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Title: A Fish Story: Longue Duree and Riverain Development in the Upper Nile, Ethiopia

Under the rubric of climate change and riverain system ecoservices, development policy has much to learn from the history of sub-tropical river basin ecologies. The upper waters of the Blue Nile river is a vanishing harbinger of the fate of the world’s great watersheds. The modern Nile as a whole has become a endorheic (an inland drainage basin that does not drain into an ocean) system. Its endemic fish --the Barbus, Labeobarbus, Garra, Nile tilapia, (Oreochromis niloticus tana) -- are historical icons of a watershed that has nurtured birds, human cultures, and domesticated plants (hybrid maize, rice, and the narcotic leaf chat (catha edulis). Yet, recent development actions are in fact a kaleidoscope changing the watery landscape and across time in ways that have now dramatically altered ecosystem services that may portend world sub-tropical systems. Tracing the history of the Blue Nile fishes’ aquatic interactions over centuries, and now decades, merges histories of water with human outcomes. Fish ecologies are thus canaries that mark danger and warnings about how pressures to develop transnational economies can have unintended consequences for the ecologies of people and their waterscapes. This paper places the conference themes in the context of both history and ecological change. It addresses several overlapping conference themes: Biodiversity and Conservation and Agriculture for Development.