



Interpreting Ethiopia: Observations of Five Decades

Donald N. Levine

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About the Book:

In this remarkable collection, internationally renowned Ethiopianist Donald Levine has assembled interpretive vignettes—some never before published—spanning more than half a century. Thanks to his unique experiences living among peasants of Northern Shoa, visiting historic monasteries, and enjoying personal connections with modernizing Ethiopians from all political viewpoints, these essays offer acute glimpses into everything from local life-worlds to historic perspectives spanning two millennia.

Catching diverse ways in which Ethiopians construct their own narratives is one of the distinctive features of this work. This includes stunning interpretations of Ethiopia's national epic, *Kibre Negest*; different ways in which Oromos construct their own narratives; and the clash of perspectives among protagonists in the 2005 political crisis, between the ruling party and the main opposition party at that time. The book also includes important political documents such as Levine's first-hand account of the December 1960 coup; his 1976 testimony for the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Africa concerning the Derg; and his thoughtful plea regarding the 1993 Eritrean referendum. The book climaxes with broad interpretive sketches, including the renowned essay on Ethiopia and Japan in comparative civilizational perspective, and Levine's revised interpretation of the evolution of Ethiopia as a historic multi-ethnic society. In addition to historic and cultural forays, *Interpreting Ethiopia* includes a number of chapters devoted to current domestic challenges, such as the problem of chronic hunger and overpopulation; the problems posed by the exponential growth of an Ethiopian Diaspora after 1974; and the obstacles and opportunities faced by Ethiopians in their effort to create a national public.

Reviews:

Professor Levine's essays savor like a fine cup of Ethiopian coffee. It is a blend of the earthy taste of ethnography, the subtle aroma of social theory, and the spices of history!

-Eloi Ficquet, co-editor of *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*

The breadth, depth and commitment of Levine's work on Ethiopia spanning fifty years has finally been woven together in this unique and inspiring collection that links profound insights across disciplines from anthropology and archaeology through sociology to history, political science and peace-making. *Interpreting Ethiopia* is required reading for anyone interested in Ethiopian studies. -Alula Pankhurst, co-editor of *Moving People: Displacement, Development and the State in Ethiopia* and Country Director of *Young Lives Ethiopia*

This outstanding collection of work by Donald Levine from 1959 through 2014 demonstrates why he is unquestionably one of the world's leading scholars on Ethiopia.

-David Shinn, Adjunct Professor of International Affairs at the George Washington University and the Former United States Ambassador to Ethiopia

About the Author:

DONALD N. LEVINE, is the Peter B. Ritzma Professor of Sociology and former dean of the College at the University of Chicago. For nearly half a century he has been devoted to Ethiopia-as a scholar, in university teaching, in providing expert assistance to various government bodies, and in community service on behalf of Ethiopians at home and abroad. Levine's publications on Ethiopia include dozens of articles, parts of *The Flight from Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory* (1985), and two books, *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (1965), now reprinted by Tsehai Publishers and *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society* (1974), a second edition of which, with a new preface was published, in 2001.

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