



**Hopeful Renewal (Maalin walba Waabarigeed)  
Celebrating 30 years with “Daybreak is near: Literature, clans, and the  
nation-state in Somalia”. Ali Jimale Ahmed  
By Abdulkadir Osman Farah  
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*“Ali Jimale projects three consistent overlapping personalities: deep personal integrity with solid respectful character, even if one is unaware of the vast knowledge he carries; a pioneer bridging the gap between often dominant external discourses on Somaliness with actual existential Somali discourses; an intellectual with capabilities of convincing opponents to listen and understand him”*

**Ahmed Ismail Yusuf**, Somali-British Author and Translator

*“Ali Jimale not just writes and reflects about Somaliness, but also focuses on numerous specific secondary works, including Kadare’s, Nurrudin Farah’s, Abdi Muhammad Amin’s and Hadraawi’s work, emphasising what happens and how. Potential prospective inquiry relates to current and emerging literary works that he may be interested in- and eventually draws upon his work”*

**Prof. Giorgio Banti**

*“Ali Jimale is an author and thinker who lives with literature whether it is in Somali or in other languages. Ali is a person you can deal with- not just in literature but also life in general”*

**Prof Martin Orwin**

*“In his work, unlike others, Ali Jimale brings poetry, songs, stories, drama and theater together. He reconciles the nomadic culture with the agrarian sedentary culture. Reading him will let you personally identify with his work”*

**Amino Sharif**, Scientist and Literary Person

*“Ali Jimale’s knowledge and wisdom is deep and immense. He combines multiple roles including both the tasks of literary as well cultural critic. He often points out/ highlights what remains good for the society and what doesn’t work and fail in the society”*

**Amb. Ahmed Awad**, Former Somali Foreign Minister

*“The specificness in innovating/ creating with Ali Jimale’s work is that he often urges intellectuals and researchers to quest for new unexplored grounds/ aspects beyond the already known/presumably established. He emphasises “garnaqsi”*

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*justification and reasoning both from himself, in relation with others, in between and beyond”*

**Prof. Mohamed Omar Eno**

*“I have known Ali Jimale since the 1970s, when he was a manuscript writer for the then popular Radio Mogadishu program “Soomaalida Maanta” (Somalia Today). I have learned a lot from his style of writing. In his vast and diverse works, he creatively weaves literature with culture, language, society and politics”*

**Dr Hussein Abdulle ”Wadaad”, Somali-Swedish Poet, author and publisher**

*“Ali Jimale tells Somalis that if they knew or have focused on how much they share and have in common as a society, they will not even have bothered launching rebellious destructive (jabhado) movements in the first place. His main emphasis rests on urging Somalis to act rationally and reasonably”*

**Bashir M. Hersi, Italy based Poet and Author**

Once, an exiled scholar in history and literature returns to his ancestral region (town). Hoping to access, learn and research more about ancestral history, culture and heritage. As soon as the scholar arrived, his thrilled close relatives received him with expectations and enthusiasm. With decades long absence from the society, the scholar requested a calm, quieter place to work and concentrate. Declaring his aims of becoming a valuable returnee for all members of the society. Serving, not necessarily and exclusively for his close relatives, but for the entire community. With emphasis on independently studying and verifying the history and development of his ancestral town. On their part, the relatives insisted that under no circumstances will they permit him to move around town as an ordinary person. For the task, they designated a couple of energetic youth to accompany, keep an eye and provide him with whatever he needed in his work. The elders also suggested, and eventually requested, that their returned accredited academic son should prioritize and elevate the specific history and narratives glorifying his close ancestors and their heroic contribution and achievements in the ancestral town.

Astonished, the scholar agreed to see the case, while not promising much to his cousins. Soon after, other elders, who heard the arrival of the town’s prominent transnational son, came to the scholar and demanded concrete profiling of their version of history. Specifically, aspects pointing to current leaders of the town accessing reign and privilege illegitimately. They claimed to have concrete documentation for that neglected history that current elites of the town were not the real adherents to govern. Days after, a third angrily agitating community constituent rushed to the scholar’s temporary working place. They suggested the two most dominant constituents of the town, whom he earlier met and listened to, were indeed in the past people of humble subordinate background. Adding that despite their current excluded sociopolitical conditions, they were the real historically superior and glamorous people of the town. They demanded that history has to be re-written, re-evaluated, recorded and disseminated, so the truth comes forward.

After several months of interviews, research and meetings, the scholar was confused and frustrated, overwhelmed by the outpouring emotions and distortions. Particularly, the deep egocentrism and selfishness of the town’s people. He invited them to a public gathering.

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Declaring that with their superficial non-caring irrational attitudes and behaviour, they deserve neither balanced documentation of history, nor substantial present or prosperous future. He, then, in their bewilderment publicly burned the research notes he so far compiled. Announcing to his ancestral people his regretful decision of returning to exile. Under conditions, he at least imaginatively and nostalgically, could speculate a collective past with a potentially prosperous present and future.

As a prominent scholar Ali Jimale Ahmed, though confronting similar challenges of navigating among diverse competing Somali constituents, he never abandoned caring and studying the Somali society from multiple perspectives. Deeply listening, engaging as well as mediating not just the diverse, often quarreling constituents and perspectives among his people, but also among diverse communities around and across the world. He often critically sees ideas and practices from within, around, across and beyond often publicly presented unidimensional projections. However, If he has to position himself, he prefers situating himself among the subordinated and excluded/ sidelined communities/constituencies. Not because they remain at the bottom of existing dominating hierarchies, but because the excluded, in comparison to the included, act authentically and less superficially. Their voices provide genuine explanations of both the existential life-world as well as that of the systematic failures of institutional frames. Ali Jimale associates himself with the subaltern voices (mustadcafiin) instead of constituents accessing state privileges and their supporting propaganda machinery. This implies the significance and the legitimation of Somaliness lies not with state and power mechanisms but on actual Somali practices through community resilience and solidarity. Such consolidation of continuity goes back to ancient times. In comparison, the imposition of bureaucratic and systematic hierarchies arrived more recently and remains either absent or fragile from the ordinary routine daily lives of the people.

Furthermore, Ali Jimale's work partially resembles the work of renowned German European intellectual Jürgen Habermas. In the 1960s, Europeans held the view that the foundation of progress for people and societies mainly lay with the efforts of administrations, leaders, the actions of the upper class, and the state. At the time, Habermas offered a different perspective. In the book "*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*" (1962), he analyzes the rise and decline of the "bourgeois public sphere"—as space for rational-critical debate independent both from the state and upper class structures. Through his research, Habermas discovered that true social and political change originates from the middle and from lower struggling classes. He studied the history of literacy in Europe and found out that as people began reading newspapers and books, they started actively participating in politics and nation-building efforts differently. This led to the formation of what he called the "Public Sphere"—a communal space where public opinion is exchanged and refined. Habermas's studies later concentrated on the idea of "filtering" public discourses from emotions, simplifications, falsehoods as well inaccurate proclamations. He also aimed to integrate those publicly produced perspectives and ideas into the structure of the state for wider dissemination and implementation.

Ali Jimale agrees with the idea that the community remains the foundation of change in the society and beyond. However, he believes with such civic and public formations, the ultimate goal is the society itself with sustainable common understanding and coexistence. The aim is

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not just the establishment of an artificial social and political system or state . From the book “*Daybreak is Near*” and other research, Ali Jimale repeatedly emphasized the idea that while institutions, government agencies, and administrative capacities remain important, these structures are often secondary to how a society speaks, thinks, and organizes its cultural and sociopolitical existence.

Yet, society is not fully uniform and horizontal. Specific individuals and groups might be responsible for introducing and shaping such thoughts, cultural frames and literary expressions. These include "Organic Intellectuals", People who often do not chase particular privileges by subordinating themselves to existing powers. People who patiently and consistently assist and empower vulnerable communities.

Where Habermas speaks of the “Public Sphere” as a social forum towards a strong political system and state, Ali Jimale emphasizes the “Public Sphere” as a freely and dynamically existing social arena. In this space, people present literature and ideas illuminating the challenges people face, how they organize and negotiate coexistence with surrounding informal, formal and natural environments.

Moreover, Ali Jimale considers dominating systems and structures inherited from colonialism, often focusing and promoting centralized power. Such imbalance then strengthens privileged elites and their associates. A top-down system that repeatedly failed in the Somali context. More recently, though diversified, externals (foreign powers) relentlessly continue to impose their exclusively biased systems on Somalis. Frames and models that most Somalis do not contribute and are not even aware of its existence. The consequences eventually produce dysfunctional platforms, perpetual inconsistencies, conflicts and failures.

The popular perception suggests that Somali culture historically relied on oral forms—poetry, storytelling, performance. Ali Jimale partially agrees but considers diverse literary expressions as spaces of social and political action, interaction and competition. Within and around literature, people observe, persuade, ridicule, defend reputations, saving faces and also negotiating obligations, responsibilities and circumstances. Ali Jimale insists that political reality and development does not necessarily lie within the erection of material buildings or the mobilization of armies. Sociopolitical advance, or lack of advance, instead lies with how people imagine and act upon authority and obligation among themselves and with others. Institutions function only when they align with such shared expectations about trust, responsibility, and belonging. Herewith literature matters as it records social and political expectations as people continue expressing, testing, and revising multiple encounters and connections.

In numerous works, including “*Daybreak is near ...*” Ali Jimale often contrasts two main conceptions of Somaliness and Somali people. The first is a conception mainly designed by externals. People who are not Somalis but anxiously want to change how Somalis live and interact. The idea is that institutions should be designed for them from the top. And literature should explain and analyse such institutional platforms that structure society. Here politics means formal institutions, the nation state, constitutions, bureaucracies, the army as well as the legal system. Such a system results from systematic social engineering. Traditional Somali social relations such as the clan remain an obstacle to such top down state

formation. The point is that authority and legitimacy emerges from erected institutions downward. The deployment of coercion, laws and administrations reinforce such framing.

The second conception suggests that politics as social practice and literature produces through everyday social practices/exchanges: persuasion, mediation, performance and dialogue. Legitimacy emerges relationally, grounded in trust, reputation, obligation, and moral expectation. Here, clan is a dynamic sociopolitical process through which people learn authority, responsibility, and loyalty. Literature (poetry, song, theater, narrative) is a constitutive sociopolitical fact, not a cultural subordinate supplement. Somali literature functions as a concrete empirical site of performative politics, where people constantly challenge and revise authority.

Apart from such conceptual dialectics, Somalis increasingly act globally as a "virtual nation." A nation functioning beyond the traditional geography of Somalia. This is a de-territorialized complex identity formation/transformation, yet grounded in traditional Somaliness. Such transnational dynamics combine traditional forms of associations with economic and educational investments, digital media, and transnational political mobilization- linking major global cosmopolitan cities to many urban and rural environments in Somalia. Somaliness and Somalia is now produced by people who exist between multiple cultures and societies. This fits the idea of a world becoming interdependent and complex.

With the passing of three decades, the means and tools of communication and interactions have since changed. New assertive social and political groups mastering the utilisation of performative digital media platforms have emerged. Such developments bring benefits but also disadvantages. Virtual spaces occasionally lack seriousness in reflections and wisdom. Despite such limitations, Somalis capitalize such global interconnected mechanisms and networks. For instance, recent virtual successes include Somalis organizing homeland and hostland entrepreneurship as well as humanitarian projects. With such platforms, Somalis also resist those who translationally wish to harm their nation and society.

Consequently, debates on how to build a society and state no longer limit or confine to specific geographical locations. Such interdependencies and interconnections occur simultaneously, constantly, instantly and digitally. Therefore, Somalis, especially the younger generations, increasingly remain translational, connected and collaborating in actively participating and contributing to the formation of global debates across diverse languages and cultures. Such processes inaugurates and projects successful transnational hopefulness and renewal with "Maalinwalba Waabarigeed" (Everyday with its Dawn).

Finally, if Ali Jimale would have to caution Somalis today, particularly under the current situation of confronting a credible existential threat to Somali sovereignty and wellbeing, what would he potentially suggest? Apart from reminding them to unite in preserving their genuine historic traditions, culture and literature, he would probably have highlighted the significance of insisting horizontal common community solidarity with emphasis on collective developmental sincere work ethics:

“Dhulyahow qumani, ninki kuu qosliyo, kii ku quursadaa ma isku qiimi baa, maya maya maya. Kala quruxsanoo kalana qaayo weyn, isma qaban karaan. Qaata qaata qaata, qaata qalabka dhulkiinna u qaata, wa qodaal iyo dhismee, kawada qeyb gala. Dhulyahow qumani, kii ku qaayimiyo, kii wax kuu qabtaa, ma isku qiimi baa, maya maya. Kala quruxsanoo kalana qaayo weyn isma qaban karaan...”

(O my perfect land, is the one who laughs with you and the one who despises you of the same value? No, no, no. They differ both in beauty and in worth, while remaining incomparable. Grab the tools (technology) for your land; for farming and building, a task people participate collectively. O perfect land, is the one who honors you and the one who opposes and undermines you of the same value? No, no, no. They differ in both beauty and worth while remaining incomparable...)  
[https://youtu.be/Ynnz\\_yaPNGM?si=0hgzH8A9bjoklXRM](https://youtu.be/Ynnz_yaPNGM?si=0hgzH8A9bjoklXRM)

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