

Beyond a few individual chapters of a very high quality, this edited collection unfortunately adds relatively little to our understanding of democratic reform in Africa. It frequently neglects to probe the difficult theoretical questions and resorts instead to easy assumptions about the relationship between democracy and development/modernization. Similarly, policy recommendations are often too general, expressing nice sentiments but few practical and political guidelines. These shortcomings aside, both students and scholars may find the volume useful for its empirical documentation and overview of recent democratic developments on the continent.

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Sarah Vaughan and Kjetil Tronvoll. *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*. Stockholm: Sida, 2003. 177 pp. Annexes. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Price not reported. Paper.

Commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, this pilot study of contemporary political culture is designed to inform preparation of the Swedish Country Strategy of 2003–2007. Similar studies of Kenya, Burkina Faso, and Mali are under way. An executive summary indicates one target audience: development bureaucrats. But this study should have a wider audience among those interested in contemporary Ethiopian politics.

The authors bring a multidisciplinary perspective to their analysis. Sarah Vaughan, a research consultant and honorary fellow of the School of Social and Political Studies of the University of Edinburgh, first came to Ethiopia as a relief worker in the 1980s. Since then she has written extensively on Ethiopian political history. Kjetil Tronvoll, director of the Horn of Africa Programme at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights at the University of Oslo, has served as an election observer and written on democratization, human rights, and conflict. Their aim is not to provide “an exhaustive description of current circumstances” but rather “a review of issues relevant to political culture and the operation of power” (25).

Their analysis covers “four arenas” of power relations: “the popular, associational, political, and state spheres” (25). The first includes neighborhood (*kebele*) and district (*wereda*) politics. The associational sphere comprises religious institutions, nongovernmental organizations, media, and commercial activity. The governmental sphere focuses primarily on the federal and state structures, including the judicial, executive, and legislative institutions. The fourth arena covers the party system, which is divided into parties belonging to the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, parties affiliated with the front, and opposition parties. This approach to contemporary Ethiopian political culture is useful and informative.

A central question is whether the leaders of the 1991 Revolution have delivered on their promises to create a more democratic Ethiopia. In light of continuing debate on definitions of democracy, there are no simple answers. The constitution approved in 1995 created a federal system with nine regional states based on local language and ethnicity. These ethnic states have provided greater governmental access for previously excluded groups. But it remains to be seen whether local ethnic elites benefit more than the “broad masses.” While early in the 1990s many hoped that the condition of women would improve, recent trends, based on the inclusive history of the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front, have been disappointing. The command economy of the Dergue era has given way to a greater economic freedom, but the state and the Midroc empire owned by Sheikh Mohammed Alamoudi have disproportionate holdings. In addition, the government continues to own all the land. Political discourse is freer than it was before 1991, with some seventy-two parties listed with the National Electoral Board, although the ruling party retains a tight control (by fair means and foul) of state power. One of the most significant areas of recent development has been at the level of local government. Greater authority has been given to *wereda* and *kebele* governments, apparently at the expense of the regional states. This may portend more responsive and effective grassroots government.

The authors conclude that “whatever the aspirations of the government, fundamental socio-political norms favour not democratization, but the perpetuation of hierarchy and authoritarianism at many levels of interaction” (34). They recommend, however, that “the most influential and important agents of change with whom Sida [the Swedish International Development Agency] can work in Ethiopia can be expected to continue to be the political leadership of the ruling party” (23).

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Michael Cowen and Liisa Laakso, eds. *Multi-party Elections in Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 387 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. \$65.00. Cloth.

Multi-party Elections in Africa is an edited volume consisting primarily of case studies of elections in twelve Anglophone African countries during the 1990s, although many chapters examine earlier elections as well. Two other case studies examine Ethiopia and Guinea-Bissau, but there are no chapters devoted to Francophone countries. This book can best be thought of as a reference book with an overview of the literature on elections as well as detailed summaries of these relatively recent elections and their outcomes. Links between communal, regional, and ethnic groups and voting,