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## Reimagining identities through orality: Political songs among the Borana of Northern Kenya during the 1960s political party formations

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**Abstract**

This paper is a reading of the political events and discourses around nationalism using orality at the eve of Kenya's independence during which period the people of Northern Kenya were confronted with the quest(ion) of belongingness to two African countries, namely Somalia and Kenya. On the one hand, their Kenyanness was determined and framed by the colonial border which disregarded ethnic, religious and cultural affiliation of the people. On the other hand, their gravitation towards Somalia was predicated upon assumed notions of cultural affinity and shared religious beliefs. While the Somali from Kenya wanted to secede in *toto*, the Borana on the contrary were divided, some chose Kenya over Somalia in a show of patriotic national consciousness as shown in the song they composed for this purpose. The employment of song performances is a site of individual and communal reflection. The very instruments of unification such as religion used by the Somali to legitimize their claim are contested by singers who invoke alternative paradigm of religions from the Islamic one. A fresh dimension of identity formulation emerges. People disregard ways in which they have been imagined and categorized as Muslim, Somali or Cushitic, to instead reimagine themselves as Borana, Oromo and Kenyan. The paper argues that the Kenyan Borana had a collective desire to be part of the other non-Somali Kenyans even though they were religiously and ethnically different from them. The song is used as sites of contestation that envoice the rejection of Somali nationalism and reaffirmation of their belongingness and loyalty to the Kenyan nation.

**Keywords:** Borana, identity, Northern Kenya, NPPPP, NPUA, political songs

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### Public Interest Statement

This paper arises from the historical incident in which the Somali of Northern Kenya attempted to secede to Somalia in the early 1960s from Kenya, citing religious and cultural affiliations to the people of that country. By simple majority, the Borana declined to follow the Somali in their machination. The paper sets the record straight by documenting some of the reasons the Borana had for their refusal to follow the Kenyan Somali into the Somali nation as propagated by the former. Reasons for this refusal are entailed in the songs analysed.

### 1.0 Introduction

Although studies have been conducted on the subject of secession and the related *shifita* (banditry) movement in the Northern Kenya and its secessionist agenda, little focus has been made on the anti-secessionist group particularly by the Borana under the ambit of Northern People's United Association (NPUA) and the fundamental reasons for it (Whittaker 2015, Mburu 2005). According to Whittaker (2008), the centre of organised political opposition to secessionism were mainly Christian Boran or individuals from the minority Burji community. Focus needed to be made of this anti-secessionist sentiment and the driving philosophy behind it. This is well expressed in the political song and oral poetry that was composed addressing the question of communalism and nationalism as they perceived of it.

One major driving force for the Borana opposing secessionism, was the fear of Somali domination and resultant marginalization of the Borana by the larger Somali group in the new Somalia nation. These fears are not unfounded. Indeed, even in the then Kenyan political formation, the so-called small tribes feared the domination of large tribes such as the Kikuyu and the Luo. This led to the formation of Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) by the Kalenjin, Luhya and the Coastal people as a counter move to curtail the domination of Kenya African National Union (KANU) populated largely by the Kikuyu and the Luo (Ogot, 2012).

The fear of domination by the Somali is also founded on the reality that although they are grouped together linguistically as Cushitic, they nonetheless do not share to a great extent ethnicity, language and religion. The Borana language is not intelligible to the Somali and vice versa. From time immemorial, they regard each other as enemies. The Borana regard Somali as *nyaapha*, (enemies) that can be raided in warfare and can in turn raid. Such raids have been a norm for a long time over land, water and pasture (Oba, 2013; Oba, 2017). The Somali derogatorily referred to the Borana as infidels, *kaffir* or nonbelievers, taking the Islamic faith as the ipso facto religion for all. In Somali worldview, any none Muslim is deemed irreligious no matter the cultural and linguistic similarity.

Political collaboration under a new Northern Province Peoples Progressive Party (NPPPP) was not ameliorating this enemy tag in meaningful way either. In some cases, even the shared Islamic religion does not seem to help the matters. The murder of two prominent Borana by the Somali, Paramount Chief Hajj Galma Dido and District Commissioner (DC) Daudi Dabaso Wabera at the eve of independence was a case in point. The twin murder by the Muslim Somali, even though Chief Galma has been a quintessential Muslim evident in his earned Hajj title, left a deep-seated wound in the heart of the Borana. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1963 the two were murdered in Modogashe on their mission to persuade the Borana masses of Merti, Isiolo and Modogashe to embrace the Northern Peoples United Association (NPUA) agenda and reject the Somali secessionist agenda propagated by NPPPP. According to Hon. Adan Waqo Bonaya who later became the Member of Parliament (MP) for Isiolo South, Wabera was in the company of his driver Kanu Jaldesa, Hajj Galma and a former chief of Sakuye stock, Guyo Jatani. He was at the steering wheel having excused his driver to sit at the back of the car. The killers were one

Mohamed Farah of Somali Majertan clan carrying a submachine gun, patchet and Mohamed Gelle from Arte clan armed with a revolver. The two assassins were former police and army officers respectively. The general Borana populous believe that the murder was planned and sanctioned with the knowledge of the then Assistant Commissioner of police, a Mr. Bridgeon. It was said that the latter had a Somali girlfriend who was in constant contact with the assailants. The whole scheme was known to special branch and intelligence officers of the colonial government and the Somali population who contributed money to buy a getaway car for this purpose. In the minds of the Borana, the killing was ethnically and politically motivated.

For this and many other reasons, the Borana opposed Pan-Somali nationalist project that tended to capitalize on religious and cultural affiliation in the northern Kenya to join the so-called greater Somaliland. For example, Weizberg (2018) argues that northern Kenya intellectual thinkers tried to forge unity for the idea of a greater Somalia using songs and poetry that appealed to what bound them in addition to religion and kinship that is the pastoral lifestyle they all shared. The secessionists themselves have composed songs that chide their Borana opponents for throwing their lot with Bantuled Kenyan government who in their imagination are not affiliated to them. Indeed, an example of one such song among the Waaso (Isiolo) Borana I came across illustrates this point:

Agaan dheera Galge	Agaa the tall son of Galge
Matoomaf gaalle	Left because of his whims
Jillon diiqa Hanxxi	Jillo the short son of Hanxxi
Agaat gaalef gaalle	Left because Agaa left
Sora maata qaala	Sora the thin headed one
Garachaf gaalle	Left because of his stomach
Jillon lumme guddaa	Jillo the thick necked one
Gar fakatu gaalle	Left to join his look alike

A pro-secession song, the stanza attempts to give various reasons that people have for joining their nemesis, the NPUA, that is anti-secession. The singer argues that they left what he deems to be the Borana political side to join their opponents who in the eyes of NPPPP adherents are the Kenyan Bantu population that are not related to them in any remote way in terms of ethnicity and religion. The first person to whom jibes are thrown at is Agaa Galgallo who is said to be too whimsical and opinionated to listen to others. He was said to be defiant for egoistical reasons and decided to join NPUA to satisfy his own egoistic desires. The second man Jillo Hanxii is basically a loyalist of Agaa. He endorses his friend's decision and falls in step. The third man is driven by his stomach, following which side of his bread is buttered, a sellout enticed by goodies. The fourth man also call Jillo is said to have thick neck, and therefore ugly, joins NPUA on account of his physical appearance. By so saying the singer implies that his ugliness affiliates him to the Bantu political groups which he has joined. Overall, the singer argues that the members of NPUA are not ideologically inclined but are driven by petty issues of looks, stomach and whims. As Nene Mburu (2005) says the secession intermeshed three fundamentals: religion, ethnicity and pastoral nomadism.

Scholars like (Weizberg 2017, p. 2) argue that by early 1960s, most of the nomadic inhabitants of Kenya's borderlands including many people who were not normally considered Somali rallied around the idea of a greater Somalia which they hoped would dismantle the territorial borders that crisscrossed the arid north Although this may be true for a few individuals who are regarded as betrayers, this hypothesis does not hold for the Borana. Firstly, the Borana had no problem with and therefore found no need in

'dismantling the territorial borders' between communities. In fact, they wanted it reinforced because the movement entailed the Somali encroachment on the Borana range lands and aggravating conflict. This is because the arrival of a new group of Somali into the area (northern Kenya) was accompanied by attack and counter attacks on Borana groups for control over wells and grazing (Whittaker, 2017, p. 387). These attacks were lethal, involving looting of livestock and massacre of people. The territorial borderlines were crossed forcefully to access not only the grazing resources such as pasture and water, but to displace and own the land on which these resources were found. The Somali nomadic groups enslaved or absorbed locals into subordinate relationships or expelled those who resisted their encroachment (Weitzberg, 2017, p. 8). The Borana were relying on government authorities to safeguard their territory from the Somali invasion.

The Borana anti-secession song is a reflection of this fear and reality of the alien Somali using some unorthodox means to entrench themselves in the Borana land, including the notions of greater Somalia and secessionism which most Borana found suspicious from the onset. On the one hand the Somali mobilized the services of non-territorial affiliation into a popular movement that appealed to many of the region's transhumant nomadic inhabitants (Weitzberg, 2017) and on the other, the Somali see themselves as a race of Asiatic origin, hence operating on the premises of superiority and exclusivity. As Lewis (1961) informs, the Somali consists of six patrilineal clan-families formed by descendants of mythical Arabic ancestors who arrived in Somali twenty-five to thirty generations ago. As descendants of an eponymous Arab patriarch called Samaale, they have an inherent pride and conceit which make them regard Africans as subhuman, slave or infidels with such unsavory epithets as *guralle*, blacks, *charrer*, kinky hair and *habid*, infidels proffered on all and sundry who are not Somali. According to Tabea Scharrer (2018), Kenyan Somalis reinforced notions of being different when calling their neighbours Africans. Indeed, even as early as 1927 one colonial Governor, E B Denham, described the Somali as the wildest and least disciplined with volatile character (Whittaker 2017, p. 387).

With the onset of the political era awakening in the 1960s, the Somali grew bolder and hell bent to institute a borderless Somali nation that reclaims land using their uninhibited migratory routes. The Somali Youth League, a Pan-Somali political association was also being blamed for teaching people to abolish tribal authority and tribal boundaries so that anyone can graze and go anywhere he likes (Whittaker 2017, p. 393). This *laissez-faire* kind of thinking did not seat well with the Borana who had tremendous respect for authorities, be they tribal or colonial. Besides, it is their land that was being made free for all and not the Somali's. The political party formation song embodies the Borana community's reaction to this state of affairs veiled as nationalism when in fact the grand plan was to have the Somali have unfettered access to and use of Borana pastoral land.

## 2.0 Theoretical framework

This paper draws on the theoretical orientation propounded by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Claude Levi-Strauss on notions of binary opposites and otherness to explain the rejection of the Greater Somalia overarching call of brotherhood and common nationality and identity by the majority of the Borana. Although these theoretical orientations were initially used to explain postcolonial societies in relation to colonizer/colonised and the structural view where universal phenomena have their own paired opposites, they are still relevant and sufficient lens with which to view and understand the power play at hand and the resistance to the exercise of that power.

Frantz Fanon talks about the other as not me. This way of perceiving other people who are not 'we' are aimed at maintaining authority over them. According to him, the other lacks identity, does not belong to a group, does not speak a given dominant language and does not have the same custom. The

other is the unfamiliar, the alien and in most cases is what the self is not. Levi-Strauss's binary opposite is a principle of contrast between two exclusive terms which indicate perceived layered power structure that work to maintain and reinforce a society or cultural dominant ideologies. Here, I apply the theory to explain the ways in which the notion of self and other are used to segregate and subjugate the Borana by the Somali using their language and religious differences, and the ways in which the other (Borana) chose to resist. In their response they portray their resistance and affirm their fidelity to their culture, custom, land and country. As Edward Said says, otherizing people is about disempowering and dislocating them, and as the song being analyzed reveals, the other understand the secession project as a scheme hatched by the Somali to access Borana land and to dislocate them from it. The binary opposites of self/other, powerful/powerless, superior/inferior etc will be handy in the interpretations of the song and the events contextualized and described by it. The singers are equivocal that the Somali were in grand pursuit of the Borana land to colonize it, to dispossess them of it by imposing their authority through culture and language. The Somali were interested in expanding their hegemony and sphere of influence over Borana land, thus building empire through deceit camouflaged as nationalism. In the words of Edward Said (1993), the actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about.

### 3.0 Literature Review

#### 3.1 *Political song, pastoral land and identity*

At the time of clamor for independence in Kenya, the then called Northern Frontier Districts (NFD) had two major political parties, namely NPUA and NPPPP. In 1960 the Northern Province People's Progressive Party (NPPPP) was formed at a huge gathering in Garba Tulla, Isiolo's second largest town. The party officials were distributed fairly across the districts and the tribes residing there. It was chaired by Waqo Haphi Taaroo, a Borana from Isiolo, deputized by Alex Kolkholle, a Rendille from Marsabit. The others were Mr. Istanbul, Secretary General from Garissa, deputized by a Somali from Wajir and the treasurer was from Mandera. Their main agenda was to secede to Somalia since in their view they were not in any remote way related to the rest of Kenyan tribes. For example, in a memorandum dated 18<sup>th</sup> November 1962 a group of about twenty Borana elders appealed to the Border commission of her Majesty's British government to allow them to secede to Somali arguing that they are not affiliated to the Bantu communities of Kenya whose political parties like KANU and KADU are set to gain power and freedom from the colonial government. Texts like this cited below are authored by different groups and interested parties appealing to the colonial government to let them join Somalia. On the contrary as Arero (2007) notes, the NPUA was a nationalist party whose ideology was pro-Kenya. NPPPP on the other hand wanted the region to secede to form greater Somalia. The notion of secession was a much larger project fronted by the Somali ethnic community in Kenya to secede to the Republic of Somalia. Regionally, it was a time of what some scholars term "the rise of Somali Nationalism" (Markakis 1987, Mahmoud, 2008). It was a project driven by ethnicity and religious affiliation, with a rallying call, Somali is our tribe, and Islam is our religion.

I now turn to the analysis of the political song that rejects the whole idea of secession to join the so call Somali brothers on the basis of religion, language, and culture which scholars in general assumed is shared. The performance of the song is a site of individual and communal reflection. Songs are a means by which people reflect on their current conditions to define or reinvent themselves and their social world and either reinforce, resist or subvert prevailing social order (Drew 1926). The Borana voice their resentment to the political machinations by the Somali as they perceive the whole idea does not augur well with their desirous identity since the Somali are not sincere in their dealings with them



from past experiences. They have even formulated a proverb to reflect this inherent suspicion, *abba gaeti Safar jaal qabata* (those who befriend Somali must be prepared for betrayal). In times of conflict (oral) poets adopt the position of journalists, spokespersons, and politicians rolled into one (Jama, 1994), as the following lines show:

Laffeen gargar captee  
Cireesa maallee hinhidhamtu  
Laafiti abba qabdu  
Beessen hinbitamtu  
Laaf teen hinbitinaa  
Biyaa biyeen hinfidaamtu

Broken bones  
Cannot be tied without an expert healer  
A land with owners  
Cannot be bought with money  
Do not sell our land  
Flora and fauna will not survive

The singer underscores the significance of land to a community. The community's very existence is about their occupation of a space solely owned with which people identify geographically and culturally. Land is a space for use to earn livelihood and to be buried in when dead. The singer hints at the risk the community has been exposed to if they lose their land. They stand to be dislocated and dispossessed. The outsider/insider contrast is shown by owner/other. The speaker warns his community not to be enticed by money into selling or be tempted to sell land and become a foreigner on land that they currently own. The song, in its main message, appeals to the local people not to sell the land to outsiders. In the singer's estimation, being converted to NPPPP member whose party policy is to secede to Somali is tantamount to selling Borana land for money. The singer quips that in a sold land both the people and the soil literally put and all that it nurtures will perish. The frightening image of destruction, dislocation and dispossession should, if nothing else, stop people from contemplating the outrageous idea of secession which in the singer's mind will surely be tragic. The stanza evokes the sentimental attachment to land and life which should be everlasting and must be sustained. In terms of style there is the use of sound parallelism in *laffeen/laafiti* (bone/land), *inhidhaamtu/inhinbitamtu/infidaamtu* (cannot be tied/cannot be bought/cannot survive). Just as broken bones cannot be tied together without the expertise of an orthopedic, land cannot survive and sustain its inhabitants in the hand of aliens to whom it is sold. Their fate and destiny as a people is tied to the fate of the land which for all intent and purposes is under threat of foreign occupation. As Clifford Geertz (1963) says people's sense of self remains bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion and tradition. The pastoral land is owned by the Borana and displacement through purchase or secession threatens the survival of the communal identity as a people as they will be swallowed by the Somali.

The second stanza also expounds on the same land purchase motif that is being resisted and scoffed at:

Fanti arba hinbane  
Ka kale bobae  
Orrin laf himbine

Bilashum obae  
Ka gan jatamat NPUA gad bae

Elephant footmarks does not disappear  
Where they grazed yesterday  
Money cannot buy land  
It will be finished for nothing  
In 1960 NPUA was formed

The money meant to purchase land is said to have been a waste since money cannot buy land in spite of the boastful wishes of its owners. The singer affirms to his people that however wealthy the Somali foreigners are; their money cannot purchase Borana land. By this claim the speaker underscores the firm resolve of his community to face head on the affront by NPPPP. The speaker lauds the formation in 1960s of NPUA which he perceives as a counter organization that will provide the much needed alternative narrative touted by the Somali dominated NPPPP. The song points to the underhand funding of NPPPP by the Somali government. My informants told me that President Adan Abdullahi and Prime Minister Abdullahi Sharmake of Somalia funded NPPPP substantially, including giving them Land Rover vehicles for their transportation and ease of movement in the vast northern Kenya region. The question of the use of huge amounts of money to politically destabilize the Borana population is what the stanza emphasizes. The Borana were aware of the vain attempts by the Somali business elites and their lackeys who entice Borana leadership with monetary rewards to join the NPPPP that in turn aid in their secession schemes targeting the Borana masses.

The third stanza is a series of answering back the NPPPP rivals taunting the Borana of lacking land, vehicles and money, and in the song the rebuttal as a punch line was 'our horses are our vehicle:

Gari hinqabdan jete  
Gari ken farda  
Laf hinqabdan jete  
Lafti ten bada  
Bangi hinqabdan jete  
Bangi ten sanga  
Irren hinqabdan jete  
Irren ten farda

You said we lack vehicles  
Our vehicles are horses  
You said we lack land  
Our land is forested  
You said we lack bank account  
Our bank account is our bullocks  
You said we lack strength  
Our strength is our horses

This stanza is the alternative voice of the 'other' speaking to power. For each of these degrading assertions, NPUA resorts not to the foreign powers but local resources where horses serve as vehicles

for logistics. The Borana are well known cavalry men and they had earlier dominated the whole of northern Kenya because of their prowess in harnessing horses in intertribal wars (Oba, 2013; 2017). The land issue is also answered by the claim that the Borana land is a highland. This is contrasted with the lowlands that most of Northern Kenya where the Somali call home and also the topography of Somaliland itself which in the most part is a desert scrubland. The Borana boast of what they call *baada saadeen* (three highlands). These are Saaku in Marsabit Mountain in Kenya and Maagadoo and Nagele in Ethiopia. This means that to the Borana their land is highly productive and sustaining rather than a waste land where nothing grows and where animals die for lack of pasture. Lastly on the issue of lacking money in the bank, the local answer is that they have money on hooves. The bullocks that are in their millions constitute the Borana money which can be drawn on at the times of need. Financial support for the NPUA is always obtained by Borana households contributing a bullock each to attend to whatever financial needs at hand that needed to be solved. Hence in stanza four, a Borana leader in Ethiopia was said to have offered bullocks for use by NPUA for slaughter and for sale to raise money. This stanza is a clear example where the Somali irredentists otherize the Borana. The other is a site of lack. The Borana, who in this case is the other is said to lack land, money, vehicle and power, therefore deemed backward without modern luxuries like car, bank account, power and land. The replies are indeed a counter narrative. The horse may not match the power and comfort of a vehicle or the bullocks that of bank account, but they are proudly indigenous to them unlike the Somali's possession which are donated by foreign powers.

The next stanza refers to Halake Guyo Xuyyee, a famous Borana leader in Southern Ethiopia.

Halake dheera Guyye  
Budde kara dhae  
Robi gurreen Buke  
Siitu surree maarree  
Shambal Makonen  
Bushenti sii dhae

Halake the tall son of Guyo  
Offered long-horned bullocks  
Roba the black son of Buke  
Tied checkered turban on you  
Colonel Makonen fired a gun salute in your honour

Halake Guyo Xuyyee was *Fitowrari*, commander of vanguard, of traditional Ethiopian armed forces. Oral sources interviewed for this research affirm that the title was conferred in recognition of Halake's unmatched bravery, patriotic defense of his homeland, impartial and just leadership and representation of his community. He was also awarded a gold medal by his Majesty Haile Selassie who decorated him in recognition of his service to the nation and people of Ethiopia. Such services included taking long and dangerous trips on horseback to Addis Ababa at least four times in his lifetime to present Boraana community grievances, fought against the Italian invasion of Borana land during World War two, successfully lobbied the Ethiopian government to arm the Borana against the Somali invasion and resisted the expansionist *shifita* (banditry) movement whose agenda was secessionist and the unification of the greater Somalia in the 1960s.

The fact that he offered bullocks for the party leaders means he was supportive of the NPUA



aspirations of remaining in Kenya rather than seceding to Somalia. This cooperation was confirmed when the Borana leaders from Kenya were invited by Emperor Haile Selassie himself and feasted. According to one informant, the then Ethiopian Ambassador Ato Getatchu Mekasha handed over three Land Rover vehicles and financial aid donated by the Emperor and his government. The honour and esteem with which the Ethiopian regime regarded the Borana leaders and the ideology they represented were evident when later on in 1968 political and administrative leaders led by Galgallo Godana (Marsabit), Osman Araru (Moyale), Haji Wario Guracha (Moyale), Hon. Adan Waqo Bonaya (Isiolo), Elisha Godana (Marsabit), Sora Galgallo (Senator Moyale) were hosted at the Jubilee Palace Hotel in Addis Ababa by the Emperor Haile Selassie.

In this stanza, Ethiopia's support is evidenced by the gun salute by Shambal Makonnen, the highest ranking Ethiopian government official in Moyale. Roba Bukura mentioned in the stanza was also a prominent Ethiopian government official of the rank of *Qenyazmach* (military commander) although he was of the Borana stock. Roba Bukura was until his death in mid-nineties a renowned Borana elder who had served Haile Selassie's government as *Qenyazmach* Roba, among the Southern Ethiopian Borana people, serving his people in leadership position alongside *Fitowrari* Halake Guyo.

Stanza five underpins the Borana unity with a phrase, 'the heart of our people are alike'.

Guyo ka Liban  
Iltamat haalle  
Iltama debiye  
Gara Saku jira  
Garachi gos tenna  
Ak taka jira

Guyo son of Liban  
Disappeared to fight poverty  
He is now back  
In the center of Saku  
The heart of our people  
Are alike and united

The singer talks of one Borana man, Guyo Liban, who had migrated out in search of wealth but who eventually returned and is centrally located at Saku in Marsabit district. The phrase 'centre of Saku' through parallelism leads the singer to talk of the community's hearts and minds that are centrally focused and united with a resolve to stay put in Kenya and to reject the foreign ideology of secession to Somalia that entices them with shared religion and cultural affinity. The stanza underscores the Borana unity and their singularity of oneness in spite of the Somali endeavors to disintegrate them. By saying so, they affirm their unified identity and exclude the 'other' who don't belong to the Borana as Wekesa (2010) puts it in another context "those who have not espoused a shared bond and a common cultural identity".

Stanza six refutes any affiliation with the Somalis, including even the shared Islamic religion by negating it in favour of the traditional African religion:

Bule gara diida	The stony plain of Galgallu
NPUA kara toche	NPUA made it into a road

Kara bule Diida	The long distance of Galgallu plain
Adanguren taku toche	Adangurre shortened it
Quranki falfala	The bewitching spell of Koran
Rabin gudan bisan toche	God watered it down
Rabin dhuga bekaa	God who knows the truth
Haqi lafa ten tolch	Gave our land back to us

The singer attributes the creation of a road in a previously rocky and stony plain to NPUA, a party that affiliates itself with the government of Kenya. 'Adangure' which literally means 'connected with a rope', was an old rickety vehicle belonging to a supporter of NPUA. The vehicle is a stark contrast in its dilapidated roadworthiness to the new Land Rovers donated clandestinely to NPPPP by the Somali government. Nevertheless, the vehicle is the pride of the Boranna community as a handy tool for their leaders to use in mobilization of their supporters as it shortens the vast distance to 'the length of a fist'. Because the Borana did not like the Somali, they also, by extension hated the Quran, the holy book of Islam, which they associated with the Somali. In a reversal of events where the traditional religion is said to be depending on witchcraft, here Quran is ironically referred to as 'bewitching'. This came about through Somali deceit that use the Koran not to preach an orthodox religious virtue as it were, but to intimidate and bully the ignoramus Borana masses that going against Quran after touching it is fatal. The singer draws on the power of the greater god to weaken the effect of Quran's bewitching spells to the community that resist the Muslim Somali. In the Borana popular parlance those who have converted to Islam are said to have become Somali. The very instrument of unification, religion, used by the Somali is here belittled by the singer who invokes another god that he prays to, to render the Quran powerless.

The question of land contestation is again reiterated. The singer appeals to 'a god that is just' to give the land back to the Borana community who are the rightful owners. The question of land and land ownership contestation is predicated upon a Somali proverb often quoted by scholars like Weitzberg (2017) and others that appear to justify the Somali claim to all land belonging to their neighbors as theirs. The proverb goes, "wherever the camel goes, that is Somalia". According to this proverb this borderless Somali camel herder may wander everywhere and anywhere and then claim for himself the entire land through which his sojourn has taken him. Of course, this is ridiculous by any stretch of imagination. There is indeed nothing without a border. There is no endless world within which one can roam without border hindrance because the world is enclosed by boundaries of nature and nation. A river, a sea and a mountain could serve as natural boundary. Where people have settled for whatever reason has limits of horizon beyond which they could not claim as theirs. While it is perhaps true that people contest national boundaries that separate same communities as belonging two separate nations, it is not true that any one community or country is borderless. Certainly, identities define a people culturally. The very fact that there is a Somali identity different from the Borana, Kikuyu or Maasai identity means that there is a physical and cultural border that binds all. Of course, borders do shift mostly through coercion such as conflict and war or through negotiations. The Borana folklore has it that, for example, their border with respect to Somali was at one time at a place call Dhadacha Waraab and at another time at Dhadacha Tabdoo both deep inside current Somalia until they were driven out in subsequent wars. The land question has this history of displacement to it in which the Somali have been gradually but surely encroaching on Borana land with the sole objective of dislocating them.

Wako Haphi's famous whipping by a woman by the name of Baati Qonchore perhaps best illustrates the collective disinterest and desire of the Borana to be authors of their own destiny and identity as a community. This took place at the NPPPP office in Marsabit one evening. On this day, there

was a political rally addressed by politicians from both the NPPPP and NPUA in Marsabit. Wako Haphi was one of them. The Borana NPUA members tried to convince Wako Haphi to decamp from NPPPP and join them but he refused. That evening Baati took a whip and followed Wako to his office where she called him outside, having hidden the whip under her clothes as if she wanted to talk privately with him and then whipped him. Baatii Kochore was born in 1921 as Baati Lukhe Guyo Torbi in Marsabit district. She was married rather strangely to a Rendille man by the name of Konchore. She was known to be a very brave woman and was the first Borana woman to have ventured into politics, a male dominated field. In her love life, she was a 'woman friend' to one Dedan Mugo, a Kikuyu Mau Mau fighter who according to informants influenced her to join Mau Mau in the fight for freedom. The Mau Mau camp was in the Marsabit Mountain near her home, where currently the Administration Police (AP) camp is situated. Apart from joining the Mau Mau, she was also involved in the anti-secessionist politics of the then Northern Frontier District (NFD). She was a very active member of NPUA and together with its leader Galgalo Godana a former Senator for Marsabit was against the secession. For all intent and purposes, Baati was a nationalist playing the politics of national liberation and political party formation.

Her bravery and patriotism to Borana course is demonstrated in the seventh stanza:

Laf ten fete	they desired our land
Galtun gudaa ordite	the enemy made you a leader
Chubun hori gosa	the sin of selling our land
Laman ila ordite	made you lose your two eyes
Ire gos ufi dhabate	she had her people's support
Baatin lichon ordite	Baati thoroughly whipped you

In the stanza the Somali armed militia are ridiculed and chastised for betraying the Borana trust. Land, a major cause of conflict in the postcolonial societies, becomes the rallying motif in the song. In the song, Wako Haphi manipulated the people and conspired to give the land away to the 'enemy', the so-called Somali nationalist who wanted to take Borana land. For this he suffered the strongest admonition. Equally, all the symbols associated with the power of domination by the 'enemy' are loathed and rejected. The Somali nationalist are seen as the coveters of Borana land for which reason they chose Wako Haphi as their NPPPP leader. Wako Haphi himself is also regarded as a betrayer who worked with the foreigners to sell Borana land. The singer says the sins he committed in conniving with the enemy made him blind. His caning by Baati is lauded as an act of bravery that had the approval and support of her community.

Society's reading of Baati's action of whipping Wako Haphi is layered. It was a reversal of roles meant to emasculate and therefore humiliate Wako. She was resisting on behalf of the Borana Wako Haphi's script of Borana identity which he had defined in relation to Islam. A fresh dimension of identity form(ul)ation emerges in considering the person and activities of Baati. Baati's life story is challenging and insightful in identity discourse at various levels. She collapses phallogocentric identity constructions of power and leadership; in the process opening up wider horizons for rethinking resistance and injustice. For her role in the Mau Mau war of liberation, a movement largely confined to central Kenya, reads a lot in the collective desire by the Borana of northern Kenya to seek to identify with the aspirations of the 'other Kenyans'. Indeed, in her we understand Edward Said's argument that "moving beyond nativism ... mean[s] thinking of local identity as not exhaustive, and therefore not being anxious to confine oneself to one's own sphere, with its ceremonies of belonging, its built-in chauvinism, and its limiting

sense of security” (1993, p.277).

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The paper debunks the myth of the so-called greater Somalia as a charade unshared by the Borana in northern Kenya but pushed down the throats of the unsuspecting residents by the Somali elites and their co-opted Borana collaborators. The songs discussed in the paper are categorical about Borana’s own identity which is largely antithetical to the proffered identity pushed by the Somali irredentists defined on religious and cultural grounds. The Borana chose Kenya and rejected the Somalination of their people, culture and land. They distanced themselves from the Somali nationalists whose intention was to take their land under the guise of the greater Somalia movement. The Borana has never sympathized with the Somali course however nicely packaged. What the songs portray is a long drawn antagonism between the Borana and the Somali and the otherization of one by the other. The Borana loyalty to NPUA was unwavering as was their distaste for the Somali dominated NPPPP.

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