

**INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**LITERATURE SURVEY OF NORTH EASTERN PROVINCE OF KENYA**

**WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SOMALI PEOPLE**

**By**

**H. A. Liyai**

**University of Nairobi**

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Any views expressed in this paper are those of the author and should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Institute of African Studies, or the University of Nairobi.

## Introduction

Researchers are always faced with the task of identifying what literature exists on a given subject as a starting point for any research undertaking. It becomes necessary to document as much as possible, all the existing literature both written and in other forms, on the subject. In a country like Kenya with such a diversity of ecological conditions and ethnic groups it becomes necessary to have a systematic documentation on the land, history and culture of the various ethnic groups in order to understand and mould a national culture and identity.

Although there are very few publications on North Eastern Province as an administrative unit, most publications on the people of the Province take wider regional approaches of the ecological zones and mode of life. Thus the Province is often treated as part of the arid and semi-arid ecological region of Kenya and the Horn of Africa. Similarly, the people in the Province are often studied as part of the pastoral and nomadic groups of Kenya and the region. Most publications on pastoral and nomadic peoples of Kenya often cover the Somali, Boran, Galla, Gabbra, Rendille, Samburu, Turkana, Sekuye and Maasai. Except for the Somali, publications on these groups are listed in Eastern Province of Kenya and its peoples: a bibliography of research and publications by H.A. Liyai, presented at the Eastern Province Cultural Festival Symposium, Embu, 27 February - 1 March 1986, 107p.

This literature survey focuses on the Somali people of North Eastern Province. It includes general bibliographical sources, publications on the history, social organization, language and economic development. The survey was prepared within limited time and the author was not able to consult all the relevant documents for this purpose. It is therefore based on selected documents. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it may help stimulate interest in the study of the history and culture of the people of North Eastern Province.

## 1. Bibliographical Sources

Most of the literature on North Eastern Province and its people is found in general bibliographies on Kenya. I. Schapera's some problems of anthropological research in Kenya Colony (London: O.U.P., 1949) reviewed the available information on the history and culture of various ethnic groups in Kenya. In discussing the Hamitic peoples including the Somali and Galla, Schapers observed that more had been written on the Somali and Galla in Somalia and Ethiopia than those in Kenya. Other general bibliographies include East Africa: general, ethnography,, sociology, linguistics by Ruth Jones (London: I.A.I., African Bibliography Series), A bibliography on Kenya by J.B. Webster, (N.Y.: Syracuse University, 1967) and Ole Norgaard's Kenya in the Social Sciences: an annotated bibliography (Nairobi:Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980). Another major contribution to the documentation of Kenya's history with detailed regional coverage was the work of Robert G. Gregory (etal), Guide to the Kenya National Archives (New York: Syracuse University, 1968). This is an annotated guide to the official Provincial and District annual reports, record books, hand-over reports, intelligence reports and miscellaneous correspondence. Like other Provinces in the country, the North Eastern Province has experienced numerous administrative boundary changes since the colonial period. Gregory explains the historical background and of these changes and the names of the Districts and ethnicgroups within those boundaries, (Gregory, p. 13 - 14; p.22 - 23).

The most comprehensive bibliography on the Somali of Kenyawas done by Angela Molnos in the 4-Volume review of Socio-cultural research up to 1972. "The Somali of Somalia and North-EasternKenya" was included in the fourth Volume, Cultural Source material for population planning in East Africa: Vol. 4, bibliography (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973),p 89 - 92.Thiswas an update of the earlier work by I.M. Lewis. Peoples of the horn of Africa.(London: International African Institute, 1955), bibliography, p. 177-194.

It is only on Somali language and literature that subject bibliographies have been published. John W. Johnson's A bibliography of Somali language materials (Hargeisa: U.S.A Peace Corps, 1967) and the article, "A bibliography of Somali language and literature" African Language Review Vol. 8, 1969, are the major contributions.

## 2. History, Migration and Settlement

Extensive studies on the history of the Somali migration and settlement in North Eastern Province has been done by I.M. Lewis who has published several books and articles. One of his earliest works was Peoples of the Horn of Africa, Somali, and Saho (London: International African Institute, 1955). His most widely referred to work is a journal article, "The Somali conquest of the Horn of Africa", Journal of African History Vol. 1 (2) 1960, p. 213-230, which discusses in detail the Somali arrival in Kenya. Lewis' other contributions to the history include; "The problems in the development of modern leadership and loyalties in British Somaliland and Somalia" Civilizations, 10, 1960, p. 49-62, "Recent progress in Somali studies", Journal of Semitic Studies Vol. 9 (1), 1964, p. 122-134, and "Origins of the Galla and Somali", Journal of African History Vol. 7(1) 1966, p 27-46.

Like I. M. Lewis, Edmond Turton did extensive research on the migration of the Somali in Northern Kenya. His, The Pastoral tribes of Northern Kenya, 1800 - 1916 was a doctorate thesis submitted to the University of London, 1970. He also published, "Bantu, Galla and Somali migration in the horn of Africa: a reassessment of the Juba/Tana area" in Journal of African History Vol.XVII(3) 1976, p 519 - 537.

Besides Lewis and Turton, two other scholars have done serious research on the history of the area under review. They are M.A.G.H. El Safi, The Somali in the Eastern Africa Protectorate and Kenya Colony, 1895 - 1963, Ph.D Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1972, and P.T. Dalleo, Trade and pastoralism: economic factors in the history of the Somali of Northeastern Kenya, 1892 - 1948, Ph.D. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1975.

### 3. Social Organization

As mentioned before no major anthropological studies have been done on the Somali of Kenya. Most studies deal with the Somali people in the Horn of Africa as a whole. Such publications discuss the Somali as pastoralists or nomads. P.T.W. Baxter discusses the Nandi, Mandari, Nuer, Turkana, Samburu, Somali and Boran in "Absence makes the heart grow-fonder: some suggestions why witchcraft accusations are rare among East African pastoralists", in, M. Gluckman (ed), The allocation of responsibility (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972, p. 163 - 191. The ethnology of the Somali is described by F. G. Jonnings, "The Somali tribes of the Wajir District, Northern Frontier Province" in, Evidence.Kenya Land Commission, Vol. 2, Nairobi, 1933, p. 1649 - 1653.

On Somalisocial life, customs, religion and family, I.M. Lewis again provides significant contributions. His "Dulism in Somali notions of power" was published in Journal of Royal Anthropological Society: Vol. 93(1) 1963,p. 109 - 116. His edited book Islam in tropical Africa (1966) includes his chapter "conformity and contrast in Somali Islam",p. 252 - 267. It is however, in his contributions in Angela Molnos four-volume series that Lewis provides a detailed description ofthe Somali Culture as it pertains tofamily life. In "The Somali of Somalia and North-Eastern Kenya" published in Angela Molnos" Cultural Source materials for Population Planning in East Africa, Vol; 2: innovations and Communications (Nairobi: East African Publishing House,1972, p. 364), he discusses Somali views on family planning, language and communication. In his contributionof a similar title in the third volume in the Molnos' series, on beliefs andpractices (1973, p. 428 - 435), Lewis discusses the family, marriage, bride wealth, fertility, children, naming, sex life and decision making. It should be appreciated that for the last two contributions there is a bias towards the socio-cultural background to fertility and population, as the series was intended for use as a practical aid on population problems in East Africa.

Most studies on the social organization of the Somali and other pastoral groups look at pastoralism and nomadism. This approach has been used for example by Paul Spencer in his, Nomads in alliance: symbiosis and growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya (London: O.U.P., 1973), Carl T. Fumagalli, A diachronic study of change and socio-cultural processes among the pastoral nomadic Samburu of Kenya, 1900 - 1975 (Ph.D. Thesis, State University of New York, 1977), and B.C. Ross-Larson's Kenya's nomads (Mankato, Minnesota : Amecus ST. Inc., 1972).

On the general development of the pastoral societies an important seminar was held in Nairobi organized by the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, March 16 - 18, 1977. Mimeographed papers of the seminar are available at the University of Nairobi Library. The seminar on Pastoral societies of Kenya" included papers and discussions on such groups as the Rendille, Turkana, Boran, Somali, Gabbra and Maasai. It also included papers by D.W. Phillipson "The beginnings of pastoralism in East Africa" and Paul Spencer, "Co-ordination of research among, the pastoral societies of Kenya".

Another significant event was a conference on the future of pastoral peoples, held in Nairobi, August 1980. The proceedings of the conference were published, edited by J. Galaty, (et al), The future of pastoral peoples (Ottawa: I.D.R.C. 1981). The conference examined the recent developments in pastoral societies of Africa and Southwest Asia. Among the contributions in the proceedings is S.E. Migot-Adholla and Peter D. Little, "Evolution of Policy towards the development of pastoral areas in Kenya", p. 144-157, and John A. Nkinyangi, "Education for nomadic pastoralists: development planning by trial and error", p. 183 - 196.

In discussing the economic social and cultural development pastoral societies are frequently portrayed as conservative and resistant to change. Nyaga Mwaniki examines this issue and challenges the published attitudes in his monograph, Pastoral societies and resistance to Change: a re-evaluation (African Studies Program, Third Annual

Graduate Student Paper, 1980). He argues that these societies resist change which seem inappropriate and meaningless in terms of their pastoral economies, social systems and ecological conditions. But they are not inherently, conservative and resistant.

#### 4. Language

As mentioned here before, two bibliographies on Somali language and literature were published by J.W. Johnson (1967 and 1969). Other significant works on the language include Christopher R.V. Bell, The Somali Language (London: Longmans 1968), B. W.

Andrzejewski, The declensions of Somali nouns (London: S.O.A.S., 1964), and Lilius E. Armstrong, The Phonetic Structure of Somali (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Pr. 1964).

Andrzejewski also contributes to the Somali socio-linguistics in his, "The role of broadcasting in the adaptation of the Somali language to modern needs, in, W.H. Whiteley (ed) Language Use and Social Change (London: O.U.P., 1971, p. 262 - 273) similarly, D. Laitin provides "Education and language change: a study of the Somalia in Kenya's Northern Province", Mila Vol. 4 (1) 1974. p 36 - 49.

#### 5. Economic Development

In discussing the economic development of North Eastern Province we are concerned with the environment and its resources and how changes introduced affect man in the building of his culture and social institutions. Directed change is initiated by Government machinery through official development plans, development projects, development of communication infrastructure and the provision of social amenities, etc.

The Ministry of Finance and Planning Publishes periodic district development plans for all districts in the country. The latest for North Eastern Province are the District Development Plans, 1984 /1988 for Garissa, Mandera and Wajir Districts. These provide

a concise description of each district including physical, socio-economic and demographic characteristics, development projects, socio-economic infrastructure and development strategies.

With the "District Focus for rural development" as a national development strategy and the institution of District Focus Circular No. I of 1986, on the Establishment and use of District Information and Documentation Centres (DIDCs) it should be expected that there will be intensive documentation activities within each district. In future one would expect for example that a comprehensive literature survey and subject bibliographies on North Eastern Province should come from the Kenya National Library Services identified and established DIDCS.

As stated before most publications dealing with North Eastern Province and its peoples invariably deal with pastoralism, nomadism and environmental conditions. Such publications include N. Watson, "Nomads in Kenya - too many animals and not enough land", E. Stamp (ed), Growing out of poverty (Oxford O.U. P., 1977, p. 107 - 113), and H. Lamprey and H. Yussuf "Pastoralism and desert encroachment in northern Kenya", Ambio Vol. 10.(2 - 3) 1981, p. 131 - 134. The authors depict man's struggle with the unpredictable environment. Others in this category include D.N. Stiles' A diachronic study of the demography, human ecology and history of pastoral groups of northern Kenya (Report to Ford Foundation and UNESCO, 1980), and Desertification in northern Kenya, Desertification Control Bulletin, No. 8. 1983.

A substantial amount of research and publication on the same subject has been done by the Integrated Project in Arid Lands (IPAL) based in Marsabit. IPAL was established by UNESCO with the support of UNEP in 1976 with the aim of finding direct solutions to the most urgent environmental problems associated with desert encroachment and ecological degradation in arid lands. The project research centre in Marsabit carries out research on "human ecology of the nomadic pastoralists in dynamic



interrelationship with animals, plants and other resources of the drought-prone environment of Northern Kenya". (IPAL Technical Report No.D-5, 1986, p.ii).

Some of the research publications issued by IPAL are "The Integrated ecosystem approach to research in the arid lands of Northern Kenya" in IPAL Technical Paper No. A-3, 1980, p.3-21; "combating desertification and rehabilitating degraded production systems in Northern Kenya the IPAL Project, in Desertification Control Bulletin No. 10 1984; p.29 - 36. Both publications are authored by Walter J. Lusigi. Other IPAL publications include C.R. Field, Preliminary report on ecology management of camels, sheep and goats in Northern Kenya (IPAL Technical Report No.E-1a, 1979) and A.J. Wilson, "Camel diseases in selected areas of Kenya" in IPAL Technical Report No. A - 3, 1980 p. 78 - 87.

## 6. General Surveys

Finally we include in this literature survey a body of literature which is useful to the more cursory observer of the Province. This includes publications written by travellers and tourists describing the lands and peoples encountered. They are often lavishly illustrated and the accompanying texts laded with a personal enecdotes and nostalgia of the authors. They nevertheless offer useful introductory information on the land and the people.

Joy Adamson's The Peoples of Kenya (London: Collins and Harvill, 1967) falls in this category of literature. In the chapter on "Some North Frontier tribes: Somali, Borana, Gabra, Elmolo" (P. 199 - 219) she offers a personal experience and understanding of the social life and customs of the groups named. Similarly, Mirella Ricciardi's chapters on "Nomads" in her book Vanishing Africa (London: Collins 1974, p. 42 - 47; p. 73 - 158) attempts to recapture the "receding civilization" by colour pictorial splashes with the description of social life, and material culture of the nomadic peoples of northern Kenya.

An attempt to describe the ethnology, history and culture of the Somali is made by Andrew Fedders in "Eastern Cushites: Somali", a chapter in his book, Peoples and Cultures of Kenya (Nairobi: Trans Africa, 1979, p.23 - 27). David K. Jones returns to the tourist nostalgic fringe in Faces of Kenya (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977). In "The desert country (p. 167 - 213) he discusses peoples inhabiting the northern and north Eastern parts of Kenya including, the Samburu, Boran, Somali, Turkana, Rendile. The personal experience leads him to observe thus, "The Samburu seem so much more cheerful and friendly than the more dour and taciturn Turkana", p. 179).

There are numerous such publications, not to forget the Earl of Lytton's more blunt edge in his partisan observation of the geopolitical environment in the Horn of Africa, The stolen desert: a study of Uhuru in North-East Africa (London.: MacDonald, 1966).

There are many ephemeral publications that litter offices of tour operators, with a note "Please take one".