

## **53<sup>rd</sup> KUASS (Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)**

**Date and Time:** 1 July 2016 (Fri), 17:30—19:30

**Venue:** Small Meeting Room 1, Inamori Memorial Foundation Building (3rd floor),  
Kyoto University

**Title:**

**Land, agro-pastoralism and Ethiopian development: a case study on competing perceptions of ‘resources’ and livelihoods in Southwest Ethiopia**

**Speaker:** Dr. Jon Abbink (Leiden University)

**Abstract:** In Ethiopia, new state development plans targeting agro-pastoralist areas and populations are being implemented. This paper discusses the situation in Southwest Ethiopia, revealing a process of comprehensive ‘development’, consisting of a package of land alienation and confiscation, plantation development, displacement, and ‘villagization’. The process has environmental problems and human rights problems, excluding input from local ethnic populations or modes of redress. A clash can thus be observed between the local agro-pastoralists and the state, the latter acting on perceptions of ‘empty space’. Blue-print notions of development are used that are hardly tailored to local realities, and lack human scale and context sensitivity. Ethiopia’s federal policy of officially according ethnic rights to people is thereby also undermined. The Ethiopian government in this venture does not pursue broad human development, but primarily GDP growth - so far exclusionist versus local people’s livelihoods. Controversy will continue over the short- and long-term ecological, social and economic effects.

The presentation will refer to some disputes and confrontations of the past three years that indicate a trajectory of land governance and 'development' appearing to endanger the use rights and civil rights of indigenous people in the Southwest. As a case-study of the Suri people illustrates, the process of head-on development tends to undermine livelihood practices, settlement patterns, and local food security as well as relations between the Suri and neighboring groups. From the description of local developments in the Maji area of Southwest Ethiopia (based on interviews and informal reports), one can conclude that the human toll is high and that there is need

or a new, negotiated model of developmental governance in Ethiopia that recognizes rights of local people as citizens, not subjects, and engages them as full 'stake-holders'.