

‘THE DEFEAT OF THE INFIDELS’:  
A POEM BY SAYYID MUḤAMMAD °ABD ALLĀH  
ḤASAN OF SOMALIA

MURSAL FARAH AFDUB AND LIDWIEN KAPTEIJNS

Sayyid Muḥammad °Abd Allāh Ḥasan (1856-1920) was a Somali religious leader who, for twenty-one years waged a holy war against the European and Ethiopian colonizers of Somalia. The Sayyid joined the Ṣālihiyya brotherhood in Mecca, and returned to Somalia to organize his own group of ‘dervishes’ to fight against the non-Muslim colonizers. He weathered four British expeditions (1901-1904), the civil war which followed British withdrawal to the northern Somali coast (1909-10), and the denouncement of his leadership by the founder of the Ṣālihiyya (1909). It was not until 1920 that British air power destroyed the Dervish movement. The Sayyid died the same year, probably of influenza. Somalis remember the Sayyid as the instigator of bloody internal warfare, a brilliant but at times obscene and divisive poet and orator, the defender of their cultural and religious authenticity, and the visionary leader of their anti-colonial struggle for a Somali Islamic state. It is clear from his prose writings and poetry that he was all of the above.

The following poems are *gabays*, the classical men’s genre of Somali oral literature, whose formal structure has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Somali poetry follows strict rules of alliteration and in the *gabay*, as in other genres, each line

1 See for example, John W. Johnson, ‘The Somali prosodic system’, *Horn of Africa*, ii, 3, 1979, 46-54, and Martin Orwin, ‘Language and poetry: An inextricable link’, *Halabuur: Journal of Somali Literature and Culture* (London), i, 1, Summer 1993, 24-7.

must contain two alliterating words, that is to say, either two words that begin with the same consonant, or two words that begin with a vowel (any vowel).

In 1904, after negotiations with the Italians and the British, Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ḥasan was given his own city-state and sea-port in Ayl, situated on the Indian Ocean coast between the two sultanates of Boqor ʿUthmān Maḥmūd and Sultan Yūsuf ʿAlī Keenadiid, in what the Italians claimed as their territory. However, as Ayl and environs were too poor in resources and too limited for the ambitions of the Dervish movement, the Dervish leaders gradually came to the decision to take up the armed struggle once again. It was at this point that the Sayyid composed the following poem, known to the Dervishes as *Gaala-legged* (literally, ‘Knocking the Unbelievers to the Floor’, or ‘Defeating the Infidels’), while other Somalis knew it as *Gudban* (literally indicating ‘movement across’)—in this context better translated as ‘General Political Assessment’, referring to the way in which the Sayyid took stock of his movement and surveyed the *status quo*.<sup>2</sup>

*Gaala-legged* is considered one of the most memorable poems of the Sayyid.<sup>3</sup> Said Samatar, an accomplished and sensitive interpreter and translator of the Sayyid’s poetry, assigned it to a special category of verse, namely one ‘which served as policy declarations or proclamations of edicts, a kind of state-of-the-union address’.<sup>4</sup>

The poem consists of different parts. In the first (lines 1-

- 2 Jaamac Cumar Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii Sayid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan*, Mogadishu: Wasaaradda Hiddaha iyo Tacliinta Sare 1974, 223, and Yaasin Cismaan Keenadiid, *Ina Cabdille Xasan e sua attivita letteraria*, Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale 1984, 153.
- 3 Abdi Sheik-Abdi, *Divine Madness: Mohammed Abdulle Hassan (1856-1920)*, London: ZED Press 1994, 76.
- 4 Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The case of Sayyid Mahammad ‘Abdille Hasan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982, 159.

6), the Sayyid explains why he has turned to poetry once again and addresses his council of advisers. He then explains (7-33) what has forced him to compose these verses by expressing his rage against specific leaders of the neighbouring sultanates who had, in his eyes, betrayed him. In lines 34-45 the Sayyid eloquently describes the power and clarity of his verses: ‘they roar like cannons and rattle like gunfire’. This section indeed exemplifies the Sayyid’s poetic talent and innovation. Each triplet paints a picture familiar to any Somali and compares the Sayyid’s verses to it: the pelting of heavy rain, the rumble of thunder, the flash of lighting; the orderliness of elders taking up their places in the circular assembly, and so forth.

Next (46-75) the Sayyid gives a dynamic picture of his state of mind and the rationale for taking up arms again. At first he was exhausted, he explains, then anguished, then angry; anger then forced him to jump into action, to take up arms, to bring out the favourite horse he had been grooming for war, to go on the attack, and to start punishing his enemies. In lines 76-96 he outlines who will be attacked, mentioning by name clan groups and sub-groups of the north, northeast and west. His polemical and at times vulgar language is also a trade-mark of his verse.

In the following section (97-110), the Sayyid brags about how he will make a show of both his generosity and poetic talent. In the last section, finally, he addresses God. First (111-41) he laments how his enemies have oppressed him unjustly and without provocation. He lists the names of famous Dervish leaders who were killed or lost their sons in battle and mentions groups of supporters who were reduced to beggary. Second he details his complaints, denouncing his Somali enemies for making common cause with the colonizers, and begs God to give him victory.

That the Sayyid addresses fellow Somalis who already know what is at stake in the Dervish struggle is obvious from both form (the simple fact that the poem is in Somali) and content. This poem is not a calm analytical summary of

grievances, but a passionate effort to influence people's minds, by reminding them, through vignettes of great specificity and powerful imagery, of Dervish agony and defeat as well as their rage and power to punish and attack. It paints the Sayyid both as a victim of godless oppression and the fire-spewing scourge of his opponents. There is therefore no doubt that the title of the poem, 'The Defeat of the Unbelievers', targets the Sayyid's Somali enemies.

The Sayyid based his claim to truth primarily in religion. Thus he ends this poem with a plea to God: 'Oh God, since I am on Your side, do not deny me victory'. However, the Sayyid's explicit emphasis on the qualities and power of his verse also suggest a strong link between eloquence and claims to truth in Somali oral culture.

Two transliterations of the oral text of *Gaala-legged* have been published: one by Jaamac Cumar Ciise;<sup>5</sup> the other by Yaasiin Cismaan Keenadiid,<sup>6</sup> who also gives an Italian translation. An English translation of six lines (112-17) can be found in Said S. Samatar.<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, this edition follows Jaamac Cumar Ciise (but without the comma separating the two parts of each line, and with the exception of obvious typographical errors)

The poetry of Sayyid Muḥammad is a challenge for all Somali and non-Somali audiences, due both to his verse being abstract and highly metaphorical and to his coining many neologisms.<sup>8</sup>

5 Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii*, 223-30.

6 Keenadiid, *Ina Cabdille Xasan*, 153-65.

7 *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism*, 192.

8 The translation is as can be seen from the notes still a work in progress with a number of conjectural readings. Suggestions for changes and improvements are welcome and can be addressed to <lkapteijns@wellesley.com>.

*Gaala-Laged: Somali Text*

- [1] Awel maanso<sup>9</sup> waataan gudboo<sup>10</sup> guriyey waayaaye  
 [2] Waataan galbeedkaas u diray guga hortiisiye  
 [3] Aan gaasheeyo tii xalay hurdada gama’a ii diidday
- [4] Galladaha Ilaahay ka badan geedahaas baxaye  
 [5] Guushuu inoo yeelay baan idin garwaaqsiine  
 [6] Guddiyey I maqal waxaa tihii galaladaydiye
- [7] Najiska gurta xumaa hadduu shalayto geeryooday  
 [8] Godka lagu cadaabkii haddaan gowrac ugu jiiday  
 [9] Uu guduri cunay waa waxay galabsanaayeene
- [10] Dhurwaagii ka giigaan u diri gacan salaameede  
 [11] Isagay gargaaroo dugaag iiga gooniyah<sup>11</sup>  
 [12] Haddaan garan gunaan siin lahaa gooriyo ayaane
- [13] Gandaldheere waataan wax badan guuyaduu maraye  
 [14] Gef hadduu ku sii daray wixii lagu gufeynaayey  
 [15] Anigu wow garaad qabay inuu gigi waraabuuye
- [16] Giriirixis aan jrin waa wixii gaabshay oo rogaye  
 [17] Gaalleefta<sup>12</sup> waataan la dhacay gucurradoodiye  
 [18] Haddeeyaan abaal gadin sidaa uma gadoodneene
- [19] Godolkiyo kasnaantaan u qabay kama galgaaleene  
 [20] Kamana gaagexeen abid hadday nabad u<sup>13</sup> goohaane  
 [21] Waxse mowd ku gaardiyay markay ganafka taageene

9 Reading *maanso* for *maano*.

10 Reading *gudboo* for *gudbo*.

11 Reading *gooniyah* for *goonihaye*.

12 Following Keenadiid’s reading *gaalleefta* instead of *gaaleyska*.

13 Reading *u* for *ku*.

[22] Gabooygii<sup>14</sup> Shuxle ahaa haddaan gowsihii jebiyey  
 [23] Gegida Yuusuf jiifaa tukuu gabas-dhebaayaaye  
 [24] Geesaaska dumarkaa sidii galow la moodaaye

[25] Geed-joogahoodii haddaan gudurigii siiyey  
 [26] Guska Taajir<sup>15</sup> baa ii hadhaan ugu gamuumaaye  
 [27] Cismaan iyo waxaan gaadayaa gabannadiisiye

[28] Majeerteenka kale inaan ku gudo wayga garanuuge  
 [29] Garacyada Bahdira haatanaa guuto loo wiciye  
 [30] Waa lagu gadaal<sup>16</sup> xoorayaa gurigi reer Nuure

[31] Gabagaba-rogaalkaa warmaha lagu ganaayaaye  
 [32] Goobay ku wada le'an sidii goosan weer helaye  
 [33] Gafuurraxun sidee Eebahay guuldarro u raacshay

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[34] Afartaa geddiid aan bartiyo gololo'daydii dheh  
 [35] Gerbidaan ka soo hoorin jiray godol naqaygii dheh  
 [36] Madfac gow yidhaahdiyo rasaas gininigtoodii dheh

[37] Guulaamo roob da' ahayiyo gababaxdiisii dheh  
 [38] Onkod guguguclayn iyo hillaac galalacdoodii dheh  
 [39] Gufaaciyo gudgude soo curtiyo garamahoodii dheh

[40] Guluuliciyo mayay laysku daray galangalkoodii dheh  
 [41] Gal xareeda daad soo gabraday gal iyo duufaan dheh  
 [42] Bad gariirtay mowjada gurxamay gacammadii Ayl  
 dheh

[43] Shir la gooday waayeel gab yiri garagangartiisii dheh  
 [44] Xariir lagu gimaamadahayiyo gola firaasheed dheh

14 Following Keenadiid's reading *gabooygii* instead of *gobeygii*.

15 Keenadiid's reads *Gus-ka-taajir*, an insult, meaning 'he who makes money with his penis'.

16 Reading *gadaal* for *galaal*.

- [45] Xaajada ninkii garanayiyo gig iyo sheeggeed dheh
- [46] Gobo’ kalana waa aniga iyo ged iska sheeggayga  
 [47] Galiilyoodayeey caro miyey gubatay laabtaydu  
 [48] Gogoshii la ii dhigay miyaan geydh la qaban waayay
- [49] Gabbal dhiciyo waaberi miyaan socod ku gaarraaday  
 [50] Giddi<sup>17</sup> maalin oo idil miyaan gaafka sare meeray  
 [51] Sidii awr gabraareed miyaan gululubluu rooray
- [52] Ma gudoodigiyo suudigaa gubadka ii yeelay  
 [53] Ma geddaabadhabadkaa sidii geri i boodheeyay  
 [54] Gooxii aan yuururay miyaan gibil madoobaadey
- [55] Raggii igu gadaanna miyaa aakhira u guuray  
 [56] Goortaan gaqwaaqsaday miyaan gocoshadii eeday  
 [57] Gamiinkaana xanuunsaday miyaan gorodda  
 laadlaadshay
- [58] Hadba gees miyaan deyay intaan gownaxyada  
 buuray<sup>18</sup>
- [59] Gelin haddii aan foororay miyaan giirka kor u qaaday  
 [60] Guhaad iyo calool xumo miyaan geyrtayoo diriray
- [61] Guntigaan maroorsaday miyaan labada low geeyay  
 [62] Gaashaanka iyo tiirigiyo gamas miyaan qaatay  
 [63] Ma genbaan u taagnahay intay gaadho noloshaydu
- [64] War ma Dhooddi baa gaamuuroo garabku weynaaday  
 [65] Ma galaasya miidaan<sup>19</sup> ku shubay gamashigii Dayrta  
 [66] Gorgor kacay la moodyow durduro ma igu gooraamay

17 Reading *giddi* instead of *gadiid*.

18 Following Keenadiid, we take this line as the 58th rather than the 60th line.

19 Reading *miidaan* instead of *midaan*.

- [67] Godobtaydu waa wada jirtaa goonyohoo idile  
 [68] Gashi niman ku leeyahayba waa dabagelaayaaye  
 [69] Waxaan goosan karo anigu waa gurubsanaayaaye
- [70] Gardarradiyo maaggii i helay waan ka geyllamiye  
 [71] Gartay weeye dunidaba inaan galalafeeyaaye  
 [72] Giyigaba waxaan doonayaa inaan gumeeyaaye
- [73] Nin ganaananayaan ahaan gabarna dhaafayne  
 [74] Waxaan geysto oo idili way gun iyo rayrayne  
 [75] Wixii guul darraystaba naflaha wow gaggabayaaye
- [76] Anigaba geddey igu faleen waa gaggaab culusee  
 [77] Gallad nimaan ka qabo laguma oga gebiga Daarroode  
 [78] Giddigoodba waatay girliga nagu garaaceene
- [79] Anaa gaafahaaygii hadhaye geyste nabarkiiye  
 [80] Anna waxaan rasaasta u gingimay gini colaadeede  
 [81] Gabagabaha Bari waxaa ku xigi go'aha Iidoore
- [82] Guban iyo Burciyo Looyo waa gaalib weerara e  
 [83] Gooddiga Arooraa fardaa lagu garmaamayne  
 [84] Gaaroodi iyo waa la tegi buurihii Golise
- [85] Galaayuubta Hagar-Aadan baan gaaddadow marine  
 [86] Gembi wowgu ridi fulayadii ganafka dheeraaye  
 [87] Geeltoosiyaha waa la siin gucurradoodiye
- [88] Sidiid garow hadhuudh baan kurtiis guran Ogaadeene  
 [89] Galaamaha haddii aanan ka deyn goor walbaba jooga  
 [90] Inshaa Ilaahu waa gurahayaan sida gal miireede
- [91] Gurraasiyo Iljeex waa la qaban gooshka haatana e  
 [92] Malahayga waa lagu galgalan gaanka reer Dalale  
 [93] Gaas baa ku caran reer-Subeyr goborra weyntiye

- [94] Kolaan Goora-cobolley ka dayo amase Geel-loo-kor  
 [95] Huwan waa ka gabangaabsan jirey gelin ma waayaaye  
 [96] Haaruun xagee baa la geyn<sup>20</sup> Goha miyuu dhaafi?

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- [97] Afartaa gudbaye balaan mid kale soo gadaal celiye  
 [98] Sidii goray garraar sare ka baxay garabka maan taago  
 [99] Waxa guudka iga fuushan iyo galayax maan muujo

- [100] Gabgabtiyo galaydheyntu waa godol hortiiyiye  
 [101] Ninkii goomman wow shubahayaa galaxa caanoode  
 [102] Gabbaan laguma sooree nin raga balaan ganuun siiyo

- [103] Waa gaaxsanaan jiray tan iyo garashadaydiye  
 [104] Sidii goodir dhalay haatanaan gaawa leeyahaye  
 [105] Aan gafleeyo geararshahaas gaafan baan ahaye

- [106] Xaajada nin gunaan ahee aan u garaaddeeyo  
 [107] Markab aashi gaambiyi sidiis balaan u guurreyo  
 [108] Meeshuu garraarkeedu jiro gow aan kaga siiyo

- [109] Nimaan gedo yarayn baan ahooy Gaaddaweyn jiraye  
 [110] Waa ii garaad li'i dantay inaan ka gaaftaaye  
 [111] Gobo' kalana waa Eebbahay midaan galliimeystay

- [112] Eebbow geyiga oo dhan waa nala ka guulaaye  
 [113] Waa noo gedleeyaan dadkii gaalada ahaaye  
 [114] Eebbow Giriig kolay ku tahay nala gamuunneeye

- [115] Go'na lagama qaadine dulmey nagu gelaayaane  
 [116] Gabbaad kale hadday noo helaan waa gam'i lahaaye  
 [117] Eebbow waxay nagu gabreen diinta soo gala e

20 Following Keenadiid's *geyn* instead of *geyaden*.

- [118] Eebbow gadhka haddaan qabsaday gaaxshe  
nabaddiye
- [119] Eebbow gammaan iyo waxaan gini cas dhiibaayey
- [120] Eebbow garow kagama helin goolashaan wadaye
- [121] Gambalaaligii bay warmaha nagu garraaxeene
- [122] Eebbow waa gumaadeen raggii gaanaha ahaaye
- [123] Eebbow waxay gabawareen Gaagguf iyo Xayde
- [124] Xirsigii garaaraha lahaa gaarufkii dile e
- [125] Geydhaale Aw-Aadan bay galowda taabteene
- [126] Eebbow geesigii Ina-Dherey ugu guduudhseene
- [127] Guxushaaga Baynaxa ilmadu waatan gabaxleyne
- [128] Gorroska Muusa-Taaganaa wadnuu ila gariiraaye
- [129] Eebbow ways gamaamaa markuu gaarka soo maro e<sup>21</sup>
- [130] Guuleedku wuxuu noo ahaa guurti loo hiranne
- [131] Nimankii garaaddada ahaa waa gadow jabane
- [132] Eebbow sidii gaanti maro waa la gaasiraye
- [133] Eebbow gaari bay reer Warfaa guradii saareene<sup>22</sup>
- [134] Gubni baa ku dhacay reerihii gaannanaan jiraye
- [135] Eebbow goonni baa laga heliyo guri qalaadeede
- [136] Gaaggii ka hadhay reer Shawaa caydh la golosleyne
- [137] Waxa goday sidii qaanso waa gaajo iyo ciile
- [138] Eebbow waxa gorof ku raray duul Geshiishaaye<sup>23</sup>
- [139] Caligeri sidii loo gondoloy gobolba meel aadye
- [140] Waa gelengal nimankii fadhiyay guriga Ciideede
- [141] Eebbow gurbood baa hadhiyo gaban agoomeede

21 This line is absent from Keenadiid's text.

22 This line is absent from Keenadiid's text.

23 This line is absent from Keenadiid's text.

- [142] Eebbow goonji weyn iyo xaq bay naga gullaafteene  
[143] Guulow ma helayaan waxay nagu gubaayaane  
[144] Eebbow waxay naga gocdaan<sup>24</sup> waa galoof olole<sup>25</sup>
- [145] Eebbow sidii guun haween giidu waa aniye  
[146] Eebbow nin goba baan ahoo guni rifaysaaye  
[147] Eebbow waxaa noo gurmaday gaaya alifleeeye
- [148] Ma garaysni Eebbow waxaa guufanneyska ahe  
[149] Eebbow gabooddii dorraad waan ka gara’layne  
[150] Eebbow markaan geyllamey guulmiyo biqiye
- [151] Eebbow guddoonkii sharciga gooye bahashiiye  
[152] Eebbow kufriga gedeftaley gacanta haystaane  
[153] Eebbow anaa kugu garlee guusha ha i seejin

*Translation:*  
*‘Defeat of the Infidels’*

- [1] To begin with, I had neglected poetry and had let it dry up.  
[2] I had sent it west in the beginning of the spring rains,  
[3] but let me set forth<sup>26</sup> what prevented me from sleeping last night.
- [4] God’s blessings are more numerous than those growing trees,  
[5] I will remind you of the victory He gave us,  
[6] Listen to me, my council, for you are most dear to me,

24 Reading *gocdaan* for *gogtaan*.

25 This line is absent from Keenadiid’s text.

26 Conjectural translation of *gaasheeyo*.

- [7] If the unwashed left-handed one<sup>27</sup> had died yesterday,  
 [8] if I had cut his throat—may he taste hell in the grave  
 itself  
 [9] and the wild animals had eaten him, he and his ilk  
 would deserve this.
- [10] I would salute the hyena that would gorge itself on his  
 flesh,  
 [11] as it is doing me a service, it is dearer to me than other  
 animals of the wild.  
 [12] If I knew it, I would reward it every day.
- [13] That deformed one wasted a lot of my wealth  
 [14] since he kept committing wrongs again and again,  
 [15] I knew all along that the hyena would devour him.
- [16] It was their insincere refusal to acknowledge the truth  
 that put them down and destroyed them  
 [17] and made me attack their best men with a dagger.  
 [18] If they had not become ungrateful, I would not have  
 become enraged with them.
- [19] I would not have lost my generosity and respect for them.  
 [20] I would not have withheld anything from them, if they  
 had desired peace.  
 [21] But when they acted disdainfully, death marched  
 straight at them.
- [22] If I broke the jaws of the low-born Shuxle<sup>28</sup>  
 [23] and the crow were to peck [at the corpses] where

27 Reference is made here to Guray Shirwac Nūr °Uthmān (Nuur Cismaan), a notable from the northern Majeerteen Sultanate (Keenadiid, *Ina Cabdille Xasan*, 163, and Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gaba-yadii*, 224).

28 Shuxle Yūsuf °Uthmān (Yuusuf Cismaan), a notable of the same sultanate (*idem*).

- Yūsuf spends his nights<sup>29</sup>
- [24] and the laments of the women would sound like the buzzard,
- [25] I would feed their leaders to the wild beasts
- [26] except for that man Tājir whom I would pierce with arrows<sup>30</sup>
- [27] and I would creep up on °Uthmān and his sons.<sup>31</sup>
- [28] A night attack on the other Majeerteen is taboo for me
- [29] but right now troops are called up to attack the bastards of Bahdir.
- [30] and the house of the Reer Nūr will be thrown into turmoil.<sup>32</sup>
- [31] Spears will rain down on them as they are rounded up.
- [32] They will perish in one spot like an unattended herd attacked by a wolf.
- [33] How God has destined these ugly-faced ones to be losers!

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- [34] Say, the above verses are an indication of how I have mastered my art!
- [35] Say, they are like a vessel with which I catch the waterfall of my thoughts.<sup>33</sup>
- [36] Say, they roar like cannons and rattle like gunfire.

29 Hājji Yūsuf Samantar °Uthmān (Xaaji Yuusuf Samantar Cismaan), a notable of the same sultanate (*idem*).

30 Aḥmad Tājir (Axmed Taajir), brother of Sultan °Uthmān Maḥmūd (*idem*).

31 Reference is here to Sultan °Uthmān Maḥmūd (Cismaan Maxmuud).

32 Bahdir and Reer Nūr refer to close relatives of Sultan °Uthmān Maḥmūd.

33 This is a somewhat free translation.

- [37] Say, they clatter like the pelting of heavy pain.  
[38] Say, they rumble like thunder and flash like lightning.  
[39] Say, they thunder like the roar of a beginning rain storm.
- [40] Say, they wind their way like rain water rushing over the ground.  
[41] Say, they are like a stream which forms its own pool, like a pond in high wind.  
[42] Say, they are like the restless sea, the rumbling waves, the inlets of Ayl.
- [43] Say, they are well composed like the circle of elders in conference.  
[44] Say, they are perfectly put together, like the silk furnishings completely covering the meeting place.  
[45] Say, they are fully articulated like a case presented by a man with real comprehension.
- [46] Another small point concerns my own state of mind.  
[47] Was I not convulsed with anger that put my heart on fire?  
[48] Did rage not give me sleepless nights?
- [49] Did I not walk day and night?  
[50] Did I not wander about all day long?  
[51] Did I not keep up the awkward gait of the hunter's camel?
- [52] Did walking by night and scorching day not burn my skin?  
[53] Did my efforts to shake off vermin,<sup>34</sup> like a giraffe, not cover me with dust?

34 Conjectural translation of *geddaabadhabadkaa*.

- [54] Did my skin not blacken from huddling in a place exposed to the elements?
- [55] Did the men who were my comrades not pass on to the other world?
- [56] Did my memory not pain me when I remembered them?
- [57] Did I not hang my head so as not to show my anguish?
- [58] Did I not keep looking to all sides, my neck swollen with anger?
- [59] Did I not raise my head after having let it hang down for so long?
- [60] Did my anger and sadness not galvanize me into fighting?
- [61] Did I not tighten my sarong at the waist and roll it up above my knees [in preparation for running]?
- [62] Did I not take up my shield, spear and war club?
- [63] Am I not ready to fight for the rest of my life?
- [64] Has [my horse] Dhooddi<sup>35</sup> not reached maturity and its full strength?
- [65] Did I not give him glasses full of ghee during winter’s scarcity?
- [66] Did he not rear up all around me like an eagle taking off into flight?
- [67] My vendetta will hit in all directions.
- [68] I will go after those who have failed to compensate me for the wrongs they committed.
- [69] I will collect anything I can grab.
- [70] I will revenge the injustice and provocation I have suffered.

35 One of the Sayyid’s favorite horses.

- [71] It is my right to plunder the whole world.  
 [72] I want to subjugate every area.
- [73] I will hunt down everyone, not even sparing a single girl.  
 [74] All these harmful actions will give me joy and happiness.  
 [75] Whoever transgressed against humanity, will be reeling.
- [76] What they did to me weighs heavily on me.  
 [77] In the whole land of the Daarood, no one ever extended a hand to me.  
 [78] [Instead] they trained machine guns on us.
- [79] Now it is my turn; they have done their harm.  
 [80] My bullets will fly as part of these hostilities.  
 [81] After I capture the East, the damned Isaaq<sup>36</sup> will be next.
- [82] My war horses will gallop in the coastal strip, Burco and Looyo.  
 [83] They will attack as well in the direction of Aroori  
 [84] and will reach Garoodi and the Golis range.<sup>37</sup>
- [85] I will squash those uncouth Hagar Aadan.<sup>38</sup>  
 [86] I will crush those arrogant cowards.  
 [87] I will feed their leaders to the vultures.
- [88] Like kernels of grain I will pick off all the Ogaden,

36 Iidoor: in colonial parlance synonymous with Isaaq.

37 All these are regions and towns in what was then British Somaliland. The Guban is the dry coastal strip inland from Berbera. Burco and Looyo are towns, while Garoodi and Aroori are plains. The Golis range includes some of the highest points of the area.

38 A group of Dhulbahante.

one by one.

- [89] I will not stop attacking them at any time.  
[90] If God wills, they will evaporate like a pool of clear water.
- [91] Gurraase and Iljeex<sup>39</sup> will not escape this time.  
[92] I plan to destroy even the Reer Dalal, so far untouched by war.  
[93] A whole army division will vent its rage on the unclean Reer Subeyr.<sup>40</sup>
- [94] I will search them out even in Gooracobolley and Geellokor.<sup>41</sup>  
[95] If I had not tolerated the Huwan,<sup>42</sup> I would have captured them in half a day  
[96] and where will the Haaruun be taken, perhaps beyond Goha?<sup>43</sup>

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- [97] After going through these points, let me conclude with another one:  
[98] Shall I not walk proudly like an ostrich emerging from a bluff?  
[99] Shall I not flaunt my glorious achievements?
- [100] I will begin with a solemn celebration.  
[101] I will ladle out milk for all the hungry.

39 Gurraase Ḥājjī ʿAlī (Xaaji Cali) and Ḥusayn Yūsuf (Xuseen Yuusuf) Xirsi Dalal were followers who had conspired against the Sayyid (Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii*, 227).

40 These are groups of Ogaden.

41 Place names in western Somalia.

42 Huwan: today this name refers to the people living north of the Haud in the former British Somaliland.

43 In then British Somaliland. See also Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii*, 228.

- [102] One does not treat noble men in a miserly way, I will ladle it out in plenty.
- [103] From when I can first remember, I have always kept it in reserve
- [104] but now I have the means to utilize my talent, as one milks a camel which has just calved.
- [105] Let me now unleash my poetic talent, I am ready!
- [106] Since I can settle the issue definitively, let me make you understand.
- [107] Let me go slowly as if walking by night, unhurried like a ship.
- [108] Let me touch upon the issue's nodal points.
- [109] I am not a young, and witnessed even the drought of Gaaddaweyn<sup>44</sup>
- [110] It would be foolishness for me to avoid what is important to me.
- [111] Another point is what God has put in my heart.
- [112] My God, everywhere people are hostile to us.
- [113] They are preparing to attack, these infidels.
- [114] God, even the Greeks<sup>45</sup> are taking aim at us.
- [115] Without us taking a iota from them, they are oppressing us.
- [116] If they had found us at fault, I would have lain down.
- [117] Oh God, they herded us together just to make us enter their religion.
- [118] Oh God, even if I beg them, they withhold peace.

44 A notorious drought which cannot be exactly dated.

45 The Sayyid regarded the Greeks as a less powerful kind of European infidel.

- [119] Oh God, how much gold and livestock I have given them?
- [120] Oh God, even though I took my prize animals to them, I found no sympathy from them.
- [121] They fell upon us with their weapons as we were unsuspecting.
- [122] Oh God, they eliminated our best warriors.
- [123] Oh God, they left the corpses of Gaagguf and Xayde,<sup>46</sup> whom they executed, scattered on the ground.
- [124] Xirsi, with the swinging gait, died of the deprivation they caused.<sup>47</sup>
- [125] They pierced the jugular vein of that robust<sup>48</sup> Aw-Aadan
- [126] and slashed the throat of the courageous Ina Dheri.<sup>49</sup>
- [127] Look at the tears running down the face of the aged Baynax.
- [128] My heart trembles when I see Muusa-Taagane hang his head in sadness.
- [129] Oh God, how he cringes when he comes close to anyone.<sup>50</sup>
- [130] Guuleed<sup>51</sup> was for us a counsellor and protector.
- [131] Our titled chiefs have become like broken basketry.<sup>52</sup>

46 Ḥasan Gaagguf Aḥmad Mulac and Xayd Aadan Gallaydh Ducaale (Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii*, 229).

47 Conjectural translation of *gaarrufkii*.

48 Conjectural translation following Keenadiid.

49 Xirsiwaal Maḥmūd (Maxamuud) Cashuur, Aw Aadan Seed, and Ḥājjī Maḥmūd (Xaaji Maxamuud) Dheri (see Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii*, 229).

50 Baynax Aadan Gallaydh and Mūsā Jāma<sup>c</sup> Muḥammad (Muuse Jaamac Maxamed) Dhegaweyne lost several sons in battle with the British (*idem*).

51 Guuleed Caligeri Aḥmad (Ciise, *Diiwaanka Gabayadii*, 229).

52 *Gadow* are the wicker rings around the *saab* (a wicker case in

- [132] They have been diminished, like under-sized pieces cut from a bolt of cloth<sup>53</sup>
- [133] Oh God, the Reer Warfaa<sup>54</sup> [have become so few that] they can be loaded on lorries.
- [134] The families that used to be strong have been destroyed.
- [135] Oh God, they have been captured in isolated areas, in the houses of strangers.
- [136] The few Reer Shawa people left wander about impoverished.
- [137] Hunger and impotent anger have made them bent over and hollow like bows.
- [138] Oh God, how the backs of the Geshiishe people have been loaded with junk.
- [139] The Caligeri have been so defeated that they are scattered everywhere.
- [140] Deserted are the dwellings of the Ciid region,<sup>55</sup> where people used to live.
- [141] Oh God, only children and orphans are left.
- [142] Oh God, they have trampled our property<sup>56</sup> and lawful rights.
- [143] But by God Victorious, they will not succeed in imposing their will upon us.
- [144] Oh God, the claims they make against us are empty

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which vessels are carried), thus holding it together.

53 Conjectural translation of *gaanti*.

54 Reer Warfaa, Geshiishe and Caligeri are groups of Dhulbahante.

55 The Ciid plain lies mostly in what was Italian Somaliland, and constitutes the north of the Mudug region and the west of the Garowe region.

56 Conjectural reading of *goonji*.

hollering.<sup>57</sup>

[145] Oh God, I am wailing like an old woman.

[146] Oh God, I am a noble man, harassed by inferior people.

[147] Oh God, the only ones who come to our rescue are riffraff.

[148] Oh God, I cannot accept this oppression.<sup>58</sup>

[149] Oh God, I will take revenge for the aggression of the past.

[150] Oh God, when I fight in earnest, they will retreat and become afraid.

[151] Oh God, these animals have destroyed the rules of the Sharī‘a.

[152] Oh God, they are holding hands with the uncircumcised unbelievers.

[153] Oh God, since I am on Your side, don’t deny me victory.

57 *Galoof olole* literally refers to an animal that has no milk yet clamors to be milked. The translation is conjectural.

58 Conjectural reading of *guufanneyska*.