

EDITOR'S NOTE

In last year's volume, we announced that 2015 would be devoted to the theme of mental health within Somali communities. While this is an increasingly important area for research and public education, we regret that our plan did not pan out the way we had expected. We apologize for not delivering on that promise, but our hope is that we will return to this much-neglected topic in the future. In the meantime, we have another promise to make: the 2016 volume is now committed to publish some of the best papers presented at the successful 2015 International Congress of Somali Studies in Helsinki, Finland. We are excited about this and look forward to the appearance of the volume.

As to be expected, many relevant events have transpired in 2015. However, in our estimation, none seems most sorrowful than the unexpected death of one of the most illustrious of Somali academicians: Professor Said Sheikh Samatar (no relation). When I heard of this devastating news, in the midst of a punishing winter in the American hinterland in an afternoon in February, I composed a few brief and incomplete reflections that captured my sense of Said, and what I came to know about him and will miss from here on. I would like to share those thoughts with our readers. First, we stand now, and into the future, intellectually and socially impoverished by his sudden passing. Second, we should remember him, and gratefully, for his leadership role (together with, among others, the indefatigable Prof. Hussein Adam of The College of The Holy Cross) in the creation of the International Congress of Somali Studies. Well into its fourth decade, the Congress has proven to be a resilient ritual (less a concrete institution) that convenes academic conferences every three years at some location in the world. Through the years, the Congress has produced very valuable collections that are part of the existing intellectual endowment of Somali Studies. Third, at his better moments, and these were not infrequent, Said typified the best amongst us: gifted with an uncommon sense of humor and fearlessly critical mind. Fourth, I always admired Said for his epiphanic bursts of Somali poetic power, a fine historian's imaginative retrieval of the past, and the vibrant restlessness of a first generation scholar (like all of us natives!) born into the perplexing ephemerality to monochrome yet seductive modernism. Fifth, every time I crossed intellectual swords with him, there will be a few memorable occasions when he will offer unseasonable and intriguing insights that I had believed settled or even unthinkable. I know that I had learned a lot from those encounters. Sixth, Said's academic work

as well as his public intellectual contributions were often marked by intelligent courage delivered with sublimely beautiful prose or oral precision and refinement. His movement between languages, particularly Somali and English, was an exemplar of what many of us continue to aspire to. Seventh, Said's approach to the Somali world varied according to the context that he found himself. But at his most bare and unguarded moments, I used to sense a mixture of tender humanity, a degree of stoicism, deep melancholic memory over the valuable traits that Somalis had lost, and feeling aghast over the frightening magnitude of the current helplessness in the face of the crushing contradictions. For Said, the Somali, the interregnum felt uniquely cataclysmic; for Said, the superb historian, Somalis were not the exception but, on the contrary, the latest society to join numerous others before them to drop to the depths of the abyss of civic degeneration. Whether current Somalis and their friends/associates could help save essential elements of a sinking culture beyond the calamity—including new, repressive, and, ultimately, malignant tactics towards artistic creativity and public performance and joy—and transmit them to the future is among the greatest of contemporary challenges. There is plenty more to say about Said, but I end with this: I hope our memory of his best will throw a lasting glow over our own modest efforts as well as inspire the generations to follow.

With this volume, we introduce two new members: an associate editor and a member of the International Advisory Board. The first is Dr. Dianna Shandy. She is a professor of Anthropology at Macalester College, where she has been teaching since 1999. She earned her doctorate, an M.Phil., and an MA in Anthropology at Columbia University in New York City and B.S. in Languages and Linguistics with a Certificate in African studies and Russian Area Studies at Georgetown University. She is the author/editor of four books and has edited special volumes on global childhood and the state for *Anthropological Quarterly*, among other contributions. Professor Shandy is the Book Review Editor for *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*. She is the past Program Co-Chair of the African Studies Association's 56th Annual meeting, Baltimore, MD. Her most recent research builds on work undertaken during a fellowship with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva on Dispora engagement and UNHCR's Global Initiative on Somali Refugees.

Bashir Sheikh Omer Goth is known to the readers of *Bildhaan*. He has made a number of superb contributions, including the recent biographical essay on the life of the incomparable and late *Magool*. An accom-

plished poet, a versatile writer across some of the most significant topic of Somali culture and civic challenges, Goth persistently speaks for community development. His numerous productions include plays (the earliest one he brought forth when he was in seventh grade!) and his widely known poem, "*Jabhad iyo Dagaalkii*. Moreover, he famously started the *Xaamiim* chain in which numerous other poets participated and which became widely popular among Somalis in the Horn of African and the diaspora. Several of Goth's English articles have been translated into French, Italian, Hebrew, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian.

Lastly, one of our authors, Dr. Ruth Smith would like to convey this message: "It has come to my attention that some text I referenced in my article, '*Young Somali Women's Individual and Collective Understanding of Cultural and Religious Identity Through Narrative Participatory Photography*,' infringed on the artist's copyright. Although his ideas were cited according to APA standards, I did not obtain explicit permission from Mohamud Mumin for the use of his work, and for this I sincerely apologize. My only intention was to extend and promote his good work."