

PREFACE

This volume is based on the papers presented at the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, between October 29 and November 2, 2012. The papers were presented at a panel entitled “***Livelihood, Development, and Local Knowledge on the Move***,” coordinated by Professor Masayoshi Shigeta of the Center for African Area Studies, Kyoto University. Of the eleven papers presented, seven were selected by reviewers for inclusion in this volume. All the works were based on fieldwork conducted by Ethiopian, Japanese, and European scholars in diverse agro-ecological and sociocultural regions of Ethiopia.

The panel’s theme emerged from an ongoing project on African Local Knowledge at the Center for African Area Studies, as well as from the center’s broader concern with the nexus of local knowledge and livelihoods in Africa. Local knowledge has been defined as the knowledge that a local community accumulates over generations, which enables the community to achieve stable livelihoods in their environment. It is dynamic, as it can be created continuously, modified, or lost in response to changes in the physical, socioeconomic, or political environments. As such, the papers presented at the panel dealt with themes of local knowledge and livelihoods and associated changes from both endogenous and exogenous sources. In turn, Ethiopian societies’ development possibilities based on local knowledge and harmonious relationships between nature and humans was also explored.

Ethiopia has experienced rapid socioeconomic, political, and environmental changes in the last few decades. Infrastructure improvement, increased foreign direct investment, and diverse development and conservation projects have all effected significant change on the country’s economy, physical environment, and methods of extracting natural resources. These factors have also affected the actors who extract the resources by modifying the relationships between both individuals and their communities. For example, many Ethiopians face challenges due to climate change and land degradation resulting from repeated farming and population pressure, market encroachment on local communities, and government interventions. These issues affect local livelihoods, style, and natural resources use and management. To cope with these changes, people have made full use of or altered their local knowledge. As a result, people’s land and forest resource use, knowledge of pasture or wild plants, crop choices and storage, and interactions with markets and local institutions have evolved in order to preserve or improve their quality of life.

Closer investigation of how Ethiopians have used or changed their local knowledge in response to challenges will reveal important implications for solving many of the country’s current problems. In this context, the papers presented at the panel discuss local knowledge and livelihoods at the intersection of local,

national, and global processes and transformations. Accordingly, papers included in this volume deal with major domains of indigenous knowledge, viz. development and livelihood, natural resources management, health, and local technological issues. Challenges and opportunities of the ongoing changes affecting local communities are emphasized.

First, Mamo investigates emerging commercialization in Ethiopia's agricultural sector, specifically with regard to the conflict between commercialization and home consumption. Using the case of a milk-selling cooperative operated by the Arsii Oromo people in Kofale District, he points to challenges and opportunities embedded in this evolving livelihood pattern. On one hand, the milk market raises people's income; on the other hand, this income may not necessarily translate into fulfilling a household's consumption interest. Therefore, Mamo suggests that competing interests between genders, home consumption, and other expenditures must be seriously considered. Ultimately, he contends that the sustainability and survival of rural communities will depend on how innovative they are in negotiating the diverse interests, actors, needs, and desires in this broader context.

Nishi's contribution highlights the link between health and livelihood in an examination of HIV/AIDS in rural Gurage, southern Ethiopia. Amid the sea of sociocultural, ecological, and political changes experienced by current rural communities, he highlights the importance of dealing with infectious disease epidemiology at the intersection of global health technology, individual behavior, and local institutions. Accordingly, his paper deals with knowledge, institutions, and ethical issues related to human survival in the context of the spread of pathogens. Using examples observed in Gurage, Nishi investigates the challenges (e.g., women's livelihood, remarriage, and childbirth) faced by households affected by HIV, as well as responses these problems by local health workers and affected households.

In Staro's paper on water usage among the Garri pastoralists of southern Ethiopia, he discusses the links between indigenous knowledge, natural resources, and social relations management. Staro calls for the current quest for indigenous knowledge and community-based natural resource management to be placed within a wider social and historical process. He suggests that, to facilitate the long-term interaction of pastoralists with external agencies (particularly national and local governments), resource use and management roles must be taken into account.

Kaneko's paper discusses pottery making knowledge and the process of its intergenerational transmission among the Aari of southwestern Ethiopia. Her analysis reveals clear similarities and differences among various artisans' knowledge of pottery production. Kaneko shows that, in potters' interaction with each other and their physical environment, pottery-making becomes a process of learning, socialization, and creation. She also argues that diversity of knowledge is not only promoted by the potters themselves, but also recognized and expected by those who use their wares.

Ito's work focuses on the economic and social implications of honey production in Gera, southwestern Ethiopia. After outlining the processes and negotiations engaged in by actors with various resources (e.g., knowledge, skill, and land), Ito points to a recent upsurge in various Ethiopian agencies' interest in improving

current honey production processes. Such improvements are intended to revitalize the economy, reduce poverty, and fund forest conservation through honey production profits. He expresses concern that prior research and current government interest have focused on improving productivity and efficiency without giving due attention to the roles and relevance of local people in the local method of honey production. Pointing to the high potential of honey production in Ethiopia and advantages of modern beehive and apicultural technology, he emphasizes the importance of local knowledge and social relations.

Samuel's paper presents evolving livelihood patterns among the pastoral Hamar people of southwestern Ethiopia. He discusses how changes in weather patterns (particularly the region's erratic and declining rainfall) and government policies are affecting the Hamar's herding culture. Samuel cites the emergence of various types of grazing enclosures, evolving crop farming, and changes in livestock mobility (or grazing) patterns as local adaptive strategies evolve in response to extensive climatic, social, and political changes. His analysis highlights both challenges and opportunities embedded in this emerging scenario among the Hamar.

Aklilu discusses the ecological and livelihood crises caused by land degradation and rain shortage in eastern Tigray, northern Ethiopia. He presents a case study of conservation activities and land rehabilitation in the village, which exemplifies successful environmental rehabilitation achieved through local innovation in conjunction with extra-local knowledge systems (in the form of government and NGO intervention). In this context, Aklilu emphasizes the potential that local communities have to prevent, reverse, or adapt to land degradation. Specifically, he presents indigenous adaptation strategies that have enabled local people to reduce their vulnerability to climate change, and highlights the potential of integrating indigenous knowledge into formal climate change strategies.

In various ways, these papers address local communities' knowledge, development and livelihood issues, and sustainability. The findings and conclusions included in this volume suggest that the communities studied in Ethiopia are subject to a shifting environment affected by government policies, educational expansion, infrastructure improvement, and increasing market forces. In this context, such communities' existence and sustainability will depend on the extent to which they are fully aware of the consequences of the transformation in which they are participating, and to which they are contributing. The analyses collected here also caution against the temptations and impressive short-term benefits of change, suggesting that local values may better contribute to their long-term survival.

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RESEARCH SITE OF CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS VOLUME



* The number on the map shows the chapter number in this volume.

Glossary of plant names appeared in this volume

coffee	<i>Coffea arabica</i>
corarima	<i>Aframomum corrorima</i>
ensete	<i>Ensete ventricosum</i>
Ethiopian kale	<i>Brassica</i> spp. including <i>B. carinata</i>