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1.4.5. Mixed-marriages, implications and sanctioning

Marriages are an important means of forging social, economic and political ties in Somali society. Connections established through marriage are called ‘xidid’ in Somali, literally meaning ‘root’. Marriages often establish political alliances. They are forged between families whose members consider themselves basically as equal. This means that marriages between a ‘strong’ and a ‘weak’ group or between a majority and a minority group traditionally are frowned upon. In everyday life, they still happen, due to individual preferences and romantic feelings of the individuals involved.496 Yet, there are socially sanctioned limits. Minorities in Somalia are considered weak. But some of them have a better social status than others. Many minority groups are predominantly endogamous, meaning that they marry among themselves. Yet, intermarriage between majority and minority groups like Asharaf, Sheikhal and most Benadiri groups is accepted. However, in these cases, typically the women are coming from the minority and the men are coming from the majority group. The female partners and their families of birth are usually (at least politically) dependent on their husbands and their families of birth and protection by them. In other cases, particularly concerning Gaboye and Somali Bantu/Jareer, intermarriages with members of majority clans are generally not accepted.497 If a man from a dominant clan marries a Gaboye or Somali Bantu/Jareer woman, his own family may disapprove, and his children will likely be insulted. If a man from the Gaboye or Somali Bantu/Jareer marries a woman from a majority clan, this typically produces major conflict between the families involved. Normally, the family of the woman rejects such a marriage. Her relatives can even threaten or attack the (prospective) husband and/or his family.498 Under Al-Shabaab, intermarriages between majority and minority groups happen more frequently.499

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

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  Shamso Sheegow, Telephone interview, 1 April 2025

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  Kemal Dahir Ashour, Telephone interview, 10 March 2025

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Wardheer News 09. April 2024: Married in the shawows: The wives of Al-Shabaab, url

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