



University of Sussex
Sussex Centre for Migration Research

Sussex Migration Working Paper no. 23

Nomads, sailors and refugees.

A century of Somali migration.

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Abstract

This working paper offers an outline of Somali migration in the 20th Century, primarily to the West. The paper argues that the overall geopolitical development from colonialism to the so-called new post cold war world order significantly has structured migration from the Somali region to the West. In order to contextualise Somali migration, the paper briefly goes through the biggest events in Somali history from the turn of the 19th Century: Colonialism, independence, and civil war. Different cohorts of migrants include nomads and traders crossing African colonial boundaries; sailors and soldiers in the British Royal Navy both during and after colonialism; student and professional migration to the colonial powers, and after independence to the former Eastern bloc up until 1977, and to the West after 1977; oil workers and white-collar workers to the Gulf; and refugees following the outbreak of civil war in 1988. Three ‘migration stories’ told by three Somali-Danes shows how historical events and conditions as well as personal initiatives and coincidences have framed their journeys and destinations. Finally, the paper concludes that Somali migration seems to continue within Europe, where Somalis who have obtained Western citizenship move on to the UK, but also to Somalia and Somaliland.

Acknowledgements

This paper was partly written during my Marie Curie Fellowship stay at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, winter 2004. I wish to thank the Centre for this great opportunity, good facilities, inspiring colleagues and talks. Likewise I thank Richard Black for supervision. In Denmark I thank Sofie Danneskjold-Samsøe, Peter Hansen, Christina Jagd, Else Kloppenborg, Annika Liversage and Marianne Pedersen for useful comments. Thanks to the United Nations Publications Board for the permission to reproduce the map of Somalia. Last, but not least, I thank ‘Mohamed’, ‘Aisha’, and ‘Omar’ for sharing your stories with me and your useful comments. Mahad sanid.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction: A short history of state and a long history of migration.....	1
2. Colonialism.....	2
2.1 Nomads	2
3. Independence	4
3.1 Oil Workers	5
3.2 Students	6
4. Civil War	7
4.1 Refugees	8
4.2 Asylum migration to the West	9
5. Conclusion	10
References	12

"My father was a sailor, seaman, and always told me about all these places. I knew the name of Copenhagen, even before I knew of Denmark! We went there as a sailor. I always wanted to be a sailor myself, like him."

'Mohamed', came to Denmark in 1969.

"I came to Denmark as a refugee in 1990. To get asylum I had to teach my children their clan lineage, which I had never taught them before. It was horrible to come to Denmark. I was always a very active person and here I became a passive person."

'Aisha', came to Denmark in 1990.

"All the time I was thinking that the war would stop, that Somalia would be normal again. We had this farm. So we took all our farming tools with us to Kenya, thinking that we would return. In the end, my father and I agreed that we will sell our tractor to find an opportunity for me."

'Omar', came to Denmark in 1993.

1. Introduction: A short history of state and a long history of migration

Somalis have travelled and migrated for many years. Today Somalis are spread over the whole world as a consequence of the civil war in Somalia, which started more than 15 years ago. However, while many Somalis have fled and gone to the West as asylum seekers or through family reunification, Somalis have also migrated along other routes and for other reasons.

In this paper I offer an outline of a history of Somali migration. The aim of the paper is to show how different 'cohorts of migrants' from (what became) the Somali Republic are embedded in a historical framework, which not only relates to the different periods and events in Somali history, but also to global geopolitical developments. I exemplify this through the stories of 'Mohamed', 'Aisha' and 'Omar'. All three have come to Denmark, a destination whose particularities are considered in more detail lower at the end of the paper.

While there are studies of the history of the Somali speaking region and Somalia more generally (i.e. Lewis, 2002; Bradbury, 1997; Ahmed, 1995; Lewis, 1994), this working paper focuses on the migratory aspects of Somali history – especially migration to the West. It does not pretend to be a full-fledged historical account of

Somali migration - it is an outline, a sketch, where I present the major political events and developments and their implications for migration. The paper does not include an account of 'the Somali communities in the West' (see Montclos, 2003 for such an account), but focuses instead on the migratory processes.

In order to do this, I have combined historical reviews with colonial documents and other archival material. Likewise I have included reports, newsletters and other kinds of grey literature to find details, which I could not find anywhere else. I refer to statistics, even if statistics concerning migrants and refugees are often notoriously unreliable. When I refer to numbers, it is to exemplify tendencies, rather than to document the actual numbers of refugees, asylum seekers (cf. Steen, 1993). The migration stories, finally, are stories told to me by three Somali migrants in Copenhagen, whom I have met several times. I have edited their stories, but the words and ways of telling the stories are as close to the interview as possible (cf. Kvale, 1997).

The paper is divided into three parts: Colonialism, independence, and civil war. In each part I sketch historical developments in Somalia and the implications for migration. I also present one of the migration stories in each part – or rather between the parts. As 'stories in between', they demonstrate, that the migrations of Mohamed, Aisha, and Omar cannot be understood without taking into account the interplay between different historical periods and geopolitical development.

Roughly speaking, the history of the Somali-speaking region can be told as a history of changing geopolitical positions during Imperialism, the Cold War, and the post Cold War 'new world-order', where the strategic location of the Somali speaking areas grew in importance and then decreased. It can be told as a history of nationalist dreams of unity followed by disintegration, of manipulations of the Somali genealogical clan system¹, and of massive displacements.

¹ Clan refers to kinship system, which identity Somalis in accordance to their father's lineage and in specific clan families. I do not mention any clan families in this paper. For discussions about the meanings of clan in the diaspora and in Somalia see (Griffiths, 2002a; Hansen, 2001; Farah, 2000; Fink-Nielsen et al., 2000; Griffiths, 1997; Lewis, 1994). For an overview of Somali clan family genealogies and statistical representation of clan in the Somali governments from 1960 to 1990, see (Hagi & Hagi, 1998).

2. Colonialism

As the main focus of the paper is migration to the West, I will not go into the pre-colonial history of Somali migration here². Still, it is important to note that mobility appears to have been a quintessential part of life in the Somali-speaking region for many centuries. Nomadic pastoralism and trade being the main livelihoods, mobility has played an important part in Somali culture and in the dominant discourses of 'Somaliness' (Horst, 2003; Lewis, 1994). Furthermore, the Somalis are said to have migrated from Aden to the Horn of Africa about thousand years ago (Lewis, 2002, 18-19). Being a migrant is thus a part of the myth of 'Somaliness' itself. The explorer Richard Burton, in his famous 'First Footsteps in East Africa' reports of Somalis who spoke three to four languages and discussed international politics in the desert (quoted in Wilson, 1990b). Certainly, Burton would also have met Somalis who did not speak English or knew of the Crimean war; my point is not meant to essentialise Somali mobility. Rather I want to point out that migration as such is not a new phenomenon; there is a certain kind of continuity, even if the forms, routes and opportunities /restrictions of migration have changed, due to different geopolitical developments.

Up until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the interests of the European colonial powers in the Horn of Africa were relatively limited and consisted of a few different treaties with local rulers. Following the Berlin Conference in 1885, where the rules of the partition of Africa were laid down, the colonial powers started to divide their spheres of influence in the Somali-speaking region between them. In 1897 the Somali-speaking region was divided between four colonial powers. Great Britain possessed the Protectorate of British Somaliland (from 1960 the North Western part of the Republic of Somalia, from 1991 the self-declared Republic of Somaliland) and the Northern Frontier District (NFD – from 1963 the North Eastern Province in Kenya). Italy colonised *La Somalia Italiana* (which became the UN-Trusteeship of Somalia under Italian administration in 1950, from 1960 the Southern part of the Republic of Somalia). France possessed *La Côte Française des Somalis* (from 1977 Djibouti), and the regional colonial power Abyssinia (Ethiopia) colonised the Ogaden and later the Haud areas (still parts of Ethiopia)

(Colonial Office, 1960a; Lewis, 2002; Bradbury, 1997; Colonial Office, 1960b; Hess, 1966; His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1928; Vignéras, 1900). As part of the British, Italian and French empires, the Somali colonial states were gradually incorporated into the world economy (cf. Veney, 1998, 220) and the two world wars.

2.1 Nomads

As a substantial part of the Somali colonial subjects were nomads, who would wander over distances – including colonial borders – to find pastures for their animals or to trade, mobility and borders seems to have been an issue from the beginning of the colonial ventures. The colonial powers tried to govern the 'Somali tribes' by restraining mobility in order "to avoid tribal trouble" (Colonial Office, 1931). In a treaty between the British and Italians in 1924, the governments agreed to "endeavour to prevent any migration of Somalis or other natives". However, it was also reported that it "was impossible to control nomad tribes" (ibid).

The aim of territorialising and circumscribing the mobile Somalis was articulated as a question of maintaining order to avoid the Somali clans or 'tribes' mixing with or waging war on each other - or, perhaps, on the colonisers. From 1901 to 1920, the British Government was continuously challenged by the so-called 'Mad Mullah', Mohamed Bin Abdullah Hassan (ibid); "maintenance of order" was not merely a rhetorical question. On the other side of the border, in Italian Somaliland, there were similar attempts to territorialise the nomads. In an account of Italian colonialism, Robert Hess describes the Italian colonial policy like this:

"To do away with one cause of intertribal disputes, Italian administrators formally established the borders of the areas occupied by each tribe. Limitations were placed on the movements of each tribe in a first step toward what the Italians hoped would be the civilizing of a nomadic people and their eventual settlement in agricultural communities" (Hess, 1966, 183).

Still, trans-frontier grazing rights were established between the British Protectorate and the Ethiopian government (Colonial Office, 1960a, 5), and other treaties between Italy and Great Britain permitted the movements of nomads between the colonial states (Hess, 1966, 183).

On the other hand, by creating Empires and colonial ties, the European powers also created

² For accounts of the pre-Colonial history of the Somali-speaking regions see (Lewis, 2002; Ahmed, 1995; Hess, 1966; Colonial Office, 1960a).

new avenues of migration, both during colonisation itself and afterwards - for instance in terms of employment and education. Somalis served in the British and Italian armies (Wilson, 1990c; Hess, 1966, 110; Save the Children Fund, 1994), not only in Africa but also in other parts of the world. Likewise, a number of Somalis went seafaring, travelling around the world, including the Far East, the Americas, Australia, Africa and Europe (Wilson, 1990a). In the introduction to one of the numerous travel tales from the early 20th century, the author vividly describes this male Somali migration.

“The Somali wanders afar. You will find him working as deck hand, fireman, or steward, on all the great liners trading to the East. I know of a Somali tobacconist in Cardiff, a Somali mechanic in New York, and a Somali trader in Bombay, the latter of whom speaks French, English, and Italian fluently” (Rayne, 1921, 6).

While some sailors returned to Somalia, others

went to major UK ports as sailors or traders, where they turned into established communities (Montclos, 2003, 44; Griffiths, 2002b; Farah, 2000, 98; Utteh, 1997, 449-450; Lewis, 1994; Save the Children Fund, 1994; Somali Relief Association, 1992). Farah and others report that the Somali-British community started out as nearly exclusively male and that the Somalis seafarers and settlers in UK sent money back home as early as the 1880s, thereby indicating a long tradition of maintaining contact across distances. Somali seafarers had their families in the Somali regions or in Aden in Yemen, where many British ships ported. Apparently some of the seafarers bought land in Somalia from their savings in the UK and maintained a dream of return throughout their lives. It was not before the 1960s that Somali women and children joined their husbands in the UK on a larger scale (Farah, 2000, 100; Save the Children Fund, 1994; Somali Relief Association, 1992, 3.1). In Italy, Somali migration seem to have been more limited during the time of colonisation, although Somalis came to Italy as traders and students, but no

Box 1: The adventures of a sailor: The story of Mohamed

My father died when I was 8 years old, then I became an orphan. He was a sailor, seaman, and always told me about all these places. I knew the name of Copenhagen, even before I knew of Denmark! He went there as a sailor. I always wanted to be a sailor myself, like him. As a young boy I went to Aden in Yemen and got a false sailor certificate. I then went to Hargeisa and went to the emigration office to get a passport so I could go to England. In the papers it said that I was 26 or something and I was just a big boy. The officer looked at me and said that it wasn't me and sent me away. I then went into the interior for a year to get tougher and look older.

One year later, I came back. I went to the emigration officer again. There was a very tall British man working there. I brought the same false papers. He looked at me from the bottom to the top and I was so much smaller than he was. They looked at my teeth and concluded that I could not be more than 16 or 17 years old. He finally said, 'these are not your papers, but you are an enthusiastic young man, who wants to see the world. You want to be a sailor – can you swim?'. 'Yes', I said. I could swim and row a boat. He did not give me a passport, but a special kind of sailor's laissez passer papers. I was very happy. I went to Aden again and got a job. After a while, a French passenger ship came to Aden, which was going to Marseilles. I bought my ticket, bought nice suits and quit my job. My friends were going to make a departure party for me. But the French Consulate in Aden refused. They told me, 'This is not a real passport, you cannot go'. What should I do? I had quit my job and everything. I went out to sit at a big rock and thought about my situation. My friends had the party, but I was not there. I decided to go on the boat the clandestine way. I borrowed a rowing boat, rowed out there with one of my friends, and told him not to go back before I was on board. I entered the boat with my suitcase, dressed in my best suit. It worked, they never knew!

There were eleven other Somalis on board, all seamen, and quite a lot of Yemenis. One elderly man who knew my father was also on board. When we arrived in Marseilles I put on my best clothes and boarded with the other people. I was not stopped. But when we came to a Somali hotel, the staff did not accept my papers and they would not let me sleep there. They told the elderly man, that the best thing to do was to take the train to England immediately. So we did that. Nothing happened until we came to Calais, where the French immigration caught me. Luckily my father's friend quickly made up a story. He told them, that I was from a Greek boat, which had left me in Marseilles and I was going to England as an English citizen. 'Bon, allez', the immigration officer said, and we took the boat to Dover. There I was caught by the English immigration, but since I was from a British Protectorate, I was allowed to enter Britain. That was in 1955.

I stayed three years in London, where I was involved in a political Somali association. We were talking a lot about independence, fighting for our country. I was so involved that I decided to return to the British Protectorate. I went back in 1958.

established Somali community came into being (Suleiman, 1992).

Apart from intercontinental migration, a larger number of Somalis migrated back and forth between the Somali colonial states, East Africa, and the Arab countries in relation to trade, pastoralism, family movement, education etc. (Goldsmith, 1997, 472; Greenfield, 1987). Whereas overseas migration seems to have been an almost exclusively male phenomenon until the 1960s, Somali women have a reputation for being traders or otherwise moving around neighbouring countries, not least in relation to nomadic pastoralism and general family-related mobility.

One effect of colonialism is that mobile livelihoods (Sørensen & Olwig, 2002) of Somali pastoralists and traders became international migration as colonial – and later national – borders were established. Somali family networks might – for instance – be divided between the British Protectorate, Aden and Ogaden in Ethiopia, or between British East Africa, and *Somalia Italiana*. All the same, the colonial ‘motherlands’ became destinations and as Empires, they offered possibilities in relation to trade, military employment and seafaring. These themes are illustrated in the story of Mohamed (See Box 1).

3. Independence

In Mohamed’s migration story, the dynamics of colonial rule are outspoken – as are the personal and adventurous initiative that Mohamed undertakes to go to Europe. While British colonial officials were in charge of when Mohamed could seek his luck as a sailor, his knowledge of the importance of appearance when crossing borders (being dressed up), his father’s friends and the immigration legislation in France and Britain were just as crucial in framing his journey to Britain. There, his engagement in the political development in the Protectorate was so strong, that he returns.

When Mohamed came back to the British Protectorate, preparations for Independence were busy both in the Protectorate and in the Italian UN-Trusteeship of Somalia. After the fascists were defeated in World War II, the future of *Somalia Italiana* was unclear and the ambitious plans of uniting Ogaden, British Somalia and Italian Somalia to a Greater Somalia failed. In 1950, an Italian administrated UN Trusteeship was ratified and the UN decided that the Trusteeship should be independent ten years later. Italy had started to make preparations, such as educating civil

servants and holding elections, and political parties had emerged (Hess, 1966, 190-193).

In British Somaliland, independence was less well prepared. Elections were held for the first time in 1960 and the leader of the biggest party, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, was appointed Minister for Local Government. In May that year, Egal and a delegation went to London to discuss independence with the Colonial Office. One of the declared aims of independence was to unify with the UN-Trusteeship of Somalia and this goal was agreed upon in London (Colonial Office, 1960a).

On the 26th of June 1960, the British Protectorate of Somaliland ended, and Somaliland was declared independent. Four days later, on the 1st of July 1960, the UN Trusteeship of Somalia followed. The two former colonial states united into the Republic of Somalia with Mogadishu as the capital. The union of the two territories was seen as a first step towards reunion of all five Somali territories as mirrored in the five-pointed star in the Somali flag. Mohamed, who had become the local secretary of a political party in Somaliland, recalls:

“I was there the 26th of June, when we got out independence. I did not sleep for three days; I was so excited. The 28th of June, 24 other people and I went on a lorry to Mogadishu. We just arrived two hours before the Italian and UN flags went down, and the new Somali flag went up. After a while, I got a job in Mogadishu as the regional vice-secretary for the party, but due to a lot of conflicts, I ended up being marginalised in the party. Finally, in December 1965, I was fed up and decided to leave Somali politics and Somalia.”

Mohamed was not the only one to be unhappy about the development of the new Republic. There was a failed coup in the British former Protectorate in 1961. Liberalism and the reproduction of the economic structures inherited from colonialism dominated the first years of independence and soon corruption, drought and unemployment promoted dissatisfaction with the government. At the same time, Somalia grew increasingly dependent on international aid and became an ally of the USSR (Bradbury, 1997).

In October 1969, the President was killed and the Chief Commander of the Army, Major General Siad Barre seized power in a coup. Barre and the new Supreme Revolutionary Council dissolved the Constitution and the High Court, prohibited

political activities, and declared scientific socialism. Barre launched ambitious development campaigns and declared that 'the evils of tribalism' were buried and references to clan and genealogies were prohibited (Lewis, 1994, 151-152; Barre, 1971, 99). All the same, Barre was increasingly manipulating clan affiliations and politics, concentrating power in the hands of members of the clan lineages of himself and of his close family (Lewis, 1994, 165).

The dream of the union of all the five Somali territories was still alive, though it was wounded. In 1963, the Northern Frontier District became a part of Kenya and in 1977, the inhabitants in French Somaliland voted in favour of creating their own independent nation-state, Djibouti. The five-pointed star in the Somali flag had lost yet another point. Barre and other nationalists, however, did not give up and invaded the Ogaden area in Ethiopia the same year. After a few weeks of military success, the USSR and Cuba sided with Ethiopia and Somalia suffered an overwhelming defeat. About 1.5 million people fled Ogaden, the majority to Somalia, but also to the West. Barre subsequently turned to the US for military help and economic support, which the country received, due to its strategically important location during the Cold War. The militarisation of Somalia took off further, resulting in a country full of weapons (Bradbury, 1997). After the military defeat in 1978, the first armed opposed group to the regime of Barre emerged, the oppression of intellectuals was reinforced and a large number of educated people left the country during the 1980s (Ali, 1995).

3.1 Oil Workers

While the first Somali asylum seekers appeared already from the beginning of the 1970s, the migration of seafarers, traders and not least pastoral nomads continued after independence. New ways of migration emerged as well: Labour migration to the Gulf, the so-called muscle drain.

Somali citizens have worked in the oil-industry in Saudi Arabia since the 1950s, and from the 1960s, when the oil boom took off, in the Middle East and the Arab peninsula as well. No reliable statistics exist of the number of Somali oil workers; the estimates of their number in the beginning of the 1980s are as diverse as 12,200 (Owen, 1985) up to 200,000 – 300,000 (Lewis, 1994, 122). The variation in estimates is at least partly due to the fact that a large number of oil workers were and remain undocumented. It appears that this migration for the large part has been undertaken by Somalis from the north-

western part of the country, the former British Somaliland, and has been largely a male phenomenon (Marchal et al., 2000; Lewis, 1994, 178).

An important feature of the Gulf migration is remittances, as seafarers and oil workers remitted part of their earnings to their families. Remittances played (and play) a key role in the Somali economy. Lewis claims that the amount sent by workers in the Gulf countries was two to three times as big as the export earnings of the country (Bradbury, 1997; Gesheker, 1997; Lewis, 1994, 122). Gesheker quotes an ILO study, which estimates that Somali workers earned US \$700 million in the Gulf States in 1985 and remitted about US \$280, that is 40 per cent of their earnings (Gesheker, 1997, 77). From 1976, when the so-called *franco valuta* system was introduced, oil workers handed over their hard currency to Somali traders, who bought commodities to sell at the Somali market, and then later handed over an agreed amount of cash to the families of the migrant workers. In 1982 the system was banned, but the money transfers continued and evolved into the *xawilaad*, money transfer companies, which transfer money from all over the world to the Somali-speaking region. Like the *franco valuta* system, the *xawilaad* is based on trust and occurs along clan lines (Hansen, 2004; Gundel, 2002; Horst, 2002; Fink-Nielsen et al., 2000, 144; Marchal et al., 2000; Lewis, 1994). This means that the remitter and receiver of money are identified by their clan lineage, eventually combined with telephone numbers, passport or other kinds of ID. The biggest money transfer company is *Dahabshill*, which means 'frying gold'. *Dahabshill* has branches in 33 countries (Dahabshill, 2002), including two offices in Denmark.

Still, Somalis have gone to the Gulf and Arab countries for reasons other than working in the oil industry. For educated Arabic-speaking Somalis, the Gulf States also offered employment opportunities. The muscle-drain was accompanied by a brain drain as well. Furthermore, Somalis migrated to the Gulf to join family members, to pursue religious education, to do business, and to get away from the political situation, which became increasingly tight from the end of the 1970s and 1980s. However, as the Gulf Countries have not ratified the Refugee Convention and do not offer any protection and very limited rights, going to the Gulf was not 'asylum migration'. The consequence of this became clear when the Gulf War broke out. Over two million migrant workers of Somali and other nationalities were expelled from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq (Collinson,

1999, 22). Some of them became asylum seekers in the West. Aisha was one of them (See Box 2).

children whose parents were in the government or trade, who received education, for two

Box 2: The journey of an educated woman: The Story of Aisha

The mother of my father was born in Aden. My grandfather married my grandmother and they settled as nomads in Somalia. One day my father got a job in Jijiga as a medical assistant through his uncle. Jijiga was then a part of the British Protectorate (the reserved area), which is now a part of Ethiopia. The uncle took care of my father's education, as he already spoke Arabic and knew the Koran. He received further education in a Secondary School and then went to Aden for more education. His uncle could do this because he was a part of the Camel Corps in the Protectorate. After he came back, my father got trained as an administrator. He worked different places –the British transferred him all the time; they did not want him to settle. He retired in 1963.

My mother came from a town in the Western part of the Protectorate, she is from a merchant family. Her uncle was a trader between Djibouti [the capital in the former French Somaliland and present Djibouti] and this town. My mothers and her siblings were split in different families, when my grandmother asked my mother to cook for them. My grandmother opened a shop selling sorghum. After that she bought cows and lambs, became a nomad and collected the whole family. My mother's family became very famous, because they earned a lot of money from trade. One of my uncles went back and forth. He did trade from Iraq. He also became a politician and was elected as a Member of Parliament. When my father and mother married each other, my father worked in my mother's hometown. I was born in the town district in a place, which is now in Ethiopia. My mother had seven children: five girls and two boys. I am the oldest girl.

My father was famous for the fact that he was the first man to send three girls to school! When I was small, we settled in Hargeisa and I went to a Koranic school from when I was four to six years old. When I was six years old, I knew the Koran by heart and I could speak Arabic. My sister and I then went to the only girl school at that time. We got a special permission and started directly in the second grade. Later one of my other sisters also went to that school. Somebody teased my father about his girls going to school, but he always defended us; he always thought that it was better to be educated.

After the school I first worked as a clerk. From 1964-69 I worked in an office. I did all kinds of work. In 1969 I married my husband, who was in the administration. I then made the big mistake of giving up my work and went into administration myself. In 1972 we moved to Mogadishu. I became a professional secretary and studied public administration, but I never pursued further education as much as I wanted to. In 1977 we went to Kuwait. One of the reasons was that I wanted my girls to go to school. I worked in different offices with administration and as a secretary. I also worked in different embassies. Also in Kuwait, women's work also proved more promising than men's work, so I had to work and I worked all the time.

In 1990 I came to Denmark as a refugee, due to the Gulf war. My husband stayed. To get asylum I had to teach my children their clan lineage, which I had never taught them before. We needed to be able to give an account of our lineage in order to get asylum. It was horrible to come to Denmark. I was always a very active person and here I became a passive person. I often miss a lot of my inner person, my old self. My friends and family have noticed it too. 'What has happened to you?', they ask. I worry so much. When I told my social worker about my career, she did not believe me. She did not even bother to read my file.

3.2 Students

In many ways, Aisha is a remarkable woman. She was among the first girls in the British Protectorate to pursue education and later a professional career. This opportunity must be seen in relation to her family background, where her father was an administrator in the Protectorate and her mother part of a well to do merchant family. As Aisha explains, it was only

reasons: because they could afford it and because they could understand the value of secular education. In this way, Aisha has been one among very few girls. Secular education was not very widespread or valued during colonisation or after independence, though Barre initiated big literacy campaigns in the early 1970s as well as introducing Somali orthography in 1972.

Hess notes that until Somalia became a UN Trusteeship, Italy paid very little attention to secular education in the area (Hess, 1966). This changed during the 1950s, when new state schools replaced the private Catholic schools, and institutions for higher education were established. In the Protectorate, mainly Koranic schools existed and the British were considerably slower to establish secular education (Lewis, 2002, 140-141, 148-149) – such as the girls' school which Aisha frequented.

Though institutes for higher education were gradually established, most Somali students would have to go abroad to specialise. Italy and Egypt offered scholarships, as well as the UK – though on a much smaller scale, it seems (Lewis, 2002, 141; Ali, 2001, 92-94). Getting a scholarship to Sudan, Aden or the USSR, Cuba, and other communist countries (cf. Ali, 1994) was also a way of gaining access to higher education, though this abruptly stopped in 1977, when the USSR and Cuba sided with Ethiopia in the Ogaden war and subsequently expelled the Somalis.

From then on, educational migration turned more towards Western countries (Hadley, 1989). Funded by scholarships, and/or backed by family or government support, the students can be expected to have been among the wealthier and more privileged strata of Somali society. Again, this migration seems to be relatively male dominated, but women got scholarships to study as well (e.g. Ali, 1994). Some students eventually went back to Somalia; others stayed or went on to other countries. Likewise Somali students have gone to Pakistan and India, where education was cheaper (Marchal et al., 2000), as well as to other African countries. In some cases, student migration turned into asylum migration as students applied for asylum due to the development of the political situation.

4. Civil War

In 1988, the Somali and Ethiopian governments signed a peace accord to end hostility between the two countries. The peace accord recognised Ethiopian control over the Haud areas, meaning that a larger number of Somali refugees were forced to go to Somalia. Furthermore, the Somali National Movement (SNM), a clan-based resistance movement, which was founded in London in 1981 in outspoken opposition to the Barre regime lost protection (Lewis, 1994, 177-219; Silanyo, 1986). The SNM in turn, attacked and briefly captured the biggest cities in the North-Western part of Somalia, and the government replied by full-scale assaults on the

local population (Bradbury, 1997, 11). Civil war was a reality and more than 600,000 people fled to Ethiopia (UNDP, 2001, 214; Republic of Somaliland, 1994).

During the next two years, civil war spread to the rest of the country and in the beginning of 1991, Siad Barre was ousted from Mogadishu. Rebels, clan-based resistance movements and drought led to huge humanitarian crises in the southern and central regions of Somalia. It is estimated that by the end of 1992, half a million people had lost their lives due to violence and hunger, and an even bigger number of people had fled the country – estimated between 800,000 (UNDP, 2001, 59) and up to 1.5 million (Bradbury, 1997, 1). The large majority went to isolated refugee camps placed in the deserts of Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen, and Djibouti. As many as two million Somalis were internally displaced in Somalia in 1992, although the number 'dropped' to 500,000 in 1994 and 200,000 in 1997 (UNDP, 2001, 60; UNHCR, 1998, table 1).

While the central and southern regions of Somalia dissolved into anarchy and civil war, not much attention was directed towards the north western part of Somalia, the former British Protectorate. In May 1991, the victorious SNM declared the Republic of Somaliland independent with reference to the four days of independence before uniting with the UN Trusteeship of Somalia in 1960 (Bradbury, 1997, 18-19; Republic of Somaliland, 1996; Lewis, 1994, 215). A reconciliation conference followed and a parliamentary system was introduced. In 1993, Egal, the former Minister of Local Government of the British Protectorate as well as the first Somali Prime Minister in the Republic of Somalia was elected as President.

Though disturbed by periods of inter-clan fighting in 1994 and 1998, there has been relative peace in Somaliland since 1996. Likewise, the north eastern part of Somalia declared itself autonomous in 1998 under the name of Puntland, but in opposition to Somaliland, Puntland considers itself part of a future Somali federal state. The rest of Somalia is highly unstable, although there appear to be pockets of fragile peace and stability (Gundel, 2003; UNDP, 2001).

The beginning of the civil war in Somalia coincided with the gradual termination of the Cold War. Somalia lost strategic value for the US and other Western countries, which gradually withdrew economic support, credits, and aid programmes. With the outbreak of civil war in Yugoslavia and the Gulf War, the attention of the

world tended to drift away from Somalia. The US-led UN intervention called *Operation Restore Hope* was a total failure and since 1991, Somalia has effectively been without a central government (Gundel, 2003; Kleist, 2003a; Marchal et al., 2000; Bradbury, 1997). A number of peace talks and conferences have taken place, but so far no lasting peace agreement has been reached. In 2000, a three-year Transnational National Assembly was established and there are currently ongoing negotiations of what will follow³.

4.1 Refugees

With an estimated 429,000 Somali refugees in 2003, Somalis are ranked by UNHCR as the fifth largest refugee population in the world, after Afghanis, Burundians, Sudanese and Angolans⁴. This has not always been so. Somalia has been an important refugee receiving country as well. In the aftermath of the failed Ogaden invasion, up to 1.5 million refugees went to Somalia (Bradbury, 1997, 7). In 1980 Somalia was said to host more than a million refugees (Øberg & Slottved, 1980), resulting in a situation, described by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Poul Hartling, as "the worst refugee problem in the world" (quoted in Anglo-Somali Society Newsletter, 1980). The number of refugees remained very high until 1990, when it fell dramatically as the civil war unfolded and Somalia became a place from which people fled if they could (UNHCR, 1998, table 13; UNHCR, 1999). While the numbers in the tables below are not necessarily accurate (as statistics of refugees rarely are), they still give an impression of the big fluctuations of refugees in and from Somalia⁵. Generally – and interestingly in relation to the claims that mainly 'women and children' fled to Ethiopia and Kenya - the gender division in refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia appears to be almost equal (UNHCR, 2003a).

³ See the report 'Biting the Somali Bullet' (2004) from the International Crisis Group, www.crisisweb.org.

⁴ Palestinians are not included in this ranking, as they are covered by another UN mandate (UNHCR, 2003c, 5).

⁵ The number of Somali refugees does not necessarily mirror the actual number of Somalis living outside the countries. First of all, it is an estimate of refugees and people of concern to the UNHCR and thus excludes those who are not categorised as such, including undocumented migrants. Secondly, those registered as refugees might hold several identity cards and might therefore be counted several times. It should also be noted, that since the great majority of Gulf countries have not signed the different refugee conventions and protocols, Somali nationals in refugee-like situations living in these countries do not appear in the UNHCR statistics, even if the number of Somalis living there might be substantial.

Table 1: Estimated number of refugees in Somalia, 1980 – 1996

Year	Number
1980	1,000,000
1984	700,000*
1988	834,000**
1992	480**
1996	700**

Source: (UNHCR, 1998; National Refugee Commission, 1984; Øberg et al., 1980).

*Refugees in camps. More refugees could be expected to have lived outside camps.

**Refugees recognised by UNHCR, including people of concern to UNHCR.

Table 2: Estimated number of Somali refugees in neighbouring countries of asylum*, 1990 – 2000

Year	Number
1990	450,000
1992	780,000 ⁶
1994	536,000
1996	500,000
1998	420,000
2000	320,000

Source: (UNDP, 2001; UNHCR, 1995).

*Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and Djibouti.

Table 3: Estimated number of Somali refugees in selected Western countries of asylum*, 1991-2000

Country	1991	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
US	700	2,400	8,800	18,200	24,400	34,000
UK	2,100	4,300	9,000	14,800	19,200	26,900
Netherlands	-	5,000	10,200	15,800	17,800	19,400
Denmark	700	1,400	3,500	6,400	9,000	10,000
Sweden	3,000	4,400	7,100	7,500	7,600	7,300
Canada	-	-	17,800	11,400	7,100	5,200
Italy	700	700	10,700	10,000	1,100	400
Total	7,200	18,200	67,100	84,100	86,200	103,200

Source: (UNHCR, 2002).

- no numbers.

*These numbers are estimates. The UNHCR does not state whether the numbers include family reunification or only refer to recognised refugees. In the former case, the numbers for at least Denmark are too low.

⁶ Bradbury estimates that there were as many as 1,500,000 Somali refugees in total in 1992 (Bradbury, 1997, 1).

Box 3: 'The war never stopped'. The story of Omar

I grew up on a farm outside a town in the Southern part of Somalia. My father was a farmer. After high school I found work at a fish factory as a sales assistant. The factory was sponsored by Danida and their field manager was Danish. He was the first Dane I ever met. After two years, the civil war started and General Aideed, a warlord, came closer to our area. His clan and our clan are different and war broke out between the two clans. Aideed captured Kismayo, the biggest town, and the war went on and on.

So we fled to Kenya. All the time I was thinking that the war would stop, that Somalia would be normal again, that there would be a system. I was waiting for two-three years. We had this farm. So we took all our farming tools with us to Kenya, all the time thinking that we would return. It got more and more dangerous and the police captured us all the time. We had to pay money to them each night otherwise ... It got worse and worse and there is no work. So I had this friend, who had lived four years in Stockholm. He recommended that I go there, but it is difficult with my family. In the end, my father and I agreed to sell our tractor to find an opportunity for me. So I bought a false passport in Nairobi, because in Kenya you can get everything if you have money. I would have liked to go to Sweden, because my friend lives there, but I was in transit in Copenhagen and I had to ask for asylum here. After a few months in an asylum centre in Copenhagen I was sent to a very small island. We were the first Africans there and sometimes the local people there stopped their cars to look at us. After four years I came to Copenhagen.

My father and I had a dream to return and grow our farm. We didn't succeed. My father died with his dreams a few years ago, my mother and sisters still live in a refugee camp in Kenya. One of my sisters has a small shop there; when I can afford it, I send money to her and my mother.

As the tables show, the number of refugees has changed over the years. On the one hand, the decrease in the number of refugees in the neighbouring countries reflects the fact that substantial numbers of Somali refugees have undertaken so-called voluntary repatriation, often UNHCR assisted. The number of registered Somali refugees in Ethiopia fell by about 210,000 people from 1997 to 2002 (UNHCR, 1998; UNHCR, 2003a). In 1997 alone, 50,000 Somalis repatriated from Ethiopia (UNHCR, 1998, table 6) to the unrecognised Republic of Somaliland; in 2002, the number of returnees was estimated to be close to 30,000 (UNHCR, 2003a). In Somaliland, large resettlement areas have formed new neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the largest towns, such as State House in Hargeisa and Koosaar Resettlement Area in Burao. Generally these areas are very poor and the resources allocated to the reintegration of returnees are extremely limited.

On the other hand, the decrease in the number of refugees in neighbouring countries also reflect the fact that substantial numbers of Somali asylum seekers have moved further on – for instance to Western countries. The numbers also clearly show that even if the number of recognised Somali refugees in the West has risen dramatically from 1991 to 2000, it has *never* come close to the number of refugees in the neighbouring countries. The major cities in Ethiopia and Kenya, especially

Nairobi and Addis Ababa, served and still serve as centres or stepping stones for migration to the West, and many Somalis seem to have headed towards these destinations in the hope of continuing to the West (Horst, 2001; Farah, 2000). Omar is one of the many refugees who spent some years in Kenya before he got asylum in the West (See Box 3).

4.2 Asylum migration to the West

That Omar should come to Denmark was not planned. He was caught by the civil war as a young man, driven out of the southern part of Somalia, and ended up in a refugee camp as did thousands of other Somalis. Selling the family tractor gave him the possibility to reach the West through the acquisition of a false Swedish passport. But due to the Dublin Convention, which dictates that asylum must be applied in the first EU country the asylum seeker enters (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2004a, 2004b), Omar did not make it to Sweden. Destination Denmark is a coincidence – or rather a consequence of the asylum legislation in the EU (cf. Lisborg & Lisborg, 2003). In this way, Omar's story is identical to many other cases. The table of 'top-ten' Western countries below might thus reflect a certain contingency insofar as the countries where asylum applications are lodged are not necessarily the destination that the asylum seeker hoped to reach.

Table 4: Asylum applications lodged in selected Western countries, 1993-2002

Country	1993	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	Total** 1993 – 2002
UK*	1,465	1,840	1,780	4,685	5,020	6,680	41,625
Netherlands	4,330	5,393	1,140	2,775	2,110	533	25,688
US*	131	114	1,140	2,268	2,364	538	13,532
Canada	2,468	1,989	962	653	753	388	10,887
Denmark*	1,469	2,011	1,514	662	747	391	10,688
Germany*	1,577	896	1,152	1,078	398	203	8,251
Switzerland	2,295	881	700	610	470	387	7,591
Norway	259	251	180	938	910	1,534	7,233
Sweden	733	934	434	228	260	1,107	5,743
France	1,077	217	85	91	109	115	2,077

Source: (UNHCR, 2003a).

*Figures for Denmark include asylum applications lodged at embassies abroad. Figures for Germany include re-opened cases. Figures for the US and UK refer to cases.

**Note that the total number includes all ten years, 1993-2002.

As the table shows, Somalis continued to ask for asylum throughout the 1990s, both in Britain as well as in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, North America and many other Western countries. In a kind of parallel movement, family reunification with relatives in the West became another way out of Somalia or the refugee camps⁷. Somalis are now spread all over the world, from New Zealand to Finland, from Japan to Canada, from China to South Africa.

However, as Western asylum legislation places severe restrictions on the possibilities of third-country citizens to enter Europe, asylum migration to the West is a very costly (and often very dangerous) affair (Lisborg et al., 2003; Carder, 2003). The continuing tightening of the EU asylum politics has led some researchers to characterise the EU as a 'non-entrée regime' (Kibreab, 1999; Chimni, 1998).

The European non-entrée regime has several implications. One implication is that the Somalis as well as other asylum seekers need to have financial resources to be able to go to the West at all. In the case of Omar, this meant the family had to sell their tractor. Other migrants who do not have such possibilities, might get help from

relatives already in the West or in the Gulf, so that at least one family member can go (cf. Carder, 2003). It goes without saying that the decisions concerning who can go might be very tough to carry out. In many cases, families are separated by the civil war and sudden flight, but in other cases, separation seems to occur as families try to seek protection in the West, but cannot afford to do it at the same time (Carder, 2003; cf. Fink-Nielsen et al., 2000). In this strategy of 'scattered family re-unification', one family member goes, especially the mother it seems, maybe accompanied by some or all children. It is then the hope to get family reunification with the rest of the family later. This plan, however, does not always work out, especially since asylum and family reunification legislation have tightened throughout Europe.

A third implication of European asylum legislation is that the arrival destination of asylum seekers might be contingent – or rather, governed and determined by other actors and factors than the wishes and hopes of asylum seekers themselves, as in the case of Omar, who wanted to go to Stockholm, but ended in Denmark. Apart from luck and coincidence, the destination reached seems to depend on which airline and destination the human smuggler asserts is the safest and whether the route implies transit in a so-called safe country, meaning the asylum seekers in principle have to ask for asylum there. Finally the price paid to the smuggler plays a role as well – different routes and destinations have different prices (Carder, 2003; Lisborg et al., 2003; Farah, 2000). The scattered and contingent destinations also mean that many Somali families have been dispersed throughout the world.

5. Conclusion

In the present moment, spring 2004, the 'status' of Somali migration is that in spite of many restrictions, Somali asylum seekers keep on lodging asylum claims in Western countries. It has become very difficult for asylum seekers from the self-declared Republic of Somaliland and other 'safe areas' to be granted asylum in the West, and as a result, family re-unification seems to one of the few possibilities for entering the West. This possibility, however, is also growing increasingly difficult as the rules for family re-unification are tightening up in many countries. As mentioned above, so-called voluntary repatriation from Ethiopia to Somaliland has been going on for some years now, as have repatriation schemes from Western countries, though in much smaller numbers (Fink-Nielsen, Hansen, & Kleist, 2002).

⁷ Another way of securing asylum to the West is through resettlement. Resettlement, however, is limited in numbers and only included 1,575 persons in 2002 (UNHCR, 2003b, table 15), whereas the number of Somali citizens granted asylum in Western countries the same year amounted to 8,380 (own calculations, based on UNHCR, 2003a).

As time passes, many Somalis have obtained citizenship in their Western countries of asylum or residence. With an EU or North American passport, the possibility for continued mobility is much greater. When Somalis return to mainly Somaliland for shorter or longer periods to buy land, build a house and maybe try to make a living, the great majority seem to have acquired Western passports. Travelling with a Western passport not only makes mobility easier (not to say legal), it also ensures that the opportunity to return to a Western country if civil war breaks out again (cf. Kleist, 2003b; Fink-Nielsen et al., 2002; Hansen, 2001). During July and August, thousands of visiting 'Western' Somalilanders with cash, presents, and video cameras go on holiday in Somaliland. While some of these people might end up staying for a while – maybe for good – the majority go back to their Western countries of residence, or maybe back and forth. It seems like it is especially the men who are trying to settle in Somaliland, maybe backed by financial support from their wives or kids in the West⁸.

Likewise, there is an ongoing movement of Somali-Europeans to Britain, especially from the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. These Somali-Dutchmen, Somali-Swedes and Somali-Danes have obtained EU-citizenship and now move on to London, Birmingham, Leicester, or Cardiff (cf. Nielsen, 2003). In this case of inter-European migration, women are said to be at least as eager as the men to go. This 'second family reunification', as one man characterised the movement, can be seen as a move where Somali families, who might have been separated, not only by the civil war, but also by the Western asylum regimes, try to unite with their close or more distant families. Likewise these migrants might be moving on with friends, to obtain international education, to find work, or to try their luck in an environment that is perceived to be friendlier than Scandinavia or the Netherlands. While this movement is sometimes termed 'secondary movement' (ibid.), I prefer the term 'continued movement'. As we have seen, it is very possible that the movement to the West was not the first movement at all: It might well have been one more step in a life of ongoing journeys, whether 'voluntary' or not.

In the words of many Somalis, the movement to Britain is a result of 'the nomadic spirit', a wish to

keep on looking for 'greener pastures'. It is not my aim here to determine whether this is a suitable explanation or not⁹. Rather my point is, that the nomadic explanation underlines the *continuity* in the history of Somali migration as well as in individual lives. Identifying oneself or others with 'the nomads' can be seen as a way to emphasise continuity and to mobilise images of being adventurous, tough and independent, rather than marginalized, displaced and helpless. Other Somalis, however, do not subscribe to the nomadic explanation and emphasise other reasons – or do not wish to live anywhere else. Not all are or wish to be identified with the nomads.

Returning to the three stories of Mohamed, Aisha and Omar makes it clear that there are both continuities and changes in the migration history of Somali nationals – including those who later became Western citizens. Their stories also show that the categories of political and economic migrants, or 'refugees' and 'immigrants', might be more fluid than is often thought. Aisha, for instance, left Somalia as a professional, a work-related migrant, but entered Denmark as an asylum seeker. Mohamed came as an immigrant, but got engaged in the SNM resistance movement during the 1980s and has continued to be a key figure in Somaliland politics in Denmark. The West still dominates and frames Somali migration, despite the dissolution of the colonial Empires, the end of the Cold War, and the appearance of the Schengen agreement in the EU. Civil war and continuing unrest continue to separate people, making mobile livelihoods an option for many people, whether such moves and livelihoods are welcomed or not. When Mohamed came to Denmark in the end of the 1960s, only a few other Somali sailors were around. Thirty years later, when Aisha and Omar arrived, this number had started growing. Whether the Somali migrants and their children will take a new turn and head further West, return to Somaliland or Somalia, or go somewhere else is impossible to know. It seems likely, that the possibility of free movement of EU-citizens within the European Union might add one more 'wave' to the history of Somali migration. However, whilst the mobility of those with Western citizenship is eased, the mobility of those without the desired passports

⁸ I have used the term 'scattered return' elsewhere to characterise these transnational family strategies and livelihoods (Fink-Nielsen et al., 2002; Fink-Nielsen et al., 2000).

⁹ Cindy Horst uses the term Transnational nomads to characterise the dispersed livelihoods and social mechanisms of Somali refugees in the Kenyan refugee camp, Dadaab (Horst, 2003). Likewise Katrine Nielsen refers to nomadism in her analysis of the movement of Somali-Danes to the UK (Nielsen, 2003).

looks to be even more circumscribed, dangerous and costlier than before.

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