

1. Introduction

1.1 Conflict in Wajir

When reading the paper, or watching the news, you are constantly confronted with conflicts or the so-called situations of armed peace. The UN is still present in Kosovo, Israel is startled by a violent attack roughly every other week, the situation in Afghanistan is still very unstable and Iraq is all but safe. The end of these (repressions of) violence does not seem to be near. People often wonder whether a solution is even possible, whether a durable peace is within reach. Instead of focusing on all the peace-building failures, I decided to look at a success story. One of these success stories is located in the Northeast of Kenya, in Wajir.

I first heard about Wajir when I saw the documentary ‘The Wajir Story’. The documentary deals with a clan conflict in Wajir¹, a district in the Northeast Province of Kenya. The story begins in 1992, when the conflict commenced, and ends in 1998, the year the documentary was made. The documentary looks at the multi-faceted and complex causes and the consequences of the conflict. Its main focus is on the responses of the local community which ended the conflict and brought about a period of peace.

The documentary showed how three groups played an important role: the women started the peace initiative when their domain, the market, was also influenced by the conflict. Having regained the peace there, they tried to extend the peace and involved the elders. The elders, also called *wazee*, could reach a peace agreement and were able to implement it. The youth contributed to the implementation of agreement by convincing young men to lay down their weapons. The documentary ends with hopes for the future, in achieving enduring peace in their neighbouring countries Ethiopia and Somalia, thus stopping the influx of refugees, weapons and bandits, (Responding To Conflict, 1998).

This documentary inspired me. It showed that ordinary people could really make a difference in a conflict situation. Not only had

¹ Wajir is the name of the district, but also the name of the main town. I will use the name ‘Wajir’ to refer to the district, including the town Wajir. and use ‘Wajir-town’ when I specifically refer to the town.

they reached a cease-fire, which is always an enormous step on the road to peace, but they seemed to have reconciled. I wanted to know how it was possible that some ordinary people, without any special means, education or experience, were able to succeed where organisations like the United Nations and the NATO largely failed. I wanted to learn from their experience, so I decided to conduct my master-research, as part of development studies at the Centre of International Development Issues Nijmegen, in Wajir.



Map 1. Wajir within Kenya

Other arguments supported this decision. First of all, the Wajir case is a success story against all odds. There are many difficulties that could have hindered the reconciliation process: Wajir lies within the Horn of Africa, which is one of the most violent areas on earth; it is the poorest area of Kenya and neglected by the central government; natural resources are scarce. Despite all this, the people of Wajir laid

down their arms, made peace and reconciled. If the people of Wajir could reconcile, there remains hope for other, rather desperate situations.

Secondly, it was rather safe within Wajir-town, which is not always the situation in a post conflict area. After a conflict, there are often many weapons remaining, which results in a lot of post conflict violence. This was fortunately not the case in Wajir. Most people had handed in their weapons; the peace was very stable. I, a white, non-Muslim woman, could walk freely during daytime in Wajir town. This does not mean that I could walk in the streets unnoticed. I always received a lot of attention, which is not surprising, knowing that there were only very few white people in the district.

Thirdly, the conflict was restricted to a limited area and the parties involved were quite clear and, although the impact of the conflict had been considerable, people were rarely traumatized and were willing to talk about it. This made it not too difficult to research the conflict and the reconciliation process.

Finally, I was fortunate to make contact with the Wajir Peace and Development Committee² (WPDC), who helped me greatly during my research. The presence of this organisation was of vital importance to my research. Their activities were absolutely essential to understanding the concepts of peace and the reconciliation process: the aim of the WPDC is to maintain the sustainable peace and thus to stimulate the reconciliation process. The information given by members of the WPDC and my attendance at the workshops held by the WPDC were, as I explain in the third chapter on methodology, of vital importance for my research.

Before I go into the research in depth, the main objective and the research question, I will elaborate some more on the case study I have chosen. The following features are not only characteristic for the district; they are also somehow related to the conflict³. Wajir is a

² The committee was founded in 1995, when people had stopped the escalation of violence and a period of peace was reached. It aims at reaching sustainable peace and it consists of the different groups who had been involved in stopping the conflict. These groups represent the entire community of Wajir: women, elders, -who are often called *wazee* youth, religious leaders and the Members of Parliament. WPDC is an umbrella-organisation in which all these groups function separately. WPDC has a secretarial function, it looks for financial support from external donors and it takes care of the co-operation between the different groups.

³ I return to this subject in the fourth chapter, when I discuss the conflict.

district in Northeastern Kenya, bordering on Somalia and Ethiopia. It is the second largest district of Kenya, and extends over 57,600 square kilometres. In 2000, the area counted about 320,000 inhabitants, who are almost entirely ethnic Somali (ARMP, 2000, n.n.). Due to the harsh living conditions -a large part of this area is either semi-arid or arid- people are originally nomads, relying on pastoralism as their main source of income. Although, due to the population pressure, many people have relocated to permanent settlements, a considerable part of the population still lives as nomadic pastoralists, tending herds of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. Owing to insufficient and unreliable rainfall, these pastoralists require extensive land for grazing and watering the herds.

The necessity for unrestricted movement and the scarcity of natural resources are potential causes of conflict. Quarrels over land and access to water have previously escalated into serious conflicts. Traditionally, the Somali clan system was the basic organisational structure of the Somali society. The clan-based relationships assured the survival of pastoralists, and provided for the restocking of families who lost their animals through drought, disease or theft (Afrax, 1993, p. 135). Although the land is accessible for all people, each clan has its own share, its own base. Tensions mount between the different clans in times of drought. People are less willing to share the scarce resources, and forbid members of other clans to enter 'their' land. This can lead to quarrels. When the clan-based legal system fails to function as well, these quarrels can turn into conflicts.

These are, in short, some important root causes of the conflict in Wajir between 1992 and 1994. During that period, thousands of people were robbed, raped, wounded or killed. Each event led to another. Revenge followed on revenge. A circle of violence had emerged. How to break this vicious circle of violence? How to reach a peace resolution? How to reach reconciliation? Questions often asked, but difficult to answer. Answers cannot be found behind a desk, but it is possible to gain some insight by learning from practical situations. This is what I have done in my research. I went to Wajir to find out how they had broken that circle, how they had reached durable peace.

1.2 Research aims

Although my research is confined to Wajir, my research aim is broader: I want to contribute to a specific part of the discussion on peace building. A peace process is a broad and inclusive process, transforming a conflict into sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997, p. 20). It does not end by reaching a cease-fire, or by signing a conflict resolution. Other, long-term processes, such as democratisation, poverty reduction, empowering the civil society, can also be part of the reconciliation process. Which processes are necessary depends on the kind of conflict and its causes. Reconciliation is always a necessary element of the peace process.

Much has been written about peace building, but most of it is on the macro or meso level, i.e. mediation and negotiation, and democratisation are well-attended subjects. The micro level of peace building, to which the reconciliation process belongs, seems to get neglected. For decades, social scientists have paid little or no attention to reconciliation and as a concept it is just emerging. Only in the last few years it began to receive some attention.

Gerrit Glas finds an explanation for this omission in the association between reconciliation and religion: people often reconcile by virtue of their religion: forgiveness is an important value in both the Christian and the Muslim religion. It is thus not surprising that the theological literature gives considerable attention to the subject. Social science on the other hand is by nature an atheistic branch of science, and it does not want to be involved in a discussion with such a close link to religion. This may explain the lack of non-religious theories on reconciliation (2000, p.74). My aim is to contribute to the discussion on reconciliation from a social scientists point of view.

My focus will be a very specific one. While reading about conflicts, peace building and reconciliation, the idea emerges that identity plays a role in almost every conflict, whether is political, economical or ideological. When there is a conflict, there are different parties; when there are different parties there is a difference between Us and Them. The differences between these parties are not necessarily based on the subject of the conflict. They are based on a sense of belonging to one of the parties; they are based on identity.

Sometimes identity seems to be the *subject* of the conflict, as was for example the case in the crusades, were the Christians fought

the Muslims, simply because They were Christians the Others were Muslims. Here the religious identity⁴ is the leading motive in the conflict. It can also be said that power and money were the real motives and that religion was only used to motivate other people. Thus, calling it a religious conflict was merely a strategy for mobilising as many people as possible. However, this does not take away the fact that many people participated in the crusades because they thought it was their duty as good Christians or Muslims. For them, identity remains the subject of the conflict.

In Wajir, the conflict was *drawn* to the level of identity, i.e. the clan identity. Since the cause of the conflict were disputes over grazing land and water, it could have simply remained limited to a conflict between shepherds. Instead, it turned into a conflict between entire clans, involving many individuals, whether shepherds or not. The conflict was drawn from a material level, the dispute over access to natural resources, to an immaterial level, the conflict between clans. The importance of the clan identity was stressed in such a way that the society became polarized between Us, who belong to a certain clan, and Them, who do not belong to that clan.

This relation between conflicts and identity has been confirmed by some social scientists; John Paul Lederach states that:

in situations of armed conflict, people seek security by identifying with something close to their experience and over which they have some control. In today's setting that unit of identity may be clan, ethnicity, religion or geographic/regional affiliation, or a mix of these. (1997, p. 13)

Ervin Staub formulates it even stronger: 'differentiating "them" from "us" and devaluating them is central to violence against "them"' (2003, p. 3). None of these scholars seems to pursue the question whether identity is also of any importance for the resolution process. I believe there is a relation between the two. I will explain this briefly. The identity of every individual is composed of different elements. Race, religion, sex, social position and nationality are just a few of the elements of which every identity is composed. During a conflict, one or more of these elements are stressed. Thus, a community becomes polarized, divided on the basis of one particular identity element: Us Jews, versus Them Muslims; Us Catholics

⁴ I will return to the correct use of the term identity in the following chapter.

versus Them Protestants, Us Capitalists versus them Communists, and Us Indians versus Them Pakistanis. When the conflict ends, the disturbed relation should alter. The identity element, that was emphasized during the conflict and could bog down other elements, should somehow become less important, while the importance of some of the other elements should increase.

I decided to find out whether this idea was true. I therefore decided to research how the different elements of identity changed and influenced each other as a consequence of the conflict and the reconciliation process in Wajir and how this in turn has influenced the conflict and the reconciliation process. I therefore describe the contents of important identity elements both in times of peace and in times of conflict and provide a possible explanation for these changes.

1.3 Thesis layout

Before I can focus on the Wajir case, I need to discuss the theories that are relevant for my research question. First, I elaborate on the reconciliation process itself. What is reconciliation, what is its place within the peace process and most importantly, how do you reach reconciliation? I divide the reconciliation process into four phases: finding a common truth, achieving a short-term peace, seeing justice done and reaching forgiveness. Secondly, I analyse the concept of 'identity'. 'What are its characteristics and how is identity formed and altered?' are two important questions. Furthermore, I provide a model, which helps analyse identity. Thirdly, I link identity to conflict and discuss what the literature has to say about this connection. This all leads to the research questions that I introduce at the end of this chapter.

In the third chapter I discuss the used methodology. I elaborate on the different methods: interviews, conversations, observations, participation and the use of archives. I explain the choices I have made on why and when to choose for which method, who to interview etc. Furthermore, I discuss the reliability and validity of the results and answer the question whether the picture given is distorted. I also discuss the possibility of generalising the data, i.e. do the results represent the whole of Wajir and if so, can the results be extended to beyond Wajir.

From here, the thesis will follow two threads that form the structure of this thesis. The first thread consists of the different phases through which Wajir has been since the outburst of the conflict in 1992. The first phase is of course the conflict itself. This is discussed in the fourth chapter. The second phase is what I have called the resolution process, which is the beginning of the reconciliation process. Reaching a peace resolution and implementing it are important parts of this phase. The resolution process ends in a short-term, somewhat vulnerable peace. This process is discussed in the fifth chapter. The third phase is forgiveness. This is the last stage of the reconciliation process and ends in a durable peace. I analyse the process of forgiveness in chapter six.

The second thread consists of the different groups that played a role during these different stages. The conflict in Wajir was a conflict between clans. Clans are thus central in the chapter four on the conflict. Women, old and wise men, and youth are three important groups during the resolution process. These three groups and their roles in the resolution process are discussed in the fifth chapter. The groups of Somalis and Muslims were of crucial importance for the process of forgiveness. These two groups are thus discussed in chapter six.

Of course, the link between the six groups and the three phases is somewhat arbitrary and merely serve an analytical purpose. Especially the restriction of the influence of the Muslims and Somalis to the process of forgiveness is debatable. Religion and tribe are two very important identity elements that influence many aspects of life. They have also played a role during the conflict and in the resolution process. Their most significant role however is related to forgiveness and I have therefore decided to discuss the Somali culture and Islam in the sixth chapter on forgiveness. This does not take away the fact that their influence on the conflict and the resolution process is also worth mentioning. The Somali culture and Islam therefore receive some attention in the chapters preceding chapter six. To understand the influence of both elements before they are actually discussed, I now describe their main features.

The Somali is a big tribe that lives scattered over four countries: Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. However, when I talk about 'the Somalis' I only refer to the ones in Wajir. One of the most important features of the Somali culture is the nomadic life.

Although many have settled down, the nomadic way of subsistence is still an ideal for most Somalis. The possibility to travel freely is thus a good that is cherished by most. The clan-system can also be seen as an important feature of the Somali culture. Because of its importance during the conflict and because most people discussed the clan-system and the Somali culture separately, I decided to see them as two different elements. The content and importance of the clan-system is discussed in the chapter four.

Two things are relevant for the understanding of the influence of religion on the conflict and the reconciliation process. The first is the importance of Islam. All the Somalis I met were professed Muslims. Islam plays an important role in everyday life. It influences simple things such, as greeting, dressing and eating habits and more eminent things, such as marriage and justice. The second is the ambiguous relation between Islam and violence. Its main message is clearly peaceful: it forbids violence and preaches forgiveness. It does however allow violence against astray-Muslims and it shows understanding for revenge. I discuss this in detail in chapter six.

In the last chapter, I summarize the main findings of this research and thesis. I end my thesis by discussing whether the relation between reconciliation and identity is interesting enough to recommend further research.

2. Theoretic framework

At the beginning of a new millennium, we can conclude that conflicts have become one of the most serious problems the world is facing. At present, there are twenty-one significant armed conflicts, of which sixteen started more than a decade ago (Infoplease, 2004, n.n.). Most of these conflicts are not between nations, but between different groups within a nation. These groups, the so-called identity groups, are based on racial, ethnic, cultural or ideological terms. Can these groups coexist within the same political system or geographic region after a conflict (Fisher 2001, p. 25), can they reconcile? To answer such a question, you first need to take a closer look at reconciliation itself.

In the introduction, I already explained that the reconciliation process is a part of the broader peace process. Democratisation, decentralisation as well as centralisation, poverty reduction, improving the institutional capacity, empowering the civil society and so on, *can* all belong to the peace process. Reconciliation is *always* a part of it; it is its final stage. Positive relations between former rival groups are formed during the reconciliation process (Bar Tal, 2000 p. 362; Staub, 2003, p. 13). A successful reconciliation process is of vital importance to reach a state of coexistence. Although I acknowledge the importance of the other processes, I have chosen to limit this thesis strictly to the reconciliation process.

In this theoretical framework, I will focus on reconciliation. I will start by defining the concepts and signalling the main features. Seeking a common truth, reaching justice, attaining security and giving and accepting forgiveness seem to be crucial for the reconciliation process. They also lead to difficulties at the same time. Finding the truth will become more difficult, when justice is to follow; people are less willing to give testimony when they face penalties. It seems impossible to forgive and punish at the same time. Furthermore, the capacity for seeking a common truth and doing justice is often missed in post-conflict areas (Anning, 2003, n.n.).

As I have already briefly explained, the introduction of the concept of 'identity' may bring a possible solution to these problems. After describing the concepts of reconciliation and identity, I focus on the

importance of identity in the conflict. Next, I formulate a hypothesis on the importance of identity for the reconciliation process. The aim of this thesis is to validate this hypothesis with a case, and thus to contribute to the discussion on reconciliation. I have therefore formulated research questions, which I will discuss in the last paragraph.

2.1 Reconciliation

Before I elaborate on the concept of reconciliation itself, I will first give a short description of the different types of theories on conflicts and see where the theories on reconciliation fit in. The discourse of conflict studies can be divided in three approaches: the rational, the relational and the symbolic approach. The first seeks an objective explanation for a conflict, and finds the cause of conflicts in quarrels over scarce resources such as land, water or money (Schrich, 2001, p. 145). They resort to conflict-resolving skills, which address these problems directly, by removing the cause of the conflict. Negotiating the use of land or the access to water can be a solution to conflicts over these issues.

The relational approach seeks the cause of a conflict in the relations between the groups and individuals involved. Power imbalances, poor communication and malfunctioning social structures cause conflicts, according to this approach. Stimulating communications, which assist humans to relate to each other and improving social structures are their main tools for conflict resolution (ibid. p. 145-146).

Though acknowledging the importance of these two approaches, the third approach criticizes the lack of attention for the cultural and psychological dimension in a conflict. Worldview, culture and identity are the core interests of this third approach. Reconciliation, which emphasizes forgiveness and healing, is the key issue in the conflict resolution programme of the symbolic approach (ibid. p. 145-156). Although reconciliation mainly belongs to this third approach, the other two are important preconditions. Only when the direct cause is removed and when the relations between groups are improved, does it become possible to reconcile.

This last but important step of reconciliation is however often omitted. Social scientists have neglected the concept of reconciliation

for decades (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 352; Base, 2001, p. 45; Glas, 2000, p. 74; Abu Nimer, 2001, ix; Pankhurst, 1999, p. 239; Rasmussen, 2001, p. 102; Staub, 2000, p. 376). Scholars have mainly focused on the creation of a better understanding of the transition from crisis to relief to development (Rasmussen, 2001, p. 102). In this transition the importance of reaching a cease-fire and creating a peace agreement is clear and thus receives a lot of attention. The significance of coexistence and reconciliation is, considering the little attention these concepts receive, apparently underestimated.

The importance of co-existence and reconciliation can be found in its long-term effects, such as the prevention of the re-escalation of a conflict in the future. This can only happen when new relations between the conflicting groups are built (Bar Tal, 2000 p. 362; Staub, 2003, p. 13). Building these new relations is inherent to both coexistence and reconciliation, but the kind of the relationships differs.

Reconciliation is more than coexistence, that is, formerly hostile groups living near each other or simply interacting and working together. Reconciliation requires that members of the two groups come to see the humanity of one another. It means coming to accept each other and to develop mutual trust. (Staub, 2000, p. 376)

The relationships built for coexistence are neutral, while the relationships built for reconciliation are positive. Coexistence merely means to accept each other's *presence*, while reconciliation means to accept each other's *person*. Reconciliation thus surpasses coexistence. Since coexistence is inherent to reconciliation, I will focus on the reconciliation process without doing injustice to the importance of coexistence.

But how do you create these positive relations? And, perhaps even more difficult, how can you exceed the relational level and enter the symbolic level, which may lead to reconciliation? Joseph Montville, who is both a scholar and a practitioner in facilitating reconciliation, describes conditions of reaching reconciliation as follows:

healing and reconciliation in violent ethnic and religious conflicts depend on a process of transactional contrition and forgiveness between aggressors and victims which is indispensable to the establishment of a new relationship based on mutual acceptance and

reasonable trust. The process depends on joint analysis of the history of the conflict, recognition of the injustices and resulting historic wounds, and acceptance of moral responsibility where due. (Montville, in Fisher, 2001, p. 28)

Besides contrition and forgiveness, Montville sees finding a mutual truth as one of the conditions to reach for a successful reconciliation process. Analysing history, recognising injustices and accepting moral responsibilities are all forms of finding a mutual truth, which is not necessarily *the* truth. There is a difference between the historical truth, the truth according to facts, and the psychological truth, which is the truth according to individuals. Although psychological truths are not necessarily *the* truth, they are not less important (Minow, 1998, p. 129). Finding a *mutual* truth, to which all the different parties can comply, is more important than finding *the* truth.

Other scholars distinguish similar elements of importance, although they name them differently: truth, justice, compensation, resolution, peace, security, forgiveness, contrition, apology, remorse and mercy are commonly mentioned as important elements in the reconciliation process (Lederach, 1997 p. 32; Minow, 1998 p. 9; Pankhurst, 1999 p. 240; Rothstein, 1999 p. 196-199). These elements can be divided into four groups. Truth forms a group of its own. Justice and compensation form the second group. Justice is the key element in this group, since compensation is only a possible element of justice. The third group consists of peace, resolution and security. Peace is the main element in this group: resolution is a step on the road to peace, and security is a necessary ingredient of peace. The fourth group is formed by forgiveness, contrition, apology, remorse and mercy. The key element in this group is forgiveness; contrition, apology and remorse can be triggers that lead to forgiveness and mercy is necessary to bring about forgiveness

Lederach describes the relation between these elements of reconciliation as follows:

truth is the longing for the acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experiences, but it is coupled with Mercy, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. Justice represents the search for individual and group rights, for social restructuring, and for restitution, but it is

linked with Peace, which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being, security. (1997, p. 29)

I will now discuss each of these groups, and indicate their importance in the reconciliation process. All of these elements involve certain problems. I will end each sub-paragraph by questioning the feasibility of each element.

2.1.1 Truth

There are, as stated above, different kinds of truth. Dori Laub distinguishes two kinds: the historical and the psychological truth. She illustrates the difference between these kinds of truth by describing the testimony of a woman in a revolt in Auschwitz, in October 1944. One of the things the woman remembers is that four chimneys were on fire. Historians regarded this testimony as false, since there was a fire in only one of the chimneys. Laub though, considers the testimony neither of less importance, nor less truthful because of the number of chimneys that were on fire; it is a report of the reality of an unimaginable occurrence. Her conclusion is that one should not 'abandon judgement about facts that can challenge testimony, but should develop attentiveness to each person's own grasp of the past' (Minow, 1998, p. 129).

Although it is possible in certain cases to find a truth based on facts, for example on medical and testimonial evidence, most facts are inextricably linked to the interpretations of the witnesses. The selection of what to tell is, for example, based on the interpretation of what is important (ibid., p. 85-86). This does not decrease the importance of the testimony, especially not when it concerns a testimony of a victim. When they try to tell the truth, they tell it the way they have experienced it. Whether or not it is *the* truth, does not influence how the victim has experienced the committed harm.

Instead of finding *the* truth, one should look for a *common* truth of what has happened during the conflict (Pankhurst, 1999, p. 244). Staub describes the importance of finding a common truth, or creating a shared history, as follows:

an important tool for the creation of a shared history is the understanding of the roots of violence and harm doing [...]. A thorough examination of what has generated violence in the course of two groups' history with each other, in a way that creates understanding and even empathy, can contribute to the acceptance

by each group of what the other has done and what one's own group has done. It can lead to acknowledging and taking responsibility for the actions one's own group, without the usual justifications. It can lead to a shared collective memory. [...]. It can lead to peaceful engagement with the other. (2003, p. 14)

A common truth can be seen as the basis for the other three elements that are of importance for reaching reconciliation: justice, peace and forgiveness. The truth is the fundament of the justice process, i.e. in order to do justice one must uncover the truth. When doing justice, people often try to uncover the historical truth: lack of evidence, i.e. lack of historical truth, can be disastrous for the justice process. Although the psychological truth can be important in calculating the extent to which a victim is traumatized, it is only supplementary to the other truths.

The psychological truth is the most important truth in the other two phases of the reconciliation process (Pankhurst, 1999, p. 244; Staub, 2003, p. 14). Uncovering or creating a common truth on the cause of the conflict and on events during the conflict can be a pre-condition for reaching a peace agreement. Acknowledging and taking responsibilities for the actions of one's own group and admitting the damage caused by these actions is often crucial for the negotiation process (Rothstein, 1999, p. 224; Lederach, 1998, p. 34), which can lead to a resolution on which peace can be based.

The relation between truth and forgiveness lies in the role of truth in the psychological healing process. Knowing and facing the truth enables victims to live with the past and to start the building of a future (Minow, 1998, p. 67). Again, it is not important to find the historical truth; it is only important to find a believable and acceptable truth. This healing process is of crucial importance for forgiving the perpetrators and vice versa (Fisher, 2001, p. 28, p. 41). The search for a common truth is difficult: how to create the willingness to negotiate and the willingness to uncover or create a common truth? These are two of the questions I will try to answer in chapter five of this thesis.

2.1.2 Peace

Peace, and with it peace-resolution and security, is the second aspect of importance for the reconciliation process. Johan Galtung

distinguishes two kinds of peace: a negative peace, in which peace is merely 'the absence of violence' (2001, p. 3), and a positive peace, which is 'the capacity to deal with conflict non-violently and creatively' (ibid. p. 3). The peace process I referred to in the introduction of this chapter is clearly positive peace, i.e. a process which starts with the willingness to negotiate a resolution and ends with complete reconciliation; negotiations, mediations, democratisation can all be part of the positive peace process. Peace as a precondition of reconciliation is a negative peace; it is the non-violence after a violent conflict.

In order to reach this stage of non-violence, a peace agreement should be agreed upon. The contents and the scope of the agreement are of crucial importance for both the durability of the negative peace and for the reconciliation process. It is important that the core needs of all the parties are met and that all the parties commonly support the agreement. Both the leaders and the 'common' people should experience the agreement as just (Rothstein 1999, p. 198).

When the peace agreement is successfully executed and a negative peace is reached, mutual trust can grow (ibid., p 231). This trust is the basis for the new or improved relations that reconciliation requires. It can be the base for the development of negative peace towards positive peace, towards reconciliation. Ronald Fisher formulates the importance of a negative peace as follows:

often in situations of protracted, violent conflict, the deep fears and perceived risks of moving into the future with the other party outweigh the benefits that are expected. Therefore, the parties remain trapped in the status quo, and the conflict is intractable. Thus, one essential element of reconciliation is the assurance that the parties can give each other in order to overcome the fears and reduce the risks [...]. One type of assurance indicated that contentious and hurtful actions of the past will not be repeated. (2001, p. 41)

The problems involved with reaching peace are related to those for uncovering the truth, i.e. how to create the willingness to negotiate a peace agreement and how to stop people seeing each other as the Enemy? Another problem involves the lack of institutional capacity to maintain peace: a functional police force is often missing in a post-conflict area. These problems will also be attended in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

2.1.3 Justice

Before discussing the importance of justice in the reconciliation process, I need to draw a distinction between two different justice systems: the legalistic and the restorative justice system. In the legalistic justice system, crimes are regarded as committed against the state, not against other people (Estrada-Hollenbeck, 2001, p. 66). The state therefore will hurt the perpetrator in return for the hurt caused, by penalties or imprisonment (ibid. p. 68.). The restorative approach regards crimes primarily as conflicts between individuals that result in injuries. The ultimate goal of the restorative approach is to make right what has been wronged (ibid. p. 74), for example by giving the victim compensation.

The difference in the roles these two justice systems can play in the reconciliation process lies in the target they aim at. The first seeks the punishment of the violator, while the latter seeks to undo the violation.

Unlike punishment, which imposes a penalty or injury for a violation, restorative justice seeks to repair the injustice, to make up for it, and to effect corrective changes in the record, in relationships and in future behavior. The harmful act, rather than the offender, is to be renounced. Repentance and forgiveness are encouraged. (Minow, 1998, p. 91)

The restorative justice system is thus more suitable when it comes to enhancing forgiveness and obtaining reconciliation (Estrada-Hollenbeck, 2001, p. 68; Minow, 1998, p. 91). This is one of the reasons why I have chosen to focus on this system throughout my research and throughout this thesis.

Another reason for focusing on this system is its broader scope. The restorative justice system is, contrary to the legalistic justice system, rooted in many African traditions (Minow, 1998. p. 92). It finds a base in both the Christian and the Muslim religion. This system is therefore widely accepted in Africa, including Kenya. The acceptance is enlarged by the low involvement of the government in the restorative justice system. Since many African governments are considered corrupt, this low involvement is seen as an advantage. The *wazee* (the elderly) on the other hand, who often play an

important role in the restorative justice system, are regarded as honourable and incorruptible⁵.

The broader scope of the restorative justice system is of importance for its success. When people are harmed, they will seek justice, either by using the legal ways, or by finding revenge. If the justice system is not satisfactory, or when people do not believe that justice will be reached by the conventional system, they are more likely to seek revenge. This can trigger other crimes, which can eventually lead to a downward spiral of violence (ibid. p. 10-12).

Apart from preventing revenge, the restorative justice system can also lead to the restoration of relations. Unlike the legalistic justice system, where the state plays the role of the victim, the restorative justice system stresses the humanity of both the victim and the victimizer (ibid. p. 92). The mere attempt to make right what has been wronged, is an expression of repentance. Furthermore, the compensation can ease the pain, and thus help the victims to forgive the victimizer (Staub, 2003, p. 13). Thus, reconciliation can be reached.

A third role of justice in the reconciliation process is the prevention of further violence. When people know that violence will be punished -and paying compensation is a serious punishment when you are poor- they will think twice before committing a crime. Thus, peace will be maintained, which is, as described above, of importance for the reconciliation process.

One difficulty in achieving justice lies in its ambiguous relation with truth: uncovering the truth becomes more difficult when justice and punishments will follow (Minow, 1998, p. 57); people will be less willing to give testimony when they know that it could lead to punishment. Another difficulty emerges when it concerns a group-conflict: not only is it more difficult to identify the perpetrators, when they can merge into the group or hide behind orders, the judiciary capacity is often lacking. In the fifth chapter of this thesis I will discuss whether and how the people of Wajir have found a solution to these difficulties.

2.1.4 Forgiveness

⁵ I will elaborate on the *wazee* in the fifth chapter.

The fourth element of importance for the reconciliation process is forgiveness. Some scholars even state that forgiveness is the crux of the reconciliation process: Gerrit Glas poses that there is no fundamental difference between reconciliation and forgiveness: reconciliation refers to the broader process in which forgiveness is the main phase (2000, p. 75).

Forgiveness is an asymmetric process, i.e. the offended grants forgiveness to the offender. The offender has no right to demand forgiveness. This leads to the main problem of forgiveness: how can forgiveness be reached? When searching for an answer to this question, it is important to realize that granting forgiveness does not mean that the offended regards the act of crime as less harmful: the crime remains condemnable (ibid., p. 77). Granting forgiveness means that the offender, not the offence, is forgiven. This requires the creation of a distance between the offender and the offence. Some scholars introduce an apology as the key of forgiveness. When offenders apologize, show remorse, they distance themselves from the offence. Thus, it becomes possible for the offended to forgive the offender, without forgiving the offence (Tongerren, van, 2000, p. 102; Glas, 2000, p. 81; Rothstein, 1999, p. 241).

Although not explicitly stated, Glas sees forgiveness as an *interpersonal* process. Forgiveness is the result of an interaction between victim and victimizer (Karremans, 2002, p. 3-4). When the first shows remorse, the latter may be able to grant forgiveness. The introduction of remorse raises a practical problem. This problem emerges when offenders are unknown or dead: The offenders cannot show remorse and can thus not create the necessary distance between them and the offences. This is especially so in group-conflicts: when crimes are committed by groups, it is unclear who has done what. And who is guilty of a crime committed by order of another person: the perpetrator or the order giver? Furthermore, in a group conflict, each group contains victims, victimizer and people who are both victim and victimizer. Where and how should the forgiveness start?

The solution may come when you start seeing remorse as an *intrapersonal* phenomenon. 'Forgiveness can best be understood as a motivational change [...] that takes place within the person who has been offended, and may have interpersonal consequences' (ibid., p. 3-4) This brings a solution to some these questions, since it is no longer

necessary to know the offender. It does however not answer the question on *how* forgiveness should start. How can a person forgive the one who looted, raped or killed relatives, especially when the offender is unknown? The questions on whether and how it is possible to grant forgiveness when the perpetrator does not show remorse, or when the perpetrator is unknown, I try to answer in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

2.1.5 The way towards reconciliation

Having discussed the four phases of the reconciliation process, I will now pay attention to the relation between them. I will also try to become more concrete and give some examples of questions I asked to examine the reconciliation process.

Truth is, as I have discussed above, a fundament for the other three elements. Without a common truth, it is impossible to reach a peace agreement; it is impossible to achieve justice; and victims cannot undergo the psychological healing which allows them to forgive the perpetrators. Truth should thus be seen as a necessary precondition of the other three phases. I can be brief about the importance of peace: as many conflicts all over the world have often shown us, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to come to a long term peace agreement without a cease fire and impossible to reconcile without a negative peace. Peace is thus crucial for a successful reconciliation process. The importance of restorative justice is three-fold: it prevents revenge, restores relations and prevents new offences. In other words, it prevents future violence and helps to implement and maintain the peace resolution.

This is where the reconciliation process often finds a premature end. A truth has been uncovered which enabled a short-term peace and the re-installment of the jurisdictional system. The last and vital step of the reconciliation process is often omitted. Forgiveness is of crucial importance for the reconciliation process. Even when a common truth is found, justice has been done and peace has been reached, there will be no reconciliation when people do not forgive each other. It is thus not without reason that some scholars even equate reconciliation with forgiveness (Glas, 2000, p. 75). Two arguments can explain why so little attention is paid to forgiveness. First, the pressing necessity to do something has disappeared. The violence has ended and there are no more casualties. Second, this

last step of forgiveness is very difficult to make. How can an organisation or government advance forgiveness?

These problems are of course too broad to be answered in this thesis. Instead, I will describe how it *can* be reached; how it has been reached in Wajir. It may be clear that reconciliation and especially forgiveness are intangible concepts. In order to describe the concept, I had to simplify it. I made a distinction between the first three phases of the reconciliation process, which lead to the agreement on and maintenance of a peace resolution and the fourth phase. Finding a common truth, achieving a short-term, negative peace and re-installing the justice system are part of what I call the resolution process. This resolution process is an essential precondition of forgiveness, which is a phase on its own.

This distinction is not as clear-cut as it may seem; the resolution process converts fluently into the process of forgiveness. Although the first is a precondition for the latter, these processes can run simultaneously for a considerable period, i.e. some people have already forgiven each other, while others are still fighting. The distinction is thus not so much based on the timeframe, as on the content.

In order to get a better picture of the two phases, I will give more concrete examples of how I translated these rather vague phenomena into things I could observe or ask questions about. The resolution phase is aimed at putting an end to violence, and preventing an immediate regeneration of the conflict. Concrete and researchable aspects of the resolution process are the mobilisation of people in favour of peace; the negotiation process itself; the contents of the resolution; the disarming of people; and the reinstatement of the justice-system.

Forgiveness is aimed at preventing a conflict in the long term. It tries to create mutual understanding and thus enable people to forgive each other. Creating new bonds and relations between the different parties is another aspect of the reconciliation process. When researching this process, I paid attention to the change of all kinds of inter-clan relationships during and after the conflict. Inter-clan relations can be found and researched on the market, at school, within a marriage, in a mixed neighbourhood etcetera.

Thus I tried to find answers to the questions above: how to get enemies to negotiate a common truth, to negotiate a peace agreement

and to forgive each other? Using the concept of identity may, as stated in the introduction, help answering these questions. Before I formulate my hypothesis on the importance of identity for the four phases of the reconciliation process, I will first look at the concept itself. What is identity, what are its characteristics and how can it be analysed? These are the questions I will answer in the next paragraph.

2.2 Identity

Identity is a commonly used concept within social science. Nigel Dennis even gives the characterisation that ‘identity is the answer to everything. There is nothing that cannot be seen in terms of identity’ (Dennis, in Eptsein, 1978, p. 6). Although many scholars fail to define the concept or to specify the characteristics of identity, identity is an ambiguous concept, and many books have been written on the subject. I do not intend to give a complete overview of the discussion, since this would be both impossible and unnecessary. Instead, I will discuss the concept as it is used in this thesis, and pay attention to the formulation and the changing of identity, which is relevant to the link between identity and reconciliation. Having done this, I will provide an analytical model that will help to examine it.

2.2.1 Characterising identity

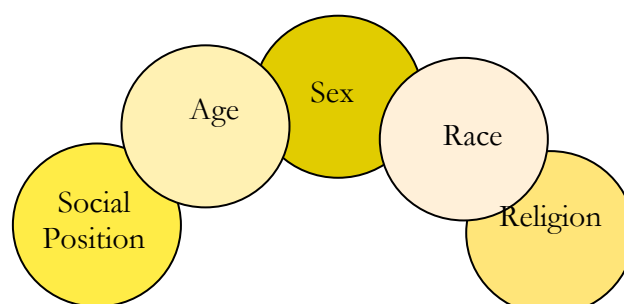
The Oxford Dictionary gives two definitions for identity: ‘the fact of being who or what a person or thing is’ and ‘a close similarity or affinity’ (Pearsall, 1999, p. 705). According to the first definition, identity is the core of a person or a thing. Identity defines the nature of a person or object. The second definition refers to the categorising character of identity; identity is used to pigeonhole someone or something. Dorothy Holland gives a more useful definition by referring to ‘the way a person understands and views himself, and is often viewed by others [...] -a perception of self that can be fairly constantly achieved.’ (1998, p. 68). Identity is thus both created and changed, both by oneself and by another.

Although Holland’s definition might so suggest, identity does not only change over time. It is also influenced by the social context (Mach, 1993, p. 3, 13) To understand this, one should realize that identity is always formed in relation to others.

An individual gains a sense of identity when he or she explicitly “belongs” and relates to a group. One’s “identity,” then, is simply a metaphor for the relationship of an individual to his or her cultural context. The self is defined in the context of relationships to others. (Schrinch, 2001, p. 148)

A woman in Wajir told me that she was a mother, a wife, a Somali, a Degodia (the clan to which she belonged), a Muslim, a market woman, a Kenyan, a coloured, a woman and so on. The importance of each of these identity elements depends on the situation: at home, the element that determines her position within the family is important. She sees herself and is seen as a wife and mother. At the market, the element that is connected to her job is most visible: she is a workingwoman sells at the market. Together, these and other elements form the identity of an individual. This is depicted in figure 1. It shows how a person is constructed out of identity elements such as age, sex, race, religion, and other socially significant categories (ibid. p. 149).

When simplifying identity to such a figure it is important to notice three things. Firstly, every element contributes in its own way to the whole: the occupation of an individual has a different influence on someone’s identity than the religion of this person. I have therefore coloured every element differently. Secondly, one should realize that the elements should not be seen separately. Identity ‘cannot be reduced to a series of separate roles which an individual plays in various social groups and situation’ (Mach, 1993, p. 3). All elements influence each other. A Muslim mother is different from a Catholic mum, and a Somali woman differs from a western woman. To symbolize this, I have chosen to give each element a shade of the same colour: orange. Thirdly, it is important to notice that the specific colour of each element depends on the individual. People of different religions can be depicted with a differently coloured religious element.



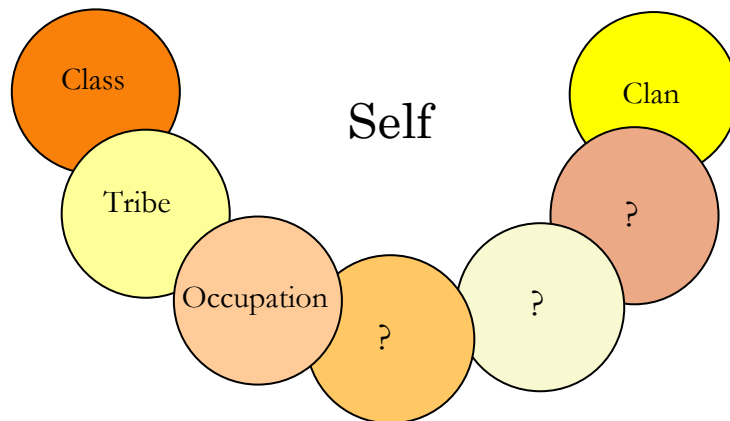


Figure 1. Identity elements (based on Schrich, 2001. p. 149)

Simplifications are unavoidable when tackling a complex concept as identity. It is impossible to analyse how each element influences all the other elements in every situation. I have therefore chosen only to describe the elements that have been essential for the conflict and the reconciliation process. It has also been unavoidable to use stereotypes. In this thesis, it is not possible to discuss all the different positions of adult women in the different nuclear families in Wajir. In order to say something on the position of women in the nuclear family, I was forced to use generalisations, based on my impression of the average role of women in the nuclear family. I talk about the women, as if it were a homogenous category.

Having described the characteristics of the concept of identity, I will now focus on the discussion on the forming of identity: what determines the contents of an identity, what influences the identity of an individual or group? But before elaborating on the discussion on the determination of the identity, I will first discuss the distinction between individual and group identity.

It is often assumed that individual and group identity are essentially, if not utterly different (Jenkins, 1996, p. 14). Although there are differences between the two, the similarities are of greater importance. Richard Jenkins even calls the two kinds of identity entangled; ‘the processes by which they are produced, reproduced and changed are analogous’ (ibid. p. 19). The most important difference is that individual identity stresses differences between individuals and group identity stresses similarities within a group (ibid. p. 19-20). Since this only concerns emphasizes, it is not a fundamental difference. Jenkins main argument is that identity, whether group or individual, is always a social construction; it is

always formulated in interaction with others. Furthermore, a group identity influences individual identity and vice versa. He therefore proposes talking about social identity, when describing the process of determining identities, instead of making the artificial distinction between group and individual identity (ibid.).

Although I realize that this is again a simplification of the reality, I will use the assumption that difference between the formation and alteration of group identity and of individual identity, are not essentially different in this thesis. It makes it possible to avoid the discussion on whether the group influences the individual or the individual influences the group (see Sztompka, 1993). I do not deny the importance of this debate; I merely do not think this is the appropriate place to give my opinion on this matter. I will therefore often leave aside what changed first, the individual or the group identity.

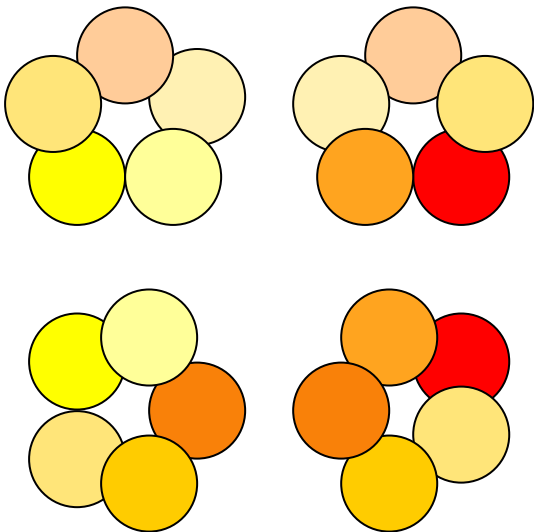
Another advantage of this assumption is that I can use both theories on the formation and alteration of individual identities and of those on group identities. Although the self-determination of identity is often taken for granted in everyday discourse (Jenkins, 1996, p. 11), there is an ongoing discussion on this subject. This discussion concerns the formulation and determination of the contents of identity. Subject to debate is whether identity is formulated in terms of what one *is* or of what one *is not*. To illustrate this, I will introduce Frederik Barth, who is a supporter of the latter and Anthony Cohen, who mixes the two streams.

Barth distinguishes four patterns that are of importance for the understanding of identity. Although these patterns are formulated with regard to group identity, they can -according to Jenkins- also be used for (social) identity in general (ibid.). Firstly identity is not a part of a superstructure as culture, but the result of the interactions in everyday life. In other words, the content of an identity does not logically derive from the culture in which it is formulated. It is constantly formulated in everyday life. Secondly, group identities are formulated in transaction with others and are thus flexible and negotiable. Thirdly, identity is ascribed, both by the group self as by others. Finally, when analysing identity, one should look at the boundaries that are shared with other groups and at the recruitment of new members of the group. (ibid., p. 102). This fourth element shows clearly that Barth is a supporter of the first group. By

looking at the boundaries of a group, you look at the distinctions between the other groups, at what one *is not*.

Cohen on the other hand, stresses that the ‘*cultural stuff*’ (ibid. p. 111) *within* the boundaries is important as well. He argues that the sense of belonging to a certain community is a response to, or even a defence against, the social categorisation by others. The process of being categorized and self-categorisation is an ongoing process, in which the one enlarges the other. The stronger the categorisation by The Other, the stronger the sense of belonging to the group becomes and vice versa. Thus, boundaries are relational, both connecting and separating one from The Other (ibid. p. 112). Cohen does not contradict Barth. He does not state that identity is *not* formed at the boundaries with other groups. He argues that the formation within the group, the stressing of similarities is just as important. I fully agree with Cohen. Identity is both formulated at the boundaries of a group, stressing the differences, and within the group, stressing the similarities. These processes strengthen each other.

Reviewing this, it is important to realize that individuals belong to several groups at the same time and that different individuals, with different identity elements, can belong to the same group. This is depicted in figure 2. I have depicted four individuals, the four larger circles, whose identity I have reduced to five different elements, the five different coloured small circles. The four individuals have certain elements with each other in common, -with some more than with others-, and certain elements differ.



*Figure 2. Identities in a group.*⁶

Consequently, every group is based on one or more elements that the members of that group have in common. Belonging to a certain clan is of course based on the clan element. The clan system itself is based on the Somali culture and is also founded in Islam. The tribal and religious elements of an identity are also important for the group clan.

Belonging to a certain group depends on the social context. People can feel solidarity with one group of individuals in *this* social context and with another in *that* social context. The four individuals depicted can all belong to one group in this situation and to four different groups in that situation. This depends on what element is important in which situation. Once I was at a dinner with only women, during which we talked about the difficulties of relationships. One woman expressed the feeling that she felt more connected to me, a white, non-Muslim, western woman, than to men from the same culture and social background. In that situation, the importance of gender related identity elements was surpassing the importance of other elements, such as the nationality, tribe or clan. I do not think that the woman would have made a similar remark during an Islamic ceremony.

Groups and individual identity thus vary according to the context. Change of identity can best be understood when you look at the different element that compose the identity. If one element changes -it becomes more or less important or the content of that element alters- it influences other elements that change as well. The change of one element can thus change the whole (group) identity. I have already explained that identity is defined in terms of what one *is* and what one *is not*. It is constructed from within and at the borders with other identities. The same is valid for change. An identity can change because the individual involved is not satisfied with it. A person decides to become a practicing Muslim, because he fears the day of judgement. Change of identity can also be caused by external influences. The ongoing violence against Muslims can contribute to the awakening of the religious element of ones' identity. I conclude that studying the different elements of identity will help to understand changes of both group and individual identities.

⁶ The representation of a single individual in this figure is based on the Schrich's figure of the self (Schrich, 2001, p. 149).

Although I have argued above that the theoretical distinction between individual and group identity is not important when analysing the formation of identity, it is interesting to see how different people, with different identity elements, share a sense of belonging. How is it possible that men and women, with high or low education and who belong to different tribes see themselves as one group, merely because they share the same religion? It becomes even more estranging when you realize that some members of that group also feel related to non-Muslims, who belong to a different tribe and who even have different nationalities, simply because they are all highly educated women.

Symbols play an important role in binding a group. They allow 'individual diversity and collective similarity to co-exist within the same social sphere' (ibid. 114). Wearing a veil has a different meaning for the woman who wears it to gain freedom to work in a public function, for the young woman who wears it in order to show she is a good Muslim and find a husband, or for the woman who wears it for solely religious reasons. But they will all identify themselves and be identified as professed Muslim women. It is not important that people see and understand things the same way, but that their shared symbols allow them to believe they do (ibid. 107).

Symbols are not the only way of combining individual and collective identity. They also coincide in institutions (ibid. 127). 'Institutions are patterns of behaviour in any particular context which have become established over time as 'the way things are done'' (ibid. 127). Just a few examples of institutions are marriage, university, practicing common law and greetings. By behaving according to the institutions that are common for the community, individuals emphasize, whether consciously or unconsciously, their membership of that community. They thus emphasize that they belong to the group or groups present in that particular community. By using 'Salam Aleikum' as a greeting, by wearing a scarf or veil and by going to the mosque, you show that you belong to a religious community, that you share the religious identity element. Differences in elements among the members of the group are overcome by using the symbols and institutions that belong to that element they have in common. Thus the gap between the individual differences and collective similarity is overcome.

Concluding I may state that identity is a categorising concept, which is multi-dimensional and can change both over time and per situation. Groups and individuals have multiple identity elements. The social context influences how prominent a certain element is. Feeling related to others and belonging to certain groups in turn depends on the prominence a certain identity element is. Identity is both determined from the outside, at the borders of identity, as from within. Both symbols and institutions can overcome the gap between the collective similarity and the individual differences. These characteristics may be helpful in analysing the concept of identity in theory, but how to use them in practical situations? This, I will discuss in the next sub-paragraph.

2.2.2 Analysing identity

When studying collective identities, i.e. groups that are based on one or more similar identity elements, you can distinguish categories and groups. The boundaries of a category are defined the researcher. The borders of the group are determined by the members of that group themselves (ibid., p. 82, 83). It is possible to belong to a certain category, without knowing so, because you do not know of the existence of such a category. It is however impossible to be unaware of belonging to a certain group (ibid. p. 84). I have decided to research existing groups, instead of categories. The reason for preferring groups above social categorisation is the relational aspect of groups. Membership of a group brings a relationship with it, while there is no necessary relation between the members of a category (ibid. 86). Since the resolution and the reconciliation processes are about relations, I consider groups more suitable for this research than categories.

This decision has consequences for the operationalisation of the concept of identity. Group is clearly an *emic* concept; it is per definition meaningful for the inhabitants. The groups I mentioned in the introduction are chosen because they were often named important. The conflict was between clans, which justifies the attention for this group. The existence of the ‘Al Fatah, counsel of *wazee*’, ‘women for peace’ and ‘youth for peace and development’ pointed me to three other important groups: *wazee*, women and youth. The often-heard expression that being a Somali and a Muslim

is much more important than being a member of a certain clan showed me two other groups: the Somali culture and Islam.

All six groups are based on certain identity elements. The importance of the groups depends on the importance of the identity elements, which is in turn based on the social context. It goes without saying that the context during times of peace differs drastically from that in times of conflict. It is thus hardly surprising that the importance and the content of the groups during a conflict differs from that in a period of peace. I now describe the model I used to analyse these changes. This model is normally used to analyse gender differences.

Gender is one of the individual's most discussed (group of) identity elements. The analytical model I will now discuss, which departs from the stratification of gender, is not only useful for disentangling the concept of 'gender', but also for other identity elements. This model starts from the assumption that gender has three different dimensions: a symbolic, an institutional and an individual dimension (Davids and van Driel, 2002, p. 74-75). I will here discuss the dimensions of gender as described by Francien van Driel and Tine Davids, but illustrate them with examples of all kind of identity elements, thus proving their broader value.

The first dimension is the symbolic dimension. This is the dimension of ideal images, representation, stereotypes and symbols. Differences within an identity element are neglected; the elements are phrased as definite and static (*ibid.* p. 74). A Muslim always prays five times a day, never drinks any alcohol and gives ten percent of his or her income to charity, all according to the holy Qu'ran. A member of the Ogaden, one of the clans living in Wajir, knows all his or her ancestors and relatives and is always loyal to the clan.

The second dimension is the structural or the institutional dimension. The symbolic world of stereotypes and idealized images gets a meaning within this dimension (*ibid.* p. 74). They are institutionalized within social constructs such as marriage, university, practicing common law and greetings. An example of the institutionalisation of the Muslim element can be found in common law. The common law in Wajir is partly based on the Qu'ran. If the values of the Qu'ran are violated, one should be punished according to the Qu'ran. A murder should pay 100 camels to compensate the

death of a male and fifty camels for the death of a female; stolen animals should be compensated by returning five similar animals (Institute for secularization of Islamic society, 2002, n.n.). An example of the institutionalisation of the clan identity element is the way the most important social network is organized. When the animals of a family die, other families within the clan will lend or even give some of their own animals in replacement

It is within this second dimension that differences *between* identity elements become tangible in everyday reality. When different clans are in conflict, people will find themselves forced to choose between Islamic norms and values, and loyalty to the clan. If they remain loyal to the clan, they violate Islamic values and common law. If they do not, they risk being (partly) excluded from their social network

There are of course also differences *within* an identity element. These differences take shape in the third dimension, the dimension of the individual subject (Davids en van Driel, 2002. p. 75).

This dimension refers to the process of identifying individuals with the different identities or aspects of identities that are passed on to them (multiple identities). Notions of the self and the other become internalized and thus do not only refer to the differences between the self and the actual other, but also to differences within the self. (ibid. p. 75, translated from Dutch, A.M.)

To illustrate this dimension, I refer back to the different meanings a veil can have: it can gain the freedom to work; it can show potential husbands that you will make a good wife and it can show that you are a good Muslim. Although these women will all identify themselves as Muslim women, they differ considerable.

It may be clear that the three dimensions of gender are also applicable for other elements. But what is the use of these three dimensions? How and what exactly can they help analyse? This model helps in two ways. First, it will help understanding contradictions within an identity element: you hear that Islam is a peaceful religion -the word Islam, popularly translated. means peace-, you hear that the Qu'ran is used for justifying killings during the conflict and you hear that people have stopped fighting because they realized that they were acting against their religion and would receive punishment at the day of judgement. These contradictions

can be better understood using the three dimensions: the ideal Muslim would not fight, since it is against the religion. This is what most people say, and what is preached in Mosques. On the other hand, the Qu'ran also allows revenge. When leaders of conflicting groups cannot reach an agreement, they will call for revenge, which can be justified with Islam. The individuals who fight identify themselves as good Muslims, obeying their leaders and the Qu'ran. The individuals, who do not or no longer fight, are also obeying the Qu'ran. Thus, by distinguishing the three dimensions, contradictions become noticeable.

The second way the model is useful is by helping to understand the shift of importance within an identity element. For example, it will help to gain insight in the reasons *why* many Muslims changed from being peaceful and forgiving to war-spirited and revengeful and back again. The analytical model will aid in signalling which aspects of a certain identity element are violated during the conflict. When the essence of an element, its core needs and values which belong to the symbolic dimension, is damaged, people are earlier inclined to take action.

As these examples already indicate, the content of the different dimensions alters in times of conflict. The toleration of violence in case of revenge is, for example, hardly ever mentioned when I was there. This institutional dimension of the religious element is thus only important in times of conflict. This is only logic, considering that both identity itself as the sense of belonging to a certain group depends on the context. I have therefore decided to describe the contents of the dimensions of the different elements both in times of conflict and in times of peace. Thus, I will be able to gain the full advantage of this tool. Note that, since only part of the people of Wajir participated in the conflict, only part of the identities was adjusted to the conflict situation. Now the elements of reconciliation are explained and the characteristics and the use of identity are treated, I will return to the subject of this thesis and discuss the relation between reconciliation and identity.

2.3 Reconciliation and identity

When discussing the four different phases of reconciliation I have signalized different problems: how to get enemies to negotiate and

uncover or create a common truth; how to create the willingness to negotiate a peace agreement and how to stop people seeing each other as the Enemy? Should you pursue justice when it can prevent the uncovering of a common truth? How to forgive people who looted, raped or killed family members, especially when the offender is unknown? As mentioned in the introduction, an answer to these problems may be found in linking reconciliation to identity. The relation between conflict and identity is not new, but identity has seldom been combined with the processes after the conflict, with the resolution process and forgiveness. The only link I have found in literature between identity and reconciliation is that of Lisa Schrich. She regards rituals as the answer to some of the questions above. Through rituals, such as eating and dancing together, one stops seeing The Other as The Enemy. The Enemy, who has been dehumanized in the conflict, starts to become human again (Schrich, p. 150-153).

In this thesis I do not contest the importance of rituals in the rehumanisation and thus in the reconciliation process as described by Schrich. Although it may be disputable that eating, drinking and dancing during a negotiation meeting should be considered rituals, this does not renounce the importance of the eating, drinking and dancing itself. Therefore, I do not mingle in the dispute, but look for a theory that explains Schrich's observations. I describe the relation between identity and the conflict, identity and the resolution process and identity and forgiveness. Since only the first relation is described in the scientific literature, I now only describe the relation between conflict and identity. I elaborate on it when I describe the conflict itself, in chapter four. The theory on the other two relations is based on my findings in Wajir. I discuss them in chapter five and six, when I have discussed the resolution process and forgiveness.

Many scholars have already described the link between identity and conflict (Lederach, 1997, p. 13; Schirch, 2001, p. 149-152; Staub, 2003, p. 3, 9; Volf, 1996, p. 16-18). In a conflict, a community becomes polarized. The conflicting groups seek on the one hand to distinguish themselves from The Other, and on the other hand to create a strong binding within the group. In the first process, The Other, the Enemy, becomes dehumanized. The dehumanisation of The Other helps in minimising any ambiguous or guilty feelings about killing and hating the Enemy (Schrich, 2001, p. 150; Staub,

2003, p. 3). Simultaneous, one identity element becomes more important. This element does not necessarily follow logically from the conflict, i.e. a quarrel between families may for example end in a quarrel between clans, religions or classes, depending on the social network the people involved use during the conflict. The identity element on which that social network is based becomes the conflicting element and can be religion, nationality, race, tribe, clan, ethnicity, profession, gender, and so on. The conflicting element is stressed in such a way that other elements, on which other groups are based, no longer seem relevant. When a conflict is based on clan, The Other is only seen as part of the enemies' clan. Having the same religion, belonging to the same tribe and having the same profession, is no longer relevant in that conflict.

Overemphasizing one identity element is also of importance in the second process, which leads to the polarisation of a community, i.e. the binding within a group (Schrich, 2001, p. 151). Differences within the group, such as religion, profession, gender and so on, are overcome. The identity element that creates the distance with The Other is the binding element within the group.

These processes are depicted in figure 3. One of the five identity elements of each of the four individuals is overemphasized, while the importance of the four others is diminished. The distance between the two individuals sharing that specific element has decreased, while the distance between the individuals who belong to another group has increased on the grounds of that element, The society has been polarized, divided in Us and The Other.

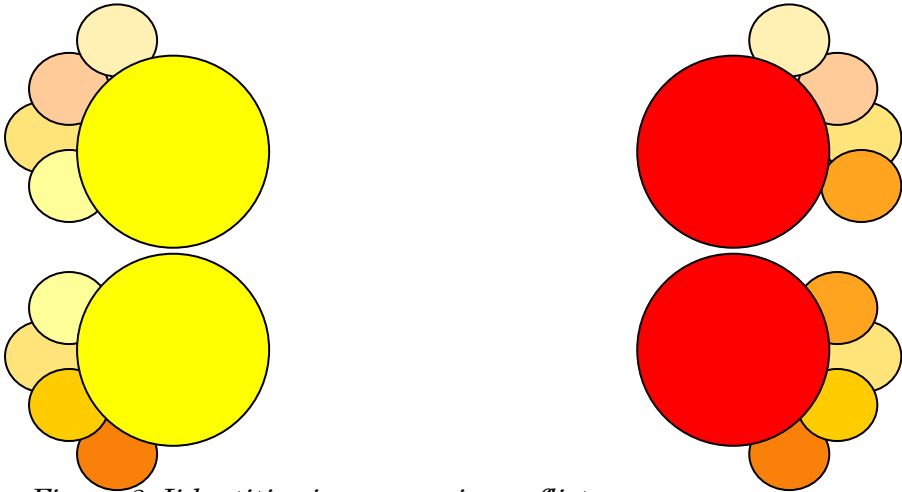


Figure 3. Identities in a group in conflict

These processes are neither completely conscious nor strategic. Although some individuals may actively encourage them for personal gain, by stressing the differences between the parties in public, most people follow because it seems logic and the right thing to do. This is a normal process, when you consider that, in times of conflict, people want to 'seek security by identifying with something close to their experience and over which they have some control' (Lederach, 1997, p. 13). How to alter this polarized community? How to overcome the importance of the conflicting identity element; how to stop the conflict and reconcile? These are the questions I answer in this thesis.

2.4 Research questions

I have divided the reconciliation process into four phases -truth, peace, justice and forgiveness-, which I have subdivided into two processes: the resolution process and forgiveness. Each of the four phases is indispensable for the reconciliation process but they all have their difficulties. In the introduction, I have already explained that analysing the conflict and the reconciliation process by using identity may create some understanding of the process.

Although this idea does not derive from the literature on reconciliation, it sure is logic. Many scientists agree that identity is important during the conflict, when a society becomes polarized in Us and Them. It seems logical to me that this polarisation must disappear in order to get reconciled. When the polarisation can be understood in terms of identity, it should be possible to gain more insight in the depolarisation using the same concept. Practical situations verify this as well: when two friends strongly disagree on politics, it is logical change the subject, and start talking about sports, in order to avoid a serious quarrel. In other words, you ignore the political identity element of your friend and stress the sportive one.

This led to the following hypothesis: there is a relation between identity and the reconciliation process in Wajir. I soon discovered that this hypothesis could be confirmed by my findings. Instead of discussing this hypothesis, I will lift my research to

another level and describe that relation. I noticed that different identity elements had changed during the conflict, resolution process and the process of forgiveness. They had increased or decreased in importance and their contents had changed. My main research question is thus the following: ‘how did the changing of identities influence the reconciliation process and how did the reconciliation process influence the changing of identities’? This question can be divided in three other research questions:

- How did the changing of identities influence the conflict in Wajir and how did the conflict influence the changing of identities?
- How did the changing of identities influence the resolution process in Wajir and how did the resolution process influence the changing of identities?
- How did the changing of identities influence forgiveness in Wajir and how did forgiveness influence the changing of identities?

By answering the first question, I gain understanding in the causes of conflict. In addition, I find out what the conflicting identity element was and try to understand how and why that particular element became so important. The second question aids in the comprehension of how the parties involved were able to end the polarisation, start the negotiations, overcome their differences and stop the conflict. By answering the third question, I hope to gain understanding of the final, and often most difficult step of the reconciliation process: forgiveness. How were people able to forgive the looters of their village, the rapists of their daughters and the murderers of their family members? I discuss these topics in the fourth, fifth and sixth and chapter of this thesis. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the methods used for this research.

3. Methodology

It is always difficult to capture the truth. Above all because there isn't commonly such a thing as *the* truth, everybody has his or her own version on what happened and especially why it happened. When the truth concerns interpretations or memories, social desirability and point of view may lead to different truths.

To be able describe the complex history and understand the current situation -to come to *a* truth- I used the principle of triangulation. Triangulation stands for making several measurements from different angles. It refers not only to the use of *different* angles, but also to different *kinds* of angles. Each method has its own stronger and weaker qualities and the same applies to different kinds of data. A combination of methods, methodical triangulation, together with a combination of different kinds of data, data triangulation, will lead to a higher validity (t Hart, 1998, p. 270).

In this chapter I discuss the way I have used the principle of triangulation. I enumerate the different methods I have used and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these methods. I also discuss the problems I encounter, which are related to the validity and reliability of this research. I discuss this in the last paragraph of this chapter. Firstly, I pay attention to the role I took during the research, since this influences both the used methods and the reliability and the validity of the research. The impact of the role chosen is again discussed in the last paragraph.

The role taken during a field research, determines the position within the society, but also the relation with the people you meet, both during 'official meetings', and in every-day life. Therefore, the assumed role influences the *kind* of information and the *reliability* of the information that you collect. I introduced myself as a Dutch student, doing research on peace and reconciliation. I mentioned my nationality to prevent being identified as a Briton, which could cause a bias, due to the British colonial history. By introducing myself as a student, I hoped to prevent high expectations of what I could do for them. Furthermore, it stressed the fact that *I* was the person that was there to learn, while *they* were the experts

who could teach me. By saying I was researching, I merely told the truth.

This role was not only of importance while I was actively involved in the research, but also in every-day life. Since I was one of the few whites in Wajir, I always got a lot of attention. People were surprised to see a white person walking through the streets and often addressed me. When I introduced myself as above and explained about my research, they often tried to help me by telling their opinion, or their story. I seized these opportunities to gather information from people who were not involved in the peace movement.

3.1 Research methods

When I arrived in Kenya in December 2001, I could not travel to Wajir, due to the lateness of the rainy season, which made the roads impassable. I therefore decided to travel to Mombassa, the second city of Kenya, where one of the initiators of the reconciliation process, Dekha Ibrahim, lives. I stayed in her house for four weeks, and was treated as a member of the family. This gave me the opportunity to talk freely about all kinds of things such as the way of living in Wajir, religion and its impact in ordinary life, the position of women, et cetera. I could also acclimatize to things like the high temperatures, the close family relations and the Somali food. Furthermore, I could use Dekha's library: a collection of reports on Wajir, and practical information on peace building and reconciliation. This included information on the history of Wajir, its population, and its natural resources and on the different projects started by the WPDC. In these four weeks, informal and mostly unprepared conversations were my main tools. I merely participated in the family life and wrote down my impressions in my diary.

By the end of December the roads had cleared and I could travel to Wajir, where I would stay until the end of April. On my arrival, I contacted the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) who helped me throughout my research. They introduced me to representatives of groups who had played a crucial role during the reconciliation process: the *wazee*, youth, women and the religious leaders. I held both interviews and conversations with representatives of each of these groups.

The interview and the conversation differ in terms of formality: an interview is more formal: I invited someone to talk with me, prepared a topic-list, made sure that the entire topic-list was discussed and recorded the interview when possible. A conversation is more informal; although I knew the subjects on which I wanted to gather more information, I did not arrange a meeting. I brought the subject up when opportunity was there, but this did not necessarily mean that *I* was leading the conversation.

These methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of the more formal interview is the control: *I* selected the people with whom *I* wanted to talk⁷, invited them and talked with them on what *I* wanted to talk about. Although I gave the informants and respondents the opportunity to give their own input, I remained in control. Because I taped the interviews, I could make a literal transcript of the interviews, which opened up the opportunity to quote people. The possibility of making appointments in advance is another advantage of the formal interview. This control was not there during the conversations. Although I asked questions and brought up some subjects, the interlocutor had the same control over the conversation as I had. The advantages of the conversation are two fold. First, there is a higher confidentiality. Without the tape recorder and often without pen and paper, people were more eager to entrust something to me. In some occasions, when doing a formal interview, the person interviewed asked me to stop the recorder and to keep the information of the record. After stopping the recorder, the interview inclined towards a conversation. The second advantage is related to the openness of the conversation. When there is no strict subject, people are more easily tended to say what *they* think is important, which can lead to unexpected new information.

There are two occasions in which I preferred to use the formal interview instead of the more informal conversation. The first was when I wanted to talk to people whom I was unlikely to meet without an appointment. This was the case with some of the most active members of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, who were not bound to the office. The second occasion was when I wanted to be

⁷ WPDC was helpful in the selection of people: since I did not know who had played which role, I mentioned the type of person - a male, of the Ajuran clan, who is an active member of the *Al Fatah* - and the WPDC invited someone who fulfilled these requirements.

able to record all the details mentioned. It is difficult to gain insight into identities and details can be of great importance. Recording the interviews ensured me that all the details would be saved. I often used the interview technique when I was talking with key-informants. In all the other occasions, I chose for the conversation method to achieve as much confidentiality as possible.

In total, I had five interviews with *wazee*, six with women and five with the youth. Furthermore, I had three interviews with religious leaders. The number of conversations is less precise. Since I had many conversations on one day, it was impossible to register them all. I therefore only registered the conversations that were somehow related to my research and contained some new information. The outcome of the conversations I did not register was however not lost: it often confirmed the information I already knew. Furthermore, these conversations extended my understanding of the Wajir society. I made daily notes on all this in my diary. In total, I had 38 registered conversations, of which 8 with *wazee*, 17 with women and 13 with youth.

During the interviews, the WPDC provided me with interpreters. Three people, who are active members of the WPDC, have helped me in this function: Nassir, Adan and Halima. All three master English, Somali and Swahili. They knew about my research target and the research questions, but since they were all very busy, I could not discuss all the ins and outs with them. Consequently, they merely translated the questions and the answers, so it was up to me to ask more in-depth questions. In some occasions I had to rephrase a question before the interpreter understood what I wanted to know, but this did not lead to difficult situations. In the end, the answers were satisfactory, although not always what I expected.

One thing to note in relation to the interpretations is the copious narrative style of the Somalis (Affrax, 1994, p. 235). In the beginning I was often surprised by the difference between the length of the answer in Somali and the translation in English. To make sure that the translations were correct, I verified some of the translations by playing the tape with a Somali part of an interview and ask someone else to translate. The translations were almost the same. In chapter six, I will pay more attention to this narrative style, when I discuss some characteristics of the Somali culture.

Besides the interviews and conversations, I also used observations and group interviews during my research. The WPDC helped me greatly in this. They regularly organized workshops, in which I was allowed to participate. These were held for all different groups: *wazee*, women, youth, schoolchildren and members of peace groups in other areas. The workshops were aimed at creating a greater awareness of the causes of conflicts; at avoiding these causes; at empowering the participants to recognize a conflict in an early stadium; and at preventing a conflict to escalate. The knowledge of the participants formed the starting point for these workshops. During the workshops, the mediators gave the participants some Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools, such as mapping, all sorts of brainstorming, transit walks and role-playing. This enabled the participant to discuss, share and exchange knowledge and information.

These workshops were very valuable for my research: I could hear the different opinions on subjects as the causes of the conflict and the possible ways of preventing it. Furthermore, when we were divided in smaller groups, I could ask questions and steer the subject in the smaller groups, and still see the outcome of the groups where I did not intercede. The participants took these 'assignments' all very seriously, the discussions were vivid and the outcomes interesting. Throughout the workshops, but most clearly during the PRAs, I could observe the group process: who was leading the process, who was contributing, who contradicted with whom and who kept silent? Many people participated in the eight workshops I attended. An estimated two-hundred-and-fifty people participated in one or more of these workshops. The composition of the groups differed in social class, age, gender, and involvement. This increased the representation of the different inhabitants of Wajir in my research.

I met many different people through the WPDC but they were all somehow linked to the peace movement. I therefore also tried to talk to other people. When walking through the streets, doing some shopping and visiting the library, I was often approached by people. On these occasions, I tried to turn the conversation towards my research. Although they all had stories about the conflict, they couldn't tell me much about the reconciliation process. They merely told me that the *wazee* had solved everything and that the situation had greatly improved since.

When I approached people *myself*, in order to prevent a bias, the answers were often short. Not only had they not given the subject a lot of thought, they were also not *used* to talking about such a subject. I deliberately approached some who seemed to be among the poorest of Wajir, since only a few of them were active in the peace movement. It struck me that their lives were completely dedicated to subsisting. They lived from day to day and were estranged from conversations and discussions on 'higher' issues such as political issues or the reconciliation process. This and the lack of education can explain their inability to answer my questions. After eight conversations that brought very little information, I decided to stop my attempts to approach the people who were not involved in the peace movement. I will elaborate on the consequences of this for the internal validity in the next paragraph.

I tried to confirm the information gathered in the interviews, conversations, workshops and observations by using written resources. Although the conflict and reconciliation process concern behavioural processes, some indications of these processes can be found in archives such as the reports of actions undertaken by the government or by organisation and peace declarations. I searched three archives: the WPDCs archive, the archive of the local government in Wajir and the Kenya National Archive in Nairobi. In the first I found reports on activities of the WPDC and the outcome of them. Among those were the minutes of several reconciliation meetings that had been held when the situation threatened to re-escalate after the *Al Fatah* declaration that officially ended the conflict of 1992-1994. In the archives of the local government, I found an overview of all the violence of the last few decades and some peace agreements. In the National Archive, where local archives of twelve years and older are stored, I found the 'handing over reports' of British rulers of the Wajir district. This confirmed the described situation in colonial time. For example, one informant who gave me very confidential information, told me about discrimination of his clan by the colonial government. Although I had not been able to verify his information by other informants, I regarded him as trustworthy. In the letters, new governments were warned against this particular clan, since they 'have a meaner face than the other Somalis and are particularly noxious tribe⁸, being inveterate thieves

⁸ In the archive, tribe and clan is often used as synonyms.

and murderers and correspondingly meanspirited' (History of Wajir, n.d., p. 6).

Newspapers -the Daily Nation and the East African Standard- served a different function throughout my research. I read them to get a general idea of the position of Wajir within Kenya. It was striking to see how little attention was given to the Wajir district, which is the second largest district of Kenya. Nevertheless it provided me with background information on Kenya, such as the amount of attention that was given to elections, the influence of corruption and the importance of paternalism. Although this information was mainly given on 'down-Kenya'⁹, it also applied to Wajir.

I have used triangulation to attain the highest validity and reliability possible in such a research. Nevertheless, these subjects need to be addressed. Is the information found valid for the whole of Wajir or even beyond the borders of the district? Did the informants know and speak 'the truth'? These are the subjects that I will discuss in the next paragraph.

3.2 Reliability and validity

When you discuss the reliability of certain information, you question whether or not that information is true. At the beginning of this chapter I indicated that there is no such thing as *the* truth. Truth is 'rarely pure and never simple' (Oscar Wilde). I was confronted with this when I asked who had taken the initiative for the reconciliation process. Some of the *wazee* stated that they initiated the process and asked women to participate in it later. Some women said that they took the initiative in the market and asked the *wazee* to take over, in order to reach the entire community. Some men confirmed this. Other people stated that they all decided that the conflict had lasted long enough. The documentary, to which all the major participants of the reconciliation process had contributed, suggested that women had taken the initiative.

The socially desirable answer would have been, as I discovered during the research, that the *wazee* had taken the

⁹ In the common speech in Wajir, Kenya is divided in two parts: the Northeastern province, containing Wajir and down Kenya, to which the rest of Kenya belonged.

initiative. It is their task, as leaders of the clans, to look after their people and thus to maintain peace. It was an undesirable answer to suggest that the women had taken the initiative. Women should, according to the Qu'ran, restrain themselves from involvement in the public domain and restrict themselves to family life. In the end I concluded that the women had most probably taken the initiative in the reconciliation process, since they had no other reason to claim this, other than telling their truth, and because women, men and the documentary told this version.

Does this mean that some of the *wazee* were liars? I do not think so. Observing group processes I noticed that men, women and *wazee* all had a role within the group that could explain the given answers on the question about the initiative in the reconciliation process. The men always took the lead in a discussion. They were the most eager to approach 'the' truth, even when that truth proved to be undesirable and when others discouraged them. Women were reluctant to give their opinion; many remained silent until they were specifically asked, but their opinion showed as much knowledge and understanding as those of the men. When a *mzee* gave his opinion the others remained silent, even when it was not a contribution to the discussion. Nobody interrupts or contradicts a *mzee*, regardless of the position taken or point of view. Consequently, the *wazee* always seemed right and were confirmed in their position as a wise and knowledgeable leader.

The interviews, documentary and observations resulted in the following picture: the women had taken the initiative and had mobilized the *wazee*, in such a way that the women could remain on the background. Consequently, the *wazee* who got involved later on did not know of the women's contribution. Some *wazee* thought that the initiative was actually theirs and no one contradicted them. This is not necessarily the truth. It is however a truth that is both possible and that does not seriously violate other truths.

This is something that one should bear in mind when reading this thesis. Although I have done my uttermost best to describe a widely accepted truth, it never is *the* truth. Nevertheless, I do take the view that vast majority of the inhabitants of Wajir can find themselves in this truth.

Having discussed the reliability of my research, I still need to address its validity. There are two kinds of validity: internal and

external validity. Internal validity refers to question whether the *internal* target has been achieved or in this case, whether the relation between identity and the reconciliation process has become clear. External validity refers to the *external* target of the research; the range of the research. In this case whether the research contributes to the discussion on the reconciliation process and perhaps even whether the findings can be generalized to apply to other cases that are not examined. (t Hart, 1998, p. 285).

The internal validity depends upon the reliability of the people with whom I spoke and the representation of the different parties within my research. The first has been discussed above. I have judged the given information reliable. The representation of informants leads to bigger problems: as I explained above most of the people I interviewed were connected to the peace movement in one way or another. Although the peace movement includes many people of different identities, there remains a certain bias. Only the people who are interested in peace and who have the opportunity to participate are represented. The people I talked with, who did not actively participate in the reconciliation process all confirmed that the conflict had been terrible and that there weren't any problems in the current situation. After hearing the same answers over and over again, without being able to have a more in-depth conversation, I decided to focus on the people who were involved in the reconciliation process.

The impact of this bias might not be too great. The people with whom I had an interview or a conversation did not contradict anything said by the people who were involved. Furthermore, everybody felt represented by the *wazee*, was satisfied with the situation and did not feel the urge to get involved themselves. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the system of *wazee* is a democratic system, where the *wazee* are unofficially chosen by the people they represent. Therefore, in spite of this bias, I still consider it possible to answer my research question for the whole of Wajir.

The aim of my research is to contribute to the discussion on reconciliation. To do so, I have to judge the external validity. It may be clear that the Wajir case is unique, as is every conflict. The cause of the conflict, the players, the background and the identities involved differ for each situation. This does not mean that the conclusion of my research will only be of value for Wajir. I chose to go

to Wajir *because* it was an unique situation. Reconciliation is rarely reached as efficiently as was the case in Wajir. The answer to my research question will help in answering a more important question: how can reconciliation be reached? It would be naïve to think that I will answer that question, but I may be able to contribute in some small way. This will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

4. Conflict

However unhelpful to you, your cousin remains the best of people¹⁰

It is always difficult to comprehend the full cause and impact of a conflict. The causes are often diverse and some of them may be difficult to reveal; there are many parties, who may have different interests at stake; and the consequences are multiple and can last until long after the conflict. This is why I do not attempt to give a full account on all the causes, parties and consequences of the conflict in Wajir. This would be both impossible and unnecessary. I will therefore only summarize the main causes, parties and consequences, and base this on the accounts of the people to whom I spoke, supplemented with the information I found in the various archives.

Since the roots of some causes lay in the past, I will first focus on the history of Wajir. The colonial period from which clanism, the overemphasizing of the importance of clans, originates and the postcolonial period, in which the gap between the North Eastern Province and the rest of Kenya was created, are of great importance. The impact of the history on the conflict becomes clearer when I discuss the term clanism. Understanding the significance and the impact of clanism will help to comprehend how and why the conflict could arise. Having discussed these general causes, I will concentrate on the conflict between 1992 and 1994. How did all these causes influence and aggravate each other? What actually happened in this period? I will end this chapter reflecting on my theoretical framework: here I will analyse the relation between identity and the conflict.

4.1 History and background of Wajir

¹⁰ Somali proverb. The meaning of this proverb will be explained later in this chapter.

Before I elaborate on the conflict in Wajir, I will first discuss some anecdotes that illustrate the position of Wajir within Kenya. Newly arrived in Kenya, I went to a mobile phone shop, to make some inquiries about the possibilities of using a mobile phone in Wajir. The saleswoman told me it was no problem, the only thing I needed to do was to change my number. When I asked why it was necessary to change the number, which was valid for the rest of Kenya, I discovered that the saleswoman thought that Wajir was abroad. That same day, I wanted to buy a ticket to Wajir at the bus station. There, I was told that it was impossible to travel to Wajir by bus, since there was no coach service operational. More important, it was irresponsible to go there: *shifita*'s¹¹, a word that is used as a synonym for bandits, made the Wajir district unsafe. Having spent four and a half months in Wajir, to where I had travelled by one of the three daily buses between Nairobi and Wajir, these *shifita*'s had never made me feel unsafe.

Another incident happened a few months later, when I travelled from Wajir to Nairobi, to renew my visa. When we crossed the Tana, the river at the southern border of the North Eastern Province (NEP), customs officers and soldiers demanded we crossed the bridge by foot. Only after examining all the identity cards and after searching some of the other passengers did they allow us to continue the trip. Later, I understood that this was common practice, to prevent people with the Somali nationality entering 'down Kenya'. The Kenyan government had more or less moved the border between Kenya and Somalia.

The first two examples illustrate the way Kenyans see Wajir: it is not really regarded as a part of Kenya. Furthermore, they see it as a dangerous area that should be avoided if possible. The third anecdote is characteristic for the way the Kenyan government treats the North Eastern Province, including Wajir: it is almost excluded from the rest of Kenya. This explains why the conflict could escalate: the government of Kenya only got involved when the first peace initiative had already been made.

How can this situation be explained and understood? Why is the situation in Wajir so different from other districts? To answer these questions, we have to look at the history of the people of Wajir. I will start at the pre-colonial time, when the Somalis all lived as

¹¹ I will return to the use of '*shifita*' as a synonym for bandit later on in this chapter.

nomads. This remains the ideal way of life for most Somalis. The culture and traditions of the Somalis in Wajir originate in pre-colonial times. In the colonial time, the Somalis were restricted to certain areas, which limited their nomadic way of life, and still does. When Kenya became independent, in 1963, the Somalis began a war of independence. The backward position of Wajir in Kenya can be seen as a direct consequence of this war.

4.1.1 Pre-colonial period

Although the first written evidence of the existence of the Somalis dates from the early fifteenth century, linguistic evidence suggests that the Somalis have lived in the horn of Africa for at least two millennia (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 17). The Somalis have always relied on livestock as their main way of living. The word 'Somali' is said to originate from the words 'so', meaning 'go' and 'mal', meaning 'milk' (Selassie, 1980, p. 98), thus combining the nomadic and pastoral existence in their name.

The nomadic existence has never been secure: drought and diseases can kill entire herds and thus ruin the source of income for entire families. A social network is thus of vital importance. The social network of the Somalis has always been primarily based on clan structure. The Somalis are subdivided into several clans. When, at the end of the nineteenth century, the first ethnographical studies on the Somalis were conducted, the Somali speaking population could be divided into six major groupings. Though every Somali belongs to one of these clan-families, these groups were too large and too dispersed to be effective units. The Somalis identified themselves more easily with the clans or sub-clans into which these clan-families had been divided (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 17-19). These clans and sub-clans can contain up to sixty thousand members¹² (or even up to 3 million people, according to one informant), with whom all members feel more or less related.

A clan not only functions as a social network but also as a political unity and as a territorial distribution formula. In the absence of a centralized state, the traditional clan system is a necessity. It established a high degree of mutuality among the people. This was a functional surrogate for a state (Afrax, 1993, p. 135). Each clan had certain grazing areas and water wells, to which

¹² Most of the information in this chapter is based on my research data.

clan members could return in the dry season. However, because of the scarce and unpredictable rains and because of the idea that water and pasture are gifts of God, areas were often shared with different clans. Nevertheless, in times of severe scarcity, clanmembers would return to their traditional areas and defend them from intrusion of other clans. This could lead to violence and conflicts (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 19).

Despite these internal conflicts, the Somalis felt and still feel related: they share strong ethnic feelings, which are much stronger than their nationalistic sentiments. Besides, they are accustomed to harsh living conditions and ascribe themselves a warlike spirit. This makes the position of Wajir in Kenya more understandable: the Somalis are feared throughout history, but most notably in the colonial period and the first decades after independence.

4.1.2 Colonial period

The colonial period started at the end of the nineteenth century, when Great Britain tried to bring Kenya under their sphere of influence. As a result, Kenya became a part of the East Africa Protectorate in 1905. The name 'Kenya' dates from 1920, when the country became a colony of the British crown. In December 1963, Kenya received its independence (Röst, 1990, p. 245).

The influence of the colonial period on the Somalis in general and on Wajir in specific was enormous. Fearing a Somali rebellion, the British applied their famous politics of divide and rule. This is not only claimed by the Somalis. Confirmation can be found in the National Archives in Nairobi. In the political reports of Wajir, the British government mentions minor conflicts and rebellions in the first decades of the twentieth century. These rebellions resulted in the evacuation of the government of Wajir in 1915. The British tried to solve this problem by giving more power to one specific sub-clan, the Mohamed Zubeir, which is part of the Ogaden clan. They were 'tactically allowed to move where they wished and consequently everyone [else] who did not wish to pay a levy [...] roamed far away' (History of Wajir, n.d., p. 20).

Nevertheless, the Ajuran and the Degodia (re-)entered the area, which resulted in some struggles. In another attempt to regain peace in the area, they redistributed the clan areas of Wajir in 1930

and 1931 (Notes on Wajir tribes¹³, n.d., p. 12), disregarding the fact that:

owing to irregular rainfall and consequent lack of grazing, it was quite impossible to form any grazing area in the nature of a location and allocate that location to a specific tribe¹³. The whole district had to be recognised as communal to Somalis living in the district. (History of Wajir, n.d., p. 44)

Although some said that the safety issue was the main reason for dividing Wajir, it was not the only one. When travelling was limited, people would be forced to give up their nomadic existence and start to live in permanent settlements. This enhanced the administrative system: people who have a permanent address can be officially registered. They can be forced to pay taxes, which of course is to the benefit of the British Treasury.

The colonial government tried to involve the three major clans living in Wajir at that time, in the distribution of the Wajir district. These clans were the Degodia, the Ajuran and the Ogaden. The Ajuran and the Ogaden cooperated, but the Degodia refused¹⁴, claiming that the land belonged to all Somalis. They declined to contribute to a division that would limit their nomadic existence. Nevertheless, Wajir was divided into three sections. The Degodia, the biggest clan, was ascribed the smallest section.

The redistribution of the Wajir clan-areas resulted in serious fighting in September 1931 (Notes on Wajir tribes, n.d., p. 12). From that time until independence, the boundaries between the different clan-areas were closed. Crossing these areas could lead to penalties and even imprisonment. The clans controlled their own borders and reported illegal crossings. The Somalis had two reasons to cooperate: not only were their natural resources, such as water and pasture, protected against exhaustion through use by other clans, they were also allowed to keep a part of the penalty fees. The disputes over the exact locations of the borders, the justness of the borders and over

¹³ The British did not make a clear distinction between tribe and clan in this report. The word tribe is often used as a synonym for clan.

¹⁴ This data is based on the information of one informant and I have not been able to verify this information. Nevertheless, I do regard this information as reliable, both because I have found no information to contradict this and because I regarded the informant trustworthy (see also paragraph 3.2). I will discuss the consequence of this in paragraph 4.3.

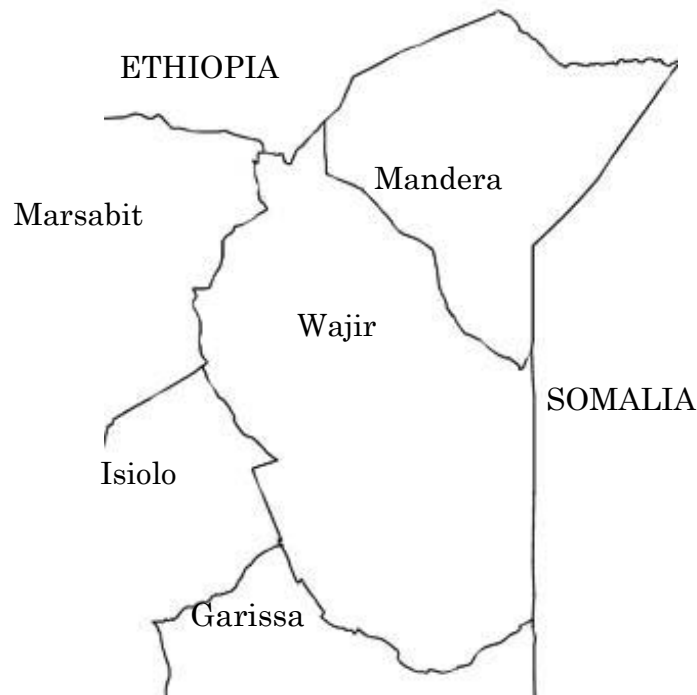
illegal crossings were many. Thus, the British government succeeded in planting discord among the Somalis.

Besides the internal disharmony, the British also created a division between the Northern Frontier District (NFD¹⁵) and the rest of Kenya. In 1902, the colonial government imposed the outlying District Act, thus declaring the NFD a closed area: a pass was needed to move in and out the area. Consequently, the Somalis had no contact or relations with the rest of Kenya (Hassan, 2001, n.n.). Farson accurately describes this relation, stating that 'there is one half of Kenya about which the other half knows nothing about and seems to care even less' (Farson, in Hassan, 2001, n.n.).

4.1.3 Post Colonial Period

The gap between the Northern Frontier District and the rest of Kenya enlarged in the sixties. In 1960, the Somali Republic was established. This republic was the result of the merging of Somalia, which was an Italian colony, and Somaliland, a former British colony (Tijssen, 2003, n.n.). The population of the Somali Republic is almost one hundred percent Somali. With the establishment of a Somali nation, the cry for an independent Greater Somalia rose. This independent Somalia should contain all the areas with a Somali majority, namely the Somali Republic, Djibouti, the Southeastern part of Ethiopia, and the Northeastern part of Kenya. The re-union of the NFP and Greater Somalia was the main agenda of The Northern Province Peoples Progressive Party (N.P.P.P.P.) that was established in Kenya. This political party could count on the support of the new government of the Somali Republic. The 'union of Somali territories by legal and peaceful means' (Hassan, 2001, n.n.) was even a part of the Independence constitution of the Somali Republic.

¹⁵ The North Eastern Province was, until 1962, part of the Northern Frontier District, which also included the Isiolo, Moyale and Marsabit districts (Hassan, 2001).



Map 2. Wajir and its neighbouring districts¹⁶

On the eve of independence, the succession of the NFD was one of the topics on the Lancaster House talks, where the Independence Constitution of Kenya was discussed. This resulted in the formation of a commission that had to investigate the public opinion in the northern province. This commission concluded that the majority of the inhabitants of NFD were in favour of secession to Somalia. Nevertheless, the British government decided against the separation of the NFD. Instead, they divided the district into the North Eastern District, which includes Garissa, Mandera and Wajir and is predominantly Muslim, and the Eastern District, of which Moyale, Isiolo and Marsabit became a part (ibid.) and where Christians, Muslims and worshipers of nature live.

The Somalis, who felt betrayed, decided to boycott the elections in 1963, on the threshold of independence. Instead, the leaders of the N.P.P.P. decided to lead a violent uprising, which would later receive the name Shifita war. The Somalis fought for an independent Somalia, which is still regarded as a noble cause. Using the word shifita as a synonym for bandits is thus an insult for the Somali warriors. In reaction to this outburst of violence, Prime

¹⁶ This is the alternated fragment of a map of the International Livestock Research Institute (2002, n.n.)

Minister Jomo Kenyatta declared a state of emergency in Wajir, thus giving security forces more power to stop the violence, by reducing the legislation on investigations and arrests. The laws applying to an area in state of emergency have varied over time, but in the end they included the prohibition on any means of transport on the Tana, the river at the border of the North Eastern District; prohibition of entry to the province for anyone other than civil servants and members of the Security Forces and the death penalty for the possession of firearms. Although the Shifta war ended in 1969 (Introduction, n.d. p. 2) the state of emergency only discontinued after almost 30 years, in 1992.

Human rights have been violated on many occasions in these thirty years of emergency state. The Security Forces have robbed, raped and murdered, with two massacres -the Bulla Kastasi Estate massacre in November 1980 and the Wagalla massacre in February 1984- as peaks. An estimated 8,000 people were killed at these massacres and 3,000 are unaccounted for (Hassan, 2001, n.n.). One survivor of the Wagalla Massacre, told me how men and boys were rounded up, in an operation against a Degodia sub-clan, of which some members were accused of banditry. They were all forced to sit on their knees in the burning sun for days, without any food, water or shade. After three days, many men were executed, without any trial. Security forces, which acted on behalf of the government, killed a total of 5,000 people (ibid.). Unfortunately, this all is not completely in the past. The history of Wajir is still tangible in the present. I will discuss this in the next sub-paragraph.

4.1.4 Consequences of History

The past is visible in the present in two eminent but also negative ways: the roots of both clanism and poverty can be found in the colonial and postcolonial history. Before I elaborate on this, it is necessary to explain the term clanism itself and distinguish clans from clanism. Strictly spoken a clan is nothing more than an extended family with a uni-linear descent (Gould and William, 1964, p. 94). It should only serve the purpose of identification, of knowing who is related to whom, and thus avoiding that people who are closely related will marry. This is the purpose according to the holy Qu'ran and because religion plays an important role in normal life in Wajir, many people mention it as the single purpose of clans in Wajir.

The term clanism is used to refer to situations in which the importance of clans becomes excessive. If clans penetrate into areas as politics, justice or police affairs, the term clanism can be applied. Since the term clanism was often mentioned as one of the root causes of the conflict, I will use the term in this thesis. With it, I refer to the excessive importance of clans. Clanism is a form of favourism, of clientalism. It leads to positive discrimination of members of one's own clan and discrimination of members of other clans. It can even lead to corruption, criminality and violence. I will illustrate this by giving some examples of clanism in Wajir.

The villages in Wajir and the settlements in Wajir town are organized according to clan. This is in itself not problematic, was it not that members of other clans are often discouraged or even forbidden to settle in the same area. Furthermore, the main reason for settling according to clans in Wajir town is for protection against violent attacks from other clans. This indicates that violence among clans occurs. Settling according to clans is thus a form of clanism. Another example takes place in the police force. When the police intercede in a conflict between members of different clans, relatives of the quarrellers will run to the police station to seek contact with an officer of their own clan. After paying some money, 'to cover expenses', that officer will do his¹⁷ best to attain a low punishment for the member of his clan. This too is clearly a form of clanism. The third and most important example is the conflict itself. During the conflict, people have killed and have been killed merely because they belonged to a certain clan. I explain this in the next paragraph. For now it will be enough to conclude that clanism is present in Wajir.

The essence of clanism is summarized in the Somali proverb, I used as a subtitle for this chapter: However unhelpful to you, your cousin remains the best of people. The proverb is used to express that the importance of family ties exceeds the importance of any other relationship. The term 'cousin' is used for family members up to the fifth or sixth degree, thus including a considerable part of a clan.

Clanism has its roots in the colonial period. As explained in the previous paragraph, the British feared a rebellion by the Somalis, one of the biggest tribes of Kenya, who were, according to them, notorious for their warlike spirit (History of Wajir, n.d., p. 6). The borders between the different clans that were installed by the

¹⁷ All police officers in Wajir are male

British government are commonly seen as the most important cause of clanism. The British were not the first to make a connection between clans and a certain territory, but they made it both official and permanent. While the borders in the pre-colonial time were only of importance in periods of drought, these colonial borders were valid throughout the year. Furthermore, pre-colonial borders could, with permission, always be crossed. The colonial borders were always closed. A third problem is the implementation of the borders. The pre-colonial borders were the result of negotiations. They changed over time, due to movements, population growth and conflicts. The colonial borders on the other hand, were enforced by the British government and fixed. The implementation of the colonial borders did not only limit the freedom of movement, it also stressed the importance of clans. Relationships, friendships and marriages between (members of) different clans were made impossible, while relations within a clan became more important. Furthermore, discussions and quarrels caused by these borders (see 4.1.2) resulted in friction between the different clans.

The second consequence of the past in the present is the social and economical situation in Wajir and its position within Kenya. The policy of the Kenyan government can be described as 'one of containment and not of engagement. No constructive or meaningful development ever took place during this period' (Hassan, 2001, n.n.). With 'this period', Hassan refers to the thirty years of emergency situation, which was declared in 1963. The consequences of this emergency situation have been severe; the Somalis have been discriminated against and marginalized and their human rights haven been violated. This discrimination and marginalization has not yet ended. The Somalis are still the only tribe in Kenya who has to prove being citizens of Kenya, in order to acquire or extend an identity card. When they cannot prove this, they are denied registration or it is cancelled, if they already have an identity card (ibid.). People without identity cards cannot cast their votes during elections. They cannot even leave the North Eastern Province, because there is still a permanent army control at the province's boundaries. Trading and education are thus seriously limited to many Somalis in Kenya.

The following figures are illustrative for the marginalization of the North Eastern Province. In the whole of Kenya, 26.5 percent

(Peace and development, 1998, n.n.) of the inhabitants live under the absolute poverty line of less than a dollar a day. In Wajir, this number is 85 percent (Hassan, 2001, n.n.). In Kenya, there is one doctor for every 10.000 patients, while the patient ration in the North Eastern Province is 1 doctor for every 200.000 patients (Peace and development, 1998, n.n.) While 94 percent of the Kenyan youth between 15 and 24 were literate in 1998 (UNDP 2000, p. 196), only approximately 12 percent¹⁸ of the children between 5 and 19 go to school in Wajir. The dropout rate of primary school in Wajir is extremely high. Over 60 percent of the schoolchildren do not finish their primary school education (Peace and development, 1998, n.n.).

There are no clear signs that this policy has changed since the emergency state was lifted in 1991: the government still controls the movement of livestock for sale, which is the main source of income for the region. The improvement of roads, which could stimulate the economy and the communication, has yet to start. Until now, there are only six kilometres of tarmac roads in the North Eastern Province (Hassan, 2001, n.n.). Thus, Wajir remains one of the poorest districts of Kenya. Poverty and clanism are often mentioned as the main causes of the conflict. In the next paragraph, I will discuss how these and other factors have contributed to the conflict in 1992.

4.2 The conflict

People signalized many factors that had contributed to the conflict. Clanism, poverty, drought, influx of arms and bandits are just a few of these causes. In this paragraph, I will discuss the main causes of conflict. Firstly, I will discuss the factors related to clanism. Since these factors have led to several conflicts -both great and small- in the past, I will discuss them in more general terms. Than, I will focus on the more specific circumstances that brought about the conflict. Lastly, I will turn to the conflict itself and describe some violent events between 1992-1994.

¹⁸ This number is based on the statistics on school attendance in 1998 (Peace and development general), the population pyramid of Kenya in 2000 (US census bureau, 2000, n.n.), and the population of Wajir (ARMP, 2000, n.n.)

4.2.1 Causes of conflicts

Many people saw clanism as the main cause of both smaller conflicts and the greater conflict in 1992. Clanism is often mentioned in relation to the colonial boundaries. When people revert to extreme forms of clanism, they close the colonial boundaries and when these boundaries are closed, clanism will grow.

The colonial borders caused serious problems: when acknowledged, they limited the nomadic existence, which could lead to the death of both animals and people, especially in the dry season. When the borders were ignored, it could lead to the punishment of the trespassers and conflicts between the clans involved. These problems are not limited to the colonial period. Although the borders are officially lifted, they are still used by many Somalis. Most permanent settlements are derived from the colonial period. Nowadays, when a new settlement is created, one tries to stay close to other relatives, in order to rely upon a strong social network. Thus, people still settle according to these colonial borders, which are more or less maintained. Clans still consider the land that was ascribed to them in the colonial period as theirs. This of course enhances clanism.

Officially, all the land of Wajir is trust-land, meaning that it is the property of the government. Except from the land that is rented for a certain period to individuals, most of the land of Wajir is accessible for all the Kenyans, and can be freely used for grazing or watering cattle. Nevertheless, if a herdsman¹⁹ wants to enter land that does not 'belong' to his clan, he is expected to ask the permission of the clan's *wazee*. In addition, he has to pay 'a contribution to the tax that the local people have to pay' according to some, or 'a huge fee' according to others. This is a clear form of clanism: the mere demand to ask permission to enter an area that is officially trust-land, merely because someone belongs to another clan is a clear form of discrimination.

This friction, between the unofficial -but widely acknowledged- colonial borders and the official absence of any borders, has been the cause of several conflicts in Wajir. Some Somalis have not acknowledged the colonial borders in the past and do not acknowledge the unofficial borders in the present. This results

¹⁹ Tending of cattle is a typical men's job

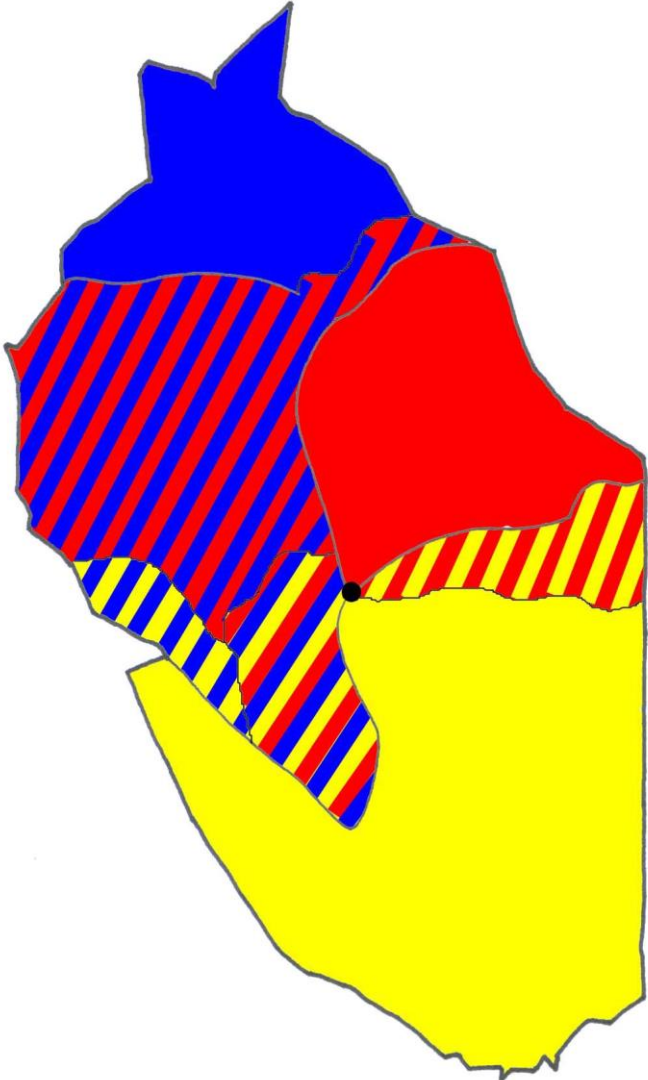
from the laying down of the borders as such. As explained in paragraph 4.1.2, one of the three major clans, the Degodia, did not participate in the negotiations over the location of the borders. As a result, the Degodia felt that they were given a smaller amount of land, with fewer wells than the others: they were the biggest clan and were assigned the smallest plot of land. Some Degodia have confided in me that they still do not acknowledge the unofficial ownership of land by clans.

It is not certain that the Degodia indeed did not participate in the negotiations on the division of land. Although I believe the informant who told me so, I have not been able to confirm it. It is, however, not important that this is the truth. Some Degodia think it is true and do not acknowledge the borders for that reason. As a consequence, one clan considers land as theirs, while the other clan considers it as common property. This results in arguments, which can escalate into conflict.

A second cause of conflict is also directly related to clanism and the colonial borders. When Kenya became a democratic republic, political borders, defining constituencies, were laid down throughout the country. These constituencies did not match the colonial borders. Instead of a Southern, middle and Northern part, in which successively the Ogaden, the Degodia and the Ajuran lived (see map 3), there was a Southern, a Western and a 'remaining' part. Consequently, the Degodia and the Ajuran shared two districts. In the western constituencies, the Ajuran were easily outnumbered, but in the other constituencies, their numbers were about the same. Since every clan wants its own representative in parliament, a clear token of clanism, the tension in this constituency increases every five years with the nearing of elections. This has led to several conflicts, including the conflict between 1992-1994.

A third impact of clanism on conflicts is that it contributes to the escalation of a conflict. This is also related to clanism: normally, members of the perpetrator's clan must compensate a crime. If this does not happen, the perpetrator's clan fails to distance itself from the violence, and is therefore held responsible for the crime. If the victim's clan seeks revenge, it is accepted under common law that they may revenge themselves on any member of the victimizer's entire clan. If the perpetrator's clan does not acknowledge any guilt,

or is indeed innocent, it will counter the revenge. Thus, a conflict can easily escalate.



Ogaden ■ Ajuran ■ Degodi ■ Ogaden
● Wajir Town

Map 3. Clans within Wajir

I will illustrate this with an example of a more recent conflict on the northern border of Wajir, between the Ajuran and the Gareh, another Somali clan that forms a minority in north Wajir. Ali Abdu²⁰,

²⁰ Because some informants asked to remain anonymous, I have decided to use fictional names throughout this thesis.

a *mzee* of the Ajuran, who is an active member of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, told me of this conflict. According to him, the conflict started with the killing of a Gareh. The Gareh accused the Ajuran and demanded compensation. The death of a man should, according to common law, which is founded on the Somali culture and the Qu'ran, be compensated with one hundred camels. The Ajuran refused, claiming that the Borona, another Kenyan tribe, killed the man. Nevertheless, the Gareh avenged and killed two Ajuran. There was a counter attack by the Ajuran, in which 64 Ajuran and 200 Gareh died. This was the beginning of serious conflict.

Clanism thus triggers conflicts. It is due to clanism that the colonial borders remain important, even though they are no longer valid. Thus, it is due to clanism that crossing these unofficial borders is often seen as an offence, which can lead to conflicts, when the other party does not acknowledge the borders and thus the offence. Furthermore, it is due to clanism that people live together, and it is due to clanism that people always vote in favour of their own clan. Clanism is not only the cause of conflicts. It is also the cause of the escalation. As explained above, it is the responsibility of the entire clan to settle a conflict. If this does not happen, the entire offended clan is 'allowed' to seek revenge on the entire clan of the offenders. If such actions are not recognized or acknowledged as revenge, the revenge itself will be avenged. Thus, clanism is both the trigger and the fuel that fires flare-ups.

4.2.2 Causes of the conflict 1992-1994

Having said this, I will look at the conflict between 1992 and 1994. What led to the outburst of this particular conflict? Before I turn to this question, I want to devote a few words to gathering information about the conflict. What struck me most when I talked about the conflict was the reluctance of people to talk about the conflict itself. As eager as people were to tell me about the reconciliation process, they were unwilling to tell me about the conflict. When I asked why they did not want to give me any details about the conflict, they told me that it was all in the past. They referred to the peace-resolution that I will discuss in the next chapter, which declared that the suffering and the crimes of all the clans were about the same. Therefore it was decided to leave these crimes in the past and to

continue with a clean sheet. Discussing the conflict seemed to negate this decision. In spite of this, I have been able to get a picture of both the concurrence of the root-causes and of the conflict itself.

The first cause of the conflict in 1992 until 1995 was the drought. Over 80 percent of the animal stock perished (Jump, n.d., p. 21) and even people died. The pressure on the remaining grazing land and water wells increased. People, who were already living in severe poverty, now had to struggle to survive. They relapsed to their strongest social network, which is founded on clans. As a consequence, people were less willing to allow people from other clans on 'their' land. This led to tensions, especially between the Degodia and the other clans. The land of the Degodia was both the most densely populated, not including Wajir town and the driest area of Wajir. On top of this, some of the Degodia do not, as explained above, acknowledge the unofficial borders. Violations were quite common, resulting in quarrels and fights.

The second cause of conflict has an international source. The conflict in neighbouring Somalia led to an influx of refugees, bandits and firearms. The stampede had been going on steadily for several years, but had increased in the second half of 1992 along with the numbers of UN soldiers, when Operation Restore Hope²¹ took place. (Operation restore hope, 2002, n.n.). While the number of refugees decreased slightly, the numbers of bandits and the number of guns entering Wajir increased enormously. This led to several problems. Firstly the pressure on the already scarce resources grew as a direct result of the increasing population pressure. Secondly, the influx of weapons resulted in the escalation of quarrels into conflict. Traditionally, Somalis fight with their hands, sticks or knives. When firearms replace these, casualties become more common. A fight between herder boys over water can result in deaths and these deaths must be compensated. If this does not happen, the death may be revenged, which can lead to counter revenge and so on. A third problem is the quarrels and conflicts that the Somali refugees and bandits brought along. Some of the Somalis in Somalia belong to the

²¹ After severe fighting, the UN decided to send troops to Somalia. These UN soldiers were assigned to monitor the cease-fire in and around Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, and to provide protection and security for United Nations personnel. Consequently, many bandits that prowled that area, fled to the neighbouring Kenya.

same clans as the Somalis in Wajir. Conflicts between these clans that were not settled continued in Wajir.

A third aspect that contributed to the conflict was the national elections. As explained above, each clan tries to ensure its own member of parliament. This is not a problem for the Ogaden, who are sure to win the southern constituency, nor for the Degodia, who are sure to win the western. It is however a problem for the Ajuran, who have to compete with the Degodia for the 'remainder' constituency. Therefore, political candidates tried to ensure a majority of their clan in this 'remainder' constituency on Election Day. They feared that people, Degodia or Ajuran, of the Western constituency would come to their constituency to cast votes in favour of the opponent. Therefore, politicians stressed the importance of again closing the colonial borders. Although these borders are not parallel with the boundaries of the constituencies, the closing of the colonial borders prevents a lot of people from travelling. The politicians succeeded in doing this under the guise of protecting scarce resources for their own clan. Problems arose when people of the Western constituency were forced to travel, in search for water. Sometimes they were refused access to a well or to pasture, and sometimes they refrained from asking permission. This caused extra problems. The Degodia won the elections in both the Western and the rest constituency. They had two members of parliament representing them, whereas the Ajuran had none. This increased the already tense situation even more.

A fourth cause I want to mention briefly here is religion. People have, in the most negative explanation, abused or, in a more positive way, misinterpreted Islam in such a way that it justifies violence. Everyone I spoke to agreed that the main message of Islam is peace. There are however Qu'ranic verses that can be used to justify violence. It is allowed to use violence against Muslims who have gone astray. Furthermore, it shows understanding for revenge. Islam also contributes to the conflict in another way. It makes it less daunting to participate in fights. Muslims believe that their life span is fixed. If you do not die in conflict, you would have died in some other way. Other verses however forbid any kind of violence, threatening with eternal damnation. In chapter six, I discuss this matter more profoundly and use Qu'ranic verses to illustrate these conflicting elements within Islam.

4.2.3 The conflict

It is not known what the actual trigger, the straw that broke the camel's back, was. Perhaps it was a quarrel between two boys over access to some grazing land, perhaps it was an argument between two women at the market, and perhaps it was the refusal of access to the territory of a particular clan. People did not regard the actual trigger of the conflict and even the actual violence as important. Instead of blaming one another, everybody agreed to look at the root causes, and to search for a possible way of removing these causes. Nevertheless, I do consider it important to describe some events of the conflict, in order to create an understanding of the situation in Wajir during the conflict. I will give a selection of some of the events during the conflict and end with a description of the situation at the peak of the conflict, when Wajir resembled a war-zone.

In 1992, a Degodia chief was appointed at Lag-Bogol, a settlement of both the Degodia and the Ogaden. It is the subject of discussion whether the settlement is located in the north of the Ogaden area, or in the south of the Degodia territory. Since the former chief of that settlement was an Ogaden, the Ogaden saw the appointment as a form of expansion by the Degodia. The tension rose. The raiding of a Degodia village by Ogaden, in which many animals were stolen, houses were destroyed and eleven persons were burned alive was seen as a direct consequence of the appointment of the chief (Community based integrated, n.d., p. 3).

In September 1992, members of one clan killed a British UNICEF pilot, because they thought he was favouring members of another clan. The staffs of foreign Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) no longer felt safe and left the district. Wajir was officially declared unsafe. For the many people relying on emergency aid, the departure of the NGOs came as a real deathblow. Some of them had to steal to survive. This of course intensified the conflict (ibid., p. 4)

In May 1993, bandits burnt a lorry with passengers, travelling to Hadado, in the south of Wajir. Thirty-five people, including (pregnant) women and children were burned alive. The lorry was dragged to Wajir town and kept as a memorial of the clan clashes. Fortunately, in contrast to the usual passivity of the government, the new District Commissioner reacted promptly and

his security officers were able to arrest the culprits within hours. The relatives of the victims therefore decided not to take revenge.

The motives of the culprits remain unknown; the victims belonged to various clans and it remains unclear if it was revenge and, if so, on what. This is characteristic for the whole conflict. It was difficult to analyse the conflicts and the alliances between the different clans. It was however easy to distinguish the four players during the conflict: the Degodia, the Ajuran, the Ogaden, and the minor clans. Two conflicts can be distinguished: between the Degodia and the Ajuran and between the Degodia and the Ogaden. The minor clans did not play an important role, but they sometimes got involved against their will. The Gareh for example, speak the same language as the Ajuran: Borona. They were therefore often mistaken for Ajuran and became victims of violence.

This analysis is not as clear-cut as it seems to be: there was an alliance between the Ajuran and the Ogaden, but this had been broken. There are known examples of violence between these clans. This was especially the case at the peak of the conflict, when the conflict lasted for two years. People were no longer only fighting for a cause, but also to survive.

At the peak of the conflict, the society was completely polarized. It was divided between Us, members of a certain clan, and Them, who do not belong to that clan. Inter-clan friendships were often neglected, forgotten or broken. Commonalities, founded on the Somali culture or Islam, were ignored. Members of other clans were only seen as The Other, The Enemy.

This affected everyday life. Schools with children of different clans were damaged. Ten had to close completely. Children of different clans could no longer sit in the same classroom. 500 businesses were looted or wrecked, simply because the owner belonged to another clan (Ndegwa, 2001, p. 1). People of mixed marriages were filing for divorce, since they no longer trusted each other's relatives. People in Wajir town, who did not live in the area of their clan, abandoned their houses and went to live with their clanmembers, since they no longer felt safe among members of other clans. Markets, which were always dominated by the clan in whose territory the market was located, were not accessible for members of other clans. People slept together in one room for safety. They were afraid to go out on the street in the morning, since there was a good

chance that one of the corpses lying in the street was that of a friend or relative. In 1993 alone, 1,213 people were killed and another 200 were injured (Juma, n.d., p. 21). People murdered and were murdered, just for being a member of a certain clan. In the next paragraph, I will take a closer look at this rise in the importance of clans, and discuss it in terms of identity.

4.3 Conflict and identity

In this paragraph I will look at the conflict with the use of the concept of identity. I will use the three dimensions of identity and discuss what the content of each of these dimensions is for groups founded on clan. This will help to understand the contradiction mentioned above: why is it said that clans are of little importance, while they proved to be important enough to kill and die for?

4.3.1 Dimensions of clans

The three dimensions of identity -symbolic, institutional and individual (Davids and van Driel, 2002, p. 74-75) - as discussed in chapter two, are helpful when discussing the changing of identities. I will use them as explained in chapter two. The distinction between these dimensions is not clear-cut. Each dimension influences the others. Changing one will lead to the change in the other two. Although it is not always possible to find out which dimension changed first, the examination of them will lead to a better understanding of the influence of the changing of identity on the conflict and the influence of the conflict on the changing of identity.

In paragraph 2.2.2 I explained that the three dimensions of identity could help in two ways: firstly first, in helping to gain understanding of the contradictions within a group, founded on certain identity elements and secondly, in helping to understand shift of importance between the elements within that group. It should help in understanding the two sides of clans. On the one hand clans are said not to be important; serving only for the purpose of identification. On the other hand they were important enough to kill for. The three dimensions of identity will also help in understanding how this change occurred; how clans became important enough to kill for. Before I can return to this, I will first discuss the contents of

each of these dimensions for the groups that are primarily founded on the clan identity element. I will limit myself to the aspects of these groups that are related to the conflict. To be able to discuss the differences between clans in times of peace and in times of conflict, I discuss the dimensions for both situations. Notice that aspects that characterize the conflict period only are valid for people that are somehow involved in the conflict.

As explained in the second chapter, every group is based on certain identity elements. The group clan is of course primarily based on the element clan. Other elements are however also influential. The clan structure finds its grounds in the Somali culture. It can even be argued that the clans should be considered as a part of the element 'Somali culture'. Since only clan interests were important during the conflict, while other aspects of the Somali culture such as the nomadic existence were violated, I have decided to discuss clans and the Somali culture separately. Religion is another element that influences clans. The fact that the Qu'ran mentions clans, was often mentioned as the reason why the clan structure was still used. Other elements that are of influence are sex, age and social position. A poor young girl has another perception of the clan structure than an influential old and wise man, a *mzee*.

It was difficult to single out the contents of the symbolic dimension, since almost all people told me that clans are not important at all. I concluded that this is the ideal content of clans: it is not important. This can be explained by taking the religious influence on clans into consideration. Many people told me that, according to Islam, the only function of clans is to know who is related to whom. Acknowledging other values of clans would be inconsonant to their religion. During the conflict this was put aside. Clans had become the most important identity element. Other, binding elements, such as religion and tribe were overshadowed by clans. The society was divided in Us, members of a clan, and Them, members of other clans. The Other was dehumanised, which helps to minimise any ambiguous or guilty feelings about hating and hurting the Enemy (see paragraph 2.3)

Many important institutions are founded on clans. Settlements, social networks, access to pasture and water are all organized according to the clan structure. Even the justice system, which I will discuss in the next chapter, uses the clan system. The

qu'ranic purpose of knowing who is related to whom; of identifying others, also belongs to this institutional dimension. Many of these aspects were still present during the conflict, but their importance had changed. Due to scarcity of natural resources many people reverted to their most functional social network, based on clans. This explains why a conflict that started between herdsmen changed into a conflict between entire clans. The colonial boundaries, that already were functional before the conflict, were now closed. Illegal crossings were often paid with one's life. Settlements were purged. Minority groups, belonging to other clans, were chased out of their homes. The justice system collapsed. Paying compensation made way for seeking revenge.

The institutions mentioned above, can only function when the individuals appreciate and acknowledge that clans are of some importance. The clan's institutions in times of conflict are the result of an overvaluation of the clan element. This resulted in excesses as the divorces of married couples of different clans filed for divorce, and people abandoned their homes to live among relatives. Table 1 gives an overview of the different dimensions of the clan identity element.

Identity	Symbolic dimension	Institutional dimension	Individual Dimension
Clan (peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification • Territory (open) • Social network • Settlements • Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciating and acknowledging the importance of clans
Clan (conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important • Dehumanising The Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification • Territory (closed) • Social network • Purged settlements • Revenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overvaluing the importance of clans

Table 1. The three dimensions of the identity elements related to clans

4.3.2 Understanding the conflict

Before I discuss how these dimensions can be used, I turn to the conflict one more time. The actual cause of the conflict was a material one. Although it is impossible to say what exactly triggered the conflict, it is safe to assume that it was somehow related to the access to water and pasture. Soon however, the conflict was drawn to another level. The conflict was transformed into an immaterial dispute. The society became polarized between Us and Them. The difference between the conflicting groups was surprisingly based on clans, an identity element that is now said to be of little or no importance.

This can be better understood by using the dimensions of identity. The symbolic dimension indicates that clans are not important. This is what people say; this depicts the ideal situation. This is also the social desirable answer: the importance of clans has caused great suffering. By denying its importance people may, unconsciously, try to prevent another clan-based conflict. In reality clans are the fundament for many institutions, which have their impact in everyday life. Clans are only unimportant in the ideal situation; in reality, the importance is significant. This makes the importance of clans during the conflict less surprising.

When you realize that both the social network and the justice system are both based on clans, it becomes clear how clans became important enough to kill for. After a quarrel, the parties involved return to their clans for support, since that is the way to achieve justice and it is their most important and powerful social network. In the attempt to have justice done, several members of the clan get together to negotiate compensation. If this does not succeed the quarrel soon surpasses the individual level and approaches a conflict. This might be the beginning of a conflict with clan as the conflicting identity element.

When such a conflict arises, the clans become more and more important. The society got divided between Us, who belong to the same clan, and Them, who do not belong to that clan. The Other becomes dehumanized; it is no longer an individual you can identify yourself with, but merely part of the opposite party. Other identity elements that previously formed bridges between the different clans such as tribe or religion, diminish in importance. I have depicted this situation in figure 3, on page 38. The circles depicting the clan element, coloured red and yellow, are enlarged, while the other

circles, depicting age, gender, religion and tribe, have shrunk. The larger circles stand between the smaller circles, forming an obstacle, and hampering bridge building between the individuals.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have taken a profound look at the causes of the conflict. Most of the causes have their roots in history. The pre-colonial, nomadic way of life was made more difficult in colonial times. The colonial borders, giving each clan its own area, limited the territory of the Somalis. Herdsmen were no longer able to travel through the whole district and across the national borders. These boundaries are still regarded as valid by many Somalis. Problems arise when some Somalis acknowledge these boundaries and others do not. This results in conflicts over access to pasture and water.

Another, less direct, cause of conflict with its roots in history is the gap between down-Kenya and the North Eastern Province. This province has been discriminated since colonial times. This has two consequences. Firstly due to the poverty that results of this discrimination, people are more dependent on their social network, which is mainly founded on clans. In times of economical adversity, people try to survive by closing the colonial borders and by discriminating against members of other clans. Although the marginalization of the North Eastern Province by the government is not the only cause of the severe poverty in the region, it is a contributing factor. As such, it also contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The second consequence of the discrimination against the region is lack of governmental interference. The Kenyan government did little to nothing to prevent the escalation, or make a serious effort to end the conflict once it had started (Ndegwa, 2001, p. 1, 3).

The negative effect of the colonial boundaries and the gap between the NEP and down-Kenya was intensified by the severe drought. 80 Percent of the animals died (Juma, n.d., p. 21). People wanted to protect the already scarce resources against the usage by other clans. Some political leaders, who wanted to prevent travelling in order to win the parliamentary elections, encouraged this. This combination resulted in the closure of the colonial boundaries, and the rise of clanism. Some people however ignored these boundaries, either because they did not acknowledge them or because they had

to, in order to survive. Clanism is thus the main cause of the most severe internal conflict in the history of Wajir.

Almost a decade later, people denied the importance of clans. This contradiction can be better understood when we discuss the relation between the conflict and identity. Clans are only unimportant according to the symbolic dimension. When we look at the institutional level, we see that many important institutions, such as the social network, are based on the clan-system. It is therefore hardly surprising that during a period of severe drought, the importance of clans rose. People had to relapse to their most important, clan-based social network. Consequently, the conflict was not limited to the areas where the dispute over water had actually taken place. Instead, it spread throughout the district and affected entire clans, living both in small settlements and in Wajir-town.

There is not only a relation between conflict and clan element; the conflict has also influenced other elements. It has increased the importance of the clans in such a way that other elements, such as gender, religion or age, were no longer important. These processes strengthen each other. When people revert to clanism, quarrels become conflicts. When a conflict arises, people turn to their clan for protection, which increases the importance of clans and clanism.

I have explained that the importance of the other identity elements decreased during the conflict, but not whether the contents of these elements also influenced the conflict. This will be the subject of the next chapter, in which I describe the relation between the changing of identity elements and the resolution process.

5. The resolution process

*No son is born in times of war*²²

In the previous chapter I discussed the causes of the conflict, and focussed on the importance of the clan element of identity during the conflict. In the following two chapters, I will take a closer look at the reconciliation process, which can be divided in two phases (see chapter two). In this chapter I will pay attention to what I call the resolution process that begins with the willingness to stop the conflict and ends in negative peace, which is the mere absence of violence. In the next chapter I will describe forgiveness, which completes the reconciliation process. It is important to realize that this is an arbitrary division. The border between these two phases is vague, and serves an analytical purpose only.

The resolution phase can be divided into three stages: finding a common truth, reaching a short-term peace, the so-called negative peace and achieving justice. These three stages form the base of this chapter. I will analyse each of these three stages by discussing who has played an important role in which phase. In the previous chapter I have, in order to gain insight into the conflict, divided the community of Wajir according to clan. In this chapter, I will divide the inhabitants into different social groups; women, *wazee* and youth. These are not categories created by me but groups used by the people of Wajir themselves (see 2.2.2)

Not only will I study how these groups have changed the conflict in Wajir, I will also look at the way the conflict has changed these groups. To gain full understanding on this matter, one must look further than their role in the resolution phase. It is also important to comprehend the role each of these groups played during the conflict. To know whether the roles played were exceptional, I will describe the traditional role of each of these groups as well. To prevent any confusion between the traditional role and the actual role of the different groups, I have placed the description of the first in three boxes. Having described the impact of the three groups on the different stages of the reconciliation process, I will analyse these

²² Somali proverb. The meaning of this proverb will be explained later in this chapter.

roles by using the three dimensions of identity. I will end this chapter by answering two of the three research questions for the identity elements discussed so far.

5.1 Truth

As explained in paragraph 2.1.1, truth is of essential importance for the reconciliation process. Truth is the base of justice: finding the truth can help to identify culprits and prove their guilt. Furthermore, uncovering or creating a common truth is essential for achieving peace: acknowledging and taking responsibility for one's actions and admitting the damage caused by these actions is often crucial for the negotiation process (Rothstein, 1999, p. 224; Lederach, 1998, p. 34). The negotiation process can lead to resolutions on which the negative peace can be based. Knowing and facing the truth enables victims to live with the past (Minow, 1998, p. 67), which can eventually help the victim to forgive the victimizer. I ended the paragraph on truth by posing two questions: how to create the willingness to negotiate and how to create the willingness to uncover or create a common truth? In this paragraph, I will describe and analyse the way the inhabitants of Wajir created this willingness.

Two groups have played an important role in finding the truth: women have created the willingness to negotiate and *wazee* have actually carried out the negotiations, thus uncovering or creating a common truth. I will discuss both the role these two groups *should* play in the transition of peace into violence and vice versa and the role they *did actually play* in the conflict of 1992 to 1994.

5.1.1 Women paving the way to truth

The clan conflict did not stop people from different clans socialising. Even at the peak of the conflict, five women of different clans attended a wedding. One of the women reminded the others of the need to leave the party early, because of safety reasons. Every night from 19.00 hours, when the sun had set, one could hear gunfire. This remark ignited a discussion in which the women decided it was time

to stop the violence. Although they doubted that they would make a difference, the five women nevertheless agreed to do something. The next morning, before they could do anything, a settlement was raided. Some children had fled to safety, and it took several frightening hours to find them all. Although nobody was injured, it did confront the parents, especially the mothers, with the fact that even children were no longer safe (Juma, n.d., p. 22).

The five women came together, but before they could do anything, a fight broke out at the market. A market is located in a particular district of Wajir town, so the clan that lives in that district controls it. Normally, women of all clans can freely enter the market, but at the peak of the conflict, women from one clan were stoning women from the other clan, to prevent them from entering their market. The market, which is traditionally immune to violence, was now the setting for several quarrels and fights (Juma, n.d., p. 22). This strengthened the women's determination to stop the fighting even more.

The five women went to the markets and started a discussion on the situation of the women at the moment. They concluded that the women were the ones that suffered most during the conflict: their husbands and sons were killed, their goats, the cattle on which women rely as an income, were raided and they could no longer trade safely on the markets. All the women decided to begin with changing the last, since the market is the women's domain.

After this discussion, a committee of ten women, headed by an elder woman leader, was assigned to monitor the situation on the markets on daily bases. This committee visited the markets and made sure that women of all clans were allowed to enter the market. The clan controlling the market had to allow women from other clans to trade, without any form of discrimination. Women who did not follow these rules would be denied further access to that market. Soon, the violence in the marketplaces ceased. This encouraged the women to expand their peace effort to the wider community. They decided to inform the government officials of their initiative, which lead to the birth of the Wajir Women Association for Peace (WWAP) (Juma, n.d., p. 22).

Because of the governmental acknowledgement, the women became hopeful that they could make a difference on other, even more public, domains. The starting point was again the market. They

assembled women and tried to convince them to talk to their husbands and sons to stop the fighting. The elder woman leader told me how they convinced them.

When we talked to the mothers, we explained them that conflicts have no benefits at all. No son is born in conflict; sons will only die. So if your son or husband is involved in the conflict, ask him to come back and hand in the gun. Mothers asked us 'how can we convince them?' We told them: 'if your son goes out for conflict, he will get hungry and after two days of hunger, he will come back. If he comes back, ask him to hand in the gun, so he won't be prosecuted. When the mothers heard that, they accepted it. The same we told them about their husbands. 'If your husband comes back, tell him he has to stay, because you can't look after the children anymore. Say them you won't spread the bed anymore, you won't stay with them, and you will not give them leisure. Then he will surrender'. These are the approaches we used. (interview with member of Women for peace)

Convincing their husbands and sons might help decrease the violence, but it wouldn't stop the conflict completely. For this, the help of the *wazee*, who function as clan leaders, was needed (see box 2). Persuading them proved to be a difficult task, because women are often expected to restrict themselves to the private sphere (see box 1). First, all the women of the WWAP, fifteen by this time, talked to their clan leaders, convincing them of the need to end the violence. They managed to organize a meeting with *wazee* of different clans, but most *wazee* were sceptical about what the women could achieve. One elder of a smaller clan 'tipped the balance in favour of the women. He spoke about the need for peace, argued that men were responsible for the violence and challenged elders to get involved and stop conflicts.'

Box 1. Women, conflict and peace

When looking at the different roles that women *ideally* play during a conflict and the peace process, it is important to distinguish their role according to Islam and their role according to Somali tradition.

Women should limit their lives as much as possible to the private sphere of their family. This is at least what the holy Qu'ran states on this subject, or better phrased, this is an interpretation of the Qu'ran. The Qu'ran leaves, just as the Bible, room for different interpretations. That does not diminish the importance of that Qu'ranic rule: as long as a certain interpretation is widely supported, which is the case in Wajir, it becomes 'the truth'.

Taking part in a conflict, or participating in the peace process would entail entering the public life and is thus discouraged. One influential woman, who had played a major role in the peace process, told me that 'according to the holy Qu'ran the voice of a woman should not be heard'. Women should thus maintain the peace inside their family, while men should keep the peace in the public sphere.

This is in shrill contrast to the role women play in Somali tradition:

(Juma, n.d., p. 23). The women and the convinced *mzee* started to mobilize more *wazee*, from different clans. This resulted in the meeting between *wazee* and two Members of Parliament on 23 September 1993 at the *Al Fatah* primary school. Thus, the willingness to negotiate and find a common truth was created.

5.1.2 *Wazee* finding a common truth

The meeting, which later proved to be an important turning point in the conflict, lasted for seven days. The *wazee* present at this meeting were selected in a process that involved all clans. The Degodia, Ajuran and the Ogaden were asked to nominate 75 elders each, while the smaller clans were asked to nominate four *wazee* (Ndegwa, 2001, p. 9). On the first three days of the meeting, all participants could share all their thoughts and their feelings over the conflict. One participant of that meeting explained:

in the first three days, we were giving chance to anyone, even if he was annoyed, to speak about anything, whether it was in bad taste or in good taste. Those days were free [for anyone] to tell their opinions,

what was on their mind. So after that, after the three days when everybody could tell anything, we made a resolution that asked: 'are we now prepared to stop the war?' and 'are we ready to have a cease-fire, to stop and prevent anymore people from dying'. We then asked what people felt about that. People agreed; all parties from all the different clans agreed that it was necessary to prevent the bloodshed and to prevent anymore dead. (interview with member of Al Fatah)

When they had agreed on this, they decided to separate according to clans and to discuss among themselves what the contents of the peace-resolutions should be. For this, they had to consider both the damages done *to* and *by* the clan. Furthermore, they discussed the way forward, how to stop the violence. On the fifth day, everybody could tell what numbers of people had died and what number of animals had been stolen. These numbers were huge. After discussing the compensation of these losses, their decision was as follows:

Box 2. *Wazee*, conflict and peace

Wazee play an important role in the Somali society. Ioan Lewis states that 'at every level of political division, policy is made by the elders [...]. This democratic organization has been preserved and is little affected by the appointment of government headmen' (1994, p. 22). The *wazee* can thus be considered as the true democratic leaders. While Kenyan government appoints the chiefs, which can lead to a lot of discussion and even conflict (see paragraph 4.2.3), the people of Wajir directly 'choose' the *wazee*. This is an unofficial process, in which people turn for advice to a man they consider knowledgeable. When the given advice is useful, more people will turn to this man for help. Thus, he becomes a *mzee*.

The most important task of the *wazee* is to look after the welfare of 'their' people, the people who turn to that *mzee* for advice. This means in practice that they solve problems, which would otherwise result in quarrels, arguments or conflicts. There is a hierarchy between the *wazee*: each family has its own *mzee*. On a higher level, that of the extended family, the most acknowledged *mzee* will be 'chosen' to represent them and so on. The *wazee* of different status are involved in different issues: for some problems, such as the compensation for a tooth lost in a fight between children, people will turn to a *mzee* within the family, for example an uncle. Other issues, such as a continuous fight over the access to a plot of land, need to be solved on a higher level. For such problems, people will turn to a more important and wider acknowledged *wazee* within the extended family or within the sub-clan. Depending on the scale of the problem, two or more *wazee* -at least one for each party involved- will sit together and listen to the accounts of the different parties. Then they will discuss the solution to the problem, such as compensation for the damage done. Both parties will abide by this decision.

Problems arise when the *wazee* do not come to a decision. The dispute can then escalate into a conflict, as explained in the previous chapter. In that situation a *mzee* can become a true warlord, igniting the conflict. He can send all the males he represents to defend or avenge them, thus protecting their rights, or taking the compensation that was denied. *Wazee* are practically always

it was decided that all the number of animals that were lost and all the people that were lost -and that was huge- could not be compensated. So we decided that it should be left alone. What ever happened in the past should be forgotten. And everybody agreed on that. [...] People were saying that so many animals were lost, and although the number of dead was not the same [for every clan], it was *about* the same. The priority was on how we could take care for the people that were still alive. The dead couldn't be saved and everybody had lost. We agreed to close the chapter about the losses and save the people that were alive. (interview with member of Al Fatah)

In the seventh day, they wrote the *Al Fatah* Peace Declaration, declaring, amongst other things, an immediate cease-fire; the return of stolen livestock; and that 'all Wajir people without distinction will work as a united people to eliminate the banditry menace in the district' (*Al Fatah* Peace Declaration, 1993, p. 2). This declaration became the backbone of the entire resolution process.

The first three stages of the meeting, speaking openly about the experiences, discussing the situation among themselves and sharing these findings, are clear examples of finding the truth. In the first stage, everybody had the chance to give their view on the conflict, to share their experiences and to confront others or to be confronted with the results of their (clansmembers') actions. In the second stage, the clans could reflect this information upon themselves; what were the losses, but also, what was the damage caused by their clan? As a consequence, the clans no longer felt that they were only victims, defending and revenging themselves. They acknowledged that their clan had also acted as a victimizer,

committing crimes and doing harm to innocent people. They started to acknowledge the consequences of their own actions. The third phase is the public expression and acknowledgement of the harm done. This resulted in the changing of the priority of the *wazee*. They did no longer want to revenge their people, but they wanted to take care for them: ‘the dead couldn’t be returned and everybody had lost. We agreed to close the chapter about the losses and save the people that were alive.’ The *wazee* also realized that the Somali proverb ‘no son is born in war’ is always true. The importance of the fourth phase, formulating the peace resolutions, will be further explained in the next two paragraphs.

5.2 Peace

In paragraph 2.1.2, I have distinguished two types of peace: positive peace and negative peace. The first term is used to refer to durable peace, which ends in the completion of the reconciliation process. Negative peace is a precondition of positive peace. It is an unstable form of peace, the mere absence of violence. I will discuss that in this paragraph. Let the importance of the negative peace be clear. Positive, durable peace can only be reached in the absence of violence. A second advantage is less obvious. A lasting period without violence helps to restore the damaged relations between the different parties. It allows a mutual trust to grow. This is a necessary step on the road to reconciliation.

I have signalized three obstacles on the road to negative peace: how to create the willingness to negotiate a peace agreement; related to this, how to stop people seeing each other as the Enemy; how to avoid the fact that even when a resolution is reached, the institutional capacity to maintain the negative peace is often missing? The solution to the first two problems has already been discussed in the previous paragraph. Women took the first step, after which the *wazee* were able to come together and discuss a common truth. After this, a peace resolution was reached. I will now discuss the contents of this peace resolution and explain how the people of Wajir have been able to enforce that resolution, despite of the low institutional capacity. Two groups have played an important role in this: the *wazee* and the youth. These two groups will be my stepping stones to the discussion and analysis of the solutions used.

5.2.1 *Wazee* instigating peace

Several of the resolutions in the *Al Fatah* declaration concern the implementation of a negative peace. The first resolution states that ‘the inter clan fighting and stock theft be stopped immediately and a cease-fire be effected from the 29th day of September, 1993’ (ibid., resolution 1). The responsibility to execute this resolution lies according to the declaration, both with the local government and the ‘people of Wajir’ (ibid.). Although the majority of the inhabitants of Wajir were somehow involved in the resolution process, for instance by encouraging relatives to stop the fighting or by handing in weapons, one group played an enormous role in the first months after declaring a cease-fire: the *wazee*.

The cooperation between the *wazee* and the local government has proven to be very successful in the Wajir story. The government was important in this phase of the resolution process because they have both the means and the official authority to act. With ‘means’ I refer to basic things, such as means of transport and money to pay for food and accommodation on the road. With the term official authority, I refer to more fundamental issues, like having some security personnel at their disposal and the means to receive surrendered arms. The biggest problem for the government is the lack of respect from the inhabitants of Wajir. This is the result of the continuous discrimination of the Somalis by the Kenyan government, as described in the previous chapter. The Somalis in Wajir have an almost natural aversion against everything that is related to official authorities.

This is why the cooperation of the government with the *wazee* is so important. Although their official authority is limited -they are allowed to assist the government in their tasks- their natural authority is considerable. They are, as explained in box 2, the chosen leaders, who are widely respected. But although their influence is much greater than that of the government, they lack the means and the official authority. That is why the combination of the two is so successful.

Resolution eight of the *Al Fatah* declaration describes in part how the two should co-operate: the compilers of the declaration decided to create a committee in which eight people from each of the major clans, and two representatives from the smaller clans are seated. This committee is known as ‘the *Al Fatah* counsel’. The

members of this counsel are recognized by all clans. They all took an oath to be impartial. Because their position and impartialness was acknowledged by all clans, these elders would speak and act on behalf of the community, without division in terms of clans' (Ndegwa, 2001, p. 9).

One of the tasks of the counsel is to participate in the so-called 'rapid response team'. Other members of this team are the district commissioner, the Members of Parliament from Wajir and members of the District Security Commission. After the cease-fire agreement, this rapid response team went from village to village to persuade the inhabitants to hand in their weapons and to recognize the declaration. They came across many difficulties; people refused the return of refugees from other clans or declined to hand in their arms, because raiding was their only remaining source of income since the entire stock of the village was stolen. But in the end, all the villages agreed that a cease-fire was the best option. They agreed on peace.

5.2.2 Youth and peace

A problem of another calibre were the bandits. Although the *wazee* and the village chiefs agreed on a cease-fire, some of the youth did not obey them and kept on fighting. During the conflict, they had been encouraged and even paid by some *wazee* and chiefs to seek revenge by raiding, looting, raping and even murdering. They responded to the call of the *wazee* and abandoned their usual way of living. The clan took care of the families and animals of these soldiers, to compensate the lost of income.

When the conflict was officially ended, many of these men could not take up their original way of living. Animals had been killed or stolen and jobs were taken. Many decided to continue their lives as raiders and looters, with the only difference that they no longer acted in the name of the clan. They had become professional bandits.

The situation in the first months of 1994 was thus all but safe. Although the conflict had officially ended, it was dangerous to travel. Villages were still being raided and animals stolen. For many people the situation had not improved. In March 1994, a group of ten young people, mostly male, decided that this situation had to change. The women and the *wazee* had done their part to end the conflict; it was now the turn of the youth.

They resolved to have a meeting with all the young men and women who wanted to do something about the situation in the district. The turnout exceeded all expectations. Over two hundred people came to talk about the situation and to discuss what they, the youth, could do about it. The first thing they decided was that the present group was too big to do anything. Therefore, they agreed to choose some leaders, who could represent them all and act on their behalf. To choose these leaders, they decided to separate into smaller groups. The composition of these groups was a small problem on its own, because the sitting arrangements during that meeting were according to clan. They feared that leaders chosen by members of their own clan would only have the trust and the support of their own clan. Therefore, they gave everyone a number, from one to seven, after which they separated into seven groups. Thus, all clans were represented in each of these groups. The representatives chosen by these groups were now supported by the different clans. By chance, the elected representatives were of different clans. Even the smaller clans had at least one of them among the youth leaders. This was the beginning of ‘youth²³ for development and peace’.

These representatives contacted the government officials and the members of the Rapid Response Team, in order to co-operate with them. At the beginning, the *wazee* were rather sceptical about the contributions these young people could give, since such an initiative was unexpected (see box 3). After a lot of discussion, the *wazee* decided to give them the benefit of the doubt and accepted them as members of the Rapid Response Team. The representatives of the youth turned out to be useful members. As role models -young men with jobs, working together with members of different clans- they were able to show bandits other possible ways of living; they showed that looting and robbing were not the only answer to their problem.

To put actions to these words, they advised the bandits on how to find a new livelihood and they initiated some income-generating activities. Some men were given money to buy a donkey

²³ In theory, the term ‘youth’ was used to refer to any man or woman under the age of 40. In practice, the term was only used for men of that age: only few women were member of ‘youth for peace and development’, which is not surprising, considering the existence of ‘women for peace’. This practical use is underlined with assertions as ‘the youth are the *wazee* of the future’ and ‘the youth are the ones who fight and die during a conflict’.

car, allowing them to transport goods and some women were funded to start a 'table shop', selling small, non-perishable items such as biscuits, soap and batteries. Although only a few people profited directly from this -the youth did not have enough money to support many people- many people were shown the way to other organisations that could help them.

To illustrate the importance of the work of the youth, I will tell the story of Hassan, who had been a bandit from 1994 until 1997. Before the conflict, Hassan had been unemployed for several years, and looked after the animals of the family. He was thus more or less dependent on the aid of others. Nevertheless, he married a second wife during the conflict, thus having two families depending on him. In the beginning of 1994, his extended family was attacked. Several members were killed and the animals were stolen. This was when he decided to 'get a gun, join the bandits and learn what they were doing'.

Hassan distinguishes two types of bandits. The first type consists of robbers: independent groups of bandits, stealing from anyone. These robbers would not even hesitate to kill members of their own family. The second type consists of clan-bandits. They are founded in the community, defending their clan. Hassan considered himself a clan-bandit. Hassan told me that they had never robbed or murdered anyone; they would only seek revenge. Nevertheless, this often resulted in theft and killings.

If they [other bandits] were stealing, we would take back what was taken from us. Anything they would do, we would go and revenge it. When there was some killing, we would go to the nearest group of people of the clan that killed and revenge ourselves. (interview with Hassan)

This means, as Hassan explained later in the interview, that they would do the same as the other bandits had done.

When the youth for peace and development organized a reconciliation meeting, at which all the fighting parties were represented, Hassan decided that his group should surrender their firearms. Three things contributed to this decision: Hassan's community did no longer support him; he realized that there was good opportunity; he would get caught or killed sooner or later and the government granted amnesty to everyone who handed in his gun

voluntarily. Furthermore, the youth for peace could offer some of them, on behalf of the government, jobs as police assistants. Hassan accepted this job willingly. Although he does not receive any salary, the community supports him again. This enables him and his family to survive.

Box 3 Youth, conflict and peace

The traditional role of youth in the peace process is rather limited. Although they have played an important role in the conflict -they are the ones that do the fighting- they are not expected to attend any negotiations. They should simply listen to the *wazee*, fight when the *wazee* call for revenge and stop the fighting when the *wazee* reach peace. This is of course an oversimplified view, but it does explain why the *wazee* were not eager to accept representatives of the youth in the rapid respond team.

On the other hand, the youth is commonly regarded as the future leaders. They are expected to learn from the *wazee*, about their culture, traditions and about fulfilling the tasks of a *mzee*. Being a member of the rapid response team is of course an excellent opportunity to do so. The activities undertaken by the youth are thus both exceptional and understandable.

Although members of youth for peace are still represented in the rapid response team, their focus has changed over the years. The new main goal is to teach new generations about the importance of peace. One of their tools is integrating peace in primary and secondary school education. Since the school curricula are fixed on a national level, they had to ask special permission to spend extra time on peace. The government gave permission for a pilot phase in 2001. After this, the teachers took over this initiative from the youth for peace and development. Since that time, special attention is given to the atmosphere in the school environment, to their own and other cultures, and to the problems that can arise from clanism. Furthermore, schools encourage the establishment of so-called peace clubs. These peace clubs have activities such as talking about recent quarrels in the school grounds; discussions on how to stop and how to prevent these quarrels; performing plays and songs that are somehow related to peace and talking about the conflict itself and its aftermath.

Unfortunately, the initiative of integrating peace in the school curriculum stumbled across many problems. Not all the teachers were enthusiastic, which is hardly surprising, considering the extra

time this project needs and the low salaries the teachers receive. Furthermore, teachers found it difficult to integrate it in the lessons, while still keeping up with the national education standards. Nevertheless, they concluded after a year of peace education that it was worth the effort to extend the pilot by another year. The atmosphere in and outside the classes had improved considerably and both children and teachers were very enthusiastic about the peace clubs.

Another more recent initiative undertaken by youth for peace and development is the organisation of sport competitions and youth meetings for teenagers of all clans. This way, the new youth also gets to know each other outside school. Inter-clan relations are formed, which can help to prevent clanism in the future.

It should be clear that these activities do not only encourage negative, short-term peace. They are also important for achieving positive, long-term peace. The main reason for describing them in this chapter is that the initiatives were a direct reaction to a slumbering problem. Fights between children have often escalated into more serious conflicts. Parents and even complete sub-clans got involved when both parties accused each other, demanding compensation. Teaching children to prevent and solve smaller quarrels has thus a similar effect as stopping clan-bandits, only on a smaller scale. This does not mean that these activities do not contribute to reaching positive peace. In the next chapter, we will see that paying attention to positive aspects of the Somali culture has contributed to achieving forgiveness. First, I will discuss the third phase of the resolution process: achieving justice.

5.3 Justice

In paragraph 2.1.3, I have discussed the difference between the legalistic and the restorative justice system. In this paragraph, I will only address the latter, not only because that system is the best system for the reconciliation process but also because that is the justice system that has actually been used in Wajir.

As we have seen, the importance of justice in the reconciliation process is three fold. Firstly justice prevents revenge. Secondly, it can lead to the restoration of relations. The mere

attempt to compensate for the committed wrong is a clear sign of repentance, and the compensation can ease the pain, especially when people are really poor, which is the case in Wajir. Thirdly justice can help the reconciliation process by preventing future violence. The compensation can function as a deterrent for future criminals.

I ended paragraph 2.1.3 by signaling two problems. The first concerns the ambiguous relation between achieving justice and finding the truth. People are less willing to tell the truth, when they know that they will be punished for the confessed actions. The second difficulty arises when it concerns a group-conflict. Not only is it difficult to identify the culprits, the institutional capacity is also often lacking. In this paragraph, I will describe and analyse the way the people of Wajir have tackled these two difficulties. Before I do so, I will first look at the justice system itself. How does it work and what are the possible punishments? Then I will look at the way justice is achieved after the conflict of 1992 - 1994. Again, we will see that the *wazee* played an important role.

5.3.1 The traditional justice system in Wajir

The Kenyan justice system can be divided into two different branches: the modern, legalistic, common law, which is based on the British model and the informal customary justice system, which is different for each tribe. The customary justice system of the Somali tribe is a restorative justice system. The jurisdiction of this traditional system is limited to certain types of crimes, 'although these informal courts often exceed the limits of their powers' (Ebbe, n.d., n.n.)

The advantages of the traditional courts are many. The first two advantages are consequences of the mere existence of the traditional justice system. Because of this system, justice can be carried out in remote villages which are not readily accessible for formalized courts. This is the case for the whole of the Wajir district. The nearest court is in Garissa, a six hour car drive from Wajir town, and up to 24 hours from other villages in the district. Travelling by car is only possible in the dry season. In the rainy season, the tracks become impassable. In these months, Garissa can only be reached by airplane. Many inhabitants cannot travel these distances, due to a lack of time, transport and money. Thus, the traditional justice system is the only system that is accessible for these people.

The second advantage of the informal courts is that it helps to 'reduce the delays and backlogs of cases occurring at the formal customary courts and at the English-based courts' (ibid.). For Wajir, this is a very important advantage. Since revenge is a custom that is both accepted by Islam and by the Somali tradition, it is commonly practiced. Revenge can only be prevented when justice is done. Official law cases can last for years, which is considered far too long. This encourages people to take justice into their own hands and seek revenge. With the traditional courts, justice can be reached within hours, thus preventing further crimes.

People mentioned many advantages of the Somali law in specific. The most important is the sensitivity of the traditional law system. This is not surprising, considering that this system is based on both the Somali culture and Islam. Compensation arrangements are based on the Qu'ran (Institute for secularization of Islamic society, 2002, n.n.) and have been used by the Somalis for centuries. The *wazee*, who play a prominent role in the traditional Somali justice system, are more likely to act according to the valid norms and values.

An example of this is the estimation of the seriousness of the crime. The Somalis consider revenge for example as an understandable reaction to violence. Thus, it should not be punished as severely as the original crime, even if the revenge is more violent. The traditional court, unlike the common law, acknowledges these norms. Another example of the sensitivity of the traditional justice system is the restorative character. The Somalis feel that the victim of a crime is not helped by the imprisonment of the victimizer. Compensation is a far more effective sentence, since it both punishes the culprit and eases the pain of the victim. A third example of the sensitivity is the influence of Islam on the justice system. Although *wazee* do not rule completely according *Sharia*, they do implement certain aspects of Islamic law.

Another advantage of the Somali law is the trust in the *wazee* as just and incorruptible judges: none of my informants could remember a *wazee* who had been bribed. This trust contrasts sharply with the distrust in the official legalistic system, which is connected to the relation between the North Eastern district and down Kenya, as described in the previous chapter. Since the Somalis have been discriminated for so long, they are suspicious of all Kenyan

authorities, judges included. The Somalis are really sceptical as to whether justice will be done in official court, while their trust in the traditional court is very high.

The third advantage of the traditional Somali court is the impact of appearing before it. In addition to receiving a punishment in the form of paying compensation, one also receives a reprimand. The social status of someone who has to appear before traditional court is damaged. The social impact of official court is far less, because it is less visible - traditional court is held in public places - and because it is regarded as inferior.

Having mentioned the advantages of the traditional justice system, I will go on to look at the contents of the system: what are the types of crimes in which this system is used and what are its verdicts in Wajir? The limitation of the traditional system in Wajir is not noticeable. People can, regardless the type of crime, choose whether they want to be tried by traditional law or by common law. Only when both parties choose for the first, will traditional law be practiced. In reality, this means that in almost all cases the traditional system is used. Only when one of the parties is not Somali, will they seek justice through common law.

The verdicts are always restorative: a penalty, in the form of money, goods or animals, must be paid to compensate the committed crime. This penalty is not only paid by the culprit self, but also by his or her family and even the extended family. The group that is obliged to pay for crimes committed by any member of the group is called a *dia*-paying group (Lewis, 1994, p. 21). This is a subdivision of a clan and consists of a few hundred people. Each *dia*-paying group has its own distribution code, which regulates who has to pay what part. An example of such a distribution code is that the family of the culprit, in other words the nuclear family in which the culprit is born, pays 30 percent of the penalty. The families who are directly related to this family -the families of the uncles of the culprit- pay 5 percent each and the families on a higher level only pay the remaining part of the penalty. When a family is not able to pay their share of the penalty, other members of the *dia*-paying group will make a greater contribution. The same distribution code is used when a member of the group receives compensation.

The advantages of this *dia*-system are two fold. It makes sure that a penalty will be paid. Most families are too poor to pay a

complete compensation, which can be as much as one hundred camels. It is less demanding to contribute to several compensations through the years than to pay an entire compensation at once. The second advantage is the social control that ensues from this system. If an individual commits several crimes, the *dia*-paying group will reprimand this individual. One informant confided that if the reprimand does not help, the culprit will be taken into the bush and tied to a tree. Then he or she will receive a serious beating. Next, they will leave the culprit alone for a couple of hours after which they return and release the culprit. If this does not help, the paying group will distance themselves from the culprit. Instead of paying the compensation, they will surrender the culprit to the mercy of the victim, which usually means that he or she will be killed. Fortunately, this does not happen often. The reprimand is usually enough.

After this clarification of the traditional justice system, I will now pay attention to achieving justice after the conflict of 1992-1994. Since the *wazee* play an important role in traditional court, I will take this group as an entry.

5.3.2 *Wazee* achieving justice

I have already mentioned three reasons why the *wazee* are the most suitable group to end the conflict: they are traditionally the ones who solve problems, some of them have fuelled the conflict and their decisions are almost always respected (see box 2). There is a fourth reason why the *wazee* are very fit to solve the conflict: they are the ones who speak justice. During the conflict, the justice system did not function at all. One of the causes of this malfunctioning was the involvement of the *wazee* in the violence. If an entire subclan is involved in the conflict, one sees a lack of *wazee* with both the trust of the clan division involved, and who are objective enough to successfully negotiate with the other party. Thus, the traditional justice system failed.

It was only at the meeting in the *Al Fatah* primary school that the traditional justice system was restored. Two things related to justice were decided at this meeting. The first decision was, as mentioned in paragraph 5.2.1, that none of the crimes committed during the conflict should be compensated. Not only was it impossible to investigate every incident that had happened, it was

also regarded as unnecessary, since each clan was both victim and victimizer. Furthermore, the payment of compensation could lead to further violence, since the precise culprits were unknown and the compensations would be too big. Many *dia*-paying groups would not be able to raise that amount of animals. Not paying an imposed compensation, whether it is due to refusal or to incompetence, justifies revenge. For these reasons it was regarded both just and wise to abandon compensation.

The second decision was that the traditional justice system should be reinforced. It is recorded in the *Al Fatah* peace declaration that:

from the date of this cease fire, the traditional law pertaining to blood feud will apply to those who commit murder namely the payment of hundred camels for a man and fifty camel for a woman. In the case of stock theft, the rule of collective punishment involving whole groups of people will be applied. (*Al Fatah* Peace Declaration, resolution 7, 1993)

The *Al Fatah* counsel plays an important role in this re-implementation of the justice system. The representatives in this counsel take their places, as described in paragraph 5.2, in the rapid response team. The most important task of the rapid response team is to maintain peace in the district. Doing justice is an essential part of this, since it prevents revenge and thus the further escalation of violence. The composition of the rapid response team is, as described above, essential for the prevention of the reoccurrence of the failure of the justice system. The quarrelling parties are always represented by at least two of their own *wazee*, who are trusted by the people involved. Furthermore, there are always a few *wazee* of clans who are not involved and who can function as mediators. Thus, they try to achieve justice.

The tasks of the *wazee* in the justice system are many. First, they try to reach an agreement to stop the immediate conflict. Outsiders -*wazee* who do not belong to one of the conflicting groups- usually do this. The quarrelling parties need to agree that they abandon any form of revenge and wait until justice takes its course. Next, the *wazee*, both in- and outsiders, have to find out what happened, who had done what and why. Then they initiate the negotiation between the parties in which the *wazee* who represent the quarrelling groups have a leading role. When an agreement is

reached, the *wazee* make sure that it is carried out. The negotiation as described in box 4 is a good example of the justice system. It describes the negotiations on the compensation after a raid in which many animals were stolen. I was told that these negotiations were similar to the *Al Fatah* meeting, held in 1993. The importance of both meetings was great and the atmosphere was consequently tense.

Box 4. Case: Achieving justice between Degodia and Borona

On December 24th 2001, members of the Degodia stole 270 cows and a few donkeys from the Borona, a tribe living in the neighbouring Marsabit district (see map 2). This was regarded as a serious incident, since it was one of a series of thefts and assaults. Revenge could not only lead to a conflict between the Borona and the Degodia, but also to a conflict between the Borona and the Somali in general. Therefore, immediate action was necessary.

The Wajir Peace and Development Committee sent a delegation to Hadad. A meeting of the stolen animals was held on the second of February 2002. I was present at this meeting. The meeting started with prayers, after which the people present went outside. Having seen the animals, the Borona had a private meeting. After this, the actual meeting could start.

The Borona started by mentioning the Mogadishu agreement, which had a willingness to follow this agreement, in which was determined that every stolen animal should be returned or, when this was not possible, should be replaced by five similar animals. The Borona explained that they had been able to identify 115 animals as theirs, while they were not able to identify 38 animals. One animal had been identified as stolen from another tribe. The Borona wondered whether the 38 animals should be seen as compensation, in which case they would count for less than eight of the stolen animals. They also explained their concern about the origin of these animals. If the cattle had been stolen, the Borona would not accept them as compensation, fearing troubles with other clans or tribes.

This led to a lot of discussion. On the one hand, the Borona accused the Degodia. On the other hand, mentioned several other assaults, committed by the Borona. In these cases there had been no attempt at all to compensate the harm done. In 1998 the Borona had stolen 1700 camels and killed about 200 people. This had not led to any repercussions and the Degodia had never complained nor sought revenge. Complaints by the Borona were therefore unjust. After five hours of discussion, the meeting ended. Furthermore, they both expressed their willingness to have an open dialogue, to prevent any future conflicts.

conclude that, although the clans agreed to abandon compensation, justice has played an important role in maintaining the peace.

5.4 Resolution and identity

Although the previous paragraphs have shown how the peace resolution was reached, it is not yet clear why the different players were successful. How is it possible that the initiative taken by only five women could end the conflict that had lasted for almost two years? This becomes even more astonishing when the limited power of women in a Muslim society is taken in consideration. To answer this question, I return to the concept of identity.

5.4.1 Dimensions of women, *wazee* and youth

As explained in the second chapter of this thesis, every group has certain identity elements in common. I shall now discuss the different elements for each of the three groups. To understand how the different elements relate to each other, I will again use the three dimensions of identity. To gain insight in the complexity of the social groups as a whole, I discuss all the elements that characterize one group together. I will however, if possible, indicate which aspect of the social group is related to what element of identity. Because the content of the three groups differs from times of conflict to times of peace, I will maintain the distinction made when discussing clan element (see table 1).

Firstly, I introduced the group of women. My earlier writing clearly shows that this group is not based only on the identity element 'sex'. Women are (seen as) mothers and wives in the first place. They are expected to look after their children and husband. Occupation and position within the family are thus two other identity elements that are essential for the group of women in Wajir. These elements are influenced by religion, which dictates that the women should refrain as much as possible from contributing to the public sphere. Many think that women also should abstain from contact with men who do not belong to the family. Being a Somali and a member of a certain clan is also influential. These elements determine for example one of the social networks to which women belong.

The importance of the market in the lives of most women is an example of how some of these different elements are combined. The market is indispensable for feeding the family. All use the market to buy perishable foods. Some women sell small amounts of vegetables, fruit, meat, milk and so on, thus making a small living, which enables them to pay for other necessities for the families' welfare. The market is also an important social network. When short of cash, women can often buy on credit, or they lend each other cash. They exchange news and maintain relationships. It is an accepted place where women can socialize outside the proximity of men. This all explains why it was such a serious problem for the women that the market places were affected by the conflict.

The most important role of women in times of conflict is still to be found in the private domain. They enable their husbands and sons to go out seeking revenge by giving them food and drink. On the other hand, they can try to end the conflict by refusing to do so. This is the role of women in conflicts when 'occupation', position within the family and religion are the only identity elements of importance. The influence of the women then remains limited to the private sphere. The tribal and clan element are however also influential. In paragraph box 1, I described how women can incite the conflict by encouraging and even insulting men in public places. If men refuse to avenge the family, women sometimes cast away their headscarves and veils and threaten to act as men instead. This willingness of women to send their husbands and sons to war can only be understood when the clan element is taken into consideration. When clan interests outweigh the interests of mothers and wives, as is the case during a clan conflict, women can do such things. A more peaceful role of women in conflict, and related to the clan and tribe element, is their function as mediators. According to tradition, women do not belong to one clan: they are born in one clan and can marry into another. This makes them both loyal to their fathers' and their husbands' clan, or, as many Somalis put it, it makes them 'clanless'. This makes women suitable for the mediator's task, especially between the clans of her husband and father.

I will now rephrase all of this and put it in terms of (the three dimensions of) identity. This gives us an overview on the different elements of the women's group and it will help to understand some contradictions between their different roles. The main aspect of the

symbolic dimension is that women are mothers and wives, who look after their families' welfare. Not belonging to a particular clan can also be placed in this dimension, because this is ideally the case. This only becomes apparent during a clan conflict. That women can send their husbands and sons to war is another aspect of this dimension. I was often told that a quarrel only becomes a conflict with the consent of the women. The fact that most women felt rather powerless during the conflict proves that this is merely idealistic. I have therefore categorized it as part of the symbolic dimension.

The social network is an important part of the institutional dimension. Women can rely on a strong network, which also exists beyond the market. They look after each other's children and provide each other with shelter when needed. This network was damaged during the conflict. It was often difficult to maintain relations with women of other clans. The two elements of the institutional dimension in times of conflict derive directly from the symbolic dimension. Instigating and mediating in the conflict is possible because women are thought of as provokers and regarded clanless.

The individual dimension of the group of women is again linked to the other two. The social network can only function when women feel strongly related to each other. During the conflict, this was no longer the case. The institutional functions as mediators and instigators, is related to the individual dimension. To function as mediators, women need to be peace-loving. On the other hand, women can only instigate a conflict, when they are somewhat militant and warlike. All this is summarized in table 2.

Identity	Symbolic dimension	Institutional dimension	Individual Dimension
Women (peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good housewives and mothers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling related to other women
Women (conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clanless • Instigator of husbands and sons • Rouser of conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediator • Instigator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace-loving • Militant and warlike

Table 2. The three dimensions of identity elements related to women

The *wazee* are the second group I introduced in this chapter. Two obvious elements of identity of this group are sex and race. Although some claim that a woman can also become a *mzee*, no woman was included in any decision making process. It is however true that some women are also regarded as wise and are consulted by others. Because these women see themselves primarily as women and are also members of women for peace, I have chosen to limit the group of *wazee* to males only.

There are however other identity elements that also influence this group. Again clans, the Somali culture and Islam are important to this group. The *wazee* system itself and their social position (another identity element) are embedded in the Somali culture and organized according to clans. When advising people, or speaking justice -two of the prime tasks of the *wazee*- they base themselves on the norms, values and laws of Islam.

In this chapter, I have explained how the *wazee* play an important role in the Wajir society. Speaking justice, solving problems and negotiating compensations are important functions of the *wazee*. They are the leaders of the clan and look after the clan's welfare. The *wazee* can also act as leaders during a conflict. Some *wazee* were said to have abused their power. Instead of preventing the conflict, or looking for a solution, they incited their people to fight and aggravated the situation. Fortunately, the *wazee* also improved the situation in the end. Their efforts to stop the conflict have clearly been essential to the reconciliation process. One *mzee* expressed their role aptly: 'we first blew the whistle to start, but we also blew the whistle to stop. And we were happy to stop it'.

Again, I will analyse this group by discussing the different dimensions of identity. An important aspect of the symbolic dimension is that the *wazee* are wise. They are regarded as incorruptible and to have the clan's best interest at heart at all times. This seems to contradict some people's view of *wazee* as powerful warlords, in times of conflict. This can be better understood when you realize that defending your clan (and revenge is often seen as a legitimate defence) is also a form of looking after it. This is the reason why I consider being a warlord as part of this dimension: it is the conflict version of 'looking after the clans' welfare'.

The institutional dimension of the group of *wazee* can be derived from the symbolic dimension. Speaking justice, solving problems, giving advice and settling conflicts are clear examples of how the *wazee* look after the welfare of their people. Acting as warlords is institutionalized in the way they influence the public opinion in their clan. Thus they can incite the youth and raise money to pay the expenses of combatants.

This all is related to the individual dimension. The *wazee are* wise and incorruptible, and they know the traditions, on which they can found their jurisdiction and their advice. When this is combined with a militant and warlike behaviour, their role in times of conflict can be explained. Table 3 gives an overview of the content of the different dimensions.

Identity	Symbolic dimension	Institutional dimension	Individual Dimension
<i>Wazee</i> (peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wise • Incorruptible • Always have clan's best interests at heart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker of justice • Adviser • Problem solver • Settler of conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wise • Incorruptible • Knowledgeable on traditions
<i>Wazee</i> (conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warlord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inciter of youth • Influencer of public opinion • Raiser of money for combatants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Militant and warlike

Table 3. The three dimensions of identity elements related to *wazee*

The last important group in this chapter is the youth. The most obvious identity element of this group is of course age. They were all rather young, although not as young as the name might suggest. According to most informants, everyone below the age of forty is a member of the youth. A second, less obvious, element is sex. Although there are some female members of youth for peace and development, the major part of this group is male. Pronouncements as 'the youth were sent into combat' and 'the youth are the future leaders' made me decide that 'male' is also an element of this group.

Other elements that are important for this group are again clans and the Somali culture and tradition. Their position within the society -yet another identity element- is influenced by the clan structure, which is in turn based on the Somali culture. Because Islam influences all aspects of life, religion is the sixth element worth mentioning. Its influences on the youth are however less perceptible than on the *wazee*.

Most of the working class of Wajir belongs to this group, which is not surprising considering their age and gender. Despite this important role, their power within the clan structure is rather limited. They are, just as everybody else, expected to obey the *wazee*. This becomes particularly clear in times of conflict when they are sent out to war. Although they can of course refuse to go, many obeyed. They considered it their duty to protect their clan.

Let us consider this group with the use of the three dimensions of identity. The position of the youth within the society as subordinate to the *wazee* can be seen as part of the symbolic dimension. Many people told me that the youth always obey the *wazee*. During my research however, I also encountered situations in which this was not the case: the refusal of the bandits to surrender is a clear example of this. Consistent obedience to the *wazee* is thus foremost an idealisation. This aspect is both important in peace and conflict. That the youth are expected to be the leaders of the future only seemed relevant in times of peace. The *wazee* could of course not teach them how to act as caretakers of the clan when they were not functioning as such themselves.

This aspect is reflected in the institutional dimension. The *wazee* prepare young men for their future tasks: they teach them traditions, inform them on decisions and explain why they chose to act as they did. Other aspects of this dimension are related to the social position of the youth. As the working class, the youth has an important function within the social network. They are the main wage earner and look after the income of the family. When the importance of clans surpasses the importance of the other identity elements, this function is sometimes neglected. Some are sent out to fight and forced to abandon their jobs.

Again, the symbolic and institutional dimensions are closely related to the individual one. The youth have an ambiguous position within the society: they are subordinated to the *wazee*, while they

are also the working class and the pivot within the social networks. They feel thus both superior and inferior to the *wazee*. This is not only the case in times of peace. The obedience to go to battle and the refusal to lay down their arms are clear examples of this. Table 4 gives an overview of the different dimensions of the group of youth.

Identity	Symbolic dimension	Institutional dimension	Individual Dimension
Youth (peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always obey the <i>wazee</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders of the future • Working class • Pivot in social network • Wage earner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Youth (conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always obey the <i>wazee</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighter • No longer working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inferior to the <i>wazee</i> • Superior to the <i>wazee</i>

Table 4. The three dimensions of identity elements related to the youth

5.4.2 Understanding the resolution process

I have now characterized each of the three groups mentioned in this chapter by naming the identity elements that are important. These elements sometimes enforce each other. Being a Muslima strengthens a woman’s role as caretaker of the family. It strengthens her social position. The elements also contradict each other. This helps to understand inconsistencies within a group or individual. A woman who sends her son to war does not do this as a mother, but as a member of a clan. A young man does not quit his job as head of the family, but as a defender of his clan. The interests of the clans are sometimes greater than that of individuals. This also explains why *wazee* have incited the conflict, knowing that this would lead to casualties.

The knowledge on the conflicting identity elements does not only help to comprehend the conflict. It also contributes to understanding of the resolution process. Overemphasizing the clan identity element violated the core values and needs of many women, *wazee* and youth; it violated (parts of) aspects related to other

important elements of their identity. If you compare the contents of the dimensions in times of conflict to those in times of peace, you see that many important aspects were violated. Especially the violation of the symbolic dimension (being a mother, wife, caretaker and breadwinner), which is the base of the other two, was grave. All three groups placed the interests of the clan above the interests of individuals; above the interests of their own family.

When the five women took the initiative to end the conflict, they were able to persuade the other women by reminding them of that symbolic dimension; of those core values and needs; they had to look after their husbands and sons, which was difficult enough without a conflict. They encouraged women to re-establish their social network, most concretely by allowing women from all clans to visit the market. Thus, they created a connection between the different clans, based on being a woman. When being a woman became more important, belonging to a certain clan became less important. This all is depicted in figure 4. One element is stressed, enlarged, forming a link between certain members of different clans. Because of this, the conflicting element has slightly shrunken. Notice that the element labelled 'women' symbolizes a whole cluster of elements that are characteristic for the group of women. The remaining small elements can have many labels, such as age, language, region and nationality.

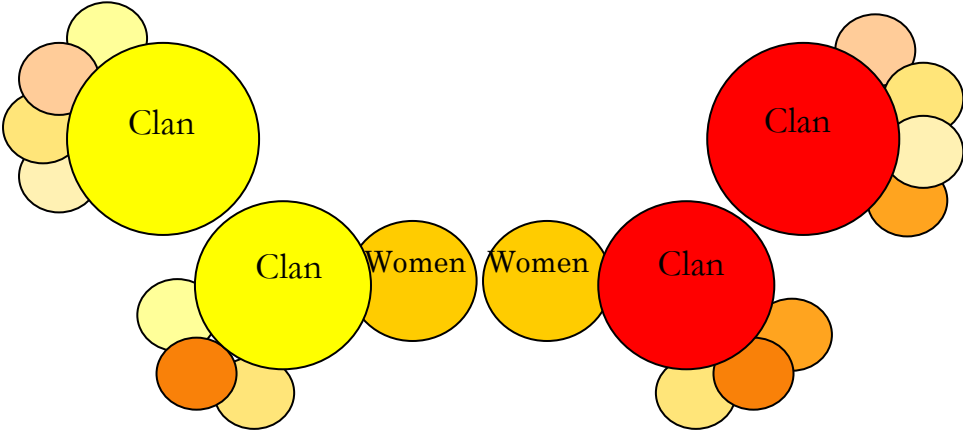


Figure 4. Identities in a group during the resolution process

It is interesting to see whether this figure is also applicable for the other two groups. I will first discuss the *wazee*. It was difficult for the women to convince them of the importance of reverting to their role

as caretakers for their people. They succeeded when they were helped by a *mzee* who belonged to one of the corner clans. It is not at all surprising that this man did not belong to one of the three conflicting clans. He was more or less neutral and, more important, his core values were negligibly influenced by the conflict; they were not overshadowed by clanism. Thus, it was not difficult to persuade him to do what he already wanted to do. This *mzee* was in the proper position to tell the other *wazee* that they were the ones who could make a difference in the conflict. He pointed out to them that they were chosen to look after the well-being of the people, to solve problems and to speak justice. He convinced them that the excessive importance of clans was violating their function. It violated other important elements of their group, such as religion, tribe and most important, their social position. By pointing out that they had the knowledge, experience, power and a duty to end the conflict, he stressed the importance of these elements. Being a *mzee* and having an important responsibility became more important than belonging to a certain clan. The element labelled 'women' in figure 4 can thus also bear the label '*wazee*', again symbolizing a whole cluster of elements, related to this group.

The figure is also valid for the third group, youth. Different young men expressed that three things had contributed to the decision to do something. They realized that they were the ones who got killed, they could no longer fulfil their function as breadwinners and head of the family and they were not acting as the leaders of the future. Or, when you put it in terms of identity elements: they disagreed with their enforced 'jobs' as soldiers and were tired of the violation of both their present and future social position. This led to the foundation of youth for peace and development. In their most important task, convincing bandits to put down their weapons, they also stressed these elements of their group. They acted as role models for the bandits, thus appealing to their commonality. They explained to the bandits that they were all the same and had similar problems; they stressed the identity elements that belong to the group of 'young men'. They showed them that it was possible to make a living without violence and that they could return to their original social position. The youth realized that they were the future generation and decided to act that way. The label 'women' in figure 4 can thus also be replaced by the label 'youth'.

All this makes it possible to understand why the initiative of five women was enough to start the reconciliation process. None of the three groups really benefited from the conflict. On the contrary, the core values and needs of these groups were damaged during the conflict²⁴; essential elements of their identity were violated. Nevertheless, they all had an important role within the conflict, both ideally and practically: they instigated the conflict, raised money to finance it and did the actual fighting. Consequently, they also had the potential to end the conflict, but clanism was hampering this. Overcoming this problem can also be seen in terms of identity: people started to realize that they belonged to the same groups, sharing the same needs, values and problems. Instead of helping each other, they were driven apart during the conflict. Once they realized this, they decided to put an end to the clan-based division. Thus, bridges could be formed between the different clans.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how the inhabitants of Wajir reached a peace resolution. They sat down with people they saw as their enemies, overcame their differences and agreed not to look back at the past violence, but to work for a better future instead. How was this possible? This question can be answered by returning to two of my research questions, and answering them for the groups discussed thus far. I will first answer these questions for the groups discussed in this chapter and then I will answer the second question for the one central in the previous chapter: clan.

The first question was both about the influence of the conflict on the changing of identity and conversely about the influence of the changing of identities on the conflict. The influence of the conflict on the three groups is clear. It forced them to abandon their core needs and values. Instead of looking after their family, women sent their husbands and sons to war; instead of looking after the welfare of their people, *wazee* acted as true warlords; instead of earning the family's income, young men quit their jobs to enter combat. On the other hand, all three groups have, as a consequence of the grown

²⁴ The bandits are an exception against this rule, but they form a small minority within the youth.

importance of clans, influenced the conflict: women have incited their husbands and sons, *wazee* have acted as true warlords and the youth have taken up arms.

The second question was about the influence of the changing of identity on the resolution process and vice versa. The answer to the first part of this question has been profoundly discussed. Once the importance of clans was put aside, women initiated the process and thus paved the way for the *wazee* to find a common truth. The *wazee* have agreed upon a peace resolution, including a cease-fire agreement. Furthermore, the *wazee* have reinitiated the justice system, which could help to prevent future conflicts. This all contributed greatly to the resolution process, but it remained unsafe to travel and some villages were still raided by bandits. This is where the youth could contribute. They were able to convince the bandits to hand in their weapons and to stop fighting.

The influence of the resolution process on the three groups is less obvious, but nonetheless considerable. The resolution process allowed or enabled the women, *wazee* and youth to return to the core values and needs that were important before the influence of the clan element increased. Under this influence, they had neglected the interests of the other identity elements that are relevant for these groups. Now, women could look after their families and reinstall their social network; the *wazee* could take care of the welfare of their people again; the youth could take up their jobs and start learning from the *wazee*. They could reinstall the symbolic and, to a lesser extent, the institutional and individual dimensions of their essential identity elements.

The relation between the identity element 'clan' and the conflict has been profoundly discussed in the previous chapter. Here, I will only describe the influence of the clan element on the resolution process and vice versa. Clanism has of course complicated the resolution process. It polarized the society. People who had not actively contributed to the conflict could still be seen as The Enemy. This made it very difficult to sit together and negotiate a solution. The resolution process also had a negative effect on the clan element: it became less important. Bridges were formed between members of different clans; people stopped seeing each other merely as members of another clan, but as women or *wazee*. People stopped thinking in terms of Us and Them. The society depolarized.

It is important to realize that the relationships described above should be seen as two aspects of one process, a positive cycle. The more the women, *wazee* and youth did to empower the resolution process, the more they could return to their core needs and values. The more they returned to their core needs and values, the more they could contribute to the resolution process. The same applies to the clan element. The less clanism hindered the resolution process, the less important it became. The less important clanism was, the less it could hinder the resolution process.

We have now seen how the people of Wajir have reached a peace resolution and ended the conflict. They even surpassed the level of negative peace. Not only did they reach a cease-fire, they also removed the immediate danger of a revival of the violence by reinstalling the justice system and by handing in a lot of weapons. This is of course an important step on the road to sustainable peace but it is not the final step. First, people have to forgive each other; they have to reconcile. In the next chapter, I will analyse that final phase of the reconciliation process.

6. Forgiveness

*Milk tastes sweetest in times of peace*²⁵

In the previous chapter, we have discussed the first phase of the reconciliation process: the resolution process. In the Wajir case, this has led to a situation that surpasses the negative peace. Not only have they stopped the violence, they have also taken away the immediate danger of a flare-up of the conflict. Nevertheless, positive durable peace has not yet been reached. So far the process is still lacking one important element: the people have not forgiven each other. Once the resolution process is completed -a common truth is found, the fighting has ended and justice is done- forgiveness is the only aspect missing in order to reach reconciliation. How this final step is made will be discussed in this chapter²⁶.

In chapter two I have explained that forgiveness is an asymmetric process: the offended grants forgiveness to the offender. The perpetrator cannot demand to be forgiven. Furthermore, it is important to realize that it is the perpetrator that can be forgiven, not the crime itself. Therefore, the perpetrator should be somehow distinguished from the crime. This distinction arises when the perpetrator distances him- or herself from the crime by showing remorse and by apologizing.

This becomes impossible when the offender is unknown or dead, which is often the case in a larger conflict such as that in Wajir. When a group of people has committed several crimes, it is impossible to find out who has done what. The issue of who is responsible for a crime committed while following orders has already often been discussed, without finding a satisfying answer. Instead of becoming entangled in these matters, I will broaden my vision and look for a solution to the real question: how is it possible to forgive someone, when it is not clear who exactly you have to forgive and

²⁵ Somali proverb. The meaning of this proverb will be explained later in this chapter.

²⁶ Note that I will not discuss *whether* people have truly been able to forgive each other. All people with whom I talked explained that they had forgiven the culprits of the conflict. This was underlined by some facts: inter-clan marriages that were ended during the conflict made up; there were no more inter-clan conflicts on the markets or in schools and people from different clan could work together

when there is no sign of remorse that creates the distance between the crime and the criminal? The distinction between inter- and intrapersonal forgiveness (see 2.1.4) might help in answering this question.

In the previous chapters I have explained how existing institutes, norms, values and needs have been damaged during the conflict. We have seen how some of them have already been re-installed: the justice system has begun to function again, social networks have started to work and the welfare of the (extended) family has regained its central position within the society. Two sets of structures, norms, values and needs have only been mentioned briefly: that of the tribe and that of religion. In this chapter I will analyse forgiveness by focussing on the influence of the religious and tribal identity elements. I will look at what 'being a Somali' and 'being a Muslim' meant during both the conflict and the resolution phase and how it influenced forgiveness. In the previous chapters, I have looked at elements that divide the society in different clans or different social groups. In this chapter, I discuss elements that bind the society: tribe and religion. I will look at how this can be understood in terms of identity. At the end, I will also pay attention to the other four groups I have thus far discussed: clan, women, *wazee* and youth. How did this final stage of the reconciliation process affect them? In the conclusion, I will return to my third and final research question and discuss the influence of identity on forgiveness and vice versa.

6.1 Tribe

In the previous chapters, I have already mentioned that belonging to the Somali tribe influences many aspects of Wajir society. The clan system, the importance of the *wazee* and common law are all based on the Somali culture. The relevance of this all, has been discussed at length in chapters four and five. Nevertheless I consider it important to elaborate on the Somali culture on its own.

The first subject and element of the Somali culture that I will elucidate in this paragraph is poetry. Poetry plays an important role in the Wajir society, both during conflicts and in times of peace. The second subject is not really an element of the Somali culture. It is the

sense of belonging to this culture itself. The communal sense contributed greatly to forgiveness.

The nomadic way of existence is the third subject I will discuss in this paragraph. Although it has not contributed to the process of forgiveness itself, it is important to pay more attention to this subject, because it helps to understand other elements of the Somali culture, such as the importance of poetry and the importance of peace itself. To distinguish the data on forgiveness from this background information, I have placed the latter in box five.

6.1.1 Poetry and reconciliation

The Somalis have a rich oral tradition. This is often seen as a consequence of the nomadic existence. Learning how to read and write would require schooling, which is hard to combine with unsettled life. Furthermore, nomads tend to travel light. Books, papers and pens were considered superfluous luggage. It is therefore not surprising that it was only in the seventies of the previous century that a considerable amount of the Somalis became literate. Until that time, history and cultural heritage was not preserved in writing but in the memory of the people, especially the *wazee* (Lewis, 1993, p. 19). The Somalis are great narrators. The *wazee* are particularly famous for their ability to enthral an audience for hours, with speeches loaded with proverbs and quotes from famous poems.

Knowing all this, it is not surprising that poets, narrators and reciters still play an important role in the Somali society (ibid. p. 19). They bring both news and joy and they are the carriers of the cultural heritage. They often get invited to parties and festivals and there are even competitions in which they compete for the favour of

Box 5 Nomads and peace

One aspect of the Somali culture that stands out is the nomadic way of living. Not only does a considerable amount of the Somalis still depend on a pastoral way of subsistence, it is also commonly considered to be the most ideal situation. To illustrate this, one man explained to me that the favourite dish of all Somalis is milk, with meat as a good second. In prayers, they always ask for many sons and for healthy animals. Even the Somali who have settled down in permanent settlements still have some animals, either on their compound, or in the care of relatives.

In Chapter Four, I explained that the nomadic way of life brings with it certain demands. It is very important to have access to a large area of land. Especially in the dry season, when water wells and pasture are scarcer, it is essential to be able to travel freely with the animals. Quarrels and conflicts can form a serious limitation of movement and thus threaten the safety of the animals. Rather than entering a conflict area, nomads prefer to avoid that area and make a detour. News on the situation is thus of vital importance for the subsistence of the nomadic Somalis.

In the bush, as the Somalis call the vast areas of arid land that are

audience. Catchy poems are quickly remembered by others and spread fast (Andrzejewski and Lewis, 1964, p. 45). It is astounding to notice that every adult knows several poems by heart, some of which can be very long.

Unfortunately, poems are not always used for the good. They form a powerful tool in times of conflict; poems filled with hatred and insults are composed and recited. When such a poem reaches the clan or sub-clan that is insulted or challenged, poets of that clan will react and compose a poem as an answer. The impact of such poems should not be underestimated; a clear example of this is the well-known poem 'Guba' ('that which burns'). The mere reciting of that poem led to a war between two sub-clans of the Ogaden. On the other hand, poems can also lead to peace. The poem 'Waar tolow colka jooja

(‘Oh, my kin, please stop the hostility’) prevented two sub-clans from destroying each other (Afrax, 1994, p. 239).

By means of poetry, the Somali culture has also contributed to the reconciliation process in an indirect way. Peace poems were composed and recited. Since poems travel far and fast, they reached even the most remote areas. They opened the discussion on the conflict situation, giving food for thought. Of course, poetry cannot work miracles. The mere hearing of a poem will not stop a war. It does however contribute to the whole process, especially in a society in which poets are as important as they are in Wajir.

To give an impression of these peace poems, I have included one that has been composed by a Somali from Wajir. Although I have only been able to find the Swahili version, I have been told that the original poem was composed in Somali. The Swahili poem has been translated on a forum on the Internet.

No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

I recite Bismillahi
and explain my views
The Somalis are astonished
They reduce themselves
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

Let’s look at the world,
We are at war in Africa,
Why are we fighting
While we are still poor?
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

We ask God for rain
And we kill in his name
We do as we know
Will that prayer be answered?
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

We bought bullets
And gave them to the rogues
And they killed in the name of God
What reputation shall we get?
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

Riches are from God
Fortune is of the Universe
Fortune is the clouds
We shall forget being bitter
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

Citizens in the districts
We curse the clans
It will ruin the peace
It will cause discord
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

Clanism is enough
We must put an end to it
That of the past is sufficient
And we return the arms
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

Peace is like a trust
Let's start it from the districts
Let's pass to the regions
Let's increase to the World
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

Peace of the districts
is lost in wars
Let's forget the past
Let's hold each other by the shoulders
No child is born in war, who is the one to tell it?

I have arrived at the term
I now leave the stage
It's necessary to save oneself
And to return to God
No child is born in war, thus said the Somalis!

Poet and reciter
Adan Abdullahi Bare Wajir (Kinyanjui)

The poem contains several notable subjects that are characteristic for the Somali culture and of influence on the reconciliation process in general and for forgiveness in particular. The first subject is religion. God is mentioned in five of the ten stanzas. The poet points out that the Somalis have themselves to blame for their misfortune. God does not answer the prayers of those who abuse his name (stanzas three, four and five).

The second noticeable subject in this poem is the Somali culture. The poet mentions prayers for rains and illustrates the gravity of the sins by linking it to the drought. Rains are of course vital for the nomadic existence, which is an important element of the Somali culture. Furthermore, the poet stresses that the Somalis should stand together. They should abolish clanism (stanza six and seven). Then they can change the situation. The last verse stresses it. The Somalis are the ones to tell that 'no child is born in war'. They have to point out the fruitlessness of the conflict.

The third and last subject of the poem I want to single out is the appeal to put the past behind. In stanza five, the poet forecasts that they will stop being bitter. In stanza seven, he states that 'we must put an end to it / That of the past is sufficient'. He proposes to bury the past. In the eighth stanza, he explains that peace is like a trust. In order to have peace, you have to trust each other, which is closely related to forgiveness.

The significance of the last mentioned subject is clear. Although the poem does not work miracles, it does influence people and it leads to discussion on forgiveness. However small this contribution may be, it is a contribution. Taken the importance of poetry in consideration, the contribution might have been considerable. The significance of the other two subjects can be found in another area. The poem stresses the importance of being a Muslim and a Somali. The contribution of Islam on forgiveness is discussed in paragraph 6.2 How 'being a Somali' contributes to it, is discussed below.

6.1.2 Somalis and forgiveness

Despite the many differences among the Somalis and despite the fact that they live scattered over five countries, the Somalis share a strong sense of belonging. Cassanelli gives several explanations for this:

what gives Somalis this strong sense of common identity [...] is their long-time occupation of nearly four hundred thousand square miles of contiguous territory; a common language [...]; a shared Islamic heritage; a wide-spread belief that all Somalis are ultimately descended from a small number of common ancestors; and a way of life that is overwhelmingly pastoral. (1982, p. 3)

This sense of belonging was very important for forgiveness. The importance of the Somali culture was mentioned time and again when I asked why people had been able to forgive each other. To understand this, we need to return to the conflict and discuss how the Somali culture was influenced in that period.

It is clear that the re-establishment of the colonial boundaries formed a serious confinement of movement, thus hampering the nomadic way of life. In addition, it was very dangerous to travel: nomads, travelling in small groups with many animals formed an easy and attractive target for bandits. The limitation of the nomadic way of existence was a real thorn in the flesh of all the Somalis in Wajir. The conflict did not only affect the nomads; the inhabitants of Wajir were also personally affected. Everyone has some relatives who live as nomads and most people have some animals in the care of those relatives. The conflict not only violated the core values and needs of the *wazee*, women and youth in particular, but also that of the Somalis in general.

Although this did not lead to immediate action - 'the group of Somalis' was not a player of importance in the of the resolution process - it may have contributed to the decision to do something. Not only were women no longer able to fulfil their duties as mothers and wives; they were also hindered in their 'Somali existence'. Looking after animals, trading in milk and meat and travelling through the district were all being hampered. Although it is difficult to estimate the impact of this, it is a telling fact that most people mentioned the restriction of free movement first, when I asked about the impact of the conflict. It would therefore seem that the violation of the Somali identity element contributed to the decision of many people to answer the call for peace.

Its contribution to the process of forgiveness is more important. This is related to the diminishing of the importance of clans. The importance of clans, which had increased enormously during the conflict, thus reducing the importance of other identity elements, diminished throughout the reconciliation process. This resulted in a kind of vacuum. Other identity elements that had been suppressed by clans, could flourish again; they could fill the gap left behind by clans. The groups mentioned in the previous chapter, became more important during the resolution process. When an unstable peace was reached, their importance diminished again. The Somali element is, almost a decade after the conflict, still very important. The plans to start a Somali museum and to start classes to teach children Somali handicraft such as embroidery and carpentry, are clear examples of this. The Somali culture annuls differences based on other identity elements. This is essential for the process of forgiveness. People stop thinking in terms of Us and Them. They stop seeing members of other clans as the enemy. People are no longer seen as members of different clans, but as members of the same tribe. They realize that they all belong to the same group; they all belong to Us. An important consequence of this is that actions held against a certain clan, will no longer be held against individuals, because these individuals are no longer associated with that clan. It means that they have forgiven each other.

I realize that this explanation might not yet be satisfying. To further explore the relation between the Somali culture and forgiveness, I need to analyse it in terms of identity. I do this in the analytical paragraph of this chapter, paragraph 6.3. Now, I discuss

the relation between religion and forgiveness, which is partly similar to that of the Somali culture.

6.2 Religion

In the introduction of the thesis, I already explained that religion is an important facet of the Wajir society. All the Somalis I met were professed Muslims. Islam affects the everyday life; it is the backbone of the society. Islam influences simple things such as greeting, dressing and eating habits and more important things like marriage and justice. The importance of Islam is not consonant with the violence among the Somalis. Islam, just as most religions, forbids violence, especially among Muslims. The problem is that Islam, again like most religions, is open to many interpretations. It can and has been used to justify violence. The attack on the eleventh of September is a clear example of this. Therefore, before discussing the impact of religion on both the conflict and the reconciliation process, I will first discuss what Islam itself says about conflict and peace. To do so, I will turn to the most direct source on Islam, the Qu'ran.

6.2.1 Islam, conflict and peace

The word 'Islam' derives from the word *aslama*, which means to submit: one should submit oneself to God. Popularly translated, Islam means peace; a peace that results from the submission to the will of God (Salmi, Majul, Tanham, 1998, p. 22). The Muslim greetings directly refer to this: *salam aleikum* means 'may peace be with you' and the answer, *aleikum salam* means 'and with you'. Although Islam preaches tolerance towards the two other monotheistic religions -Christianity and Judaism- the message of peace is mainly aimed at Islamic society. Fighting among Muslims is highly condemnable: 'It is unlawful for a believer to kill another believer²⁷ except by accident' (4:92²⁸). Muslims should live as brothers and sisters, who belong to one family. Islamic term for that family, the religious community, is *'umma*. The features of the *'umma* are

²⁷ Note that Christians and Jews are neither seen as believers nor as unbelievers. They do believe in God, but they do not choose Islam as their religion (3:83)

²⁸ All Qu'ranic quotes derived from the translation of the Qu'ran by N.J. Dawood (1993)

described in several Qu'ranic verses. Salmi summarizes these verses as follows:

As members of their 'umma, all Muslims believe that they are brothers and sisters constituting a single unity. The umma is a moral collective transcending family, clan, tribal, ethnic and linguistic differences as well as economic disparities. Its members ought to be characterized as "merciful among themselves", their hearts are attuned with one another, they protect one another, they share their wealth with the needy who have some acknowledged right to it, they deal justly and do not permit injustice to influence them in dealing with those who bear enmity towards them, they encourage each other in righteousness while refusing to cooperate in matters of sin or transgression, they shun insulting, backbiting, and unnecessary suspicion, they are true to their word, commitments, and covenants, and they do not hesitate to give up their lives and wealth for the cause of God. (1998 p. 39)

Not only does this summary describe the features of Islamic 'umma, it also clarifies the importance of it: it transcends family, clan, tribal, ethnic and linguistic differences. In other words, one should put aside differences between members of different families or clans when all of them belong to the same religion: Islam.

In chapter four, I already indicated that Islam has been abused to justify violence. However peaceful most interpret the Qu'ran, and however strong it forbids violence amongst Muslims, it does allow fighting against unbelievers; people who do not believe in God at all. Some Qu'ranic verses even encourage war against unbelievers, stating that it is part of the religious duty:

Fight against them [unbelievers] until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme. (2:193)

God has given those that fight with their goods and their persons a higher rank than those who stay at home. (4:95)

Fighting is obligatory for you [believer], much as you dislike it. (2:216)

Although this justifies violence between Muslims and unbelievers, it does not justify violence among Muslims. It is however allowed to fight Muslims who are astray. They should not be treated as enemies, but as misguided people, whose knowledge of Islam may be

inadequate. They should thus not be eliminated, but other Muslims should attempt to restore law and order in that society and reintegrate them back to the 'umma (Salmi e.a. 1998, p. 135).

Islam not only allows or encourages conflict; it also makes it less daunting to participate in the fights. It removes the possibility of a premature death: 'no one dies unless God permits. The term of every life is fixed' (3:144). This makes it less grievous to die in conflict; you would have died anyway. It is even preferable to die in a legitimate conflict than by a disease or accident: 'let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of God; whoever fights for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, We shall richly reward him' (4:74). In other words, people who die in a legitimate conflict will easier go to heaven.

It is thus understandable that Islam can be abused to justify violence, even among Muslims. If religious leaders claim that others are disbelievers or Muslims who have gone astray and ignore all laws and verses that forbid violence, they can instigate or aggravate a conflict. However, the overall message of Islam is that Islam 'peace is the rule while war is the exception. War is the result of injustice, despotism, and corruption. [...] If Islam is followed, war based on the individual pride of persons, personal ambitions, racism and exploitation will disappear' (Salmi e.a., 1998, p.144). When atheism is seen as a form of injustice, thus being a potential cause of conflict (ibid. p. 144), this does not contradict the verses quoted above.

Manny Qu'ranic verses underline this peaceful interpretation of Islam. Even when it allows violence, it does that within certain limitations. It states that one should 'fight for the sake of God, those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors' (2: 190). In other words, Muslims are forbidden to fight at all, unless they are attacked. Furthermore, the Qu'ran encourages a peaceful co-existence with all people, as long as they are not violent themselves: 'if they incline to peace, make peace with them and put your trust in God' (8:61).

In the unfortunate situation that there is a conflict, the Qu'ran encourages other Muslims to interfere and, if necessary, suppress the aggressor with violence:

If two parties of believers take up arms the one against the other, make peace between them. If either of them commits aggression against the other, fight against the aggressors till they submit to

God's judgement. When they submit, make peace between them in equity and justice; God loves those who exercise justice. (49: 9)

When the conflict is ended, the Qu'ran preaches forgiveness: 'he that forgives and seeks reconciliation shall be rewarded by God. He does not love the wrongdoers' (42:40) and 'to endure with fortitude and to forgive is a duty incumbent on all' (42:43).

From the above we can conclude that the Qu'ran is ambiguous in what it preaches. It encourages both conflict and peace; revenge and forgiveness. It is open for many interpretations, which can easily be abused. In the next subparagraph, we will take a closer look at both the conflict and the reconciliation process in Wajir and see what role Islam played in it.

6.2.2 Islam in Wajir

During the conflict, religion was often put aside or abused. One *wazee* explained to me that Muslims are like brothers and - like brothers - they sometimes fight. They are astray for sometime, forgetting or ignoring the fact that they all belong to the same 'umma, they always will return: 'even two brothers can fight, but they will always come back together and agree.' However, most of the time I was told that people had not gone astray, but that they had been misled. Many adults, especially in the smaller settlements are not literate nor have they attended Qu'ranic lessons. Their religious knowledge and behaviour completely depends on what other people say about Islam. This makes it easy for religious or political leaders, such as sheiks, *wazee*, chiefs or politicians, to influence them.

It is difficult to accuse certain groups or individuals of abuse. It is quite possible that certain Qu'ranic verses or sermons were unintentionally completely misinterpreted and even used in all sincerity to justify violence. An example of this is to be found in the statements made by a Sheikh, who is very active in the peace movement and was a strong opponent of violence during the conflict. He told me about Islamic position towards violence. 'All Muslims who are killing innocent people, who are taking lives, are not good Muslims. They are hypocrites, or maybe they are Muslim by mouth' (interview with a religious leader). In another conversation, he brought a Qu'ranic verse to my attention:

whoever killed a human being, except as a punishment for murder or other villainy in the land, shall be deemed as though he had killed all mankind; and whoever saved a human life shall be deemed as though he had saved all mankind. (5:32)

This verse illustrates how Islam strongly condemns violence. The Sheikh explained to me that the only justifiable violence is that used in defence. 'If you defend yourself and you kill him [the attacker] it is no sin. If he kills you, you will directly go to paradise' (interview with a religious leader). The Sheikh's message is plainly peaceful; it clearly rejects violence and holds out the prospect of severe punishment at the day of judgement.

Nevertheless, it can also be interpreted in a complete different way: it is only forbidden to kill innocent people, but it is permissible, and according to other Qu'ranic verses even required, to kill 'as a punishment for murder or other villainy'. It is also allowed to use violence as a defence; moreover, you go directly to paradise when you kill in such a fight. Add to this the famous saying that attack is the best form of defence and a conflict is justified on the grounds of a Sheikh's peaceful statements. It is clear that it is very easy to deliberately use more offensive quotes from the Qu'ran to goad gullible people into participating in the conflict.

Fortunately, religion has not only been used for the bad. It formed a strong motive for the people who initiated the peace process. They were aware of these misinterpretations and abuse of Islam and were eager to preach and reinstall the true message of the Qu'ran. The prayers, with which every peace meeting starts, illustrate this. Islam is also, though indirectly, incorporated in the Al Fatah Peace declaration. Resolution 7 declares that the traditional law with regard to murder should be reinstated (Al Fatah Peace Declaration, 1993, resolution 7); murders should be compensated instead of avenged. This compensation system is based on Islamic law (Institute for secularization of Islamic society, 2002, n.n.). The compensation for theft, also re-stated after the conflict, is also based on Islam.

The contribution of Islam to the reconciliation process is not limited to this third phase, justice. It has also greatly contributes to the fourth phase, forgiveness. For me, this has been the most astonishing element of the reconciliation process in Wajir. I could understand that people wanted and were able to find a common truth and to end the conflict. It was not difficult to comprehend that

they had reinstalled the justice system. It was however incredible that all people with whom I spoke told me that they had forgiven the perpetrators. This forgiveness was not only expressed in words, which is already a very big and important step, but also in deeds. I have spoken to people who had given food to the relatives of their family's aggressor, or who had even given medical assistance to their grandfather's murderer. How was this possible? How could people forgive these criminals?

When I talked to people about forgiveness, most of them told me that it was their religious duty to forgive them (see verse 42:40 and 42:43, quoted above). It was the best thing to do for the criminals and for themselves. Several of them elaborated on this religious duty by referring to the concept of *Sabr*, which they translated as patience. The word *sabr* derives from the Arabic word *sbr*, which also means to abstain and to refrain. The importance of *Sabr* in Islam becomes clear in the following quote of a sermon on that concept:

Islam is submission to Allah. To have patience, then, is to submit to what has been written for each and every one of us, to submit to Allah's will with respect to our lives. God loves patience because, above all else, it reflects the depth of our faith in Him. (Dajani, n.d., n.n.)

It is important to notice that this is not an empty phrase or an empty concept. This is what most of the people truly believe. Several people told me that everything in life is predestined when you are four months old in your mother's womb. Nothing happens without the consent of God. Therefore, instead of fighting the will of God, one should have patience and submit to His will. This does not mean, however, that one should lapse into fatalism; there still is room to manoeuvre, but only with the consent of God: 'inshallah'.

Sabr, meaning submission to God, is thus an essential part of Islam. Forgiveness is an example of *Sabr*: one forgives another person trusting that it was the will of God that this happened to you and knowing that the perpetrator will be punished on the day of judgment. A *wazee* explained this to me as follows:

There is something in our religion called Sabr. This means patience. [...]. If somebody has wronged you, you don't correct it by wronging him again. You correct the issue by being patient and forgiving and you leave it to the Almighty. If you do this, you are in a better

position; you can put down your anger and disappointment. [...] But if you hit him, it will continue. Our religion does not allow this. If one person is wrong, other persons should try to solve it. One should always try to be patient and ready to forgive. (interview with a member of Al Fatah)

Forgiveness was also enhanced by religious ceremonies and service. Sheikhs used the Friday prayers in the mosque to preach peace and forgiveness. One Sheikh explained to me that

a mosque is a worshipped place. Whenever people come there they are conscious of God fearing. When people come to a mosque, they are going to forget about all things that are material, or about clanism. They are just standing in front of God. (interview with a religious leader)

Being present in a mosque and listening to these sermons and services or merely being confronted with their own conscience in the face of God has boosted the will of people to forgive, and to both start and continue the reconciliation process.

Another way in which religion contributed to forgiveness is similar to the contribution of the Somali culture. It has filled the gap that resulted from the diminished importance of clans. Again, the differences based on other identity elements were overshadowed by the sense of belonging to one group: the Muslims. People no longer think in terms of Us and Them, they realize that they belong to the same group. Individuals are no longer associated with violence committed by clans, because the group clan is no longer important. In the next paragraph I will explain the importance of all this in more details.

6.3 Forgiveness and identity

I have often mentioned the frequent heard expression that clans are not important. Being a Somali and a Muslim is what really matters. In this chapter, I have explained *how* the Somali culture and Islam became more important. I have not yet explained *why* this was the case. A possible explanation is political correctness. It is plausible that many people felt that this was the social desirable answer to my

questions on the importance of clans. Considering the number of people who gave me this answer, it is very well possible that political and social leaders have urged people to diminish the importance of clans, while stressing the importance of tribe and religion.

This does not make the expression less intriguing. It is still interesting to know why the social and political leaders decided that clans should become less important and why they stressed the importance of tribes and religion instead. It is also necessary to know why so many people complied to this call. This all can be better understood by discussing the relation between the Somali culture and Islam on one hand and the process of forgiveness on the other, in terms of identity. In order to do so, I first need to unravel these two identity elements somewhat further. I do this with the use of the three dimensions of identity.

6.3.1 Dimensions of the Somali culture and Islam

The influence of the Somali culture has been visible throughout this thesis. It was with good reason that many people mentioned it, together with Islam, as a very important element of their lives. We have seen that it influences all three groups discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, we have seen that there is a strong relation between clans and the Somali culture. The Somali culture is in turn influenced by other identity elements. The most important element is Islam: the Somalis have a long Islamic history. They even trace their origin to the Quraysh, which is the lineage of the Prophet Mohamed (Touval, 1963, p. 15). Many traditions, habits and laws that are considered typically Somali can be traced back to Islam. I already explained that the common law is both based on the Somali culture and on Islam. Eating habits (only eating *Hallal* food), dressing customs (wearing headscarves and veils) and even the pastoral existence are all embedded in the Somali culture and consonant with Islam.

A second identity element that influences the Somali culture is nationality. Although the Somalis in Wajir feel strongly related to Somalis in other countries they also see differences. Living in a country that is torn apart by conflict, which is the case for the Somalis living in Somalia, does influence the Somali culture. Age, social position and sex are three other identity elements that influence the Somali culture on a more individual level. Young girls

experience their culture differently to *wazee*, who in turn see the Somali culture in a different way to young men who have to struggle to provide their family with a living.

The way the Somali culture has influenced the conflict and the reconciliation process cannot of course be seen completely apart from these other identity elements. The aspects mentioned as part of the elements clan, women, *wazee* and youth all find some basis in the Somali culture. To prevent repetition, I now only name aspects that have not yet been mentioned. The following list of aspects is not complete. I limit myself to aspects that are somehow related to the conflict.

Regarding a nomadic existence as the ideal way of life belongs clearly to the symbolic dimension. The importance of poetry and freedom of travelling are, as explained in box five and paragraph 6.1.1, consequences of this ideal, and can thus also be placed in this dimension. A fourth aspect I want to mention in this context is the perceived gap between the Somalis and down-Kenya. This increases the community spirit; the sense of belonging to one group: the Somalis. During the conflict, the importance of the nomadic existence and the necessary freedom of travel were ignored. The sense of belonging to one group was no longer significant. The clan interests exceeded the mentioned aspects of the Somali culture. Only the importance of poetry, although used differently, remains the same.

The nomadic way of existence is the reality for many Somalis. This is of course part of the institutional dimension. The function of poetry, which is related to this kind of existence, can also be placed in this dimension. Bringing news and keeping the cultural heritage alive are two examples of the practical use of poetry. During the conflict, the lives of many nomads changed. It became extremely dangerous to cross the colonial boundaries. The area in which they could wander in search for pasture and water was limited. It was even unsafe on their own clan's territory. Nomads were an easy and attractive target for bandits. Many nomads saw themselves forced to limit their nomadic existence as much as possible and settled down for a while. The other aspect of this dimension, poetry, changed as well. Although it was still used, its function had changed. It was now utilized to insult and provoke the enemy.

The only aspect of the individual level is the appreciation and acknowledgement of the Somali culture and the nomadic existence as

important. This was completely overshadowed by clans, during the conflict. The individual dimension of tribe in times of conflict does not exist. All the dimensions are summarized in table 5.

Identity	Symbolic dimension	Institutional dimension	Individual Dimension
Tribe (peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomadic way of life is ideal • Poetry is important • Freedom of travelling is important • Somalis versus down Kenya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomadic way of existence • Poetry bears both news and cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciating and acknowledging the importance of the nomadic existence and the Somali culture
Tribe (conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Nomads’ live in settlements • Poetry is use to offend and provoke. 	

Table 4. The three dimensions of identity elements related to the tribe

Islam is often mentioned in the same breath with the Somali culture: ‘being a Somali and being a Muslim is what really matters’, was a frequently heard expression. Just as the Somali culture, Islam has influenced all the women, *wazee* and the youth. Its impact on clans is not really great. According to the Qu’ran, clans exist only as a means for recognising who is related to whom. The importance of clans as described in chapter four is thus in breach of Islam.

Islam is in turn somewhat influenced by other identity elements. Although I have not done research on it, it is safe to say that the Somalis experience their religion different than Arabs in the Middle East. Tribe and nationality thus influence religion to some extent. Other elements that influence Islam are age, sex and social position. Again, the young girl experiences her religion differently to the *mzee*, who in turn has not the same perception of religion as the poor young men who have to struggle to survive.

Some of the identity elements mentioned earlier are influenced by Islam. The symbolic dimension of clans and *wazee*, the institutional dimension of *wazee* and many aspects of the Somali culture are, in times of peace, based on religion. To avoid repetition, I

only mention the aspects that so far have not been mentioned. I had to limit the list of aspects of Islam as well. I have only selected the aspects that are somehow related to the conflict and the reconciliation process.

The norms and values that derive from Islam are of course part of the symbolic dimension. The ban on violence, the encouragement of forgiveness and the importance of *sabre* (patience), are three values I want to mention separately. The belief in predestination, which helps to accept the death of loved-ones, is another aspect of Islam that belongs in this dimension. Allowing revenge and punishment of evildoers are two aspects of Islam that were influential during the conflict.

The only aspect of the institutional dimension I want to mention here is the common law, which is based on the Qu’ran. Other aspects of this dimension have already been dealt with when I discussed the other identity elements. In the previous chapter, I already explained that the common law was ignored during the conflict. People could not agree on what happened. They refused to pay compensation. Eventually, people did not even try to negotiate any compensation. The only aspect of this dimension in times of conflict is the abuse of religion to justify violence. Peaceful Qu’ranic verses were ignored, while the verses that allowed revenge and punishment were emphasized. Some leaders abused Islam to escalate the conflict, to incite people to avenge themselves.

Islam can only be this influential when most people are professed Muslims. This is clearly the case in Wajir. Religion influences every aspect of life. This is not only the case in times of peace. I was often told that the people involved in the conflict thought that they were still acting as good Muslims. Table 6 summarizes the aspect of the different dimensions of identity.

Identity	Symbolic dimension	Institutional dimension	Individual Dimension
Islam (peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norms and Values • Forbids violence • Encourages forgiveness • <i>Sabre</i> is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a professed Muslim

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> important • Predestination 		
Islam (conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows revenge and punishment of evildoers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to justify violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a professed Muslim

Table 6. The three dimensions of identity elements related to religion

6.3.2 Understanding forgiveness

In the previous chapter I explained that the different identity elements can contradict each other. This explains inconsistencies within a group or individual. A man does not fight as a Somali or Muslim, but as a member of a certain clan. This has led to the violation of some of the core norms, values and needs of the group of Somalis and the group of Muslims. The conflict led to the ignoring the interests of the Somali identity element: the nomadic way of life does not agree with a conflict situation. Freedom and safety of travel are two important requirements of this way of existence. They were both damaged during the conflict. Interests of Islam were violated as well. Although, by interpreting some verses differently and by ignoring or forgetting others, Islam was adapted to the conflict situation, the main message is peaceful. Important values such as non-violence and forgiveness were ignored. These violations of important aspects of the Somali culture and Islam indirectly contributed to the whole reconciliation process. It added to the willingness to change the situation.

It is however not surprising that the group of Somalis and the group of Muslims did not participate in the first part of the resolution process. That would have required the unification of all players in the conflict, before the situation could cool down. All players, friend and enemy, within the conflict are both Somali and Muslim. In a tense conflict situation, it is easier to relate to and feel empathic toward a more specific group. I realize that the three social categories used in the previous chapter are still very broad, but it gives some foothold. The women had a lot in common: they were

almost all mothers, had to look after their families and were the worst victims of the conflict. Not only are these three important reasons to do something about the conflict, but also, and more importantly, why *they* should do something. Similar reasons can be found for the other three social categories.

I have explained why the conflict could start despite the Somali and Islamic identity elements and why these two elements only contributed indirectly to the resolution process. I will return to the subject of this chapter: forgiveness. In the second chapter of this thesis and again in the introduction of this chapter, I posed several questions with regard to increasing the capacity for forgiveness. More specifically, I asked how it is possible to create the necessary distance between the crime and the criminal when there is no clear perpetrator to show remorse, thus distancing him- or herself from the act of violence. This question is now partly answered. Islam, which takes an important place in the society of Wajir, preaches forgiveness, and makes it a way of showing your dedication to God. This is however not the only way in which religion has contributed to the fourth phase of the reconciliation process. I already explained how Islam, as well as the Somali culture, filled the gap left by clanism. I will now expand on the importance of this.

It is important to remember that the conflict in Wajir was a group conflict, meaning that individual perpetrators are often unknown. An important implication of this is that the group as a whole becomes the perpetrator. A village was not raided by twenty individuals, but by *the* Degodia. A girl was not raped by Ahmed Sheikh, but by *the* Ogaden. A herd was not stolen by those five teenagers, but by *the* Ajuran. The most obvious consequence of this is that all the members of these three clans are seen as perpetrators, while most are probably innocent of such crimes. The reasoning behind this can be seen as follows: ‘members of that clan have attacked members of my clan’. This changes in ‘that clan has attacked my clan’ and ‘Individual A, who is a members of that clan, has attacked my clan and is thus the enemy’.

Viewing the whole group as the perpetrator also has another, less obvious consequence: the group that is seen as the perpetrator can become less important. The importance of clanism diminishes. This does not alter the fact that ‘that clan has attacked my clan’, but it changes the relation between an individual and the group. ‘A’ is no

longer immediately associated with the clan, and thus no longer seen as a perpetrator.

Both the Somali culture and Islam have contributed to this. I have explained how they both filled the gap left by clanism. The frequent statement that ‘clans are not important, being a Somali and a Muslim is what really matters’ illustrates this. This changes ‘that person, who is a member of that clan’ into ‘that person, who is a Somali’ or ‘that person, who is a Muslim’. The remaining ‘has attacked my clan and is thus the enemy’ is no longer applicable. ‘A’ is no longer seen in relation to the crimes committed during the conflict. The crimes, whether ‘A’ had actually committed them or not, are no longer held against him. The necessary distance between the crime and the criminal is thus created. ‘A’ has been forgiven. In the Wajir case, forgiveness is thus not an *interpersonal* process. It is not reached through a dialogue between the victimizer and the victim. This is impossible, because the perpetrator is unknown. Forgiveness in Wajir is an *intrapersonal* process. It is an internal process that took place inside the person who forgives. The change of perception of the perpetrator eventually leads to forgiveness.

This is depicted in figure 5. The conflicting element has diminished to such a degree that it is less important than most others. One²⁹ or more elements have taken over its central position. When almost all the people share this element, it is capable of binding the community. This is the case in Wajir. All the people to whom I spoke stressed the importance of religion. Most of them stressed the importance of their common tribe as well. The element with the label ‘religion’ in figure 5 can thus as well be labelled ‘tribe’.

What happened to the three elements that were important during the resolution process that bridged the gap between the different clans? It is difficult to make an assured pronouncement on this. I estimate that their importance diminished as well. When I talked about the resolution process, people often mentioned the importance of being a woman, *mzee* or belonging to the youth. However, when I talked about the present situation in which people were reconciled, neither of them was mentioned. Therefore, I have depicted the other elements the same size as they were before the conflict started. Note that this is a rough estimation, which does not

²⁹ Not all people stated that ‘being a Somali *and* a Muslim’ was more important than being a clan. Some, an estimated 15 %, only mentioned the importance of Islam.

necessarily depict the real situation. Since the only relevance is that these elements had become less important than the binding one, I do not consider this problematic.

It is important to notice that change is not as easy as it may seem. It is a slow and difficult process; the process is not controlled by any insider or outsider. One cannot decide that clanism is no longer important, nor that being a member of a tribe or religion is the new or renewed bond between the conflicting parties. It is a process that needs to grow. It is however possible to stimulate the process. When conflicting groups share one identity element, it can be good to stimulate the increase in importance of this element. Organizing cultural or religious festivals, teaching children at school about their cultural and religious heritage, condemning the conflict in the mosque, talking about the importance of forgiveness and so on did help in creating and maintaining the bonds between the conflicting groups. Thus, religion could become the binding factor after the conflict, overcoming the differences and reconciling the people of Wajir. It could depolarize the society. People no longer thought in terms of Us versus Them. They shared a strong sense of commonality, of belonging to the same group: Us.

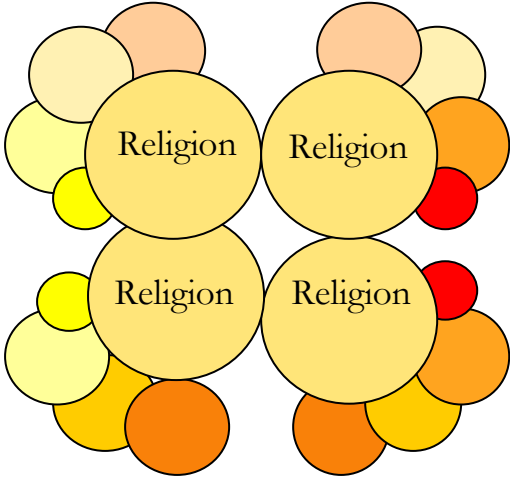


Figure 5. Identities in a group during the process of forgiveness.

6.4 Conclusion

When negative peace has been reached -the resolution process is completed- the road to positive peace lies open. Two obstacles remain

on the way to reconciliation: the importance of the conflicting identity element and the lack of bonds between all the members of the conflicting groups. Both obstacles have been overcome by the last phase of the reconciliation process: forgiveness.

Two overlapping groups have played an important role in the process of forgiveness: the group of Somalis and the Muslims. Before I discuss how they have contributed to forgiveness, I shortly discuss their role in the conflict and the reconciliation process. This helps to comprehend their influence on forgiveness.

Although religion was used to justify the conflict, Islam was also damaged by the conflict. The conflict violated the norms and values of both Islam and the Somali culture. The restriction of travelling, which made the nomadic existence difficult and the use of violence against Muslims, are two examples of such violations. These two important identity elements were thus seriously damaged. This has of course added to the willingness to change the situation. The contribution of the Somali culture and Islam was indirect. The power of the women and the *wazee* to change the situation -their social position- is based on the Somali culture. The justice system finds its roots in the Qu'ran.

The most important contribution of these two elements is to be found in the process of forgiveness. Poetry, which has an important function in the Somali culture, has given many people food for thought. It encouraged people to rethink the conflict. It denounced the importance of clans and stressed the commonalities between Somalis and Muslims. Furthermore, it incited people to forgive each other. Although poetry on its own cannot bring about forgiveness, it does contribute to it.

Islam has promoted forgiveness more directly. Having *sabr*, meaning patience, is an important virtue of Muslims. It indicates that one submits oneself to God. Instead of seeking revenge, one should be patient and forgive, knowing that the evildoer will be punished on the day of justice, while forgiveness will be rewarded.

Forgiveness has been enhanced in a third way. The Somali culture and Islam have taken over the place of clans. Instead of primary belonging to a certain clan, people felt more related to the other Somalis and Muslims. This changed the perception of the Other. People were no longer primarily associated with 'that other clan', The Enemy, and thus not with the crimes committed by their

clan. The necessary distance between the criminal and the crime is created. Forgiveness, which is in this case study an intrapersonal process, is reached.

I have now partly answered my third research question, on the relation between the changing identities and forgiveness. To complete this answer, I both need to discuss the influence of the other identity elements on forgiveness and the influence of forgiveness on all the discussed identity elements. The influence of clanism on forgiveness is a negative one; granting forgiveness does not serve the common interest of the clan. Only when the importance of clans had diminished, was it possible to make that final step of reconciliation. The relation between the three social categories and forgiveness is neutral. Being a woman, mzee or belonging to the youth has neither helped nor hindered forgiveness.

The answer to the second part of the question, should be sought in the decreasing and increasing of the importance of the different identity elements. The decreasing of the importance of clanism seems to happen inversely proportionally to the increasing of the importance of the Somali and the Muslim identity elements. Or, as one mzee expressed it: 'our animals drink from the same watering points; they eat the same grass. We don't see any differences. The difference is the name'. The impact of forgiveness on the other three groups is less clear. Suffice to say that their importance has diminished during this last phase of the reconciliation process.

Having described all four phases of the reconciliation process - truth, peace, justice and forgiveness- I can now turn to my main conclusions on this research, and finally tell what I have learnt from the success-story Wajir.

7. Conclusion

At the end of 1992, a clan-conflict erupted in Wajir that would last for over two years. During these two years the society of Wajir was completely disrupted: travelling became dangerous, schools were closed, animals were raided or killed and over 1500 people found a violent death. The importance of clans drastically increased. People raided, raped and murdered others, simply because they belonged to another clan. The society was polarized; divided between Us, members of a certain clan, and Them, who belong to another clan.

Less than a decade later, Wajir seemed to have recovered completely. People of different clans were living and working together as if nothing had happened. Friendships and marriages between members of different clans prospered. Belonging to a certain clan was said to be of no importance. How is it possible that a community that had gone through a clan-conflict now denies the importance of clans? How is it possible that the people of Wajir could live together after a violent conflict? Or, in other words, how could they reconcile?

Answering these questions can contribute to the discussions on reconciliation. For decennia, social scientists have paid little or no attention to reconciliation. It is only in the last decade that scholars have begun to explore the concept. The theories on reconciliation are only in the early stages. Most scientists who do pay attention to the concept, agree that the reconciliation process can be divided into four phases: truth, peace, justice and forgiveness. Each of these phases has its own contribution to reconciliation, but they also bring along some problems. Finding a common truth is a precondition for justice, knowing the truth helps to forgive others and it contributes to the negotiation process. But how can people come together and negotiate a common truth in the first place?

Peace is of course essential for the growth of mutual trust and the restoration of damaged relations. Again, the first step to negotiating a peace-resolution is problematic. Furthermore, it is difficult to implement such resolution; the necessary infrastructure is often lacking. Justice can prevent revenge and future violence, and it helps to restore the damaged relations, but it also makes it more difficult to uncover or discover a truth; people are less willing to tell

the truth when they know that justice will follow. Again, the weak infrastructure can hamper this phase of the reconciliation process. The importance of forgiveness is clear. Only when people have forgiven each other they can start to live together; only then relations can be restored. But how can you forgive the persons who robbed, raped or murdered your relatives? This is especially the case when the perpetrators are unknown and cannot show any remorse.

During the preparation of this research, I soon considered it plausible that the difficulties described above could be solved by concentrating on the relation between reconciliation and identity. Although the literature pays little or no attention to this relation, it does recognize the importance of identity during a conflict. Conflicts often have a material cause, such as access to natural resources. As the conflict evolves, it often turns into an immaterial conflict. This is where identity plays a role. During a conflict, some identity elements are stressed, while the importance of others diminishes. Thus, identity *creates* the difference between Us and Them, it helps to distinguish one group from the other. Emphasizing a certain element also stimulates bonds within a group.

It is logical that identity also plays a role *after* the conflict, in the reconciliation process. In this thesis, I described the relation between reconciliation and identity. Before I could do so, I first had to analyse the relation between conflict and identity. Furthermore, in order to keep the subject comprehensible, I divided the reconciliation process into two phases: the resolution process, which ends when a negative, short-term peace has been reached and the process of forgiveness, which in the end results in positive, sustainable peace. I now summarize my main findings and conclusions for each of these three stages: conflict, resolution and forgiveness.

7.1 Identity and conflict

During the conflict, the society of Wajir was divided into clans. People were injured and even killed simply because they belonged to a certain clan. Knowing this, it was surprising to hear people denying the importance of clans. 'Clans only serve the purpose of identification; knowing who is related to who', most people said.

Obviously clans were not always important. When analysing the history, I concluded that in the colonial period the importance of clans had grown. After independence, the significance of clans began to fluctuate. It increases in times of drought, when people try to protect the scarce resources. It also grows in the prelude to elections, when the clientalistic system, strongly based on clans, is stressed. In times of abundance and political stability, the importance of clans diminishes again.

This can explain the rise of clanism during the conflict in 1992-1994. Due to drought, over 80 percent of the animals, had died. In Wajir's pastoral society, this of course was a great disaster. People tried to save the scarce resources for members of their own clans. With elections coming up that year, politicians made clans even more important in their attempt to obtain a seat in parliament. Add to this the influx of weapons and bandits from Somalia and you have the main causes of the conflict. The conflict started on a material level – the daily struggle to survive-, but soon exceeded that level. In order to survive, people turned to their strongest social network: the clans. The conflict thus shifted into an immaterial level, to the level of identity. One identity element -clan- was stressed in order to distinguish one group from the other and to create a bond within the group. Thus, a quarrel between herdsmen became a clan-conflict.

The clan identity element not only turned into the subject of the conflict; clans also brought about the escalation. In the Somali tradition, the whole clan is held responsible for the actions of each individual member. Normally, in a violent incident, clan representatives come together and agree on the compensation. When this does not happen, or when they do not agree, the injured clan is more or less allowed to avenge itself on any member of the other clan, even when these people have nothing to do with the original injury. When the revenge is not recognised as such, or when it is not acknowledged to be just, the revenge can be avenged in turn, which can result in the escalation of the conflict. This explains why the conflict was not limited to the nomads, but also affected the permanent settlements and even Wajir-town.

During the conflict, identities changed. Obviously, the clan-element became more important. Other elements, such as social position, religion, tribe and position within the family changed as well; both the importance and the content of these elements altered.

This had not only its consequences for the clans, but also for the other groups that are based on these identity elements in change. One of these groups is the *wazee*. The *wazee* hold an important position in Somali society. Although they often lack official governmental power, they have huge influence on everyday life. The *wazee* are commonly regarded as wise and just and their decisions are generally acquiesced to. Traditionally, they look after the welfare of their people. They give advice and they mediate in quarrels. During the conflict, the identity elements on which the *wazee* group is based, such as religion, Somali culture and social position, changed. As they ignored some Islamic values, Somali tradition and their role as caretakers, some *wazee* started to misuse their powers, under the auspices of protecting their people. They became true warlords, encouraging their people to seek revenge, raising money to buy weapons and paying men to fight for their clan.

The group of women also changed during the conflict. Normally, women look after their family. They run the household, do the shopping and earn some money at the market. They also help each other: giving neighbours milk or sugar and looking after each other's children for a while. When the clan element influenced identity elements that are characteristic for the group of women such as their social position and their position within their family, all this changed. Markets were no longer a safe place and friendships between neighbours from other clans ended. Women did not primarily act as mothers and wives, but as members of a clan in conflict. Instead of looking after the welfare of their family, they often called for revenge when their relatives were wounded. Sometimes, when the family refused to revenge, women went to a public place to cast away their head-scarves and veils. This is a clear message: when the men are not brave enough to revenge the family, the women will act as men and do it themselves.

The youth form the fourth group that altered during the conflict. Generally speaking, the youth are the backbone of society. They have most of the jobs and provide their relatives with some income. A more ideological task of the youth is to learn from the *wazee*, so that they can become the future leaders. Again essential elements for the group of youth, such as social position and Somali tradition, were influenced by the clan element. Many young men were forced to fight for their clan. They had to quit their jobs,

abandon their families and risk their lives in order to defend the clans' honour. In return, the clan looked after their relatives. Instead of learning the traditional way of solving conflicts peacefully, they were instructed to seek revenge; to loot, rape and murder.

The group of Somalis was the fifth group that changed during the conflict. Normally, Somalis try to avoid conflicts, because they obstruct their traditional nomadic existence. Travelling becomes dangerous and shepherds form easy targets for bandits. The importance of peace becomes apparent in several aspects of the Somali culture: there are many peace poems and songs and the Somali greeting includes an inquiry whether the situation is peaceful. The justice system, which prevents many quarrels from escalating, is embedded in the Somali culture. During the conflict, the clan element overshadowed the tribal identity element. People seemed to ignore their Somali culture. People no longer felt the tribal relation. Clans prevailed over the Somali tribe.

The Muslims belong to the sixth group that changed during the conflict. Religion plays an important role in Wajir. All the Somalis I met were professed Muslims. People explained to me that Islam is a very peaceful religion. The word 'Islam', popularly translated, means peace. Islam is however, as most religions are, open to interpretation. During the conflict, the clan element influenced the religious identity element drastically. Religion was used to justify the conflict. Although it is absolutely forbidden to use violence against other Muslims, some verses state that it is permissible to correct strayed Muslims. It also allows Muslims to defend themselves when attacked and even shows some understanding for revenge. Some politicians, Sheiks and *wazee* are said to have misused Islam to incite their people to seek revenge, attacking sometimes innocent people.

The clan element became more important thus overshadowing and changing other identity elements on which the groups mentioned above were based. Core needs and values were abandoned. The society of Wajir was divided. There was a wide gap between the different clans. Relations based on the other elements were no longer significant. How did the people of Wajir change this situation? How did they overcome that gap?

7.2 Identity and the resolution process

The conflict continued for almost a year before a serious peace initiative was taken. Surprisingly, this was not taken by the *wazee*, the generally acknowledged leaders, or by the Sheiks, the religious leaders. It were the women, according to the Qu'ran restricted to the private family sphere, who initiated the peace effort. Why did the women take the initiative and how was it possible that their effort succeeded?

At a wedding, visited by people of different clans, five women started to realize that they were the main victims of the conflict. Their husbands and sons had been killed, their relatives robbed, and they were deprived of their income, because the markets were no longer a safe place. They decided to try to change the situation. They pointed out to other women that they were the main victims of the conflict and that they could make a difference, by improving the situation at the market and by persuading their husbands and sons to stop fighting. Instead of sending their relatives to war, they had to take up their roles as mothers and wives again, and look after the welfare of their family. Or, in terms of identity, they managed to overcome the influence of the clan element which overshadowed and altered other important identity elements that characterize the group of women. They returned to their 'normal' position both in their family as in the society. Thus, they could reduce the violence.

The women realized that they could not stop the conflict on their own. Therefore, they tried to involve the *wazee*. At first they were not taken seriously, but after some time, the women were able to convince one of them. That *mzee* belonged to a corner clan and was thus not directly involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, when he called for peace, this was taken seriously by some other *wazee*. After a while, they decided to organize a meeting of *wazee* of all the clans. At this meeting, the *wazee* agreed on what had happened during the conflict; they agreed on a common truth. They decided to stop the conflict and signed a peace resolution. Furthermore, they agreed to reinstall the traditional justice system. Any crime committed after the cease-fire would be punished.

Agreeing on a peace resolution is one thing, but implementing that resolution is another. The *wazee* took the lead in this as well: they decided to look after their people again. They travelled across the district, convincing their people to put down their weapons.

Although this was not an easy task, they eventually convinced all the villages and settlements to stop the violence.

When asked why they decided to put an end to conflict, they told me they merely fulfilled their duties as *wazee*. But why did they wait for almost a year to do so? This becomes more understandable when realising that the clan identity element overshadowed and influenced other elements that characterize the group of *wazee*. Their social position as leaders and caretakers of their people had changed. Some *wazee* had looked after their people by using violence to protect them. Only after almost a year the *wazee* were able to overcome the importance and influence of the clan identity element, thus allowing more space for other characteristic identity elements, such as their social position and their religion. The *wazee* were able to take up their normal role and to look after the welfare of their people in a peaceful manner, based on Islamic norms and values.

Although the *wazee* had been successful in implementing the peace agreement in the permanent settlements, they had problems convincing the young men in the bush. These men had given up their jobs and abandoned their families at their clan's request. Many of them refused to disarm. After the peace agreement, the clan no longer looked after the families of these men, these weapons had become their only source of income. They were reduced from protectors of the clan to bandits. The youth, who had organized themselves in order to contribute to the peace-process, were more successful when approaching these bandits. Once they had convinced the *wazee* that it was their duty as future leaders to cooperate with the *wazee*, the youth accompanied them when visiting the bandits. The youth could function as role models: they were the living proof that it was possible to earn a living without weapons. Furthermore, the youth could, on behalf of the local government, offer the bandits some work or funding to start a small business. Thus, the youth were able to convince many bandits to hand over their weapons. In terms of identity, we could say that the youth had been able to overcome the dominance of the clan identity element. Because of the importance of clans, many young men felt obligated to abandon their position within the family as breadwinner. During the resolution process, the youth could change the identity elements back to normal, and regain their position within the family as wage earner and their social position as future leaders.

The groups of women, *wazee*, and youth were of course not the only groups that altered during the resolution process. Other groups based on the changing identity elements changed as well. I already explained that the importance of the identity element clan diminished during this phase of the reconciliation process. It could no longer overshadow or influence other elements as it had done before. The importance of the group clan diminished simultaneously. Thus, being a member of a certain clan could no longer hinder the resolution process.

The element tribe became more important during the resolution process. Although it did not play a prominent role in this phase of the reconciliation process, it certainly contributed to it. The nomadic way of living, which is very important for the Somalis, was damaged during the conflict. This increased the need for peace, and thus strengthened the willingness to do something. People started to realize again that they all belonged to the same group: Somalis.

Both the importance and the content of the religious identity element were influenced by the resolution process. Religious norms and values were violated. More and more people started to realize this. This awareness contributed to the willingness to stop the violence. They restored the Islamic values, thus stressing the importance of being a good Muslim. The feeling of commonality, of belonging to the same group, intensified.

Now we can answer the second research question, on the influence of the changing of identities on the resolution process and vice versa. The women had been able to build a small bridge over the gap that had been created during the conflict. They had realized that 'no son is born in conflict' and had stressed their identity as mothers and wives, who had to look after the welfare of their family. The bridge was broadened by the *wazee*, who looked after the well being of their people, and by the youth, who started to act as the future *wazee*. The importance of clans diminished during the resolution process. Although the Somali culture and Islam had not played a prominent role in this process, the violation of the values of both identity elements contributed to the willingness to change the situation. During the resolution process, the changes in different identity elements, caused by the increased importance of clans, could be reversed. Thus, the violence was stopped. Although this is a huge

step on the road towards sustainable peace, one thing is still missing. People need to forgive, before they are completely reconciled.

7.3 Identity and forgiveness

Forgiveness is perhaps the most difficult and intangible phase of the reconciliation process. How can you possibly forgive those who have robbed your family, looted your home, raped your daughter and killed your parents? The inhabitants of Wajir had been successful in doing so. People told me that they had given food to the family that had tried to rob them and medical assistance to the people who had attacked them. This can again best be understood when we take a closer look at the different identity elements, notably at the tribal element -or the Somali culture- and at Islam.

Poetry is an important aspect of the Somali culture. It is a way of sharing news, of remembering and learning history and traditions, and of spreading a certain opinion or point of view. During conflicts, poetry can be utilized to offend and provoke someone, but it can also be used to call for a cease-fire. When the peace agreement was signed and the importance of the clan element had somewhat diminished, poetry was again used in a positive way. Several poems on peace were composed. These poems inspired people to disarm, to stop thinking in terms of clans and to forgive each other. Although poetry is not a magic potion, it does fire off discussions and influence opinion.

A more important way in which the Somali identity element has contributed to forgiveness is by creating a bond between the different clans. When the tribal identity element became more and more stressed, differences between the clans decreased in importance. The commonality of belonging to the same tribe and religion was emphasized instead. Initiatives for a Somali museum and teaching children traditional crafts show that the importance of the Somali culture increased. The saying 'clans are not important; being a Somali and a Muslim is what really matters' was often heard.

Before I turn to the importance of this for the process of forgiveness, I first discuss the relationship between forgiveness and the other groups. Although Islam had been used to justify the conflict, all people agreed that the main message of Islam and Qu'ran is peaceful. It preaches peace and encourages forgiveness. Being patient, forgiving the offender and waiting for the day of judgement, shows that you submit yourself to God, that you have trust in God. After the resolution process, the importance of the religious element could increase. This helped people grant forgiveness. Furthermore, religion creates, just as the Somali culture, a bond between the different clans; it fills the gap left by clanism.

During this last stage of the reconciliation process the importance of the clan element, and thus of the group clan, diminished even further. People denied any function of clans, except that of knowing who is related to whom. Some people I met refused to tell me to which clan they belonged, because they thought that clans should be completely abolished. Clans could thus no longer hinder the reconciliation process.

It is difficult to indicate how the elements on which the groups of women, *wazee* and youth were based altered in this phase of the reconciliation process. I have found no evidence that they obstructed the process of forgiveness in any way, or that they actually stimulated it. They were simply not mentioned in relation to forgiveness. Because people only referred to these three groups in relation to the resolution process and, to a lesser extent, to the conflict, I must conclude that the elements on which the three groups were based had diminished in importance. This however does not mean that women, *wazee* and the youth did not forgive, it only means that these groups were less important in this phase; they forgave each other as Muslims and as Somalis.

With this knowledge, the question on the relation between the changing of identity and forgiveness is partly answered: religion has stimulated forgiveness and it has, together with the Somali culture, 'filled the gap created by clans'. The other four identity elements have a passive function: they have not obstructed the process of forgiveness.

I will now return to the importance of creating these new bonds within the society. To do so, I first revert to the concept of forgiveness. Some scholars see forgiveness as an *interpersonal*

process that takes place between victim and victimizer. However, the criminal is often unknown or dead, which makes forgiveness impossible. Furthermore, victims bear malice not only against the individuals who have actually injured them, but also against the entire clan that can be held responsible. It is thus necessary to forgive the entire clan. This makes it impossible to maintain the *interpersonal* approach.

The alternative is to see forgiveness as an *intrapersonal* process. People need to change their perception of the Other in order to reach forgiveness. While clans remain important, people will associate individuals with clans. If a victim of clan X relates individual A to that clan, A will be seen as the Enemy. When clans are no longer important the victim will perhaps not associate individual A with clan X. This becomes more likely when other identity elements become important; when other elements replace clans. This is why the Somali culture and Islam are important for forgiveness. The Somali culture and religion have filled the gap clans had left behind. A will be seen as a member of the same tribe and as a member of the same religious community. Thus it is possible to forgive an entire clan; it is possible to reconcile.

Let us complete the metaphor. Clans created a gap within Wajir society. Women built a small bridge across this gap. The *wazee* and the youth broadened that bridge. Religion and the Somali culture have replaced clans; they have filled up the gap that divided the society in the first place. The gap is thus removed and the bridge is no longer needed. But, although the gap and the bridge are no longer clearly present in the society of Wajir, the attentive observer will still be able to see the remnants of both. The remains of the past are the lessons for the future.

The uniqueness of this situation can also be understood with this metaphor. Instead of waiting for foreign troops to march in and build a temporary prefab-bridge, the people of Wajir have built a bridge themselves. Although such a bridge is quite sustainable, it can still collapse in a future earthquake. To prevent this, they have filled the gap itself, which is of course the most permanent solution possible. Thus, we can fully comprehend the success-story Wajir. We now understand how they were able to reach sustainable peace.

7.4 Final remarks

I started this thesis by mentioning several conflicts and situations of armed-peace around the world. I decided not to discuss why governments and international organisations were not able to reach sustainable peace. I did not want to focus on the many failures. Instead, I decided to look at a success-story; I decided to look at Wajir. By doing so, I hope to contribute to the discussion and the development of theories on reconciliation. My findings are only based on one case. It is thus impossible to say whether the relation between identity and reconciliation as described above is the same in other reconciliation processes.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the argument, I will presume that it is the case; that similar relations can be found in other cases. That would both have a theoretical and a practical consequence. The theoretical implication is that this knowledge fills a void in the theory. Many scholars see a clear relation between conflicts and identity. One identity element is stressed and the community gets divided on grounds of that element. I only came across one scientist who wondered whether there was also a relation between identity and the processes after the conflict. Knowing that bridges are built by stressing other identity elements can prove to be useful in further discussion on reconciliation.

The practical implication can be found in the use of this information by people and organisations, who try to reach sustainable peace. They can actively stress certain identity elements, while diminishing the importance of others. They can, for example, organize cultural festivals and religious ceremonies in which certain common elements are stressed. I realize that this information is not really new. Common sense tells us to understate differences and to stress similarities when there is a conflict, big or small. As said in the second chapter, when two friends quarrel about politics, a subject change is a logical solution; they could start talking about sports, in order to avoid a serious argument. Nevertheless, it could be helpful to have some scientific grounds.

It is however much too early to assume that my theory on the relation between identity and the reconciliation process is also valid for other cases. Considering the theoretical and practical value of knowledge on this relation, I recommend further research on the subject. What happens in Wajir when there is a new period of drought, when people again have to struggle to survive? Are

there other success stories that show similar relations between identity and reconciliation? It is also interesting to discuss the relation between identity and reconciliation from a different perspective: how did the power balance change during the reconciliation process? Was identity strategically used to gain more power? A third suggestion for further research is to see the reconciliation process as a social change and place it in the actor-structure debate. One could argue that some identity elements, such as social position and position within the family are more related to actors, while others, such as religion and tribe, are more related to structure. This all contributes to the relatively new discussion on reconciliation. Furthermore, further research could lead to other practical recommendations, which can be used to stimulate other reconciliation processes around the world.

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