News and Notes

The 20ᵗʰ International Conference of Ethiopian Studies

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The 20ᵗʰ International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (ICES) was held in Mekelle, Tigray Region, Ethiopia, from September 30 to October 5, 2018, and was hosted by Mekelle University. The conference hosted 594 participants from different continents and countries, such as Africa (17) America and Canada (28), Europe (153), Eastern Europe (12), Japan (17), etc., and 305 researchers from local universities in Ethiopia. As many as 329 presentations were delivered. This number is expected to increase to 400 as certificate issuing is ongoing during this reporting time.

The conference theme, "Regional and Global Ethiopia—Interconnections and identities," constituted 13 major themes (disciplines), under which over 107 panels were held and 696 papers were submitted. The themes covered areas such as archaeology, arts, economics, education, history, Ethiopian studies, human geography and environment, law, philology and linguistics, politics, migration, population, and social anthropology. The opening ceremony was held at the Mitiku Haile conference hall on September 30 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., after registration of participants in the foyer of the hall. The program started with a musical performance by a youth musical group, followed by a welcoming address from Dr. Ahmed Hassen, Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES). Professor Kindeya Gebrehiwot, president of Mekelle University, and Professor Fetien Abay, vice president for research and community service at Mekelle University, were the hosts and organizers of the event. In their address, they highlighted their gratitude on behalf of Mekelle University for the opportunity to host such a prestigious international conference in social sciences and humanities related to the region, and hoped that the event would promote further networking and experience-sharing among participants and between institutions. A welcoming reception was later held at 6:00 p.m. at a local restaurant (Geza Gerelasse), where participants were entertained with local food and musical performances.

On October 1, the first day of the conference, the programs started at 9:00 a.m. with a keynote speech by Prof. Mitiku Haile, former president of Mekelle University and former UNESCO Deputy Representative of Ethiopia. At 10:00 a.m., scheduled programs of panel presentations started, and continued until 12:30 p.m. After lunch, programs resumed from 2:00 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. All presentations were held within the Mekelle University campus in one of the teaching complexes.

In the afternoon of the second day, a book was launched and an exhibition was inaugurated. On the fourth day of the conference, Prof. Gunther Schlee delivered the second keynote speech in the afternoon, titled "Citizenship and 'Backwardness' as Interconnected Collective Identities." Considering the current winds of change in Ethiopia's political dynamics, his speech was of special interest to most participants, including myself. Prof. Schlee[1] tried to highlight the realities in Ethiopia's governance system of ethnic federalism. He spoke about the challenges in balancing universal citizenship with ethnic entitlement, on the one hand, and how "backwardness," given as a label

to certain ethnic groups, has been used to revoke entitlement on the other.

My attendance at the conference mainly focused on the theme "Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies." Thus, on the first day, I attended a panel titled "Local-Knowledge Studies Reconsidered; Creativities, Transformation, Sharing and Beyond." A panel recognizing the elaboration of the local knowledge studies approach tried to bring researchers from a variety of perspectives together for further discussion and mutual criticism for the next-generation research on the topic.

I participated as a presenter on "Tourism and Development" panel within the same thematic area as indicated above. Submitted abstracts in this panel covered areas such as impediments in the Ethiopian tourism development; community empowerment and tourism development in Ethiopia; the challenges in linking tourism with agriculture; overcoming the challenges in the Ethiopian hospitality industry; Ethiopian heritages and tourism; the challenges in developing domestic tourism in Ethiopia; and other related topics. However, out of ten expected presentations, only five were delivered. One particularly interesting presentation was the introduction of geo-tourism as a new potential option for Ethiopia, showing an example of scenic landscapes and geological formations and associated landforms in Northern Ethiopian Highlands, Dogu'a Tembien mountainous district that has been developed for geotropism.

Another panel, "Globalization and rural Ethiopia," had interesting presentations on the effects of accelerating cross-border interactions such as technology, economic activities and policies, climate change, etc., on rural communities in Ethiopia. Numerous papers, based on fieldwork evidence, showed that the realities of people's livelihoods impacted positively and negatively through such cross-border interactions. As it is my interest area, I followed most of the presentations. One particularly interesting presentation was "Revisiting Shashemene: A mixed methods approach to a study of social change" by Professor Gunilla Bjerne. The presentation included discussion on an experience of a re-study of a research that started in 1972, combined with a follow-up study in 2008. The focus was on what can be understood when analyzing data collected under a situation where everything has changed drastically, i.e., the field, the researcher, and the theoretical framework, and how a mixed methods approach worked in such a situation.

The weather was pleasant throughout the duration of the conference and a number of evening receptions were organized for participants to relax and continue networking.

NOTES

(1) Schlee, G. (2018). Citizenship and "Backwardness" as Interconnected Collective Identities. Keynote address. 20th International Conference on Ethiopian Studies. Mekelle, Ethiopia.

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Appendix

The list of panel title, 20th International conference of Ethiopian Studies

Discipline	Panel number and title
01 Archaeology, Palaeoanthropology & Heritage	0101 Interdisciplinary Interconnections for the Scientific Growth of Ethiopian Archaeology
	0102 Practices of Archaeological Researches and Conservation of Archaeological Sites in Ethiopia
	0103 Studying Aksumite Ceramics to reconstruct social and trade intra-interconnections
	0104 Foreign Projects Meet The Ethiopian Universities. Several Cases of Studies in Ethnology, Linguistics, Archaeology and Experimental Researches
	0105 Current Practices and Discussions on Heritage in Ethiopia
02 Arts & Architecture	0201 Contemporary Ethiopian Art Scene: Drawing Heritages from the Past, and (Being engaged in) New Aspects in Art
	0202 Ethiopian Christian Art: Defining Styles, Defying Definitions
	0203 Ethiopia's Ecclesiastical Painting Traditions: Influences, Development, Technology, and Conservation
	0204 Ethnomusicology Studies in Ethiopia
	0206 Museums and Development in Ethiopia
	0207 Music and the Dynamics of Contact in Ethiopia
	0208 Musical Instruments and Performance of Peripheral Societies of Ethiopia
	0210 The New Rock-Hewn Churches of Ethiopia: Continuity or Revival?
	2011 Traditional Building Technology and Comparison with Abroad
	2012 Transnational Entanglements of Cultural Festivals in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa
	2013 "Art History, Church Architecture, Liturgical Development and Historical Issues in Tigray" Inter-Disciplinary Researches
	0214 Challenges of Modern Architecture and Urban Planning in Ethiopia
03 Economics & Development Studies	0301 Ch'AT in Ethiopia
	0303 Development and Labour in The Horn of Africa: Outlining the Contours of a Key Relationship
	0304 Enabling Infrastructures, Redefining Territories: Ethiopia's Regions Beyond Rural or Urban Bias
	0305 Lands of The Future: Time for Innovation. Can Ethiopia Still Set a Global Example for Equitable Development
	0306 Vulnerability and New Solidarities Among Ethiopian Pastoralists: Renegotiating Power and Identities in Ethiopia's Pastoral Borderlands.
	0307 Entrepreneurship, Enterprises and Social Responsibility
	0308 Rural Development: Recent Research on the Socioeconomic Situation of Farmers
	0309 Development Aid, Food Security Programmes and the Effects
04 Education & Pedagogical Science	0403 Modern Education In Ethiopia: Challenges For Teachers and Learners
	0404 Managing Universities and Quality of Higher Education
05 History of the States and Peoples of the Region (Political and Cultural)	0501 A view From Afar
	0502 Borders and Frontiers in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa After 1941
	0503 Entangled Histories and Traditions: Ethiopia and the World
	0504 Ethiopian vis-à-vis Oromo and Islamicate Studies: Change Trajectories
	0505 Ethnic Identities of Amhara Region
	0507 New Evidence on Slavery and the Salve Trade in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa

	0508 New Perspectives on the Relation Between Ottoman-Turkey and The Ethiopian Region
	0509 Polish Ethiopian Studies in A Global Context
	0510 The medieval Ethiopian Dynamics (12th–17th): State, People, Space ad Knowledge in Movement
	0511 Trade, Routes and Travel: Ethiopia in the Pere-Modern World
	0513 Rethinking Ethiopian Studies
	0514 "Cartography and itineraries": Territorial Knowledge and Spatial Networks of Ethiopia and Its Neighbours in Historical Maps and Itineraries
	0515 The Italian Occupation of Ethiopia: Recent Studies
	0516 Modern Ethiopia from Adwa to the Durg
	0517 General Panel "Discussions on Ancient History: The Aksumite Period"
	0518 Ethiopia and the Ancient World: Reception and Transformation of Geographical Knowledge
	0519 Entangled Histories and Traditions: Ethiopia and the World—Ethiopian Imagination Outside Ethiopia
06 Human Geography, Environment & Ecology	0602 Developing Waters, Crafting the State, and Remaking Society in Ethiopia
	0604 New Water-Energy Paradigms? Ethiopia's Expanding Hydroelectric Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities for Domestic and Regional Energy Futures
	0605 Climate and Its Impact on Livelihoods
	0606 Biodiversity and Ecosystems
	0607 Landscape Change and Land Use Change
	0608 Water Resources, Irrigation and Rainfall
	0609 Ecological Systems and Population
	0610 Recent Studies on Energy, Waste, Sedimentation, Erosion
07 Law, Governance & Political Economy	0701 Historical Dimensions of Citizenship and Belonging in Ethiopia and The Horn of Africa
	0702 "Justice From Below" Panel 1: Searching for A Right To The City In a Transitional Urban Ethiopia
	0703 Legal Pluralism in Ethiopia. The Interplay of International National and Customary Law
	0704 Local Government in Ethiopia: Democratic, Developmental & Accommodative of Regional Minorities?
	0705 The Political Economy of Ethnicity and Cultural Identities in North-eastern Ethiopia
	0706 Studies on Legal History of Modern Ethiopia
08 Philology, Litrature & Linguistics	0801 Automatic Text Processing And Digital Humanities For Ethiopian Language and Culture
	0802 Linguistic Challenges and Change in Multilingual Ethiopia
	0804 Quantification and Numeration of Objects in Space in Ethiopian Languages
	0805 Past, Present and Future of Editing Ethiopian Texts: Regional and Global Perspectives
	0806 Historical and Comparative Linguistics
	0807 Applied Linguistics, Orthography and Language Reform
	0808 General Panel "Geez Literature"
	0809 Sociolinguistic and Dialect Studies on Tigrinya
	0810 General Panel "Linguistic Studies on Amharic"
	0811 General Panel "Philological Studies on Modern Ethiopian Texts"
	0812 General Panel "Studies in Cushitic and Omotic Languages"

09 Political Science	0901 External Actors and Forces and Their Impact on Politics in Ethiopia
	0902 USA and Africa: From Berlin to San Francisco and After
	0903 New Media in Modern Ethiopia—Developmental Challenges
	0904 The (Re-) Making of the State Internally and Internationally After 1991
10 Migration Studies	1001 The Feminisation of Migration: Perspectives and Experiences of Gendered Migrations Within and Outside of Ethiopia
	1002 Trends and Dynamics of International Migration in Ethiopia
	1003 Child and Youth Migrants in Cities
11 Population & Gender Studies	1101 Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Social Norms in Ethiopia
	1102 "Justice From Below" Panel 2: Gendered Approaches of Social Justice in Ethiopia: Women, Redistribution and Recognition
	1103 Gender Relations in Agriculture
12 Social Anthropology & Cultural Studies	1201 Archives and Collections for/in Ethiopian Studies
	1202 Changing Intersections of Environmental Shocks and Local Institutions in Ethiopia: Debates and Case Studies
	1203 Film Panel: Ethiopian Studies through Image, Sound And Beyond: Perspectives From Ethnographic Films
	1204 Global Schooling And Local Learning in Ethiopia
	1205 Globalisation and Rural Ethiopia
	1206 Guardians of Productive Landscapes: Farmers and Farming in Ethiopia
	1207 Health, Religion, Inequalities and Development
	1208 Interconnection of Human society with Animals in North-eastern Africa
	1209 Local-Knowledge Studies Reconsidered: Creativities, Transmission, Sharing and Beyond
	1211 The Abbay (Nile) Quest in the Ethiopian Popular Imagination and Belief System
	1212 Tourism Development
	1213 Workshop Panel for Junior Scholars on Horn of Africa Studies
	1214 Anthropological Studies on Songs, Music and Poetry
	1215 Socio-political Systems Beyond the State in the Past and Present
13 Studies of Religion	1301 Christian-Muslim Relations in Ethiopia
	1302 Ethiopian Christianity: Global Interconnections and Local Identities—From Late Antiquity to Early Modern Times
	1303 Monasticism in the Horn of Africa? Comparative Considerations Beyond the Christian Tradition
	1304 Revisiting Islam in Ethiopia: The Dynamics of its Heritage, History and Culture
	1305 Ethiopian Christianity: Global Interconnections and Local Identities—19th–12st Centuries