

EDITOR'S NOTE

I begin this brief note by wishing all of our readers a new year that brings great blessings to all! The contents of this volume range from an arresting and commemorative essay on the life of one of the most magnificent of all Somali *fannaaniin*, Halimo Khalif (Magool), to women in the diaspora, to specific recommendations for addressing the worrisome issue of job creation for the many young graduates from the universities in Somaliland—the latter a phenomenon so conspicuously observable among the Somali youth in every part of the Horn of Africa.

Remembering Magool comes up every time one hears any singing performance in the Somali language. Himself a highly accomplished poet and a discerning essayist across the wide arc of Somali society, Bashir Goth has inaugurated the awaiting task of profiling for posterity each of the greatest of Somali *fannaaniin* and *abwaaniin*. If it is the case, as numerous commentators believe, that the most important gift of the Somali people, next to their resilience to survive in a harsh and niggardly environment, is the production of superb poetry and exquisite singing, then the time has come for serious attention to writing about the life and times (distinct from clanistic hagiography), as well as record the achievements, of the major artists. High quality works of this type will offer the coming generations of Somalis a source of tremendous cultural literacy, pride, and encouragement to add to the world's treasure trove of the best of global multiculturalism. This will not be easy, for the exhaustive research that has to be done, the fine writing required, and the laborious and expensive production and distribution that will make the works available will presuppose collective purpose and investment in time, energy, and resources.

Despite this tall order, however, there are a few signs that might bode well for the future. One such signal is the new Redsea Cultural Foundation, located in Hargeisa. We congratulate the creators, particularly the director, Jama Musse Jama, for daring to rehabilitate Somali poetic and cultural ingenuity. This effort, no doubt, will confront numerous difficulties, not least a paucity of funding, the bane of Somali creative action, and the recent onset of constrictions on individual freedom of expression and public display of aesthetic taste. The sustainability of the new initiatives will be a formidable test. In this context, then, it might be worthwhile to remember that final sentence of Spinoza's profound volume, *Ethics*: "All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare."

While the news on the cultural front might be a tad auspicious, the hard case of the ever-present civic revival is still extremely disheartening. Politics in Mogadishu continues in its predictable bath of regurgitating the dismaying brew of “duopoly,” ineptitude, malfeasance, and further retailing of both kin identity and geography. This must be a cruel ambience that compounds feeling aghast on the part of those Somalis who still have not given up on a renaissance of a united, just, capable, and re-dignified Somali Republic. Politics in Hargeisa, while more advanced in the area of institution building, public safety, and freedom of expression and association, also seems to be increasingly veering towards a combination of raw sub-clanist appetite for power and an enervating neglect of the imperatives of good day-to-day administration. This is likely to get worse as the appointed date for Somaliland elections for the members of parliament and the presidency gets closer. Still, if the people of Somaliland conduct their upcoming national elections with timeliness, transparency, and order (that many argue is now part of the practice of the existence of Somaliland as a separate country), this will add another and major marker to the claim of the distinctiveness of Somaliland and its justifiable right to continue to follow its own sense of the future.

Finally, our readers might find this segment of a powerful poem by the one and only late Timacade worthy of recalling and meditation. It is even more instructive than when he first composed it nearly half a century ago.

Afrikan is-wada daafacdee, dababka noolaysay,
Dib baa looga joogsaday markay, debinta ruugeene,
Laga durug dorraad galab kuwuu, dacasku saarnaaye,
Dirqi bay xornimadaw heshaye, laguma diiqaye,
Ninkii aan udoog-dhaban biyaha, looma soo daro e',
Daayeerna laas waa qotaa, doox hadduu tago e',
Dudduntaan halkii lagu ogaa, doorsan weligeede,
Daa'imo carruureedna ways, daba gurguurtaane,
Dadkan wada dallacay dawladaan, dahabka shiilaaya,
Da'deennay ahaayeen kuwaa, loo dabbaal degaye,
Doqonniimo Soomaali waa, loogu daw-galaye,
Immikaa la doondoonyaa, Dir iyo Daarroode,
Dan Soomaaliyeed lama hayee, waa dabbaal kale e',
Shacabigii dagaalka ugalaa, daadsan suuqyada e'
Distoor iyo qawaaniin ayaan, cidiba doondooin,
Ninnaan dawladda baa Xamar fadhida, haw dabbaal-degine...