

POLITICS, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND GLOBALIZATION

Lahra Smith. *Making Citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, Gender, and National Identity in Ethiopia*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. 2013. xxi + 252 pp. Maps and Tables. Acknowledgments. Abbreviations. Glossary. Appendixes. Bibliography. Index. \$29.99. Paper.

Ethiopia's policies of ethnic federalism have generated a great deal of analysis and debate among scholars. Lahra Smith develops the concept of "meaningful citizenship" to make a valuable intervention in these debates. Smith argues that scholars must go beyond an analysis of formal citizenship and legal rights, and examine acts of citizenship and the exercise of rights. For Smith, citizenship is a practice, something that is done.

Smith traces the roots of contemporary ethnic conflict in Ethiopia to the expansion of the Orthodox Christian Abyssinian empire in the late-nineteenth century and the modernizing and centralizing policies of Haile Selassie during the mid-twentieth century. Conquered ethnic groups were forced to acculturate in order to participate in civic life. Despite some reforms implemented under the Marxist military Derg regime, oppressed ethnic groups in southern and western Ethiopia still had very little sense of "meaningful citizenship." Since the fall of the Derg in 1991, Ethiopia has been governed by a policy of ethnic federalism that is intended to provide rights to disenfranchised ethnic groups. The country is divided into regional states on the basis of ethnicity. States have a broad range of powers covering education, economic development, health, police forces, and legal courts. Regions may conduct government business and education in the language of their choice, and in theory they have the right to secede and form their own nation. Based on a thorough reading of the secondary sources, Smith offers a very clear and detailed account of the historical processes behind the development of ethnic federalism, and provides a useful rereading of Ethiopian history through the lens of citizenship.

Individual chapters focus on the implications of ethnic federalism for language policy, ethnic sovereignty (the Silte and Oromo cases), and gender. In each of these chapters Smith demonstrates the complexities of implementing policies that respect ethnic identity and promote a sense of membership in the nation. In the case of language policy she demonstrates the difficulty of selecting languages for education that allow young people access to economic and political goods without compromising their sense of self and ethnic identity. The Oromo case for self-determination, discussed in chapter 5, is particularly complex, because, as Smith explains, the political oppression that Oromo people have experienced since the advent of ethnic federalism will likely prevent them from investing in any state policies aimed at citizenship expansion. Smith's treatment of the Oromo case is very well-balanced and offers a valuable introduction to the struggles faced by Oromo people in Ethiopia.

However, as skilled as Smith is in describing policy and explaining complex issues concerning citizenship, the analysis in these chapters rarely

moves beyond the identification of complexity. This is largely an issue of research methodology. Smith's primary data was derived from focus groups with teachers and parents and interviews with elites. She incorporates this information into her arguments effectively, but in order to fully examine "meaningful citizenship" more detail concerning the lived experience of ethnic federalism is necessary. For example, how do diverse Ethiopians actually make decisions regarding language use in day-to-day life? In regard to ethnic sovereignty, Smith notes the difficulties of determining the importance of the symbolic elements of self-determination for an Oromo peasant. However, research methods that enable observation of day-to-day life would have supported a deeper exploration of these issues.

Smith's analysis of women and "meaningful citizenship" would also have benefited from more attention to lived experience and practice. Her examination of women is an important corrective to the heavy emphasis on men in much scholarship of Ethiopia. She offers the important insight that the disproportionate attention given to ethnicity in discussions of Ethiopian politics, both by scholars and laypeople, distracts from other forms of difference, particularly gender. Smith's central argument—that cultural rights may be utilized to support women's rights—is interesting, but it needs to be supported with research concerning the lived realities of women. For example, Smith discusses traditions among the Arsi-Oromo that promote women's rights. But an investigation of "meaningful citizenship" requires research on how these traditions interact with ethnic federalism and the struggles of women in day-to-day life.

Smith's conception of "meaningful citizenship" and attention to gender are valuable contributions to scholarship of Ethiopia and African politics, and her balanced accounts of Ethiopia's history and politics provide a very useful introduction for students who are new to the Ethiopian case. However, ultimately *Making Citizens in Africa* left me wanting something more. As Smith notes, it is through practice and the exercise of rights that citizenship becomes meaningful. Further research on the day-to-day practices of Ethiopians is necessary to fully assess the relationship between ethnic federalism and "meaningful citizenship."

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