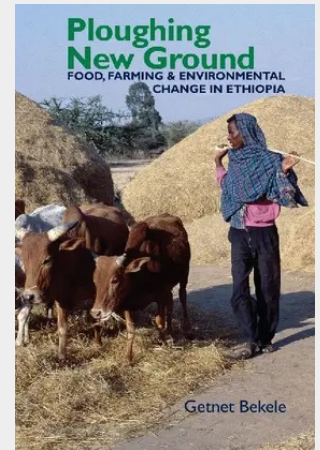


Ploughing New Ground

Food, Farming & Environmental Change in Ethiopia

An in-depth analysis of the politics and practice of food production and supply in Ethiopia, and their impact on the largely agricultural economy and farming populations, who represent nearly 80 per cent of the country's population. Winner of the Bethwell A. Ogot Book Prize to the author of the best book on East African Studies, 2018. In October 2016, the Ethiopian administration declared a State of Emergency in response to anti-Government demonstrations and mass riots. While the Government claimed the riots stemmed from subversive activities among large diasporic populations in the West, the evidence suggests that they were provoked by widespread internal dissatisfaction. Land deals by the Government with foreign investors, the building of vast hydroelectric dams, sugar estates and industry parks, and urban sprawl have put pressure on agricultural, rural areas. Today, disposessions, drought and social unrest surround fears of the worst food shortages in decades. Examining these developments in Ethiopia's lake region, the author shows how transformations in state-society relations and the organization of production and exchange have impacted on a population of smallholder farmers for whom agriculture is not only the mainstay of the economy but a way of life.

In October 2016, the Ethiopian administration declared a State of Emergency in response to anti-Government demonstrations and mass riots. Officially said to result from subversive activities channelled from Eritrea, Egypt and diasporic populations in the West, the evidence in fact suggests that the riots stemmed from widespread internal dissatisfaction. Large-scale land disposessions following bilateral deals with transnational agribusiness, damming of major rivers, construction of sugar estates and industry parks as well as urban sprawl have put pressure on agricultural and rural areas. Today, displacement, drought and widening inequalities surround fears of severe food shortages and political instability. Drawing on informant testimonies, court archives, field reports and other sources, the author examines these developments in Ethiopia's lake region. He shows how transformations over time in spatial politics, state-society relations and the organization of production and exchange have influenced the situation today, and reveals the impact of these changes on a population of smallholder farmers for which agriculture is not only the mainstay of the national economy but a way of life. Getnet Bekele is Associate Professor of History at Oakland University, MI, where he teaches African History and the Environmental and Economic History of Africa and the Global South.



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