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Reclaiming African Heritage: Chinweizu's Decolonial Lens on Gabooye Marginalization in Somaliland

Richard Atimniraye Nyelade

Abstract

This paper explores the historical and structural marginalization of the Gabooye community in Somaliland through the lens of Chinweizu's Afrocentric decolonial framework. Challenging dominant Somali nationalist narratives and genealogical myths that valorize Arab ancestry and nomadic heritage, the study situates the Gabooye as heirs of pre-Islamic, pre-colonial African civilizations systematically excluded by processes of Arabization, Islamization, Westernization, and internalized hierarchies. Drawing on extensive fieldwork and oral testimonies, the analysis foregrounds the Gabooye's cultural resilience, political agency, and aspirations for equity in a society that continues to deny them full citizenship. By interrogating the epistemic and material legacies of empire and internal complicity, the paper advocates for a radical re-Africanization of Somali identity, one that recognizes the Gabooye not as peripheral victims but as central actors in the struggle for justice, inclusion, and decolonized sovereignty in Somaliland. It concludes by urging policymakers, scholars, and local actors to dismantle inherited taxonomies of exclusion and envision a democratic future where the Gabooye are integral to both national belonging and regional Pan-African resurgence.

Keywords: Gabooye, Arabization, Westernization, Somali nationalism, Pan-Africanism.

Introduction

Somaliland's pursuit of international recognition and sovereignty remains a compelling narrative in the Horn of Africa, rooted in its historical grievances against Somalia during their union between 1960 and 1991. Situated in the northwest of the Horn of Africa, Somaliland occupies the territory that was once the British Somaliland Protectorate, which gained

independence in 1960. Shortly thereafter, it united with the Trust Territory of Somalia, a former Italian colony located to the south, to form the Somali Republic. While Somalia remains internationally recognized and continues to advocate for a "one Somalia" policy that envisions the reunification of all Somali-speaking regions under a single state, Somaliland declared independence in 1991 following the collapse of Somalia's central government.

Despite controlling a defined territory with functioning state institutions, Somaliland remains unrecognized by the United Nations and the broader international community. Its leadership seeks full recognition and membership in the United Nations, presenting Somaliland as a democratic and peaceful entity distinct from the conflict-ridden and fragmented Federal Republic of Somalia. Conversely, Somalia views Somaliland's secession as a violation of its territorial integrity and continues to assert claims over Somaliland's territory based on the principle of national unity.

Somaliland frames its bid for recognition around narratives of historical mistreatment, including systemic oppression, accusations of genocide, and marginalization under Somalia's governance during their union. However, questions arise regarding Somaliland's internal dynamics and its treatment of marginalized communities within its borders. This study probes whether Somaliland has effectively transcended the exclusionary practices it once condemned or whether it perpetuates similar patterns of marginalization, particularly toward the Gabooye community, a historically stigmatized minority.

The Gabooye, like the Somali Bantu in southern Somalia, belong to the broader "Sab" group, historically positioned in contrast to the dominant Somali clans—namely the Hawiye, Darod, Rahanweyn, Dir, and Isaaq. These dominant groups, often referred to as the "Hajji group," assert their status and social superiority through claims of Arab ancestry and cultural nobility. Although the Gabooye share the same Cushitic biological, linguistic, and ethnic roots as the wider Somali

nomadic population, they trace their lineage to the early rulers of the Horn of Africa. Nevertheless, they have long been ostracized and confined to socially stigmatized occupations such as blacksmithing, leatherworking, and traditional healing.

Despite being linguistically and culturally indistinguishable from other Somalis, the Gabooye remain structurally marginalized. As Jama Musse Jama aptly observes, “Marginalised communities are as ethnically Somali and as much Somalilanders by nationality as persons hailing from other clans” (Jama, 2015), yet their access to full citizenship rights continues to be restricted. Paradoxically, it is in the realm of culture—particularly in music, poetry, and theatre—where members of marginalized communities have achieved the most visibility. “There is no comparable industry or sector,” Jama notes, “where members of marginalised communities have been so visible and made such indelible contributions as in music, poetry and acting” (Jama, 2015).

The decline of the Gabooye’s socio-political status coincided with the region’s Arabization and Islamization, processes that introduced rigid hierarchies favoring nomadic clans over other groups. This entrenched discrimination intensified with the arrival of Western colonial powers in the late 19th century. The colonial strategy of divide and rule, particularly in favor of dominant nomadic clans like the Isaaq in Somaliland, further marginalized the Gabooye. Their resistance to colonial rule, often demonstrated through their expertise with bows and venomous arrows, marked them as adversaries to colonial administrations.

The rise of Pan-Somalism in the 1960s introduced another layer to the Gabooye’s marginalization. The national agenda, bolstered by colonial scholars like Ioan M. Lewis (1961), who characterized Somaliland as a “segmentary society” under “pastoral democracy,” idealized an exclusive identity centered on nomadic shepherds with Arab ancestry. This narrative reinforced an exclusionary image of Somali identity, further sidelining groups like the Gabooye. Despite these shifting discourses, the Gabooye’s lived reality has remained largely

unchanged. Confined to slum-like neighborhoods such as Daami in Hargeysa, Somaliland's capital, they are systematically excluded from socio-political participation and barred from intermarriage with dominant clans, reflecting caste-like systems seen elsewhere.

Similar to the Somali Bantu, or Somali Jareer, in southern Somalia—discriminated against for their African-like phenotypes and coarse hair—the Gabooye in Somaliland endure a paradoxical existence as "landless landlords" within their ancestral territories (Eno, 2004) under what Catherine Besteman (1991: 150; 449) describes as "Somali hegemony". This systemic marginalization has been described by Omar Eno (2008) as akin to "apartheid in the Horn of Africa".

This paper examines the marginalization of the Gabooye through the lens of Chinweizu's Afrocentric decolonial framework, which critiques the internalization of colonial ideologies and the alienation from indigenous African identities. Chinweizu's concept of "culturecide" underscores the systemic efforts to erase and subordinate African traditions through Arab hegemony, Western colonialism, and Somali nationalism. By centering the Gabooye as active custodians of ancient African traditions rather than passive victims, this study challenges essentialist paradigms that homogenize Somali identity under the guise of unity while perpetuating inequality (Chinweizu, 2010).

Drawing on fieldwork conducted between February and December 2024 and extensive archival research, this analysis situates the Gabooye's plight within the broader legacies of imperialism and Somali nationalism. It critiques the "self-same nation" narrative that underpins Somali identity politics and advocates for the inclusion of marginalized communities as equal stakeholders in Somaliland's socio-political trajectory (Kusow, 2004).

1. Ethnography

Since the fall of 2020, I have been a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Ottawa, focusing on the

intersections of sovereignty and diplomacy in contested political environments. My dissertation, titled "Navigating Sovereignty in a Hostile World: Strategies and Representations of Diplomats in Taiwan and Somaliland", examines the diplomatic strategies of actors from unrecognized states like Taiwan and Somaliland. This research investigates how these actors assert sovereignty and legitimacy through both formal and everyday diplomatic practices.

After completing a year of immersive fieldwork in Taiwan in 2023, where I explored its diplomatic narratives and practices, I arrived in Somaliland in February 2024 to continue my fieldwork. My goal was to delve into the diplomatic and sovereignty strategies of Somaliland, an unrecognized state in the Horn of Africa. Throughout this phase, I engaged with a diverse array of informants, including government officials, foreign diplomats such as the head of Taiwan's Representative Office in Somaliland, members of the UK and Danish missions, Somaliland parliamentarians, and scholars who have studied the region.

One evening, during what I thought would be a routine errand, I entered a small barbershop for a haircut. This seemingly mundane moment marked a significant turning point in my fieldwork. I met Samatar Diriye, the barber, a man in his early forties with striking fluency in English—a rarity for someone who had lived their entire life in Hargeisa. As he worked, Samatar Diriye engaged me in a friendly discussion, curious about how I, a Canadian researcher, had found myself in Somaliland. In turn, I was intrigued by his background and experiences.

After the haircut, Samatar Diriye followed me outside to share more about his life. With visible desperation, he explained that he belonged to the Gabooye, one of the most marginalized and oppressed communities in Somali regions. As he recounted his struggles and aspirations, including his desire to find stable employment, I expressed my interest in learning more about his community's experiences. This conversation

marked the beginning of an enriching ethnographic engagement.

Over the following weeks, I met several times with Samatar Diriye (a pseudonym), who introduced me to key members of his community, including his close friend Sharmarke Barako (also a pseudonym) and their chief, King Warsame. While pseudonyms are used throughout this text to protect the identities of Gabooye individuals, King Warsame appears under his real name, as he is a well-known public figure who, despite enduring multiple assaults, has remained unwavering in his activism. King Warsame is a prominent figure recognized by the United Nations as the “King of Minority Horn of Africa,” a title formalized during his participation in the 17th Minority Issues Forum of the Human Rights Council in November 2024.

Through these connections, I conducted participant observation and interviews in various settings, including the Daami neighborhood—a hub for the Gabooye community—schools, homes, and workplaces. These engagements provided valuable insights into the socio-economic challenges, cultural practices, and resilience of the Gabooye people. The community’s accounts highlighted their ongoing struggle for recognition and equity within Somaliland’s complex socio-political landscape.

2. Theoretical Framework: Chinweizu’s Afrocentric Decolonialism

This paper adopts Chinweizu’s Afrocentric decolonialism as the theoretical framework to examine the impact of Arab and Western imperialisms and Somali nationalism on the Gabooye community. Chinweizu’s incisive critique of colonialism, imperialism, and cultural subjugation offers a lens through which the structural marginalization of the Gabooye can be understood and addressed. His work emphasizes reclaiming African identity, sovereignty, and dignity as central to resisting oppression, making his Afrocentric approach highly relevant to the issues faced by the Gabooye community.

2.1 Pre-Islamic and Pre-Colonial Africa: Achievements and Contributions

Chinweizu's Afrocentric decolonial framework begins by highlighting Africa's historical greatness before its subjugation by Arab and Western imperial forces. He emphasizes that Africa was a cradle of civilization, excelling in science, technology, and culture long before foreign conquests. Chinweizu (2021) documents these achievements in his article "432 Centuries of Recorded Science and Technology in Black Africa", underscoring the continent's contributions to global human history.

The pre-colonial Horn of Africa shared in this prosperity, attracting the attention of various external groups, including Jews, Arabs, and Romans, due to its strategic location and resources. However, these interactions often evolved into forms of domination, particularly through the instrumentalization of Abrahamic religions. Chinweizu critiques the role of religion as a tool of conquest, arguing that it facilitated the erosion of African sovereignty and cultural identity (Chinweizu, 2010). In the case of the Horn of Africa, these dynamics laid the groundwork for alliances between nomadic clans and Arab powers following the rise of Islam in the 7th century, and later with Western imperialist forces from the 19th century onward.

Chinweizu (2021) celebrates ancient African civilizations, particularly Egypt, as exemplars of Africa's intellectual and technological prowess. He highlights achievements such as the construction of the pyramids, which he associates with advanced mathematical and engineering techniques, noting, "The math they used to build the pyramids 50 centuries ago is the same as the modern math independently discovered in the 20th century and used by modern computers" (p. 17). Similarly, African innovations in agriculture, such as the domestication of plants and animals in the Nile Valley around 18,000 BP, predate similar achievements in Southwest Asia (Chinweizu, 2021, p. 10).

These historical achievements echo the Horn of Africa's legacy as Ta Netjer—the "Land of God"—in pre- and pharaonic times. Long before the rise of Islamic influence or colonial borders, powerful Cushitic-led kingdoms such as Punt, Macrobia, and Adal flourished, their rulers—ancestors of today's Somali peoples—presiding over prosperous trade routes, monumental architecture, and rich spiritual traditions. This was a time before the rigid divisions between Saab (non-nomadic, artisan castes) and Hajji (nomadic, noble clans) emerged. As Chinweizu notes, the decline began when foreign ideologies infiltrated, eroding cultural sovereignty and rewriting African memory. During fieldwork, Gabooye elders evoked this buried past, recounting how their ancestors once ruled the Horn—until foreign powers arrived with divide-and-rule tactics. Those quickest to align with these invaders rose to dominance, while those who held fast to ancestral practices were cast aside as impure and unholy.

By situating pre-Arab and Western imperialism Africa as a bastion of cultural and intellectual brilliance, Chinweizu's framework provides critical insight into the Gabooye community's historical marginalization. This narrative contextualizes the shifts in power dynamics that enabled external forces and Somali nationalism to subdue and marginalize such communities. Understanding these historical antecedents through Chinweizu's lens underscores the Gabooye's place within broader patterns of African resilience and subjugation.

2.2. Self-Sabotage: Chinweizu's Reflections on African Agency in Civilization's Downfall

In *The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers, and the African Elite* (1975), Chinweizu challenges conventional critiques that focus solely on foreign powers while neglecting internal responsibilities. He directs his scrutiny toward the African elite, whom he describes as "black slavers" for their complicity in ceding sovereignty, imitating foreign powers, and renouncing their ancestry through opportunistic

alliances. Chinweizu calls for introspection and a critical interrogation of the roles and responsibilities of African leadership in perpetuating the continent's challenges.

Chinweizu's critique of African complicity in the erosion of sovereignty and cultural identity offers a valuable framework for understanding the internal dynamics that contribute to the marginalization of communities like the Gabooye. He argues that the adoption of foreign ideologies, religions, and cultural practices undermines indigenous identity, fostering what he terms "self-contempt" (Chinweizu, 2010). This concept is especially relevant to the Gabooye, who have been relegated to the lowest strata of Somali society due to entrenched hierarchical structures rooted in Arab-Islamic influence and Somali nationalism.

This internal complicity aligns with Fanon's idea of the native bourgeoisie: elites who inherit colonial systems and use them to reinforce their own power, often at the expense of more marginalized classes (Fanon, 1961). For the Gabooye, this manifests in Somali nationalism's selective memory, which glorifies nomadic, clan-based genealogies while erasing artisanal and servile groups from the national narrative.

2.3 Arab and Western Imperialisms: Catalyst for the Decline of African Societies

Chinweizu extends his critique beyond Africa's internal responsibilities to address Western and African imperialism, which he defines as a form of "racial war" aimed at the domination and exploitation of Africa. He particularly highlights "culturecide"—the systematic destruction of a people's cultural identity—as a central tool of imperialism (Chinweizu, 2006). Culturecide manifests through the imposition of foreign ideologies, religions, and economic systems, eroding indigenous traditions, knowledge, and social structures to ensure the subjugation of the colonized. According to Chinweizu, "A society's ancestral culture is the social analogue of the body's immune system" (2010, p. 51). By dismantling these cultural systems, imperial powers undermined Africa's

resilience, leaving communities vulnerable to external domination.

He critiques the dual processes of Christianization and Westernization on one hand, and Islamization and Arabization on the other, both of which have systematically eroded African identities (Chinweizu, 2010). However, Achille Mbembe's necropolitics (2003) sharpens this by examining how sovereign power chooses who may live and who must die—not just biologically, but socially and politically. The Gabooye, while not physically exterminated, are subjected to a form of symbolic death: denied political voice, erased from history, and condemned to invisibility in national discourse. Their enforced socio-political "death" through silencing, spatial segregation, and institutional neglect exemplifies Mbembe's notion of subjugated life under colonial logics in the postcolonial state.

This critique resonates with the Gabooye community's experiences of exclusion under Western-dominated global and regional systems. The colonial and post-colonial structuring of Somali society reinforced ethnic hierarchies and marginalized groups like the Gabooye. Through policies and frameworks that privileged dominant clans and suppressed traditional egalitarian structures, colonial powers and their post-colonial successors institutionalized the exclusion of minority groups.

2.4. Internalized Oppression and "Niggerism"

A key concept in Chinweizu's critique is the phenomenon he terms "Niggerism," or the internalized oppression that drives Africans to reject their heritage in favor of Eurocentric or Arabocentric identities. He characterizes this as a form of self-contempt that perpetuates stratification within African societies. Chinweizu critiques this alienation, writing, "Negro negrophobia is a most absurd disease. Can you imagine some black running to escape his blackness? To escape from himself? His obsession with fleeing from himself proves he is unfit to live" (2010, p. 46).

This internalized self-contempt, he argues, leads to the adoption of foreign cultural symbols and practices, further

eroding African identity. His poetry vividly portrays the absurdity and tragedy of this phenomenon:

"That one claims he is an Arab. He now wears around his neck
A fake genealogical chain Linking himself to the Quraish.
Look, look at him now! Look at what air he wears! He feels his
worth increased In the sight of his alien god: And when he
bites off his African tongue, And stutters in Arabic, He is giddy
with divine pride At being able to address his fellows In 'the
language of God himself!'" (2010, p. 345).

Chinweizu further laments, "For two and a half millennia, driven by brainwashed shame, they have bleached their black identity, scraping it off like shit from their fine skin" (2010, pp. 345–346). These striking images underscore the psychological and cultural damage inflicted by such alienation.

While Chinweizu diagnoses the disease, Fanon prescribes the cure: a violent rupture with internalized colonial scripts. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon calls for a decolonized self who refuses to define itself in the gaze of the Other. For the Gabooye, reclaiming ancestral pride—through oral histories, spiritual traditions, and localized knowledge—is not simply cultural; it is existential.

2.5. Resistance and Re-Africanization

Chinweizu's solution lies "decolonizing the African mind" as developed in his 1987 book by rejecting alien influences and reclaiming African cultural pride through Afrocentric modernization. He emphasizes the need for Africans to rebuild societal structures grounded in their ancestral traditions to prevent further marginalization or extinction. This includes not only cultural revival but also the creation of power structures that prioritize African autonomy.

Chinweizu's emphasis on mental decolonization, collective security, and the reclamation of indigenous knowledge provides a transformative pathway for addressing Gabooye marginalization. His call for a "new black identity" rooted in indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions (Chinweizu, 1987) aligns with the Gabooye's need to reclaim their heritage and

resist the imposed narratives of inferiority. Additionally, his advocacy for regional integration and collective action offers insights into how marginalized communities can engage in broader efforts for socio-political and economic inclusion within Somaliland and beyond.

3. Arab Imperialism and the Marginalization of the Gabooye Community in Somali Society

Arab imperialism, often manifested through the spread of Islam and Arab cultural hegemony, significantly shaped Somali social hierarchies and contributed to the marginalization of the Gabooye community. By intertwining Arab-Islamic identities with Somali clan structures, Arab influence played a pivotal role in eroding African traditions and creating systems of exclusion. This section explores how Arab imperialism, mediated by Somali nomads, fostered the subjugation of the Gabooye through social, political, and cultural mechanisms.

3.1. The Pre-Islamic Horn of Africa: From Revered "Land of God" to Subjugation and the "Curse of Ham"

By 2500 BC, the Horn of Africa held a position of immense prestige in the ancient world. Egyptian pharaonic records revered it as Ta Netjer, the "Land of God," a region celebrated for its extraordinary wealth, fertile lands, and strategic location bridging Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Near East. This region, widely identified with the fabled Land of Punt, was a vital source of coveted resources. As noted by Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge, Punt was considered by some scholars as the "aboriginal home of the Egyptians" (Budge, 2019). Egyptian expeditions, most famously under Queen Hatshepsut (c. 1478–1458 BC), documented Punt's abundance: gold, aromatic resins (incense, myrrh), ebony, ivory, exotic animals, and skilled inhabitants. Egyptians viewed Punt with deep spiritual reverence, considering it a sacred ancestral homeland central to their cosmology.

Punt's wealth and strategic importance made it a natural target for neighboring powers. As Abdhiraman Ali Hersi (1977)

observed, "The Horn of Africa had a more bountiful environment than the desert conditions of Arabia... It was, therefore, bound to attract the attention of the desert dwellers of Arabia across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. That alone could have secured a profitable trading position for the inhabitants of the Horn of Africa vis-à-vis their neighbours" (p. 44). This natural bounty established the region, inhabited by Cushitic peoples like the ancestors of Somalis, Oromo, and Afar, as a pivotal player in ancient global trade networks.

The rise of Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and later Islam) introduced a powerful and damaging ideological construct: the "Curse of Ham" (or Canaan). Rooted in interpretations of Genesis (9:18-27), this ideology claimed that Ham (Kham), the progenitor of African peoples including Cush, was cursed by Noah, condemning his descendants (interpreted as darker-skinned Africans) to servitude. As Goldenberg (2003) meticulously documented, this concept became deeply embedded in Jewish, Christian, and later Islamic thought, serving to racially degrade and justify the subjugation of African peoples, particularly those like the Cushitic groups of the Horn who were among the earliest in contact with these faiths.

This ideological imposition marked a profound turning point. It sought to invert the historical reality where the Horn's settled agricultural societies (like those linked to ancient Egypt's prosperity) were sources of civilization and wealth. The Abrahamic worldview, often aligning with patriarchal nomadic pastoralism, increasingly devalued these settled ways of life. The very name "Cushitic," bestowed by external Semitic (Arabs, Jews) and later Western scholars, became entangled with this curse, transforming a label denoting a powerful ancient civilization (Kush) into a racialized term associated with degradation and servitude in the eyes of those seeking to dominate.

By the 7th century CE, the Quraysh tribe of Mecca had consolidated power over Arabian trade and the religious sanctuary of the Kaaba. Their strategic location and alliances allowed them to dominate caravan routes connecting the

Indian Ocean, East Africa, and the Mediterranean. The Horn of Africa, with its legacy of Punt and its resources (especially incense crucial for religious rituals), remained strategically vital. The Quraysh evolved from merchants into powerful financiers and political brokers, leveraging their connections to this wealth.

The expansion of Islam, spearheaded by the Quraysh, brought profound cultural and political change to the Horn. Arab imperialism, facilitated by religious conversion, initiated a process of cultural subordination. Indigenous Cushitic populations, including Somalis, gradually abandoned their ancestral spiritual beliefs centered on Waaq (a pre-Islamic sky god) and their authentic genealogical heritage tied to the powerful kingdoms of the region (like the Macrobian described by Herodotus or the city-states of the Somali coast). Instead, a process of Arabisation encouraged the invention of fictitious genealogies tracing lineage back to the Quraysh family or other Arabian tribes. This represented a profound historical inversion: the descendants of peoples revered by pharaohs as coming from the "Land of God" now subordinated themselves ideologically to the very groups whose religious ideology labelled them descendants of the "cursed" Ham. They became, in effect, pawns in a system that devalued their African origins.

The imposition of this new Abrahamic, nomadic-pastoralist value system had devastating consequences for groups who resisted cultural assimilation or whose lifestyles diverged from the newly dominant pastoralist ideal. Non-nomadic groups within Somali society – such as the Gabooye, Yibir, Jareerweyne (Somali Bantu) – whose livelihoods were based on crafts, farming, hunting, and fishing, faced the harshest marginalization. Their resistance to or divergence from the pastoral-nomadic model, perhaps echoing an ancient tension between settled African agriculturalists (like the Egyptians who historically repelled Semitic incursions like the Hyksos) and external nomadic groups, made them targets. Branded as inferior through new social hierarchies (like the "sab" or low-caste classifications), they suffered profound

exclusion, economic exploitation, land dispossession, and violence. As warlords aligned with the new order gained power, they became major landowners, while these settled groups were often rendered landless. This systemic marginalization, rooted in the ideological and economic shifts initiated by external forces and internalized hierarchies, persists as a tragic legacy of this transformative and subordinating era.

3.2. The Construction of Arab Lineages and the Erosion of Somali Identity

The rise of Arab imperialism, intertwined with Islamic expansion, initiated a profound transformation of Somali identity. This process systematically privileged fabricated Arab genealogies over authentic African heritage, leveraging religious doctrine to devalue pre-Islamic culture.

Prior to Arab influence, the Horn housed sophisticated societies rooted in African traditions. The Macrobian (described by Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.17-24, c. 440 BCE) were renowned for their longevity, wisdom, and resistance to Persian domination, embodying a powerful indigenous political tradition. Along the coast, thriving city-states like Opone, Malao, and Mosylon (documented in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, c. 1st century CE) engaged in extensive trade with Egypt, Greece, Rome, and India, exporting incense, myrrh, tortoiseshell, and slaves. These centers were governed by local elites, worshipped the sky-god *Waaq*, and maintained complex social structures independent of Arabian influence. The later Sultanate of Adal (9th-16th centuries CE), though Islamic, initially reflected a fusion of indigenous Cushitic political organization and local Islamic practice before becoming a conduit for deeper Arabization.

Central to the dismantling of this heritage was the Islamic concept of *chirk* (شرك), meaning polytheism or associating partners with Allah. Chirk became the definitive theological condemnation applied to all pre-Islamic Somali beliefs and practices. Indigenous spirituality centered on *Waaq*, ancestor veneration, nature worship, and ritual practices of groups like

the Yibir (traditionally associated with pre-Islamic ritual roles) were aggressively labeled *chirk* – not merely incorrect, but spiritually corrupt and fundamentally incompatible with Islam. This theological framing, as emphasized by influential scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328 CE), rendered the entire pre-Islamic past a "Time of Ignorance" (*Jahiliyya*), inherently devoid of value or legitimacy. As Hersi (1977) notes, the adoption of Islam required "a break with the pagan past," a break defined by the rejection of *chirk*.

Within this religious framework, claiming Arab ancestry, particularly descent from the Quraysh tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, became a powerful source of religious prestige and social capital. As Lee Cassanelli (1982) argues: "It was the Muslim sheikhs, both Arab and Somali, who first planted the notion of a wider Somali identity. They propagated stories of Arab ancestry and facilitated the construction of genealogies that linked the ancestors of the various clans they served to the Qurayshitic lineage of the Prophet or to some prestigious immigrant from Arabia" (p. 20). This process wasn't passive; it was actively driven by the desire for status within the new Islamic world order. Ali Jimale Ahmed (1995) explains: "Many Somali nomads felt the need for the prestige that comes from an identification with Arab ancestry. They absorbed individual Arabs who provided them with new tribal lineages whose names were adopted as the tribal eponyms" (p. 16).

The construction of an Arab-Islamic identity in Somali society produced far-reaching exclusionary consequences that continue to shape social hierarchies and historical consciousness. Central to this transformation was the delegitimization of African genealogies that traced lineage to the ancient Cushitic inhabitants of Punt or the founders of the region's pre-Islamic coastal city-states. These lineages, once revered, were increasingly dismissed as shameful remnants of *Jahiliyya*—the so-called age of ignorance—due to their association with *chirk* (polytheism or the association of partners with Allah), a theological concept weaponized to discredit indigenous African spiritual systems. Communities

such as the Gabooye (Midgan), Yibir, and Jareerweyne (Somali Bantu), whose livelihoods were rooted in crafts, agriculture, hunting, and ritual roles, were particularly affected. Their economic and cultural practices, which diverged from the dominant pastoral-nomadic ethos, rendered them susceptible to accusations of impurity and chirk, reinforcing their relegation to a socially inferior sab or low-caste status. Over time, the persistent condemnation of the pre-Islamic past fostered a pervasive cultural amnesia. The rich historical legacy of civilizations like Punt, the Macrobian, and the autonomous city-states that once interacted as equals with ancient Egypt and Rome was systematically erased and supplanted by a narrative that celebrated descent from Arabian immigrants purported to have brought divine enlightenment to a spiritually deficient African land. In this way, the theological framework of chirk functioned as an ideological tool for severing Somali identity from its African origins. The fabrication and institutionalization of Arab lineages by religious and clan elites, motivated by the pursuit of socio-political prestige within the Islamic world, laid the foundations of a new identity that actively marginalized the region's ancient heritage and the communities that continued to embody it.

3.3. Islamization and the Devaluation of African Traditions

Islamization, facilitated by Arab missionaries, became a tool for cultural domination and the erosion of African traditions. Abdirhaman A. Hersi (1977) observes, "Now the Somalis came to assume an Arabico-Islamic identity in preference to their African heritage" (p. 110). This identity shift was particularly pronounced among northern Somali nomads, whose customary law (Heer) became heavily influenced by Arabic orientation (Ali Jemale, 1995, p. 62). In contrast, southern Somalia retained more African and Islamic influences. This divergence highlights how Arab cultural imperialism disproportionately affected the northern nomadic groups, embedding social hierarchies that excluded communities like the Gabooye. Poetess Karara Handulle cited by Eno (2010)

reflects on this process, stating, “When the Gabooye rejected domination by pre-colonial Arab immigrants, the Somalis took sides with the immigrants and devastated our kingdom, expropriated our land, and ostracized our people as 'pagans' and 'sorcerers' because of practicing our own traditional religion” (pp. 122-123).

3.4. Social Marginalization Through Arabization and Nomadism

Arabization, coupled with the nomadic lifestyle of northern Somali clans, reinforced the marginalization of the Gabooye. As Ali Jimale (1995) explains, “The ethos and patterns of life among the nomadic northern groups of Somalia are very close to those of the Arabs. They are belligerent, less law-abiding, arrogant, destructive, and look down on any profession except herding” (p. 62). This disdain for non-nomadic livelihoods marginalized agricultural and artisan communities like the Gabooye, who were often branded as inferior. Mukhtar (1995) further critiques the Arabization process, stating, “Unlike Arabic factors in the Asiatic and North African groups, where physical and linguistic characteristics support Arab claims, in Somalia there is no such thing... This is a cultural invention developed recently to gain political ascendancy” (p. 20).

3.5. Political and Social Exclusion

The integration of Arab cultural and religious elements into Somali society entrenched systems of exclusion that targeted the Gabooye. King Ahmed Iman Warsame (2024) recounts how “After our kingdom fell, they imposed various social and political sanctions to ensure our people would not rise again to rule. That painful fact led to us having no educated youth, a mentally oppressed minority society, and poor families.” These sanctions were enforced through customs such as the prohibition of intermarriage, as Warsame laments: “In social life, marriage for example, Somali tribes have made sure and forbidden not to marry from the minority no matter what.”

Such practices reinforced the Gabooye's marginalization, perpetuating systemic inequality.

3.6. Arab Imperialism and the "Curse of Ham"

Arab imperialism also introduced racial ideologies that contributed to the Gabooye's exclusion. The "Curse of Ham," an Abrahamic construct used to justify the subjugation of dark-skinned peoples, was leveraged by Arab and Somali elites to demean communities like the Gabooye. Samatar Diriye highlights the lasting impact of these ideologies, stating, "The influence of Arab and European control in this region has significantly impacted how the Gabooye are treated today. In particular, the male-dominated and tribal nature of Arab cultures has had a profound effect." These racial narratives, coupled with the privileging of nomadic lifestyles, devalued the Gabooye's agricultural and artisanal contributions.

Arab imperialism, mediated through Islamization, Arabization, and constructed genealogies, played a critical role in the marginalization of the Gabooye community. By privileging Arab-Islamic identities and nomadic lifestyles, these processes systematically excluded non-nomadic and non-Arab groups, embedding cultural and social hierarchies that persist to this day. Chinweizu critiques the imposition of artificial hierarchies through imperial ideologies, local Somali social structures similarly perpetuate exclusion. Jama echoes this critique, noting that Gabooye marginalization is "sustained by a culture of privilege or 'nobility'... a largely socially constructed form of exclusion" (Jama, 2015).

4. Western Imperialism and the Marginalization of the Gabooye Community in Somali Regions

Western imperialism played a significant role in shaping the social hierarchies and marginalizing minority communities such as the Gabooye in Somali regions. Through colonial policies, cultural classifications, and social divisions, Western powers entrenched systems of exclusion that continue to affect marginalized communities. This section examines the

mechanisms of Western imperialism and their impacts on the Gabooye, using historical accounts and scholarly insights.

4.1. Divide and Rule: The Colonial Strategy

Western colonial powers employed a deliberate "divide and rule" strategy that deepened internal divisions within Somali society. As Christine Choi Ahmed (1995) points out, colonial researchers like Ioan M. Lewis and his followers played a central role in codifying Somali lineage systems. She writes, "The obsession with Somali lineage systems, classifying who is noble and who is commoner, slave, or caste... has, in effect, defined Somalia" (p. 160). This fixation not only institutionalized pre-existing hierarchies but also reinforced the exclusion of marginalized groups such as the Gabooye, who were labeled as a "caste" and systematically denied access to political and social power.

Colonial travel accounts further illustrate how these dynamics played out. In *Seventeen Trips Through Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia*, Harald G.C. Swayne (1903) describes the Gabooye (referred to as "Midgan") as expert hunters and archers renowned for their use of poisoned arrows—relying on their deep knowledge of wabaio (poison) to defend themselves and their communities. Oral traditions suggest that these skills were not only vital for survival but were also deployed in resistance against inter-clan aggression and, at times, against foreign incursions, including British colonial forces.

This legacy of resistance is echoed in contemporary testimonies. As Sharmarke Barako (2024) recounts, "Western influence is the biggest pillar of cause for this discrimination. Before colonial power in the Horn of Africa, the one powerful people were us, but everything changed when the British colony came into Somali territory and fought against us, eventually defeating our army and dividing us into small groups." By fragmenting indigenous communities and privileging dominant clans, colonial authorities dismantled the social and political foundations of marginalized groups like the

Gabooye—entrenching their subordination in the postcolonial order.

Colonial economic policies further entrenched the marginalization of the Gabooye. The British administration's taxation system placed a disproportionate burden on marginalized groups. Edmond R. Turton (1974) documents the grievances of the Isaaq clan members, who opposed being taxed as "natives of Africa," emphasizing their perceived status as non-Africans due to their Arab-Islamic identity (p. 329). This preferential treatment for groups claiming Arab ancestry marginalized African communities like the Gabooye, whose indigenous identities offered no such leverage.

Sharmarke Barako underscores the deliberate nature of this economic exclusion: "When the British recognized the intelligence of the Gabooye, they deliberately divided one community among others." This fragmentation ensured that the Gabooye remained politically powerless and economically disadvantaged, unable to unite or assert their rights within the colonial system.

4.2. Cultural Misrepresentation and the Reinforcement of Hierarchies

Western writers and administrators often misrepresented Somali cultural practices to align with their own imperial interests. Abdirhaman Ali Hersi (1977) observes that colonial accounts, such as those of Richard F. Burton, erroneously described Somali nomads as "Bedouin," suggesting an affinity with Arab desert dwellers (p. 11). These misrepresentations perpetuated narratives that favored Arab-Islamic cultural dominance while undermining indigenous African identities, thereby marginalizing communities like the Gabooye.

Abdi Kusow (2004) notes that colonial researchers often employed pseudo-scientific methods to reinforce entrenched social hierarchies. For example, "Goldsmith and Lewis's (1958) serological examination sought to determine genetic differences between noble and caste groups" (pp. 4–5). These studies were designed to legitimize the exclusion of the

Gabooye and similar groups from broader Somali society. However, as Kusow emphasizes, such research ultimately revealed no biological difference between the Gabooye and dominant clans, exposing the caste system as a social and cultural construct without scientific basis.

Vitturini (2017) reinforces this conclusion by showing how colonial anthropology deliberately framed the Gabooye as an anomaly within Somali society— “a disturbance in the paradigm of social organisation” (p. 20). The Gabooye's existence challenged the structural-functional narrative of Somali egalitarian lineage systems, leading colonial anthropologists to explain their presence through the outdated and racialized “remnant model,” portraying them as vestiges of aboriginal populations (p. 21). This framing not only obscured the complexity of Somali social stratification but also served to naturalize the political and occupational exclusion of groups like the Gabooye.

Furthermore, Vitturini notes that these colonial-era assumptions persist subtly in contemporary social attitudes, where Gabooye marginalization is still justified through religious and cultural narratives rather than empirical fact (pp. 4–6). His fieldwork confirms that while formal segregation may have eroded, the “plasticity of social stratification” ensures that caste-based stigma remains deeply embedded in Somali habitus, mirroring Bourdieu's concept of durable social hierarchies (p. 7).

4.3 The Role of Self-Denial and Loyalty to Colonial Powers

Colonial powers exploited existing divisions by encouraging loyalty among certain Somali clans. Turton (1974) recounts how the Isaq diaspora petitioned the British Colonial Office to gain more privileges against the rest of their Somali brothers, emphasizing their loyalty to the Union Jack and their sacrifices during colonial conflicts: “During the struggle with the Mad Mullah, we were fighting against our own countrymen but realized that we were fighting for an ideal government” (p. 332). This loyalty narrative contrasted sharply with the

treatment of marginalized groups like the Gabooye, who were excluded from such alliances and denied opportunities for social mobility.

Furthermore, the colonial administration's endorsement of Arab-Islamic identity over African heritage further alienated the Gabooye. The qadi of Hargeysa stated, "We Somalis are Arabs by origin and we like to consider ourselves as still being of the Arabic race. We can never consent to our being considered as Africans" (Turton, 1974, p. 330). Such assertions reinforced the erasure of indigenous African identities, marginalizing communities like the Gabooye who did not conform to the Arab-Islamic framework.

4.4. Long-Term Implications of Colonial Policies

The colonial strategy of divide and rule had enduring effects on Somali society, entrenching hierarchies that persist to this day. Sharmarke Barako reflects on these long-term impacts: "The old governance structures from Western colonization continue to impact our society today." The classification and division of Somali society during colonial rule created a rigid social order that perpetuated the marginalization of the Gabooye. By prioritizing nomadic and Arabized groups, colonial policies systematically excluded agricultural and artisan communities, embedding structural inequalities that remain deeply entrenched.

Western imperialism significantly contributed to the marginalization of the Gabooye community in Somali regions. Through strategies of divide and rule, cultural misrepresentation, economic exploitation, and the privileging of Arab-Islamic identities, colonial powers dismantled indigenous African power structures and entrenched systemic discrimination. These policies not only reinforced existing hierarchies but also created new forms of exclusion that continue to shape Somali society. Addressing the legacy of Western imperialism requires a critical examination of these historical dynamics and a commitment to restoring equity for marginalized communities like the Gabooye.

5. Somali Nationalism and the Marginalization of the Gabooye Community

The roots of Gabooye marginalization trace back to the Arabization of the Horn of Africa and its entanglement with Somali nationalism. The emergence of Arab-influenced ideologies, often conflated with Islamic orthodoxy, reshaped Somali identity along exclusionary lines. As Ekman (2021) notes, "The pursuit of a collective national Somali identity has... activated a condition for a collective identity crisis, but it has also created an order... where social differences are not celebrated" (p. 22). Nationalism, rather than embracing diversity, became a vehicle for homogenizing Somali identity around Arab ancestry and nomadic virtue.

This process coincided with the internalization of caste-like divisions. Ekman aptly frames the Gabooye as "a collective comparable to caste, positioned between the structural understanding of class and the ideological notion of identity and status" (2021, p. 6). Gabooye were thus rendered doubly invisible: marginalized both as a racialized underclass and as cultural outsiders in a project of nation-building premised on sameness.

Bashir Goth poetically exposes this contradiction: "They speak the same language we speak and pray towards Makkah five times a day like the rest of us. But dare you tell any Somali to pray behind the most learned Imam of the Migdaan and he would rather go to hell" (Goth, 2013). This quote powerfully underscores how even religious unity fails to bridge caste boundaries forged through centuries of Arab-Somali entanglement.

5.1. Nomadism and the Idealization of Clan Lineages

Somali nationalism has long been dominated by the ideals of pastoral nomadism and its associated lineage systems. Mohamed Mukhtar (1995) notes that "The genealogy and lineage systems (*Abtirsinyo*) are part and parcel of the nomadic social life. They are in fact part of the educational system in

which children memorize their *Abtirsinyo* at the earliest stage. On the contrary, sedentary societies of Somalia are not concerned with *Abtirsinyo*" (p. 17). The dominance of this lineage-based framework excluded sedentary communities like the Gabooye, who had little to no engagement with these systems.

As Somali nationalism evolved, nomadism was glorified as the foundation of Somali culture, while sedentary lifestyles were denigrated. Mukhtar (1995) highlights this trend, stating, "Efforts were made to carefully glorify nomadic language, culture, and history and destroy or denigrate the history and culture of the Somali sedentary societies. Institutions were created to propagate the nomadic tradition, ascribing to it a greater antiquity" (pp. 20-21). This cultural bias not only marginalized the Gabooye but also delegitimized their contributions to Somali history.

The Gabooye, historically associated with artisan and agricultural livelihoods, were systematically marginalized under Somali nationalism's prioritization of nomadic culture. Lee Cassanelli (1982) observes, "Farmers were regarded as an inferior class by the Somali pastoral majority, probably in part because of the disdain most herdsmen had for the agricultural way of life. Groups of farmers seeking military security and perhaps trading partners historically tended to attach themselves to powerful nomadic clans in the area and thereby came to be seen as 'clients' or dependents of the latter and therefore necessarily inferior" (p. 15). This socio-economic subjugation relegated the Gabooye to a status of dependency, stripping them of autonomy and respect.

Despite Somaliland's embrace of democratic norms and its repeated appeals for international recognition, the state continues to exhibit entrenched patterns of exclusion toward the Gabooye. Bashir Goth powerfully observes: "They have no voice among us and no political representation. And if anyone of them dares to protest, we easily silence them by invoking the M-word" (Goth, 2013). This silencing extends to systemic marginalization in public office appointments, limited inclusion

in national narratives, and a denial of cultural dignity. Though Somaliland's constitution nominally upholds equal rights, in practice, Gabooye communities are consigned to socio-political invisibility.

Amina-Bahja Ekman (2021) critiques this contradiction, arguing that "current issues of inequality experienced by groups... cannot be redressed if the only mechanisms of justice available are those attached to a primordial ideology, where members of the status quo demarcate the reach of justice" (p. 8). Policies on inclusion remain largely performative, often excluding marginalized groups from meaningful participation in governance, legal frameworks, and resource distribution. Without constitutional reforms and genuine political will, Somaliland's claims to democracy risk perpetuating a clan-based oligarchy that systematically sidelines non-dominant communities.

5.2. The Role of Asabiyyah and Arab-Islamic Supremacy

Somali nationalism's alignment with Arab-Islamic identity further marginalized the Gabooye. The concept of asabiyyah (tribal solidarity), coupled with the emphasis on Arab lineage, elevated clans that claimed Qurayshitic ancestry. Abdi Kusow (2004) explains that Somali nationalism "engaged in the violent removal of non-Islamic cultural traces and heritages and those who refused to become part of the social boundary of this new Somaliness" (p. 3). The Gabooye, often viewed as having "unholy origins," were ostracized as socially polluting, akin to the "untouchables in India" (Kusow, 2004, p. 3).

This exclusionary framework extended to other minority communities as well. Besteman (1999) highlights the plight of riverine farmers, stating, "Despite outward trappings of being Somali... many look different, and so are considered different by Somalis" (p. 43). Similarly, the Gabooye's distinct cultural practices and history of resistance to domination marked them as outsiders in the Somali nationalist project.

5.3. The Manifestations of Somali Nationalism on the Gabooye's Daily Lives

The Gabooye's marginalization under Somali nationalism was exacerbated by systemic discrimination. Samatar Diriye asserts, "The Gabooye are so distinct from the nomadic Somali. They were hunters, the rulers of the Horn of Africa, and indigenous people of this region." However, this history of autonomy was erased and replaced by narratives of inferiority. Sharmarke Barako adds, "The Gabooye community is mostly discriminated against and has no more rights economically, socially, and politically. Therefore, as a minority, we feel that we have lost a lot of our basic rights."

Somali nationalism's emphasis on tribal supremacy also entrenched economic disenfranchisement for the Gabooye. Eno (2004) recounts the lament of a Jareer bard: "*Murug Maahino ii Masiibo Aduunyo-Minaa Minin Keeyga Leegu Maamulaaiyo*" ("Isn't it disheartening and reflective of the unfairness of this world that we are bossed around in our own abode"). This sentiment reflects the broader experience of the Gabooye, who were deprived of control over their lands and resources.

The enduring impact of Somali nationalism on the Gabooye community is evident in their continued exclusion from political and social life. Abdi Kusow (2004) observes that the Gabooye and other marginalized groups remain "permanently removed from the social boundary of Somaliness" (p. 3). This exclusion is reinforced by systemic discrimination and cultural erasure, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.

Somali nationalism, while aimed at unifying the nation, systematically marginalized communities like the Gabooye by prioritizing nomadic culture, Arab-Islamic identity, and tribal lineage. This exclusionary framework erased the histories and contributions of the Gabooye, entrenching their social, economic, and political disenfranchisement. Addressing this legacy requires a reevaluation of Somali identity to include and honor the diverse communities that constitute the nation.

6. Contemporary Governance: Progress and Ongoing Struggles for Gabooye Inclusion (1991–2025)

Since declaring independence in 1991, Somaliland has made strides toward institutionalizing democratic governance and inclusive citizenship. The 2001 Constitution affirms equal rights for all citizens, regardless of clan affiliation. Although formal quotas for minority representation remain absent, recent political developments—especially in the wake of the 13 November 2024 presidential elections—suggest meaningful, if still uneven, progress in advancing Gabooye inclusion in governance and public life.

One of the most notable milestones came with the election of Parliamentarian Barkhad Batuun, who secured the highest number of votes in Somaliland’s electoral history. Though not the first Gabooye MP—Mohammed Biixi Shuuriye had already broken that barrier in the 1960 Somaliland parliament by winning a historic seat in Hargeysa against dominant clan candidates—Batuun remains the only Gabooye MP to be nationally elected in the post-1991 multiparty era. His record-breaking victory was widely interpreted as a turning point: both a repudiation of exclusionary clan politics and a sign of growing popular support for minority rights in Somaliland. Batuun’s campaign, which emphasized dignity, anti-discrimination, and inclusive development, resonated far beyond his own community, inspiring hope among marginalized groups and reform-minded elites.

In parallel, King Ahmed Iman Warsame, regarded as a symbolic and cultural leader of the Gabooye, has emerged as a more vocal and visible figure. Despite facing social and institutional barriers, King Warsame has become an active participant in regional and global forums. Between 2023 and 2025, he traveled to Switzerland, the United States, and Ethiopia to advocate for Gabooye rights at international conferences on minority inclusion, statelessness, and human rights. His growing diplomatic visibility has elevated the Gabooye’s profile both within Somaliland and on the international stage.

The victory of the Waddani party in the 2024 elections also marked a moment of renewed optimism for Gabooye political representation. During the campaign period, Waddani leaders visited marginalized neighborhoods such as Daami and pledged concrete reforms, including ministerial appointments and improved access to public services. Community members interviewed during fieldwork in Hargeysa described this period as one of “cautious hope,” believing for the first time that national leadership might reflect the country’s full diversity.

Following the elections, the new Waddani-led government appointed one Gabooye minister to the cabinet—a symbolic breakthrough, given the historical absence of minority figures in executive leadership. However, the appointment has been subject to debate within the Gabooye community, with some activists questioning whether the selected figure adequately represents the grassroots voices that mobilized during the campaign. This reflects an emerging political maturity and internal pluralism within the Gabooye community itself—no longer satisfied with tokenism i.e. symbolic recognition, they now demand accountability and meaningful inclusion.

Beyond electoral politics, Somaliland has witnessed a broader cultural and institutional opening. Civil society organizations, including the Hargeysa Cultural Center, have provided platforms for Gabooye youth to express their identity through storytelling, music, and public performance. These cultural spaces have fostered a sense of belonging and countered narratives of marginality. Additionally, media visibility for Gabooye voices has increased, with local outlets featuring community leaders and raising awareness about caste-based discrimination.

There are also signs of gradual change in the policy environment. While Somaliland’s 2020 Gender Policy does not yet explicitly address caste-based inequities, ongoing discussions among lawmakers and civil society actors—particularly women’s organizations—have begun incorporating intersectional concerns. This momentum draws inspiration from scholars such as Lila Abu-Lughod (1990), whose critique of

universalist feminist frameworks underscores the need to confront local hierarchies like caste and clan in tandem with gender. Gabooye women, long subjected to dual systems of patriarchal and caste exclusion, are increasingly voicing their demands in public forums and policy dialogues.

Nevertheless, persistent structural barriers remain. Discrimination in school admissions, rental markets, and access to credit continues to be reported, often based on surnames or neighborhood origin. While the symbolic breakthroughs of the 2024 elections are notable, the deeper work of dismantling informal exclusions and redistributing opportunities is ongoing. As Samatar Diriye put it, “We have opened the door, but now we need to walk through it and make sure it stays open.”

These recent developments signal a shift in the social contract of Somaliland. While clan-based *asabiyyah* still shapes many aspects of political life, new modes of civic engagement—rooted in minority rights, urban solidarity, and transnational advocacy—are beginning to reshape the terrain. The Gabooye’s growing political presence, cultural assertion, and international engagement illustrate that inclusion is no longer simply about recognition; it is about rights, voice, and structural transformation.

The experience of the Gabooye from 1991 to 2025 thus reveals a dual narrative: one of historical marginalization, but also of growing agency, political innovation, and strategic mobilization. As Somaliland continues its quest for international recognition and democratic legitimacy, its treatment of minority communities like the Gabooye will remain a key test of its commitment to justice and equality.

7. Understanding Somaliland's Gabooye and Nomadic Clans Dynamics through Chinweizu's Framework

Chinweizu’s work offers a robust framework for analyzing the complex socio-political and cultural dynamics in African societies. His concepts of imperialism, cultural alienation, and the necessity of Afro-modernization provide critical tools for deciphering the historical and contemporary interactions

between the Gabooye minority and nomadic clans in Somaliland. This analysis contextualizes Chinweizu's insights within the specific case of the Gabooye and nomadic clan dynamics, highlighting how these ideas illuminate the underlying forces shaping these relationships.

7.1. Imperialism as War: Divide and Rule Dynamics

Chinweizu (2010) argues that "imperialism is war, and the imperialism of whites over blacks is race war" (p. 15). This perspective can be applied to understand the historical strategies of division and domination in Somaliland. While not directly rooted in European imperialism, the socio-political marginalization of the Gabooye by dominant nomadic clans reflects a localized form of divide-and-rule tactics. The segmentation of clans, reinforced by social hierarchies and cultural stigmas, mirrors the manipulation Chinweizu describes as "divide and conquer at its devilish worst" (p. 16).

Historically, the Gabooye have been relegated to the lower rungs of society, labeled as "outcasts" and denied access to land and power. This marginalization resembles the broader patterns of internalized oppression and fragmentation described by Chinweizu, wherein local groups perpetuate divisions that serve external or dominant interests.

7.2. Cultural Alienation and Identity Manipulation

Chinweizu's critique of cultural alienation—the stripping of African identity through external forces—is particularly relevant in examining how cultural stigmas against the Gabooye have been perpetuated. He writes: "The Nigger is the African mangled by white power...a person of African race, who has been stripped of African culture" (p. 90). Though applied to colonial and post-colonial contexts, this idea resonates with the Gabooye's struggle for cultural recognition within a system that devalues their identity and contributions.

For example, the Gabooye's traditional roles as artisans and blacksmiths have historically been stigmatized, reflecting a broader pattern of cultural alienation. This mirrors Chinweizu's warning that "Negro negrophobia is a most absurd disease...his

obsession with fleeing from himself proves he is unfit to live” (p. 46). The disdain for the Gabooye’s cultural heritage demonstrates how societal self-alienation can perpetuate internal hierarchies.

7.3. Arabization and Religious Dynamics

Chinweizu critiques the cultural and political expansion of Arab hegemony, noting that “Somalia and Djibouti were induced to join the Arab League and to Arabize themselves culturally, despite their non-Arab populations” (p. 22). This insight is crucial for analyzing the role of Islam and Arabization in Somaliland. While Islam is a unifying factor, its intersection with clan dynamics often exacerbates inequalities, as seen in the continued marginalization of the Gabooye.

Religious identity can serve as both a unifier and a divider. In Somaliland, the Gabooye’s marginalization persists despite shared religious beliefs. Chinweizu’s critique of “Arabocentric” influences (p. 90) highlights the potential for religious frameworks to be co-opted into reinforcing socio-political hierarchies rather than dismantling them.

7.4. Western Imperialism and Gabooye’s Marginalization

Chinweizu’s critique of Western imperialism—“imperialism is war, and the imperialism of whites over blacks is race war” (p. 15)—provides a lens for understanding how Western influences have shaped power dynamics in Somaliland. The Gabooye, as a historically marginalized group, face a dual burden: local clan-based exclusion and the broader impacts of Western-driven global systems. Western imperialism’s economic and cultural infiltration often manifests as control over resources and narratives, leaving societies like Somaliland entrenched in structural inequalities.

This dynamic is evident in the perpetuation of poverty among the Gabooye and the dominance of nomadic clans in decision-making processes. Chinweizu’s warning about “Debt Trap Peonage” inflicted by global institutions like the IMF and World Bank (p. 381) resonates with Somaliland’s struggles to

achieve self-sustaining development. These external pressures exacerbate internal hierarchies, further marginalizing groups like the Gabooye.

Furthermore, Western cultural imperialism often promotes Eurocentric values that undermine indigenous practices and identities. For the Gabooye, this translates to a devaluation of their artisanal traditions and a lack of representation in modern governance frameworks. Chinweizu's call to "reclaim ancestral culture" (p. 51) underscores the importance of resisting these external impositions and fostering local resilience through cultural and economic empowerment.

7.5. Afro-modernization as a Path to Liberation

Chinweizu's emphasis on Afro-modernization—"the project of putting African culture and societies on an industrialized foundation" (p. 40)—offers a strategic vision for addressing structural inequalities. The Gabooye's socio-economic marginalization is tied to the lack of access to industrial and educational opportunities, which perpetuates their dependency on dominant clans. Chinweizu's call for "the development of African Power" underscores the necessity of creating inclusive systems that empower marginalized groups through education, industrialization, and cultural reclamation.

For the Gabooye, Afro-modernization could involve the integration of their artisanal skills into broader economic frameworks, thereby transforming stigmatized roles into sources of economic and cultural strength. This aligns with Chinweizu's vision of reclaiming "ancestral culture" as "the social analogue of the body's immune system" (p. 51).

Chinweizu's poetic critique of identity loss—"They have scrambled from their black identity / Like a man fleeing his menacing shadows" (pp. 343-344)—captures the existential crisis faced by marginalized groups like the Gabooye. Their historical exclusion from land ownership and political power reflects a broader struggle for identity and dignity. Chinweizu's call to "de-Niggerize and re-Africanize our minds" (p. 90)

resonates with the need for a grassroots cultural revival among the Gabooye, reclaiming their heritage and challenging the entrenched hierarchies that sustain their marginalization.

7.6. The Path Forward: Re-Africanization and Power Building

Chinweizu's framework provides actionable insights for addressing the Gabooye's plight. His advocacy for "Black Power" as a means to counter systemic oppression (p. 380) emphasizes the importance of collective agency and self-reliance. For Somaliland, this could mean creating policies that promote social inclusion, equitable resource distribution, and recognition of the Gabooye's cultural contributions.

Chinweizu's critique of external influences, including "Arab expansionism" and "UN imperialism" (p. 381), underscores the need for locally driven solutions. Empowering the Gabooye requires dismantling the internalized hierarchies that perpetuate their exclusion, fostering a shared vision of unity and progress.

Chinweizu's incisive critique of imperialism, cultural alienation, and identity loss provides a powerful lens for analyzing the dynamics between the Gabooye and nomadic clans in Somaliland. By applying his concepts, we gain a deeper understanding of the systemic forces shaping these relationships and the paths toward a more equitable future. Re-Africanization, Afro-modernization, and the reclamation of cultural identity are not just theoretical ideals but practical imperatives for building a society that values all its members equally.

Conclusion

The marginalization of the Gabooye in Somaliland is not an isolated sociological anomaly but a deeply historical and structurally embedded outcome of imperial incursions, epistemic violence, and internalized hierarchies. Through Chinweizu's Afrocentric decolonial lens, this paper has reframed the Gabooye not as passive victims of a rigid caste system, but as survivors of successive erasures—colonial,

religious, and nationalist. Their lived realities reflect a history in which African civilizational memory was displaced by imported narratives of impurity and inferiority, masking the Gabooye's former centrality in the Horn of Africa's pre-Islamic, pre-colonial polities.

This inquiry challenges dominant genealogical and Islamic-nationalist frameworks that obscure the violence of historical categorization. Colonial anthropology's obsession with Somali lineages and the replication of dominant clan ideologies in academic discourse have rendered Gabooye voices peripheral or even invisible. Yet, oral testimonies, resistance practices, and cultural continuity—such as those preserved in Daami—speak to a politics of memory and endurance that resists reduction.

Reclaiming African heritage, then, is not merely an intellectual act. It is a necessary rupture with the inherited taxonomies of power that continue to dictate legitimacy, belonging, and sovereignty. By situating the Gabooye struggle within a broader decolonial matrix, we affirm their historical agency and underscore the urgent need for anthropology to shift its gaze—from documenting marginality to dismantling the structures that produce it.

For decades, the Gabooye have been relegated to the periphery of Somali society, victims of systemic exclusion rooted in the interplay of Arabization, Islamization, and colonial hierarchies. This marginalization persists in Somaliland, undermining its moral authority to assert claims of equitable governance and democracy before the international community. By positioning the Gabooye at the heart of its domestic and international narratives, Somaliland could present itself as a progressive and inclusive state, capable of addressing historical injustices while forging a new path forward.

The Gabooye's centrality to Somaliland's state-building project cannot be overstated. Internally, their inclusion would strengthen the fabric of Somaliland's democracy by fostering unity and demonstrating that marginalized voices are valued and represented. Internationally, such inclusivity would

enhance Somaliland's credibility as a modern, pluralistic state deserving of recognition. Acknowledging and addressing the systemic challenges faced by the Gabooye—from socio-economic disenfranchisement to social stigmatization—is not merely an act of justice but a strategic imperative. It signals to the world that Somaliland's sovereignty project is built on principles of equality, human rights, and shared prosperity.

Furthermore, the empowerment of the Gabooye offers a template for broader Pan-Somali and Pan-African solidarity. By addressing its internal hierarchies, Somaliland could inspire similar reforms across Somali-speaking regions, including Djibouti, Kenya's North Eastern Province, Ethiopia's Ogaden, and Somalia. Such a movement could transcend clan-based politics and divisions, advancing the ideals of Pan-Somalism rooted in inclusivity rather than exclusion. The Gabooye, as custodians of ancient African traditions, artisanship, and resilience, symbolize the rich cultural heritage that unites these regions beyond the confines of clan structures and foreign-imposed hierarchies.

The implications of this approach extend beyond the Somali-speaking world. A unified and inclusive Pan-Somali movement, championing the rights of marginalized communities, could serve as a cornerstone for Pan-Africanism. It would echo the broader continental struggles against imperialism, racism, and neocolonialism, offering a model for how historical injustices can be redressed to create equitable societies. Somaliland's commitment to the Gabooye would thus resonate with Pan-African ideals of solidarity, self-determination, and collective progress.

To achieve this vision, Somaliland must embark on a deliberate and sustained effort to integrate the Gabooye into its socio-political and economic structures. This entails reforming discriminatory practices, ensuring equitable access to education and employment, and fostering cultural pride in the Gabooye's heritage. Beyond policy changes, there is a need for a societal shift—a collective acknowledgment of past wrongs and a commitment to building an inclusive future.

Such efforts would not only strengthen Somaliland's internal cohesion but also position it as a leader in addressing marginalization in the Horn of Africa. By championing the rights of the Gabooye, Somaliland could assert itself as a regional trailblazer in human rights and governance, distinguishing itself from the fragmented and often exclusionary politics of neighboring states. This moral high ground could serve as a persuasive argument for international recognition, highlighting Somaliland as a stabilizing force in a volatile region.

The Gabooye's inclusion also holds the potential to unlock economic opportunities. Their traditional skills in craftsmanship and trade, if harnessed and supported, could contribute to a more diversified and resilient economy. Investing in the Gabooye's potential aligns with broader goals of sustainable development, reducing poverty, and fostering innovation. Economic empowerment, coupled with social and political inclusion, would solidify the Gabooye's role as active contributors to Somaliland's prosperity.

At a broader level, Somaliland's recognition of the Gabooye's rights and contributions could catalyze a reevaluation of marginalized communities' roles across Africa. It would challenge the continent's lingering colonial legacies that continue to marginalize indigenous and minority groups. By addressing these issues head-on, Somaliland could emerge as a case study for how postcolonial states can reconcile historical grievances while building cohesive and progressive societies.

Finally, the empowerment of the Gabooye could serve as a unifying narrative for Pan-Somali and Pan-African movements. Their story embodies the struggles and resilience of marginalized communities across the continent, making them a powerful symbol for broader solidarity. Somaliland's efforts to elevate the Gabooye would thus ripple outward, fostering connections among Somali-speaking regions and beyond, ultimately strengthening Pan-Africanism.

Somaliland's pursuit of international recognition and UN membership is intrinsically tied to its treatment of marginalized

communities like the Gabooye. By embracing inclusivity, equity, and justice, Somaliland not only strengthens its case for sovereignty but also lays the groundwork for enduring domestic peace and prosperity. This approach, rooted in addressing historical injustices, could extend to unite Somali-speaking regions under a vision of Pan-Somalism that prioritizes unity over division. In doing so, Somaliland has the potential to inspire a broader Pan-African renaissance, championing the ideals of justice, solidarity, and shared progress. The Gabooye, far from being a footnote in Somaliland's history, are central to its future—as a nation, as a region, and as a symbol of what Africa can achieve when it embraces its diversity and collective strength.

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