnation, is greater in the Somali than with the Nuer, the Tiv, and the Bedouin.

To show the relevance of agnation amongst the Somali, I examine the relations between rural and urban kinsmen.

Most of the larger interior trading towns in northern Somalia are of recent formation, and, as noted by Lewis, there is a striking cultural continuity between urban towns and rural areas (cf I.M. Lewis, 1962: 377-378). There is a tendency to replicate lineage affiliation with area of residence in urban setting. This is more marked in smaller villages where town planning has little effected this pattern (ibid: 378).

Elders permanently or temporarily residing in towns and often possessing urban property direct lineage affairs. Moreover, traders and other kinsmen living in towns are subject to the 'dia-paying' contract of their rural clansmen (ibid: 379-380).

Economic cooperation between close kinsmen living in the two domains, is as binding as above cited politico-jural links. Most of the largely transitional generation townsmen own rural property of pastoral herds, agricultural or frankincense fields, in the country of their lineage. Such property which was acquired before migration as potential members of their groups, is managed and exploited by their rural kinsmen.

Some traders and employed townsmen sponsor the education of a child or children of their nomadic brothers and other close agnates, or younger brothers and sisters from a second marriage of their nomadic father. Those who can afford it, usually finance the construction of water tanks for use by the pastoral family of their close agnates. In

their competition to get the assistance and admiration of a rich kinsman living in the town, rural agnates sometimes wildly accuse each other of damaging the corporate interest of the composite families in the rural area.

Visiting kinsmen from the country usually bring to urbanised close agnates, gifts of pastoral delicacies, purified ghee and small pieces of dried meat cooked with the fat of animal. Sometimes a ram is brought to the latter families to be slaughtered for a special occasion, or to satisfy the desire for meat. Also if someone in the village admires a change, or feels feeble, he may go to the nomadic hamlet of his close agnate during the rainy season of plenty, to regale with the fresh milk of the camel which is thought to have the power of recuperating the weak.

Assistance from the nomadic kinsmen is essential for their poor agnates in the town, who may require the proceeds from an obtained animal for a particular purpose, e.g. the fee for a driving license. But the gifts offered to rich kinsmen in the towns is symbolic rather than necessary. Nomadic kinsmen usually receive in return an amount of cash or consumer products and food whose total cost may exceed the value of their gift. Indeed pastoral gifts are assumed, in many occasions, as a pretext to visit a wealthy kinsman in the town to seek assistance.

Local Thoughts about the Industrial Use of Incense

It may be worthwhile to preface the discussion with a consideration of an entrenched indigenous belief about the ultimate use of frankincense in the industrial world. Frankincense collectors, traders and enterprise officials know very little about the uses to which frankincense is put by the ultimate consumers. The stable demand for frankincense and the tremendous price increase of some types of incense during the last decade, seems to have led Somalis to believe that exotic frankincense must be of crucial importance for the consumers, particularly Western countries.

Viewed by the local producers as an expert who graduated on a special course on frankincense, I was expected to answer every question on the subject, and moreover explain how they understood frankincense was used in the industrial world. I saw nothing wrong if people asked questions on the subject of my study, but it surprised me when they found it difficult to believe my explanation - that 'Somali type olibanum' is chiefly used by the perfume industry in the West, and meydi incense as a chewing material in Saudi Arabia.

One commonly perceived industrial use of frankincense by people in the frankincense region of Somalia which is held to explain the demand for it in the West, is the part it is thought to play in the manufacture of lethal weapons. One informant suggested that it forms the explosive power of

many weapons, particularly nuclear bombs. A regional militia chief in Bosaso town stressed that the fire created by exploding frankincense is not readily extinguishable. This quality is explained to make it suitable in the manufacture of napalm bombs! Indeed, many were the stories told by inquisitive individuals concerning exploding lumps of frankincense to test its power.

Some good reasons underlie the people's popular belief relating to the use of frankincense in modern weapons. As will be seen shortly, frank<sup>k</sup>incense balls are flammable if put on fire. People seem to believe that if it were not essential for an important weapon's industry, the West would have ceased buying frankincense produced in Africa. Later I learned that such beliefs have been corroborated by unscrupulous national scholars who on several occasions visited some areas in the frankincense region.

### Some Practical Uses of Frankincense

Frankincense has various local uses, although it is essentially an export crop. One minor use and one related to the flammable quality of incense balls mentioned in the above, is its use as a source of energy. Frankincense collectors abandon the nomadic hamlet to stay in the frankincense mountain-cave stations during the tapping cycles. If the need arises, it is practical to burn incense tears inside the dark rock-cave at times during the night. The bright flickering flames of burned incense

sufficiently illuminate the cave lodging for most practical purposes. To date, this is an emergency practice resorted to only occasionally, for example to locate vermin in the darkness, in the absence of other source of light.

Frankincense is expensive. Therefore it is not economical to use a large amount as a source of light energy. The assertion that the practice was more frequent in the past than the present testifies to the current adoption of widespread modern sources of light in the remote areas of incense production. Flash lights and to some extent paraffin lamps are commonly used by collectors.

The kind of incense preferred for the occasional illumination inside the frankincense cave-station is the meydi quality. It emits a steady bright light comparable to candle light. It is more suitable than the beeyo quality for the purpose, which when burned bursts into mass flame and smoke. The inflammable property of incense which is recognised to the extent that passengers aboard trucks carrying incense goods are banned from smoking, explains the above mentioned belief concerning its possible use in modern weaponry.

Finally, small incense balls are sometimes used domestically as fire making catalysts. Under these circumstances in which it is difficult to make a fire, for instance, if the available wood is wetted by rain, the task is facilitated by throwing incense balls into the fire. incense instantly bursts into flame and helps the wet wood

to burn.

The leaves of frankincense trees provide good fodder for livestock. Camels browse the foliage by extending their long necks to reach the branches of frankincense trees. The comparatively tiny goats who otherwise could not reach the upper leaves grazed by camels, ascend to bewildering heights on precipitous mountain complexes, where the bulky camel cannot go. Standing on the hind legs, they graze the low lying foliage of the bigger frankincense trees. The leaves of the seedling and smaller trees are devoured by all livestock species, camels, sheep and goats.

From the bottom of a rugged mountain in the frankincense region, the panorama of goats and sheep grazing on heights is rather picturesque. Sheep and goats appear as tiny white spots scattered across a rocky surface covered with green leaves of frankincense and other types of plant vegetation. Perhaps more devastating than the tolerated customary grazing rights over frankincense trees growing in territorially bounded incense fields, is the drastic defoliation, sometimes carried out by ruthless pastoralists. During the jiilaal dry season, and more so in recurrent drought years, trees are illicitly defoliated or cut down, to fatten helpless beasts incapacitated by drought or disease.

The animal's liking for the leaves, and sometimes, the opportunistic destruction of the branches by some nomads for fattening up some of the stock even in good years, can

be explained by the fairly high nutritional content of the leaves. "The young leaves contain 7% protein, 3% oil, 45% carbohydrates, 25% fibre, over 3% calcium oxide and 0.3% phosphorus pentoxide, and are therefore highly nutritious." (United Nations Technical Assistance Programme, the Trust Territory of Somaliland Under Italian Administration, New York, 1952: 202).

The desire of many 'owning' families and the government's pretension to protect the commercial *Boswellia* forests is superceded by an overarching pastoral concept (see chapter on 'ownership') that regulate range resource as 'God given' and fundamentally community property.

The adequate tannin content of the bark of incense trees provides another common form of exploitation that further accentuates the destructive tendency to over-exploit these commercially valuable forests. The protective bark is stripped off to dye and disinfect milking and water vessels of the household. Traditional vessels wood-carved or else made of plant fibre are thought to require periodical tannin treatment. In the frankincense region, the treatment consists of burning the bark of a frankincense tree inside a hole made in the ground. The vessel to be treated is turned upside down and placed over the mouth of the hole, so that its inside is smoked by the ascending smoke. Once the inside is dyed and disinfected, the same is done on the surface of the vessel which eventually assumes a reddish tinge.

Frequent tannin application for the traditional milking and milk storing vessels is thought necessary. Housewives and unmarried daughters who perform such domestic tasks are careful not to cleanse these traditional vessels with water unless it is extremely necessary. To do so will contaminate the milk which may go sour or become spoiled sooner than if the vessels were tanninised. Domestic vessels not used for storing milk, for instance, water containers are not frequently tanninised, although they may be treated periodically for coloration, quality improvement and preservation.

New utensils made of fibre or carved out of wood are usually treated with frankincense tannin. The process is however thought indispensable in the preparation of goat skin water containers that are commonly used in most areas in the frankincense region. The tanninisation method used is different from the smoking process for the milk vessels. The organic container is stuffed with pieces of frankincense bark dissolved with water which is allowed to remain inside the vessel for some days. Apart from disinfecting and cleansing, this is done to make the container pure and free from organic stench. The method which is applied periodically after the initial process, is also said to induce softness and elasticity.

The bark of the frankincense tree is not the only source of tannin. In areas outside the frankincense region other plants are variously exploited for the purpose. In the frankincense region, the fragrance of the bark of the

frankincense tree offers superior quality in relation to other tannin producing plants. As a source of aromatic tannin, this fringe exploitation of the Boswellias contribute to their destruction.

The appearance of a tapped frankincense tree is likened, in one description, to that of a 'decomposing animal'. This is a fitting description considering the resin exuding wounds scattered over the body of a tapped tree. Yet, more repulsive than this sight is that of a bare tree, its inside reddish resinous matter exposed by the removal of its bark for tannin. Unlike the customary grazing right over the foliage of the frankincense trees, cutting branches for browse or removing the bark for tannin without the approval of the 'owners' is illegal. (See chapter on 'ownership'.) Nevertheless the removal of the bark of the trees by nomadic families without permission continues unabated.

### Fumigation and Purification

The mysterious appeal incense has had throughout human history with which, of course, it is still connected in Somalia, seems to derive primarily from its ritual importance in divine worship. As documented by Groom, in early times people learned some practical uses of incense: "But in very early days it was not just for religious purpose that incense was a highly desirable commodity. The ancient Egyptians understood the more practical properties

of the material, so that after the sacking of Memphis in the eighth century BC the king appointed men to purify the city with natron and incense. Purification may have been behind the Assyrian custom, mentioned by Strabo, of offering incense immediately after sexual intercourse. The synoecism of communities from which the first civilisations developed brought considerable sanitation problems which could be met in the most primitive ways. In the warm climates of the Mediterranean and Middle East, putrefaction of waste sets in quickly. Disagreeable smells pervaded the air. Pestilential insects, especially flies and mosquitoes, abounded and had to be kept at bay by a pleasant smoke. In such conditions incense and perfumes became very necessary for comfortable living and were used widely, the more effective of these substances becoming the expensive luxuries of the rich. Foremost among the materials used were frankincense and myrrh. These had an excellence of quality exceeding that of almost every other plant produce, not only for incense and perfumes but also for other applications especially in medicine." (Nigel Groom, 1981: 8).

Although it may be more difficult for modern Egyptians to use incense on this scale in their sprawling cities, the practice continues to a considerable extent as noted by Lane: "In cold weather, a brazier or chafing dish called 'mankal' and vulgarly 'manka'), of tinned copper, full of burning charcoal, is placed on the floor and sometimes perfume is burnt in it. The Egyptians take great delight in perfumes; and often fumigate their apartments. The

substance most commonly used for this purpose is frankincense of an inferior quality, called 'bakhoor elbarr'. Benzoin and aloes-wood are also used for the same purpose." (E.W. Lane, 1954: 142).

Domestic fumigation is widespread among the Somalis who love perfumes in the same way their Muslim co-religionists the Egyptians do. Urban Somalis purify and incense their homes with a type of compounded incense known as uunsi which is processed and mainly traded by women. Despite the easy application of manufactured air sweeteners, urban Somalis do not use them, and prefer uunsi incensing. To observe the custom one can witness it in most Somali households in London. They keep various types of modern electric incense burners obtained from the Gulf states for the purpose. A Somali lady told me a story about her refugee girlfriend who was living in bed and breakfast accommodation in the Limehouse area in East London. One day she burned incense in her room. The fragrant smoke from the burned incense was sufficient to trigger the fire alarm.

Domestic fumigation is not restricted to urban areas. It is more widespread, as said earlier. Those who cannot afford the uunsi which is mainly used by better-off urban Somalis, the urban poor, residents in rural villages and nomadic families, fumigate their homes with a ritual incense known as foox that is odouriferous but not as fragrant as the uunsi. This is the lowest commercial grade of beeyo incense, the only quality that is locally traded.

It consists of a mixture of bark flakes, powder or tiny pieces of incense. Foox is important both in terms of its widespread application and its use in ritual.

For purification purposes, foox incense is claimed to excel other types of local perfumes. In contrast to the pleasant smell created by the burning of the chiefly urban uunsi, foox incense is claimed to be both pleasant and able to dispel any bad smell. This sanitation benefit of foox incense is found essential by most of the restaurants and stores in the larger towns and corresponding rural trading centres. Given inadequate or non-existent sanitation facilities, many restaurants and trading stores find it necessary to burn foox at least once a day, usually just before opening for business, to cleanse any offensive smell. To make a derelict apartment fit for habitation, the necessary innovation would not be complete without foox fumigation which purifies the aura of dereliction.

In addition to the custom of incensing their homes, Somalis fumigate some of the domestic vessels. Muller, noting the same custom in Sana, wrote, "In Sana moreover, the common custom has survived of turning jugs upside down over burning frankincense and of filling these jugs later on with water which takes on the taste of frankincense and is drunk while chewing qat" (Walter W. Muller, 1975: 131). Somalis are inveterate qat chewers like the Yemenites, and fumigate water jugs for the same purpose. Qat which was banned in Somalia in 1983 by the present government, is still illicitly chewed in Somalia particularly in the

northern region. Qat is the stimulant leaves of the qat plant, *Catha-edulis*. Some of the traditional water containers are also fumigated periodically in Somalia, to impart to the drinking water something of the pleasant aromatic and medicinal taste of the applied incense.

In the rural villages and nomadic hamlets of Somalia, when guests are being entertained, respite is essential from the swarms of insects, flies or mosquitoes that thrive on the poor sanitation and torrid tropical heat. To drive away these insects while taking meals, incense is burned in the domestic incense burners which emits a cloud of smoke that momentarily drives away vexing insects.

Somalis do not use myrrh as fragrant incense for their country abounds with more odoriferous products. Its smell is said to be offensive and suggestive of burning rubber. It is repulsive to snakes and is therefore burned to drive them away from nomadic huts if they sneak inside.

Quoting past literature on the inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula, Muller described a habit attributed to the inhabitants of these peoples relating to hair and garment fumigation. Honour was shown to visitors by perfuming their garments on special occasions (cf Walter W. Muller, 1975: 131). Urban Somalis and rich rural families apply manufactured perfumes to their guests as mark of honour. In weddings and other public ceremonies, for example religious ceremonies, manufactured perfumes and ritual incense foox are sumptuously applied to participants. From

a burning incense taken around the participants, each one in his turn wafts a share of the smoke fanned towards his body. The habit has aims other than the practical body and garment incensing. It seems to be an act whereby participants partake of something of the purpose of the event.

Among the Somalis, in most social events, the practical clothing and bodily fumigation or perfume application, is often charged with religious intent, particularly the burning of ritual incense foox. One special type of hair fumigation which is apparently secular is widely practised by women, particularly those of the middle class families in northern Somalia. Not the ritual foox is ideal for this, but the more fragrant uunsi incense. Balls of uunsi incense are burned in stone carved censers placed underneath the hair, so that the rising smoke passes through the shampooed and combed hair of the women.

At present, urban women apply strong perfumes and fumigate their hair for most casual events and some formal occasions, albeit that normal Islamic behaviour allows women to do these things at home and for their husbands but not in public. Generally speaking hair fumigation and the application of perfumes are considered as symbolic signs of seduction. If a married woman fumigates the apartment, incenses her hair and applies perfumes, this is considered by men an anticipation of romance.

In the foregoing discussion, I limited myself to the

consideration of the two most common types of incense in Somalia, chiefly the ritual incense foox and the mainly urban uunsi incense. I did this partly because myriad forms of aromatic products are used in different parts of Somalia, and partly because manufactured perfumes themselves are used for different specialised functions in different rites. These aspects of perfumes require a lengthy treatment beyond the scope of the thesis.

### Medicinal Uses of Frankincense

Nigel Groom's book on early Arab incense trade (1981) is a good source on the medical virtues of frankincense and myrrh in antiquity and the middle ages. Of the two types of frankincense produced in Somalia, meydi is not thought to have wider medicinal virtues. One informant told me that meydi resin is so powerful that it can tear a hole in a frankincense production uniform on the spot that it falls upon. This means that it is dangerous to apply to the body for treatment.

In the most westerly frankincense producing area in Erigavo region, beeyo is used to treat venereal complaints and as an external application to wounds. A prepared solution of white pure tears of beeyo is drunk for these ailments and for back complaints. In some areas in Bosaso district, small drops of beeyo incense are swallowed to treat back ailments too. In Alua district, a solution of incense drunk is thought to treat a chronic cough, polio, and to

relieve chest congestion.

The various medicinal virtues of the beeyo incense in different areas in the frankincense region of Somalia clearly demonstrate the elusive nature of the traditional medicine. Quite often the same prescription is variously applied to different malfunctions, thus defying any underlying systematic order, to the chagrin of the observer. Given this lack of consistency, one has to be careful about what treatment methods are used in a particular area, and the method of application, before reaching any general conclusions.

As is often the case, most communities have their traditional doctors, who have admirable expertise in the indigenous medical lore. They are consulted for the treatment of illnesses that fail to respond to treatments based on commonplace medical knowledge possessed by most adult men. Sometimes if the treatment of the traditional healers fail to cure a particular sickness, an alternative local method may be tried, before the patient is considered to be finally taken to a modern hospital. This alternative venue is based on the scriptural medical texts kept by some of the learned men of religion. An elderly sheikh from Erigavo frankincense region told me the following medicinal virtues of beeyo incense read from a text titled The Book of Compassion in Medicine and Wisdom.

The white pristine drops of beeyo incense is claimed to have a drying effect on the human body. It is useful in

the treatment of acute coughs such as whooping cough. It prevents or restricts an abnormal flow of organic fluids in the body. Moreover, it is said to improve intelligence and impart valour. With the exception of cough treatment, the catalogue of sicknesses scriptural methods claim can be treated with the product differ from those acknowledged by the traditional healers, once more illustrating the unsystematised nature of traditional medicine.

Meydi incense produces inferior ritual incense foox, compared to the beeyo quality which yields better foox that is widely traded in Somalia. It is almost entirely produced for export to Saudi Arabia which consumes the bulk of the produce. In the frankincense region of Somalia, meydi is used as a chewing gum. It has a pleasant, perfumed and somewhat medicinal taste. Its chewing perfumes the breath. If chewed regularly, it is thought to protect the teeth from decaying by cleansing them from bits of food left between them. Its constant chewing is also thought to strengthen the gums.

Saudis seem to cherish the chewing meydi gum more than the Somalis by willing to pay a high price for it. It appears so popular in Saudi Arabia that it has become an object of everyday domestic consumption. Somali traders report that Saudis attribute medicinal virtues to the product exceeding those reckoned by Somalis. Like the Somalis, its chewing is thought to protect the teeth and strengthen the gums, and its perfuming of the breath is a desired quality. Moreover, the Saudis are said to claim that it cleanses the

alimentary canal and prevents stomach worm infestation. Apart from its medicinal attributes, Saudis seem to cherish the chewing meydi because it has become a prestigious social commodity consumed mostly by women in the household during social gatherings, and offered to honour visiting guests.

### Medicinal Uses of Myrrh

Medicinal uses of frankincense is of little importance in Somalia, compared to its fumigatory, purification and ritual function. Other plant products, like myrrh are more useful than frankincense in local medicine. The present demand for myrrh mainly derives from its use in the manufacture of perfume and in incense sticks. It is also known to have a limited application in the preparation of mouth washes and gargles, in some special tooth pastes, and some other pharmaceuticals.

Drake-Brockman noted that in modern times a diluted emulsion of myrrh is given to newly born infants in Somaliland and also used for venereal ailments, and in animal husbandry to increase the milk yield of female camels (cf Drake-Brockman, 1912: 247). I am not certain whether myrrh in diluted emulsion form is given to newly born children in Somalia, but certainly myrrh is an ingredient of a protective charm worn around the neck of infants. The most important use of myrrh is thought to be its disinfectant ability. It is claimed to have a drying

and healing effect on wounds. To this effect, a plaster of thick myrrh emulsion is applied on the surface of a festering wound.

A thick emulsion of myrrh is daubed over the head of children suffering from infected skin diseases. The same is done for circumcised young females after the operation, to combat any possible infection of the mutilated reproductive organ. Afterwards, the application of myrrh on the wound is continued by making young circumcised girls sit over the smoke of myrrh burned inside a ground hole, to smoke the wound and disinfect it.

Throat infections, common cold and disturbances of speech, pain of the throat and glands are all treated with a drop of myrrh inserted underneath the delicate tissue of the tongue, in many areas in northern Somalia. Patients undergoing this treatment must bear the bitter taste of the gum (myrrh in Arabic is 'murr' which means bitter and 'malmal' in Somali).

Myrrh is used to control men's sexuality. A solution of myrrh, if drunk, is thought to reduce the sexual desire of adult men. Unmarried adult theology students are said to find this property quite useful to safeguard moral chastity, and be able to concentrate on religious studies. More so in the past than the present, young adult men suspected of overpowering sexual desire were recommended for the treatment. Even at present, religious husbands away from their wives <sup>and</sup> who do not approve of immoral sex,

take a solution of myrrh to control desire. I knew of a government official in Bosaso town whose family were living in Hargeysa in the north, who used myrrh to save himself from adultery.

After prolonged use, the termination of the inhibitory impact of myrrh on the sex drive of men is locally referred to as 'untying myrrh rope'. To prepare a man for normal sexual life, a fat ram is slaughtered and its meat is cooked with the animal's fat. Eating this meat is thought to balance off the depressed sexual appetite brought about by the consumption of the myrrh solution. In northern Somalia, it is a joke to taunt the sexually weak by asking if they have been treated with myrrh.

The foregoing medicinal attributes of myrrh certainly do not exhaust all its local uses which are more widespread than the comparatively localised and limited medicinal uses of frankincense. Myrrh is significant in the traditional medicine as an important disinfectant, while frankincense is important for sanitation as a fumigant and purifier.

Apart from the fact that it is used by adult Islamic students to suppress sexual drive, myrrh has other significant uses in the traditional Islamic learning institution. It forms a chief ingredient in preparing the ink used to write religious texts, hagiographies and historical works written by men of religion. The ink of the koranic schoolchildren in rural areas is made of myrrh dissolved with charcoal, sometimes added with a small

amount of sugar. This local ink shines visibly on the student's wooden tablet when written on it.

Regarding the efficacy of the traditional medicine, successful cases concerning particular treatments are well remembered and widely disseminated to reinforce the traditional method. On the other hand, people tend to forget disastrous and unsuccessful cases, and perhaps unwittingly, to disregard the shortcomings of the tradition. Furthermore, determinism and fatalistic ideas are evoked to justify unsatisfactory results. For instance in the event of no response to a treatment, it may be said that the time of the patient to recover has not yet come. It will come when Allah wishes so. It is this local tendency which memorialises satisfactory treatment and conversely disregards glaring failures of the traditional methods.

#### Ceremonial Use of Incense

The practical uses of frankincense were discussed in the first two sections of the chapter. This last section briefly looks into the ritual use of frankincense.

Incense offering as a religious practice appears to have existed throughout human history, from the earliest civilisations to present day. Nigel Groom's study reviews the significance of the tradition in the religious rites of peoples in the classical civilisations, the Sumerians and

Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks (see Nigel Groom, 1981: 21).

The Christian tradition rejected the practice initially, seeing it as a pagan rite, but later adopted it. In Islam, it does not constitute a prescribed part in a religious observance, yet it is widely used in the tradition, as a sacred perfume for the dead and is offered in the shrines of the Muslim saints.

At present, offering incense in worship can be found in major traditions in the West as well as in the East, and it retains its universal appeal in religious practice. The symbolic importance of the sacred incense smoke rising upwards from a censer has been noted by Groom. He wrote: "The spreading of the smoke and fragrance of incense and the visible movement of that smoke upwards towards the heavens has given it a symbolical relationship to prayer, making the offering synonymous with worship. This symbolism has sometimes been extended, so that the four basic components of the holy incense of the Hebrews have been variously held to signify the elements - water, earth, fire and air - or the products of the sea and of the inhabited and uninhabited, indicating that all things are God's" (Nigel Groom, 1981: 2).

The sacramental attribute of ritual incense is frequently quoted in early literature. Frazer made an important distinction between perfumes for the Gods and perfumes used for sexual seduction, and explained that in ancient Arabia

ritual observance attached to the exploitation of frankincense trees which were thought to be sacred. Frankincense resin was considered holy, and the collectors were required to remain pure while gathering the resin. (Golden Bough, III: 106-7).

The hallowing of incense in ancient times due to its ritual importance, notwithstanding its practical applications, seems to have led to a great interest in the lands that produced frankincense. Muller (1975: 132) remarked, "A country which produced expensive spices in abundance gave rise in antiquity to the idea of the legendary rich Sabeans living in luxury in the remote and happy frankincense region. The news about the country which brought forth plenty of frankincense by which one could obtain the favour of the Gods, went as far as China. The name Arabia Eudaimon as designation for south Arabia is explicitly connected with that part of the country which is called aromatophoros (Strabo, 1, 2, 32)".

The frankincense region of Somaliland also assumed similar romantic feelings among early peoples. There is no evidence to suggest that frankincense has earned Somalis substantial wealth comparable to the wealth it is claimed to have earned early Arabians. Nevertheless, as shown in the preceding chapter, frankincense trade has been important for their history and culture. Somaliland became known very early in history as a country blessed with various aromatic products and spices. Besides frankincense, it supplied other products unobtainable in

the arid parts of southern Arabia. The ancient Egyptian's love for the country is epitomised by the celebrated names they gave to the region - 'the land of punt', 'land of Gods', 'land of spices'. The ancient Egyptian expedition to the legendary 'land of punt' undertaken during the reign of the powerful queen Hateshepsut in 1495 BC to fetch frankincense indicate the esteem they had for the fabulous incense region of Somalia.

Groom noted that demand for frankincense was very high during the Roman Empire and inflated its price. "Demand exceeded the supply, and transport expenses were high. Consequently the cost of frankincense and myrrh was considerable. By the time of the Roman Empire the enormous demand for these rare products had so swelled the price that they could be equated with gold. Thus we find gold, frankincense and myrrh together as the gifts brought to the infant Jesus in the legend of the Magi". (Nigel Groom, 1981: 8).

Atchley's 1909 historical study of the use of incense in divine worship, specifically deals with the subject. From an evolutionary perspective, he asserts the widespread use of the practice in divine worship, and tries to explore the origin of the tradition. Quoting Egyptian and Roman traditions, Atchley makes two propositions for the basis of the ritual incense. The first suggests that the custom had originally been a dimension of tree worship, the frankincense tree was believed to be sacred and its resin the blood of a divine tree. This primitive form of

worship, in the opinion of the author, somehow later survived among the advanced traditions. The second postulation holds that what is pleasant and sensational to the olfactory human domain (fragrant incense) would provide a suitable offering for the deity which is thought to be entrallled by the burning of fragrant incense.

Atchley's propositions differ in the method of canonisation of the offering incense. One holds that its institutionalisation is derived from the perceived divine quality of ritual incense, and the other from its pleasant smell aspect. Neither of these assumptions adequately explains its origin, nor do they explain the present religious function of the tradition, for the evidence relates to the past rather than the present.

#### Incense Offering in the Spirit Possession Ceremony

The foregoing review of ritual incense illustrates the paucity of ethnographic and theoretical data on an important religious subject. In this section I want to consider briefly some ethnographic examples of the custom among the Muslim Somali.

Somalis are almost exclusively Muslims who follow the orthodox Sunni Shaafi'ite Islamic Law. They share with south Arabians a penchant for perfumes in general: a cross-cultural trait which may predate the faith of Islam. Incense offering seems to be a residue of former pagan rite

(for further information see I.M. Lewis' paper on the Spirit Possession in Northern Somaliland in 1969). The Koran permits the use of tib in ordinary life, a generic word that encompasses many fragrant substances. As stated earlier, incense offering does not constitute an essential part of the Muslim prayer but is widely used in the traditional rites.

Manufactured perfumes, which universally came into vogue after the 17th and 18th centuries, seem not to have eclipsed the importance of ritual incense in many ceremonies in Somalia; quite often they supplement each other in a particular rite. In almost all ceremonies the ritual incense and manufactured perfumes are both used. Except for specialised rites where the role of perfumes are indispensable, the traditional natural ritual incense inspires an intense sacred sentiment not evoked to the same degree by the application of modern perfumes that are also widely used for secular purposes.

The availability of manufactured perfumes, incense sticks and a myriad of concocted incense compounds which have been integrated into most rituals in Somalia further complicates understanding the real purpose of the custom. Multiple application of perfumes, like many rituals, is most apparent in the saar ceremony. Saar spirits which afflict both men and women in southern Somalia and mainly women in the north (see I.M. Lewis, 1969: 198-211), consume special types of perfumes. The existence of different saar spirits which belong to different transcendental groups are thought

to be appeased by particular brands of perfumes. Women spirit priestesses identify the group of spirits that afflict the patient and recommend the specific type of perfume appealing to them. The correspondence between the ethnicity of afflicting spirits and the particularly favoured perfumes is necessary in the treatment. If the wrong perfume is offered to the spirits, they are claimed to get offended and take revenge by inflicting more harm to the patient.

The overriding importance of ritual incense in solemn rituals contrasts here with the overriding importance of particular brands of perfumes which are thought acceptable to different groups of spirits. The subordination of ritual incense to perfumes in the spirit possession cult in Somalia, could be explained by the fact that saar is denounced by orthodox Islam as 'pagan', and by men in northern Somalia as a foible of women engaging in 'superstitious expensive exercises'.

Broadly speaking, two types of possessing spirits are recognised, holy and unholy spirits. Both spirits consume particular manufactured perfumes, and certain types of food, and they differ in terms of their response to incense offering (see I.M. Lewis, 1980: 240-253). Ritual incense is thought appropriate to holy spirits: it is also offered to saints and used in other venerated Islamic ceremonies. As holy spirits, they are treated properly, and they are thought to respond positively to this sort of attitude. If they are offered their perfumes, incense, and sumptuously

feasted, they abandon the afflicted. Unholy spirits do not respond to their special perfumes but do not like ritual incense. They are forced out of the body of the afflicted by burning pungent substances. This testifies that ritual incense is associated with sacredness. It is offered to holy spirits and in the pursuit of good intentions. It is interesting to note that incense characteristically does not form part of the ingredients employed in malevolent magical rites with vocal intent to harm somebody or do something thought immoral. Tabooed objects like finger nails, human hair are objects usually used in witchcraft and other malevolent magical rites which are very rare in northern Somalia.

### Burning Incense: the Vision of Prophecy

Like the saar ceremony, fortune-telling is chiefly a women's occupation, although most popular fortune-tellers are men rather than women. Fortune-tellers are often consulted by women who are considered by men as gullible beings squandering resources in unIslamic rites. Only Allah is knowledgeable about future and forthcoming events, is the view of good Muslims. Indulgence in the practice is seen as intervention by the ignorant human being in the domain of Allah. In conspicuous disregard for the orthodox and eager to get an explanation for a misfortune or else to know more about the future, women and men consult fortune-tellers.

A female fortune teller faaliso is sometimes derogatively called fooxiso, the same way as a male fortune-teller faaliye is called fooxiye. The derogative names for male and female fortune-tellers literally mean 'incense burner' and signify the importance of the practice in the event. Some fortune-tellers undergo a traumatic transformation to carry out a prophecy. During the transformation they abandon their self and get possessed by prophecy spirits which are their agents. They recite magical spells and frankincense is sumptuously burned in the domestic censer.

The role of incense in prophecy is most important in the actual future speculation for the consultant or identification of the cause for a particular misfortune. For instance, to identify the cause of an illness, infertility, or perpetual loss of children, the fortune-teller burns incense on the censer placed in front of him. The crux of the rite is a fixed gaze by the operator on the ascending fumes. Reading the ascending smoke from the pattern it makes, the fortune-teller eventually reveals the sought after explanation which is translated into plain language for the consultant.

What we see in the prophecy rite, is the importance given to the burning of the ritual incense which is here imbued with magical quality by projecting it as the mirror image through which explanations for occurrences are revealed. The custom is absolutely crucial for the performance, just as manufactured perfume is essential in appeasing spirits in the saar ceremony. The function incense offering has in

these magical contexts is remarkably distinct from the holiness it assumes in the traditional Islamic rites, i.e. reciting Koran and reading prophet Mahammed's birth day service in Islamic calendars.

#### Domestic Incensation: a Means of Demonifuge

It is thought that two times a day, early in the morning and in the evening, are particularly propitious for incense burning, although domestic fumigation for purification or practical fumigation could be carried out at any time. This is held to have the objective of shielding the dwelling from malicious spirits who are in an eternal struggle against good Muslims, and bent on dissuading them from Islamic way of living. In addition to this protective role, the custom has another important supplementary function, that of attracting holy spirits, the guardians of faithful Muslims. These two antagonistic spirits never reside together in the same place at the same time. The holy spirits dispossess and drive away the evil ones once they are invited through observance of Islamic faith.

As a matter of fact, in everyday family concerns that do not necessarily call for the conduct of a large blessing ceremony duco, it is usually the burning of incense that acts as a means of propitiating the assistance of Allah or the ancestral saints in attending to the immediate concerns of the family. If a segment of the herd gets astray, the prayer for the protection of the animals from marauding

beasts is solemnly recited in the evening incensing. Apart from warding off evil spirits from home and inviting holy spirits, incensing in the ritual sense represents as easy and quick form of propitiation for the family.

### The Cult of Saints

In lieu of direct communication with the ultimate source of grace, Allah, Somalis commonly place a hierarchy of saints whom they seek, to intercede with the prophet on their behalf. To make merit for saints, most of whom are clan ancestors, and to assert that they are remembered by their descendents are some of the important aims in the veneration of saints (cf I.M. Lewis, 1980: 248-251).

The veneration of saints takes the form of organised large scale periodic visitations to their tombs. Feasting, reciting Koran and Prophet Mahammed's birthday service, are remarkable in the commemoration of saints. Reciting of the holy text and the tradition is supplemented by burning incense that is offered throughout the course of the event.

In the tombs of the great saints, presents of manufactured perfumes which may be explained like the saar ceremony in terms of their unIslamic origin, brought by disciples, accumulate over the time. These are offered to saints by the visitors. Many shrines contain receptacles for incense offering. At graves without such receptacles, one can often find earthen or stone carved censers for the purpose.

Unlike its function in magical rites like the prophecy rites, the tradition in the context of saint veneration assumes sacred overtones. I don't think it may be thought of as food for saints or as an independent form of worship. It may be described as contrite behaviour aimed to win the favour of the saints, to induce them to intervene effectively on behalf of Muslim followers. It seems to function as a means of promoting the pursuit of the purpose in hand, by creating currents of religious feeling during the performance.

Fumigating or purifying the living place by burning incense has apparently a hygienic function too. In practice this mundane function of the custom cannot totally be separated from the underlying religious dimension. Burning incense is customarily accompanied by seeking blessing for the Prophet and may be initiated by pronouncing 'in the name of Allah the merciful the gracious', followed by the blessing of the family and its wealth or any other intent of immediate concern.

Among the urban middle class who live in a relatively hygienic environment, domestic incensing could be said to entail the sense of creating an enthralling and pleasant environment. Such a pleasant living environment felt by urban Somalis in response to domestic incensing could be suggested to be analagous to the sensation felt by a person in the West after varnishing domestic furniture or replacement of the old and wornout item of furniture with a

new shining one.

Alfred Gell's (1977) hypothesis on the smell sign seems to apply to the role of ritual incense. He explained the profound connection between the smell aspect and other worldliness. He showed that Umeda villager's outlook intimately connect smelling with dreaming which represents access to higher truth. The smell sign is explained as an ideal model of exchange between different domains - this world and the transcendental. What we 'thematise' in everyday life but have no practical access to is manifested as a concept via the smell sign. In this context, sacred fragrant smoke of the ritual incense gives access to higher truth without leaving the realm of things that are intelligible.

### CHAPTER THREE: GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF PROPERTY AND ETHNO-BOTANY OF FRANKINCENSE TREES

#### Pastoral and Non-Pastoral Categories of Property

The first section of this chapter deals with indigenous classification of wealth. This is followed by ideas specifically pertaining to the commercial frankincense forests. In the last part of the chapter, I will compare some aspects of the biology of the frankincense trees with the ethno-botany of the plants.

In Somali, the generic term for wealth is maal (alternative 'adduunyo' - worldly material things, or 'xoolo' which refers to animate wealth). Maal is also commonly used to refer to the surplus animals or agricultural fields that are loaned to needy kinsmen. The compound term soo maal which mean 'go and milk' the livestock, is a popular version for the origin of the word Somali (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 12). These designations of the word maal already express the pastoral outlook of the society, which this chapter and the next will document in detail.

The schematic representation of wealth is not complex, for only two distinct and non-overlapping broad categories are generally acknowledged. The first is the pastoral type of wealth, and consists exclusively of nomadic livestock species and other domestic animals that render some sort of service to the pastoral people. The second category groups

together all other useful properties that fall outside the first category.

The linguistic regional terms that correspond to the major categories of wealth are socially important. Regional differences with respect to the description of wealth, accord with the social division of the Somali society into two factions: the predominantly pastoral groups in northern Somalia and the largely sedentary cultivating groups in southern Somalia.

In the northern part of the country, the terms mood and nool are most commonly used to express categories of wealth. Nool literally mean living, but more appropriately it can be translated as 'animate wealth' or more precisely as pastoral property. The mood concept literally designates something non-living or dead, but it accurately seems to correspond to 'inanimate' or 'non-pastoral' form of property. In the chiefly sedentary groups in the south, property concepts that correspond to those in the north are guure and magurre which mean literally: 'mobile' and 'immobile'.

Fundamentally the two regional systems of property classification are identical. Not only two broad categories of wealth are commonly acknowledged, but also the elements that are placed under each category are similar. The 'animate or pastoral' northern concept and its southern counterpart 'mobile', consist of the familiar domestic stock of pastoral peoples, while the 'in-animate

or non-pastoral' and 'immobile' category represents wealth other than the nomadic stock.

If the two regional property classification systems are basically identical in terms of differentiating pastoral and non-pastoral forms of wealth, their descriptions vary to designate the distinct variation of the two factions of the Somali society. To glorify cherished herds, northern pastoralists describe nomadic herds as nool which imply 'living' in the literal sense, in contrast to non-pastoral property which is designated as mood and connotes 'non-living' and by implication inferior, undesired wealth. For their part, sedentary communities in the south exalt the primary resource of land which is described as 'immobile' landed property maguure, a notion which seems to convey a sense of permanency in contrast to the 'mobile' guure pastoral herds which depend upon varying and uncertain pastoral resources.

The 'animate or pastoral' category of wealth is self explanatory. It encompasses herds of camels, flocks of sheep and goats, horses, donkeys and mules whose service, to varying degrees, is required for animal husbandry. In short, this form of wealth represents the herding species that support the pastoral clans. Of these, the camel, which has been described by I.M. Lewis (1961: 86) as the 'capital resource' of the Somali pastoralists, is the most coveted form of wealth.

The 'inanimate or non-pastoral' category is polarised as

distinct from the pastoral type of property. The first thing to note about this ill-defined category is that intriguingly it is not afforded the distinctiveness afforded to the other. It is a set of various property elements explained or categorised in terms of what it is not, in lieu of what actually it is (it is not animate or pastoral property). Hence it is a residual category of wealth, for every other valuable asset other than the domestic herds are indiscriminately assembled under this extraneous jumble of property elements that are seen as alien to the pastoral society.

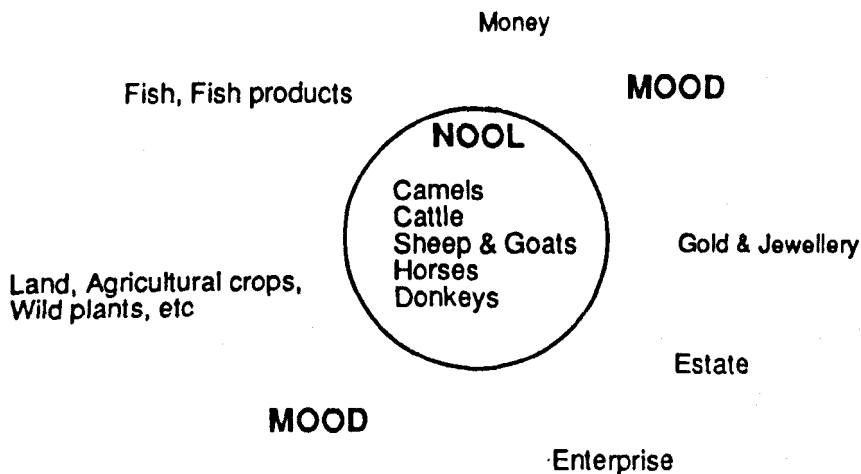
The importance of inanimate wealth is that it can accommodate any novel property which may evolve as a result of change. The lack of definition induces elasticity to the system of classification and allows a flexibility that insulates it from disruption or endemic contradiction. Any useful material object that is not 'animate' can conveniently be counted as non-pastoral, regardless of any of its other important characteristics.

Property elements jumbled together under the residual and open 'inanimate' category include useful objects like: money, jewellery and gold, capital goods, land and agricultural products, wild plant products, weaponry, trucks, building property, enterprise etc.

To propose a simple model for the property classification outlined in the above, the two categories of wealth may not be regarded as two distinct and separately bounded sets. A

suitable schematic representation would be a framework consisting of a central circle which encloses an exclusively pastoral property. All other types of 'inanimate' wealth occur outside the central circle which encloses the 'animate wealth'.

FIGURE 4: General Classification of Property



What needs to be stressed is the fact that the classification alluded to in the above is constructed from the actor's perspective, particularly from the pastoralist's outlook. Nevertheless, the distinction between pastoral and non-pastoral wealth is true for the other economic groups in northern Somalia, frankincense collectors in the north-east, and sedentary cultivators in the north-west agricultural region.

To substantiate the significance of the actor's categorisation of property, northern pastoralists describe poultry as 'birds', and do not count it as animal property. rearing chicken is alien to mobile nomads and it does not

constitute a source of food. Nomads and other rural groups in northern Somalia do not eat eggs. As a result of this, poultry is seen as 'birds' which are not hunted by pastoralists nor valued for other significant reasons.

Pastoral concepts used to categorise property are apparently different from specialised wealth concepts used in the developed world. Hence it is imperative to give actual situations where indigenous ideas are put to use. It is usually the case that important social transactions between groups are customarily settled in terms of quantified 'animate' and 'inanimate' units, depending upon the size of the transaction concerned. For instance, in the case of sustained physical injury by a man of a particular lineage, the elders of the lineage of the victim would negotiate with those of the assailant's lineage, if out of court peaceful settlement of the matter is agreed upon. Quite often, the final negotiated compensation would consist of a sum total expressed in 'animate' and 'inanimate' units.

The bridewealth (people in the frankincense region know it as honouring affines 'xurmo'), that is exchanged between the groom's social unit and the bride's lineage may be settled with a payment consisting of both units of wealth. For example, 15 camels nool, and a certain amount of cash or a gun which represent 'in-animate' wealth mood (cf. I.M. Lewis, 1961: 138-139).

A Somali expression says that an individual or a group is

dispossessed of all that he or it has of 'inanimate' and 'animate' wealth mood iyo nool waxey xoolo lahaayeen waa laga qaatey, in the case of plunder by a more powerful individual or group.

To account for the rationale of the indigenous property classification is not as easy as the overall distinction made between 'animate' and 'inanimate' categories. The first clue for the basis of the classification can be traced in the structure of the scheme, in other words the polarisation between 'pastoral' and 'non-pastoral' forms of property. The coveted pastoral herd units that are described as 'living' in the literal sense, are separated from the 'inanimate' wealth described as 'non-living' and by implication inferior to herds.

#### Camels and Other Stock

Varying attitudes apply to the different species raised by nomads, although pastoral wealth in general is held to be superior to 'non-pastoral' property. I.M. Lewis (1961: 88-89) wrote: "This division which conforms to ecological requirements is also accompanied by a distinction in the values which attach to the two types of stock. Sheep and goats have importance mainly in subsistence while camels have a greater social value since in addition to their subsistence uses they are regarded primarily as a medium for the regulation of most aspects of social, and political life. In essence camels represent agnation, for to a large

extent social relations are a function of joint rights in them. In conformity with this, agnatic kinship, which underlies the structure of both camel-camp and nomadic hamlet, is especially important in the former. While the hamlets are essentially domestic groups of kinsmen, the camel camps contain the capital resources of lineages."

Pastoral Somalis distinguish between large stock of camel and cattle ishin, or isjin in the south, and small stock of sheep and goats adhi or yiriis. Apart from its socio-economic importance, the camel has significant symbolic value. Said S. Samatar explained the sentimental attachment Somalis show towards the camel. "Camel culture pervades contemporary society and the influence of camel vocabulary and concepts on modern life appears to be extensive. In modern literature, writers draw their images and inspiration from pastoral figures denoting relations between man and camel. Thus, the lover in the modern drama says that owing to unrequited love, he is stricken with dhuhkaaḥ, the disease from which camels in drought suffer. Similarly, the singer of a popular song likens the tender sentiment he feels towards his lady to what a camel feels towards her suckling baby. 'I groan in agony of love', he sings, 'like a camel whose baby is unjustly sequestered away from her'. For her part, the woman singer poet, admonishes her suitor to give her 'fine pastures, and pat her gently on the udder so she'd give milk'. The jealous husband, in his bitter sarcasm and ridicule, points out to his wayward wife, that it is only the 'camel which enjoys being milked by two men at the same time, and not in all

seasons, but solely when she is in full lactation. Anything else of the feminine gender shared by two men is soon debased, 'he moralises'." (Said S. Samatar, 1981: 20).

Another account by the same author depicts camel symbolism signified in the context of a national event. He wrote: "When they gained independence and the two former territories of British and Italian Somalilands joined to form the Somali Democratic Republic in 1960, the Somalis found it fitting to adopt a camel name maandeeq to stand as symbolic name for their freedom. Maandeeq means a milk camel which satisfies the mind through the generosity of its milk. The well-known northern Somali poet and patriot, Abdillahai Tima-Ade, composed a poem which he called mandeeq to celebrate the advent of independence, and the term became popular in press and radio in the heady euphoric days of early sixties" (Ibid: 20).

The influence of camel culture on the world view of the pastoral and non-pastoral economic groups in the northern region will become clear in the next chapter on the oral poetry of the frankincense sector. In general, the fate of the Somalis is thought to be inextricably linked to the existence of the camel herds. It is very difficult for a pastoralist to contemplate life without camels. The ideological association between camels and the continuity of the lineage is symbolised by the image of camel herds. Apart from joint interests and corporate joint rights over the total camel stock of the lineage, camel stock of the individual members of the lineage usually bear lineage

brands, in contrast, herds of small stock bear the brand of the individual owner.

Idealised as the 'capital resource' of the pastoral society, and symbolised as a corporate property which is expressed in joint watering of the camel stock of the group and joint protection, it is not surprising to observe strong 'ownership' rights at the individual level. The generosity attributed to pastoral Somalis hardly applies when it comes to camels.

Pastoralists are less generous in camels, a tendency which may not be true of the smaller stock of sheep and goats. Needy kin are preferably offered some sheep or goats and hardly camels. This does not mean that a pastoral man would never give a destitute close kinsman, a brother, or uncle, a valuable burden camel or a female milk camel. If a rich pastoralist feels that it is essential to assist a loved kinsman, he would lend camels maal instead of giving them outright.

Essentially coveted camels pass between social groups ceremonially on important social occasions. The example of homicide compensation, most clearly show the reluctance shown by individual herders to dispense camels. Individual members of the lineage which is paying compensation collectively to the victim's lineage strive to pay the least desired camels in their herd at the time, as part of their allotted share. The consequence of this tendency is that the final compensation paid for homicide consists of

an inferior herd on average. It is proverbial among northern pastoralists to wonder, if they see inferior camels, if they are camels selected for the payment of blood money - ma geel magbaa!

If the desire to keep camels and hoard them sometimes transcends kinship morality, it is no less the case that it also violates a religious prescription. Except for the pious, most camel herders exempt their camel stock from the Islamic annual obligatory tax saka on property. The tendency of those who pay, is to offer inferior camels. This proclivity testifies to the strength of camel possessiveness shown by pastoral Somalis, and is not true of the small stock of sheep and goats and to some extent cattle where it is raised.

The desire to acquire camels is best articulated by a famous northern poet, Abdi Gaheyr. In response to a religious man who suggested that pastoralists must relinquish plundering herds of fellow Muslims, Abdi Gaheyr places camel affairs above the rule of Islam. Here are the relevant lines from his poem.

B4

Other clans send their children as migrant labour to Aden  
Among the Iidagale clan someone without camels is not  
counted among the ranks in the group.

Other clans with substantial number of townsmen are said to be able to send adult men to Aden in Southern Yemen which

was an important labour market before independence in 1960. These relatively urbanised clans which could earn remittances are distinguished from the poet's interior pastoral clan which is predominantly pastoral. Without camels, the fate of members of the pastoral Iidagale clan is described to be uncertain or rather in a limbo as the second line seems to suggest.

In a highly secular tone uncharacteristic of devout Somalis, in another more familiar poem, the poet finds a place for camel in the afterlife, let alone its indispensable role in this world. Here is a relevant extract:

B5

The progenitor female camel Idinba,as, its burden camel and young calves

Have benefitted the early companions and revered supporters of Prophet Muhammad

Someone without camels is said to earn no praise in the afterlife

Why should a person without camels pray with you, men of religion.

In terms of Islamic ideology, forgiveness, penitence and expiation, with which the devout may earn heaven, must be the overriding concerns. Such subjects as camels that indeed come after people in importance in this world are not important in the other. To the displeasure of the pious, if the secular poet transgressed the border of the

devout by extending the importance of the camel to the afterlife, he surely emphasised the love Somalis have for the camel more strongly than one can imagine.

The importance of the camel is ceremonially enacted by the husband who is the proprietor of the family stock at the birth of a baby boy. The infant is offered a gift of a female camel known as xuddun-xidh - 'naval knot', the nucleus of the future herd of his son. And as the child grows he receives gifts of camels from his father, and sometimes from his uncle and other members of the male kin. As shown in the chapter on 'ownership' women do not inherit camels that are passed from father to son.

Sometimes a husband may give a female camel to console an offended wife whose dignity he has damaged. If it multiplies, the husband may renege the offer and dispossess the wife. If the wife complains to her husband's kinsmen, whose support a good wife obtains for good reason, or else to kinsmen in her natal group, she may be told to forget claiming camels. Camels belong to men not women.

Idealised as the 'capital' goods of pastoral peoples, and as a lineage resource, not to mention its social and symbolic value, it is understandable that the camel occupies a pivotal position in the culture of the Somali society. Although they cherish it highly, Somalis do not consider the camel as a sacred object in the literal sense. To assert its uniqueness in relation to the small stock and non-pastoral property, pastoralists find it difficult to

describe its attraction, and say it a property of the 'anthropomorphic spirits' xoolo jin. It is not an ordinary property what a man can sacrifice his life for its protection or acquisition. The camel has been a constant cause of pastoral feuds and vendetta in the past and is still the source of many conflicts.

Unlike cherished camels that take part in important exchange systems between social units, i.e. in marriage as bride wealth and in blood compensation for homicide or injury, the small stock frequently circulate between individual members of the group. In contrast to the camel which may be slaughtered during important occasions, i.e. religious festivities, sheep and goats are frequently slaughtered for guests.

Sheep and goats are regularly offered as gifts to kin, a tendency which is not true in the case of coveted camels. Moreover, they are often sold to be exchanged for supplementary food items and other household goods. In contrast camels, are rarely brought to the market. If this happens, as it may at times, it is usually impelled by sheer necessity. Usually camels sold and taken from the kraal are inferior individual camels. For instance an old female camel that is past bearing and is no longer reproducing, or one that is deficient and not becoming pregnant, or yet another its udders may be diseased. Somalis know this tendency and do not buy directly from the market female camels which they want to rear; instead they buy directly from the owner of a camel whose pedigree they

know.

The proceeds from surplus male camels may partly be invested in a female calf that will increase the herd in the future and partly finance other needs. Sometimes a pastoralist sells some sheep and goats and exchanges part of the proceeds for a female camel to build the camel herd at the expense of the other less valuable species.

In contrast to camel herds which are viewed as 'permanent pastoral wealth' and lineage property, small stock of sheep and goats are seen as consumer domestic goods. Northern pastoralists say geel waa raasamaal arina waa raashin - 'camels are permanent wealth while sheep and goats are food'. The concept about camels as permanent pastoral wealth is indeed engendered by its profound social and symbolic values in addition to its subsistence utility.

Camels are status symbols, 'beget' women, and maintain relations between groups. Camels paid to the lineage of a murdered man by that of the assailant are said not to compensate entirely the value of the dead man (Somalis do not put a value on a person as the classical literature tends to suggest) but to make them forget the tragic human loss. Even in terms of subsistence, camels are supreme. They are drought animals and withstand the arid conditions in the Horn more than the other stock. They are economical on water which is a scarce commodity, and can move fast and frequently across the country to make the best use of the

available resources. These qualities of the camel, not matched by the small stock and cattle, further entrench the notion about the camel as a permanent wealth and reliable stock in adversity.

The designation of the small stock as consumer domestic goods in contrast to the more permanent and lineage camel herds, is also demonstrated by the difference in the management of the two pastoral stocks. Sheep and goats are commonly herded by household female labour in the nomadic hamlet, while boys and unmarried adult men tend camels in the camel-camp. Of all the pastoral wealth, the Somali pony was most valuable in the past. This was largely because of its essential role in the protection of the lives and property of pastoral people in a world endemic with conflict.

It is interesting to note the love Somalis hold for livestock seems to be extended to animal products. The traditional pastoral diet of milk and meat, to date supplemented with imported or locally produced food stuff, is thought to be the best nourishing food. Pastoral Somalis are often said to manifest certain qualities that help them weather the harsh nomadic life-style - resilience, virility, unyielding resistance to thirst and hunger, etc. These qualities are thought by pastoralists to be obtained from the consumption of livestock products.

A pastoralist would taunt a visiting kinsman from the town as being effeminate, someone who cannot adequately perform

the usual laborious pastoral chores, for instance, driving camels to distant wells in the dry season. In towns he may argue, people do simple clerical work even the weak women folk could perform. A pastoral stereotype holds that the hands of townsmen are clean and tender, not hardened by rough manual work, that an ordinary sheet of paper can cut through like a sharp knife. The physical weakness pastoralists assume to be characteristic of townspeople is explained as a consequence of the latter's diet, which contains little pastoral products, and largely consists of inferior items like vegetables, fruits, fish, rice and spaghetti, etc.

The positive attitude toward animal products is further enhanced by the medicinal virtues pastoral diet is thought to possess. The first traditional treatment for a sick person, before anything else, is to treat him with a dose of specially prepared meat or milk or purified ghee sometimes taken with non-pastoral food. This tendency prevails in rural areas and depends upon strong beliefs about the medicinal attributes of pastoral products. It is sometimes carried out without consideration for the types of illnesses that are anathema to the consumption of dairy products, i.e. jaundice. People who urgently require special care, for example a circumcised child, a delivered mother, an injured person, a weak person, etc., are given specially prepared meat, milk and purified ghee.

Apparently the pastoralist model of property classification is biased against non-pastoral forms of wealth. Unlike the

pastoral stocks where different values are attached to different stocks, non-pastoral property is not systematically categorised and no coherent values attach to different elements. The pastoral attitude towards alien types of property is distinctly negative - inferior and devoid of the social and symbolic value pastoral herds perform. Non-pastoral agricultural crops could be said to be inferior because they are not as nourishing as pastoral products.

A pastoral saying meditates upon the fate of an unwise man who sold his pack camel Allahayow maxey noqon ninkii awrkii lacag siistey! - I wonder what would happen to a man who exchanged his burden camel, which is essential for herding, for cash. This old saying indicates that livestock, particularly camels, are preferred to cash, a tendency which may still be true despite current thorough commercialisation of the national herd. Urban property such as buildings and cash are thought less permanent and artificial. They may quickly disappear as they are acquired and therefore are unreliable, unlike the camel herd which always supports nomads even in adversity.

The attitude pastoralists hold about agriculture is summed up by I.M. Lewis (1961: 100-101), "Although gaining in popularity through the benefits which can be made in a good year, cultivation is still despised by the Somali pastoralists however much they may covet the income of a farmer. In the eyes of a Dhulbahante or other herdsmen of the north-east, those who till the land are poor in spirit

and in livestock, for cattle and ploughing oxen replace camel to a considerable extent. To the pastoralist camel rearing and fighting are the proper pursuits of men. The mutual contempt between nomad and cultivator is often phrased in terms of the relative excellence of camel's milk and cow's milk. Such insults are usually levelled between entirely pastoral clans such as the Dhulbahante and partly agricultural clans such as the Habar Awal where differences in economy serve as a convenient vehicle for the expression of the rivalry between the two clan families (Daarood and Isaaq) in which they belong."

The pastoralist view of fishing and fish products is more lowly and degrading than that obtaining for agricultural crops. While pastoralists consume substantial quantities of grains produced by rival cultivators, particularly in the dry season, they do not eat fish, and hence their denigration of fish is most pronounced. 'Fish eater' is a term of abuse. Eating fish is repugnant and one informant asserted that the sight of raw fish or the talk about it makes him feel nauseated. A pastoralist may describe fishing as 'maritime hunting' to reduce it to a form of hunting, for he derides hunting. The pastoralist dislike for fish can even be observed in larger towns in the north where the fish market is relatively small compared to that of livestock meat.

## Ideas about Frankincense Trees

It would have been appropriate to preface this section with a discussion of ideas relating to trees and crops in the north-west agricultural region. This is not possible because of the absence of literature on the topic. Such a topic, I realise, demands an investigation which may not be fully compensated by familiarity with the region and its people, a familiarity which as a son of a sedentary family in Dila village near Borama I claim to possess.

In this section I try to examine the position of frankincense trees in relation to the pastoral property concepts outlined in the preceding section.

Frankincense gathering communities and sedentary cultivators in the north-west region of Somalia (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 90-126) do not contradict the pastoral property classification which distinguishes between 'pastoral' and 'non-pastoral' categories of wealth. However, they praise or glorify their respective economic basis in the same spirit pastoralists praise coveted herds. In the next chapter the competition for honour and excellence between economic groups in the northern part of Somalia via the media of the poetic oral craft will be discussed. We will see how the dominant camel culture influences the outlook of non-pastoral groups who sing that agricultural or frankincense fields are as valuable as camels.

Frankincense collectors and sedentary cultivators view their primary resources with fascination. Working on the camel standard which Somalis use to evaluate important things in life, frankincense collectors point out certain advantages commercial forests excel in. They say that 'frankincense gathering is more viable than herding' xiji xoolo ka roon.

Frankincense gathering is claimed to be more viable than herding, for the reason that it is possible for poor-herd families with a very limited herd size (less than fifty head of sheep and goats) to subsist on incense production. With an insufficient number of stock, poor families cannot rely on nomadism since a large herd of more than a hundred sheep and goats and some camels is necessary for subsistence of an average pastoral family.

People's fascination with their frankincense forests cannot adequately be explained by the simplistic device of giving credit to a resource that sustains the communities of incense collectors. A complete explanation must consider ideology. Muslim Somalis believe that compassionate Allah justly provided each community he created on the earth with a primary resource to subsist upon. By His will the physical environment of every social group is moulded and modelled in such a way as to sustain the basic resource for the maintenance and well-being of each and every social group, regardless of its colour, creed and ideology. In the light of this belief, incense producing communities in the frankincense region of Somalia primarily see

frankincense property as their legitimate share in Allah's equitable distribution of resources. As good Muslims, they must not complain whatever the merit and demerit of their respective resource; they must try to make the best possible use out of whatever resource they were given as a result of Allah's providence.

Apart from the ideology which enjoins Muslims to be thankful for what Allah has provided for them and be content with it, as we will see in the next chapter, incense people as do other economic groups often complain about their lot. For the people in the frankincense region, the disparity of resource distribution at the national level seems obvious to them. The southern region of Somalia contains the most fertile and well watered agricultural land. Most of the land in the northern part of the country is blessed with the best available pasturage in relation to the rugged and mountainous resource-poor frankincense region. Given the limited resource base of their country, incense people seem to embrace the view that, in a sense, they have been compensated by benign Allah in providing unique and localised commercial forests.

The divine compassion of Allah towards the frankincense cultivating communities is revealed in a miraculous story concerning the original formation of the frankincense groves. Informants in Bosaso district told the story. The creation myth claims that frankincense groves in a form identical to their present nature were cruising through the sky to an unspecified destination. At the time they were

aloft the frankincense region, they were very tired from the effects of the flight. Desperate to rest, they entreated the maritime incense region for an overnight lodging which was allowed.

Once landed, frankincense groves declined to honour their guest status and refused to abandon the region. In this miraculous story, frankincense resource had been created for the benefit of the communities inhabiting the resource-poor territory which is not suitable for agriculture nor for pastoral production. The obstinacy of the *Boswellia* forests, that is their refusal to abandon incense territory, has become an admonitory expression which is applied against fastidious persons who persistently ask for support, or those who repeat irksome mistakes against somebody who is patient with them.

The tendency implicit among incense communities which seems to assume that they have been kindly compensated with frankincense resource is indicated by other factors. Incense collection areas xiji are described as fields. Territorially bounded collection areas could be considered as fields in the sense that they are plots of land growing exploited commercial crops and also because of the fact that they are subject to rights (see chapter on 'ownership').

Similarities and differences of frankincense and agricultural fields in the north-west sedentary region are discussed in the chapter on 'ownership'. Here I want to

give an example relating to a tendency in which incense collectors describe their chief resource as 'camels' in poetic allusion - a tendency to impart the love Somalis hold for camels to incense groves, or possibly an explanatory device characteristic of the pastoral Somalis who draw on camel metaphors in order to explain non-pastoral property. This epigram which was obtained from Galgala village in Bosaso district exalts commercial frankincense forests to the rank of camels.

B6

We have got camels (frankincense forests) that never run dry of milk (resin)

Each individual camel yields a full milk vessel gaawa

Camels whose lips do not have to be <sup>Y</sup>bought to the water

Camels that are never troubled by hunger

Camels that grow in the frankincense Guban region.

In the verse, frankincense forests are figuratively spoken of as camels. In the first line the resin derived from incense plants is likened to the milk obtained from female camels. The second line implies, just as the good female camel yield a full gaawa milk vessel, a fecund frankincense tree produces a full collecting basket of commercial resin. Frankincense collectors carry the dichotomy further by calling a fecund frankincense tree madi, which is a popular name for a female camel that yields plenty of milk. On the contrary, an incense plant that produces less resin is known as bigjaar which is also a name for a camel that produces less milk.

In the third and fourth lines, the poet remarks on some qualities in which frankincense forests excel the coveted camels. They are resistant to hunger which may decimate the sturdy camel herds in a prolonged drought; and they thrive on minimal rainfall of four inches per annum, and are therefore more economical on water which is scarce in the Horn. The final line is a clue for the reader, to help him understand the type of camels concerned. The expression 'camels that grow in frankincense Guban region' is a sufficient indication for the Somali to recognise that the topic of discussion is not actual camels, but frankincense forests that are as valuable or more important than cherished camels which do not thrive in the burnt coastal Guban (incense region).

The specific attitude of the inhabitants of the frankincense region towards incense property is one replete with fascination and marvel. It is not easy to say if this is entirely due to innocuous eccentric glorification of the primary resource, or a defense against the domineering pastoral culture, or both. I surmise it is both. Commercial frankincense forests are reckoned as a prodigious wealth that can be considered as irrefutable evidence of the benevolence of Allah towards his subjects and a tacit manifestation of his omnipotence, a view which other economic groups to a varying degree hold about their respective basic resources, but in this context particularly over emphasised.

Various reasons seem to account for the uniqueness attributed to the *Boswellia* forests. First and foremost is perhaps their natural habitat. They grow, particularly the *B. frereana* species, outwards and upwards from vertical cliffs, clinging on the surface of boulders by means of 'a bulbous mass'. There is a big debate among the frankincense collectors as to whether frankincense trees growing on exposed rock surfaces are held to their sites by natural roots, the 'bulbous mass' or some other mysterious force. This feature of the plants has also attracted the fascination of various observers who frequently mentioned it in their reports.

To argue against domestication experiments going on in the frankincense region and outside it, some collectors and inhabitants in the region tend to argue that to plant precious forests on extremely precarious sites must surely be the work of an omnipotent and divine power, that of Allah. The creation of wonderful things, like frankincense species, is thought to entail tangible evidence that the Almighty exposes himself to the human society, for the purpose of strengthening their belief. The creation of all wonderful things is accepted as the domain of Allah. This notion may be exemplified by the public perception which disregards the possibility of propagating frankincense trees. The establishment of recent experimental state domestication farms is seen by many as the pursuit of the impossible and meddling in the sphere of the omnipotent. The human power to create things is limited, and propagation of exotic incense species is thought a futile

exercise by reckless humans transcending the limits of their power.

Apart from the habitat of the fabulous incense trees, people derive great delight and pride from the long-standing export history of the incense crop (see chapter one). The cumulative effect of these factors have generated an impressive attitude towards frankincense property. However, there are no mystical attitudes attached to them, despite the traditional use of incense. They are marvelled at in moments of speculation, highly regarded in public discourse concerning objects of importance and above all are economically exploited without any stringent ritual observance. This noted pragmatism is fairly true of northern Somalis in general. As mentioned in the above, Somalis do not consider their beloved camel herds as sacred, nor do sedentary cultivators in Borama district relate mystical forces to their agricultural land.

Non-pastoral groups in northern Somalia boast of essential resources of frankincense and agricultural land. These resources are assumed by the respective sedentary groups as lineage resources, the same way camels are exalted as lineage wealth by nomads. Group ideologies, inheritance patterns and other characteristics of group resources among northern economic groups are dealt with in the chapter on 'ownership'. Women do not inherit these group properties, which are passed between father and son and by implication through men of the patriline.

What may be said to differentiate pastoral wealth from non-pastoral property of frankincense and agricultural lands is that the latter do not generally pass between social units and between members of the lineage. Camels, though coveted, are passed between social units ceremonially on important occasions like the exchange system involving blood compensation. And more commonly the smaller stock take part in frequent social prestations. Apart from right of use in relation to sedentary resources, they do not circulate the same way stock circulate between individual members of a lineage and between different social units, as pastoral livestock do. This role is performed by the crops procured from the sedentary property of fixed land. Sedentary resources of frankincense and agricultural land are fixed and immobile. They may be affixed to social relations among kinsmen or affines through right of use, but usually are not passed between 'owners' and non-holders.

The dependence of non-pastoral groups on nomadic culture for images and metaphors, seems to reduce them to localised systems struggling to attain independent identity within the constraint of an overarching pastoral tradition (see next chapter). The pastoral supremacy in the Somali culture and its influence on sedentary systems is understandable because of the recent introduction of agriculture in the north-west, in the beginning of the twentieth century, and the fact that pastoralism is a subordinate activity to the prevailing peasant economies of frankincense and crop production. Moreover, the

substantial influence of nomadic culture on the frankincense economy, which is as old as pastoralism if not older, signifies the tenacity of pastoralism in Somali culture.

The pastoral model of property classification which is applied throughout the country testifies to the intensity of the influence of nomadic values upon the Somalis. All known property is divided into two broad categories, pastoral or animate and non-pastoral or inanimate. The former category consists of the traditional stock species herded by pastoral Somalis, while the latter assembles all other useful property elements which are not pastoral. Values evolved by pastoral wealth are relatively speaking universal. Since both social and symbolic values revolve around this property, it is regarded as a superior form of wealth.

This table summarises the chief characteristics of major property types discussed in the text.

TABLE 4: Chief characteristics of the animate and inanimate categories of wealth

Animate or pastoral wealth (camels, sheep and goats)	Inanimate or non-pastoral wealth (frankincense forests, agricultural land)
Socially and physically mobile	Fixed and socially not as mobile as the other
Invigorating animal products	Less nourishing plant food
Universal system of value	Local system of values
Frequently constitute part of the social exchange	Do not often pass between lineages

The pastoral attitude towards urban properties like money, buildings etc. is ambiguous. Although they may be coveted, they are rated as being less reliable and less important than rural property of herds or land and frankincense forests. Because of the cultural commitment of pastoralists towards their stocks, and the hold pastoralism has had over non-pastoral communities, there is apparently a general tendency to reduce other types of wealth to pastoral or animate property. In both rural and urban areas, it is usually the case that blood compensation is conveniently valued in terms of camels. Since it is not practical to effect the compensation in actual camels between lineages, a sum calculated on contractual camel price which is much lower than the real market value of the camel is paid.

#### Ethno-botany: Local and Botanical Classification of Frankincense Trees

This section deals specifically with a comparison between the botanical classification of the frankincense trees that grow in the frankincense region of Somalia and the corresponding indigenous order. Their distribution and the species that are commercially exploited in the major frankincense producing countries were described in the first chapter of the thesis.

It is not possible, at present, to undertake a comprehensive comparative scheme between universal and local botany of the Somali plants, because the available scientific literature on incense plants is so far very limited. As will shortly become clear, until quite recently botanical identification of the Somali bearing species that grow in the frankincense region of Somalia has been a contentious subject.

Valuable reports by Greek and Latin writers chronicle various aspects of the incense trees, i.e. production, cultivation, qualities of the resin and processing. These are so extensively quoted in the early literature that it is not necessary to go over this ground. Nigel Groom's review of the past and present literature in the area notes considerable contradictions and ambiguities (Nigel Groom, 1983: 96-121).

In early times, for instance during the classical period, technologically it was difficult for travellers and traders to penetrate deep in the interior of the frankincense growing lands to get access to them. This apparently affected the accuracy of information on the frankincense plants. What is surprising, as commented by Groom, is the bewildering inconsistency of information of the species quoted by contemporary writers (Ibid: 109).

Frankincense and myrrh both belong to the Burseraceae family. One of the most distinguishing features of the

family is the presence of resin ducts on the bark of the plants. Within this family, frankincense is obtained from trees of the genus *Boswellia*, and myrrh from trees of the genus *Commiphora*. *Boswellia* and *Commiphora* are tropical plants that are widely distributed throughout the tropics. Various commercial species are known to grow in south Arabia, the north eastern part of Africa and India.

To name and order plants that grow in their environment is a prevalent tendency of the Somalis. People inhabiting the frankincense region of Somalia who are known as 'the people in the east' ('reer bari': 'reer' is from 'reer', the all-pervasive term for a group, ideally a family or lineage, but extended to include all types of human group), because of the geographical location of their country, have a compounded term geed-quawaax for gum producing plants. The word geed means plant, while quawaax means resin or plant sap. Although this term does not exactly correspond to the Burseraceae family, many of the gum producing plants in this category rightly belong to the genus *Boswellia* and genus *Commiphora*.

Correlation between the local classification and the scientific one diverge below this highest level of ordering. The indigenous order seems to classify resin producing trees according to the value of resin obtained from them by using mixed criteria. Commercial forests which mainly consist of a mixture of *Boswellia* and *Commiphora* species that are known as xiji are distinguished from resin producing species that are not commercially

exploited.

Frankincense collectors in Aluala district classify the following species as xiji:

TABLE 5: Ethno-classification of the gum trees

Local name of the species	Botanical name
Yagcar	Boswellia frereana Birwood
Moxor	Boswellia sacra Fluckiger ,B.cateri)
Ceeqad	?
Xankookib	(Acacia ankookib Chiov.)
Cobbol	(Combretum molle R.Br.)
Cadaad	(Acacia Senegal (L.) Willd.)
Jeerin Anders.)	(Acacia edgeworthii T.
Fuulaa (not known to occur in Alula)	(Acacia seyal (Del.)
Hadi	(Commiphora flabellifera Chiov.)

The list of commercial forests which produce valuable resin that are categorised as xiji in the local classification, botanically consist mainly of a mixture of species that belong to both Boswellia and genus Commiphora. In general the resin obtained from these commercial forests is known as falleen. In its narrow and most common sense falleen is used to refer to incense derived from Boswellia species which are subject to prescribed rights and most intensely and systematically exploited for commercial purposes.

The xiji class of economic forests, are further subdivided into plants that have no thorns, i.e. moxor and Yagcar, and those with thorns, i.e. caddaad. Like the term falleen, xiji has a general and precise meaning. In its general sense it denotes plants that produce valuable gum-resin. In its narrow sense it relates to the two major types of species that grow in the frankincense region of Somalia.

As the data seem to suggest, the two systems of classification have some correlations at the highest level of ordering. Many of the gum producing Geed-quwaax plants that produce valuable gum-resin belong to the Burseraceae family. Below this level, the local system of classification diverges from the universal one by using mixed criteria. Gum-resin producing plants are ordered in terms of their economic importance, in contrast to the botanical one where biological considerations provide the basis of identification and systematic classification. The distinction drawn between the commercial forests xiji and non-commercial gum-resin producing species accounts for the fact. The attempt to further subdivide xiji economic species into those with thorns and those without thorns indicate that an aspect of the physical feature of the plants has been utilised as another criterion.

From this brief general account of the local and universal systems of classification and gum-resin producing plants, I now want to consider the identification of the frankincense bearing species that grow in the frankincense region of

Somalia. Other plants are deliberately left out for lack of written sources of information.

Largely as a result of limited botanical field work, two issues concerning the Somali frankincense bearing species remained unresolved until very recently. The first one relates to the number of species that actually grow in the frankincense region of Somalia. The second contentious issue was the real association between the Somali and Arabian frankincense bearing species.

In the past, several species were considered as the source of the Somali incense. In the first written report on the Somali frankincense trees, George Birdwood (1870) identified three species found in the frankincense region of Somalia: *Boswellia cateri* moxor madow, *Boswellia bhau-dajiana* moxor cad, and *Boswellia frereana* yagcar.

In 1872, Miles reported that frankincense is procured in Somaliland from four different species, which produce two types of gums.

Using information derived from Miles, Hunter suggested five frankincense species thought to be growing in Somalia. (Nigel Groom, 1981: 103).

Hepper (1969) made the first credible contribution concerning the uncertainties that shrouded the associations between the Somali and Arabian frankincense species. Benefitting from information made available by writers who

carried out field work in the frankincense lands of the two incense regions, he concluded that the species first identified by Birdwood from a Somali sample was a distinctly different species from the Arabian. He suggested the name *Boswellia carteri* for the Somali species, although the name ~~was~~ intended to commemorate Carter's Arabian discovery. He further proposed the name *Boswellia sacra* for the Arabian species, a name earlier popularised by Fluckiger in an incorrect assumption that the Arabian and Abyssinian species were identical. Hepper also surmised that the inadequately described Somali species, moxor cad, first identified by Birdwood may not be a distinct species.

As quoted in the first chapter, recent scientific studies on the frankincense trees that grow in the frankincense region of Somalia establish the existence of only two commercially exploited species, *B. frereana* yagcar and *B. sacra*, synonymous *B. carteri* moxor (M. Thulin and A.M. Waria, 1987).

The source of confusion has been the moxor species. The uniqueness of the other species Yagcar and that it is native to Somalia alone was a consensus among the authors. As mentioned earlier, the most remarkable feature of the latter species is the way it grows outwards and upwards from the side of smooth limestone foundation, to which they attach themselves by growing what Miles has described as 'a large white bulbous mass'.

Its localised distribution is perhaps a good reason that

has helped its correct identification in the scientific literature. I think, also important is the fact that the vernacular for this species is very specific. Only one local name yagcar is known for the species throughout the frankincense region. This is not true of the other species moxor that has been the source of contention and which has about ten local names.

The yagcar species produces meydi incense. In everyday language the name for the resin is sometimes used to refer to the plants, but this does not imply a confusion in relation to the source and the produce. If it signifies something it illustrates the popularity enjoyed by the meydi crop in relation to yagcar plant which is little known.

The second Somali frankincense bearing tree , that has long eluded proper botanical identification and consequently evoked disagreement among plant specialists is the moxor species. One species first identified by Birdwood moxor madow, *Boswellia carteri*, which at the beginning was thought to be identical with the Arabian species assumed some persistence in the scientific literature. A second species described by the same author moxor cad, *Boswellia bhau-dajiana*, mysteriously did not appear in the subsequent literature. Some authors lamented the lacunae and indeed Hepper suggested that it might not be a distinct species.

With respect to the identification and distribution of the moxor species, two issues emerge in the scientific

literature: first, the question of the number of moxor species found in the frankincense region of Somalia; second, the actual association between the Somali plant and its counterpart in southern Arabia.

The recent study quoted in the above, concluded that a single moxor species existed in the frankincense region of Somalia. This crucial finding reduced the various moxor species described by previous writers to being varieties of the same species. Neither morphological nor habitat variations between the varieties have been found by the authors.

Regarding the relation between the Somali and Arabian frankincense species, the authors also discovered that they are identical species. As a result, only two frankincense species grow in the frankincense regions of Somalia and southern Arabia. One species, *Boswellia sacra* Fluckiger is found in south Yemen (Hadhramut region), Oman (Dhofar region) and north-eastern Somalia; and the second species, *Boswellia frereana* grows exclusively in the north-eastern frankincense region of Somalia.

It is now apposite to consider the local identification of the Somali moxor with respect to the previous inconsistency in the literature and in the light of the latest scientific contribution. As mentioned in the above, the yagcar species has a single local name and its uniqueness to the frankincense region of Somalia has been consistent throughout the literature. The moxor species has numerous

local names of which few have appeared in the literature. Its various local names seems to have increased the confusion over identification.

Why people gave numerous local names to one frankincense species and just one name to the other is a question that is not easy to explain, given the similar socio-economic pattern of the frankincense region of Somalia. Many elders suggested that the exploitation of the moxor population far exceeds that of the yagcar its cultivation is thought to date from the early 19th century. This proposition which implies that the beeyo quality obtained from moxor was the early incense exported from Somalia is difficult to verify, because there is a profound confusion over the qualities of incense goods produced in Somalia and elsewhere.

Below is a check list of the various local names of the Somali moxor varieties.

TABLE 6: Names of the moxor tree

<u>Local name of the variety</u>	<u>Meaning of the name</u>
Moxor-madow (B.carteri Birdwood)	The black <u>moxor</u>
Moxor-cad (B.bahau dajiana)	The white <u>moxor</u>
Moxor-cas	The red <u>moxor</u>
Moxor-san	The good quality <u>moxor</u>
Moxor-didibeed	The <u>moxor</u> that grows on gyps <sub>um</sub> soil
Moxor-lab	The male <u>moxor</u>
Moxor labeeb	The <u>moxor</u> that has the qualities of both

	genders.
Lufood	?
Boydo-san (mentioned by Miles)	The superior <u>Boydo</u>
Bodyo	The inferior <u>Boydo</u>

Except boydo and lufood varieties, the vernacular of the moxor species consist of the species' name moxor and an affixed descriptive word that designates its variety. Boydo is presumably named so as to distinguish it from the Bodyo san which comparatively produces superior quality. These two varieties are local to Karkaar area between Iskushuban and Qardho, while other local names seem to be known across the frankincense region, despite the fact that certain names are more common than others in particular areas. While lufood is often found sharing the same habitat with B. frereana yagcar in the maritime belt, it is claimed to be generally taller and resemble the Yagcar in appearance.

The descriptive word accompanying the name of the species moxor which explains the type concerned, most commonly refers to the colour of the bark of the tree (i.e. the black moxor, the white moxor, the red moxor); or the quality of the resin (i.e. good quality boydo san, poor quality boydo). It may signify the habitat, for instance in the case of (moxcor-didibeed - the moxor that grows on gypsum soil); or the gender of the variety (i.e. the male moxor - moxor lab).

In general, people offer two main reasons for the tendency to recognise different varieties of the moxor species. First, it is claimed that different varieties sometimes growing in the same collection area show differences of colour variation, and may produce incense that differs both in quality and colour. This may be due to geological, soil and other environmental variables. The effect of these variables upon production and quality as well as the colour of the variety is not known due to absence of any such study. Partly because of lack of information and partly because of my poor colour distinction, I was not able to assess the people's claim which holds that the quality of the resin and colour of the bark are important factors that are responsible for differences of the numerous varieties that are locally acknowledged.

Despite significant differences between the two systems of classification, the local reckoning of a single moxor species with varieties is consistent with the latest botanical finding, refuting the earlier assumption of the existence of more than one species in the frankincense region of Somalia.

As to the association between the Somali and Arabian frankincense species, the frankincense people's opinion which states that they are the same species is also consistent with the latest botanical contribution. Somalis know about the south Arabian frankincense species because of the long-standing trade relations between the two people's and also because of the fact that some Somalis in

the past and to a limited degree at present labour<sup>in</sup> the production of incense in southern Arabia.

This testifies to the fact that local knowledge on frankincense contains some concepts that are consistent with the biological facts, for instance, the recognition of only two incense bearing species in Somalia and southern Arabia, one species the yagcar being peculiar to the former region and the other being found in both regions.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FRANKINCENSE SECTOR POETRY

### Pastoral Metaphors

In the preceding chapter on property, we have seen the influence of pastoral concepts on classification of property among northern Somalis. Wealth is categorised into pastoral or animate and non-pastoral or inanimate. In this chapter, we will witness the same tenacity of the pastoral culture and its influence on non-pastoral groups in northern Somalia, using a cultural idiom, that of oral poetry.

Before I start the first section of the chapter which deals with metaphors of pastoral provenance borrowed by non-pastoral economic groups in rival poetic discourse, some preliminary remarks on the importance of poetry in Somalia may be useful for readers not familiar with Somali society.

Their elaborate types and styles of poetry and the tremendously deep and profuse literary heritage, has led to the Somalis being characterised as 'a nation of bards'. Some aspects of the social dimension of the poetic craft have been incisively documented by students of Somali language and culture. Unlike their western counterparts, Somali poets are not a professional cadre who communicate with a sophisticated but a limited elite group in the midst

of an indifferent mass population. On the contrary, they are ordinary people who on their own initiative have mastered the skill of the craft and therefore effectively communicate with an enthusiastic wider society through a popular medium. Somali poets come from all walks of life and do not necessarily originate from a particular social or economic stratum.

Although an impressive style and high linguistic standard are admirable qualities of a successful poem, nevertheless it is the 'social connotation' that is often appreciated by both critics and wider audiences. B.W. Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis (1964: 2) cogently expressed the point. "It is designed to influence the opinion either of a body of kinsmen or of the public at large. Thus some of the serious poems incite kinsmen to avenge past wrongs. Others foment them, and praise and blame are most effectively spread throughout the country through this medium. For example verse spreads most rapidly and is not easily forgotten, serious poetry indeed is closely allied to oratory, another art which Somali esteem and in which they excel."

Apart from the crucial role poetry plays in clan politics, a topic which is adequately documented in the Somali context, another important function has also been noted by Somali ethnographers. The authors cited in the foregoing paragraph wrote: "Oral poetry assumes a pervasive importance and appeal because it does the role of broadcasting information as effectively as the press and

radio in a country where although a few can read, news travels with amazing rapidity" (Ibid: 2). These factors and the appreciation by the Somalis for the poetic language in lieu of prose, explain the significance of the oral craft.

Samatar (1982) approached the subject from a particular perspective by examining the relation between oral poetry and politics in the Somali case. He ably discussed the capacity of the art as a potential cultural element harnessed effectively by a charismatic national leader in the colonial resistance movement. A relatively puritanical messiah preaching the new Salahiya Islamic order, no less than an astute political leader, Sayid Maxamad Cabdalla Xasan employed the medium in which he excelled in order to organise the dervish army against colonial infidels for a period of two decades.

Far from being a comprehensive review of an extremely important cultural element, the above remarks represent nothing more than a superficial introduction for a reader not familiar with the Somalis.

I gathered the following verses during my field work, and most of them are short praise and work songs, although some of them do have the qualities of some of the more serious and elaborate versification that address pastoral, philosophical and historical issues. Praise and work songs are chanted while collecting incense, and in Erigavo region where the traditional dhaanto dance is very popular, some

of the work and praise songs are chanted by incense collectors for the dance.

My approach could be considered distinct in the sense that it represents the first micro-level economic analysis of Somali poetry. Despite the fact that frankincense sector poems portray a distinct and localised culture in relation to the pastoral and other sedentary cultures, they are impressively replete with metaphors and imagery derived from the overarching nomadic way of life.

The first section of the chapter shows how antagonism between different economic groups is expressed through the poetic discourse. An element of comparison and denigration of one or the other group which is the dominant theme illustrates this tendency. Most importantly, it shows the way the superordinate pastoral culture imposes itself on non-pastoral groups in the context of oratory. Undoubtedly traditional stock breeding moulds the world view of the Somalis in general, and enormously influences the fabric of their social world. In corroborating this predisposition, frankincense collectors not unlike others derive metaphors and images from the overarching pastoral system, in the versification of their exploits. The following dialectics of a discourse between commercial frankincense forests and camel herds elucidate the point.

B7

The first verse, from Galgala village, Bosaso district, elaborates some important features of the frankincense

economy.

It (frankincense forests) does not require transhumance  
into the interior of Nugaal

Nor does it pasture on grass and it refrains from water  
altogether

It is not persistently moved after the fresh grass of the  
latest rain

The sites at the mountain caverns of Lumanka, and the glens  
of Indhacad and Hoohaale

Our Boswellia forests never fail to yield some reserve  
resin (milk)

Which is continually milked out for economic exploitation  
Nothing else except the 'red guinea' could buy the incense  
commodity

May Allah not deprive me of the frankincense forests for  
they are my herds.

The poet spokesman for the frankincense people makes a  
comparison between their mode of livelihood and that of the  
pastoral economy. The limitations of the latter are  
dilated upon to mark the superiority of the former.

Frankincense forests do not browse, nor do they depend upon  
drinking water as do the pastoral herds, scarce resources  
that cause the constant and rather erratic movement of  
pastoralists. To distinguish the semi-settled pattern of  
frankincense collectors from the transhumance of  
pastoralists, frankincense property is described as fixed  
property.

The poet glorified the frankincense economy which is claimed to be free from pastoral impediments. However it is interesting to note that in the concluding line of the verse, commercial forests are described as important as herds. Thus the trees are milked of resin in the same way animals are milked by the nomads. The resin produced from the incense trees sustains life by earning the cultivator income which is purchased with staple food, just as animals and their products support the nomadic populace. In short, if livestock does not fail the herder, commercial forests do not fail the frankincense gatherer. The assertion that only money (the red guinea is the old Somali name for the British gold coin worth nominally £1, but in poetic language it symbolises money in general) can buy frankincense merchandise attests a long-standing commercial culture of the crop which collectors point out to excel in relation to other local economies.

Despite the glorification of frankincense in the text, and the denigration of pastoral herds, the major objective of subordinating herds to frankincense is, I think, undermined by the poet's allusion to his trade as animal wealth in the concluding line. For want of a better term to express the importance of frankincense, the poet described it as important as herds.

The analogy obtaining between the frankincense crop and camels is better expressed in this song which has been obtained from Galgala village

B8

May I identify our camels  
 They are resin impregnated grey ones  
 that grow on the mountain range  
 And bear tapping incision marks on their bark

The song points out some important features of the frankincense industry. To present familiarisation in a popular idiom, frankincense is designated as camels. Not to allow the analogy to obscure the crucial difference between the rival systems, frankincense forests are characterised as resin impregnated compared to milk impregnated camels. In contrast to the mobile herds which move seasonally from one region of pasturage to another, frankincense grows and thrives on the maritime frankincense region.

The tapping wounds that are administered on the bark of the frankincense trees, are figuratively stated as significant mark in the last line of the song. The act of marking, more than the significance it may have for the description of the trees, seems to underlie an element of control. Pastoral herds bear brands which denote ownership. Similarly, the tappings along the bark of frankincense trees mark control rights of the tapper over the incense crop. In an almost identical song in Erigavo district, the tapping instrument mingaaf is described as literally watching over the frankincense trees. What is implied is not vigilance in the same way that pastoralists keep vigil over herds; rather, the metaphor tends to emphasise a

unique system of resource exploitation where frankincense trees are tapped with a knife to procure commercial resin.

In the search for advantage over the rival economic systems, frankincense collectors are quick to raise the market orientation of the incense crop. The first verse has already pointed out the fact, but I want to consider some more examples of songs which show frankincense as an export item of trade. The songs were obtained in Erigavo district.

B9

A garment wears out in time  
And wealth may vanish  
We own permanent port facility  
And export meydi incense

The song claims other types of wealth are not permanent. As stated in the preceding chapter, urban property of money and buildings could be lost any time. And drought could decimate nomadic herds. Resistant to drought and more endurable than urban property are permanent natural port facilities and the incense crop obtained from drought resistant frankincense species.

Many songs articulate some tangible benefits brought about by the exploitation of frankincense for the producers. Here are a few examples:

B10

Despised incense beeyo

But during the harsh xagaa season

It is wealth

That can buy clothes

B11

When the hot season of xagaa commences

And the gu' rains of plenty recedes

And other peoples are starving to death

Is the best time for beeyo producers

As clearly expressed in the songs which are gathered in Erigavo district, frankincense families are said to enjoy an advantage, that is access to imported goods, i.e. clothes and food made possible by exported incense. This advantage is indeed not limited to them in modern times because of large scale commercialisation of livestock which are exported from the natural coastal harbours in the frankincense region as is frankincense.

Without exposing the weakness of the frankincense economy, we are preached about pastoral families starving to death during the critical dry season xagaa. This is the season of prosperity and harvest for incense collectors. To try to convince women that incense men are better men (young men from different economic groups compete for women by praising their exploits), it is argued that they could afford to buy gifts of clothes and provide imported food for them at times of privation for the pastoral people.

The analogy between the frankincense economy and the superordinate pastoral system is much wider. In the area of commensality, an elder incense man resuming frankincense collection after a period in which he engaged in herding, had this to say on a missed staple diet or bread baked inside the ashes of a fire. In a rather nostalgic tone, he described the diet of bread as more invigorating than the fresh milk of a camel soon after it gave birth. The verse is collected from Galgala village.

B12

If it is (bread) warm and sparkling  
 With sticking ashes and embers flying off its surface  
 It is more invigorating than the fresh milk of a recently  
 calved camel  
 If you could serve it to me in just a moment

These short praise and work songs show the preponderance of the camel culture that influences heavily the outlook of the frankincense collectors. Such predisposition is general, and as will be seen shortly is also true of the sedentary cultivators in the north-west. It is evidence of the degree to which the cultural pattern of non-pastoral communities are permeated by pastoral values.

The competition for excellence between different economic groups is quite often between the other and the dominant pastoral system. However, the battle is sometimes carried out between sedentary groups in the northern region. In

the present verse, frankincense collectors in Erigavo district portray their trade as all important in relation to pastoralism and crop production. Incense men sing the song in the folklore dances to persuade women to join them.

Trading agricultural goods is denigrated as petty, local business and therefore the province of small-scale women traders, while frankincense is an export good which is traded through large enterprise like the National Trading Agency which is shortened in Italian as (E.N.C.). Tipping the balance before-hand in order to cajole the opinion of women folk, the singer finally asks, which men would they like to go with, frankincense men or cultivating men.

B13

The men who produce long tears of resin  
 The best quality mushaad and gleaned inferior grades  
 Finally settle accounts with E.N.C.  
 And the men who deal and have ties with urban women traders  
 where their meagre agricultural surplus  
 Is hauled aboard a trade truck  
 For trading in the distant capital city, Xamar  
 You girls with the smart look of silk  
 In the name of justice  
 which men would like to go with?

The sector glorification verses examined so far articulate a theme of economic evaluation. Two types of representations that coexist but are analytically contradictory are expressed. Carried away by the innocuous

and snobbish banter, it is thought appropriate to equate commercial forests to cherished camel herds. In a different representation camels are subordinated to the frankincense property. In the context of sector glorification, the underlying contradictions may not be apparent to the poet. His aim is to enoble the fundamental community resource base. If at times, he presents frankincense as important as camels for better description, instead of sustaining the superiority of his trade, he is unwittingly doing so within the constraints of the pastoral culture that permeates the outlook of most Somalis.

#### Ambivalent Attitudes Towards Frankincense Property

Using the cultural idiom, oral poetry, in which they glorify their economic base, frankincense people also realise the constraints and endemic problems of their sector. The following verses substantiate a pragmatic consideration of the plight of the incense collectors.

Cognisant about a perpetual debt that haunts many incense collectors, a new initiate prophesied:

B14

Either I manage to settle my debt this season  
And accumulate some surplus  
For the benefit of purchasing camels from Dalawa market  
Or fall into debt  
And never again cultivate beeyo incense

A few more examples gathered from Galgala village will further indicate the sector constraints **bitterly** versified by incense poets.

B15

A man early in the morning set out for work  
 Taking off his usual dress, donned the filthy work clothes  
 In the evening about half a measure of cereals  
 Helped himself to his mouth  
 Let alone fitness and health  
 I fear of death and corpses picked up by vultures

B16

"Abandon herding your stock"  
 "Never take refuge under the shade of a tree"  
 Is the lot of frankincense producer  
 May Allah save us from such a misery  
 "Mr. 'X' has not shown for work in this cycle"  
 "But I was committed and braced myself for work"  
 Is the lot of frankincense producer  
 May Allah save us from such misery

Several sector constraints are pointed out in the verses, in addition to the previously mentioned perpetual indebtedness of the producers. The intensive work of resin collection in a difficult environment; meagre diet of dry bread which lacks animal products, milk and purified ghee and meat that are thought most nourishing; and conflicts between the joint unit of frankincense production in

relation to work ethic.

The artistic praise language which glorifies the frankincense industry is here replaced with lamenting verses denouncing the occupation as daunting, less remunerative and ultimately miserable. This ambivalent attitude towards the primary resource of the community, could be considered a general tendency notable among northern Somalis regardless of economic specialisation.

Similarly, peasants in the north-west region glorify and speak openly about the adversity of sedentary life. Gardening is viewed as a difficult task in relation to animal husbandry in average years. They say there is always some work to be done in the field. First of all the land has to be prepared for planting. Then the planted crop has to be tended. Choking weeds have to be cleared away. And all the time crops have to be protected from domestic animals. At the ripening stage swarms of hungry birds have to be pelted away all day long. In some areas, during the nights men watch the scourge of wild pigs that devastate the crop.

The demanding farming tasks are justified by a belief which reckons farming as a punishment imposed upon sedentary human beings in general. The ancestors of human society, Adam and Eve, were originally living in heaven. Their eternal enemy (Satan) tried to corrupt them by persuading them to eat a forbidden fruit growing in heaven. Eventually he succeeded in corrupting Eve, as a consequence

of which they were thrown out of heaven into the natural world.

From the bounty in heaven where everything that is desired was available without effort, the ancestors had no alternative other than to support themselves. They started to practise agriculture which is thought to have been imposed as punishment for this original sin. The myth could be interpreted in various ways. It could be argued that it reveals the moral superiority of men over women. It was Eve not Adam that was corrupted. Indeed Somalis hold that women are morally more susceptible than men who are viewed as moral guardians. I am not certain whether the myth has such agricultural connotations in other Muslim countries, but certainly in the north of Somalia it is used to rationalise agricultural work and its origin.

#### Praise and Work Songs of Sedentary Cultivators in the North-West Region

Sedentary communities in the agricultural north-west possess an elaborate body of various types of verses and work songs, many of the latter contain *Oromo* words (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 105). Like frankincense collectors they glorify and subordinate camels to farming through the poetic discourse<sup>in</sup> which the race for honour between different economic groups is conducted.

The focus of many of their work songs is the plough-oxen

which are the companions of the cultivator in the gardening season. The frequent analogy drawn between camel herds and farming by agriculturalists where cattle replace camels as the primary stock, shows the influence of the pastoral world view of these recently sedentarised groups.

The following songs are taken from an unpublished source at the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts in Mogadishu.

They were collected by a research worker, Cabdi Cabdillaahi Ducaale (1984), who is based in the Academy office in Hargeysa. The English translation is mine.

To brace the plough-oxen for the task, the farmer sings:

B17

I have relinquished pleasure  
And never enjoy the fresh milk of recently calved camels  
And you (oxen) must also abandon the delight of Madar  
pasture  
and all other good things

While tilling the land, if he detects signs of fatigue or clumsiness from the oxen, the farmer admonishes:

B18

Like terrified and fleeing camels  
That long wandered astray in the wilderness  
My white streaked Caare (name of an ox)  
You lost your swift move

The sluggish movement of the draft animal is likened to

that of desperate camels that lost their energy as a result of persistent danger in the wilderness. In the former song, to console the work-oxen, the farmer tries to convince them that he himself made sacrifice to do gruelling farm labour. He relinquished the enjoyment of fresh camel milk. It seems unusual for a farmer practising crop production and supplementary cattle breeding to retort that he relinquished regaling himself with camel milk. Most appropriately he should have rued that he missed cattle milk and sorghum diet.

To glorify their system, not unlike frankincense producers, cultivators in one instance exalt their crops to the rank of camels. In another instance they elevate it above all other rival occupations. These divergent representations of economic comparison, at times unwittingly, coexist in the same verse. Here are some more examples of poetic analogies between agriculture and other economies.

B19

If the planting season shinni commences  
 At the onset of the short season shinni gaabey  
 I may exchange for you the long-legged pony  
 And an ideal woman partner  
 Certainly not for five milch camels

At the beginning of the farming season, when investment in land overrides all other considerations, the plough-oxen essentially are the most valuable property. The cultivator would not surrender them for any price, not even for five

milk camels. However, he may be seduced to exchange them with a suitable wife, and a strong horse. As mentioned in the preceding chapter northern Somalis traditionally valued horses more than the other domestic species. These goods coveted by the cultivator are the ones a nomad may also exchange for his beloved camels.

We have observed earlier that pastoralism as the superordinate culture is constantly used as a standard for economic excellence by non-pastoral poets. At those euphoric moments of sector glorification, venerated pastoralism is subordinated to the economy concerned. The following songs express the advantage crop production is claimed to have over stock breeding.

B20

Those who inhabit the Qaaliga pastoral region  
And milk camels is the Qadowga country  
Are despising us  
But would ultimately beg us favours

The purchase of sorghum from the sedentary cultivators, which is most pronounced in the dry season when milk yield from pastoral herds is greatly reduced, is considered as a marked superiority of farmers. It is implied that the pastoral system which derides farming is fundamentally not self sufficient as it advocates, and ultimately depends upon crops produced by their archrivals.

The benefits of agricultural specialisation is expressed

after a bumper crop. The status it confers by attracting others is well brought out in the following songs. The present songs are chanted by the flailing parties thrashing the harvested sorghum. Many of these songs and others show Oromo influence which is linked to historical introduction of cultivation in this style from Harar region in Ethiopia (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 102).

B21

When the critical time starts to grip  
And the milk yield of livestock diminishes  
Alla kaniyow in aabe - sorghum crop  
Brings all people to our door  
Hoo hoo hoo

B22

Someone who fails to get a supply of sorghum  
Either desperately sells his calf  
Or abandons his own son  
Hoo hoo hoo

B23

My God, someone who harvest a bumper crop  
Badda nageeye - sorghum  
can afford to do whatever pleases him  
Hoo hoo hoo

I realise that the Somali expressions which refer to the sorghum crop need an explanation, but truly I do not know their etymology, and their direct translation does not make a clear meaning. For instance badda nageeya literally translates as 'pacifier of the ocean', which may signify

that sorghum as a staple crop smoothens the life of the sedentary people. With an adequate supply a man is said to enjoy a good life; lack of it could cause the farmer resort to all sorts of aberrant behaviour, like fleeing from ones dependents, or desperately selling young cows that will increase the herd.

In contrast to the analogy often drawn out between cultivation and nomadic herds, the present songs explain the legitimate exploitation of the plough-oxen, and at least articulate a distinct feature of the sedentary life. The subsistence sorghum crop is cogently expressed as wealth (plant wealth) which is buried underneath the ground waiting to be procured by the cultivator with the support of the plough-oxen.

To get effective service from them farmers sometimes go beyond persuasion and remind the draft animals of their obligations.

B24

I would have pampered you  
And never have rigorously exploited you  
But my kids are crying for support  
And I seek subsistence from the land

B25

You are not a slim necked girl  
To be expected from marriage  
Nor are you a young calf

To be expected of progeny

There is wealth buried underneath the ground waiting for  
our joint exploitation

The sector oratory examined so far reveals that non-pastoral groups in the northern region of Somalia, for want of a better analogy utilise metaphors and concepts of pastoral provenance. This predisposition itself is sufficient indication of the extent to which the nomadic life permeates the thought of the society regardless of economic specialisation. We saw frankincense forests symbolised as economically important as herds. In other words, here, as in the currency compensation transactions between lineages (physical injury of a person or homicide) where a certain amount of cash that is less than the actual value of the compensation in camel units is passed, people are operating on a camel standard.

Another aspect of this oratory is that the battle for excellence between rival economic groups, necessarily requires the glorification of the economic system concerned in relation to others. The merits of a particular subsistence economy are rather exaggerated. Its institutional constraints are diplomatically concealed to project a flawless industry transcending others in which their shortcomings are dilated upon.

This contextually based economic representation, concerning the primary resource base of different economic groups, is uniquely amended with a pragmatic view. Poet spokesmen of

sedentary cultivators and frankincense collectors not only sing the praises of their respective economies, they also express through the same media, the constraints and limitations of their trade. The chief economic activity is amusingly denounced as a miserable and necessary evil, a tendency which is equally true of the pastoralists.

Underlying the competition between rival economic systems indicated in the foregoing discussion, seems to be some sort of sector antagonism and competition for land and water resources. Verbal antagonism does not entirely coincide with the social distribution and organisation of the rival economic groups, despite the fact that certain clans, and particular lineages within clans may dominate the practise of a particular mode of production. Thus it is not uncommon that a considerable proportion of cultivating lineage members still practise mobile pastoralism, the same way some members of frankincense gathering lineages engage in nomadism. Presumably antagonism between economic groups is most intense when lineage ties and economic specialisation coincide.

Most commonly some sort of antagonism obtains between contiguous systems, e.g. pastoralism and cultivation or pastoralism versus frankincense production. At the highest level there seems to be an opposition between the dominant superordinate pastoral culture and relatively localised sedentary systems. Sedentary cultivators and frankincense collectors, because of their unreflective or uncritical dependence upon pastoral concepts and metaphors in their

endeavour to glorify their trades, illustrates the fact that they could be considered as localised activities struggling for survival and identity in the framework of a dominant pastoral world.

### Frankincense Theft Curse

The present verses explain a past frankincense theft, a practice that prevailed with intensity before the 1969 revolution. The theft was carried out by organised banditry that harried not only frankincense communities but also terrorised rural communities in general. Animal theft was as common as frankincense stealing. Storing harvested frankincense in open mountain caves as well as the fact that collectors abandoned incense collection sites at the intervals between the harvest cycles to return to the nomadic hamlet, made frankincense most vulnerable to pilfering and plunder.

Some isolated cases of theft were reported in some places during my field work, particularly in some areas in Erigavo region. Where the problem exists, a guard is contracted to keep vigil over the collected merchandise at the height of the harvest, although in general the practice is becoming a thing of the past. Thus the cited poems refer to the period before the present regime.

An incense collector in a village in Bosaso district got suspicious about a local thief, anticipating that he would

steal his frankincense. Without naming him, as the etiquette requires, he denigrated the villain in three lines.

B26

Deceptively dressed like a moustached gentle man, but with a woman's honour

If he sneaks into every cache to know all the secrets

He is treacherously waving hernia-distended testicles for an incense cave-store to plunder

The suspected thief is represented as one with woman's virtue. Honour which Somalis greatly value, is primarily conferred by one's lineage, although it can be buttressed by individual qualities like courage, hospitality and skill in oratory. Honour is man's prerogative in male dominated Somali society. To label a man as possessing woman's attributes is one of the worst forms of abuse. What gives efficacy and power to the substance of the abuse is the art in which it is expressed. What is couched in a poetic language is thought to carry more weight than plain language.

The damage to honour that invective poem can cause is long-standing and in acute cases considered more damaging than physical assault. It is here that the function of the verse lies. The poet seems to have warned the local thief by composing the abusive verse - a pretext to dissuade him not to steal his property.

The most potent verses of the Somali poetic repertoire are 'curse poems'. They are commonly composed by the aggrieved to direct deserved punishment upon the guilty who may or may not be known. A typical verse is that of an elder sheikh in Gudmo-biyo-cas village in Erigavo district. Hassan was robbed of work uniforms he bought for his labouring sons the other day.

B27

They confided the sad news as I prepared the ablution  
The performed prayer and expiation had been spoiled by  
distraction

the fatiha chapter has not been validly recited

The meticulously organised tools and equipment provided for  
the boys

Were taken away yesterday by those whom Allah may dismember  
their organs

If my property is not retrieved, I am an elder parent

What I pronounce has caused many deaths in the past

And now I want to call Allah, the Almighty guardian

May the theft of the immaculate pieces of cloth cause your  
death

Forever, from one generation to the next experience  
persistent bereavement

Lose your fertility and your testicles get transformed into  
skin water drawing vessel wadaan

Your descendants get condemned to everlasting grief

I wish to dig your grave unceremoniously with simple  
branches of xogor and haam trees

Do your funeral service with a broken fence-making stick

hangool

The perdition cry be the eternal call that echoes from your quarter

As long as you live, wear the 'mourning scarf' of bitterness

Said S. Samater (1982: 80) has classified the various forms of curse used by Somalis according to their function and source:

TABLE 7: Types of Somali Curse

TYPE	USEABLE BY	OBJECT
Inkaar including plants and animals	All living things, animals. This type of curse is a weapon for the weak against the predatory rapine of the powerful	The powerful, the oppressor and those who use their advantage over others to irresponsible ends
Na'lad	God Prophets Angels	Sinners, unbelievers, liars, trouble-makers in the community of faith
Habaar	Intelligent beings: men, angels, parents and elders	Infidels, disobedient children, oppressors
Asmo	Wadaads: Men of God	Rival clans
Yu'asho, Kuahaan (also known as guhaan or haafil)	Poets	Blatant offenders, rival clans

In practice, these types overlap and may not be as distinct as the typology suggests. For instance, the curser could

be a parent, a religious man and a poet. The type of curse which such a multi-character person uses would depend upon the context. As an elder parent he may pronounce habaar towards his unruly child, and as a poet he can pronounce kuhaan against a rival clan on behalf of his group.

The way the poet's pronounced curse is thought to possess efficacy, in other words to achieve the stated misfortune or punishment, has been ably explained by the author. He wrote, "This is the poet's curse and rests on the belief among Somalis that the poet has, as it were, 'a hotline' to the Deity and can therefore intervene, through his poetic oration, in natural events. The compound of poetic verse Kuhaan is called afkuleeble 'he whose mouth is a dart'. An afkuleeble is at once weird, clairvoyant and prophetic: he is believed to foretell the future, to possess omniscient attributes and to perceive things beyond the natural range of mortal men. His malevolent orations are compared to: "lethal arrows which fly across the Somali desert and come home to the hearts of those who incur his displeasure, causing joy among his friends and consternation among his enemies". (Said S. Samatar, 1982: 81).

Samatar also explained the maintenance of the belief about the efficacy of poetic curses and how they assume such attributes. Somalis apparently chose to remember events and circumstances in which a poetic curse has somehow proved efficacious, while forgetting those situations in which poetic curse proved ineffective. (Ibid: 82)

The poet in the example has the qualities which could qualify him for a source of potential curse. He is an elder, and claims that his poetic words are potentially lethal, speaking from past experience. Given the elder status and his religious inclination, as well as the general belief about the power of the poetic curse, I was not surprised to hear from my informants that the bandits died in mysterious circumstances soon after the composition of the curse. Relevant events, in our example the death of the thieves that take place sometime after the performance, is explained as the consequence.

Items used in the production of frankincense such as work uniform, cooking utensils, the tapping instrument and grinding stone, were all subject to frequent stealing in the past. The most serious of all was the theft of incense merchandise. A man abandoned his nomadic homestead in a distant pastoral territory to cultivate frankincense had expressed his concern of a possible theft of his labour.

B28

The cultivation of frankincense that has sapped my strength during the preceding xagaa season

And made me forget the guardianship role of my family and others

My God, he who steals it, may never enclose lawfully acquired property in a kraal

The poet wishes any one who steals his labour which caused him dear, e.g. temporary abandonment of his family, to

subsist forever on filth and forbidden bread. The consequences of this in the afterlife is God's wrath and eternal hell.

As to why incense theft remarkably diminished in the revolutionary period, many informants claim that people had become 'civilised' and had grown out of such illicit and morally wrong practices. Nowadays, it is said, people prefer to work and earn a living in an honourable way instead of by plunder. However, the crucial factor which may have greatly curtailed the practice and, to a considerable extent, restored peace and order in both rural and urban areas is a heavy handed clampdown by the revolutionary government on crime.

#### A Poetic Contest about an Imagined Woman Postitute

Frankincense collectors in Bosaso district have a possibly unique poetic contest which is centred on an imaginary unseemly woman. The principal rule of the contest is that she must continually move between work parties residing in collection sites in a particular area. She is formally deployed in a particular site by a composed poem which conveys her over the physical terrain from departing site to a new destination. The receiving party pass her to another site in return.

To avoid a possible disruption of her movements, she is not usually sent to a site whose occupants are known not to

excel in poetry. At least one tenant of the joint production unit must be competent in the craft to participate in the game.

Frankincense collectors in Bosaso district who entertain this transhumant woman do not credit themselves with having originated this style of poetic contest. They admit that they borrowed it from townspeople who similarly passed her between towns and villages across the frankincense region.

Why is she denied residence or sojourn in any place for a time? Because she is portrayed as amoral, with inverted attributes to those of an ordinary woman. In poetry she is described as a prostitute and sometimes as a stupid donkey, etc.

Being a prostitute or loose woman, she is never welcome in any place. Wherever she lands, however temporarily, she brings shame. Therefore in haste she is passed on to another rival quarter.

The following long poem, was composed by a 17 year old high school student studying in Bosaso town. At the time he was cultivating incense with his three brothers near Galgala village where his parents live. After receiving the amoral women from another site, Geedi conveyed her from the residing site, Jeeni-dheere about an hour's walk to the north of the village, through the village and from there on to Booj site which is roughly two hours walk west of the village. In the journey, we will see the young poet

articulately maps out the route the woman had to take towards her new destination. Sometimes she had to run, at other times she had to scurry or tread carefully over the rugged terrain. The poem was composed on 12.6.1985.

B29

Bracing ourselves for work at early hours of the day break  
We set out for Boydo, the site of beeyo frankincense  
species

As soon as we got here, we met Beyluul (woman) in the  
middle of the site

Geedi went for her and asked the news

She reported that there is prosperity and peace

Although she had been evicted by a group who directed her  
up the mountain

They advised not to miss there, what is described as the  
abode of nice boys

Whatever, I am desperate and in need of food

Geedi made a fire and instantly cooked a kilo of pasta  
Put on the kettle and served her a quick tea

After taking her fill, with satisfaction

She said, you work incense and are ready to go for work

Tell me the site I want to go there

I said let me tell the news, my sister Bilan

If I got hundreds of sheep that graze in the mountain

or habitually bred the grey cattle herds in the country

or owned camel stock available to be milked with the left  
hand

or migrated to the Arabian peninsula to earn money

If I were a driver of trade truck Sabaax or a military

truck

If I got substantial money deposited in the world banks  
Or else if I am a professional incense collector residing  
at Booj site

Bilan, I would never send you away, for lies must not be  
told

I am a poor student who does not have hundreds

If God wills and <sup>we</sup> are protected from misfortune

As soon as this month finishes, we all have to go

Dear sister, we will go to Bosaso for study

Let me elaborate the physical terrain of your trip

The track will take through the uprising that is abundant  
with moxor trees

Continue moving forward, I wish you safe through the barren  
cliff track

Then you will descend to the valley and uneven lowland

Pass on to clamber up the opposite ascending slope

It will lead to the even surface with the bulky dhamas  
trees

Mind this is the grave yard of a revered sheikh who is  
never passed

Quickly offer him the prayer, he deserve more than this

Take the left one of the bifurcating track

There is land abundant with date palm ahead of you

Its panorama shines from the distance when you arrive the  
Bilcin growing area

Keep on moving, you will come to the spurting spring

In a hurry fill up your plastic water container

The track will lead you through the open dhicir growing  
area

Do not turn to the infidels (French team) they will  
 persuade you to take forbidden alcohol  
 Scuttling climb up the opposite slope to the surface of the  
 plateau  
 Consume your water, the upward slope makes someone sick  
 They abandoned the site early in the morning  
 There is no open entrance, the cave site is padlocked  
 You can pay a short visit to Sahal, and Salaad-Baashe  
 They slaughter sloppy or shabby women  
 If you don't look immaculate they may mistake you for the  
 sloppy type  
 Sahal will attack while others beg for restraint  
 Fumigate yourself with fragrance and apply perfume  
 Their lodge is Booj, they retire there in the evening  
 Follow them and try to walk gracefully  
 Bootaan Abdi would service your tea and tobacco need  
 Cusmaan is attractive and would make a good bed-fellow  
 Saliim is a man of religion, wary but in need of woman  
 He may refrain from having an affair, but may be seduced to  
 indulge in foreplay  
 The terrible Mataan would deny you peace  
 And aggressive Sahal may break your leg in the night  
 There is no better site in the neighbourhood of Booj  
 All worldly desires are there for you to stay permanently

The metaphoric woman is featured in our example as a  
 prostitute. She has been transported in oratory from  
 Jeeni-dheere site to Booj. Mr Saliim who is sarcastically  
 described in the verse as a man of religion who is more  
 likely to commit the lesser sin of foreplay instead of

sexual intercourse, took the task of getting rid of the unwanted guest on behalf of his group. To transpose the shame brought by her to another site, Ceel-dibir, Saliim propelled her with a departure verse.

B30

Women stay in numbers in the vicinity of Booj site  
Lies Must not be told, they gracefully move around in  
numbers

The youth recite the Prophet's mantle poem and Koran Suras  
Ya sin and Bara'ah

There are no morally corrupt youth in our group  
Gorgeous woman if you paid us a visit  
Bootaan Abdi would sacrifice you in Booj  
Set your feet properly on the track, your departure time  
has come

Never turn to Mr Siciid, he is sick and not well  
Ceel-dibir site has a well where you may take a bath  
The residing men are urban if you think they are bedouins  
sumptuously apply yourself with powder and perfume  
Jamac spreads out the sleeping blanket in an open ground  
Cabdillaahi will operate his thing (penis) inside you  
Do not be sloppy, shabby women are disliked.

In this style of poetry, sex is discussed without restraint, notwithstanding the fact that sex is rarely discussed and not in public by rural Somalis. The first verse stigmatises the occupants of Booj as sexually starved. To relieve them of their desire Geedi sends them a prostitute. Such a grave accusation is refuted by Saliim

who claimed his unit are morally more pure than the student and urban young brothers residing in Jeeni-dheere.

Moreover, if someone fancies a woman, he argues, there are many attractive women in the area. Instead of indulging in sin, Saliim claims they recite the tradition and the Koran.

It is the essence of the verse, not its entertaining diversion on women and sex that is important in order to consider which poem is superior to another. Poets and critics scrutinise the essence of the encoded message. A poet who misses the essence of the rival verse and therefore gives a response wide of the mark brings shame to himself and fails his colleagues who share with him both his success and failure.

Apart from its focus on a little discussed subject, sex, this style of poetry presumably acts as a tolerable vehicle where undesirable traits of particular persons are critically exposed. For example, Bootaan Cabdi is portrayed as an inveterate tea drinker and chain smoker of raw tobacco. It is not polite to say such things to a person under the usual circumstances. On the other hand, the media could be used to encourage positive qualities of characters who appear in the verse.

Occasionally the generally entertaining and collective spirit of the verse is violated. The competition gets particularised by assuming some form of verbal duel between two antagonistic authors. This has happened between Saliim, the composer of the second verse quoted in the

above and a rival, Gabdi. Both of them live in the same village, Galgala.

Saliim made the first initial inflammatory verse:

B31

You lady who has come from the interior of Nugaal (pastoral region)

Places where no affines reside and the wilderness must not be trodden

You ventured into a bounded territory of useless and poisonous plants gawlalo and ciin

The generous men no longer reside in the Gadoob region

If you are asking for Cabdi and his colleagues Meyra-gale and Gaban

Take off your underwear before-hand you will undergo something terrible

They have got a grenade and unbreaking object (penis)

They will sumptuously feast you with sorghum bread

There they are residing in a dusty site on the horizontal escarpment

Stay there and do not move to another place until the onset of the gu' rains

Saliim's verse, particularly making fun of the private parts of the rivals, has greatly incensed Cabdi who responded with a terse and threatening short verse:

B32

If you inquire something of the fundamentals of poetry

I am a pioneer and have a key to its mastery  
 A force (distant kinship relation) that is blind to you is  
 restraining me  
 Retreat otherwise I will blind you with a bomb (power of  
 the spoken word)

It is a common feature of the confrontation verse, e.g. the  
 'diatribe', to preface it with strong remarks that outline  
 the skill of the poet and his prowess in order to harass  
 and intimidate the opponent. Cabdi's harangue is no  
 exception. He argues that if he was not distantly related  
 to Saliim without warning he would have unleashed his  
 lethal poem upon him.

To be scared away by the warning shots of an adversary is  
 not the hallmark of a skilled poet. Hence Saliim took no  
 notice of the opponent's banter and harangue. He  
 irrevocably escalated the clash to a level that has to be  
 settled by a full-blown contest by making the second  
 attack.

B33

If you inquire something of the fundamentals of poetry  
 I am a pioneer in the art and have a key to its mastery  
 Inside my mouth I have got a sharp knife and an iron saw  
 I compose unforgettable poems when I confront a non-kin  
 rival  
 Retreat otherwise I will blind you with a bomb

As far as Cabdi was concerned, Saliim's second verse

symbolised an act of declaration of verbal war, war where words sharper than a knife and iron saw constitute lethal weapons that could damage the honour of the loser. Cabdi responded:

B34

If you have got wisdom, understanding and wit

You would have avenged those past injuries your head has sustained

Otherwise you are a family daughter and a marriage partner

Your hair will plaited while you are waiting for a spouse

And your reproductive organ would be mine in exchange for bridewealth (camels)

Unlike Saliim's banter and almost empty harangue, Cabdi found a genuine weakness of the opponent which he focussed upon. Saliim was assaulted in the past by a youth of a different lineage. He did not avenge the assault. Cabdi capitalised on this point and reduced him to the lowly position of woman, the weak sex, which could be obtained with camels to 'beget' children. It is men's responsibility to avenge the blood of women-folk, but a man's noble duty to avenge his own blood from an equal opponent, especially if he belongs to a different lineage.

The damage to honour the spoken word can inflict is most intense, if the accusation made against somebody contains an element of truth. Such is the fate of Saliim. His peers would remember the poem that defamed and designated him as weak as a woman by not avenging his blood. Anyone

can cite the poem to embarrass him in a social event.

Desperate to recover some of his status, Saliim composed the last verse in the duel. Instead of attempting to undermine the grave accusation or its total rebuttal, the way he should have responded, he changed the theme by evoking a grey area concerning lineage determination of individual honour and social status.

B35

I am the great architect who put up fences on the four  
universal corners of the cosmos

I am the originator of the short four lined style of poetry  
Those who have a smattering and real experts in poetry fear  
my skill

And you without a mouth who still milk goats (women's task)  
It is rude of you to say a word to man born to aristocratic  
lineage

### Conclusion

These sector glorification verses obviously indicate the powerful influence of the dominant pastoral culture upon non-pastoral sedentary systems in northern Somalia. To glorify their subsistence economies, frankincense collectors and sedentary cultivators in northern Somalia draw images and metaphors of pastoral provenance. This pastoral outlook was also seen in the preceding chapter on classification of property, where pastoral and non-pastoral property has been distinguished.

These styles of poetry, that is sector glorification and the theme about the prostitute woman, could be assumed to have another crucial implication. They may signify a notion of equality. Since pastoral economy regards sedentary people as lowly, and in the view of the dominant ideology there is the thought that the status of rival economic groups is somehow determined by economic specialisation, non-pastoral groups claim to be of equal standing to pastoralists and, moreover, better in some areas. Thus the egalitarian model of the society held by northern Somalis in general seems to be expressed by a levelling view which stresses the strength of the particular economy concerned and denigration of the other.

Since the majority of northern Somalis practise mobile nomadism, and, as explained by I.M. Lewis (1962), women are preferably passed between exogamous lineages to establish affinal links which supplement agnation, it is not surprising that a woman should be chosen as a mobile message-bearer between frankincense stations in Bosaso district. The function of poetry as a cultural element which seeks to enforce equality fits into this context too. The verbal discourse on the prostitute woman is taken up between structurally similar frankincense production units that are of equal socio-economic standing. Regarding the frankincense economy, the equality and egalitarianism which northerners strongly advocate, holds only for those relations obtaining between the actual frankincense collectors. Relations of economic exploitation obtain

between traders and kin client collectors.

Finally, the sexual joking theme enshrines an element of religion which reflects the sexual morality of an Islamic society. Prostitution and immoral sex which are limited in rural areas in general are sinful acts which are denounced.

## CHAPTER FIVE: 'OWNERSHIP' OF THE FRANKINCENSE BEARING SPECIES

### Pastoral and Agricultural Land Use Systems

The preceding two chapters concerned property in general. This chapter discusses the chief characteristics of the exploitation of frankincense property, with emphasis on man-land relations, local concepts relating to property and local geography. Explicit and sometimes implicit comparison between sedentary economies of frankincense and crop production and pastoral economy in northern Somalia, will be carried out throughout the discussion.

It will be seen that the frankincense system of land use articulates important concepts that underlie both sedentary and pastoral systems of land use. It establishes prescriptive rights over territorially bounded frankincense collection areas, that are locally known as incense fields, which belong to a core of closely related agnatic families. Despite being held collectively, such control rights are comparable to the individual rights held by small producers over a cultivable plot of land in the sedentary area in the north-west where sorghum is chiefly produced.

Prescriptive rights held over frankincense fields specifically relate to the most important property that occurs in the fields which are the commercially exploited frankincense species. Pasturage, naturally occurring

surface water and other natural wild products which are found in the fields are communal property. By excluding nomadic resources from restraint, the system enshrines an important pastoral principle which promotes free access to pasturage and water.

Since the frankincense tenurial arrangement embodies some of the chief features of the sedentary and pastoral land use economies, it will be useful to outline briefly the major forms of land use systems in the country. In Somalia very few intensive local studies were undertaken in relation to other African nations. More surprisingly, the most important studies on land tenure, however inadequate, were carried out in the colonial period. Neither the present revolutionary government, perhaps due to its cooperativisation experiment and the underlying collective exploitation of land resources, nor the preceding civilian governments did anything remarkable to augment the meagre colonial literature on the subject.

At present, seeking information about local land use systems creates problems for research students. It is illegal to discuss the clan organisation on which these systems are actually based. Furthermore, information about the processes of land registration, however unreliable and inadequate, is sensitive, and so is arbitration since they involve the interests of influential urban settlers and powerful interest groups with vested interests in land. Rich and powerful urban settlers who are moving out into rural areas, particularly in the potentially rich

agricultural lands in the southern region, constitute a current tendency that is widely acknowledged but not yet well researched.

The land tenure system in Somalia is fundamentally based on the pervasive principle of clan organisation. Customary norms which relate to the social organisation ultimately regulate individual and group access to the important material things that are locally available.

As we have seen in chapter two, an elaborately segmented patrilineal descent system ultimately divides the total Somali population into seven large 'clan families'. Each clan family subdivides into different social units, the largest and most important of which is the clan. Unlike the clan family which indeed is a higher order symbolic grouping that is too large to act as a single unit, the clan acts as a political entity when the combined strength of the clan is required to achieve a common end. For the present purpose, the clan is important for it represents a social corporation that is associated with a particular territory.

Within the clan, the socially most important unit is the primary lineage (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 5). It is characterised by the inclination of its individual members to identify themselves with this group. Generally speaking this is also an exogamous unit. Members of the primary lineage are required to marry outside it.

Finally at the bottom of this elaborately segmented social organisation where every Somali is a potential member of a large array of patrilineages lies the 'dia-paying group' - members tied by collective obligation in relation to blood compensation and its distribution between corporate kinsmen. This social unit has been described by I.M. Lewis (1961: 6) as the basic jural and political unit of the Somali society. It is a small lineage or an alliance of several small lineages whose members usually trace descent to a common ancestor, a depth of between four to eight generations. Its male strength could vary between a few hundred to a few thousand members. The 'dia-paying' group guarantees a Somali security against raid and feud, pastoral scourges that were rampant in the past. It is also the social unit which regulates the individual's access to the natural resources.

Pasturage and water are the two most important elements which are essential for pastoral production. Surface grazing and browse are primarily regulated by the customary principle which sanctions their unlimited access. A similar rule applies to naturally occurring surface water.

Given the scarcity and uneven distribution of water and range in the arid northern region of Somalia, the principle of free access to seasonally and annually varying nomadic resources, can appropriately be considered as a cultural element which promotes their widest possible use. This tendency to exclude encumbrances from the utilisation of such resources is further reinforced by a strongly held

Islamic tradition which demands that such properties be used publicly.

The following quotations illustrate the Islamic provisions that regulate the free disposal of water in relation to human and animal consumption. "There are three persons whom Allah will ignore on the day of the resurrection. He will not grant them any indulgence and will inflict on them painful punishment; these persons are: the man who, having enough water in excess of his herds, refuses it to a traveller ...'. And for animals, 'He who digs a well in the desert when there is pasture nearby cannot prevent the animals from slaking their thirst at the well.'" (Caponera, 1954: 15-16).

In contrast to naturally occurring water which are communal resources, two types of man-made water points are subject to prescribed rights. These are the traditional lineage wells and the increasingly common cement lined water tanks barkads and artificial ponds ballis.

Barkads and ballis mainly contain water after the poorly maintained and often shallow community points dry up, in many areas, during the dry season. Man-made water points which are resorted to after the drying of community holes, in some areas, also fail to provide sufficient water for the community, particularly if rain fell later than expected. This makes necessary long treks to the most reliable traditional wells in the case of a prolonged dry season.

Man-made barkads and ballis are extended family rather than lineage property. They belong to those who invest in their construction. Their chief purpose is to provide securely the water demand of the owning family and its stock, in essence to protect the family and its property from the consequence of cyclical drought. In many cases, a subsidiary commercial incentive is an underlying motive. Surplus water is sold to the inhabitants of rural areas who do not own such relatively expensive facilities and therefore have to pay for the use of water at the private holes. The consequence with respect to the private holes is that the owning families, especially in the pastoral economy, are well placed in relation to the non-owning majority to exploit effectively the traditional public property.

Constructing and maintaining lineage wells is a collective enterprise. An able bodied man who refuses to participate in the task has traditionally been subjected to corporal punishment known as yake among the Gadabuursi clan in the north-west. The reluctant man was tied to the trunk of a big tree inhabited by ants. Ant bites caused pain and suffering. Furthermore, one of his precious animals was also slaughtered for the labouring kinsmen. This was thought of as a compensation for the labour withdrawal. Hence the disciplined kinsman was not denied the use of the well after it was completed.

The domestic and livestock water requirement of the owning

lineage is paramount. Nevertheless, if the supply of the source exceeds the demand, the surplus is customarily allowed to be used by members of other social units who may need it. In contrast to the customary free access to naturally occurring water, and the usually contractual distribution of water contained in the lineage wells, water use in man-made holes operates on commercial principles.

Government run motorised wells, ballis and barkads, with varying regional distribution and often serving settled communities, are generally limited. Where they occur in rural areas people are charged nominal fees.

Often in old age a pious Muslim may designate his private water holding structure as a welfare source, with effect from his death. This is thought to earn the religious man merit in the afterlife as long as the property persists to serve the public. Such sources are extremely rare in northern Somalia.

In the pastoral world, clans may not in practice always occupy a particular region in a given season and from one year to another. However, frequent exploitation, effective occupation, and implicit state tolerance of the status quo, the existence of the traditional wells and trading villages, all constitute important factors that establish customary association between the clan and a particular territory among the northern Somalis.

Apart from agnation, other important cultural elements in

relation to resource use, have been documented by I.M. Lewis. He wrote: "In keeping with the weakness of territorially based social ties, agnation supplemented by contract has a primacy which kinship does not appear to possess in other similar segmentary societies with less shifting land relationships and more binding localities." (I.M. Lewis, 1962: 7).

Writing on rights and duties which are created by marriage with respect to the exploitation of local resources the same author stated, "The wide network of affinal and matrilateral ties which each individual possesses is used to the full as a subsidiary basis in social relationships. It is drawn upon to gain access to pasture and water held by non-agnates in time of distress, and in the wider sphere of social relations in employment and in many other ways." (Ibid, 1962: 7).

The organisational differences between the dominant pastoral Somalis in the north and the chiefly agrarian groups in southern Somalia has been well documented by Lewis. He argued, in the south, use rights in agricultural land are individually held, and the clans that maintain these rights are large, relatively more stable, territorially bounded, and moreover, to a certain degree are hierarchical and stratified, with a kind of differentiated authority structure not found in the egalitarian pastoral life-style in the north (I.M. Lewis, 1969: 59-79). These large units act as a 'dia-paying groups'. Those significant organisational features of the

southern Somali cultivating groups are lacking in the northern Somali structure, or are very rare, as noted by Lewis.

Apart from individual rights held over agricultural fields and a developing concept of loyalty to a fixed territory, recently sedentarised north-west cultivators generally lack some of the more complex institutional features of their agricultural counterparts in the south of Somalia. In the south a non-kin member could be adopted by the land-holding social unit. He is given rights and duties which are similar to those enjoyed by members of the host group (cf I.M. Lewis, 1969: 66). This is alien to the sedentary cultivators in the north-west, where almost all members of the sedentary village community belong to the land-holding lineage.

The sedentarisation of previously nomadic groups in the north-west which took place in the beginning of the twentieth century, has been modelled on the pastoral tenurial pattern (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 106-108). Each lineage settled and developed the territory customarily associated with it in the country of the clan.

In contemporary Somalia, as in some other developing countries, the crucial issue concerns the antithesis between customary norms which maintain group control over important local resources, and statutory laws that tend to deny or undermine traditional regulations. For instance, the 1975 land law declared land to be the property of the

state, although in practice the mobility of pastoralists remained to a large extent unhindered, exempting land losses in some areas as a result of state regulation. Apart from concessions given to the previous land-holders, the law did not specify any rights concerning the dominant pastoral peoples in the country.

### Initial Distribution of Frankincense Trees

As will be seen shortly, rights to frankincense bearing species were initially distributed according to custom as in the case of the north-western cultivators. Lineages assumed rights over the commercial forests that grew in the areas customarily associated with them. However, all the individual members of the units concerned did not participate in the initial distribution.

Oral sources unanimously claim that pastoral clans in the incense territory failed to reach a binding agreement on whether to distribute the frankincense forests for intensive exploitation. The parties to the discussion were, on the one hand, wealthy herdsmen with large numbers of stock. They were against formal partition of the area into frankincense fields, since their herds grazed the region in the winter months. On the other hand, in favour of exploitation, were two groups with less vested interest in stock breeding. Herd-poor families with insufficient stock to sustain them and therefore already dependent upon frankincense collection wanted the allocation to proceed.

Allied with this group were merchants who supported opening up the traditional pastoral land for intensive gum production, since the frankincense crop was an important export commodity.

The winter months when pastoral clans aggregated in the maritime frankincense region acted as a suitable period for this public discord. The dispute is reported to have been very divisive. Many were the cases of brothers and close kin with different interests who took sides in the dispute. A man with limited stock who aspired to get an incense field or fields understandably wanted his brother or other closest kin to obtain the adjoining property. Any amount of persuasion was not sufficient if the brother was a rich pastoralist who was committed to his herds.

The lack of initial consensus in relation to the distribution and intensive exploitation of a community property subsequently resulted in an inequitable distribution. Rich pastoralists could not finally prevent the allocation of frankincense and responded by declining to obtain their due rights. The consequences of this happened to be the appropriation of the greater and better fields by those with a vested interest in the partition and intensive exploitation of frankincense.

Tenancy and share-cropping arrangements which regulate access to frankincense trees testify to this past unbalanced distribution of customary lineage property. The living descendants of those ancestors who declined to

participate in the initial distribution are now obliged to rent or enter share-cropping arrangement with present owners who inherited rights from their ancestors.

As tradition recounts, if the original holders were either poor nomadic families or local traders residing in trading villages, the present title-holders are mainly absentee fairly rich pastoralists, with herd size of usually more than a hundred head of sheep and goats and some camels. I don't think that the size of the father's herd is an important factor which determines the size of the herds of his sons and grandsons. The father may have many sons which could limit the share of the inheritance due for each son. The gifts obtained by sons from their fathers when they marry or their inheritance shares are important, but environmental factors and occurrence of disease are more important, in relation to the accumulation of herds among Somali pastoralists. My sedentary father, who had no camel herd since my early childhood, told me that my grand father was a wealthy camel herder. Some village settlers and migrants to towns are also title-holders.

Among northern Somalis, if a legitimate holder abandons his land property, even for a considerable period of time, it does not return to the lineage for allocation. Nor does it change hands without the consent of the holder as long as he is known to be alive. Abandoned property is used or taken care of by the closest male kin of the departed. In the case of frankincense where joint ownership is the pattern, a member of the joint holders

over the property may be found in the frankincense region to manage the property.

Tenancy and share-cropping practices are virtually unknown in the north-west agricultural region. Here a pastoralist who wants to settle down or temporarily cultivate a field, obtains a farm on loan from a sedentarised kinsman. The same kinship obligation operates in the pastoral economy and functions to promote the distribution of animals between rich and poor pastoral families, as mentioned in a previous chapter.

The pastoral faction which opposed the partition and associated intensive exploitation of frankincense argued that two key objects of economic exploitation (white resin producing frankincense trees and white milk yielding stock) are anathema to each other, and therefore can not harmoniously thrive together in the same environment. Large-scale adoption of gum production was thought to bring havoc to the cherished herds of nomadic people.

The adverse consequences thought to follow the economic transformation, and the lowly position held by collectors in relation to herdsmen, explains the apprehension of the pastoral faction to this change. Consequent limitation to the use of rights over the foliage of the frankincense trees which is cherished by the animals, and the exploitation of the pastoral resources available in the frankincense fields, may be considered the most important reason for the faction's refusal to cooperate with the

transformation.

The system of frankincense use understandably made some crucial concessions to the dominant pastoral system. Pastoralists retain the right to cut the foliage of owned frankincense trees for their animals. Moreover, other than the commercial frankincense species, all useable natural objects that are found in the fields are not subject to prescriptive rights and are free for public exploitation. Despite these profound concessions, the relations between pastoralists and title-holders, many of whom are pastoralists in their own right, is strained and less harmonious. Some young men start building herds from a few animals they inherit from their herd-poor incense collecting father and eventually succeed in becoming rich pastoralists. Some rich pastoralists loose their animals and turn to cultivating incense.

Some pastoralists cut down branches or fell trees for animals. Others illicitly remove considerable parts of the bark for the purpose of extracting tannin. These practices either greatly damage the trees or kill them, and may lead to litigation and arbitration between the parties concerned. Pastoralists have the right to graze the frankincense fields, but actual damage to the trees by pastoralists is not allowed. By rubbing their body against the tapped frankincense trees, sheep and goats may knock off the maturing resin from the bark. This annoys the collector.

Frankincense has continued to be produced in Somalia, perhaps disjointedly, in the frankincense region since antiquity, as mentioned in the first chapter. However, both local and existing written sources tend to suggest that the actual distribution of the Boswellias took place in the middle of the nineteenth century in Bari region. In the neighbouring Erigavo region the partition seems to have taken place at a later date, in the early decades in the twentieth century.

The details of the partition among the easterly Majeerteen clan in Bari region could be established more accurately than could be done for the westerly frankincense holding clans, the Warsangeli and Habar Toljecla (Isaaq).

Majeerteen informants, particularly those who belong to the traditionally aristocratic Cismaan Maxamuud lineage, unanimously state that a revered sultan, clan leader, Maxamuud Yuusuf (Xawaadane) encouraged and ceremoniously implemented the partition of the commercial forests.

Durrill's 1986 historical paper on famine in northern Somalia details the successive office holders of the Majeerteen Sultanate in the area. According to this source, Maxamuud Yuusuf, who is said to have affected the partition by informants, appears to be Maxamuud (II), who became the first sultan at the age of 18 in 1855. For reasons unknown, the first sultanate, based primarily upon wealth derived from shipwreck, is reported to have consolidated power in 1809.

Durrill's paper shows that the Majeerteen sultanate exerted considerable control over the local productive resources long before Maxamuud (II), whom oral sources claim to have implemented the partition, came to power. According to the author, "By 1843 Ismaan political leaders operated twelve vessels all but one of which sailed exclusively to Aden and back out of the Majeerteen ports on the north east. From that commerce, Majeerteen merchants accumulated capital and invested it in livestock. In 1843, Cruttenden reported that "some of the principal Bedouin chiefs" possessed "upwards of a thousand she-camels" and even more goats and sheep. The chiefs parcelled out herds of fifty to eighty animals to their wives and clansmen, who became clients as well as kin. In addition, Majeerteen traders bought usufruct rights to the country's marble hills where acacia trees grew wild. Earlier, herders had claimed acacia plots held in common by the sultan for their own use at no cost. After 1843, the 'Ismaan sultanate sold those rights to merchants, which then rented acacia plots to herders in exchange for a portion of the gum crop. Pastoralists became tenants, caring for Majeerteen merchant's livestock and gum trees, although they were somewhat better fed for their trouble than before." (Wayne K. Durrill, 1986: 296-297).

The cited evidence traces the present share-cropping and possibly rental arrangement practices to the Majeerteen sultanate. The sultan's rights over gum species held in common with the part time pastoral collectors testify to the fact. And after 1843 there was a transfer of usufruct

rights to the local merchants who, in turn, demanded shares in the produce from the dispossessed local pastoralists.

The impact of the sultan's commitment to the export economy has been ably discussed by Durrill. The drive to increase exports of livestock led to a dramatic increase in numbers and hence pressure on land. It undermined the traditional subsistence and effective drought management strategies. Moreover it has altered the supplementary economic relations between the pastoralists and coastal fishing communities to the chagrin of the former. The Majeerteen political economy created stratification and relations of economic exploitation. Perhaps most consequential of all, local pastoralists in the region seem to have lost their ability to weather the drought spells that occur in the area.

To buttress the history of the aristocratic lineage, Majeerteen informants claim that sultan Maxamuud (II) partitioned two essential valuables between his subjects. The right to govern was offered to the Cismaan Maxamuud lineage, while the commercial forests were decreed to be justly distributed between abiding subjects residing in the frankincense region.

As a matter of fact, whether the distribution was effected by one of the Majeerteen sultans or not, certainly it has not been justly effected as the tradition reports. Reluctant to participate in the partition because of their commitment to herding, many families were given no rights

over the group property to the advantage of the local traders and herd-poor families who were eager to obtain incense fields. Many members of the Cismaan Maxamuud lineage who still live in the region, and others who have migrated to the interior and towns, still possess rights they obtained at the time of the partition. This contradicts the oral claim that the sultan justly gave this lineage the right to govern, and the other local resource, frankincense, to his poor subjects belonging to other subject lineages.

Frankincense owning clans to the west of the Majeerteen, the Warsangeli and Habar Toljecla, like other northern clans, lack a historic authority system comparable to the distinctive Majeerteen sultanate. Partition proceeded predictably in a more conventional form. In the beginning, most of the people were uncertain about prospects of obtaining frankincense forests at the expense of herding. This hesitation gave local traders living in villages and poor-herders the early advantage of acquiring many large frankincense fields.

Among the Habar Toljecla in Erigavo region, it is said, a stampede to obtain large fecund fields followed as the partition progressed and people realised the importance of owning the property. Dominant lineages within the clan, and within the lineages families with sufficient strength of adult men ready to further their interest took proportionately greater shares of the available community property in relation to the weaker lineages and families.

Most probably faced with disputing claims over incense fields that were partitioned on the basis of customary means, where might may be the ultimate judge in the case of disagreement, the colonial administration in British Somaliland compiled a gum and damask (*Conocarpus Lanciofolius*) register. A hand written register is now still available in the district National Range Office in Erigavo town. Its date is 1937 but it quotes an earlier register. It details some interesting information on the types of species that grow in particular fields, the name of the fields, and the name of the areas in which they occur, and the owning families and their clan affiliation.

It is interesting to note that damask plants which grow in the valleys of the incense escarpment, were subject to prescriptive rights in Erigavo region, rights similar to those pertaining over *Boswellias*. Damask plants produced timber for export to Aden before the middle of the twentieth century. Afterwards timber lost its export value and hence people lost the interest to exert control rights over them. This made it easier for the present government to resume control over the plants. At present those who want to cut down timber for local building, obtain a permit from the district National Range Office, without seeking the authorisation of the previously owning families.

Incense people in Erigavo region recount some useful customary techniques that somehow regulated the assertion of rights over frankincense trees. The person who did the

first tapping over the frankincense trees in a particular field in the territory of his lineage, was acknowledged as the legitimate owner. In some cases this principle caused problems. Some initial tappers did not regularly exploit the acquired property to consolidate their rights. Other aspirants who as members of the holding group had claims over the property started to exploit the vacated property. The initial tappers and the later exploiters clashed. Such disputes were said to be arbitrated by dividing equally the disputed property between the litigants.

In Bari region it is thought that the sultan sanctioned a tenancy security rule. If a tenant regularly uses the field for a prolonged period without doing damage to the property, and regularly pays the rent, then he must not be evicted from the field without a good reason. The demand for use by a member of the owning families is an example of a good reason. This important rule does not apply in neighbouring Erigavo region. Nor does it function throughout the frankincense producing districts in Bari region. Where it seems to partially operate, it may not function without the good will of the owners, or the persuasion of an important person like the local cooperative chairman who is often a respected person in the community.

I tried to find out if some fields were acquired through non-customary means. I found two cases in which frankincense fields were exchanged for wives in Xiis village, Erigavo district. Wives' kin who belong to

different lineages were given ownership rights over frankincense fields by the frankincense owning husbands.

A different case concerning the transfer of ownership rights to a local merchant creditor as a payment of a debt incurred by a client holder has been reported in Galgala village. Another event took place in the same village. A man killed another accidentally. The assailant, who had no male heirs and was a cousin of the victim, offered two fields as some sort of compensation or assistance to the two daughters of the dead kinsman.

The above cases concerning transfer of rights over frankincense in the form of bridewealth, debt or compensation for the loss of a father, are indeed very rare. Moreover, most of these cases are said to have taken place at an earlier time when most of the people were yet sceptical about the importance of acquiring the property.

At present, there is virtually no other way in which rights over frankincense could be passed over than through male inheritance. In contrast, camels may be sold however coveted, if it is essential to do so. Surplus male camels may also be sold to exchange with young female camels that will increase the herd. A female milch camel or a pack camel may reluctantly be given to assist a needy kinsman. Likewise, a plot of cultivable land may be sold, if necessary, by the owner, in contravention of the land laws which prohibit such action.

Certainly joint ownership may be an important factor that helps restrain frankincense property from being marketed. Nevertheless, the resource, which is unexpandable under the prevailing circumstances, is justly thought of as a long term investment which is much more valuable than a property that can be offered in assistance to a kinsman, or else exchanged for money.

Like cherished camels or agricultural fields, a close kinsman may be given right of use over frankincense field as a loan, but not ownership rights over jealously held incense property. Many absentee pastoral owning families in practice do not utilise the joint property, but the possession of such rights gives them a satisfaction and a sense of security that they have a property which is more resistant to drought and therefore <sup>one that</sup> they can fall back upon if they lose their herds.

### Inheritance

In contravention of the Islamic inheritance rule which prescribes for a woman half the share due for a male, women do not generally inherit the primary resource base of the economic groups in northern Somalia. Coveted camels, agricultural land and frankincense forests are all passed through male members of the patriline.

The traditional marriage pattern explains the male monopoly of the property of the group. Women generally marry

outside the lineage (primary lineage is regarded as an exogamous unit). People say, in the extreme, women may marry members of potential rival groups and possibly non-Somalis, e.g. Somalised Arabs living with Somali clans. Therefore, if women are given rights over important community property, they will pass these rights to their children who belong to their husbands' groups.

After marriage women leave their natal group to live with the husbands' social unit. It is the duty of the husband to support his wife and children, and moreover, maintain good relations with his affines. Since women are supported by their husbands after marriage, and by their fathers or married brothers before marriage, it is thought appropriate that brothers ought not share the father's estate with sisters.

In general terms, frankincense fields, agricultural land, and camels are idealised as lineage property and hence the prerogative of men. As mentioned in the preceding chapters on property, the symbolic link between the primary subsistence property and the social unit is best illustrated in the pastoral economy. To reinforce collective interest over camels which are jointly watered from lineage wells in the dry season, jointly defended, and in the past jointly raided from other groups, individual camel herds bear a lineage brand. The symbolic lineage brand stamped on one's herd does not, however, imply that the individual proprietor has no absolute rights over the disposal and management of his herd.

The less cherished small stock of sheep and goats are frequently traded to be exchanged for essential household goods and frequently enter the social exchange transactions between members of a social unit. If someone's small stock bears a brand at all, this is an individual mark not a group brand.

Sedentary cultivators in Borama district evoke sibling sentiment to dissuade women from inheriting agricultural land. If a sister claims or insists to receive her due rights in her father's estate, it is believed that a terrible thing will happen, the worst being the death of the brother.

A story about a woman living in Qandala reveals the subtle means men resort to in order to prevent the strongest of women from inheriting frankincense fields. Asha was the only child of her father, and hence expected to inherit her father's fields. The closest male kin of her father, her father's cousin, claimed that women do not inherit frankincense and therefore he was the legitimate heir.

Asha fought for the property and tested the strength of both traditional and administrative courts on the issue. Both legal channels are reported to have ruled Asha as the legitimate heir. The male disputant got round the problem by marrying Asha's daughter. Hence in-law relations of marked respect replaced the prolonged feud. In effect, the man got access to the property and ensured that his

children would inherit the property.

Northern Somalis commonly raise a different justification for the male monopoly of the basic subsistence property of the group. Womenfolk are held to be weak and unable to defend camels and fields from outsiders, and from men of the same lineage in the case of fields. It is the noble duty of the men of the lineage to defend the common property and its women. Within the lineage a man protects his fields from others and also looks after his female dependents.

Not able to defend lineage property, and by implication the existence of the group, physically weak women are also thought incapable of crop or incense cultivation, let alone camel herding.

Wives of poor husbands are considerately allowed to bring their husbands to the wife's group and are given use rights over frankincense or agricultural fields. Pastoral women, particularly married ones living with their husbands, may receive token gifts of small stock, a few milk camels or a pack beast from the stock which is inherited from their father. If the wife loves her husband very much he may exhort her to insist on getting her entire share of the inheritance from her brothers. This could create some problems for the covetous brothers.

Generally speaking, women may get their due share of the inherited cash. In urban areas they may obtain town

property like buildings through inheritance or from money some of them make as government employees or as petty traders.

### Multiplication of Rights

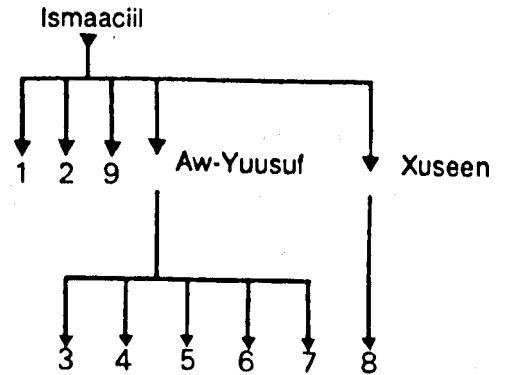
The initial discord between the different interest groups over the exploitation of the frankincense property, <sup>and</sup> the actual distribution and inheritance of the frankincense property, were discussed in the foregoing sections. The following section deals with some of the chief characteristics of the frankincense property, the regulation of its use and some local concepts.

Of fifty frankincense fields in Galgala village I surveyed, except three individually held fields, all were jointly held by a core of agnatic families, usually consisting of less than ten nuclear families, counting from one to three generations from the original ancestor holder. An incense field known as Sidib-hoose which lies near the village can be considered as a typical example. The field was held collectively by the following agnates:

### FIGURE 5: A Case of Several Agnates Collectively Owning an Incense Field

1. Jibriil Ismaaciil
2. Shire Ismaaciil
3. Ciise Aw-Yuusuf
4. Cismaan Aw-Yuusuf

5. Siciid Aw-Yuusuf
6. Cali Aw-Yuusuf
7. Xasan Aw-Yuusuf Ismaaciil
8. Faarax Xuseen Ismaaciil
9. Maxamuud Ismaaciil



In the example, Ismaaciil is the original ancestor holder of the property. His now elderly sons, Jibriil, Shire (Nos. 1 and 2) and Maxamuud (No. 9) are jointly holding rights with the grandsons of their father. After their death, their rights will pass on to their male sons, the same way their dead brother Aw-Yuusuf, passed rights to his living sons (Nos. 3-7).

Cases which deviate from joint ownership are very rare. They relate to previously jointly owned property that got dismembered into small fields individually held by the owning families as a result of disagreement between them. This tendency is more marked in the case of brothers by the same father but different mothers, who are more likely to disagree on the use and management of the joint property.

Very few cases where demographic accident has persistently resulted in a single male heir, starting from the original holder down to the present male holder, accounts for the second possibility concerning individual ownership over frankincense. Irrespective of its economic advantage in relation to maintaining a balance between an unexpanding

resource and potential exploiters, families who do not multiply adequately are considered as unfortunately stricken by a social disaster. It is said that 'their fire got extinguished' dabkoodii wuu bakhtiyey. This seems to imply where there is no fire there is no social life and perpetuation of family name.

Collective ownership over a limited and unexpanding property raises the question of how access to the property is regulated. The local system which regulates exploitation of the joint property is known as gaafeysi literally 'taking turns'. This is a system where each member of the right-holding group has a right to exploit the property in his turn in a rotating system of seasonal exploitation. For example, if the holding unit consists of three families owning one field, each one will get access to it every third season.

The strict application of the system mainly functions when all the right-holders are on the same economic level, and therefore the exploitation of the joint resource by all is important. This is usually the case when the holding members are all poor. In practice, this is not often the case. Quite often some families are better off than others. These well off families allow poor families with little stock to exploit regularly the joint property without obligation. In this sense, the property may be said to function as a local social security support scheme for the poorest owning families in the region.

Right holding poor-herd families which obtain usufruct rights from their joint holding kinsmen, are better off than their counterparts who have no rights. Landless herd-poor tenants which constitute the bulk of the frankincense collectors rent or enter share-cropping contracts for the exploitation of the traditionally group resource with the right-holders.

The management of the joint property is mainly assumed by a member of the owning group who may be residing in the area or in close proximity. The manager is required to have a strong and influential personality. The senior elder of the title-holding families who possesses such qualities preferably assumes the position. The protection of the frankincense stands from pastoral destruction or inappropriate exploitation if the field is worked by tenants, participation in border disputes, and regulation of use among the right-holders where this is necessary, are some of the tasks of the manager. This status is different from that of the work party leader which is designated by the same Somali term mugadin that will be discussed in the next chapter.

The system of seasonal rotating use among the joint holding families when all of them require to exploit the collective property, and the acknowledged field manager, could be considered as cultural mechanisms that function to try to resolve the disparity relating to the multiple use right over a proportionately limited joint property. The pursuit of alternative subsistence production, e.g. stock breeding

or town employment by some holding families, actually reduces the competition for the use of the property by all the owners. However, such measures do not appear to resolve effectively the imminent ownership crisis which would eventually result from cumulatively increasing rights over the generations on unexpanding natural plant property.

Joint holders may relinquish their use right for the benefit of a needy kinsman, but they do not give up their titles, even if they go abroad or to towns in Somalia. A Somali sea man working at that time in Britain wrote this letter to the district administration in Erigavo, the former British Somaliland. I found the letter inside the gum and damask plantation register that is referred <sup>to</sup> above. The seaman asks the authority to register properly his incorrectly registered frankincense field.

28.8.1956

Erigavo

Dear Sir

I have the honour to inform you that the gum plantation which belongs to Ali Bulhan is called Shela Madow, Ali Bulhan is a sea man. He was absent from Somaliland in 1926, so his plantation was misregistered by someone else. Galdameer is not the proper name for my plantation, but it is the place we put the gum when it is collected.

Its real name is:

a) Meydi "Mantek Yareh"

b) Moxor "Doomo Yareh"

I would be most grateful if you would kindly register the mentioned plantation against my name on behalf of my mother.

Your obedient servant

Ali Moh'd H.Y.

Musa Ismaaciil/Abdulla Hamud

Presumably the author wanted his mother to look after the field. This may suggest he had estranged his closest male kin who normally take care of the property of an absent kinsman. Nevertheless, what is important in terms of asserting 'ownership' rights is the demand for the name of the migrant to be registered against the real name of his wrongly registered gum field.

For an example which shows the degree to which multiplication of rights over unexpanding natural frankincense fields is stretched, I document the case of an extended family I knew in Galgala village. The descendants of the original ancestor holder (grandfather of the present right-holders), now number 70 male individuals who jointly hold 3½ frankincense fields that were acquired through inheritance. After two to three generations, if male members propagate sufficiently, we will witness a lineage counting four to five generations to the original ancestor, whose male members all claim legitimate rights over their

ancestor's property.

It is difficult to speculate how customary or state laws will deal with a tenure system where there is accumulating rights over the generations on an unexpanding frankincense property. Despite its limitations, it appears to contradict the current tendency of individual ownership over previously communal land that is reported for many sedentary societies. In contrast to other cases, it is not viable to parcel out the collective property between the legitimate right-holders. To maintain the integrity of the collective property is the best option, in the absence of conflict.

#### Concepts Relating to Utilisation of Frankincense Property

Although not all agricultural villages in the north-west region possess separate names as territorial entities, the location of any settlement can be described in relation to particular names known to other places (cf I.M. Lewis, 1961: 114-115). Other economic groups, that is pastoralists and frankincense producers in the north, commonly give local names to prominent geographical features that occur in their countries.

Frankincense collectors make substantial use of the local system which assigns name labels to territorial space. More than the general tendency to give particular names to rivers, streams, valleys, gorges, and other mountain

features of the escarpment, frankincense fields are characteristically given particular names. Thus each and every field in the frankincense region of Somalia bears its particular name. In contrast, agricultural farms in the north-west do not in general have specific names though agricultural areas often possess names.

The sedentary cultivating families in the north-west, mainly reside in permanent settlements which often lie in close proximity to the agricultural land. This is not the usual case in the frankincense land. The possession of frankincense property seems not to have induced a permanent settlement of actual owners who regularly exploit the resource. Exempting a relatively small number of village based collectors, the gatherers are chiefly semi-settled poor-herd tenants who rent the property from absentee pastoral holders.

Frankincense production is relatively speaking less desirable, partly because of endemic exploitation which profits traders more than the producers, and partly because it is a difficult task in a difficult environment. Therefore collectors seem to seize the earliest opportunity to change occupation.

Those who manage to build up sufficient stock of more than one hundred head of sheep and goats and some camels start raising herds. Others seasonally migrate to coastal towns in the region, or permanently to the larger towns in the country. At the same time, some pastoral families whose

herds have dwindled in size and therefore cannot without hardship subsist on stock breeding, start to cultivate frankincense. Hence, though there may be a fairly stable number of families who engage in collection in a given season, frankincense production is not as permanent as sedentary cultivation or pastoralism in terms of families who regularly exploit the property. Many of the people living in the frankincense producing districts in Bosaso region who now do different activities, have one time in their life engaged in frankincense collection.

In the absence of regular use and the difficulty to maintain vigilance over the property, one may surmise that it behoves the owners to name frankincense fields. This makes it easier to exert control over distant fields that grow wild but contain commercially valuable frankincense bearing species. Faced with the problem of parcelling out desolate mountain regions into bounded frankincense fields, incense people may have rightly thought it necessary to delimit collection plots by giving them particular names.

Below is a sample concerning the meaning of the names of some frankincense fields taken from a survey of fifty fields I did in Galagal village.

TABLE 8: Names of some incense fields

NAME OF THE FIELD	MEANING
1. Dankung	<u>Dankung</u> plants are the dominant plant vegetation in the plot.

2. Dhabab                      Literally means well protected. The rock cave station which bears the name of the field is naturally well protected. It is said to be large enough to shelter 400 head of sheep and goats from the rare stormy weather in the area.
3. Huraahur                      Can be translated as torrid. Frankincense stands grow in a deep gully which is locked along the sides by towering rock walls that prevent free movement of air which makes the site a sweltering place to work.
4. Haama gooye                      Literally means cutting off domestic vessels. The track that leads to the field is extremely narrow. To avoid falling into a bottomless abyss laden camels tend to lean toward the protruding vertical rock face. This is likely to knock off water containing vessels carried by the burden camel.
5. Ilo badan                      Literally means abundant sources. Frankincense bearing species grow abundantly in the site.
6. Meeriye                      Frankincense stands are widely scattered in the plot. To tap them the collector continuously moves from one cluster of trees to another, as the name signifies (literally the one which causes translocation).

A distinctive feature of the field, the quality of the gum resin it produces, the dominant plant population in the plot, or yet a prominent geographical feature in the site, generally provide grounds for giving particular names for the fields. The name of the field and that of the station are often used synonymously. The frankincense field station in Somali is known as gole - 'temporary site'. It is a pastoral institution (variant gale) which designates the temporary sites of the mobile pastoral herd units of the nomads.

The Somali word xiji for the frankincense field has various designations. In one sense it applies to the frankincense stands that are exploited. In another context, it seems to refer to the frankincense field as a territorially bounded physical entity. Also, as noted in the second chapter in the section on ethno-botany, in the most general sense, it is used to imply *Boswellia* and *Commiphora* species that yield gums and resins that have market value.

Each and every field has a station where incense men reside while working frankincense, store food and harvested incense. Just as no field is ideal without a station, no station is perfect without a track however treacherous. This mountain track connects the field to a network of tracks that connect frankincense sites in an area of production to a village base. Such tracks are frequented by pack camels and donkeys which carry incense and food provisions between rural villages and frankincense collection areas.

Apart from the elaborate system of giving names to territorial space, other supplementary techniques are employed to make incense fields distinct territorial entities. Concrete landmarks are commonly chosen to act as boundaries that separate adjacent fields. Four prominent landmarks are frequently used as physical boundaries.

Two fields on the sides of a horizontal or vertical mountain block are said to be separated by dardar - 'the

top surface of the mountain'. Other important mountain features that are chosen as convenient boundaries, where they occur are: jeex - gullies and other small natural water courses, tog-weyne - a valley or any large river, wado - tracks used by people and livestock.

In the absence of any significant landmark to act as a concrete boundary between neighbouring fields, piles of stones are erected for the purpose.

As tangible boundaries, landmarks are not easily destroyed or disputed, despite the fact that features such as valleys apparently lack precision as boundaries. A valley could be ten or more metres wide. However, natural landmarks as boundaries function as buffer-zones that separate adjacent fields. The most valuable property found in these natural fields are frankincense trees. If some trees grow in the boundary they are agreed to be equally divided between the owners.

Different types of frankincense fields are acknowledged. The smallest viable field is known as kob - 'miniscule field'. These often occur in a difficult environment. The terrain may be rough and rugged, the water point may be distant, or the quality of the resin may be relatively inferior, etc. As unattractive property, they were not acquired in the initial partition, and were obtained by latter aspirants who joined the fray after the good fields were taken up.

Other miniscule fields were previously large and fecund fields that got dismembered by the joint owners, mostly due to conflict over the use of the property.

Large fields are known as macyaan, 'fecund and large fields'. They lie in a relatively open and less hostile environment, within a striking distance of the water hole, and may produce superior resin. Closeness to a trading village is also another hallmark of a suitable field. These features of an ideal field are discussed and meditated upon by the joint collectors before they finally decide which field to work in a particular season.

In between the less desired smaller fields and the larger and better ones, lie intermediate fields of varying qualities.

Incense men have a common sense knowledge about the number of collectors who can proportionately work a particular field and its capacity of production in an average season. The table below illustrates this. The fields lie near Galgala village.

TABLE 9: Estimated seasonal production and labour capacity of selected fields

NAME OF THE FIELD	NUMBER OF COLLECTORS	ESTIMATE OF SEASONAL OUTPUT/KG
1. Dankung	1	200
2. Damberrehe	1	300

3.	Naasacad	1	400
4.	Gol	2	600
5.	Buura dharje	2	500
6.	Ceel dibir	2	600
7.	Ilo badan	3	700
8.	Kashkaash	3	700
9.	Xoor xooro	4	1000
10.	Booj	6	1500
11.	Jeeni dheer	8	2000

The first three fields are typical examples of miniscule fields. They are ideally worked by an individual collector who produces in an average year about 200-300 kg of meydi incense if the field grows yagcar species, or about twice of this amount if it is moxor. The last two fields represent large fields which are worked by a comparatively large joint unit of collectors of 6-8 men. Their production capacity in an average season varies between 1500-2000 kg of meydi incense.

Estimated seasonal yields may be expressed in camel loads. One camel load is assumed to correspond to 150 kg. A field that roughly produces 750 kg of frankincense is said to yield 5 camel loads.

Despite the commonplace knowledge of estimated annual yields of fields and the number of men who suitably work them, neither tenants nor owners have a knowledge about the number of trees that are found in a particular field at a

given time. Tenants do not bother to keep a tally on the number of trees they visit in a day, although this depends largely upon the stage of the tapping cycle. In the initial tapping cycles there is less resin to be harvested. According to informants in Galgala village, a man can visit three times (150 individual trees) the number of plants he can visit during the last cycles when more resin is harvested.

Lack of knowledge of the number of trees in a field does not mean that owners have no effective control over incense property. Trees the bark of which are removed for extracting tannin bear the scars, and branches that may be cut by nomads for animals to graze can apparently be detected. Trees that are removed from their site by the elements or intentionally, leave white coloration of the rocky site on which they cling to. Such white stains which are visible from a distance provide sufficient indication for the owner to find out if the missing trees were removed on purpose by pastoralists or others.

So far we have discussed the original distribution of frankincense, the customary means use rights are regulated between the core of agnatic families that collectively own the property, inheritance and some other characteristics of the frankincense property. Now, I think, it may be worthwhile to discuss the 'cluster of rights' over the property. Prescriptive rights apply only in relation to the major property that is found in the fields, the frankincense bearing species. Other useable material

objects which exist in the fields, e.g. pasturage, naturally occurring water and wild fruits are explicitly communal property.

Excluding encumbrances from the use of non-frankincense property, especially nomadic resources, can be considered as a concession to the dominant pastoral system. By limiting prescriptive rights over frankincense trees, the system embodies a fundamental pastoral principle which maintains free access to nomadic resources. This pastoral predisposition has been ably described by Lewis: "Grazing is regarded as a gift of God to man in general and not as parcelled out amongst specific groups. Pasture thus is not subject to ownership in the ordinary sense, and the right to graze in an area depends upon its effective occupation." (I.M. Lewis, 1962: 3-4).

In principle, sedentary cultivators in the north-west region possess prescriptive rights over all the useable material objects which occur on their farms. In practice a farmer, may not effectively exercise, strict control over some of the resources. Most commonly he is unlikely to deny kin members of the community the use of naturally occurring water and pasture existing in the fallow parts of his land. However, he may reserve areas on the field that grow abundant and better grass for the exclusive use of his cattle and small stock of sheep and goats.

Despite significant differences in the frankincense and sedentary land use systems, they could be said to share an

important feature. They tie members of a social unit to plots of land in the territory customarily associated with the group. This economic transformation of previously pastoral groups took place in an equitable format in the north-west agricultural region. All members of the lineage who wanted to become sedentarised obtained fields in the land of the holding group. Because of this we may not find landless cultivators among those who first settled down in the agricultural villages of their group. Currently, pastoral families who belong to sedentarised lineages, if they want land to cultivate, usually obtain it on a loan basis (maal, the same way milk camels are loaned to destitute herdsmen by a wealthy pastoral kinsman), from their sedentarised land holding kinsmen.

In the north-east frankincense region, an unbalanced distribution of frankincense took place as shown in the section on the oral history of frankincense tenure. Frankincense fields were obtained by some members of the land owning social units at the expense of others who declined to obtain their due rights over the common property. Consequently, the present descendants of the landless ancestors, if they want to exploit frankincense, rent or enter into share-cropping relations with the living offspring of the original ancestor title-holders who have inherited rights.

Rental and share-cropping relations obtain between title-holders and landless tenants who in many cases belong to the same dia-paying group. At a higher level of

grouping, tenants who belong to lineages which proportionately own less property or greatly engage in collection, may rent fields from neighbouring and matrilaterally related lineages with more incense resources. For example, many Sawaagroon tenants in Alula district, rent fields from title-holding members of Cismaan Maxamuud lineage who are their affines, although a great number of them have migrated outside the district. In short, people who stand in such unbalanced relations in relation of access to the exploitation of customary common property are kinsmen.

This does not mean to deny that in many cases, permission to exploit freely the joint resource may be given on a consensus basis, or by the authorisation of the acknowledged field manager, to a needy kinsman who falls outside the category of right-holder. In general, it is not kinship morality that primarily regulates access to the exploitation of frankincense property, as shown by the institutionalised tenancy and share-cropping arrangements in the frankincense economy.

Owners and landless tenants who stand in unbalanced relations with respect to the exploitation of the frankincense property, do not totally negate kinship obligations, which operate outside such relations. For instance, right-holders may evict a distantly related tenant from a field to rent it to a closer agnate. Such a move is thought inappropriate and is restrained by the wider body of kin who disapprove of the act. Also a

related tenant may be permitted to pay the rent at the end of the season instead of in advance. If he is unable to pay the rent he may be given a running credit.

Nevertheless, if a kinsman openly refuses to pay the rent, or unreasonably delays it, or more consequentially damages the property, the right-holders have the right to evict him.

Gluckman (1943) has called on students of customary law to study the 'cluster of rights' that are exercised over the property under investigation. This is rightly suggested as more useful than the past tendency to emphasise blanket concepts like 'communal land holding'.

As said earlier, women do not inherit frankincense, but are not denied the right to exploit the property. Women who are married to poor husbands who belong to a different lineage, and who decide to reside with the wife's group, are assisted by allowing them to exploit the joint property of their male kin. Widowed women raising children may be given the rent proceeds from the fields of kin.

Poor kin who are members of the owning group, benefit from kin obligation with respect to the exploitation of the property. In some cases, they are allowed to utilise the property regularly without obligation, paying rent, as far as circumstances allow.

Pastoralists, no matter whether they are owners or not, have the right to cut the leaves of the trees for the

animals which cherish the foliage of frankincense trees. This important fringe right in relation to the exploitation of the most valuable plant that is found in the region, testifies to the importance of considering different rights that are exercised over the property.

Those different rights over the primary property are important for those who exercise it, and gives us a wide view of the ways in which it is made use of. What I think most interesting about frankincense land use is that different rules apply to the various material objects that are found in the field. In the most general sense, this is indicated by the prescriptive rights held by a core of agnatic families over the naturally growing commercial forests, and the communal rights over all the other natural useful things that occur in the frankincense fields.

### Local Geography

Finally I want to make some general comments on the local geography of northern Somalia. Somali terms correspond to the three ecological zones in the region. The narrow torrid coastal belt is known as (Guban from the verb gub - to burn). Behind the low coastal belt lies the Oogo highlands and the interior plateau of Haud.

The coastal strip contains trading towns for the export of frankincense and other local produce, and the small-scale fishing communities. The highlands, particularly the

maritime escarpment, yield the commercial frankincense, and also contain the deep wells of the interior pastoral clans. The interior Haud plateau is chiefly a pastoral region where nomadic clans aggregate during the rainy season.

In addition to frankincense, collectors and others in the north-east region attribute two non-frankincense benefits to their superficially precarious mountain region. In the past the rugged terrain acted as a safe refuge for the settlers from invasion. Someone can threaten to kill a person alien to the region, because, he may claim, he can get away with it by running for the mountains where no one can find his hideout.

When the interior pasture drastically diminishes and fails its inhabitants, the mountain is said to retain some left-over tufts and permanent streams that ensure the survival if not prosperity of the stock and people. In good years of plenty, the interior plateau of Haud offers abundant pasturage and water in relation to the mountain habitat. Hence interior nomads enjoy a prosperous life that is envied by the residents in the upland, who say, however, that they prefer the security of the austere life-style in their country.

Frankincense people divide the maritime incense growing range into three zones:

1. Cal Madow: Literally 'the black escarpment'. It is the westerly extension of the horizontal escarpment which runs parallel to the coast and grows

frankincense bearing species. This westerly segment starts from Karin village east of Berbera as far as Karin village in Bosaso district.

2. Cal Miskeed: This is the middle segment of the frankincense growing escarpment. It extends from Karin village in Bosaso towards the east as far as Ceel-gaal village in Qandala district.
3. Cal bari: Literally the 'eastern escarpment', this is the eastern fringe of the frankincense growing escarpment lying east of Cal-miskeed.

The horizontal division of the frankincense territory to a great extent corresponds to the social distribution of the frankincense owning groups. The westerly segment of the escarpment is the country of the Habar Toljecla (Isaaq) and minority groups like the Jibraa'iil, Gaheyle; and neighbouring Warsangeli frankincense holding lineages. The middle part of the escarpment is chiefly inhabited by the Majeerteen and distantly affiliated minority owning lineages like the Dashiishe, Janbeel, and others. The most easterly segment of the mountain range is the country of the Sawaagroon and other minority owning lineages, Geesagulle, Wadalmugge, Liibaangashe and others.

The social distribution over space, is not the only criterion for the local demarcation of the frankincense mountain region. For example, the westerly fringe is said to be generally cooler and wetter than the easterly part.

These differences are thought to affect the colour of the frankincense crop that is produced in the two areas. Frankincense that is collected in the west of the escarpment is claimed to appear slightly redder than the white frankincense that is produced in the eastern fringe.

Northern Somalis go further than the general tendency which customarily associates social units with particular territories. To a considerable extent, clan territories are mapped out into distinct areas. In reference to ubiquitous names which are known to refer to prominent features that occur in their country, northern Somalis can more or less accurately describe any location in a particular area. In the pursuit of the latest rain, a scout sent out to explore the intensity of the pasturage and water in a region of grazing, is able to provide such information to residents in the nomadic camp that move together.

Sedentary cultivators in the north-west agricultural region have a distinct concept relating to an ideal farm that could support an average cultivating family beer. Members of an agricultural community in Dila village near Borama describe the family farm beer as a plot of cultivable land which is about 4 daag in length and roughly 4 goodi in width. I am not certain about the etymology of these land measurement units which could be of Oromo origin in neighbouring regions in Ethiopia. Daag is said to consist of 4 goodi, and one goodi is about 22 paces. Thus an ideal family farm

is about 1056 paces long and about 88 paces wide. However, Most farms are smaller than the prototype field described.

Frankincense fields which mostly lie in vast expanses of rugged and rocky mountain terrain understandably defy precise demarcation similar to that which is found in the north-west region. Such limitation is compensated by giving names to particular frankincense fields, and also by delimiting their boundaries by using terrestrial signs, although landmark boundaries are to some extent employed by the sedentary cultivators too.

Finally it may be instructive to compare the map of northern Somalis to that of the Tiv studied by Bohannan, who called for students to look into <sup>the</sup> folk view of geography, folk view of the relationship between man and things and folk view of the social things' (Bohannan, 1963: 104).

In both patrilineal segmentary societies, the idiom of genealogy and descent is commonly used as a basis for social distribution over space. Individuals are assigned rights over a plot of land in the territory customarily associated with the lineage or that temporarily occupied by the group.

The crucial difference between the two patrilineal societies in relation to man-land relations seems to stem from the different cultivation methods they practise. As a result of swidden cultivation, the position of a Tiv farm

changes from one season or seasons to another. They designate space by using lineage names. Unlike the northern Somalis who have place names for natural features, the Tiv have no place names except streams and hills. Thus, the Tiv lack in Bohannan's words 'land tenure', but possess 'farm tenure'. In contrast sedentary cultivators and frankincense producers in northern Somalia have land tenure. Men have fixed and bounded parcels of land obtained in the idiom of genealogy and descent.

## CHAPTER SIX: ORGANISATION OF THE PRODUCTION OF FRANKINCENSE

Instruments of Production

This chapter observes important aspects of production, technology, institutions of production, and the traditional relations of production prior to the current reforms initiated by the present regime.

In contrast to the primarily family based crop production in the north-west region (here also tasks like winnowing, weeding and harvesting are carried out by close agnates at peak periods), frankincense cultivation is corporate. The major unit of production often consists of a joint work party of adult men, mainly two or three co-labourers and less than eight collectors, representing their families.

A remarkable and distinctive feature in the frankincense economy is that different codes apply to different economic spheres. Organisation of labour is collective. Individual members of the work party are thought to contribute equally to the seasonal production input.

The distribution of the seasonal proceeds from the joint effort is rather complex. Here group and individual accounts are kept separately in order to effect an equitable distribution of final output. Investment of production, e.g. food for work which is consumed by the unit of production throughout the season is prescribed as

collective. The total seasonal investment expenditure is first recouped from the total value of the joint output, the balance is then equally divided between all the members of the unit.

Collateral with these collective economic spheres (labour and production input), is an individual family credit scheme. Each member of the work party is responsible for the credits incurred by his family. This is deducted from the individual's respective share obtained from the final collective proceed.

Thus two economic spheres are distinguished, production which is regulated by a collective code and domestic consumption where individual responsibility for the family credit is the rule. The system which seems so complex has the function of organising group labour which is necessary for frankincense production, while at the same time maintaining a just distribution of the joint labour by requiring each labourer to take responsibility for the credits of his family. This is because credit requirements for the different families greatly differ because of the varying need and the different strategies. These different economic patterns will be seen to take place in a social context of economic exploitation between trader creditors and client kin collectors.

From the above introductory remarks, I now turn to the first section of the chapter which deals with the technology of the frankincense production. Instruments

used for frankincense cropping are very limited and underdeveloped: they consist of three primary tools:

Mingaaf which is the scraping knife

Koley which is a large receiving basket, and

Dhuraad which is a small carrying basket,

The tapping instrument mingaaf, is the most important tool of the incense man. It consists of a wooden handle with a narrow portion, the grip, so designed as to protect the knuckles from striking the bark while administering incisions. Fitted at the two ends of the handle are two specialised blades. One is sharp and kept in this condition, as the occasion demands, by rubbing it against a sharpening device. The other blade is rather blunt.

The sharp blade is used for administering incisions along the bark of the trees or scraping off the coagulated resin ready for harvest. Unlike the sharp blade which is used to harvest superior resin that matures along tapped receptacles on the bark of the plants, the blunt blade is a gleaming device. It is used to scrape off droplets of low quality incense that flow along the bark outside the tapped incisions.

The blades are made of iron, and are processed by the local smith. At the time of the field work, the price for making two blades necessary for the mingaaf was So Shs 200/ in Galgala village. Shaping the wooden handle as well as cutting its narrow protective grip are commonplace skills that are performed by most adult men.

A careful incense man prepares two mingaafs for the season, although the possession of a single mingaaf is not in itself a major obstacle to start working incense.

It is required that the tapping instrument must not be warmed up or brought into contact with fire. A heated tool is claimed to have a disastrous effect on the frankincense plants. It can kill those trees tapped with it. As a result of this, not only old instruments are keenly protected from fire but also new ones must be cleansed from the impact of the processing fire. This is done by gashing the new instrument, a number of times, into the trunk of non-commercial resin producing plants, until the owner is satisfied he has washed off the noxious effect of the fire. It is difficult to say if this is some kind of taboo or not, since I am not sure if there is any biological explanation for the behaviour for lack of scientific information.

In addition to the tapping instrument there are two frankincense collecting baskets. The smaller one dhuraad is very light so that it is carried by collectors with the scraping knife while harvesting incense.

The incense gathered in the smaller basket is emptied into the larger basket as soon as it gets filled up. At the end of the work day members of the unit of production return from the field carrying the larger basket which contains the day's harvest.

Weaving baskets fall in the domestic sector of activity that is thought proper for women. In Galgala village, incense men usually pay So. Shs 200/ to women for making a basket, though the wives of some men prepare baskets for their husbands. Quite often pastoral women and poor women in the villages make baskets to earn an income. The baskets are made of fibre which is derived from a rare species, caw, *Hyphaene thebaica* Mart.

### Production Uniform

Since frankincense is a sticky substance those who handle it require some sort of protective gear. The work uniform of incense men is locally known as malwaha xijiga - 'the uniform for the production of frankincense'. It consists of three pieces of cloth: a loin cloth or short trousers, a shirt or some form of under cloth, a pair of shoes and a head scarf. The uniform is required to fit tightly to the body of the men, especially those who work in treacherous sites. If it is loose there is a danger of it catching a rock snag which may result in a disastrous fall from a precipice.

Although the uniform is rarely washed, it is said that the locally available detergents are powerless to cleanse satisfactorily the resin stains that accumulate on the uniform. In poetry, the filthy uniform which is characteristic of incense worker's occupation is a point

rival poets denigrate in the verbal battle for excellence between antagonistic economic groups.

Despite its ghastly appearance, the resin-soaked uniform is claimed to perform a hygienic function. The incense dirt suffocates vermin and thus prevents vermin infestation. Despite the coarse texture and the unpleasant look of the accumulated dirt, it does not smell bad, for after all the resin stain is aromatic.

### The Temporary Field Station

As mentioned in the preceding chapter each collection area or frankincense field has a station. This is known as 'temporary residing place', gole. Physically the station consists of a rock shelter located at the bottom of one of those valleys or gullies that cross-cut the area. As a facility that belongs to particular fields frankincense stations, which mainly bear the name of the field, are distinct from the numerous public mountain caves in the region, some of them are said to be large enough to give refuge to hundreds of sheep and goats during storms.

Persistent use has made the stations fit for human occupation. Some of them are protected with flimsy pole walls which are strengthened with thorn fence and have a lockable entrance. Such scant protection is particularly useful nowadays to keep away swarms of marauding monkeys which have recently acquired the habit of stealing food

from the stations in some areas.

As a precaution against the seasonal and occasional flash floods, the stations are often located slightly above the floor of the valley. The rocky surface above is also terraced to divert run-off water.

It is important that each station be connected to a network of tracks that ultimately connect the fields in an area of incense production to a village base, as stated in the previous chapter. Donkeys and pack camels that frequent such tracks where motor transportation is absent, transport goods between frankincense fields and rural villages which are connected to the coastal towns.

Frankincense stations are multi-purpose institutions. They are places of abode for the unit of production while working incense. Almost all keep their rations there, and many store harvested resin in well protected parts inside the station, though others store their goods in uninhabited caves that are abundant in the region. Of no lesser importance it acts as a social night-club where neighbours assemble during nights to discuss matters of importance, or indulge in poetry.

The concept relating to a temporary site which the Somali word for the stations signifies is a pastoral institution. Camps of different stocks residing in a region of grazing at a particular time frequently change sites. The camel camp gole geel, the cattle camp gole lo' and horse camp

gole faras are all stock units that frequently change sites under the management of adult herders. Because of the decline in the traditional importance of the horse in clan warfare, raising horses has declined in modern times.

Frankincense collectors return to the nomadic hamlet for a rest period which occurs between one harvest and the next. The exuded resin takes some time to harden. Apart from this temporary evacuation, there is hardly any other evidence which supports the rationale that assumes frankincense stations as temporary, other than the fact that Somalis draw heavily from the nomadic culture.

Some features of the frankincense station designate its sedentary characteristics. As a consequence of a prolonged use, the vicinage of some of them is severely denuded of firewood which is essential for cooking and making bonfires in the cold winter months. The occupants of such sites travel an hour or more to get firewood.

Apart from the main fire place that lies inside the station, some sites have another 'specialised fire place' xufadda kimista, the fire place for making bread just outside, for baking the staple flour bread that is known as ruub - 'flour bread baked inside the ashes of a fire'. Moreover, some of them, have ground mosques which are marked with stones near the station - a visible symbol of a place frequented by Muslim devotees.

As shown in the preceding chapter, no frankincense field is

complete without a station. Each field has a particular name, and quite often the name of the field and its station are the same.

### Seasonal Rent

The majority of semi-settled poor-herd frankincense collectors do not have direct rights over the fields they cultivate. As tenant labourers they get access by renting fields from absentee pastoral holders. In the past, it seems rental and share-cropping arrangements were both common. Currently, the rental arrangement is increasingly displacing share-cropping for reasons which will be explained in the next chapter on transformations taking place in the frankincense economy.

The seasonal rent is known as cawaaj in Bari region and sad or haarad in Erigavo. The word cawaaj is used in two contrasting social contexts. In non-formal discourse a man could refer, without constraint, to livestock exchanged for a bride derogatively as wealth earned in exchange for women's reproductive organs xoolo cawaaj. In formal occasions especially on the occasion of contracting a marriage and agreeing on bridewealth, bridewealth is described as an act of honour xurmo, not an act of buying women's sexual organs.

The word sad which is also known in Bari region, connotes a system of distribution in terms of which a group of people

allocate something between themselves on an equal basis or else on a pre-agreed quota. In this context, the rent is an amount of payment due ~~to~~ a title-holder as compensation for the right of use of the property by the tenant.

Polarisation between the owners of the means of production and tenants, and relations of exploitation obtaining between the actual producers and local traders, as seen in chapter one, has been a moralistic issue which commonly provided the pretext for unsuccessful intervention by past governments. Given the failure of the present government's attempt to abolish the rent altogether, the issue persists as a potential source of conflict.

The right-holders are setting high rates for the exploitation of their frankincense fields. In 1985, I witnessed the negotiation of a seasonal rent rate in Bosaso town. The parties concerned finally agreed to increase the rate for a large field from So Shs 2000/ - 8000/ for the production season.

Tenant collectors expect a modest rise of the rent, following the increase of both the official producer price and that of the informal market in which they illicitly sell part of the produce. It seems that the parallel market is raising expectations and creating confusion. With an eye on the attractive price of the parallel market, the right-holders are accused by tenants of imposing exorbitant rent charges. Moreover, the increase can be assumed as a response to the current transformation from

the traditional share-cropping scheme that is comparatively less demanding for the landless collectors.

Apart from verbal rhetoric, that is the owners threatening to evict tenants if they refuse to pay high rents, and tenant's counter threat to report unfair escalation to the authority, tenants oppose rent and possession of frankincense fields in some other way. In Bari region, particularly in Bosaso district, it is a popular belief that right-holding families who obtain an income by renting their fields to others are punished for doing this. Making an income from undomesticated and customary common property, with little or no capital investment expended in their exploitation, is thought tantamount to living on gains derived from sources regarded as unlawful in Islam. In practice this has a limited impact for it does not stop renting.

Because they obtain a forbidden return, which is unclean in a religious sense xaaraam, from renting a public resource provided by Allah for the benefit of the community, title-holding families are believed not to increase as satisfactorily as do other families who depend upon proper occupations, e.g. farming and herding. To substantiate the ideal of slow demographic growth of the right-holders, people cite odd examples of those with many fields but accidentally fail to propagate sufficiently.

The same is said about lineages with comparatively substantial frankincense resources but who are small in

size and strength. Their unfortunate demographic development is said to be brought about by the dependence of many of their families on the extortion of immoral rent.

The belief which makes a correlation between the acquiring of rent and slow demographic growth is not supported by conclusive ethnographic evidence. Indeed many families with large and fairly adequate frankincense property experienced favourable growth. In the neighbouring Erigavo region, families and lineages with abundant resources are said to belong to strong families and lineages who appropriated a great proportion of the resources in the initial partition.

The rent rate varies with the type of species that grows in the fields. Frankincense fields, that grow yagcar species which produce the expensive meydi incense, were rented in 1984/85 in Basaso at So Shs 1000-8000/ a season, depending on the size of the field, quality of the resin and other attractive qualities, for instance nearness to the village and water point. Moxor growing fields, which yield the relatively cheaper beeyo, fetched about half the rate of those growing most valuable yagcar. A third type of frankincense field which grows a mixed population of moxor and yagcar has an intermediate rate in general, varying with the relative proportion of the species.

The rent institution which acts as a battle ground for the interest groups, tenants and owners of the means of production, varies in different frankincense producing

districts. It is lowest in Alula district, where it has been regulated by the district cooperative movement, albeit with tremendous consequences as will be seen in the next chapter. A miniature field growing yagcar was rented for about So. Shs. 500/ in Alula at the time of the study, compared to about twice the amount in neighbouring Bosaso and Iskushuban districts.

Capacity of production, and the type of species chiefly determine the rent for a particular field. However, other factors are also important, i.e. the proximity of the field to nomadic hamlet or village base (owners of distant fields sometimes rent their fields and obtain the proceeds with nearby fields to cultivate), the distance to the nearest water point, and the physical terrain-open and less rugged sites are preferred to treacherous localities.

Apart from the rental arrangement which accounts for the most common form of exploitation, share-cropping and direct exploitation by individual members of the right-holders constitute the major types of frankincense exploitation. If all the owning families eagerly want to receive the rent proceeds from the collective property, then it is distributed between them on a rota basis, the same way that direct exploitation is regulated. However, this is usually unlikely and the benefits are often allowed to go to the poorest family which needs it most.

Organisation of Labour

Working frankincense is a male activity. This verse, by an incense collector poet in Alula district, makes the point clear. It is a response to colleagues who tried to persuade Axmed to compose a dissuasive verse for women who took up incense collection at a critical dry period in the past.

B36

Honourable Saalax, I explain the issue to you  
 I have grown out of teenage and early foolish behaviour  
 I am too old to indulge in dhaanto dance  
 I am a man whose beard has grown fully and attained maximum height  
 How could I ridicule my own sisters and Dhudayar  
 Hurt them and imperatively stand in front of their faces  
 The drought has turned all mankind into hyenas  
 People are falling over any place that has any valuable sap  
 Scrambling up incense trees, sweltering heat, and eventual disappointment  
 Resin sticking to their hairs which cannot be avoided  
 The lot of frankincense collection will soon be abandoned  
 as they get plenty  
 May Allah provide a better alternative, they will never do  
 with incense.

The poet refused to be persuaded by his friends to defame women with unjust cause. They were impelled to venture into the men's domain of frankincense collection by drought

and acute scarcity, which has been worsened by events in the Second World War that affected imported goods. The poet claimed that it is immoral to insult women which are described as sisters and partners of men in general. The role reversal is assumed to be a transient episode. Women would gladly cease working incense to resume their domestic tasks as soon as conditions get back to normal.

Women do supplementary activities, e.g. weaving collection baskets, preparing goat-skin water vessels which are commonly used in the frankincense region. If the nomadic hamlet is encamped in the vicinity, they usually relieve men from fetching water and wood and preparing meals. If necessary, they also keep vigil over the harvested resin which is stored in the rock caves.

The mechanism of tapping is quite simple. It could be acquired at an early age. Boys younger than fifteen years can be proficient in administering incisions. The skill is acquired by observing adult men do the task without any formal training.

Frankincense collection is a family enterprise. Most of the unmarried adults who perform the task do so as members of their father's household where they remain as members until they marry and establish their own nuclear family.

There are two forms of labour organisation. The first and most common is a joint unit of production, containing two, three or four, sometimes more, but often less than eight

co-labourers. Traditionally the most influential member of the unit assumed a leadership role mugadin, 'work party leader'. He had contact with the village traders who were the source of credits and therefore mediated between traders and actual collectors. However, he had little authority to impose his will, and his responsibilities never relieved him of the collection work. At present the status, which has changed very little, is dubbed as the 'leader of the unit of production' in the jargon of collectivisation.

The second and less common form of labour organisation is the individual labourer who works a miniature incense field that has the capacity to accommodate one man's labour in a given season. As stated in the preceding chapter, people have a clear understanding of the correlation between fields and the size of the unit of production they can accommodate. Nevertheless, this is not strictly adhered to in practice. It is not uncommon to find a field which is claimed to accommodate two working men or three, being cultivated by one or two collectors respectively.

Team work has certain advantages lacked by the production organisation based on the individual collector. It has labour flexibility in terms of allocating necessary tasks. Four collective labourers can distribute the tasks in hand in the following format. Three could be allocated to do incense collection, and the other can be conveniently entrusted to carry out regular chores, fetching water and fire wood, preparing meals and taking cooked food to

workers in the field. Other rare instances when men perform women's roles include the construction of lineage wells by able bodied members of the group in a place that is distant from the area where the agnatic hamlets are congregating at the time. In contrast, the companionless individual collector not only misses the comfort of group work in production areas that are less frequented, particularly in the hot xagaa season, but also various routine activities easily distributed in team work demand vigorous effort on the part of the individual gatherer.

The individual collector has no choice but to abandon his work, however temporarily, if it is essential that he should attend to an important matter in the homestead. The consequence of disruption in the production of incense is disastrous since it is essential that tapping must be regulated. In the case of group work, temporary absence of a member of the team may not necessarily lead to disruption, although the tempo of the work will be affected.

Since it is comparatively convenient and more efficient, collective work is the major form of frankincense production. Despite its structural persistence, the social composition is often mobile and less stable. Membership of one particular unit of production changes from one season to the next. There is a continuous realignment and regrouping between work units in a particular area of production.

Of course there are exceptions to the general social mobility of the joint unit. The most stable unit consists of a father and his adult sons. The unit may also consist of brothers, <sup>and</sup> cousins, but most commonly it consists of agnates who belong to the same 'dia-paying' group. Some agnates as members of a joint party remain together for a number of successive seasons, developing and maintaining trust which has been promoted by working together.

Several reasons are responsible for the social mobility of the work party. Theoretically all members are expected to contribute equally to the joint venture. This hardly works out in practical life. Some members may be more committed to work than others. The dissatisfaction held by diligent workers against less able or dishonest co-labourers is indicated by a saying popular in Galgal a village. The saying which denigrates those who pretend to be sick to absent themselves from work goes, "I hate those with a healthy appetite to eat greedily, and at the same claim not fit for work".

Authority is an important factor that can destabilise the collective unit. There has always been an acknowledged leader of the unit. Besides the status which is conferred by the responsibility as an intermediary between the unit and the wider social structures, the leader lacks the power to enforce unpopular decisions. In practice he is not entitled to privileges unknown to others. Relations may go awry if the leader tries to exempt himself from regular work. Frequent absenteeism, and unreasonable excuses which

are thought evasive, provide grounds for opposition and may subsequently cause the dissolution of the unit in the next season.

Noticeable abuse of the leader's position invites criticism from neighbours and outsiders who start to meddle in the affairs of the unit. To worsen the tension, they retort that the concerned leader is unacceptably exempting himself from work and is consequently reducing his work mates to a servile status.

If crucial disagreement on work ethics arises in the middle of the season, an effort is made to minimise a precipitate dissolution. On the one hand, it is not easy to do improvised calculation before the end of the season, so that the available joint output could be distributed between the dissenting members, or to work out the right share for a dissenting member. On the other hand, in general, there are customary rules that promote the unity of the group, at least during the season of production. Individual members who decide to abandon before the last harvest cycle ought to relinquish any claim in the collective produce. The unit on its side must not demand any compensation for the food consumed by the dissenting member with the group before withdrawal.

I was told of several cases where frugal and diligent collectors stopped collaborating with the unit. Apart from the customary prescription and especially if the departing member has a legitimate cause, some sort of agreement is

usually reached. Either some incense is given from the joint stock if the harvest is large, or the disputant relinquishes a share, if the stock is small. Afterwards he may not leave the residing station, and may continue to work a specific part of the joint field. He will assume full responsibility for his expenditure and labour.

Solidarity creates endemic conflicts mainly revolving round work ethic, a tendency that causes constant reshuffles between work units. Besides such limitations, its advantages over the atomistic individual production are widely acknowledged.

Solidarity functions in two major ways in the system of joint production. First, there is the element of collective labour where members equally participate in the production process. Second, communal food which is consumed by the unit in the course of production and related production expenditure, is a collective responsibility. At the end of the season, this joint production expense is deducted from the gross value of the joint output.

In contrast to the collective pattern in the sphere of production, domestic consumption is fundamentally individual. Each member of the unit bears responsibility for the subsistence credit obtained by his semi-settled nomadic family during the season. This is paid from the respective shares collectors obtain from the value of the joint produce, after the collective investment is recouped.

In effect, two parallel credit accounts are kept for the producers: the collective credit scheme which covers joint production expenses, and the individual family subsistence credit. The underlying rationale for this is not difficult to perceive. The families of those who constitute the work unit of production naturally have different subsistence requirements. Large families necessarily need more food and other essential domestic goods than smaller families.

Local terms for the two accounts raas and minkiise clearly express the different patterns. The former term translates literally as 'hearth' and connotes collective sharing of the food communally consumed, while the other term which translates literally as 'every body from his own pocket' designates the individual consumption pattern of the family.

By embodying collective and individual economic patterns in the production and domestic consumption domains, the frankincense economy stands distinct from other economies in northern Somalia. Apart from inter-family cooperation in harvesting, and maintaining some water systems, etc. in the north-west, the nuclear family is the chief unit of crop production. Family labour is utilised in the production of sorghum and in raising stock units of cattle, sheep and goats, which represent a supplementary activity of great importance.

Besides some institutionalised and obligatory forms of

cooperation, informal cooperation between co-labourers residing in the same frankincense station is of considerable importance. It is not uncommon to use a burden beast, say a camel or a donkey which belongs to a person in the group for a common end. <sup>e</sup>Someone's cooking utensils may be used in the same way. A tapping instrument is borrowed if one's tool gets broken and a person has a spare one.

Cooperation and assistance also occur between neighbouring agnates residing in the stations in an area of incense production. The unit when its food is exhausted and waiting for a supply to arrive from the village base usually borrows food from neighbours. Pack animals and tools of production are also borrowed across work parties. Water for preparing food is provided freely or loaned in areas of acute scarcity.

In terms of labour, two types of recruitment methods are distinguished. One is short and friendly assistance offered by those who finish their work to those who still have a task to complete. This is differentiated from wage labour magdac 'wage labour'. An incense collector who had an urgent duty to attend to may contract a labourer for a short period, say two weeks. The daily wage for casual labour was So Shs 200/ in Galgala at the time of the field work. In Erigavo region, it is reported that seasonal labourers are contracted to do frankincense cultivation for an agreed payment, although the system seems to be disappearing.

### Typology of Frankincense Gathering Families

The majority of frankincense collectors are adult married men. As mentioned in the text, unmarried men who collect incense often do so not as independent producers but as members of their father's household before they marry and establish their own nuclear family.

About two-thirds of the actual collectors own limited stock, mainly between thirty and seventy head of sheep and goats, in some cases a pack camel, and hardly any camel herd. For such families frankincense collection is the mainstay and herding is supplementary.

Two principal types of frankincense gathering families may be differentiated. First, there are semi-settled families who habitually herd their limited stock in the frankincense region. Due to primary dependence upon collection and because their herd is small and does not allow mobile nomadism, they rarely venture beyond the frankincense region, except under extreme conditions. Such families represent the prototype frankincense collecting family.

Adult men of primarily incense cultivating families periodically commute between the semi-settled nomadic homestead and frankincense fields. They temporarily reside in incense field stations during the tapping cycles and return to the hamlet at the interval in the frankincense

maturing period that occurs between the regulated successive tapping cycles.

Families based in villages that are scattered across the frankincense region form the second type of incense cultivating families. Not unlike their cultivating rural counterparts, they keep a very limited number of stock in the villages. The herds of those with large stock is looked after by their nomadic kinsmen, or a member of the family herds them following the cyclic nomadic movement.

The economy gets more diversified in villages like Galgala, where small scale irrigation is practised. Here it is difficult to say which activity is more important than others for a family doing a stint in frankincense collection, herding and irrigated agriculture. In those years when irrigated fruits and vegetables grow well, the proceeds from their sale provides the main source of income. In years when agriculture is less successful, more labour is invested in the production of incense, and animals may be sold to cover any shortfall.

Herd-poor semi-settled rural families and village based collectors seem to account for more than two thirds of the actual gatherers. The remaining one third largely consists of wealthy pastoral families, with herds of more than one hundred head of sheep and goats and camel stock. These rich pastoralists practise migratory nomadism and move between the frankincense region and the interior pasture lands. Because they are less tied to the frankincense

region, only those with family labour to spare from herding are likely to engage a member of the family in the production of frankincense.

The cultivation of the yagcar species that produces the expensive meydi incense, for the most part, falls in the autumn cool season, when nomadic families encamp in the escarpment. The strategy is to derive income from frankincense exploitation which is exchanged for food and other domestic goods, to save animals which would otherwise had been sold for the purpose.

A local axiom says that two types of families, poor families and families with surplus labour are most favourably placed to exploit frankincense xiji waxa ka shageyn kara nin ceydh ah iyo nin ciidan leh. This implies that poor-herd families have little alternative in a resource-poor region, and are impelled to devote themselves to the intensive work of frankincense cropping, while other families like the rich pastoralists with surplus labour can make a good income out of it by deploying a free person in the production of incense. It is claimed that someone who is engaged in another activity would not be able to do properly the intensive and regulated work of frankincense.

#### The Production Process: Methods of Tapping

The work parties consisting mainly of agnates has taken shape and the particular frankincense field they want to

exploit has already been jointly decided. Tools of production and other prerequisites are made ready at hand. Food for the labouring party has been transported to the stations.

'A supplicatory feast' ducada xijiga, marks the beginning of the cropping season. This is held in the frankincense stations. Rice is cooked, bread is baked, and sometimes a goat may be slaughtered. In addition popcorn and coffee are made.

In the past, people say, the initiation feast was more pompous and brought together a large group of people working in neighbouring fields. Although very few work parties at present perform together, the feast is still popular, and food prepared in different stations is partaken with other incense men and passers by. The aim is to supplicate a bumper crop and a smooth working season.

General slackening of the beliefs and practices of the community, in this context reduction in the initiation feast, is raised by elders, as a causal factor for some of the unfortunate things that happen, for instance fatal accidents caused by falling from cliffs on attempts to reach trees that grow in treacherous places, diminishing rainfall, and dwindling yields due to over-exploitation. Such events are claimed by elders to be a consequence of not honouring tradition by young people, not meticulously performing observances as ancestors did.

The feast could be said to be rather supplicatory. It does not on its own have the power to bring the desired end, the multiplication of the crop. More accurately the performance seems to act as an acceptable venue which could bring about the desired result. After the meal the following prayers are commonly read:

May Allah bestow his blessing baraka in the fruits of the working men ... Amen

May Allah protect us from fatal accidents, venomous snakes and noxious creepers that abound in the area ... Amen

May Allah realise the aspirations of incense men and all good Muslims ... Amen

In Bosaso district, the role of popcorn in the feast is rather interesting. It acts as an augury, although its interpretation is often disputed. Maybe because of improper firing of some other reason, if an unacceptable proportion of the popcorn goes bad, sceptics interpret this as sign of a poor harvest to come. Others dispute this and rightly blame the method of preparation. However, at the end of the season, if output falls short of expectation, sceptics revive the argument. They say that the augury was a clear indication of a poor harvest. This has not been a blessed field to cultivate, we should have changed in the beginning, they suggest.

Tapping consists of administering incisions on the body of the frankincense trees where the bark could withstand the wound. The depth of the incision depends upon the depth of

the resin bearing ducts of the plant. The initial cut appears no more than a scratch. From small scratches the cuts develop to wider and deeper wounds as the tapping cycles proceed. At the height of the season, the average depth of the cuts may measure about 2.5 mm or more in depth and about the size of a palm.

Apart from other factors such as the conditions of the plants, the number of tappings usually correspond to the age of the tree. Some of the fecund and large trees may bear about a hundred wounds at a time, while smaller trees that are being tapped for the first time may bear no more than four incisions. Between these extremes lie all sorts of trees that can bear various number of gashes. In general, average trees bear about twenty to forty incisions at a given time.

Tapping is a simultaneous process that involves dual acts. It involves cleansing the wound by exposing the resin bearing ducts for further exudation. This is done by scraping off from the healed wound the hardened resin or the incense crop from the preceding tapping.

The production of frankincense is based on regulated successive tapping cycles. When men finish harvesting the resin from the previous tapping cycle, they return to the nomadic hamlet or village base to spend the time the resin takes to metamorphose into real hard resin.

The regulation of the cycles is very important. Failure to

conform to the rhythm of the cycles could have an adverse effect on production. The initial five or three tapping cycles in the exploitation of yagcar and moxor species are known as the preparatory cycles. Yield is low and quality of the resin is poor compared to the latter cycles. However, they are necessary to stimulate the trees for increased production in the succeeding peak cycles.

If the plants are not tapped at the right time, the wound may totally heal. Since it takes time to prepare the plants to produce adequate and superior resin, starting the process all over again will cause the negligent collector a great loss, incense men claim.

The first tapping incision is known as calaamad which corresponds to 'marking'. Since it is no more than a scratch and hardly any resin is harvested from it, in some areas, it is not counted as a tapping cycle.

The preparatory cycles are referred to as preparing or making the plants to produce milk (resin). Because the resin harvest is small, and the act of cleansing or harvesting the resin could be done faster than latter peak cycles, incense men have a longer rest period in the hamlet at these initial stages of collection.

After the preparatory cycles, production increases and therefore the work that has to be carried out in the fields. Consequently incense men stay for longer periods in the stations.

The last cycle is called Jadar-goyn which literally means 'harvesting long meydi tears' and implies the closing of the season.

Some of the resin exuded by the frankincense plant coagulates on the wound receptacle, while part of it actually flows down along the bark. The resin that hardens on the receptacle is harvested in each cycle while the run down resin is allowed to form valuable long tears, in the case of meydi production, to be procured in the last closing major harvest. In the case of beeyo production, the resin does not usually flow and hardens on the receptacle where it is scraped off into collecting baskets in every tapping cycle.

Thus, in the exploitation of yagcar species which produces the expensive meydi incense, production consists of one major harvest at the closing cycle and cyclical harvests where the resin that coagulates on the wound is obtained. In the exploitation of the moxor species which produces the beeyo incense production is cyclical.

Further differences in the exploitation of the two species concerns the length of the season they are cultivated. Yagcar trees are ideally exploited for a period of about ten months, starting from about the end of August or early September until June the following year. During this period the trees are visited or tapped twelve or thirteen times; while moxor trees are exploited for about eight

months, commencing at about March until October. This ideally constitutes nine or ten tapping cycles.

Apart from some diligent and hard working men, most collectors do not often complete the ideal tapping cycles for the species. In the case of meydi production, a shorter season of eight or nine cycles is very common. Late start, early closing, and most consequential for production temporary cessation of the work, accounts for the difference.

The effect of weather is explained to be largely responsible for most of the differences in the exploitation of the two species. Hot weather is thought congenial for the production of beeyo incense. Hence the tapping of the moxor species commences in the short hot season of kaliil that occurs before the Gu' rainy season which starts at about April. Although rain is required to improve the condition of the plants and indirectly increases production, rain water can wash away the beeyo resin more readily than meydi resin.

Gu' rains, which are unreliable in the frankincense region where autumn rains are important, fall before the succeeding hot season or xagaa which marks the peak period in the production of beeyo incense. The incense produced in this hot season is superior and is known as the xagaa crop.

This high quality xagaa crop is differentiated from an

inferior fringe crop which is called 'autumn crop' beeyo deyreed. Made damp and more sticky by the cool autumn weather (October-January), this inferior crop is said to be heavier than the superior but lighter xagaa crop. Some collectors are said to mix the two crops discreetly in an attempt to get more income from the crop.

Those who labour in the wrong season to collect inferior autumn crop are not considered professional beeyo producers. They are described as amateurish. They are mostly village vagabonds and others induced to make some income from the pursuit.

The cool weather that is thought to have an adverse effect for the production of beeyo incense, on the contrary, is held to be congenial for the production of meydi incense. Its peak of production occurs in the less torrid cool autumn season deyr. The cool weather at the time and the fact that the region is populated by nomadic families at this time of the year affords a better condition than working beeyo incense in the corresponding hot season of xagaa when the region is desolate of life.

This main meydi crop is known as autumn crop xeysimo sarac in Alula district that is renowned for its superior meydi incense. It takes a period of about ten months involving twelve successive cycles. A very rare crop known as xagaa sarac, xagaa crop, is also reported in the same district. It takes a longer period to produce this latter crop.

The rare crop is described as the most intensive form of incense production. The aim is to achieve maximum annual output. Therefore apart from the longer period (one complete year) other important prerequisites must be considered for effective use. It is important that the collectors be free from other responsibilities to allow maximum labour input. To make investment worthwhile the field to be worked must be fecund and of the required size to accommodate the labouring party. Frankincense trees must be in a good condition, preferably must have rested for a period of two or more years.

It takes a period of about 25-30 days for the meydi incense to mature. The corresponding period for beeyo incense is 15-20. The difference is explained in terms of the seasonal variation of temperature. Since the cultivation of the former takes place mainly in the cool season, it takes the resin a little longer to harden than the beeyo incense which matures earlier due to the influence of the hot weather of the xagaa.

Two alternative strategies are commonly utilised to implement the day's work. One is called gelin soof. It literally means 'setting out for grazing half day'. This is a two shift system in which incense men work before noon and in the afternoon, with a mid-day break. The second strategy is also a borrowed pastoral concept and is known as maalin gaal. It means 'the longest distance covered by a moving nomadic hamlet in a day'. No mid-day break is taken in this intensive system of work which is employed

when more work is required to be performed.

If the frankincense trees growing in the field are widely dispersed, as is usually the case, the work team splits up into individual collectors labouring in contiguous areas. If the trees are dense, then they advance abreast to avoid missing some of the plants.

Compared to other economic activities in northern Somalia, frankincense collection seems most intensive. The tapping cycles are synchronised harvest periods that require the necessary work to be carried out at the right time. For more than half of the season of production (4-5) months, incense men stay in the fields separated from their families. They have to bear the impact of the separation and working in a difficult environment. In the hot season of xagaa, beeyo collectors have to carry water all the time as a precaution against thirst which can easily kill a man without water.

In this hot season, the desolate and seasonally vacated frankincense region is also pestilential. Swarms of small mosquitoes dhabcad vex incense men at work. Venomous creepers must also be watched out for during the day, and during the nights they pose danger in the rock exposed shelters.

Some perilous surfaces where incense men labour are very slippery. To minimise the danger incense men take off their shoes to avoid the danger of skidding down a cliff or

bottomless abyss. Despite all possible precautions, sometimes the worst happens. In Alula district alone, five men were reported to have died after falling from a precipice in 1983/84. Although this particular season could be considered as unfortunate and exceptional, one could say hardly a season passes by without its toll of fatal accidents or death.

Some adverse tapping practices are acknowledged by the collectors. The first is known as 'deferred tapping' caddaal which is claimed to have a disruptive effect on the regulated production. According to informants in Galgala village, delaying harvest for more than two days cannot be immediately corrected.

Precipitate tapping ceyriin sarc, literally 'harvesting raw resin' is another noxious form of exploitation. Deferred tapping is usually explained as a foible of less committed and lazy collectors, albeit that it may sometimes be caused by extraneous factors, while precipitate tapping is said to be employed by avaricious collectors. They think they can increase output by administering tappings before the resin gets mellowed and ready for harvest. One informant in Bosaso town commented on such misguided behaviour. He compared incense trees exploited in this way with a milk camel from which the herder callously tried to get more milk by striking it hard on the udders.

Precipitate tapping is claimed to be harmful to the plants and does not increase production. Most damaging to the

plants is an illicit and noxious tapping technique which is called jageyn, literally 'stabbing the tree'. Two deep parallel cuts are administered on the surface of the ordinary tapping incision. These extra piercing cuts are rewarding in the short term. Trees slashed in this way produce increased resin, though the effects on the plants their internal organs are damaged is disastrous. The plants may die, and even those who withstand the noxious deep cuts take a long time to recover from the impact. Deep incisions are also thought to act as a medium that allows wood borers to infect the trees, a condition which may result from the weakened resistance of the plants.

Another presumably restricted illicit harmful practice is reported in Galgala village. The white peel that covers the bark of the trees is burned. This increases the yield but the trees whose resin is milked out in this way are known to die eventually.

The technical information presented in the forgoing paragraphs, concerns selected patterns which are intended to represent substantial folk knowledge on the exploitation of the Boswellias. The information, particularly concerning noxious tapping techniques, has social implications. In reality the damage done to the trees by the application of inappropriate tapping techniques is tremendous. Perhaps no less than half of the frankincense plant population are to some degree damaged. Tapping scars on the trees that fail to heal after the bark has been inappropriately removed testify to the tendency.

Nevertheless, to explain the damage as a result of deficient and unscientific traditional tapping methods, as technocrats are quick to assume, is very simplistic. Incense men are clear about good and bad tapping techniques and the adverse effect noxious tapping practices has had on the plants.

The exploitation of the frankincense forests involves different interests, those of the absentee pastoral right-holding families and tenant collectors. It is the concern and responsibility of the former group to oversee the exploitation of the resource and therefore reduce or forestall any damage. However, they are not often in a position to carry out such a course of action since they are not present in the region at least part of the year. Consequently, the damage to the trees which may be caused by some irresponsible tenants for maximisation is sometimes detected too late to contain it.

Customary regulations which ban noxious techniques are not effective to withstand the tendency. That the problem is sociological rather than technical is illustrated in the case of a dispute between the right-holders and the tenants. If the latter feel antagonised, i.e. threatened with unreasonable eviction, or are demanded to pay high rents, some of them are reported to resort to harmful exploitation so as to inflict economic sabotage as a revenge.

The protection of these commercial local forests is a crucial issue for all those concerned, but I think attending to the social causes of the problem can have more effective impact than the prevailing tendency which often puts the blame on the local system of exploitation.

### Traditional Relations of Production

In the past, prior to the collectivity experiment initiated by the present regime which came to power in 1969, a share-cropping arrangement locally known as nidaam shago, literally 'a system of work' and more precisely 'labour code', prevailed as a common scheme. Customarily it regulated economic relations between three kin groups who generally belong to the same 'dia paying group', frankincense collectors, owners of the primary resource, and local merchants who were the source of credit.

The tripartite system of distribution which was indeed more complex than is usually reported (i.e. in some cases title-holders acted as creditors, or creditors holding rights), dictated the gross value of the seasonal incense produce to be partitioned into three equal parts. One part was allocated for the owners of the means of production. The second portion was allocated to cover production expenditure and went to the merchants who supplied credits usually on hefty profits. And the remaining one third was all that left to be obtained by the actual collectors. In the event of joint production, members further divided this

share among themselves on an equal basis. The share due for each collector was deducted from the credits incurred by his family.

The second type of arrangement was 'wage labour', in Somali magdac. A title-holder, or a sub-contractor who rented a field from the owners used to hire wage labourers. Incense labourers received in exchange for their labour a certain amount of incense or some agreed cash. In addition the employer also paid food consumed while engaged in production, a pair of shoes and two pieces of cloth.

The rental arrangement provided a third variant. Tenants rented fields from the owners without entering into a share-cropping arrangement or selling their labour.

In recent times, tenants who held a subordinate position vis-a-vis kin owners and merchants, have started spontaneously to oppose unbalanced economic relations. The difficulty of finding wage labour or share-croppers, and the modification of the traditional share-cropping where it still exists, and other transformations which will be discussed in the next chapter demonstrate this.

Partly because local traders represented an economic group distinct from rural incense collectors (both tenant producers and those who exploited their property directly), and partly because the interaction between merchants as a source of credit and client producers was frequent and most consequential, community poets often spoke of their

relations with exploiting kin merchants. Using poetic media as a cultural explanation of the existing relations between the two groups, I want to look into those past relations.

The following anonymous verse was obtained in Xaabo village, Alula district. It demuringly points out how the fruits of hard labour are appropriated by an assortment of village kin patrons. The poet uncharacteristically takes the plight of the exploited incense men to Allah, the ultimate judge. In contravention of the religious edict which demands contented acceptance of the predestined condition, the poet suggests why compassionate Allah has not provided them with a more noble occupation and one which is less exploitative.

B37

Tenuously escaping fatal accidents while traversing  
treacherous precipices

Haunted by the grinding sound of sorghum in the later part  
of the night

Consoling myself in the face of such grave and potential  
danger

After I make ready, my produce is finally hoarded in a town  
store

The one who transported, the other who distributed and yet  
another who exports

If the turbaned literate man of religion is given the pen  
And accounts are set down by the actuary man of religion  
My marketed merchandise gets apportioned between nine

unholy patrons

Improvised stone unit and unreliable bush scale aggravate  
our grievances

And we stink like unknown itinerant beggars

Other communities enjoy their respective shares of the  
predestined noble wealth

To deserve our lowly exploit, oh Allah, are we a low caste  
without clan affiliation

And may I ask, where is our just share of the distributed  
community resources?

Certainly the type of wealth we aspire to is apparent to  
You

I did not mean to question Your just distribution of  
resources

The first three lines of the verse mention the difficulty  
underlying the production of frankincense. Then the  
discussion proceeds on to note the embezzlement subjected  
to the goods that has caused the producers a lot of  
trouble. The position of men of religion as accountants  
literate in rudimentary Arabic is referred to. Such  
religious accountants and others, such as shop assistants,  
porters, and intermediaries, are described as an unholy  
alliance of townspeople who exploit incense people. Most  
of their services were counted against the collectors.

Kin merchants and intermediaries are widely accused of  
having devised measurement units and bush scales with the  
aim of extorting more incense. To make standard weight  
units heavier so that they give false value favourable to

the patron, it is reported that some merchants cemented lead weights underneath the standard units.

The last section of the verse is a complaint to Allah about the frankincense economy which is projected as lowly and undesirable in relation to the other subsistence economies in northern Somalia.

Informants in Bosaso town told me a story about a dishonest trader who is thought to have died as a consequence of his deceptive practice. As a covert holding back mechanism, he tied to the shop scale a string ~~slipped~~ through the wooden counter and long enough to touch the ground. By holding down the string attached to the scale ~~with~~ his toe he was able to get more incense per unit. Eventually the organ that did the deception got infected and caused the death of the trader. The event is cited as a divine punishment for the dishonest.

Before the latter half of the twentieth century merchants were largely responsible for exporting the incense produced by their clients. This gave them a monopoly over external marketing information which some are reported to have manipulated to their advantage. Declaring lower value for the consigned merchandise is said to have been the practice of some merchants.

A story told in Qandala town testifies to the fact that some merchants jealously guarded external marketing information. For the first time, a merchant was

accompanied by some client producers on a trade voyage to India where beeyo incense was exported before Aden developed as a frankincense exporium in the twentieth century.

The merchant devised a ruse to prevent intruding kin client followers accompanying him to the market. When they arrived at Bombay port, he told them that the place had a stringent sexual rule which obliges any customer who wants to sell his goods in the market to undergo anal sex before being allowed to sell goods. The trick worked and clients preferred to stay aboard the dhow, entrusting the task of selling the goods to the trader.

In the 1930s, an incense collector in Qandala district was reported to have become insolvent. He could not pay all the debt that had accumulated over the years. His creditor who was his sister's husband eventually took him to court. The court ordered the auctioning of the property of the indebted. The decision incensed the pauper collector who committed the episode to a short verse. Customarily the sister's husband must not press hard the brother of his wife let alone take him to court. On the other hand, to compose an abusive poem against one's sister's husband is not the norm.

B38

I have no herds that graze the pasture of the rains  
Nor do I export dried fish to import sorghum  
Brother in-law I have no shops open for me anywhere in the

world

The debt I owe you is not large enough to warrant an  
invading judicial force

Leave auctioning my utensils, the world is wayward and fate  
ridden

In the past, and to some extent today, clients were given  
shoddy goods or those that had remained in the store for a  
long time on loan. To deny them desired goods when needed,  
annoyed incense collectors. Sometime before the Second  
World War, an incense collector in Qandala district is said  
to have requested rice on credit terms from his kin patron.  
He was refused and told to accept sorghum instead. He  
expressed his rage in this short verse.

B39

Fellow townsman do not taunt me contemptuously

Spiced bread freshly served out from the oven

And good maanguuri rice is what you eat all day long

My ribs are hard pressed by the consumption of sorghum

Without a grindstone to crush it, it's as bitter as the  
seeds of cawaag tree

May sorghum forever disappear from the face of the earth

Some mechanisms of the local system of exploitation  
explained in this section, bear comparison with those that  
existed between Aden traders and Somali merchants in Aden  
prior to current collectivisation. As shown in the first  
chapter, Aden merchants obliged Somali customers to buy  
shoddy goods or clear out old and expired products from

trade stores in exchange for their frankincense crop. As we have seen in the above, local merchants sometimes required their kin clients to take poor quality goods on credit. Aden merchants fiddled measurements and charged various services against Somali customers. Local merchants are seen in the above to do similar things vis-a-vis client kin producers. In this sense, it can be said that local merchants were passing onto their clients some swindling practices that were subjected to them in Aden.

At present, some of the earlier forms of exploitation have disappeared or taken new forms. For instance weight units are so mastered by collectors that it is almost impossible to deceive them on this ground. However, albeit in subtle forms, the maintenance of the traditional economic relations under the collectivity model of development is the theme of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE COLLECTIVITY ENTERPRISE OF THE POST REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

### Frankincense Development and Sales Agency

This chapter examines the working in Somalia of a crucial contemporary development concept, the cooperative model. Two contradictory streams of thought dominate anthropological discourse on the viability of the cooperative enterprise in the third world. The first is the 'pessimistic view' (P. Worsley ed., 1971). It postulates that modern and rational cooperatives are not compatible with traditional societies where kinship and other social principles of organisation hinder the development of a modern and successful enterprise.

Opposed to the 'pessimistic' view which traces the dysfunctional variable that restrains the evolution of viable modern enterprise in some cultural constraints embedded in the social systems of traditional societies is the 'optimistic theory' (P. Worsley ed., 1971). It propounds that underdeveloped societies are generally predisposed to the adoption of collective models of development and social change. Inherent forms of solidarity, for instance collective altruism, commonplace mutual help, are some of the corporate cultural elements that are widely found in the social organisation of traditional societies which are conducive to the implementation of the collective enterprise.

An alternative proposition considers endemic corruption and inefficiency as a causal factor that hinders the take-off or development of effective collective enterprise in less developed countries.

Although it is no longer argued that traditional societies are harmonious, implicit in the traditionalist views, <sup>(both</sup> the 'pessimistic' and 'optimistic' thoughts), <sup>the</sup> is the notion that these societies are harmonious. In effect they neglect relations of exploitation that may exist traditionally and develop further between cooperativised peasant producers and middle-men.

As shown in the preceding chapter, relations of economic exploitation existed, prior to the present socialist government, between frankincense collectors and local merchants who provided credits for their kin client producers. In the present chapter, it will be shown that such unbalanced relations have been maintained in subtle forms in the current framework of cooperative enterprise. Cultural elements intrinsic in the social organisation may have implications for the development of the movement, nevertheless, I think, inefficiency and unbalanced economic relations represent the most important factors restraining the development of modern enterprise in the Somali case.

The chapter starts with a brief chronological reconstruction and stated objectives of the frankincense development and sales agency and the cooperative movement.

This is followed by a description and analysis of the practical operation of these development bodies at the local level.

To achieve a balanced rapid socialist model of development, the popularly advanced policy of 'scientific socialism' led the present government to try to control the key sectors of the economy, particularly the important banana industry in the south, and the manufacturing and banking systems. For fishing and other areas of production, except stock breeding where the Livestock Development Agency has been set up to initiate processing industries and organise export, cooperatives have become the sacred scheme for the pursuit of anticipated socialist development and social change.

Thus technical ministries initiated and encouraged collective enterprise. For example, the ministry of fishing started to organise cooperative fishing communities, while the ministry of agriculture did the same for the sedentary communities. Presumably disappointed with the dismal participation of the cooperative movement by the local producers, the Union of the Somali Cooperative Movement (USCM) was founded on the 8 January 1978 as the highest legal authority to consolidate all types of cooperative organisations. Six cooperative organisations grouped into different sectors were brought under the sway of the union:

1. National agricultural cooperative organisation
2. National fisheries cooperative organisation

3. National organisation of livestock, forestry and incense cooperatives
4. The national cooperative organisation of handicrafts and small scale industries
5. The national organisation of transport and construction cooperatives
6. The national organisation of consumer and service cooperatives

Apart from the anticipated need for a central authority that handles matters of common interest by the federated organisations, the USCM lacks a coherent strategy. Absence of clearly formulated aims and objectives is most apparent in the legal sphere. The most important legislative measures are law no. 41 of 8.10.1979 and law no. 9 of 18.3.1980. The former regulates the union as the highest legal authority of the cooperative movement, and the latter transfers the management role from the former administering ministries to the USCM.

I participated in the 1985 general assembly of the union held in Mogadishu. Delegates from cooperative organisations presented brief reports often relating to history, organisation, performance and constraints of the respective organisations. Neither the speakers nor the participants questioned cooperativisation in principle, although admirable critical questions were raised. In the face of mounting evidence of inefficiency and bureaucracy of the organisation, union officials promised wide-ranging reforms, bylaws, decentralisation and democratisation of

the decision-making process. Besides the genuine need for reform, the anticipated reform strategy was I think largely designed to impress participating donor agencies who urge the government to liberalise the economy using economic assistance as leverage (for fuller discussion of the socialist policies in Somalia see I.M. Lewis (1988: 205-225), and J.M. Haakonson (1984)).

To get a general idea about the objectives of the cooperative movement in Somalia, one cannot do better than examine the initial cooperative law, no 40 of 1973. This, I think, is so far the only comprehensive piece of legislation where the stated objectives of collectivisation, the organisation and responsibility of the hierarchical committees and offices are clearly articulated.

The preface of this amended law describes the aims of the movement. The Somali text idealises 'scientific socialism', which is explained as a democratic mass movement and a remarkable achievement of the October Revolution.

In relation to social goals, the movement is thought to liberate the masses from oppression, poverty and exploitation of the capitalist system, particularly emphasised is the need to liberate poor categories of the population engaged in production from the yoke of capitalism. Price regulation of goods and control of the parallel market has been thought to achieve this end.

The movement was assumed to unify and integrate poor sections of the society and its exploited middle ranks. These oppressed groups are said to benefit by pooling their power, knowledge and limited material possession to increase production and, by implication, improve their standard of living, and will ultimately contribute to the creation of economies of scale.

The union is acknowledged as a mechanism where technical and scientific methods could be introduced for the productive members of the movement, so that they could improve the quality and increase the quantity of production. Consistent with the socialist policy of industrialisation and processing, the movement will strive to mechanise and process goods produced by the cooperatives. Moreover, making appropriate use of modern scientific and technological achievement, the movement will pursue an import substitution policy and will also encourage the export economy.

The USCM is concerned with the appointment of officials for the cooperative organisations, including frankincense agency and frankincense producing local cooperatives. It is also an important duty of the union to see that export, and productive activities of the various organisations follow national policy. For instance, frankincense collectors are cooperativised and their produce is purchased, and then processed for export by the frankincense agency.

Cooperative organisations underwrite the administrative costs of the USCM. In the case of frankincense, this is effected by its regional offices who collect special duties that are charged on the actual frankincense producers.

The function and organisation of the frankincense agency were discussed in the first chapter. No public organisation to replace the local traders was immediately set up after the banning of the export and handling of frankincense by the private sector when the revolutionary government came to power in 1969. After three years of uncertainty in which local traders exported incense illicitly, thus maintaining traditional relations with the actual kin producers of frankincense, in 1972, the government affiliated the frankincense sector with the National Trading Agency. Thus the frankincense sector became a department in the National Trading Agency under the ministry of commerce. During the first part of this period cooperativised collectors were required to sell frankincense in only two trading centres, Bosaso in Bari region and Berbera as the closest place for producers in Erigavo region.

From an obscure department in the National Trading Agency, the frankincense agency ascended to an autonomous enterprise in 1981. It expanded by establishing administrative and warehouse installations for storing and processing incense purchased from the collectors in the frankincense producing districts.

Once more in 1981, the agency underwent another reorganisation, ostensibly to induce reform and revitalisation, but I think, primarily as a result of competition between powerful national institutions aspiring to control the hard currency generating frankincense sector. A decree transferred the agency from the ministry of commerce and placed it under the USCM which is supervised by the party.

Supplementary working relations of the sort whereby the USCM provides technical or other forms of required assistance on its own or through collaboration with technical ministries to cooperative organisations is so far lacking. The absence of any significant projects implemented by USCM or the frankincense agency despite many promises testifies to the fact.

### Frankincense Production Cooperatives

This section considers the relations between the frankincense agency and cooperativised local frankincense collectors; in other words, I discuss the impact of instituted development organisation upon the objects of change - the semi-settled herd-poor frankincense collectors.

As shown in the first chapter, state initiated marketing enterprise has been a favoured model in the development of

the frankincense sector of Somalia. To abolish endemic relations of economic exploitation obtaining between merchants and kin client producers, and to achieve other various economic and technical improvements are some of the elusive goals that are advanced for the policy.

Northern Somalis seem to have responded positively to cooperativisation largely because it has brought certain incentives at least in the beginning. Benefits in the form of loans, food and seed subsidies and priority of state machinery in the ploughing service with respect to both cooperative land and individual family land, have attracted the few collectivised sedentary cultivators in the north-west region.

The present verse collected from Baargaal village in Alula district, commemorates the first fair marketing system which was introduced by the then Italian governor in Bari in the 1930s long before the socialist initiatives discussed above.

B40

Liberated from the past arrangement where one exported his goods unaccompanied

Liberated from family anxiety resulting from the final declaration 'no rubi left'

Liberated from the inveterate Aden habit of deterred sale and free expedite incense

God accredited one (the Italian governor) bearing wealth has arrived

He is the one anticipated by the pauper and the bedouin  
 Applaud and enjoy, before him you were oppressed

The verse expresses the delight of the gum producers with the marketing organisation (Olibanum Inc.) that for the first time allowed the collectors direct access to a relatively equitable system operating on the principle of auction. This status is implicitly denied to the local kin traders who previously assumed the marketing of the produce of their kin client producers, and in poetry are described as exploiters.

The verse apparently represents an example where economic consideration is valued more than kinship morality. It is interesting to note a devout Somali poet venerating as a God-commissioned hero an otherwise 'infidel' Italian governor, because of a marketing reform he implemented.

Some instrumental advantages that came with collectivisation, e.g. state subsidy in the form of food and other forms of low interest credits that were made available, however temporarily to the collectors before the 1980s induced collectivisation of frankincense. Besides such instrumental incentives, and the notion that state policies must be uncritically accepted by the public, the Somali social system is not alien to solidarity. Kinship morality reinforces mutual assistance between agnates.

Both the pastoral tradition and sedentary economy in northern Somalia are not short of agnatic solidarity. In

the former, pastoral kinsmen maintain corporate interests in the camels of the lineage which is reinforced in collective watering and protection of the common herd. In the latter, a man could organise a work party guus consisting of cultivating neighbouring kinsmen, for intensive activities like weeding, winnowing, harvesting and sometimes ploughing.

If certain incentives are often provided to prompt collectivisation, if there are no constraints intrinsic in the social organisation of the society, if it is initially created on good will, the question is why the experiment failed to take off effectively in the frankincense region of Somalia?

I begin to examine some of the factors that undermine the development of a dynamic and viable enterprise. The first concerns the wide-ranging deductions meted out to frankincense collectors. The present verse obtained from Qandala town raises the issue.

B41

Frankincense is as valuable as pearl but I quit because of the difficult system

The numerous exploiting patrons made me quit

Worn to a frazzle by the gruelling work and killing thirst

A clerk had to take charge of my goods induced me quit

Port construction levy and broker charges made me quit

In other instances you (district cooperative committee) act collectively in foray

The disappointing third grade remuneration of Mr Addoosh made me quit

The aim of the poet who is said to have ceased frankincense collection because of the oppression he experienced, is to try to influence the district cooperative committee who consist of local elders related to the collectors to do something about the producer price and the evaluation system. Mr. Addoosh, who is a returnee from Aden and now works as purchase expert for the agency in his home town Qandala, is exhorted to reward kin gatherers with first scale not the third disappointing grade.

Development toll referred to in the verse as port construction levy is a euphemism for substantial deductions recouped from the actual producers. Regular deductions from the seasonal individual income are within the range of 15-17% of the proceeds from the frankincense sold to the public organisation.

Apart from the regular deductions, other subtle forms of deductions that often escape the attention of casual observers are exacted. At the time of the study, incense collectors surrendered 3 kg of free incense in every 100 kg sold to the organisation. This duty in kind started at 10 kg per 100 kg in some of the districts and later got reduced to half the amount as a result of strong opposition by the producers.

The explanation for the deduction in kind by the

organisation officials seems untenable and rather perplexing. It is claimed that the frankincense crop contains some volatile compounds as a result of which it loses some of its weight after some time. Therefore the free payment in kind is argued to compensate for weight reduction of the commodity.

The deduction in kind appears not to be based on accurate calculation on the average weight diminish of the crop in time, but rather founded on vague notions held about the nature of the crop. To penalise the producer for the nature of his product is intensely disturbing. A more suitable alternative entailing no loss of value for the organisation could be to recoup the anticipated weight loss of the goods by revising the price.

As implied in the first chapter, the system of evaluation, including most of the conventional deductions, the grading and processing of frankincense were introduced from Aden. To introduce processing techniques, the Somali government recruited petty traders or brokers in Aden. Most of these traditional experts now work in the frankincense producing districts as purchase experts among their lineage groups. Thus the foreign system imposed without significant modification smacks of unpropitious past and oppressive external market conditions, things expected by the collectors to be replaced by an impartial national marketing arrangement.

A different form of deduction concerns the jute sacks

holding incense. These had been regulated to weigh 2 kg which is deducted from the contents. To observe the quality of the contents and check whether it has been adulterated, the purchaser rips open the side of the sack. The damaged sack is not returned to the collector but taken by the organisation. The practice still existed at the time of the study, despite the USCM prescription to return the sack to the owner.

The range of types of deductions, relatively speaking, are more in Erigavo than in Bosaso region. It is not easy to account for the difference other than suggest that collectors in Bosaso region are more aware and concerned about the deductions. In Erigavo, apart from regular and more common deductions, frankincense gatherers are charged the seasonal expenditure of the cooperative committee and purchase personnel as well as other dignitaries that periodically visit production areas for particular duties.

Perhaps more important than the substantial income lost in the form of this bewildering array of deductions, is the crucial factor of price regulation. The following poetic exchange between an accredited incense collector and an elder purchase worker in Qandala district testifies to the importance of the issue. The collector poet spokesman initiated the verbal dual.

B42

Mr Addoosh you are not a man to be elaborated for the poetic craft

For a year and more ..... we have been cronies  
 I assume that you are a true Somali and a good statesman  
 You know as well as I do the plight of incense men  
 One trudges to a distant place that normally takes a long  
 time to reach  
 One sleeps in a desolate rock station for more than a month  
 One abandons his beloved children and herd of sheep  
 One struggles to harvest frankincense on plants growing on  
 treacherous cliffs  
 If not driven by the desire to get more, no one would have  
 bothered the trouble  
 What has been produced and transported with effort is  
 finally brought down for sale in one morning  
 And you are anxiously waiting to get it in the market  
 You prey for impurities from incense spilled over the floor  
 Your rigorous control have wounded the feeling of many  
 patient men  
 We swear you in the name of Saatir (Allah) and prophetic  
 suras  
 We entrust you to reward a satisfactory crop with the prima  
 scale  
 And the second best crop with the second scale  
 Never remunerate us with the lowest third grade, it is  
 absurd.

In the opening first lines, the poet acknowledges some  
 virtues of the purchaser, his skill in the poetic craft,  
 his statesmanship and his intimate knowledge of the  
 difficult conditions in the production of frankincense.  
 Indeed Addoosh was an incense collector early in his life.

Then he goes on to feature some painful troubles that such work entails, e.g. temporary abandonment of one's guardianship responsibility to his family and herd. Finally he strikes his message in the end of the verse by depicting the disappointing purchase practice. He explains the emotional stress that results from rigorous checks subjected to one's goods brought for sale, and yet rewarded with third grade scale, a tendency described as absurd and entreated not to be subjected to collectors.

The response of Addoosh goes:

B43

You have also been prominent, Mr Siciid, in the oral craft  
 As you have said the two of us understand each other  
 There are intimate goodwill relations between us  
 I know as much as you do the plight of incense men  
 I collected many years from the frankincense field,  
 Sidib-tooxeed  
 After a long stormy maritime journey with waves splashing  
 all over  
 A pound of frankincense fetched merely one shilling in the  
 Aden emporium  
 Yet you were content with such prevailing conditions  
Prima and second scale of remuneration are for those who  
 deserve  
 It is none of your business if the feckless get rewarded  
 with third scale

The system of frankincense evaluation is largely subjective

and never precise. This allows some degree of manipulation if one wishes to do so. One hears frequent arguments made by the chairmen of the production cooperatives on behalf of the collectors to purchase experts in the organisation centring on the quality of marketed goods and the right remuneration.

Sometimes collectors accuse purchasers of favourably treating their close kinsmen more than themselves. The organisation officials especially those in the central office in Mogadishu, accuse purchase experts working in the areas of their ethnic origin of being too generous to their kin producers. Notwithstanding the fact that the system of evaluation would continue to remain loose until standardised, two reasons underlie such dissenting opinions. Because it pays an attractive price in relation to the official rate, the parallel market monopolises the superior grades of frankincense. Therefore the agency shows concern over the relatively small quantity of superior grades they get at the end of the season and the greater quantity their accounts show to have been bought with the first grade price. Presumably aware that the government is underpaying the producers, purchase experts try to reward their kin producers for the inferior grades sold to the agency.

Frankincense collection areas for the most part are geographically isolated by mountain precipices and remain the most inaccessible and underdeveloped parts of the country. Except some isolated instances where a water

point has been built by the authority in places experiencing acute shortage of water, one hardly finds useful projects implemented outside the north-eastern port towns.

Schools and health facilities are commonly unknown except in the district towns and some coastal villages. Given the difficult terrain, most of the interior frankincense producing areas are difficult to reach by motor transport. The easiest route between Alula, Bosaso and Qandala towns is via the Red Sea coast. Small and very slow private fishing launches are improvised to carry goods and people between these vital towns. The government has not contributed anything in the improvement of roads in the frankincense region. It is noteworthy to report that self-help road construction connecting Alula town with frankincense collection areas in the interior had ceased in 1985 after the government failed to assist the scheme as reported by the people.

No technical or scientific methods have been successfully introduced into the sector despite a long history of cooperativisation and the prevailing perception which views traditional methods as deficient and in some ways destructive. After more than a decade of collectivisation, local experts who acquired the knowledge early in their life by cultivating incense still conduct the sale transactions of the organisation and supervise the grading system which they introduced from Aden.

Corporate production of frankincense is traditional and precedes modern attempts to initiate cooperation. As explained in the chapter on production, the major unit of frankincense production is a work party consisting of more than one collector. It is sufficient to say that the movement has not brought about any noticeable impact upon the traditional system of production and organisation. Certainly it has not fostered any superior or more advanced and effective form of solidarity unknown to the collectors.

Cooperativisation has neither reduced nor abolished the moralistic issue concerning entrenched relations of economic exploitation between local merchants and kin client producers that often belong to the same corporate lineage. If it has effected such relations in any way it has made it more complex and subtle as will be shown in the next section.

Instead of establishing good relations with the producing cooperatives so that fundamental changes could be collectively pursued, one notices a polarisation between the agency and the objects of change. In effect, the enterprise is reduced to a mandatory buying agency which also performs the distribution of inadequate credit facilities.

The enterprise is manipulated to a considerable extent by bureaucrats as a means to advance personal ends. It is a widely reported practice that high-level officials conspire with local traders to allow them to trade in the

frankincense in contravention of the monopoly. To circumvent official regulation, the authorisation of export transactions through the formal institutions, e.g. the bank, officials in the enterprise allow incense to be exported. Export permits are given on the justification that the inferior quality which is legal to be traded locally is sold to the trader. The trader pays a hefty commission for the export of the superior incense to the officials concerned.

The commission for superior frankincense is thought to be paid in hard currency, reportedly US 2-3 dollars per kg. Because of the demand for superior frankincense which could be sold at hard currency prices abroad, it is reported that non-traders with the right connection who obtain permits sell them for profit to interested traders.

Enterprising officials are accused of stealing frankincense. They record goods bought at second grade to have been purchased at first commercial grade. The difference is pocketed.

A merchant authorised to export inferior grades is surreptitiously allowed by the officials to export valuable first grades in exchange for a commission proportionate to the amount of frankincense involved. In a different practice, a certain amount of frankincense is reported spoiled and as having had to be cleared from the store. An equivalent amount of goods in good condition is sold to a merchant, and the spoiled goods are kept in store.

The central authorities are not of course blind to this extensive graft and corruption. To try to limit the scope of public appropriation, district and regional directors of the enterprise and accountants are periodically reshuffled. Some of the notoriously corrupt officials may be either discharged or taken to courts for trial. Nevertheless, these malpractices do occur pervasively as they do in other sectors of the economy.

Working one year or more in the frankincense sector as an important official is considered a fortune, because someone could dishonestly build a home in the capital city on the proceeds.

Of more consequence for the frankincense producers is the administrative tendency to delay payment for the purchased incense, sometimes a delay of about eight months is reported. In 1986, it is reported that frankincense collectors in Erigavo region were insisting not to sell goods to the agency unless the money for the crop was made available. It is not uncommon to see in Mogadishu where the central office for the enterprise is located, district and regional cooperative chairmen waiting for money owed by the enterprise to the local collectors. It is rumoured that the annual budget for buying frankincense is illicitly invested in business for private profit, by some prominent officials. This explains partly the lengthy delay of payment.

The organisation's crucial role to provide credits for the collectors is beset by bewildering problems. First, credits are currently inadequate by all standards, despite the fact that they had considerably increased in figures. For example, the 1984 seasonal credit for Alula district has been increased to 6 million So Shs from 600 000/ the previous year. Cooperative members and district committee concurred that such a tremendous amount is yet inadequate to cover the needs of member collectors.

Second, a systematic method of distributing the available credit is lacking. Cash and occasional food items like sugar, rice, floor and cooking oil, are allocated arbitrarily between the producing districts, and further between local cooperative units engaged in production. Consequently district cooperative chairmen manipulate or rather inflate the total number in their cooperative movement in order to receive a bigger share in the seasonal credit. This causes a disparity of credit distribution among production units, no matter whether this happens by accident or manipulation of influential leaders. In 1984, Alula district in Bari region obtained 6 million So Shs, while Erigavo region which consists of three frankincense producing districts got 11 milion So Shs.

Apart from inadequate credit and inappropriate distribution, there seems to be a lack of appreciation in the enterprise, of the kind of services required by the gatherers. Apart from clothes, utensils and footwear which are needed periodically by the collecting families, basic

subsistence household goods like food and everyday items are needed by many collecting families to be obtained on credit. The period before 1981, when the enterprise was a department in the National Trading Agency which distributed essential goods is acknowledged by the people as the best time the agency has functioned as a source of credit compared to the current situation.

Organisation credits meant for distribution to the frankincense producing units are claimed to be invested in private trade for a quick profit by some cooperative leaders. In 1984 there was a former cooperative leader in Erigavo town who was paying instalments of debt to the organisation. He sold food consignments for his unit of production and then invested the proceeds on exported livestock. The animals were sold at a loss and the cooperative leader became insolvent.

Most policy documents are frequent, as are short reports prepared for important political event, e.g. ministerial on inter-ministerial meeting, or else in the form of decrees hastily formulated to deal with an urgent administrative concern. The only specific project committed to decree on 30.1.1985 recommends:

Cash incentive for cooperative units that excel in production. A sum total of So. Shs. 400 000/ which is subject to breakdown has been allocated for competition.

Cash incentive for staff and cooperative leaders, depending upon the performance of those who qualify for bonus. A sum

total of So Shs 160 000/ that is subject to breakdown has been earmarked for the purpose. Development budget: 20 000/ assistance to two truck tracks that were anticipated to be constructed on a self-help scheme by the local cooperatives in Bari and Erigavo regions.

Assistance fund for the construction of three cement lined water tanks that were planned to be implemented in the following areas:

Iskushuban	So Shs 80 000
Qandala	" 80 000
Alula	" 80 000

Road construction and water holes are genuine needs in many isolated and acutely dry interior areas of frankincense production. Nevertheless, so far as I know, after six months of project approval, there were no signs of take off, and I wonder if it will be implemented at all.

The record of the agency is not all negative, however. As a matter of fact, it has done some useful things in the course of time. In its earlier period only two purchase and processing offices, Berbera and Bosaso, operated in the frankincense territory. To date all districts own administrative and processing facilities that are easily accessible to the collectors.

Organisation vehicles though limited and totally lacking in some districts, transport goods from remote production

areas to collection villages in places where useable tracks exist. Collectors using organisation vehicles are now charged fuel cost, but many of them claim that in the past they were charged the total transport cost for a free service.

The most important achievement of the nationalisation of the frankincense sector, as mentioned in the first chapter, is the creation of processing and grading techniques introduced from Aden to Somalia.

In this section, our focus has been to investigate the consequences of collectivisation, particularly those factors that have a direct impact upon the collectors. Numerous dysfunctional factors that constrain the development of a modern and efficient enterprise were noted - deductions, delayed payment, price regulation, insufficient and inadequate distribution of credit facility, not to mention endemic corruption in the enterprise.

### The Role of Middle-men in the Cooperative Enterprise

The resilience of the private sector is a distinctive feature of the frankincense economy. This tendency has been shown in the first chapter under the marketing policies of the past governments. Instituted marketing organisations often fail to disrupt traditional relations of exploitation between local traders and client producers.

Food loans and other forms of credits have been necessary for the poor-herd collectors. The ability of the local merchants to provide such facilities compared to public organisations seems to have promoted the maintenance of the traditional unbalanced relations between local traders and kin collectors.

Generally speaking, local merchants as rural intellectuals and intermediaries between their social groups and the government, install themselves in the movement. In response to the policy of cooperativisation, each merchant mobilises his kinsmen to appoint him as their chairman.

At the time of the study, more than two thirds of the cooperative district chairmen in the two frankincense regions, Bari and Sanaag, were merchants who to a varying degree engage in import/export trade. Many of them have themselves cultivated frankincense early in their lives before they migrated to towns. Although they reside in the district towns, they maintain ties with their rural kin collecting groups.

To mention an example which shows the degree to which collectivisation has been dominated by middle-men, Hodmo cooperative branch in Erigavo district decided to change the leadership in 1984. They were disappointed with the then rich chairman who was already senile and could hardly move off his bed. In his place they appointed his son, an intellectual and a clever businessman too.

Given the failure of the enterprise to effect anticipated socio-economic changes, it has become a mandatory buying body and the source of insufficient and unreliable credit. As a source of credit and marketing organisation, it resembles traditional traders who provided credits, and to a large degree, especially in early times, exported the seasonal incense produce of their kin client producers. Present cooperative committees who are actually local traders seem to correspond to the local intermediaries mugadin between traders and producers.

The function of middle-men in establishing a link between the micro and macro level of interaction is effected in various ways. One of these is their capacity to understand, communicate and interpret government decisions to cooperativised lineage groups involved in frankincense production. The concept relating to the monopoly of information as a source of power by middle-men in the movement has been well elaborated by Gulliet (1979: 164-169) in his study on Peru.

To facilitate free access for tenant collectors, the government decreed that frankincense is a public property in the early 1970s. The decision was interpreted mostly by influential middle-men, many of them having rights over frankincense fields, as a rejection of tradition. Because of ensuing strong resistance which is said to have resulted in a total confrontation between landless and right-holding agnates, the government retreated by not forcing the

decision which subsequently degenerated to a dead log.

Middle-men escort government officials going for duty in rural areas that are inhabited by their kin groups. Cooperative chairmen who are mainly traders organise the feasts that are provided for the visiting dignitaries. It is middle-men who get the honour even if the cost is afterwards distributed among the kin groups, as is usually the case, although middle-men sometimes sponsor the feast. The merchant often acts as one of the prominent spokesmen of the community, and may elaborate some of the official views that may require further explanation.

As stated in the preceding section merchants do <sup>than</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>bring</sup> the public enterprise as a source of credit. Apart from the fact that interest on state credit is comparatively low, these facilities are often inadequate and unreliable. They may reach the recipients too late. Apparently of more importance is that it is not at all tuned to satisfy the wide-ranging needs of the collecting families.

An example obtained from the district cooperative chairman who is a merchant based in both Bosaso town and Galgala village, concerning the seasonal credit account of a particular collector in Bosaso district illustrates the point.

TABLE 10: Seasonal Credit Account of a Collector

Name of the collector: Muse Cige

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF THE CREDIT	VALUE SO SHS
7.4.80	½ quintal of rice and 1 quintal of flour	700
18.6.80	Cash obtained from Xuseen in Galgala	20
17.8.80	Debit by Faarax caddeysin	279
11.9.80	Debit by Faarax caddeysin	318
29.9.80	½ quintal of rice obtained from Faarax Cabdi	320
11.10.80	2 kg of sugar obtained from Faduma Ciise	20
4.11.80	Debit by Faarax Caddeysin	?
6.11.80	Cash obtained from Xussen	20
8.11.80	Cash obtained from ?	200
13.11.80	Cash drawn by his wife	18
19.11.80	Cash obtained from Axmed Gurxan	200
10.2.81	One quintal of poor quality rice	584
10.2.8	Seasonal frankincense field rent	120
27.3.8	Debit by Axmed Jaamac	312
Total		<hr/> 3435
Total value of frankincense sold to the enterprise		2350
Balance -ve		<hr/> 1085

It is doubtful whether a modern enterprise would be able to operate such complex and comprehensive credit service from community stores in rural areas. The actual collector, his wife or indeed any other dependent person could receive a

required item on credit, from different local traders based in different villages, all of them passing on credit to the district chairman who is the person whose influence makes such a system operate.

Credit facilities provided by the traders has another advantage. It is much more flexible than that of the enterprise. In many cases collectors fail to repay all the debt. Local merchants do not usually withdraw credits from indebted clients but mainly offer them a running credit. The indebted is pressed to work hard to be able to settle the debt. In the extreme the merchant may demand from the indebted kin to sell some of his animals to pay the debt.

Some of the important factors which give precedence to the private sector over the public enterprise are discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The implication for this is further exacerbated by the tacit manipulation of the experiment by the local traders.

Members of Hodmo cooperative branch in Erigavo district, reported that, in 1984, kin merchant leaders organised the movement by paying membership fees on behalf of their clients, without bothering to create a central fund obtained from members, as the rules require. Once they submitted the fund to the concerned authority to convince it that the recommended reorganisation of the movement has been carried out, they withdrew their deposit which they needed for private investment. The case mentioned early in the text concerning a former cooperative chairman in

Erigavo town who was allowed to pay the enterprise a mishandled state credit for the collectivised collectors is another example which shows that the experiment has been manipulated by traders acting as leaders to promote economic ends.

In Iskushaban district, a proportionately greater corruption involving embezzlement of the central fund of the cooperative has occurred. Out of the total eight year subscription fund, estimated by the new chairman at about So Shs 1 650 000/, only 3 000/ were found in the central fund by the newly appointed committee in 1984. This enormous mis-appropriation of public wealth, is believed to have continued for such a long period with the alleged connivance of the district authority.

From the above, it can be understood that the limitations of the organisation as a source of credit and as a marketing board as will be seen shortly, and the intermediary role of the local traders which has not been effectively undermined, led to the dominance of middle-men in the sector. Cooperative leaders are quick to blame the frankincense agency for all the existing problems.

Enterprise officials are claimed to be insensitive to the plight of the collectors, and they are accused of lacking proper understanding of the prevailing conditions. As chairmen of the cooperative production units and as sources of reliable credit which is made easier by the inadequate state facilities which they administer, and as will be seen

shortly as members of regional traders who engage in the parallel market, local merchants advocate that they do essential services for the collecting members of their kin groups. As the data seem to suggest, local merchants and enterprise officials tend to manipulate the movement for economic ends. Middle-men involved directly in the administration of the cooperatives as well as others, collaborate subtly with the district and regional government officials in the informal frankincense market which integrates the interests of all these particular groups.

#### Parallel Market

As with many developing countries, Somalia's informal economy is just receiving serious attention as an important economic category. Vali Jamal (1987) argued that the Somali economy could be considered as unconventional since a substantial part of the economic activities elude government control and escape the national account. Remittances from Somali workers abroad which are repatriated through informal channels are considered to represent a greater portion of the national economy; export and import trade to a considerable extent operates at free market exchange rates outside state control; similarly the bulk of the internal trade also escapes government control.

Jamal examines the implications of the pervasive parallel economy and other features of the Somali economy for

important indicators like welfare. Given the extent of the informal economy, estimates which suggest that the unofficial private trade handles about 80% of the value of the frankincense trade does not seem to appear unfounded. Private trade dominates frankincense exports, because it pays relatively better and attracts superior and most valuable chewing grades of meydi which is exported to Saudi Arabia.

The 1985 price for 1 kg of first grade meydi incense was about So Shs 330/ compared to 1000/ in the parallel market. The selling price of the organisation for the same amount in the same year was US dollars 35. The figures illustrate the big margin between the producer price and the real value of the crop.

Under the circumstances, the market strategy of the frankincense collectors is to try to sell most of the expensive superior meydi grades to the private traders for good prices, and the inferior meydi grades and cheaper beeyo frankincense to the public enterprise.

If organisation officials ask the collectors what they have done with the valuable chewing grades of meydi types of frankincense, they get a diplomatic response.

Over-exploitation of the species, inadequate rainfall and some other extraneous factors that disturbed production, are often quoted as reasons for the low proportion of superior quality in the frankincense sold to the enterprise.

Apart from its positive effect on income, the higher price of the parallel market, can be said to benefit the collectors in some other ways. Unofficial trade has instigated a beneficial competition and price war between the official enterprise and enterprising local traders. Out priced, the agency has found it necessary, several times during the course of the study, to increase the official producer price to try to get a share in the trade of superior qualities. For example, in 1985, the price of 1 kg of first grade meydi incense was increased from So Shs 60/ to 330/. The parallel market price had correspondingly increased from 220/ to 1000/.

What gives the informal frankincense trade a dynamic momentum and pervasive tendency, is its capacity to combine and integrate the interests of various groups, those of the client collectors and local kin traders or middle-men, and those of the officials of the enterprise and district and regional officials.

Ironically, the pivotal link in the operation of the informal trade is assumed by the cooperative leaders themselves. As leaders of the frankincense producers, they effect the crucial initiation link between traders and kin collectors. In their presence the transaction may be completed. The price and details of the quality and quantity of goods that could be made available by the collectors are settled.

Traders who inhabit district or regional towns may leave the production area after the transaction is concluded. The exchange of goods and money is accredited to the closest kinsman residing in the area, often a member of a 'dia-paying' group in the absence of a close relative, a brother, a cousin or uncle. Cooperative leaders obtain commission from the contact they establish between producers and traders.

There are no conspicuous bosses among the dealers who operate the informal frankincense trade. Most of them are local merchants dealing with collecting members of their lineage groups in their own territory. Some are small-scale traders aspiring to become wealthy traders. The details of the agreement varies from one area to another. In some areas a certain amount of frankincense is sold to the trader and a portion is consigned to him, so that he would bring back to the clients the value of the consigned goods in hard currency or consumer goods. It is also common to sell the goods to the trader for a good price.

In some isolated towns like Alula where traded foodstuffs are sometimes scarce, there seems to be a feeling that they must be given special treatment by the government. In the absence of such treatment, they think they had been neglected and that the people must use local resources of frankincense in a way useful to the people in the district. Such grievances are exploited by merchants who urge collectors to sell frankincense to them, so that they could

import essential goods needed by the collectors.

Agnation is used to handle illicit trade. Local traders claim that they are unfairly treated in terms of obtaining official permits for export of inferior frankincense and Commiphora gums that are freely traded. To circumvent this, they trade illicitly frankincense produced in the areas of their ethnic origin.

Outsiders participate in the frankincense trade chiefly through formal channels and do not meddle in the parallel trade for good reasons. First, they lack adequate knowledge about types and qualities and could be deceived on this ground. I heard many stories about ignorant traders who were sold inferior goods. Related to this is the fact that they are not acquainted with the collectors and therefore could not interact directly without a local intermediary. Second, they are liable to be reported to the authorities.

In general export is executed in two alternative ways. A merchant or else a representative of a syndicate with a common interest in the goods being illicitly exported, travels to the final destination abroad, Djibouti or Aden. A motor launch is hired from there. It is escorted back to one of the numerous natural harbours on the north-eastern Red Sea coast where goods are made ready for a quick haul. The merchandise is hauled aboard the vessel during the night.

This nocturnal operation is relatively cheap since it avoids the hefty commission usually paid to the government officials. However, it does pose some difficulty. Somalis are very communicative and the news about the operation soon filters out to the authority. This antagonises the district authorities and may undermine the future interest of those concerned.

This makes the second option more feasible. A merchant negotiates secretly with important officials, the commissioner, the party representatives, security and policy chiefs and others. He seeks their implicit permission for exchange of an agreed commission, depending upon the quality and quantity of frankincense.

As stated above, sometimes the legal system acts as an umbrella for the parallel trade. A merchant permitted to export low quality products is allowed to export better quality goods, or an amount exceeding the permitted quantity. This happens on the understanding of the enterprise officials and government departments responsible for export control.

The foregoing is an outline of the prevailing pattern, and must not convey the idea that all officials are corrupt or that the central authority is oblivious to the economic offences taking place. To glimpse a heavy-handed example concerning the central government's attempt to curtail such economic mismanagement, prominent district and other officials in Alula were called to report in Mogadishu in

1984. None of them returned to the district to resume his responsibility and some were demoted, as a result of large-scale frankincense trafficking in the district. As stated earlier, such occasional crack-downs on corruption are not sufficiently frequent to contain the tendency.

In addition to the common accusation relating to the tolerance by the government officials of the parallel trade, due to the commission they obtain, I have heard rumours claiming some officials participate in the informal trade in a partnership role with local traders.

Apparently there seems to be a stake for all the interest groups that participate in the subrosa parallel frankincense trade. However, bigger chunks go to the more powerful groups, the middle-men and the government officials. The actual producers derive the least benefit from it.

The relatively small benefit wrenched by collectors in the form of a good price for products sold in the parallel market, is not often realised without some negative consequences. On those occasions when the central authority urges the local government, patrols are dispatched to frankincense production areas, and intimidation and harassment are committed against some of the collectors.

In 1983, a group of about thirty frankincense collectors were reported to have started to unpack the convoy of

camels and donkeys near a collecting site not far from the main road, so that the goods would be transported from there on by the organisation vehicle to Iskushuban district town. All of a sudden an ordeal started. An approaching truck fired a hail of bullets in their direction. Except for the brave, the majority fled for their lives. They returned to the nomadic hamlets where they reported that the goods were robbed by armed dissidents. The assumed robbery by dissidents was made in association with a repulsed attack on Iskushaban town which took place shortly before the incident.

The invading truck turned out to be carrying police and militia who were misinformed about the real intention of the convoy. A local employee of the organisation reported that the convoy was destined for trafficking, according to some informants, to create trouble for some of the collectors whom he had a grudge against. Those who stayed with the goods were rounded up and taken to Iskushuban town. After rigorous interrogation no suspicious intention was found, and the goods and collectors were released.

I was told of several cases where cooperative leaders were detained by the district authority, presumably to impress a visiting high-level delegation, and freed by the delegation who understood the circumstances. Several innocent victims of perverted justice were considerably released by the party chairman of the Union of the Somali Cooperative Movement during his 1984/85 tours in the frankincense region.

There is no distinct criterion to assess what sort of goods under certain circumstances should be considered illicit in the official view of the matter. I knew many instances where frankincense consignments claimed to be destined for the organisation were caught in the middle and charged with contraband offense. Some suspicious circumstances can not be ruled out, and the usual justification by hoarders in villages, following a police search, that the recovered goods were destined for official sale are not all genuine. Nevertheless, the issue of careless arrests in grey circumstances must be a matter of crucial concern.

In their reports prepared for the central authority government officials conceal their economic interest in the illicit frankincense trade. They evoke a stereotype litany suggesting some physical and logistical obstacles that are said to impede effective control of the tendency. The proximity of the mountainous frankincense region that is difficult to penetrate and the coast which is endowed with natural harbours is often explained as one of the important factors that facilitate the trade. Limited police forces, lack of speed boats to guard the extensive coast, inadequate communication facilities, the price incentive and the entrenched relations between traders and bonded kin collectors, are some of the other factors suggested to promote the lucrative informal trade.

As a matter of fact, the above noted factors are problems that had to be reckoned with in any endeavour to curb the

practice. However, the reality is that most interest groups favour the persistence of the trade because of vested economic interests. Hence the incumbent obstacles raised by the officials as promoting factors are merely scapegoat mechanisms employed to try to cloak their collusion with middle-men and the frankincense collectors.

The collusion of the government officials in the syndicated parallel trade, could be indicated by the insignificant record relating to the number of offenders who were actually convicted of trafficking. In Alula district, in 1976, following a high level judicial inquiry, four motor boats were confiscated, fifteen offenders consisting of small-scale traders and middle-men were sentenced from 15-30 years and fined from So. Shs 20-30 000/. Despite short term detention of some suspects, no one is known to have been tried for trafficking offense in the district after that year despite the existence of the informal trade.

In the neighbouring Qandala district, I was told, 144 kg of frankincense were retrieved from a hideout in a desolate village near the Qandala town. This represents the only catch that has been classified as contraband in the records. It was accidentally found by high school leavers doing national service. In other frankincense producing districts, court cases involving large-scale trafficking are insignificant compared to the scale of the practice.

Current Transformation of Access to Frankincense: from  
Share-Cropping to Rent

We have seen in the foregoing, how the cooperative experiment fell victim to the manipulation of the powerful forces of middle-men, government and enterprise officials for economic ends. The actual frankincense collectors for their part, participate in this perverted scheme of development by selling part of their produce in the informal market which acts as an arena that combines these various economic interests. Given the absence of an effective organisation to seek some orderly and just transformation, and the need to transform some of the traditional relations with respect to access of the frankincense property, incense men manipulate relations of production at the local level.

In terms of access to the primary resource, the most important transformation is a tendency towards rental arrangement instead of the traditional share-cropping. This process appears to have progressed not by the force of statutory rules, but chiefly by the will of landless people to improve their conditions. Tenant collectors started to refuse share-cropping and the trend is now towards a tenancy system based on seasonal rent that determine access to the exploitation of jointly owned frankincense property.

This important transformation could be thought to have thoroughly succeeded across the frankincense producing districts in Bosaso region, albeit the fact that

share-cropping in a modified form still exists in some local areas. Thus the substance of the present arrangement is remarkably different from its ~~precedent~~. In Karkaar area, between Iskushuban and Qardho, the total value of the seasonal yield is divided into three parts, not unlike the traditional scheme. One portion is automatically received by the producer or producers. The remaining two sums are first deducted from the seasonal joint production investment. The balance is then equally divided between the collectors and the owners. Herein lies the improvement of the system. One share which used to be the prerogative of the right-holders in the past is now shared equally between tenant collectors and the owners.

In general, the neighbouring Erigavo incense region appears far behind in the scope of the transcendence of tenancy over share-cropping. The reasons are difficult to identify other than conjecture that collectors are less dynamic and more traditional than their counterparts in Bosaso. A similar process of share-cropping modification has taken place in areas where it still exists.

The emergent share-cropping system in Erigavo district is known as kala-badh which translates to 'two equal halves'. The total value of the seasonal output is first recouped from the production expenditure. The balance is then divided on an equal basis between the producers and the right-holders.

As explained in the preceding chapter, the right-holders

would like to maintain the status quo since it affords them one third of the value of the produce. Because it is getting difficult to maintain, they opted for a form of distribution which is less beneficial than the traditional one but more advantageous than the buoyant rental scheme.

To exemplify how the share-cropping system in its modified form benefits the owners more than the rental arrangement, let us consider an average incense field. Two frankincense collectors may produce goods valued at about So. Shs. 60 000/ in a season. Suppose the costs of production netted at about 15 000/. In terms of the two part division that is current in Erigavo district, the owners and labourers would each receive 22 500/.

If the right-holders rent such an incense field growing yagcar species that yields the expensive meydi, they may not obtain from it more than So. Shs. 5000/ in a season.

The example explains the collector's desire to enter rental arrangements with owners. Due to scarcity or unyielding demand of the right-holders of a good field, those who have no alternative other than to labour in a share-cropping scheme, resort to commonplace deceptive means aimed at reducing the amount they actually pay to the owners. They lower the seasonal output and keep the underdeclared amount which may be sold in the parallel market for their benefit.

Title-holders are cognizant about being deceived by landless collectors. As explained in the last chapter,

production capacity of frankincense fields in an average year is commonplace knowledge. In both serious rhetoric and casual discussion incensed owners often threaten to evict deceitful tenants from the property, to exploit it themselves. Such aspiration, however attractive to date due to the increased value of the crop, is not practical for most owners. They often lack a surplus labour from herding which could conveniently be deployed in the production of frankincense.

In a world of crumbling customary means of distribution, and in the absence of effective modern organisation to assume this function, owners promote their interests through the rent institution. In areas where share-cropping had virtually become obsolete, owners have tremendously increased the rent. In the previous chapter I gave an example of a field whose rent had been increased from a modest So Shs 2000/ the previous season to 8000/ for the 1984/85 season.

Incense men reasonably expect some increase of the rent because of increased international value of frankincense. But they are disturbed by exorbitant increases by some owners who seem to have an eye on the price of the crop in the parallel market. In various places across the frankincense region, cases where owners demanded the rent to be paid in kind, have been reported. The object of this disguised share-cropping is to obtain a certain amount of goods which may be sold in the parallel market to earn an income exceeding that accruing from the rent.

Current official policy aiming to abolish share-cropping and tenancy arrangements had very little impact. The tenacity of tradition and the opposition of the owners, particularly influential middle-men, many of them are right-holders, whose support is essential for the laws to have any chance, account for the failure. Enterprise and government officials lack the incentive and resources necessary for sustained effort to implement this unpopular decision in the most difficult and isolated part of the country.

Alula district shows what happens in the case of imposed administrative regulation of access to the owned frankincense property. Share-cropping is relatively unknown in this very poor and remote district. Cooperative leaders in the district started to regulate the exploitation of the property. The legal basis for the intervention is cited as a decree formulated by the then deputy chairman of the party responsible for the cooperatives on 23.5.1979. Point nine of the decree calls for prosecution of any offender who asserts rights over frankincense property or else demands a rent from it or commits any other offense that is contrary to the stability of the sector.

Themselves experts of tradition, and realising the slim chance abolishing rights stand, cooperative leaders took a middle of the road course. To strike a balance between antagonistic title-holders and tenants, they implicitly

acknowledged the rights of the holders by allowing them to obtain regulated rent without any other interference.

Apart from the disappointment which followed the regulated rent, owners strongly objected to a different injunction demanding the registration of frankincense fields against the landless exploiting collectors in lieu of the absentee holders. To control and increase production and also to limit trafficking has been explained as the underlying aim. Understandably the strategy pleased tenants and antagonised owners. The controversy instigated an intense public debate focussing on which tenure system, prescriptive rights versus free access, is suitable for the protection and exploitation of the commercial forests.

On the one hand, owners were volubly warning against the adverse consequences of communalisation of the property. They claimed that free access will prompt indiscriminate and careless exploitation which would endanger the valuable plants. On the other hand, the supporters of communalisation dismiss the argument. They state that it is not beneficial for anyone with long-term vested interest in the property to inflict damage to the property by applying damaging methods. Tenant collectors claim to know the cultivation methods better than chiefly absentee owners, some of them being townspeople who have not actually seen their inherited frankincense fields which grows in the country of their lineage groups.

To play the rules, some holders started to give serious

consideration to begin cultivating frankincense to put their names against their property. . . . Tenant collectors were making fun of villagers who had not ventured into the interior on whether they could face the hardship of collection. . . .

The protection of the frankincense groves is an important and delicate matter that has to be carefully handled. The local discord looks inflated and manipulated to suit the divergent claims of the disputing kinsmen. To give free access to landless collectors is morally attractive but falls short of an alternative effective tenure system. It raises the question of responsibility for the protection of the property.

The issue has social implications which concerns the obvious interest over land and the valuable commercial species it grows. The majority of tenant collectors in the district belong to the numerically dominant lineage group. Some of its landless collectors rent fields which belong to members of the traditionally aristocratic lineage and their minority allied or related groups. The dominant group with insufficient resources for its members and which chiefly depends upon collection, believes that, in the past, the relatively resource-rich aristocratic lineage and its affiliates dominated the district affairs prior to the present government.

The out-migrated and largely non-cultivating aristocratic

lineage and its comparatively resource-rich minority allied groups, think that the dominant group are motivated to dispossess them of their customary property by capitalising on the present socialist government's policy of equality and social justice. This is assumed to be the real purpose of the reform policy pursued by the district cooperative committee which is dominated by members from the numerically dominant group.

In most of the other districts, statutory rules had been ignored and thus tradition prevailed, we witness escalation of rent and modified share-cropping. While in Alula where an attempt to control rent has been made, we witness lower rents which have been promoting social schisms.

In the frankincense sector of Somalia, corruption and graft, inefficiency, perpetuated by middle-men consisting of government officials and elected cooperative leaders are chiefly responsible for the failure of the movement. Saul's paper in P. Worsley ed. (1971) on Tanzania's case, shows that inefficiency and corruption perpetuated by bureaucrats and elected cooperative committees led to the exploitation of the beneficiaries and failure of the cooperative movement. My account goes deeper than the wider analytical approach taken by Saul, since it gives details at the local level concerning manipulation of the movement by different interest groups, and the movement in the context of informal economy. Saul has chosen to concentrate on macro analysis and therefore his account is

not sufficient to illustrate the interaction between the beneficiaries and middle-men at the local level.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

### Property Classifications in Frankincense Production

This study has examined the production and marketing of frankincense in northern Somalia from a number of perspectives - cultural, sociological, economic and political. In this chapter, I draw together the principal findings of the thesis, under the broad synoptic headings of property, poetry and political economy.

Somalis classify wealth into two broad categories, animate and inanimate or pastoral and non-pastoral. Pastoral wealth consists of domestic species of camels, sheep and goats, horses, donkeys and mules, whose service to varying degrees are required for animal husbandry. Inanimate property is a residual category which distinguish domestic stocks from other useful properties, e.g. money, jewellery and gold, land and agricultural products, weaponry, trucks, building property, enterprise, etc. etc.

Different values are attached to the different stocks raised by Somalis. Partly because as drought animals they can be relied upon at harsh times, camels are the most cherished pastoral herds. In addition, they have social and symbolic importance which transcends those of the less sturdy stocks of sheep and goats and cattle. They are ceremoniously passed between social groups in important occasions like marriage and compensation of homicide.

Many corporate activities of the pastoral Somalis revolve around the camel. They are collectively defended, jointly watered from the deep wells by close agnates, and jointly raided, particularly in the past. To reinforce collective interest over these herds whose production and prosperity much depends upon corporate function, camels are symbolised in various ways as group property. Camel herds of individual members of the lineage usually bear a lineage brand, unlike the other stock of sheep and goats which bear the brand of the individual owner.

At birth, a father gives his son a female camel known as xuddun xidh, 'navel knot', which forms the nucleus of the future herd of the young man. Women are prevented from inheriting camels, though they may inherit cash, buildings and other urban property as well as some of the small stock. Camels are commonly passed from father to son, in effect through men of the patriline.

Because of their practical, social and symbolic values, camels are prestigious animals which Somalis cherish and avidly accumulate. Unlike the small stock, they are rarely given in assistance to kinsmen, and most herders exclude the payment of the annual Islamic taxation on property from their camels. The different values in relation to the different species is aptly expressed by the designation of the camel herds as the 'permanent pastoral wealth', and the contrasting view which signifies the small stock as 'consumer goods'. Unlike hoarded camels, small stock of

sheep and goats are frequently slaughtered for guests, are offered as gifts to kin, and are often sold for cash which is exchanged for grains and other domestic goods.

Of all the pastoral stocks, the Somali pony was traditionally the most valuable. As an instrument of warfare, its essential role in the protection of the lives and property of pastoral people in a turbulent pastoral world gave it this elevated status which it has lost in modern times.

Although pastoralists attach different values to the different herd stocks, nevertheless, the pastoral model of property classification, is not unexpectedly biased against non-pastoral property. Domestic stocks and their products are thought to be superior to agriculture and agricultural products. Pastoralists despise agriculture and consider it as a lowly occupation which is taken up by some one destitute in herds. Their view of fishing is even more degrading. They tend to describe fishing as 'maritime hunting', in an attempt to reduce it to hunting that is regarded proper for marauding beasts and not an appropriate human occupation.

Frankincense trees and agricultural crops are classified as non-pastoral wealth. Frankincense people and sedentary cultivators may aspire to own camels. However, they consider commercial forests, land and crops, as their respective share in Allah's just distribution of basic community resources between social groups. Surprisingly,

in the sector glorification rhetoric, sedentary groups draw extensive analogies between sedentary resources and cherished camels which acts as standard of value. Moreover, sedentary groups point out certain advantages their system has over the overarching pastoral way of life. It is difficult to consider this as being entirely due to an innocuous eccentric glorification of the community resources or else a defense against the domineering pastoral culture. I surmise that it is both.

Not unlike camel herds which are idealised as lineage property, sedentary resources of frankincense forests and agricultural land are also regarded as community wealth. Like camels, in order not to allow such basic properties to circulate between groups, women who pass between distant and often antagonistic lineages in marriage are not allowed to inherit them. What may be said to differentiate sedentary properties from camels is that frankincense and agricultural fields are a fixed and generally unexpanding wealth. Hence, they do not usually circulate between different lineages and within the members of a particular lineage. Camels on the other hand, though coveted and avidly accumulated, are ceremoniously passed between social units on important occasions, e.g. marriage and compensation.

The pastoral attitude towards urban properties, e.g. money and estate, is ambiguous. Such urban wealth may be coveted but generally is considered artificial, less reliable and less permanent than rural properties of

pastoral herds and land. Due to the overwhelming commitment of pastoralists to herds, and the tremendous influence of a pastoral culture pivoted on camels upon non-pastoral groups in Somalia, there seems to be a general tendency to reduce other types of properties to pastoral wealth. In both rural and urban areas, it is usually the case that blood compensation is conveniently valued in terms of camels. Since it is not practical to effect compensation in actual camels between lineages concerned, a sum calculated on contractual camel price which is much lower than the real value of the camel is paid.

#### The Poetry of Frankincense Production

Elaborate and extensive oral poetry holds a prominent position in the culture of the Somali society; and further features, to a great extent, in the more encompassing cultural elements of pastoralism and Muslim belief and practice. Accordingly, important historical, philosophical and religious issues are committed, preserved and transmitted through this medium.

Notwithstanding some structural and technical information on the Somali language in general, most studies on poetry dilate upon the political dimension of the art, quite often clan politics. This limited scholarly attention inspired me to look briefly into the subject. The wider social functions of the craft which have not been systematically explored so far, and the richness of the ethnographic

material, account for my interest in the subject and its utilisation in this study.

The skill of the composer, impressive style and high linguistic standard, are important qualities both critics and wider public audiences admire about the poetic craft. However, the essence of the medium basically lies in its 'social connotation'. Thus Somalis compose poems for all sorts of purposes: to solemnise national and local matters, and for any other legitimate personal or corporate social, political or economic function. Not surprisingly, the generally egalitarian pastoral Somali appear not to set encumbrances for the participation of this popular public discourse. Thus, revered community and national poets come from all walks of life and do not necessarily emerge from a particular social or economic stratum.

The poetry of the frankincense<sup>K</sup> production shows that antagonism between rival economic groups in northern Somalia is expressed in poetic discourse. An element of comparison and denigration of one economic group or another testifies to this tendency. Not unlike other economic groups, frankincense collectors draw images and metaphors from the superordinate pastoral culture in the glorification of their exploits. This further corroborates the pastoral outlook of the Somalis who classify wealth into pastoral and non-pastoral.

Poet spokesmen of frankincense collectors describe frankincense property to be as economically important as

herds are. Commercial resin which buys the collector essential goods is compared to camel's milk which sustains the life of the pastoralist. In the sector glorification theme advantages of the concerned sector over the rival are emphasised. Thus, the frankincense economy is represented as flawless and free from pastoral restraints. Frankincense commercial forests do not browse, nor do they depend upon drinking water, scarce resources in the country, as do pastoral herds. To distinguish the valued semi-settled pattern of the collectors from the erratic nomadic movements, frankincense property is designated as fixed. And the long-standing commercial culture of the frankincense crop is a point on which collectors claim their economy excels over recently commercialised livestock sector.

The competition for excellence between antagonistic economic groups in northern Somalia is often carried out between a particular group and the dominant pastoral system. Representing frankincense as a superior economy in relation to herding, seems to contradict a parallel representation in which other local economic groups draw metaphors and images from the superordinate pastoral culture which acts as a standard of value for Somalis regardless of economic specialisation. In one context, valuable frankincense forests are represented as more important than camel herds. In another context, through the same poetic media, camels are subordinated to frankincense.

The sector oratory not only acts as a public forum for the glorification of the group resource, the craft is also used as an expression for the constraints and endemic problems of the economy concerned. For instance, the praise verses which exalt frankincense are replaced with lament verses denouncing the occupation as daunting, less rewarding and ultimately miserable. This ambivalent attitude towards the primary resource of the community is a general tendency notable among northern Somalis. Cultivators in the north-west region both glorify and denigrate farming. The demanding task of agricultural work is justified by a local belief which reckons farming as a punishment imposed upon sedentary groups in general due to original sin.

Using herds as a standard for economic excellence, cultivators in the north-west region, like frankincense collectors, exalt crops to the rank of camels. At euphoric moments of sector glorification, venerated pastoralism get subordinated to farming which is fulsomely adulated.

Anatagonism between specialised economic groups is fundamentally based upon competition for land and water resources. Opposition between specialised groups does not entirely coincide with lineage organisation. A considerable number of cultivating families in the north-west region practise nomadism; similarly, many members of the frankincense producing lineages in the frankincense region engage in pastoralism. Presumably antagonism between economic groups is most intense when lineage ties and economic specialisation coincide.

At the highest level, the boundary of opposition could be drawn between the superordinate pastoral culture and relatively localised sedentary systems. Because of uncritical dependence upon the pervasive pastoral style of life for metaphors and images suitable for the glorification of their economies, sedentary cultivators and frankincense collectors, reduced themselves to localised economies struggling for survival and identity in the framework of an overarching pastoral culture.

The dramatisation of sex and women is said to be one of the distinctive features of the theme about the imagined prostitute women in Bosaso district. Sex and prostitution which puritanical Somalis shrink from discussing in public, are openly discussed in this style of poetry by rival poets working in an area of frankincense production. It is suggested that this acts ~~as a medium to~~ to discourage undesirable qualities of characters who appear in the verse by critically exposing bad behaviour. It may also be used as a medium to encourage positive qualities of characters who appear in the verse.

The pastoral model of property classification and the sector glorification verses indicate the tremendous influence of the pastoral culture upon non-pastoral groups in northern Somalia. To glorify their respective economies, frankincense collectors and sedentary cultivators draw images and metaphors from the superordinate pastoral tradition which acts as a standard

of value.

Sector glorification poems and the theme about the prostitute woman may also be said to signify a notion of equality. Since the overarching pastoral economy considers sedentary as lowly, and in the view of the dominant ideology, it is held that the status of rival groups is determined by economic specialisation, non-pastoral groups seem to claim to be of equal standing and better in some areas. Thus, the egalitarian model held by pastoral Somalis regardless of economic specialisation seems to be expressed by a levelling view which stresses the strength of a particular economy concerned and the denigration of the other.

Marriage patterns may explain the reason why a woman is chosen as a mobile metaphoric message-bearer between rival poets residing in neighbouring stations. In general, northern Somalis practise lineage exogamy to establish affinal links which supplement agnation that provides the basis for important corporate functions (I.M. Lewis, 1962).

The function of sector glorification poems in seeking to further equality applies here as well. The verbal discourse on the prostitute woman is taken up between structurally similar frankincense production units that are of equal socio-economic standing. In the frankincense economy, the egalitarian folk model held by northern Somalis, is only true with respect to relations obtaining between the actual collectors. The study shows relations

of economic exploitation obtaining between frankincense collectors and related middle-men.

Apparently the theme about the sexual joking of the prostitute woman enshrine an element of religion which relates to the sexual morality of the Islamic society. Prostitution and immoral sex which are proscribed are limited in rural areas of Somalia.

### The Political Economy in Frankincense Production

Since colonial times, successive governments were concerned about entrenched relations of economic exploitation obtaining between local merchants and kin collectors. Understandably this offered a moral justification for concerned governments to try to reduce exploitation, often by establishing short-lived, less exploitative marketing boards which were also thought to improve efficiency. Such strategies of the colonial and succeeding civilian government has been suggested to indicate a static model of development which resembles a pendulum oscillating between instituted marketing organisations and a resolute private sector that emerged after the failure of each initiative.

The prevailing tendency of rental and share-cropping arrangements between landless collectors and right-holders, testifies to the unbalanced distribution of the community property that happened in the nineteenth century in Bosaso region and in the beginning of the twentieth century in

neighbouring Erigavo. Lack of consensus in relation to the initial partition of the property has resulted in this pattern. On the one side were rich pastoralists who were against the partition, for fear of losing rights over pastoral resources in the frankincense growing areas; and presuming that exploitation of frankincense would prove anathema to herding. On the other side were those with less vested interest on pastoralism and hence were in favour of the intensive exploitation and partition of the resource, mostly herd-poor collecting families and some traders based in the villages. The impact of this is currently felt by the descendants of the pastoral faction who do not own sufficient stock to practise herding as their ancestors did, and are obliged to rent or enter share-cropping relations with legitimate holders who inherited rights.

In the north-west agricultural region, some members of land holding groups did not participate in the initial distribution of land, and opted to practise stock breeding. If some of those previously pastoral members aspire or are necessarily forced to cultivate, they are loaned fields, the same way families with limited herd are loaned milk camels in the pastoral economy. Although close agnates may allow a poor member of the owning families and sometimes a non-owning kinsman, to freely exploit frankincense until a member of the right-holding group require its use, landless tenants are generally not loaned the property. Quite commonly they enter rental or share-cropping relations with right-holding kinsmen.

Unbalanced economic relations between the actual collectors and other groups involved in the production of frankincense, namely the 'owners' of the commercial forests and traders, kin groups who often belong to the same corporate lineage, has been a marked feature of the sector. Prior to the 1969 revolution which introduced a sustained cooperative model of development, a traditional tri-partite system of distribution was most common. It dictated that the gross value of the seasonal produce of the joint unit of production be partitioned into three equal shares. One part was allocated to right-holders for access to the property, another went to the local traders as a compensation for the joint expenditure obtained by the work party<sup>l</sup> in the form of credit. The remaining portion was all that was left for the landless gatherers and their families. Wage labour which was sometimes paid in kind and rental arrangement also existed, as they still do at present, the former to a limited extent, as the other major forms of socio-economic exploitation.

Partly because local traders represented an economic group distinct from incense collectors in rural areas and partly because, as a source of credits, the interaction between traders and collectors was frequent and most consequential, the latter spoke of their subordinate relations with kin patrons. In one verse, religious actuaries for shop owners and other townspeople were described as an unholy alliance who exploit collectors. Merchants and intermediaries were widely accused of having devised measurement units and bush

scales to extort more unaccounted incense.

Moreover, weights were claimed to have been made heavier so that they give a false value to the advantage of traders. Collectors are said to be given on credit shoddy goods and those that remained in the store for a long time. Thus they were denied, in many cases, to get good quality goods on credit terms. Merchants who had a monopoly in marketing the produce of their kin client collectors before the latter half of the twentieth century were also accused of deceiving by declaring lower value for the consigned incense merchandise.

It is interesting to note that some of the mechanisms used by local merchants against kin producers are replicas of those Somali traders claim to have experienced in Aden before the 1970s. Merchants in Aden are said to have obliged Somali traders to buy shoddy goods, the same way Somalis required kin clients to get poor quality goods on credit. Merchants in Aden are reported to have dishonestly fiddled measurement units to their advantage, a tendency which local traders are said to have resorted to. In the light of this, it can be said that local merchants were passing onto their clients the effect of the swindling practices that were subjected to them in Aden.

In the cooperativised frankincense sector of Somalia, these traditional unbalanced relations are perpetuated by graft and corruption on the part of the elected cooperative leaders, enterprise and other government officials.

Corruption and inefficiency are thus suggested as the main factors that are responsible for the difficulty underlying the endeavour in getting cooperatives to work effectively (see John S. Saul's paper on the Tanzanian case in P. Worsley, ed., 1971).

Many reasons account for the failure of the cooperative movement in the frankincense sector of Somalia. Poet spokesmen for the collectors rightly indict various deductions of substantial magnitude, more than 17%, both in kind and cash, that are deducted from the value of the frankincense which is sold to public enterprise. Deferred payment of the purchased merchandise contributes to the disappointment of the collectors.

The Organisation's development record is dismal by all standards. Grandiose promises to bring about social services unknown in the isolated areas of the frankincense production often fail to materialise. Furthermore, to abolish relations of economic exploitation between collectors and local traders proves an elusive moralistic goal. The movement also fails to foster some form of collective organisation superseding the traditional corporate production of frankincense.

Inadequate state credit and lack of a just and effective distribution of the limited facilities further undermine the movement. These facilities are not only insufficient, they are not tuned to the real needs of the collecting families. It is not easy for a modern enterprise to supply

constantly throughout the season, credits as varied as the people's needs for basic subsistence food and daily domestic goods.

These constraining factors tend to reduce the enterprise created to modernise the traditional sector into a lethargic mandatory buying agency. Of most consequence, the enterprise gets manipulated by officials to promote economic ends. Enterprise resources allocated for development are appropriated, and high-level officials also allow merchants to trade in frankincense, in contravention of the monopoly.

At the local level, elected cooperative leaders, mostly traders, dominate the production of frankincense. As rural intellectuals they act as intermediaries between government and cooperativised kin producers. They are able to understand, interpret and communicate government decisions to collectors living in the areas of their ethnic origin (for information as a source of power in the context of cooperativisation see David Guillet, 1979: 164-169). They escort government officials going for duty in rural areas, they also act as community spokesmen by elaborating and commenting on some of the stated official views which require further elucidation or stress.

Cooperative leaders who are mainly traders extend the public enterprise as a source of credit, as noted above. They are able to provide reliable and sustained credit facilities for kin client collectors from shops in the rural villages

dominated by particular lineages. Such facilities are also congruent with the frequent and varying needs of the collectors. For example, if a kin collector gets insolvent he may be allowed to labour on a running credit.

The failure of the enterprise to attain socio-economic changes, not to mention its extortionate practices; and the domination of the cooperatives by elected middle-men, undermine the movement and reinforce traditional relations of production. As a source of credit, the enterprise corresponds to the role of the local merchants who previously provided credits. Present cooperative committees correspond to the traditional intermediaries between traders and collectors.

The control of the frankincense export crop which is hard currency generating merchandise, and the general disenchantment with the enterprise and its failure to bring about anticipated socio-economic changes, among other factors, encourage a pervasive parallel trade.

Paradoxically, cooperative leaders act as intermediaries for the informal trade by establishing a link between traders and local collectors. Economic grievances, for instance the failure of the enterprise or other state agencies to make essential goods available in some isolated areas, further acts as a vehicle that drives the informal trade. Exploiting such grievances local traders urge kin producers to sell goods to them, on the pretext that they would import the required goods.

Some traders claim that they are unfairly treated by government officials in terms of obtaining permits for the export of frankincense and other commercial gums. To circumvent this, they urge their kin collectors to sell goods to them illicitly; so that it is local people who benefit from handling frankincense and other valuable community resources.

The pervasive and dynamic role of the informal trade in frankincense is due to the fact that it integrates the interests of the various economic groups. The collectors sell superior grades of meydi incense illicitly to the private traders for higher prices. The competition between the enterprise and enterprising traders for superior frankincense has compelled the enterprise to increase producer prices, several times during the period of this study. This also meant increased income for collectors from the incense sold to the state enterprise. District and regional officials who are responsible for control of the parallel trade, turn a blind eye to it for economic ends. And for traders who are strapped for hard currency, export of frankincense earns them the means to import consumer goods which are claimed to profit them more than the exported frankincense.

Given the absence of an effective modern organisation to seek orderly and just transformation, and the present need to transform some of the customary means of distribution, right-holders and landless tenants started to manipulate

relations of production in ways that are inimical to agnatic solidarity. The most important current transformation is the tendency towards rental arrangement with respect to access to the commercial forests in lieu of the traditional share-cropping.

In those areas where share-cropping still prevails the owners seem to be forced, by opposition from tenants, to modify the terms of the distribution instead of allowing renting which is favourable for the tenants. And where seasonal rent has become the accepted norm, right-holders tend to set exorbitant rates for the exploitation of the commercial frankincense forests. To reduce the amount required to pay in terms of the existing share-cropping, some collectors, for their part, lower the actual seasonal produce and keep the undeclared amount for themselves.

In Alula district where an attempt has been made by the district cooperative leadership to regulate the soaring rent, we witness an imposed modest rate which is achieved at the cost of stirring up traditional social schisms between the major lineages living in the district. The numerically dominant group in the district dominate the management of the cooperative, but many of its landless members rent fields that belong to the traditionally aristocratic lineage and its minority allied groups. The latter groups consider rent regulation and other anticipated reform as a pretext to undermine customary rights by the dominant group, who are seen to be capitalising on the government's socialist policy of

equality and social justice. In other districts where rent control has not been enacted, we witness escalation of rent or modified form of the traditional share-cropping.

My analysis of the problems of the cooperative movement in the frankincense sector of Somalia, indicts inefficiency, corruption and graft as the major impediments in the take-off of an effective modern enterprise. This approach, which was propounded by John S. Paul for the Tanzanian case in (P. Worsley, ed., 1971: 347-370), offers a more precise explanation of the actual cause of the failure of the movement in third world countries than the 'traditionalist' views which place the facilitating or constraining factors in the social organisation of these societies (Peter Worsley, ed., 1971). Quite often the manipulation of the movement for economic ends by middle-men pre-empts the assumed function of the social organisation as a facilitating or constraining factor.

APPENDIX A  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE

TABLE A1

PRICES TO PRODUCERS FOR MEYDI AND BEEYO, 1971 AND 1986

		Meydi	Beeyo
Price per kg, 1971 (1)	So. Sh.	4.80/-	4.00/-
Price 1971, at 1986 prices (2)	So. Sh.	168.90/-	148.80/-
Price per kg, 1986	So. Sh.	600.00/-	60.00/-
Increase (decrease)	%	255%	(57%)

- (1) Source for 1971 prices: Mr. Ahmed Hasan Fiqi, frankincense expert, Bosaso.
- (2) To convert 1971 prices to 1986 prices, the former were deflated by a factor reflecting the change in the consumer price index (35.19) between 1971 and the second quarter of 1986 i.e. the last period for which the said index was available.
- (3) Source of consumer price information: IMF International Financial Statistics.

TABLE A2

## MEYDI: ANALYSIS OF PRICES and margins

1) International Price Structure

Grade	Somalia Official export price FOB	Djibouti Price delivered to warehouse	US\$ per kilo J E D D A H				
			Trade price (1)	Cleaning charge	Cost after cleaning (76% yield)	Retail Price	Combined distributor + retail margin
Mushaad	36	40	64	3.2	88.4	133	50%
Mujaarwal	30	30	43	3.2	60.8	107	86%
Fas-kabir	12	11	17	3.2	26.6	40	50%
Fas-saqir	5	4	7.5	3.2	14.1	27	92%
Shota	2.4	1.75	2.15	-	N.A.	...	N.A.
Jimanjim	2.4	1.75	2.15	-	N.A.	...	N.A.

(1) Subject to variable discounts

2) Estimation of Revenue/Kilo FOB Somalia for Unofficial Trade

Grade	Percent yield by grade	Djibouti price delivered to warehouse	Revenue per kilo of ungraded material
Mushaad	15%	\$40	\$6
Mujaarwal	27.5%	30	8.25
Fas-kabir/Fas-Saqir	35%	7.5	2.62
Shota/Jimanjim	17.5%	1.75	0.31
Waste	5%	-	-

Total Revenue \$17.18

Less expenses:

Warehouse rental/grading (14%) 2.41  
 Freight Somalia to Djibouti in Dhow 2.25

Sub total expenses 4.66

F.O.B. revenue per kilo in US\$ \$12.52

F.O.B. revenue per kilo in Somali shillings 1,878/- (150/- per US\$; unofficial rate)

C/F purchase price 900/- to 1,000/- per kilo

TABLE A3

## BEEYO: ANALYSIS OF PRICES AND MARGINS US\$ PER KILO (1)

	GRADE		
	No. 1	No. 2	Ungraded
<hr/>			
Official Somali Prices:			
Price to collector			0.50
Direct expenditure on handling, packaging and customs clearance (2)			0.10
Export tax (17% FOB Price)			0.51
<hr/>			
Sub-total			1.11
FOB export price	6.00	3.00	3.50
<hr/>			
Private Trade Quotes:			
Somali quality			
- delivered to Djibouti			1.50 - 1.70
- exported from Djibouti FOB			2.40
C & F Marseilles	6.00		
- exported from Aden	6.80		3.00
C & F Marseilles			
Ogaden quality	4.00		
Dealers price delivered to user			
(a) According to 2 sources	9.30 - 9.80	5.40	4.20
(b) According to 1 source (3)	6.02		3.20

## Notes:

- (1) Conversion rates 120/- per US\$; French Francs 6.65 per US\$.
- (2) Information provided by the Branch.
- (3) This quote may be for Ogaden quality.

TABLE A4

## SOMALIA: EXPORTS OF INCENSE, NOT PREPARED

	TONNES			
	1976	1977	1978	1979
Total	173	86	81	118
of which				
Saudi Arabia	156		11	67
France	16			
United Arab Emirates		70		22
Djibouti		16		29
China			60	
Italy			11	

Source: Official trade statistics

TABLE A5

## SOMALIA: EXPORTS OF MYRRH

	TONNES			
	1976	1977	1978	1979
Total	1,352	497	199	421
of which:				
China	1,017	361	70	248
Saudi Arabia	199	-	10	83
PDRY (South Yemen)	69	61	-	-
Djibouti	33	3	30	11
Italy	-	36	8	16
Kenya	-	7	-	26
France	-	10	79	37

Source: Official trade statistics

TABLE A6

## SOMALIA: EXPORTS OF NATURAL GUMS

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Quantity (tonnes)	608	128	211	503	568
Value (US\$'000)	9,641	1,385	...	1,168	4,450

Source: Private communication, Ministry of Commerce, Mogadishu

TABLE A7

EXPORT OF FRANKINCENSE BY FRANKINCENSE AND GUMS TRADING AGENCY/  
BRANCH 1982-1986

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986 Jan - Nov
(a) <u>Beeyo (Olibanum)</u>	53	360	159	13	-
Total of which to:					
China	-	300	100	13	-
France	16	30	50	7	-
W. Germany	20	10	4	5	-
Switzerland	17	20	5	-	-
(b) <u>Meydi</u> - virtually all to Saudi Arabia					
According to Mogadishu office	206	127	244	249	-
According to Berbera office	...	201	99	344	-

TABLE A 8

## SOMALIA: EXPORTS OF INCENSE GUM

Year	Quantity tonnes	Value US\$ 000
1972	535	267
1973	688	333
1974	259	363
1975	684	671
1976	173	297
1977	86	39
1978	81	78
1979	118	577
1980	373	809
1981	...	...
1982	602	3,673

Source: Frankincense and Gums Trading Agency

TABLE A 9

## DJIBOUTI: IMPORTS OF INCENSE AND MYRRH

	tonnes		
	1983	1984	1985
Total,	96	276	262
of which from			
Saudi Arabia	-	5	126
Singapore	20	20	47
India	64	81	39
Somalia	5	126	35

Source: Dinas - Official trade statistics, product code 130210

TABLE A10

## DJIBOUTI: EXPORTS OF INCENSE AND MYRRH

	Volume in tonnes Value in Djibouti Franks per kg. (in parentheses)	
	1983	1984
Total,	19	219
of which to		
Saudi Arabia	13 (951)	89 (1,247)
Yemen Arab Republic		94 (124)
Italy		16 (118)
France	6 (50)	6 (40)

Source: Dinas - Official trade statistics, product code 130210

TABLE A11

## ETHIOPIA: EXPORTS OF GUMS USED AS INCENSE

	tonnes			
	1980	1981	1982	1983
Total,				
of which	46	318	831	1,122
China	-	-	486	265
Federal Republic of Germany	-	138	155	568
France	-	64	147	40
Switzerland	-	-	-	72
Hong Kong	-	-	-	94
Djibouti	1	55	-	11
India	35	-	-	-
U.K.	-	1	-	25

Source: Official trade statistics, article code 292 220

TABLE A12

KENYA: EXPORTS OF GUMS, RESINS, BALSAMS AND LACS OTHER THAN GUM ARABIC

	tonnes				
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total, of which	144	172	194	58	32
PDRY (South Yemen)	102	-	159	-	-
Pakistan	14	112	-	-	11
Saudi Arabia	-	12	6	35	5
Federal Republic of Germany	15	16	-	3	-
France	-	-	28	-	-
Italy	5	6	-	2	-
USA	-	15	-	-	-
United Arab Emirates	6	2	-	-	2
Yemen Arab Republic	-	-	-	-	9

Source: Official trade statistics, product code 292 209

TABLE A13

## SUDAN: EXPORTS OF NATURAL GUMS, OTHER THAN GUM ARABIC

	tonnes				
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total	8,632	...	1,000	1,206	2,900
of which to,					
China, Peoples' Republic	364	...	500	685	1,620
China, Taiwan	-	...	-	-	213
Egypt	10	...	51	128	238
Saudi Arabia	82	...	13	215	50
Federal Republic of Germany	8,047 (1)	...	156	54	222
Italy	5	...	5	-	99
Greece	37	...	31	22	21
Other European countries	44	...	218	3	159
Kuwait	6	...	14	22	20
Syria	37	...	-	20	31
Ethiopia	-	...	-	32	123
Phillippines	-	...	-	25	20
Tunisia	-	...	-	-	77

Note: (1) Believed not to be incense gums.

Source: Sudanese Foreign Trade statistics, product code 292 2050

TABLE A14

## INDIA: EXPORTS OF OLIBANUM

	tonnes					
	1979/80	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85
Total, of which to	236	262	294	328	...	179
USA	54	45	57	86	...	19
Hong Kong	7	13	67	60	...	38
Singapore	17	9	27	31	...	13
Iraq	2	26	28	-	...	-
Oman	10	7	22	21	...	5
United Arab Emirates	-	5	5	8	...	15
Syria	5	9	12	10	...	7
Federal Republic of Germany	34	7	-	9	...	2
France	28	2	2	3	...	2
UK	11	4	5	4	...	3
Italy	14	8	4	8	...	8
Trinidad	8	7	6	14	...	8

Source: Official trade statistics, product code 292 2232

TABLE A15

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY: IMPORTS FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES OF NATURAL  
GUMS, RESINS AND BALSAMS OTHER THAN CONIFER  
RESINS AND GUM ARABIC

	tonnes					
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Sudan	329	209	223	447	275	2,829
Ethiopia	107	68	139	154	199	253
Somalia	186	214	126	109	271	196
PDRY (South Yemen)	54	86	109	111	135	84
Djibouti	-	30	-	-	-	25
<u>By country of destination</u>						
From Sudan, to:	329	209	223	447	275	2,829
UK	211	27	-	245	40	2,315(1)
Federal Repub- lic of Germany	27	57	85	66	41	61
France	84	33	31	15	120	248
Belgium-Luzem- bourg	7	12	8	38	21	149
Greece	-	80	99	-	53	54
From Ethiopia, to:	107	68	139	154	199	253
France	77	43	67	48	24	39
Federal Repub- lic of Germany	18	22	66	101	159	211
From Somalia, to:	186	214	126	109	271	196
France	111	174	120	89	193	137
Federal Repub- lic of Germany	71	32	4	18	78	59
From DDRY, to:	54	86	109	111	135	84
France	15	38	59	15	36	16
Federal Repub- lic of Germany	37	45	40	85	94	59
Italy	1	2	9	10	4	9

Note: (1) Suspected misclassification

Source: NIMEXE Statistical Office of the European Communities,  
product code 130 299

TABLE A16

PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF CHINA: IMPORTS OF OLIBANUM AND MYRRH SINCE 1982

	1982	1983	1984
Gum olibanum			
Quantity (tonnes)	1,303	1,239	1,657
Unit value (US\$/kg.)	1.95	2.08	2.04
Gum myrrh			
Quantity (tonnes)	291	962	1,374
Unit value (US\$/kg.)	2.54	2.64	3.14

Source: British Embassy, Beijing

TABLE A17

## SAUDI ARABIA: IMPORTS OF FRANKINCENSE

	tonnes				
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total, of which from	567	598	687	584	799
Singapore	305	397	432	297	253
India	65	49	26	77	121
Somalia	45	-	62	-	-
Indonesia	46	48	92	157	352
Malaysia	30	35	33	10	41
North Korea	20	10	-	-	-
Sudan	15	29	-	-	-
Taiwan	2	21	8	30	-

Source: Official trade statistics, product code 1302 0243

TABLE A18

## SAUDI ARABIA: IMPORTS OF OLIBANUM

	tonnes				
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total, of which from:	63	196	70	143	269
Sudan	24	47	-	-	50
India	22	-	-	5	19
Somalia	13	77	9	-	61
Greece	3	-	2	3	4
Djibouti	-	28	-	5	35
Singapore	-	21	11	55	33
Thailand	-	-	-	29	-
Ethiopia	-	-	-	13	-
Indonesia	-	-	-	-	55

Source: Official trade statistics, product code 1302 0242

TABLE A19

## AN OVERVIEW OF WORLD TRADE IN INCENSE GUMS

Type of gum	Main Uses	Producing Countries	Estimated World Trade (Tonnes per annum)	Major Consuming Markets	International Prices (per kilo) C & F
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Frankincense

Eritrean type olibanum	burning chewing medicinal	Ethiopia Sudan	2,000 +	N. Africa China Europe Latin America	\$1.5 - 2.1
Somali type olibanum (beeyo)	perfumery medicinal burning	Somalia Ethiopia	200 +	France China	\$2.4 - 5.8
Indian type olibanum	burning	India	200	USA Hong Kong Middle East	\$1.4
Meydi (a) chewing grades	chewing	Somalia	500	Saudia Yemen Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia	\$5 - 50
(b) burning grades	burning	Somalia	300 - 400	Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen Arab Republic	\$2

Commiphora Gums

Myrrh (+ hagar)	medicinal perfumery	Somalia Ethiopia Kenya	1,100 +	China Middle East France	\$1 - 7
Opoponax	medicinal perfumery	Somalia Ethiopia Kenya	400 +	China France	\$1 - 4

TABLE A20

## ESTIMATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL VALUE OF INCENSE EXPORTED FROM SOMALIA

US\$			
<hr/>			
1. Meydi - value delivered to Djibouti			
(a) Chewing grades			
Mushaad	20% at \$40/kg.	\$ 8.00	
Mujaarwal	30% at 30/kg	\$ 9.00	
Fas-kabir	20% at 12/kg	\$ 2.40	
Fas-saqir	30% at 5/kg	<u>\$ 1.50</u>	
	Value per kg mixed grades	\$20.90	
	x 500 tonnes		\$10,450,000
(b) Burning grades			
	300 - 400 tonnes at \$1.75/kg	\$525,000 -	<u>\$700,000</u>
Total meydi		\$10,975,000 -	\$11,150,000
		Approx.	\$11,000,000
2. Beeyo - value FOB Mogadishu, Aden and Djibouti			
		Approx.	\$15,650,000
	Ungraded 100 tonnes at \$2,400		\$240,000
	No.1 50 " at \$6,000		<u>\$300,000</u>
Total beeyo			\$540,000
3. Myrrh - mixed grades 700 tonnes at \$14,500 FOB			3,150,000
4. Opoponax - mixed grades 500 tones at \$3,000 FOB			900,000
5. Total all incense gums		\$15,565,000 -	\$15,740,000
		Approx.	\$15,650,000
<hr/>			

## APPENDIX B

SOMALI TEXT OF THE TRANSLATED POEMS  
IN THE STUDY

B1

Taariikhda boqollaal kun oo beri fogaa joogta  
 Bilaad Bunta waagaan aheyn baradii kheyraadka  
 Bogorrada fircoonkaa arliga baawar ku lahaaye  
 baalgoraydey gadan jireen meydii noo baxaye  
 Baayacmushtari kama horeyn beeyada iyo fooxa  
 Annagaa bilownaye khalquigu biica ma agoone  
 Berigaa an tilmaamey iyo waqtiga beeshayadu guurto  
 Ma bedeline dhaquankii horaan weli ku baqaaye

B2

Isku daalney oo isku dacasney  
 Marka daartii doonyaha u meer

B3

Allow carabtii cadcadeyd ee cancanjuuleyd canbar kuu saar  
 Aaney ku celcelin

B4

Dadka kale carruurtuu dhaluu cadan u dhoofshaaye  
 Ciida-gale nimaan geel laheyn waa cirka u tuure

B5

Idinbasa awrkey dhashiyo aarankey wadatey  
 Asaxaabihii horeba wey ku intifaaceene  
 Aahkiro nimaan geel laheyn lama amaaneyne  
 maxaan idinla awlaadsadaa awgayow awrba maan rarane

B6

Geel an naga gablomeyn  
 Haliba gaawa leedahey  
 An biyo loo garsaareyn  
 Gaajana looga yaabeyn  
 Yaa gubanka noogu yaal

B7

Ma gudbo oo garkaa iyo ma tago guda Nugaaleede  
 Geedaha ma daago oo biyaha waa ka garanuuge

Meeshii gasooruhu ka da'ao uma gargaadiine  
 Godka Lumanka, golihi Indhacad, gagada Hoohaale  
 Gaax lagama waayoo beryuu godolmaceeyaaye  
 Waxa la goorgooiyaa goor iyo ayaane  
 Ginigaa cas maahee ma jiro ganac la siistaaye  
 Illaahow ha iga goyn geedku waa guunyadeydiye

B8

Geelayaga ma sheegaa  
 Ma sheegaa shalalax siiyaa  
 Waa rimeyda boyga leh  
 Buuraha ku taal  
 Lambarku beerka kaga yaal

B9

Maro waa idlaataa  
 Maalkuna waa dhammaadaa  
 Marso aan gabloomeyn iyo  
 Meydi baanu leenahey

B10

Xumey beeyoy  
 Xagaagii bey  
 Xoolo tahayoo  
 Xudh la siistaa

B11

Marka xagaa bilowdaa  
 Ee gu'gu naga baqoolo  
 Ee dadka kale bakhtiyayo  
 Baa beeyadu hagaagtaa

B12

Haddey qararab leedahey  
 Haddii gubadku duulaayo  
 Geel dhaley ka xoog roon  
 Haddaad mar ila soo gaarto

B13

Ragga xabagta dhaadheer  
 Xaga iyo mushaadka leh  
 ENC kula xisaabtama  
 Iyo ninka habar xiriir la leh

Ee xoogaaga beeraha  
 Baabuur la xaw yiri  
 Xamar lacagta lala tago  
 Gabadhahey xariir u eg  
 Xaqa meydin eegtaan  
 Iyamaad xigi laheyd

B14

Wallee ama maanta deyn baxey  
 Xaadir intaan ka dowladbey  
 Dalawa geel ka iibsadey  
 Ama daalac la ii raac  
 Oo beeyaba dib uma guran

B15

Nin Salaada faqdiirtey  
 Oo fur wuxuu qabey xuurey  
 Oo fiidkii nus firfiire  
 Faruuryaha mar la gaarey  
 Ar hoy feydu ha joogtee  
 Gorgor sow na fagte

B16

Guunyadaada ha daaqsan  
 Geed fagaara ha joogsan  
 Xiji gaadihii weeye  
 allow nooga gargaar  
 Hebel gooshiga baawqey  
 Anse waan guntanaa  
 Xiji gaadihii weeye  
 Allow nooga gargaar

B17

Anigu raaxa kay quustey  
 Oo ramaad geela ma maalo  
 Raaridii Madarkii iyo  
 Adna raaxa ka quuso

B18

Sida cyemadka geela  
 Oo cidla waaya ku raagey  
 Qalimaalahey Caarow  
 Waad ceymad yareysey

B19

Mar haddey shinni gaarto  
 Shinni-gaabey ay gaarto  
 Shansha-dheere gammaan iyo  
 Gabar shaaximan mooyee  
 Shan halaad kuma siisto

B20

Kuwa Qaaliga jooga  
 Ee Qadow geela ku maala  
 Wey no quudhsanayaane  
 Wey na quudidoonaan

B21

Kolkey dhawaaqdo  
 Duunyo caana yareyso  
 Alla kaniyow ina aabe  
 Dadka noo wada keen  
 Hoo Hoo Hoo

B22

Nageeyow nin ku waayey  
 Anba weysa xaraash  
 Anba wiilka ka roor  
 Hoo Hoo Hoo

B23

Alla ninkaad u samaatooy  
 Badda nageeye  
 Siduu doonaba yeel  
 Hoo Hoo Hoo

B24

Waan ku dhawrilahaayoo  
 Sidaa kuuma dhibeene  
 Dhallaan baa was is sii lahoo  
 Dhulkaan dhuuni ka dooni

B25

Qooryarey gabar mayhid  
 Oo guur lagaa sugi maayo  
 Qaalintii Dhafan mayhid  
 Oo dheys lagaa sugimaayo  
 Ee dhulkey xoolo galeenoo an ka xoogsaneynaa

B26

Shuluqshuluqle shaaruba raglow sharaf haweenadle  
 Mar hadduu shareeraha galo oo shey walba ogaado  
 Wuxu sheelada u lulayaa god u shaleeyaa

B27

Weyseyso goortaan isiri bey war igu taabteene  
 Wardigiyo salaadaan ku jirey wahan i dhaafsiye  
 Faataxada goortaan wadwadey waafi ma aheyne  
 Halkaan tobanka weela u toley ee wiilasha u qeybshey  
 Waaxya alla gooyow shaley iga walwaaleene  
 Waxeygii haddaan hoo la odhan waalid baan ahaye  
 Waxan idhi wax badan baa u go'ay waayadii hore e  
 Iminkana wakiilkaan lahaa waan u wacayaaye  
 Go'yaashii wanaagii lahaa idinku waandaabshey  
 Wasiir iyo wasiir iyo wasiir wey ka bixiwaaya  
 Xiniinyuhu wadaan idin noqde waaya manidiina  
 Wareegtadiina nimankii lahaa wey ka bixiwaaye  
 Hogta kuugu qodey hogor yar iyo haam an soo jaraye  
 Hangool jabey intaan murmurey kuugu hawlgaleye  
 Hayaay iyo hayaay qeyladii la is hindiidsiye  
 Abkiin intaad nooshihiin cadho la weeraada

B28

Xijigaan xagaagii dhaweyd xuurto igu gaartey  
 Xijigaan ninkii igu xaqliyo xaaska ku ilaabey  
 Ilaahow ninkii iga xadow adan xalaal oodan

B29

Waagoo bilaabmey oo aan shaqada wada bilaabeyno  
 Boodaan aadney iyo dhulkii beeyada lahaaye  
 Bartankeeda goortaan tagney baan aragney beyluule  
 Geedaa u baxey oo wuxu ku yiri war igu so boobe  
 Waxey tiri barwaaqaan qabnaa bala la'aaneede  
 Kuwaa isoo baxshey oo waxey dhaheen buurta kor u fuule  
 Beegsey dhaheen waxad ka heli wiilal baashi ahe  
 Haseyeeshee baahaan gabaa waanan ba'ayaaye  
 Dab buu balbaliyoo wuxu ku shubey baasta kiila ahe  
 Beyl buu u saarey oo qaxwaha lagula soo boodye  
 Goortey barwaaqowdey oo uurku balaxoobey  
 Beeyaad gurtaan oo idinku shagaad bilowdeene  
 Xaggee buurta kaga yaal galihii waan u baxayaaye  
 Waxan idhi warka an kuu bandhigo bilan walaaleeye  
 Haddaan boqol ido ah leeyahey oo buurta ku ilasho  
 Haddaan gidirka beyga leh dhaqdoo baladka joogaayo  
 Haddaan baare geel leeyahey oo bidix ku haaneedo  
 Berri Carab haddii an tago oo dibedda boodboodo

Baabuur sabaax ah iyo haddii an B.M. wadanaayo  
 Bankiyada adduunyada haddii ay lacagi ii buuxdo  
 Beeyada haddii an gurto oo Booj u hoyanaayo  
 Been lama hadlee bilan walaan kuuba bixiyeene  
 Ardey baab riqiisaan ahey oo heysan boqolaale  
 Haddii boqorku noo saamaxo oo an balo na sii qaadin  
 Bishatan haddey le'ato waan wada baxeynaaye  
 Boosaasaanu qaban iyo walaal barashadeydiye  
 Baladada an kuu kala tirshee hore u sii baaci  
 Gosha moxorka badan bey wadadu kaala sii bixiye  
 Dhaaraca bannaan buu qalbigu kuugu bogayaaye  
 Bookhaad u dhici iyo walaal bohololoodkiye  
 Babacaa qarkaa kaa ah baa lagaga boodaaye  
 Bannaan baad u bixi iyo bankii damalka weynaaye  
 Sheekh baashi ah baa jiifa oo aan cidina baaseyne  
 Ducada ugu boob sheekha waa looga badiyaaye  
 Jidka bidixda raac dawgu waa kal baxaayaaye  
 Balad kaa horeeyaa gira oo ay timiri buuxdaaye  
 Bilcishaa markaad gaarto bey wada bildhaantaaye  
 Horena ugu bood waxad ku dhici ila barwaaqahe  
 Caagaaga buuxso adoo socodka biisaaya  
 Dhicirtaa bannaan bey wadadu kaala sii bixiye  
 Ha u beydhin gaaladu khamrey kula baryaayaane  
 Oogada u bood adigoo socodka boobaaya  
 Biyahaaga fuud xiiqda waa lagu bukoodaaye  
 Galihii banide saaka bey kala boqooleene  
 Qafil buuran baa lagu dhiftey oo meel bannaan ma lehe  
 Sahal iyo Salaad Baashe baa lagu yar beydhaaye  
 Hablahana middii an bileyn waa ay bireeyaane  
 Baaley ku moodaan haddii adan bildhaameyne  
 Midna waa baryaa Sahalna waa kugula boodaaye  
 Isbukhuuri cadarkaaga waa la isku buufshaaaye  
 Booj baa u hoyo oo hadhow bey u baxayaane  
 Daba bigley socodka waa la iska baaraaye  
 Bootaan Cabdaa kuugu filan buuri iyo shaahe  
 Cismaan baari weeyoo hurdadaad ugu bogeysaaye  
 Saliimna waa wadaad beydad ah oo inan u baahnaaye  
 Badaha uma dhaco ee oogaduu biis ku leeyahaye  
 Mataan balaqabeenaa jira aan kaaba baxaheyne  
 Sahalna waa burcade yuu habeen biixi kaa jabine  
 Baro iyo Bannaan laguma oga booska Booj yahaye  
 Barwaaqada adduun baa ku dhane balada ha u yeeran

B30

Baalahakan Booj bey habluhu badi u joogaane  
 Been lama hadlee weyakaa wada barseynaaya  
 Dhallintuna burdaha waa naqdaa Bara iyo Yaasiine  
 Dhallinyarada biidka ahi nooma oo bixine  
 Bashaar gobaadley haddaad boogashada keentey  
 Bootaan Cabdaa kugu bireyn Booj haddaad timiye

Marka waad boqoolin ee dhabada beeg iskugu taag  
 Ma Billa oo Siciid waa buktaan ee haba u soo beyrin  
 Ceel-dibir biyuu leeyahey ee ba'e ku sii meyro  
 Ragguna waa benderi badow haddaad mooday  
 Baarafuunka iyo bootarka aad iskugu baahi  
 Jaamac baa bustaha qaada oo meel bannaan dhiga e  
 Cabdillaahi baa kugu buteyn bahalka uu heysto  
 Baalina ha noqon naag xun baa laga bareystaaye

B31

Gabaryahey garkaa iyo ka timi guda Nugaaleedka  
 Gabangoobi lama rooro iyo meel an gacal joogin  
 Gebi oodan baad soo gashey iyo gawlalo iyo ciine  
 Gadoobada ma joogaan raggii gaaxsanaan jiraye  
 Garre iyo haddaad Meyrgale gaban i weydiisey  
 Googarradda sii dhigo wax baad galabsaneysaaye  
 Iyagaa garneyl weyn haya iyo geed an go'aheyne  
 Iyagaa gasiin kaaga dhigi kimis an gaafneyne  
 Garka gudubsan weyakaa ku jira gole habaas weyne  
 Naa geesna ha u kicin intaa gu'gu ka hooraayo

B32

Mahyuubow macnaha gabey haddaad mid iga weydiisey  
 Anigaa miftaaxa u haya oo mawlaca u sida  
 Waxan adiga kuu muuqan baa .....?  
 War ma maarantaa yaan qunbulad kugu madoobeyne

B33

Cabdiqow micnaha gabey haddaad mid iga weydiisey  
 Anigaa miftaaxa u haya oo mawlaca u sida  
 Minshaar xadiid ah iyo afkaan muus ku leeyahey  
 Shisheeyuhu hadduu muukhdo baan mahadho reebaaye  
 War ma maarantaa yaan qunbulad kugu madoobeyne

B34

Haddii ad garaad leedahey oo ay garasho kuu raacdo  
 Madaxaaga goobaha leh baad wax u gleysaaye  
 Haddii kale gashaantaad tahey iyo reera gabadhooe  
 Guudkaa lagu dabi intaad helin gayaankaaye  
 Geedkaaga anigaa leh oo geela kaa bixine

B35

Afarta irgimood ninkii oodey baan ahaye  
 Afareyda gabeyga ah ninkii aakidaan ahaye

Afar kii yaqaan iyo afmaal waa iga oo'osadaye  
 Adigana aflowow haddaad ibila maashaaye  
 Waa kuu afxumo ugaas in aderey tiraahdaaye

B36

Dhammow saalaxow xaajadaan kuu dhibrinayaaye  
 Dhallinyaro ka weynaadey iyo dhaacdankii hore  
 Dhaantada intaan tumi lahaa facu i dhaafsiiye  
 Garku nimu dhammeeyaan ahey oo aan dherer u laabneyne  
 Ma anaa gabdhaha ila dhashey iyo Dhuda-yar ceebeysta  
 Wax intaan u dhimo ma anigaa dhereran foolkooda  
 Abaarahakan dhacey aadamuhu wada dhurwaayowye  
 Meeshii dheecaan lehba naftaa loola dhacayaaye  
 Dhir la fuulo dhidid howleh iyo dhib iyo tiiraanyo  
 Beeyada timaha kage dhagta ee aan la iska dhowreynin  
 Waa dhaafi doonaan haddey dhererg helaaniine  
 Illaahow arsaag dhaanta sii kama dhawaadeene

B37

Qarkaan meerey qomorkaan galey qaarad waxan gaarey  
 Habeen qaarkii qoloflaha harruur qararableyntiisa  
 Qartartaa wixii aan ku jiro oo ruuxa qariyaaba  
 Goortaan u soo qarax tiro ayey qol ku gurtaaniine  
 Kii qaadey kii qeybiyey iyo qaarka mid u jooga  
 Qaayimaddii dhuubneyd haddii qalinka loo geeyey  
 Qaariga waddaad ahi hadduu qararabta u dhiibey  
 Waxan qaadey sagaal qoorqab bey qeyb u noqotaaye  
 Dhagax qoofil ah kalax qoob ah iyo qorigu noo dheere  
 Kana qadhuuni qaadaali iyo quluble reeroode  
 Ninba qeybtii waa kaa haya quruxda xoolaha  
 Illaahow ma qabad baan nahey qolona aan sheegan  
 Illaahow waxad noo qortey iyo qeybtayadii meedey  
 Allahayow qasmiga waad taqaan qeybahaan rabo  
 qadarkii illaah ila damcey iyo qeyb ma diidani

B38

Cirka da'ay daruuraha onkodey cood ma daaqsado  
 daalaca ma saaro oo harruur iima soo dego  
 Seedow dukaan iima yaal dunida suudaan  
 Deyn kaama qabo la isku diro col iyo duulaan  
 Wheelkeyga ii daa adduun dalab rid weyaane

B39

Wiilyohow magaalada fadhiyey ha i masqaradeyn  
 Kimis moofu laga soo baxshey oo maxawaj loo yeeley  
 Adba maanguuraad cuntaa maalin oo idile

Waxa feeraheygii makiney mira fi fiiraaye  
 Madxin nimaan laheyn geedku waa u mira cawaageede  
 Waqan maanta dabadeed la arag meel u joogaba e

B40

Laga reysey doonyaha ku rida oo oo ha raacina  
 Laga reysey rubi kuuma sido reerkuna xumaa  
 Laga reysey raajicaddii iyo reydalkii cadmeed  
 Mid Illaahay soo ridey oo reer wadaa yimide  
 Waa key miskiinkiyo rabeen reer bustaaliguye  
 Ku reyreya waa hortii wada rareydeene

B41

Xiji daanad weeyee habxumadaan iskaga daayey  
 Tobanka daalin oo nalagu darey baan iskaga daayey  
 Anigoo dakaan iyo harraad labadaba u diiqsan  
 Wiil baa waxaagii duwadey baan iskaga daayey  
 Dakad iyo dillaal buu go'ay baan iskaga daayey  
 Inta kaleba duulaan sidiisaad u dirirtaane  
 Teersada dugowdiyo Addoosh baan iskaga daayey

B42

Addooshow sifnaha gabey nin loo saafo maadihide  
 Saaxiib baan kula ahaa sano iyo dheeraade  
 Nin Soomaaliyaa ila tahey oo suuban oo wacane  
 Ragga saraca waad ila ogtahay suunta uu qabo e  
 Meel laba subuuc loo maruu uga socdaalaaye  
 Cidluu seexanaayaa bil iyo laba sagaalaade  
 Soofkiisa iyo waa huraa siidalkuu dhalaye  
 Geed sidib ku yaal iyo bob buu sado ka raadshaaye  
 Wax siyaadso buu leeyahee sidan ma yeeleene  
 Seedaha wax lagu soo gurey baa subax la keenaaye  
 Adigana nin sugayaad tahey oo suuqa loo dhigaye  
 Markii sibidhka lagu daadiyo baad suruq ka eegtaaye  
 Sonbobadooda rag ad faaqidey oo saabiraa jira e  
 Saatirkaanu kugu dhaariney iyo suuradaha nebiye  
 Birimada wax suurta gal ah yaan sii ku leenahay e  
 Sukundaduna waa sicir dhexe iyo meydii suu yahey e  
 Teersada ha nagu soo saladin waa siko iyo yaabe

B43

Siciidow sifnaha gabey adaa saagac ku ahaaye  
 Sida u sheegtey labadeenatani waa isla soconaaye  
 Saaxiibnimaa inoo dhexa iyo sama iyo dheeraade  
 Ragga saraca waan kula aqaan suunta uu qabo

Aniguba siniin baan ka gurey sidibta tooxoode  
Safar dheer socdaal iyo wixii mawjad nagu seyrmeey  
Shilin baaba laga siin jirey suuqa Cadan weyne  
Isagoo sidaa lagu qabaan saabir ku aheyne  
Sukunto iyo Birimo ninkii saahibaa hela  
Maxaa kaaga saawa ah haddii teerso laga siisto

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