



# Living Terraces in Ethiopia: Konso Landscape, Culture and Development (Eastern Africa Series)

*Elizabeth E. Watson*

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Terraced agricultural landscapes in Africa are remarkable feats of human engineering and social organization, enabling the conservation of soil and water and the cultivation of food. Indigenous terraced landscapes are all the more valuable because they have been produced by the people themselves and maintained for several hundred years, evidencing a valuable degree of sustainability. Yet until this book, there have been few accounts of how such landscapes in Africa are produced and maintained over time. Taking a period of approximately a hundred years, *Living Terraces* is both an ethnography and history of the terraces of Konso in southern Ethiopia. It traces the way Konso agriculture and landscape has been produced and managed in close relationship with broader changes in Konso political and cultural lives. In shedding new light on the relationships between landscapes, livelihoods, culture and development, the book demonstrates the embeddedness of social institutions in areas of social, cultural, religious and political life, showing that social institutions cannot easily be abstracted, replicated or used instrumentally for development purposes. The result is a call for an approach to social institutions, so vital to development, which centralizes a study of culture, history and power in the analysis. ELIZABETH E. WATSON is a Lecturer in the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge

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