

Bibliocaust of Somali libraries: Retelling the Somali civil war

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to identify the catastrophic activities in the context of the Somali civil war in order to classify and evaluate the destruction of libraries and archives in the capital Mogadishu, Somalia during the early 1990s. By combining literature-based evidence and personal narrative of a living witness, the research proposes a case of bibliocaust in Somalia that is evident in intentional actions that have been exercised for clan-based and political agendas. Results reveal that these actions take forms of inter-clan hatred, planned looting operations, military campaigning, and psychological warfare. This study uses a non-probability sampling method to interpret the case study, which may have introduced subjectivity in selecting the research subjects. The ongoing intra-state violence in Mogadishu, where most of the nation's civilian and cultural property interests are located, suggests that Somalis have yet a lot to understand and learn about their past and the gap between value, perception and action pertaining to libraries, archives and documentation centers in Somalia. This contribution highlights part of the cultural heritage losses in the Somali recent past, which will redound to the understanding demanded by the existing challenges of the current national reconstruction and post-conflict recovery efforts in Somalia. This is the first study to investigate the social and political circumstances of the destruction of Somali libraries and archives. The research also presents unpublished data and testimonies of a witness to the destruction and looting events.

Keywords: Libraries and archives, intentional destruction, civil war, Somalia, bibliocaust

Introduction

Deliberate attacking of libraries and archives in times of war has been an established practice of cultural vandalism through the centuries of human history drawing attention to the fact that this kind of act "is as old as the concept of culture" (Zgonjanin, 2005, p.128). This frequency in the nature of cultural property destruction suggests studying and reflecting on the patterns of motives behind it. Libraries and archives in particular constitute a fundamental composition of the human nature both at the individual and group levels, because the books and manuscripts inhabiting these places foster precious records of memories and meanings that matter to communities.

Fernando Baez (2008) emphasizes that the initial objective of physical targeting of books in war times is in fact to paralyze identity by breaking its historical link to the memories that define it: "The book is an institution of memory.... [B]ooks are not destroyed as physical objects but as links to memory, that is, as one of the axes of identity of a person or a

community. There is no identity without memory” (p.12). In his work, *Books on Fire*, Lucien Polastron (2007) argues that “the book is the double of the man, and burning it is the equivalent of killing him” (p. x). Put differently, if the construction of libraries and books denotes the rise and state of well-being of the cultures they narrate, their destruction symbolizes the erasure of these cultures (Garrett, 2009). Baez (2008) refers to this erasure process as a ‘bibliocaust’ of books, of which he defines by “the intent to induce historical amnesia that facilitates control of an individual or a society” (p.12).

Historical accounts of bibliocausts in times of war has revealed various interesting drives for destruction. Some of these are linked to structural social and ethnic issues that remained unresolved long before the incidents. The destruction of the Bosnian National Library in Sarajevo by the Serbs in the 1990s can serve as an example of that (Riedlmayer, 1995). Bibliocausts also result from political action and reaction between political rivals to facilitate military advancement and impose humiliation and psychological pressure upon the adversary. An example is the devastation of the Iraqi historical libraries and museums by the mercenaries backed by the American forces after the fall of Baghdad in 2003 (Knuth, 2006). The recent Syrian civil war adds a distinct experience in demolishing ancient archaeological and cultural landmarks shedding light on new levels of religious extremism that can be exploited in a heated context of such a geopolitical conflict (Brosché et al., 2016). Somalia has also presented its own episode in this cultural heritage destruction series. The civil conflict that broke out between Siad Barre’s dictatorial regime and the southern clans led by the United Somali Congress (USC) in January 1991 has not only left the country devastated, but also has made it an unprecedented model of state failure in the contemporary history (Lewis, 2010). It is important, however, to note that each bibliocaust case is a multi-layered unique situation that engages different dimensions of the reality, although might seem focusing on or emitting elements of a certain dimension due to each story’s characterizations. Therefore, analyzing such cases requires a special attention to the political, social, cultural, economic, and even sometimes environmental settings of the conflict in order to create a holistic view of its background and foreground factors.

This paper extends and presents unpublished data of a previously conducted research by the author discussing the local political and social drives of targeting cultural heritage institutions during Somalia’s civil war in the 1990s. It argues that the destruction of libraries and archives in the capital Mogadishu in particular constitutes a case of bibliocaust that is evident by intentional violence taking the forms of inter-clan hatred, systematic and opportunistic looting operations, military campaigning, and psychological warfare. The paper identifies and classifies these acts of violence by reading the literature and presenting an unreported eyewitness account. The study uses a qualitative non-probability sampling method to collect and interpret its findings. This approach may have introduced subjectivity in selecting the three research subjects, one of whom is a former Somali Librarian who is participating as a witness of the destruction events.

The paper first provides an overview of the pre-civil war Somali libraries, archives, and documentation centers in Mogadishu with a particular focus on the Somali National Library (SNL). The next section presents interpretations of the background and foreground causes of libraries destruction and it is followed by a narrative of the living witness to the bibliocaust as well as a pictorial demonstration of some of the affected institutions.

Overview of libraries and archives in Somalia (1960s – 1991)

Following independence in 1960, Somalia had primitive efforts in supporting library and information services. Two serious handicaps confronting libraries in the country, where over eighty per cent of the population are nomads, were lack of literature resources and scarcity of qualified library staff (UNESCO, 1982). However, the value of such services gained recognition with the establishment of the written Somali language, which was followed by the intensive national literacy campaign and rural educational programs in the early 1970s. The growing need for documentation and information services to support all subject areas at all levels for economic and educational development led the Somali government seriously consider establishing a national library. In September 1975, the Somali government officially requested the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to assist in developing a national library system. The project was financed by both the government and UNDP. The Somali National Library was opened to the public in 1976 with a team consisting of one director and four assistants. The initial collection of the library contained 4,000 volumes and 200 references and it was hosted in a temporary rented venue (UNESCO, 1977). Eight years later, a new building of the SNL was constructed in the Mogadishu Cultural Center, which also contained the new buildings of the National Museum and National Theater. In 1986, SNL was inaugurated and declared open for the public (Crespo-Toral, 1988).

“The library functioned as a public, school, academic and research library as well as a center for entrepreneurial authorship and publication of innovative Somali fiction novels. The library consisted of five sections for reading, reference, governmental documents, writing center to develop the Somali language and literature at grass-roots level, and a special section for historical and colonial publications. All sections were accessible to the public except the latter, which was highly restricted and only intended for researchers. The writing and printing space of the library helped produce a new generation of writers who were able to print and publish their works for free, which in turn helped increase the audience turnout and access rates of library materials” (Nur, 2016, p.19).

Hassan Noor Farah, the former Director of the Somali National Library (1985–1991), signifies that despite limitations in size, financial support, and availability of professionals, the library collection was well developed as it was assessed and evaluated by a number of foreign friend cultural institutions. Farah had personally supervised library training programs aimed at the staff of the library as well as library service points of other governmental, private, and academic institutions including faculty libraries of the Somali National University.

“More library service cooperation programs were designed by the library involving special institutions and documentation centers across Somali cities, which enabled establishing a network between all Somali libraries both at the professional and institutional levels. One of the main outcomes of this move was the creation of a union catalogue to meet the needs of all libraries in Mogadishu regardless of type or specialization and hence reduce their dependence on the technical services provided by SNL. Farah adds that another project of the National Library was to create a special classification system based on the Library of Congress Classification Schemes to handle the unique different categories of the Somali Literature. After its completion, the system was immediately adopted by both the Monologue Archive and

the Multimedia Library of the Ministry of Information and National Guidance” (Nur, 2016, p.20).

The following two figures show correspondences from the Library of Congress office in Nairobi and California State University Library, Fresno campus in recognition of the SNL’s efforts in outreach, collection development, and technical and reference services.

Figure 1. A correspondence from the office of Library of Congress in Nairobi to SNL (Farah, n.d.).

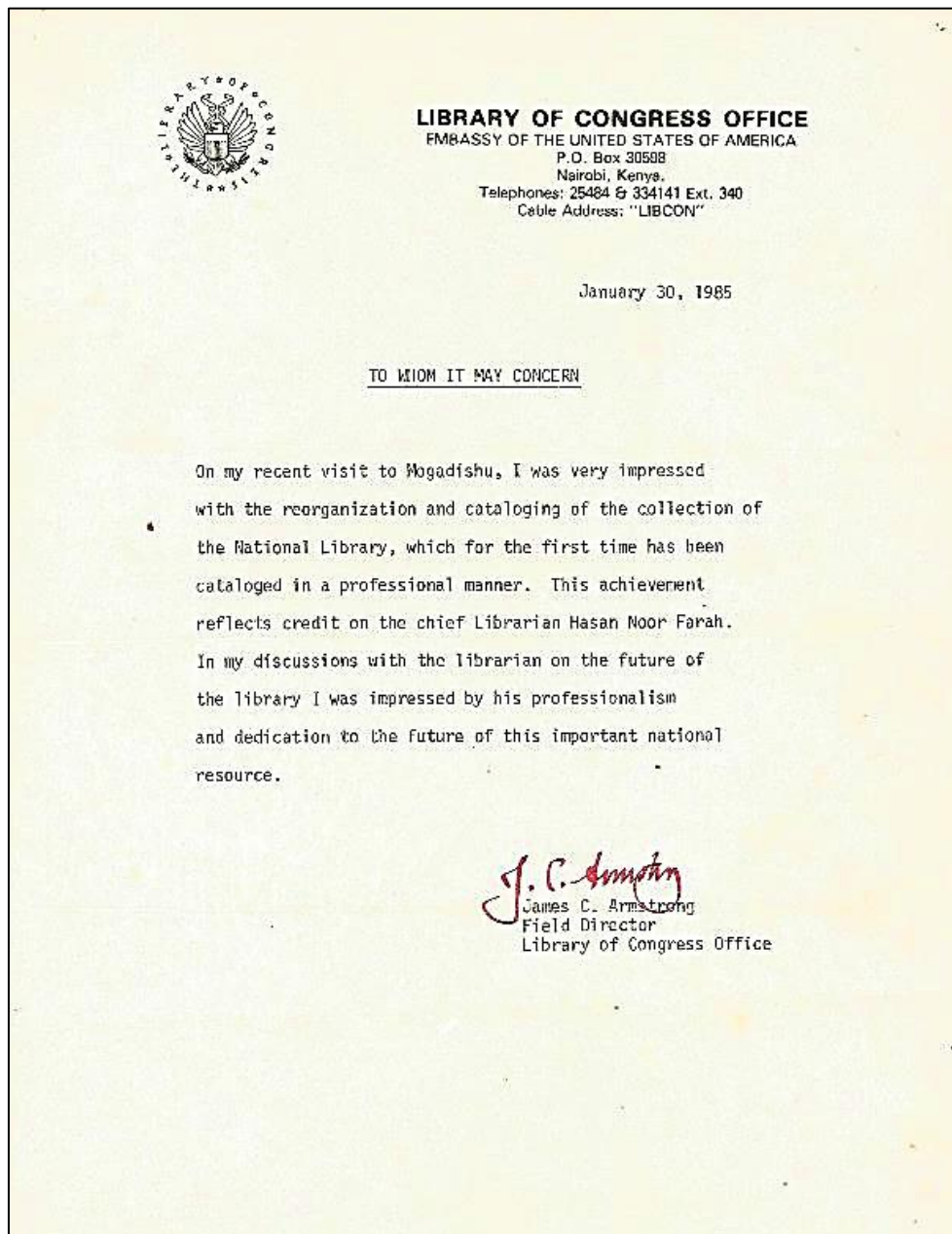




Figure 2. A correspondence from the California State University Library, Fresno campus to SNL (Farah, n.d.).



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23/2/1985

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mostafa Elhag and I recently visited the Somali National Library to observe the progress being made in the organization and access of the books in its collection. Having seen the library a year ago, in early 1984, before the appointment of Hassan Noor Farah as National Librarian we were struck by the fine job he has done.

Books have been classified professionally and a card catalog established. A Union Catalog listing all the books in the National Library and other Mogadishu libraries has been initiated, the library has been advertised to the public and was being well used by students when we were there.

As a professionally trained librarian I realize how much hard work and dedication has gone into these accomplishments. The National Library is in a good hands.

Bettina H. Wolff
Bettina H. Wolff

Mostafa Elhag
Mostafa Elhag

Prior to the state collapse, there was no national archive in Mogadishu in which all the country's documented legacy can be preserved. Therefore, institutions and agencies created their own libraries and archives to serve their purposes. Including the National Library, there was a total of 46 library stations affiliated to public and/or private institutions that vary in their specialization, collections, and target audiences. "After the introduction of the union catalogue by SNL, all the libraries adopted and used the catalogue until the outbreak of the civil war" (Nur, 2016, p.20). The following table demonstrates special data on libraries and archive centers that existed in Mogadishu.

Table 1. Data on the pre-civil war Somali libraries and archives

| Type | Institution | Notes |
|--|--|---|
| Government "ministries & authorities" (17) | Agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Most of the ministries were either completely destroyed or severely damaged from heavy shelling and gunfights. – Displaced rural families with their livestock occupied other buildings that have suffered less damage (e.g. Public Health; see figure 3). – Collections, including historical and highly classified documents, in the ministries marked with (*) were systematically plundered and burnt. – A trade information center and a special documentation center, for the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of National Planning respectively, were under development in mid 1980s. – Although, Villa Somalia has survived destruction, further research is required about the condition of its library. – Sources report that the Juba Valley Authority developed a databank archive and a documentation section in mid 80s to support its geographic and agricultural projects (UNESCO, 1982). |
| | Commerce and Tourism | |
| | Culture and Higher Education | |
| | Education | |
| | Fisheries and Maritime Resources | |
| | Foreign Affairs (*) | |
| | Industry | |
| | Interior (*) | |
| | Information and National Guidance (*) (See figure 5) | |
| | Public Health | |
| | Livestock and Animal Husbandry | |
| | Mining and Water Development | |
| | National Planning (*) | |
| | Somali Development Bank | |
| | Office of President | |
| | Settlement Development Agency | |
| | Juba Valley Development Authority | |
| Foreign embassies & international missions (6) | Egypt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Missions were evacuated and closed immediately during the first weeks of the conflict. Most of the buildings were vanished without a trace due to the warring factions' bombardment. – Organized looting operations will then take place stripping bare the survived buildings. – The damaged U.S. embassy will reopen in late 1992 to serve as a base for the United Nations Unified Task Force (Lofland, 1992). – The UNDP library enjoyed handling hundreds of international periodicals, which made it a prominent research destination for Somali scholars prior to the civil war. |
| | France | |
| | India | |
| | Italy | |
| | United States | |
| | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Museum libraries (2) | Garesa National Museum (est. 1870, formerly “Saeed Barqash Museum”) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Garesa was originally the residence of the representative of the Wali of Zanzibar Sultanate. It had a rich library of pre-colonial and colonial materials that were immediately leaked onto the black market (See figure 4). The building was severely damaged (Dirios, personal communication, July 13, 2016). – Collections in the new National Museum were also plundered. The building, along with the National Library building, has suffered less damage to later become shelters for the displaced persons (See figure 6 and 7). |
| | The National Museum (est. 1985) | |
| Research libraries (3) | Institute of Development, Administration, and Management | Originally a UNDP initiative. It had a well-established library in management and development subjects. |
| | National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics | This library was using the Pan-African Documentation and Information System (PADIS). It was considered as a national information and documentation center as it connected all local statistical research centers of the Somali cities (Wedgeworth, 1993, p.780). |
| | National Academy of Sciences and Arts (also known as Somali National Academy of Culture (SNAC)) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “SNAC worked on various original projects aimed at preserving the Somali heritage and oral tradition by documenting stories and poems of the Somali legends and traditional heroes. – Not all, but most of these projects were conducted to study historical characters who are descendant from the Daarood clan. – All documents as well as the building itself had to vanish without trace” (Nur, 2016, p.25). |
| Media and special archives (4) | Radio Mogadishu | Fortunately, hundreds of items of the station’s library were rescued by some former staff members. The station was reopened in 2001 and still broadcasts (IRIN, 2001). See figure 8. |
| | State Printing House (est. 1950s) | The publishing center located in the archaeological area of Shingani district was utterly demolished with no remnants of its collections. See figure 5. |
| | Somali Film Agency (est. 1972) | Further research is needed about the massive media library of the agency. See figure 8. |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Somali National News Agency (SONNA) | SONNA contained archives of daily and weekly newspapers and gazettes (e.g. Stella d'Ottobre, Down, Sonna cyclostyle gazette, etc.). Some items are reported to be preserved by former employees abroad. The Library of Congress also keeps some volumes of the Xiddigta Oktoober, the Somali version of Stella d'Ottobre, in a microfitch format. |
| School libraries (2) | Women's Education School (WES) | Reports indicate that WES library had a total of 3,000 items (Wedgeworth, 1993, p.780). |
| | Private American School | |
| University libraries (8) | Somali National University Central Library (formerly “Gaheyr University Library”) | By early 1980s, the Central Library possessed some modern techniques such as document photocopiers, Kardex filing system, and microfilm readers and a collection of 28,000 items in Italian, English, Somali, and Arabic mostly in law and economics (UNESCO, 1982; Greig & Rangaswami, 1979). |
| | Faculty of Agriculture | Each faculty had its own library. Sources report that Lafoole faculty library is the oldest academic library and that it has been receiving Indian and Italian technical assistance since early 1960s. The library had good facilities and a collection of about 38,000 volumes, while Digfeer faculty library had 6,000 items (Rohr, 1965; Wedgeworth, 1993, p.780). |
| | Faculty of Geology and Mining | |
| | Faculty of Political Science and Journalism | |
| | Faculty of Medicine “Digfeer” | |
| | Faculty of Education “Lafoole” | |
| | Faculty of Engineering | |
| Faculty of Economics and Law | | |
| Other cultural center libraries (3) | U.S. Cultural Center Library (formerly the “United States Information Service (USIS) Library”) | The center was located against the U.S. embassy and near the Somali National University main campus. The library contained hundreds of expensive and current publications in various subject areas donated by American authors to Somalia. It also had film, press, and photographic sections with plenty of rare documents frequently requested by Somali schools, colleges and ministries (Mack, 2008, p.97-98). |
| | Italian Cultural Center/Library | The centers were reported in governmental maps and pamphlets dating back to the 1970s. There are no clear indications on their succeeding status. |
| | Russian Culture Institute Library | |
| Grand total = 45 | | |

Interpreting the causes of destruction

The reasons that instigated the destruction of libraries and cultural facilities can be classified into two categories:

- a. Long-term structural factors that mirror the social and economic cracks of the society represented by the inter-clan hatred and systematic looting operations, and
- b. Short-term factors that reflect the mobilization strategies and immediate developments of the political and armed clash represented by direct military campaigning and psywar.

1. Inter-clan hatred

Clannism was historically an essential ingredient of the Somali identity. It is at the same time one of the biggest issues that kept challenging the stability and sustainability of the modern Somali social fabric. Somalis are one ethnicity, however, consist of several clans each of which has numerous sub-clans all speaking one tongue, Somali language, and embracing Islam. Major clans practicing nomadic-pastoralism include *Dir* and *Isaaq* in the northwest; *Daarood* in the northeast, west, and the southwest; *Hawiye* in the central regions; and the *Raxanweyn* in the southeast and mainly dedicated to agriculture (Ahmed, 1993). So it becomes significant here to focus more on the dynamics of this clan-based social organization in times of political violence instead of ethnicity or religion, which would be major concerns in other case studies. In this context, inter-clan hatred is viewed as one of the causes of intentional destruction of cultural property during the course of the civil war. An explanation suggests that Somali cultural institutions and sites were targeted because they were perceived as assets of a particular clan and its social or political representatives.

Siad Barre's regime was cruel to all Somali clans including the Daarood, his own clan; however, some opposition factions, such as the USC militias, found it difficult to confine their animosity to the regime and its repressive political practices. In her sociopolitical analysis of the facts and narratives of the Somali civil war, Lidwien Kapteijns (2012) refers to the communal violence led by the USC leadership in Mogadishu after ousting Barre as a 'clan cleansing campaign'. She argues that the USC warlords wanted to speed up their control over the capital; thus, they employed technologies of clan and religion to fuel old clan-based hostilities in their troops and the raging masses. Members of Daarood clan and their properties as well as any other non-Daarood people if they are proved to help or cover for them were exclusively at gunpoint. Between January and July 1991, more than 500,000 of people have been displaced from Mogadishu and tens of thousands were killed for their clan affiliation. Public and national properties were also targets for systematic eradication since the rebels identified them as assets of Barre, his regime, and the Daarood (Roble, 2014).

This highlights an old socio-structural problem in the Somali society that frustrated efforts of maintaining both concepts of nationhood, as a cornerstone of the modern settings of their nation-state, and clanhood, as an integral part of their ancient identity and heritage. The first is a top-down model operating at the macro-level where all groups authorize laws and political representations to fulfill their common interests, while the second is instead a bottom-up approach that localizes authority to clan leaders and prioritizes the clan's aspirations above anything else. Therefore, when governments fail, people tend to return to their old clan-based ways of identifying their group interests and labelling the 'other' who is threatening those interests. It is then highly probable in the event of armed conflict to target the culture of the 'other' by causing as much physical damage as possible as a means of protecting the clan's political agendas.

2. Organized looting operations

Another prominent cause of deliberate damages against cultural institutions is the systematic or opportunistic plundering operations. All public, private, and personal properties in Mogadishu were extensively plundered by the rebels. Some of the city dwellers also took advantage of the opportunity and participated in these operations. There are two possible interpretations of these actions.

The first points to the long-term weak economy of the country. When Barre decided to fight a losing war against Ethiopia in 1977 for the liberation of the Ogaden region, Soviets and their allies turned on him and this eventually deepened the country's economic crisis. In the following twelve years, the regime launched full-scale military operations to suppress oppositions in the northeast and northwest adding burdens to the already dying economy. The country was suffering high poverty rates with great numbers of internal displaced people and inadequate United Nations aids, draughts and famines that kept threatening every five to seven years, and the deep-rooted corruption that was in all sectors including the National Army (Heath, 1993, Mukhtar, 2003).

The other interpretation of these operations relates to the plunderers. In order for the great numbers of the recruited gunmen to continue serving them, the ambitious USC warlords, who had nothing to offer the fighters, had to allow systematic looting of national wealth and cultural property in exchange for power (Heath, 1993). Similar scenarios can be observed in Iraq, Syria, and even in less severe political instability situations as in Egypt for the last couple of years. Looting of historical artifacts and national monuments is important to militias as it "provide[s] a ready source of cash" to survive and carry out their planned activities (Cunliffe, 2012; Russell, 2004, p.42). It also opens a great business opportunity for militia leaders to sell the stolen and illegally obtained government items and cultural objects through the international black market (Frigerio, 2014, p.5).

Normal citizens can also illegally obtain cultural objects and other historical and governmental records in such contexts either to preserve them from damages, or in other cases, to use them for their own personal interests. An example of the latter scenario is the lands registry of the pre-civil war Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, which contained massive data on the residential, commercial, industrial, and other types of lands in Mogadishu and its outskirts. There have been reports that the registry was and still is in the hands of a Somali individual who is living in Europe and making business out of its data (Anonymous, personal communication, June 01, 2016).

3. Military campaigning and psychological warfare

It was advantageous to the USC leaders that most of the areas in the south, including the capital and its surroundings, were inhabited by their own people (Paterson, 2000). To utilize that and maximize their chances of winning in real time, they recruited and armed great numbers of Mooryaans, young rural destitute mercenaries who hail from the southern sub-clans including but not limited to Hawiye and Raxanweyn (Kapteijns, 2012, p.279). These young men, who have never been in cities, will commit most of the physical violence in Mogadishu under the command of the USC leadership. On January 26, 1991, the USC militias took control of the capital and consequently Siad Barre had to flee into Gedo in the southwest, the homeland of his Mareexaan sub-clan of Daarood. Some of the USC forces with allies started to prosecute Barre and his loyalists of the Somali National Front (SNF), the pro-regime remnant of the Somali National Army, to the southwest, while the rest of the forces including the Mooryaans were launching a military campaign in Mogadishu, ostensibly to purge it of the regime figures (Mukhtar, 2003).

It should be, however, clarified that focusing on the USC with regard to what happened in Mogadishu does not mean that other armed factions did not take part in the destruction episode of Somalia, but rather reminds of the fact that the city was under the full control of the USC for several months when most of the reported destruction and looting of cultural property was happening (Roble, 2014). This draws attention to the USC Mooryaan troops and their brutality and absence of conscience while committing much of the physical violence. In fact, the Mooryaans were also victims who have been used and abused “to do the dirty work of the more powerful and power-hungry men who incited them from behind the scenes” (Kapteijns, 2012, p.25). These young rural men were deceived and moved by clan-based hate-narratives and brainwashed into believing that they are in a holy war against the disbelievers who have been seizing the country for ‘100 years’ (Lewis, 2010). With such devastating mentality, in addition to being inflamed by drugs and heavily armed with automatic weapons, it is not surprising, then, if Somalia returned to the Stone Age in few months.

A great part of this campaign was employed psychologically. The USC forces kept indulging in a clan-based orgy of murder, rape and robbery against unarmed civilians even after Barre and his army had already left the city to the south. “The infrastructure of the city was immediately destroyed. Ministries and governmental buildings, nurseries and schools of all kinds, houses, factories, banks, hotels, hospitals, worship places, and cultural venues and monuments were all under attack” (Nur, 2016, p.14). The atrocities and full-scale war crimes committed by the USC would not be easier without the help of some of the city dwellers, who had tribal affiliation with the troops. They served as informants against their Daarood neighbors participating in the systematic killing of civilians and looting of public and private properties (H. N. Farah, personal communication, July 15, 2016; Kapteijns, 2012). All this shows that these militias were performing a major psychological operation to ensure a quick and complete control over the capital by spreading panic and fear. The destruction of the city’s property was in particular a powerful element to force the targeted group to flee with no hope of return.

Scense from the bibliocaust

Libraries and other cultural heritage institutions were exclusively located in Mogadishu prior to the collapse of the state, which increased the degree of loss. Development plans and decisions were entirely made by the twenty per cent minority urbanite elite, while the majority of the population did not have the slightest understanding of the philosophy or purpose behind all these efforts. This failure in understanding the value of cultural property could be ascribed to the overwhelming collective ignorance of the nomadic community about the basics of modern civilization, which in turn highlights yet a deeper failure in adopting and introducing adequate cultural assimilation and outreach methods from the authorities’ side. The abysmal perception gap here between the authorities and the community regarding basic concepts, which modern interpretations of cultural heritage are built on, such as nationhood, statehood, and common cultural wealth and values has exacerbated the situation leaving no chance for preserving and viewing cultural property out of the then political context (Anonymous, personal communication, June 01, 2016). These concepts, in the mindset of the raging masses, were alien Western concepts brought by the oppressive ruling class and seemed difficult to digest or break down. Therefore, tangible records of their existence in the nation’s memory and history were not worth keeping or caring about, which formed a bibliocaust of its kind. The following is a short eyewitness account of the burning and armed robbery activities against libraries and cultural monuments in Mogadishu during the first few days of the war.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had one big library and two archives, one for top-secret State documents and the other for diplomatic correspondence. The library possessed very rare historical collections from the colonial period onwards as well as old manuscripts pertaining Somalia's foreign relations. Farah, whose house was next to the Ministry, says that in the first few days of the war a group of people attacked the Ministry building in what appeared to be an organized looting mission. They were guarded by young gunmen and started robbing the Ministry's property and burning its library and two archives while chanting, "Siad's property is all ours" (H. N. Farah, personal communication, July 15, 2016). Garesa Museum, the new National Museum, and the National Library also will encounter similar scenarios.

In the morning of January 27, 1991, the Mooryaans' trucks started to transport the National Library's property. Books and documents, over 60,000 items then, were scattered and torn beneath the soldiers' feet. Library furniture including reading tables, printers, shelves, office chairs, lights and carpets, everything was robbed in broad daylight and at gunpoint. When the news reached the concerned Librarian, Farah rushed to the location in an attempt to stop the looting. A young USC gunman pointed his weapon towards him and started shooting around him while shouting, "You Faqash! Your days are over. You will no longer run this library. We will destroy it from root to branch" (H. N. Farah, personal communication, July 15, 2016). Kapteijns (2012) explains the term 'Faqash' as a "[p]ejeorative term initially used by the SNM [Somali National Movement, a rebel group hailing from the northwestern clan of Isaaq] to refer to exponents and backers of the government 'government scum'. However, it became a code word in the campaign of clan cleansing and then indicated those to be clan-cleansed, namely all individuals of all clan backgrounds making up the genealogical construct of Daarood" (p.279). In such environment, the clan backgrounds of notable and educated figures must be known to all. It seems that Farah was already labeled as a member of the targeted clan here, which supports the claim that the clan-based 'otherness labeling' was an active war technology for the USC guerillas.

Similarly, national memorial monuments depicting Somali liberation leaders had to receive their part of the physical violence right after Siad left Mogadishu. Since he came to power in 1969 and throughout his reign, Barre's government endorsed and practically emphasized Marxism by the use of material culture for establishing the new Somali national identity (Mukhtar, 2003). The Somali authorities have erected more than six monuments and statutes of historical characters, known for their pan-Somalism, and depicted other foreign Marxist and Socialist concepts and figures in the fields of the capital (Mets, 1993). "The national statues of the Sayyid Muhammad Abdulle Hassan, a poet, anti-colonial resistance hero, and nationalist clan leader; Ahmad Gurey, a traditional Somali warrior who fought the Abyssinian Empire in the 16th century; and Hawo Taako, a nationalist Somali lady who struggled against the colonial authorities and was killed for that in the 1940s, were all topped and ripped off from their stands" (Nur, 2016, p.26). Again, a common characteristic of these characters is that they all belong to the target clan. "The Mooryaans were clapping and cheering, and I was crying", Farah narrates. "They had ripped off the Sayyid from its stand before my eyes" (H. N. Farah, personal communication, July 15, 2016). After being fragmented into pieces, the removed metal and bronze monuments were exported to and sold in the black market of Arab and African countries (M. Dirios, personal communication, July 13, 2016; Heath, 1993).

The following is a pictorial demonstration of some Somali cultural institutions, libraries, and monuments before and after the civil war.

Figure 3. The Ministry of Public Health after destruction (Warah et. al, 2012).



Figure 4. A picture taken in 1983 of the interior of Museo della Garesa “Garesa Museum”, Mogadishu, Somalia. (Kassim, 1983).

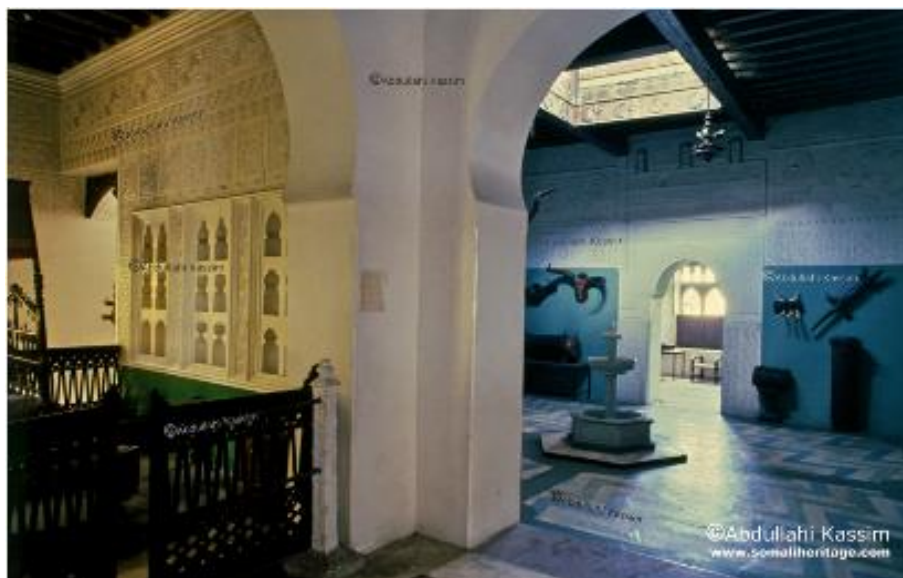


Figure 5. The buildings of the Ministry of Information and National Guidance (left) and the State Printing House (right) in the 70s (Wasaaradda Warfaafinta iyo Hanuuninta Dadweynaha, 1976)



Xarunta Cusub ee Wasaaradda Warfaafinta iyo Hanuuninta Ummadda, Muqdisho.



Dhismiyeasha Wakaaladda Madbacadda Qaranka, kii hore iyo kan cusub oo labaduba ah xarumaha shaqada Wakaaladdu ka socoto.

Figure 6. The damaged building of the National Library (BBC, 2013)



Figure 7. Displaced families occupying the National Library and the National Museum buildings since the state collapse (TEDx Talks, 2014).



Figure 8. Multimedia libraries of Radio Mogadishu (left) and Somali Film Agency (right) in the mid-70s (Wasaaradda Warfaafinta iyo Hanuuninta Dadweynaha, 1976).

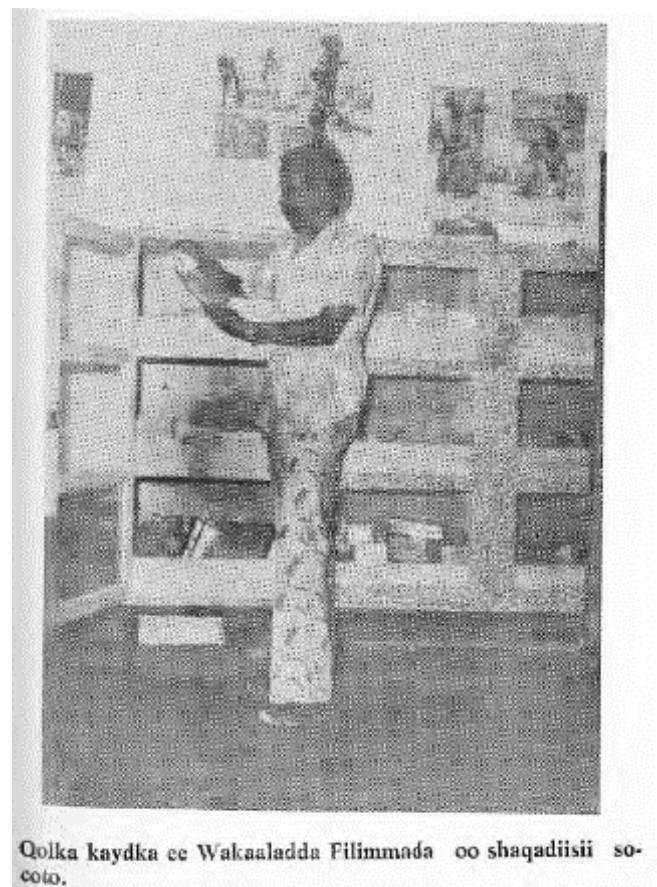
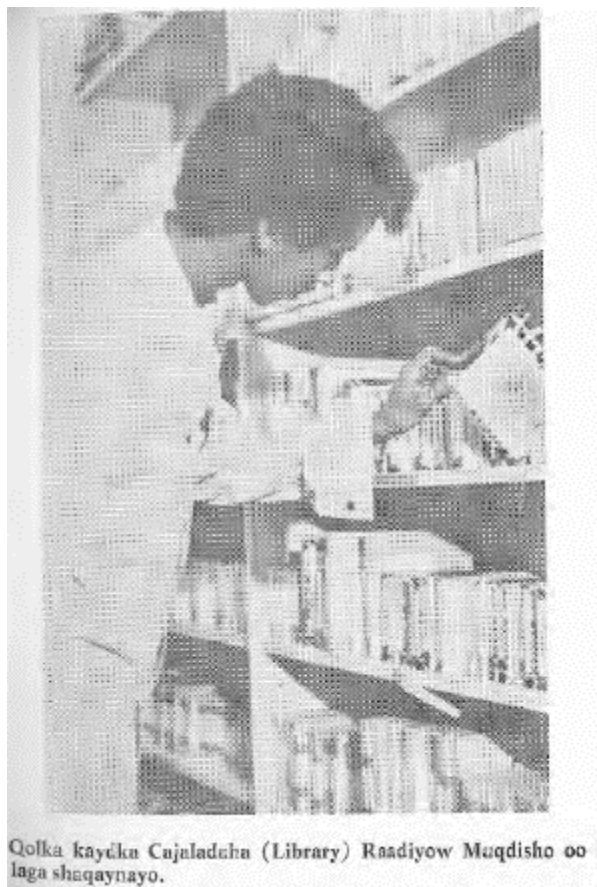


Figure 9. The memorial statue of the Sayyid in Mogadishu before (left) and after (right) (Dirios, n.d.; Adde, 2011).



Figure 10. Monuments of Ahmed Gurey and Hawo Taako before (left) and after (right) destruction (Dirios, n.d.; Adde, 2011).



Conclusions

To sum up, this paper holds that the destruction of Somali cultural property, particularly libraries and archives, in Mogadishu during the civil war indicates that there was a systematic war against the national culture through the misperception invented by the power-hungry warlords to deceive and control the mass violence in favor of their political and personal agendas. Findings reveal that war commanders in Mogadishu have exploited the long-term societal rift nourished by the traditional mentality of otherness labeling on blood-ties basis in the Somali society to lead a massive looting, military campaign, and psychological warfare not only against the ousted authoritative regime, but also against unarmed civilians of particular clan backgrounds as well as national and civilian property.

The paper presents unpublished eyewitness account that supports this analysis of the war dynamics and strategies that targeted Somali cultural property. The Mooryaan troops and the city dwellers, only those who have supported them, have been told certain stories by the USC masterminds. It appears that the aim of propagating such stories and slogans was to mentally control the raged masses by extending the anger as much as needed until particular political and military objectives are being achieved. The stories that revolved around freeing Somalia and terminating the so-called '100 years of Daarood domination' serve as an evidence of the utilization of deliberate destruction and looting by the warlords as a war strategy to defeat their political and clan rivals (H. N. Farah, personal communication, July 15, 2016; Kapteijns, 2012, p.210; Lewis, 2010).

The civil war in Somalia represents a complex type of conflict in which different powers collide locally, regionally and internationally. It is necessary to note that the scope of this paper is limited only to the local political and social aspects of the Somali conflict. It is highly recommended to broaden this scope in future investigations by including other local dimensions as well as relevant elements at the regional and international levels of the conflict in order to develop a deeper understanding of the facts and narratives concerning this dark part of Somalia's modern history.

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