out of the government's ethnic policies, stretches credulity. So does the repeated claim that the multiethnic character of Eritrea was revealed only in the mid-1990s. Perhaps this fact became apparent to the author at that time, but certainly it was known to any serious student of Eritrea: one need only recollect the famous Eritrean People's Liberation Front poster of one large fist surrounded by nine smaller fists—obvious reference to the nine ethnic groups of Eritrea united within one Eritrean national identity.

Kassahun Woldemariam does make the important point that the vast majority of Amhara people in the countryside suffered terribly from impoverishment, along with everyone else in the country during the regimes of Haile Selassie and Mengistu Haile Mariam. However, noting that the suffering masses included Amhara does not prove the point that he needs to if he wants to make a good case for the "myth" of Amhara domination.

One unsettling problem with this book is its failure to address information that would weaken the argument of the author. He chooses not to discuss the land issue during the era of Haile Selassie, saying only that the issue of the appropriation of the lands of southern peoples has been exaggerated. This is a shocking omission, as it is perhaps the most serious evidence of ethnic oppression in Ethiopian history. In regard to the issue of language, the author argues that the prominence of Amharic culture and language is "simply symbolic," noting that Haile Selassie promoted other languages to their full potential by establishing television and radio programs. This completely ignores the fact that instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels was in Amharic or English and that laws, newspapers and most media were in Amharic.

It would have been possible to have established a lesser claim—that the majority of the Amhara were greatly oppressed by various dictators in Ethiopian history, as were other groups. However, by seeking to prove that Amhara domination has been a myth created by contemporary political entrepreneurs, Woldemariam creates for himself an impossible task. The great irony of this book is that it will be of most interest to the very group whose existence the author denies, the educated Amhara elite.

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Ruth Watson. *"Civil Disorder Is the Disease of Ibadan": Chieftaincy and Civic Culture in a Yoruba City.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003. xii + 180 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. $49.95. Cloth. $22.95. Paper.

"The past is always political" is a phrase I often invoke in class when discussing both the way history is debated and how our understanding of the past informs our present. Few books highlight this reality more effectively than Watson's study of politics and history in Ibadan from 1829 to 1939. In

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this compact yet dense study, Watson takes the reader through a dizzying series of political disputes and intrigues. The tale begins with the founding of Ibadan as a war camp and follows the city through its rapid growth in the chaotic years following the collapse of the Oyo Empire and into the colonial period as one of the largest and most important cities in British West Africa.

Running through the chronological narrative is the clear and consistent argument that the system of political authority extant in Ibadan was never clear or consistent. To this end, Watson characterizes Ibadan's "civil culture as a contentious historical process" (9) wherein there was a never-ending contest over both the form and the function of chieftaincy. Intrinsic to this process was a conflict between the proponents of inherited authority, who traced their lineages back to the founders of the city, and those who advocated a more open system of meritocracy, wherein anyone who "fought for the city" (militarily or politically) could become a chief. To great effect, Watson often provides examples of the contesting versions of history presented by the different camps or claimants (see, for example, 18). Notably, in arguing for the contested and fluid nature of authority in Ibadan, Watson is engaging previous scholarship on the topic (particularly that of Falola and Awe) that sought to identify consistent organizing principles behind the apparent complexity of Ibadan politics.

In presenting her argument, Watson divides her study into two broad eras. First is the period of "Ibadan Militarism," which is identified as running from 1829 to the 1890s. During this period, the ongoing expansion of the "Ibadan Empire," as well as recurring armed contests over chieftaincy within the empire, insured that military prowess underpinned by the ability to attract and retain followers was the key to successful acquisition of chieftaincy titles. The first three chapters examine this period.

Following a transitional chapter 4, wherein Watson examines the imposition of colonial rule in Ibadan, she shifts to an examination of her second era, wherein chieftaincy, rather than being contested militarily, became the subject of the "War of the Pen." Watson maintains that in the climate of peace enforced by British colonialism of this period, aspirants to chiefly positions were forced to contrive new strategies of political competition, some of which were fought out in the newly established colonial legal system and some of which were based upon displays of political pageantry. Notably, Watson argues that this new political context allowed a new class of educated elites to compete against those whose power was based upon lineage and/or military prowess.

There is far too much texture in Watson's work to do justice to it in this brief review. She skillfully weaves together the social and political contexts of Ibadan's history to highlight just how complex the city's reality was. Also, her deft use of documentary, linguistic, and oral sources reflects a keen grasp of relevant methodologies—quite impressive for a "bookertation." And finally, I must admit much amusement at the images of colonial angst

that are conjured up by Watson's presentation of various British officials' attempts to make sense of what was going on within their jurisdictions. *Civil Disorder* provides much food for thought regarding both the politics of this important city and also the nature of Indirect Rule in Southwestern Nigeria.

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Shiraz Durrani. *Never Be Silent: Publishing and Imperialism in Kenya, 1884–1963*. London: Vita Books/Mau Mau Research Centre, 2006. xi + 272 pp. Bibliography. Index. £20.00. Paper.

African historians in Kenya have long been familiar with *Uhuru and the Kenya Indians* by Dana April Seidenberg (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983), and with Robert J. Gregory's *India and East Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). This volume by Shiraz Durrani will be a very welcome addition to the researcher unfamiliar with the role of South Asians, or "Wahindi," in the struggle for Kenya's independence. It is at once a research document to be used by discerning aficionados and a resource for those not constrained by the lack of strict footnotes. The author tells us in the preface that he has been involved with the Kenyan underground struggles, and much of this detail informs the text. The pages on the banned publications are particularly valuable, for they remind us that the struggles continue, that they did not begin yesterday, and that the spirit of humanity remains uncowed by all those forces dedicated to the suppression of African voices, in the past, present, and in the future.

Where is Shiraz coming from? In *Breaking the Culture of Silence* he tells us that he is a veteran of the anticolonial struggles, having been initiated while serving as a "progressive" librarian at the University of Nairobi from as far back as 1979, before his journey led him to exile in Britain in 1984. Though he touches on various aspects of his own struggles, his text brings out a masterly record of the broader anticolonial struggles in Kenya. I particularly like the countrywide sweep of his approach, which reminds us that *Mwalimu*, by Francis Khamisi, was a radical publication in 1946, and that a whole gamut of gramophone records and films were banned by the colonial authorities—works like *En Ang'o ma ni e chuny piny* ("What is happening [in the middle of] the world?"), which was banned by the government on July 17, 1954; and John Mwale's *Nilisimama River Road*, which surely must have offended nobody in his right mind! The author notes that among the films banned were "West of Zanzibar" and "Jhansi ki Rani."

The informants, alive and dead, are important, too. They include Sitaram Acharia, Haroon Ahmed, Amer Singh, Basant Kaur, Chandrabh Bhatt, M. A. Desai, Keshavlal Dwivedi, Amon Gakanga, K. C. Kamau, Victor