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1.4.4. Clans specialised in Islamic services

Traditionally, Asharaf and Sheikhal were respected by other clans as ‘religious people’ or even ‘teachers of religion’. The name Asharaf derives from the Arabic word ‘sharif’ which means ‘honour’.489 Members of both groups are considered descendants of the family of the Prophet Mohamed who have immigrated into the Somali peninsula long ago. Until the outbreak of the civil war, they had protection arrangements with dominant clans among whom they lived. Yet, during the civil war in the 1990s they lost clan protection and were exploited and subjugated by clan militias.490

Asharaf consist of the main groups Hassan and Hussein. Many reside in and around Mogadishu and up to Afgoye. Some also reside among Digil in Bakool region.491 Those Asharaf residing along the southern Somali coast are considered part of the Benadiri conglomerate.492 Other Asharaf reside in ‘southern interior at Baidoa, Hudur, and Bulo Hawo, in the Baay, Bakool and Gedo regions respectively. These Asharaf communities are most usually from the Hasan branch of Asharaf lineages.’493 Sheikhal - also known as Shekhal or Sheikasha, i.e. ‘the Shekhal people’ - are divided in the main lineages Loboge, Jazeera and Aw Qutub. Aw Qutub mainly reside in the Somali Region of Ethiopia. Jazeera and Loboge reside mainly in and around Mogadishu. Most Asharaf and Sheikhal are considered ‘light skinned’ (gibil cad); yet some, like Asharaf/Hassan/Sarman and Sheikhal/Aw Qutob are ‘dark skinned’ (gibil madow). In recent years they gained some political and economic influence in southern Somalia again. They also have access to education. Some Asharaf and Sheikhal engage successfully in businesses, including large-scale business in Mogadishu. Still, members of both groups occasionally face discrimination and human rights abuses due to their non-major-clan origins.494 For further background information see section 4.3 Groups specialised in religious services of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Targeted Profiles (September 2021).495

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  Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

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  Minority Rights Group – Somalia, 2024, url

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  Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

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Minority Rights Group – Somalia, 2024, url; Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, p. 140

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  Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, p. 141.

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  Minority Rights Group – Somalia, 2024, url

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  EASO, Somalia: Targeted Profiles, September 2021, url, pp. 69-72

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