



Roots in a New Land

Visualizing the Lives and Cultural Continuities of Ethiopians in Japan

Itsushi Kawase (National Museum of Ethnology, Japan)

14th November 14:00 to 16:00

Building 6, Room 502, Sophia University, Yotsuya

No prior registration required / In person only

This talk reflects on the author's years of participatory, reflexive ethnographic filmmaking in northern Ethiopia, before turning to recent film projects in Tokyo.

Japan is home to people from many cultures, yet African immigrants remain little known to the wider public. In Tokyo's Katsushika and Sumida wards, Ethiopian immigrants have formed a close-knit community, connected through gatherings such as Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Faith, and engaging neighbours through music, dance and food.

Countering the dominant framing of immigrants as "foreign human resources" for labour shortages, the film portrays them as individuals and active community members, following the Adeyabeba Ethiopia Association. It invites reflection on Japan as a society that thrives through cultural diversity.



Itsushi Kawase is a professor at the National Museum of Ethnology and the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI), Japan. Combining ethnographic filmmaking, poetry, fiction, and performance, he researches music cultures in northern Ethiopia and the Ethiopian diaspora in Tokyo. His acclaimed films include *Azmari: The Feast of Voices* (2023), *When Spirits Ride Their Horses* (2012), and *Room 11, Ethiopia Hotel* (2007). He has served as a guest professor at universities across Europe, Ethiopia, and China, and as a juror and selection committee member for international ethnographic film festivals. In 2025, EHESS hosted a symposium in Marseille dedicated to his film and literary work.

This event is organized by Megha Wadhwa (Assistant Professor, DES, Sophia University) for the ICC Research Unit [Visual Studies and Displacement in/to Japan](#) and for SORW 2026.

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