

about the topic in Arabic or English. Instead, the only Sudanese women who 'speak' in the book are those whose *zar* (spirit possession) ceremonies Boddy recorded during fieldwork in the 1970s and 1980s.

Boddy remarks that the British misunderstood Sudanese values towards female circumcision, rather than seeing them 'in ways that might have helped to steer effective reform' (p. 99). Nowhere does she propose what 'effective reform' should have been; the tone of her work suggests instead that do-gooders should leave off their meddling. However, echoing a claim that has circulated among some anti-female-circumcision activists since the mid twentieth century, she does write that '*summa* circumcision' (meaning partial clitoridectomy, as opposed to the more radical Sudanese form) 'is the only form of female genital cutting admissible under Islam' (p. 205). She also cites a Muslim doctor in Sudan who recently declared that all forms of female circumcision were 'against Islam, insofar as they might reduce a woman's God-given sexuality' (p. 312). Islamic authenticity, she implies, meaning an Islam based on scholars' readings of the Qur'an and *hadith*, may be suitable grounds for 'reforming' female circumcision today. Forget about encircling the womb, this version may go, the Sudanese practice is 'un-Islamic' and good Muslims should abandon it. If Muslim activists do indeed use Islam to take on female circumcision, then a sequel to this book might one day be entitled, *Civilizing Women: Internal Jihāds in Postcolonial Sudan*.

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## THE MAKING, UNMAKING AND REMAKING OF ETHIOPIA

doi:10.1017/S0021853708003885

*The History of Ethiopia*. By SAHEED A. ADEJUMOBI. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007. Pp. xix + 219. \$45 (ISBN 0-313-32273-2).

*Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Edited by DAVID TURTON. Oxford: James Currey Publishers; Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2006. Pp. x + 246. \$49.95 (ISBN 0-8214-1696-0); \$24.95, paperback (ISBN 0-8214-1697-9).

KEY WORDS: Ethiopia, ethnicity, historiography, nationalism, politics/political.

For centuries, the territory bearing the name 'Ethiopia' has expanded and contracted, its ethnic composition reconfigured, and its socioeconomic characteristics transformed. The state that eventually emerged in the nineteenth century included diverse cultural and linguistic communities out of which successive rulers have tried to forge a nation, either by emphasizing the metaphor that Ethiopia is a 'museum of peoples' or by devising policies that would redress the contrary image that it is 'a prison house of nations'. While all previous rulers have denied that constituent ethnonational groups ever demanded autonomy and self-determination, the present government has recognized the existence of such demands and proposed to resolve the issue through a federal arrangement. Saheed A. Adejumobi's *The History of Ethiopia* provides an account of the historical trajectory of the making and unmaking of the Ethiopian state, which led to the present situation, while David Turton's edited volume, *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, explores the effort at remaking a multinational entity.

As part of Greenwood's series on modern nations, Adejumobi's book identifies Ethiopia's place in the development of the modern world. He argues that globalization began for Ethiopia in the sixteenth century when Portuguese sailors arrived on its coast, offering Christian solidarity against local Muslims but also challenging Ottoman dominance of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade. Ethiopia has since remained at the center of major events in world history, including the ongoing democratization process in Africa and the global war on terror. Domestic modernization, according to Adejumobi, began in the mid nineteenth century with the unification of Ethiopia. At this stage, 'modernization' meant increasing the state's military capacity, enlarging the state, expanding education and developing the physical infrastructure. Such developments are discussed under the rubrics of Afro-modernism, fascist modernization and the modernizing autocracy of Emperor Haile Sellassie. Another theme in the book is the significance of Ethiopia as a symbol of black people's aspiration for equality, freedom and nationhood. The symbolism originated in biblical representations of Ethiopia and was reinforced by the victory at Adwa in 1896 and the coronation of Haile Sellassie in 1930. Italy's invasion of this cherished symbol in 1935 thus mobilized black people around the world in support of Ethiopia. Even Ethiopia's socialist period is described as 'Afro-Marxist' to stress the African connection.

The reader might expect *The History of Ethiopia* to build on two recent general history books (Harold Marcus's *A History of Ethiopia* and Bahru Zewde's *A History of Modern Ethiopia*). If this was the Greenwood series editors' intention, it has not been achieved because Adejumobi's account adds little to our knowledge, in terms either of providing a sweeping narrative or of presenting a novel interpretation. With regard to the modernization theme, perhaps unbeknownst to Adejumobi, careful observers of Ethiopian society have long ago demonstrated that the modernizing ventures of Ethiopian emperors were a superficial façade for what was a profoundly conservative culture that actually subverted the modernization program. The 'modernizing emperors' of Adejumobi's book have been shown to be reactionary despots who actually stood in the way of change, rather than agents of change.

Other factors also undermine the significance of this book. Contrary to the general editors' claim that they have selected 'an author who is recognized as a specialist' and has worked with them in producing a volume 'that reflect[s] current research' (p. x), the book is marred by problems that expose an alarming lack of expertise. No specialist in Ethiopian history who knows current research would consistently use such pejorative references as 'Galla' (to refer to the Oromo), 'Wallamo' (Wolayita), 'Tigre' (Tigrayan) or 'Shankalla' (Nilo-Saharan speakers). No specialist would state: 'Lebb Woled Tarik authored a pioneering novel in Amharic' (p. 17); this is not an author's name at all but a phrase that literally means 'a novel' in Amharic. Only those who are unfamiliar with Ethiopian names refer to Haile Sellassie as Emperor Selassie, to Yekuno Amlak as Emperor Yekuno and list 'Menelik I, Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon' among notable people in Ethiopian history. Inconsistencies in spelling names of places and persons abound – too many to list here – but it is amusing to note that, beginning on p. 152, Meles Zenawi becomes Prime Minister Menawi. More substantively, it is hard to expect that anyone would do justice to the analysis of the Derg years (1974–91) in a mere ten pages, this despite the general editors' claim that the author has 'devoted a significant portion of the book to the last thirty years' (p. x).

In reviewing *The History of Ethiopia* together with *Ethnic Federalism*, one cannot fail to notice that the present experiment in federalizing the Ethiopian state is essentially a reversal of the centralizing drive, which started when the 'modernizing' Emperor Tewodros II made it his mission to remove the Oromo elite

from Abyssinian court politics. The politics of exclusion led to the deposing of Iyasu II (1913–16), an Oromo and a Muslim from Wollo. His replacement, Haile Sellassie, dismantled what could be described as Menelik's nascent federalism (local autonomy-for-tribute for southern kingdoms that submitted to his suzerainty peacefully) with a policy of political centralization and cultural assimilation. Not surprisingly, when the Eritrean, Tigrean and Oromo guerillas defeated the Derg in 1991, they targeted the infrastructure of cultural domination and the practice of political exclusion. As they tackled the challenge of remaking Ethiopia, they seized on 'ethnic federalism' as the only workable model for 'maintaining intact a multi-ethnic Ethiopia' (*Ethnic Federalism*, p. 2). Critics have dismissed the effort as an attempt by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to resuscitate Leninist federalism. In this volume, Will Kymilcka rejects this claim, stating: 'the Ethiopian constitution can be seen as consistent with the most progressive development within Western democracies' (p. 54).

In many ways, *Ethnic Federalism* attempts to gauge the success of Ethiopia's bold and unorthodox political experiment against the backdrop of the experiences of Western countries (Will Kymilcka), Nigeria (Rotimi Suberu) and India (Rajeev Bhargava). Federalism has not been an unqualified success in each case, but it has worked remarkably well in holding these nations together. In evaluating success, David Turton says, 'what matters is what works' (p. 12). It is too early to pass the final verdict on Ethiopian federalism, but the studies in this volume identify some troubling areas. Merera Gudina posits the 'nationalities problem' as the handiwork of radical students who, to this day, refuse to engage in pragmatic politics. Assefa Fisseha, in a brilliant chapter, identifies gaps between policy and practice and between the principle of empowerment and the institutional capacity of regional states to implement federal policies. The gaps are filled by the ruling party's political machinery that extends down to the smallest administrative units. Gideon Cohen warns against several misconceptions in language policy formulation. Sarah Vaughn shows the catastrophic consequence of a misguided social engineering scheme in which the EPRDF attempted to create ethnic identity where it never existed. Dereje Feyissa shows the problem of introducing ethnic autonomy where there was no popular demand for it nor capacity to sustain it.

In the Afterword, Christopher Clapham (p. 234) joins David Turton (p. 7) in urging Ethiopians – following Nigeria's lead – to 'fragment, crosscut, and sublimate the identities of each of the major ethnic formations' (p. 73) in the Oromia and the Amhara regions. Nigeria's historical itinerary is altogether different from that of Ethiopia. The volume contains no case studies on how the ethnic federalism has fared in regions where there has always been demand for autonomy. The call for a break-up of these regions cannot be justified based on experience from regions that have never shown demonstrable desire for autonomy.

The threat to Ethiopia's federalism is not that it is organized along ethno-linguistic lines. Kymilcka makes it clear that 'the institutionalization of ethno-national identities is not illiberal or undemocratic – on the contrary, it is the outcome of liberal democracy in action, and it would be illiberal or undemocratic to preclude this as a possible outcome of politics' (p. 58). The danger is posed precisely by those challenges that the studies in the volume have highlighted: the gap between policy and practice, the blurring of the line between state and party, and, despite claims to achieving the contrary, the continuation of Ethiopia's political culture that puts a premium on hegemonic control of power. The chapters in this volume demonstrate that federalism has gone too far along to turn it back. A reader is left to surmise whether the forces of liberal democratic values and the human rights revolution that, as Kymilcka shows, made federalism the

popular choice to address minority grievances in the West can also triumph in Ethiopia.

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## DISCOURSES OF ALGERIAN NATIONALISM

doi:10.1017/S0021853708003897

*History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria.* By JAMES McDUGALL. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xiii + 266. No price given (ISBN 978-0-521-84373-7).

KEY WORDS: Algeria, ideology, nationalism.

This book has as its main theme the discourses of Algerian nationalism as constructs produced to lay claim to the past and present in order to fashion a new future. Thus, 'cultural authority' is seen to derive from certain historical narratives articulated in the context of national struggle and changing modes of social domination. McDougall deals competently with a plethora of historical discourses and their significance for the evolving entity of Algerian nationalism, seeing them as products born out of an encounter with modernity, particularly after the French invasion of Algeria in 1830. These discourses, probed in five thematic chapters, together with a prologue and an epilogue, include Islamic revivalism as opposed to reformism, colonial accounts and nationalist narratives. In this sense, the reader is alerted to the different regularities, rules and sites that govern the deployment of their themes and underlying assumptions.

Two of these discourses are singled out by McDougall for extensive treatment: reformism and the nationalist ideology of the FLN. Whereas the former took the existence of its nation for granted and accorded it a perennial and enduring essence, the latter based its precepts on a revolutionary will placed at the behest of the masses for their salvation. Hence, reformism sought to awaken the dormant spirit of the nation by diffusing a new reinterpretation of Islam. Consequently, schools, journals and mosques were employed to spread the message of a reformed and rationalist Islam shorn of superstitions and false Sufi beliefs. The FLN, on the other hand, adopted a militant ideology that posited armed struggle as the only method of true liberation and rebuilding nationhood. Moreover, the study disaggregates these discourses by showing that their contribution to the emergence of Algerian nationalism was not a linear progression whereby one phase fed into the other and reinforced or enriched its evolving structures. Revivalism, for example, denoted the presence of God and divine intervention as central concepts of its apocalyptic visions. With the arrival of reformism by the turn of the twentieth century, modern notions of civilization, nationhood, reason and cultural renewal were imparted into the religious realm and made an integral part of its internal structures. In other words, human agency was highlighted rather than miracles or natural retribution. Thus, reformism stands on its own as a fully developed discourse and as worthy of investigation in its own right, rather than being an adjunct of a richer nationalist project, or simply a precursor and a prelude of things to come.

By attempting to seize 'symbolic power in the cultural realm', as McDougall elucidates, these discourses represent earnest endeavours to recreate a new historical imagination capable of asserting the right of Algerians to join the modern