

I. M. LEWIS MASTER ETHNOGRAPHER OF THE SOMALI

Recipient of the I.U.A.E.S. Commission on Nomadic Peoples Lifetime Achievement Award

Philip Carl Salzman
Chair, Awards Committee

It is through the work of Professor I.M. Lewis that we have learned most fully and most deeply about the Somali nomads, that ‘fierce and turbulent race of Republicans’, as Burton, quoted by Lewis, calls them. From Lewis’ accounts of the Somali, always graceful, sympathetic, and analytically sharp, we have been taught about Somali nomads’ way of life, their engagements with the wider world, their history, and their contemporary circumstances and dilemmas. Thanks to Lewis’ efforts, publications on Somali nomads serve as one of the richest repositories in the ethnographic literature on nomadic peoples.

Lewis’ general ethnography of the northern Somali nomads, *A Pastoral Democracy*, subtitled *A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*, was published in 1961, and shortly followed by the brief complementary monograph, *Marriage and the Family in Northern Somaliland* (1962). Then Lewis collaborated with Andrzejewski on a volume about *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (1964). The first edition of Lewis’ history of the Somali, entitled *The Modern History of Somaliland: From Nation to State*, appeared in 1965. Three subsequent editions have been published, the latest, with the title, *A Modern History of the Somali*, in 2003. In addition to several brief, introductory works on the region, Lewis’ more recent works on the Somali include: *Nationalism and Self Determination in the Horn of Africa* (1984); *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (1994); and *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Afar and Saho* (1998).

Those of us who are familiar with *A Pastoral Democracy* and Lewis’ supplementary ethnographic monographs and articles can testify to how full and rich his accounts of Somali nomads are, and with what a masterful eye he examines events to discern patterns. If I may be allowed a personal reminiscence, the Somali were the first nomads I met, and I met them in Lewis’ *A Pastoral Democracy*. I was intrigued by the Somali nomads, not knowing at the time how much I owed to Lewis for the fascination that I felt. Reading *A Pastoral Democracy* was a major step for me along a path I have trod for many years (although Lewis of course cannot be held responsible for any of my ethnographic or theoretical sins).

Lewis as we know did not stop at his ethnography of a tribal people. He pursued the Somali back through history, and forward through the passing of time, and outward geographically in order to contextualise Somali people, practices, and activities. He particularly focused on the interplay between Somali culture and social construction in patterns of change and transformation such as state-building and state-breaking and other engagement with the wider and contemporary world. Thus Lewis has not left his Somali nomads as impressive examples of their ethnographic kind, but has followed them in their real lives as they struggle to make a place for themselves in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Lewis' work is a demonstration, if any such be needed, that the postmodern rejection of repeated field research and of continuity of ethnographic focus is an arid conceit.

We can see in Lewis' more general anthropological work an additional contribution of his ethnographic studies. Lewis' profound knowledge of tribal society arising from his Somali research is reflected in the wisdom of his more general treatises, such as *Social Anthropology in Perspective* (2nd edition 1985) and *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (1971), where we find examples drawn from the Somali, but, more importantly, his appreciation of the organisation and dynamics of social life and culture rests firmly on knowing first hand how tribal society works.

The Commission on Nomadic Peoples of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, in recognition of Professor I.M. Lewis' outstanding contribution to the study of nomadic peoples, presents Professor Lewis with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

WALTER GOLDSCHMIDT EXEMPLARY ANTHROPOLOGIST OF EAST AFRICAN PASTORALISTS

Recipient of the I.U.A.E.S. Commission on Nomadic Peoples Lifetime Achievement Award

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Walter Goldschmidt has enriched nomadic studies by bringing his particularly American sensibility to the study of pastoral and other East African peoples. Goldschmidt has succeeded in combining in his approach three complementary analytical themes, with which he has been able to illuminate lives and cultures. One theme is values, those institutionalised standards by which people measure themselves and others. The second theme is the individual, both as carrier of biological and psychological characteristics, and as actor pursuing his or her own interests. The third theme is ecology, and the ways in which ecological adaptation shapes institutions and values. These three themes were well established in American anthropology, but Goldschmidt developed and integrated them, and then applied them in a systematic, precise, and creative fashion to the study of East Africa.

Goldschmidt's three books on the Sebei of Uganda, along with his many articles, are a major contribution to the study of pastoral peoples and of East African pastoral peoples in particular: *Sebei Law* (1967), *Kambuya's Cattle: The Legacy of an African Herdsman* (1969), and his general ethnography, *The Culture and Behavior of the Sebei* (1976). In oversimplified summary: *Sebei Law* illuminates values, their institutionalisation into law, and their transformation in response to ecological shifts; *Kambuya's Cattle* features the individual actor manoeuvring and manipulating the conventional resources at his disposal to advance his goals; and *The Culture and the Behavior of the Sebei* illustrates the ways in which culture and behaviour are responses to ecological pressures, and that differences or shifts in ecological adaptation have their corresponding adjustments of culture and behaviour.

Goldschmidt's contribution to East African pastoralist studies extends beyond his own work to the major research project, 'Culture and Ecology in East Africa' (1960–67) that he directed. Four distinct East African societies were studied. In addition to the individual studies of each society, there was a general, psychological and value study carried out in all four by Robert B. Edgerton, which resulted in the ground breaking volume, *The Individual in Cultural Adaptation: A*

Study of Four East African Peoples, a work that Goldschmidt was particularly pleased to have sponsored.

The power of Goldschmidt's work results not only from his meticulous, detailed information, analytical sharpness, and theoretical insight, but also from his methodological rigour. For Goldschmidt, it was imperative for anthropologists to improve the quality of the information gained from research, so that we could more decisively draw sound conclusions. Methodological improvement required adoption and adaptation of scientific logic to anthropological research. To achieve this, Goldschmidt refined 'controlled comparison' and applied it in the 'Culture and Ecology in East Africa' research. Each of the four societies studied had both pastoral and farming sections, which meant that those differences between pastoral and farming sections found in common in all four societies, could be attributed to the difference between pastoral and agricultural adaptations, rather than to the cultural or environmental differences between the societies, which were effectively 'controlled' through this comparison. The concomitant variations elicited between pastoral or agricultural adaptations and behavioural and cultural patterns were the fruits that justified the methodology. Similar logic is applied in Goldschmidt's analysis of geographical variation and change over time, which are integral to his books on the Sebei.

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