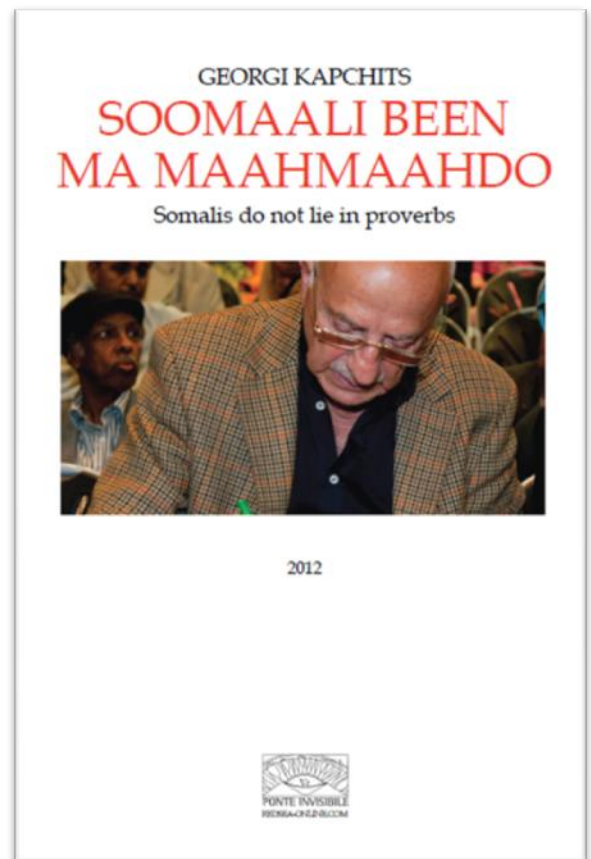


The Best Book on Somali Proverbs

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‘He who forgets the past, trails back to his ancestor’s vestige’. Relating to language, this saying imparts the impossibility of development once the archaic portion is lost. The significant stage of human intelligence and his ability of domination lie on the combination of rhetoric and wisdom. That is why Napoleon said “we rule men with words.”

When the wisdom shrinks, the knowledge of the word declines and the moral principles of the language stray, it means a clear degrading of the nation’s civilization. However, the Somalis are bestowed with a rich language and the ability to utilize it. That is why they are portrayed by Richard Burton as ‘a nation of poets’. Unfortunately, during the last few decades the Somali language and its oral literature were on the margins of public attention. In regard to the Somali proverbial treasures the situation has been improved by the Russian scholar Georgi Kapchits. In June in 2012 Ponte Invisible issued his book “Somalis do not lie in proverbs”. Following the example of the Prophets, Georgi said ‘*thou shalt not stray again*’ and saved a large number of Somali wisdom.



Who is the author?

Georgi Kapchits is a prominent figure in the field of the Somali language and folklore which he used to teach at Moscow State University and several universities in Europe. For 25 years he has worked as an announcer and translator at the Somali section of Moscow Radio world service.

When I first met G. Kapchits in Oslo in 2008 I was amazed by his ability to pronounce Somali sounds in the manner of a native speaker. I was also impressed by his knowledge of Somali proverbs which filled and decorated his speech. I said to him: “If I had been a Buddhist, I would have taken you for a reincarnated Somali sage.” In fact he reminded me of Muse Ali “Faruur” who had profoundly known Somali proverbs and sayings.

G. Kapchits does not limit himself to the study of the Somali language and folklore (see his books and articles on his website <http://kapchits.narod.ru>) but he diligently advocates their preservation at every international gathering he takes part in.

What kind of a book is it?

‘Somalis do not lie in proverbs’ is a bilingual (Somali-English) book aimed at Somali and non-Somali readers. In the introduction G. Kapchits has answered several important questions: What is the nature of proverbs? How should be understood the truth of a proverb? What makes the proverbial stocks of all nations alike and what is the difference between them? Into how many types can Somali proverbs be divided and what are their distinctive features?

The first section of the book contains 249 the most popular Somali proverbs and sayings received by a special experiment. The second part offers four thousand proverbs of different types.

The only imperfection in this book seems to be the small font size of the text. Nevertheless it makes the book of a pocket size and therefore handy. In my opinion, “Somalis do not lie in proverbs” is the book of the year in regard to those written in Somali. Even if it is not, this is a book which I recommend to everybody who is interested in the Somali traditional wisdom.

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