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Preface

This volume of *Senri Ethnological Studies* is an outcome of "Empirical Studies on Ethno-Systems in Northeast Africa," a joint study program of the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka (Kurimoto 1994). The joint study program is one of the main research projects of the museum as a national research center of ethnology and anthropology. At any time, there are about thirty on-going programs. They are officially approved and financed by the museum. Each one focuses on a specific theme, organized by a museum staff member, with participants from different universities and institutions in Japan. Members of a program may share common interests and research fields relevant to the theme, but, in principle, the composition of members is multidisciplinary. A program may continue for two or three years, after which it is required to produce the results in a published form.

Our program is one such research project. It was originally organized in 1991 by Katsuyoshi Fukui as program leader and Kazuo Otsuka as sub-leader. At that time they were associate professors of the museum. The project continued for three years until 1994, during which time both Fukui and Otsuka moved from the museum, to Kyoto University and Tokyo Metropolitan University respectively. Shun Sato and Eisei Kurimoto took over the roles of program leader and sub-leader.

The program had twenty-one members. We were from a variety of disciplines: social, cultural and ecological anthropology, history, archeology, linguistics, geography and religious studies. We were also at different stages of our academic careers, from senior professor to post-graduate student. All of us had experience of fieldwork in northeast Africa, and shared the common objective of studying and achieving a deeper understanding of the societies and cultures of the region.

During the three years, nine seminars were held, with twenty-two presentations by the members. These seminars were conducted in a very free and animated atmosphere. Heated discussions and debates across the boundaries of disciplines usually continued until midnight. The fourteen essays in this volume are results of this communal and stimulating experience, although, of course, each contributor is solely responsible for his/her article. Therefore we are very grateful to all the members of the study program, including those who could not contribute to this volume.

Our program was primarily focused on the "ethno-system." It was an operational concept proposed by Fukui in an attempt to reevaluate conventional ethnographic studies on specific and allegedly isolated ethnic groups in the context of inter-ethnic relations in the region of northeast Africa. An ethno-system was to be a system of inter-ethnic relations, meaningful and relevant to the reevaluation and reanalysis of the characteristics of a society from a new perspective.

In the course of the program, instead of trying to clarify and define the term

"ethno-system," we maintained it as a working notion for each member to use in presenting his/her own paper.

We use the term "Northeast Africa" in a broad sense. It is not limited to the Horn, although many of the essays are on Ethiopia. For studies of any area it is always highly problematic to demarcate clear-cut boundaries in space and time. In our case we find no reason, be it academic or conventional, to limit the domain of northeast Africa within the present state territories. Therefore, we have included in this volume three papers on the directly adjacent areas. One is on the Synaitic Bedouin, and two are on the Swahili and long distance trade in the Indian Ocean Rim.

If the themes of the essays look diverse, it is a reflection of the highly complex nature of the region in terms of economy, culture, ethnicity, religion, and history. We do not claim that the essays taken together represent a holistic image of northeast Africa, even if such a thing were possible, but we would say that they certainly represent some of the important aspects of the region, and may be a useful guide to scholars.

One of the major research fields in northeastern African area studies in Japan is the ethnography of the subsistence economy and related "folk knowledge." The first four essays are in this category and all of the peoples dealt with live along rivers. Hiroshi Matsuda's "Riverbank Cultivation in the Lower Omo Valley" describes the intensive farming system among the Kara, an Omotic speaking group. Since the riverbank, where most cultivated fields are located, is inundated by seasonal floods, soil fertility is renewed every year and sustainable food production is possible. He compares this area with other seasonally flooded environments in Africa.

Another example of riverbank cultivation is discussed in "People of the River" by Kurimoto. The range of economic activities of the Anywaa (Anuak), a Nilotic people of western Ethiopia who live along the tributaries of the White Nile, is wider than the study above. Besides riverbank cultivation, they are actively engaged in fishing and hunting, which are strongly associated with the river. The study challenges the predominant pastoral image of the Nilotic peoples.

A much modernized and commercialized picture of a riverine poeple is presented by Kazuo Otsuka. "Water, Land and Labor in Irrigation Agriculture along the Nile," is a study of a peasant village on the Nile in northern Sudan, where diesel pump irrigation was introduced in the 1940s. It analyses the system of ownership, usufructuary rights to land and the redistribution system of the agricultural products in the historical context since the last century.

The Cushitic speaking Hoor (Arbore) in southwestern Ethiopia cultivate the flooded plain of the Weito River. Yukio Miyawaki's essay, "Cultivation Strategy and Historical Change of Sorghum Varieties in the Hoor of Southwestern Ethiopia," specifically focuses on the numerous local varieties of sorghum. He maintains that the indigenous knowledge of sorghum may be called "folk science" and demonstrates, through detailed analysis of rich empirical data, why and how

they have such numerous varieties in terms of "diversified selection."

These four essays may be of much interst to agronomists and agricultural development specialists. In spite of the various settings, the river persists as the vital source of life in the region.

The southwestern part of Ethiopia has been a place where a number of Japanese researchers have conducted fieldwork. Like many other Omotic societies the Dizi have a stratified social order. In "Rainbow-like Hierarchy," Akira Deguchi critiques the work of E. Haberland who studied the same people some sixty years ago and constructed a model of the "caste-like society." Deguchi presents evidence, such as social ties and oral traditions, which make the boundaries between "castes" obscure and flexible. As an alternative, he proposes a "rainbow model" of the society.

Deguchi's essay is relevant to Osamu Hieda's paper on multilingualism among the Koegu of the lower Omo Valley in southwestern Ethiopia. Their economy and ideology are fundamentally oriented to hunting and gathering, although they practise cultivation. They are a minority group despised by all the neighboring peoples, and form a kind of a subordinate class in the Kara society. As a linguist, Hieda conducted research, in close cooperation with Matsuda who studied the same area, on multilingualism among the Koegu to reveal the varying degrees of multilingual ability by sex and age. He accounts for the characteristics of inter-ethnic relations in a wider geographical setting.

The next two essays are also by linguists. Yoichi Tsuge compares the basic vocabulary of four Omotic languages—Ari, Kara, Hamer and Dime—in order to clarify phonetic corrrespondences, in cooperation with other researchers, including Hieda and Matsuda, working in the same area. It is a valuable contribution to the study of these little known languages.

"Where Does the Wadi Come from?" by Tetsuo Nishio is a socio-linguistic study on spatial cognition among pastoral Bedouins in the Sinai Peninsula. He forcefully argues how the pastoral way of life is reflected in the language. The essay may stimulate not only those who study other pastoralists in the region but also cognitive scientists.

Muslims in Ethiopia, who comprise about half the entire population, have not properly been dealt with in Ethiopian studies, presumably because of the dominant image of Ethiopia as the country of Orthodox Christianity. Minako Ishihara in her essay, "Text Analysis of a Poetic Verse in a Muslim Oromo Society in Jimma Area, Southwestern Ethiopia," specifically focused on poetic verse, a religious practice of popular Islam among the Muslim Oromo. She examines the carefully transcribed and translated text in detail, and analyses its social and political significance. Her study clearly suggests that Islam in Ethiopia is a worthy subject of comparative studies in northeast Africa.

"Uniqueness" is another image underlying Ethiopian studies; Ethiopian culture is considered distinctively different from any other culture of the neighboring areas. Takao Yamagata's essay on the symbolism of Christian monastries challenges this

view. He argues, adopting a narrative style of travelogue, that the circular plan of Ethiopian monasteries may find its cosmological affinity not with the Coptic monasteries in Egypt but with African homesteads. Some may consider his arguments speculative, but we think this sort of reanalysis of Ethiopian cultural and social elements in a wider northeastern African context could be fruitful.

Deguchi's second essay on the creation myths of the earth and sky is a reanalysis, through Lévi-Strauss' structuralistic approach, of Nilotic myths studied by British anthropologists. His argument is that the myths do not necessarily reflect the image of self-contained community but rather imply instability and division. Although both structural-functionalism and structuralism seem to be out of fashion in contemporary anthropological discourse, Deguchi demonstrates that there can still be room left for a further exploration.

The last three essays are on trade in one sense or another. Although commercialized pastoralism is an integral part of pastoral economies in many parts of northeast Africa, it has been neglected, particularly in anthropological studies. We would argue that it is inseparably connected to subsistence pastoralism. Shun Sato's essay presents us a typical case among the Garri, Cushitic speaking camel herders in southern Ethiopia. Garriland is located on the borders of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. Taking advantage of living in the borderlands, the Garri have played a key role in inter-regional long distance trade, which dates back to at least the eighteenth century. Sato shows how economic transactions are conducted, how the network of traders is established and maintained based on kinship relations, and how commercialized and subsistence pastoralism is managed by the same family group.

Essays by Chizuko Tominaga and Hikoichi Yajima invite us to the Indian Ocean coast and beyond. In "Indian Immigrants and the East African Slave Trade," Tominaga examines historical sources in order to reevaluate the active involvement of Indian traders in the slave trade of nineteenth century Zanzibar. Their role has been, she argues, underestimated in comparison to that of Swahili and Arab traders.

Based on an extensive research on literature, Yajima argues that the Swahili socio-cultural area emerged as a result of the long and complex history and synthesis of various cultures and peoples in the "Indian Ocean maritime world." His essay demonstrates that the entire east coast of the African continent was already an integral part of the global economic system during the first millennium, and points to the importance of determining any unit of area studies in a wider perspective in both time and space.

In Japan, area studies on northeast Africa based on fieldwork are a relatively new genre. They started in the 1960s and developed through the 1970s and 1980s. The essays in this volume demonstrate and represent, the contemporary standard of area studies by Japanese scholars on northeast Africa. It is our sincere wish that through publication in English our work shall become more accessible to the global academic community.

We would like to express our deep gratitude, on behalf of the contributors, to the academic and administrative staff of the museum, who contributed to and supported the joint study program, and to the editorial and publishing committee which approved the publication of this volume in *Senri Ethnological Studies*. Finally we are grateful to Ms Yuko Matsumoto who performed secretarial duties.

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