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Bekele Hundie

Pastoralism, Institutions and Social Interaction

Explaining the Coexistence of Conflict and Cooperation
in Pastoral Afar, Ethiopia

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The interaction among social elements involves quite complex relations, which can be manifested by cooperation and conflict. This book by Bekele Hundie deals with both conflictive and cooperative interaction between Afar pastoralists and various actors. First, the author presents a theoretical discussion on the features, types, functions and outcomes of institutions, the New Institutionalism, and the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. Thereafter, based on primary and secondary data collected from three districts of Afar region in Ethiopia, he discusses cooperative and conflictive interactions among different actors which can be put under three levels: state-pastoralist interaction, inter-group interaction, and intra-group and inter-household interactions. In four empirical chapters of the book, the author shows how interventionist policies of various Ethiopian governments have facilitated the transformation of traditional property rights in Afar since the 1960s, how the natural and the social environments have influenced the interaction between Afar pastoralists and the neighboring ethnic groups as well as among different clans of Afar, and how contemporary and past interaction between Afar and various actors have influenced the livelihoods of pastoral households.

The author argues that improving pastoral livelihoods requires both fostering cooperative interaction among different groups in the area and managing conflicts by securing property rights, strengthening institutions that facilitate cooperation between neighboring regions and countries, and institutionalizing conflict management. Moreover, he suggests a well-coordinated development intervention, including improvements in marketing and financial services, in order to avert the deteriorating livelihoods in Afar.