

PREFACE

This Special Issue of African Study Monographs consists of 18 chapters written by students at the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS) at Kyoto University, Japan, and the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology (SOSA) at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. The studies were initially presented at the international workshop on the “Environment, Livelihoods, and Local Praxis in Asia and Africa” held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 20–23 October 2003, which was jointly organized by ASAFAS and SOSA. Some 30 participants from Kyoto University and a host of Ethiopian scholars attended the meeting. The event was more than an academic workshop and involved a weeklong on-site educational tour of various research sites in Ethiopia. Twelve of the 22 papers read for the workshop and 10 of the 18 chapters included in this volume are about Ethiopia.

The meeting in Addis Ababa and the publication of this monograph were made possible by funds from the 21st Century Center of Excellence (COE) Program. The COE Program, which is a recent initiative proposed and financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, was established at ASAFAS jointly with the Center for Southeastern Asian Studies (CSEAS) for a period of 5 years beginning in 2002. The program cultivates a competitive academic environment with the goal of creating world-standard research and education in a range of disciplines. The COE Program at ASAFAS has three goals: integrating research activities and on-site education, establishing an integrated information center for area studies, and adopting the common research theme of “Human–Nature Coexistence in the Globalizing World.” The workshop in Addis Ababa was the first international meeting sponsored by the COE Program in the context of the first goal. Establishing and maintaining scholarly relationships with universities and research institutes in Africa and elsewhere in the world is one of the objectives of the MA program in social anthropology offered by the Department of SOSA. Therefore, the workshop and this publication may be viewed as steps toward this objective.

The idea of holding the workshop in Ethiopia had more to do with our commitment as the editors to promote collaboration between the students and faculty of ASAFAS and SOSA. Ever since we met in the second half of the 1980s, we have been collaborating in academic research and more recently in development projects in southwestern Ethiopia. Moreover, we have been encouraging Japanese scholars to conduct research in Ethiopia, while facilitating conditions allowing Ethiopian scholars to travel to Japan to study. It has long been our dream to launch joint research that would lead to conferences and joint publications. When the idea of conducting the COE

workshop outside Japan was proposed, we offered to organize the meeting in Ethiopia. Thanks to the hard work of the contributors, we managed to organize a successful workshop and publish this volume.

The topics discussed in the volume cover a variety of interesting issues related to the environment, social identity, livelihood strategies, indigenous knowledge and practices, and social problems. The papers make valuable contributions to the literature on Asian and African area studies, and we hope that the readers, particularly university students, will find the monograph quite informative and possibly inspirational.

Finally, the editors and the authors of each chapter thank the Editorial Office of African Study Monographs, Center for African Area Studies, Kyoto University, for preparing the volume and Ms. Aki Minami and Mr. Toru Sagawa for providing editorial assistance.

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