Introduction

In the Shola neighborhood of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, there is a bustling local market. Just a few decades ago, Shola formed the outskirts of town, and much of its surrounding areas were open fields where children could play soccer and follow well-worn paths to school each morning. Now there are no fields for miles, and the edges of the city have moved out in all directions to new residential developments. Shola is now part of downtown Addis Ababa. It is also home to pockets of distinct ethnic communities, as are many of Addis Ababa's neighborhoods. I lived in Shola for a year, and I was repeatedly told that "a lot of Sudanese live in Shola." I did indeed observe many young men and some families who bore evidence of phenotypical difference from the Amhara, for instance, walking on the road near my home. In addition to crude phenotype differences such as skin color and stature, there were other cultural cues; for example, the women did not wear the *natalas* or *hijabs* more common among the Orthodox or Muslim women of my neighborhood.

Surely some of these individuals were Sudanese citizens – refugees, students, and residents – fleeing war in their country or seeking employment or educational opportunities in Ethiopia. In fact, I personally had a Sudanese friend who lived near Shola. He was a refugee and a student who struggled to make a living as a tutor to children of middle-class Ethiopian families interested in improving their children's English-language skills. It was impossible, however, for these Sudanese citizens to be visibly distinguished from Ethiopian citizens of similar ethnic groups. Short of stopping them on the street and asking what their citizenship was, I could not conclusively prove what proportion were Anywaa, Nuer, or other ethnic groups, probably from the western region

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of Gambella, and what proportion were Sudanese nationals or refugees. I would speculate that many of these families were Ethiopian citizens by birth and territory, if not by some elements of a shared culture, language, or, especially, history. Nevertheless, from the frequent reference to the "Sudanese" in Shola, I became quite aware of what unequal citizenship sounds like every day in Ethiopia. In fact, many Ethiopians of other ethnic groups are not quite sure that the Anywaa or Nuer – much like the Somali – really are Ethiopian, although of course the Oromo certainly are and must remain so. The potential of this dynamic to foster conditions for ethnic violence was highlighted quite dramatically in 2003, when ethnic clashes in Gambella regional state left some 1,100 people dead and thousands of others raped and wounded. Investigations into the violence demonstrate the role of both Ethiopian security forces and members of dominant ethnic groups (referred to as "highlanders" in Gambella) in the killing of local Anywaa citizens in particular.[1]

I think often of my Shola neighbors as I write about citizenship in Ethiopia, particularly because the participatory and meaningful notions of citizenship are denied to many people actually born within the borders of the country today. The contradiction between the passionate support for the "unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia" and the refrains about diversity and culture in Ethiopia are multiple. Equal legal citizenship is a relatively new political identity for all Ethiopians. Even since the granting of legal citizenship in 1974, its content has been deeply contested, and meaningful citizenship is not yet fully realized. This book seeks to explore the nature of contemporary citizenship in Ethiopia in order to understand more fully the future trajectory of an emancipatory project begun by Ethiopians in the twentieth century and shared by citizens across the African continent and around the world.

But *why* citizenship? And *which* citizenship? Most studies of African politics today focus on elections, institutions, legal reform, and other elements of formal political arrangements. In this vein, the study of Ethiopian politics since the early 1990s has focused similarly on constitutional

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[1] The term "highlander" has multiple meanings and contexts in Ethiopia. Local residents in Gambella identified at least some of the perpetrators as "highlanders," which in the frontier regions of the west and south of Ethiopia (now called the emerging regions) can refer to Amharas, Tigrayans, and Oromos, who are all considered outsiders from the highland regions of Ethiopia. In other places in the country, for instance, the Oromo refer to Amhara and others as "highlanders." This is partly a function of geography and partly an expression of historical and sociopolitical experiences. See Human Rights Watch 2005; Dereje 2006, 2008; Markakis 2011.

changes that introduced federalism, multiparty electoral contestation, and other changes in law and political structure within the country. This is partly because the study of politics is often the study of those in power, and also perhaps because of optimism that institutional reform could dramatically alter the socioeconomic conditions of the millions in places such as Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa – people who had spent much of the postcolonial period living under authoritarian regimes.

All this political reform is centrally about the making *of* and the making *by* citizens. Although there are many definitions of citizenship, surely a citizen is one who makes the laws by which he or she lives, whereas a subject has no such claim or ability. Citizens are more than just those who make laws, and citizenship is most definitely more than a status. Citizenship is also a practice, an activity, a thing that is done, reflected in the choices people make and the sets of choices they perceive they have.[2] Although the very concept of a citizen implies a noncitizen, it is never as simple as the "insiders/citizens" and the "outsiders/noncitizens." The contestation of citizenship engages the state, social movements, and individuals in meaningful ways. It is also often a matter of prioritization. This is why citizenship is such a powerful analytical tool with which to approach political life in Africa at this very moment – because the institutional and structural reforms of recent years that have swept across the continent have been inextricably linked up with the battle over the "right to have rights."[3] Groups that were left out of the political reforms of the newly independent African states of the 1960s have since clamored for greater access to the "goods" of citizenship, to distinctly more than the status of citizen in an independent state, aspiring ultimately to the meaningful application of citizenship in the form of participation and accountability of leaders. Citizenship has also become, at least in some parts of Africa, about the kind of quality-of-life and development initiatives one could or should expect.

The citizenship of this book is not the kind you get from birth, in a geographic place or from one or both parents. It is not the kind of citizenship that is represented by a passport that grants access to some places and not others. These are surely powerful statuses, particularly in the modern state system and in the context of global economic inequalities.[4] Legal citizenship has a particular and specific relevance to the majority of African

[2] Tilly 1995.
[3] Arendt 1951, 296.
[4] Shachar 2009; see also Geschiere 2009.

contexts where colonialism produced political boundaries demarcating
which groups were inside a given colonial territory and which were not.
The ramifications for postcolonial politics, particularly after the period
of political reform in the 1990s that ushered in multiparty politics, have
been stark. Political elites have battled over citizenship as a specific tool to
restrict the scope of contestation and render powerful opponents illegiti-
mate by virtue of noncitizen status. At the grassroots level, too, we have
seen legal citizenship as a tool of violence and an expression of general-
ized political dissatisfaction, as in the case of xenophobic attacks against
other Africans in South Africa, calls for "indigenization" in Tanzania and
Sierra Leone, and other related movements or episodes. Manby summa-
rizes these well by noting that all involve the "manipulation of citizenship
laws" either through "raw violence … [or] the apparently dry detail of
the rules for obtaining papers [that] can hide an ocean of discrimination
and denial of rights."[5] In this focus, one must look to the specific histor-
ical process of border delineation, citizenship law, settler pattern, and so
on in any particular African colonial case.

The present work is not a study of legal citizenship per se. The citi-
zenship of this book is the kind that labels an ethnically Anywaa woman
"Sudanese" even if she carries (or could carry) an Ethiopian passport,
even if she was born in Addis Ababa or a village hamlet of Gambella, and
even if she speaks the Ethiopian national language, Amharic. Although
it is not a book specifically about the Anywaa as a distinct ethnocultural
or linguistic group, it is about how the Anywaa, who make up about
27 percent of the population of Gambella regional state but only a very
small part of the total population of Ethiopia, are integrated in and enact
meaningful citizenship inside the modern state of Ethiopia.[6]

Meaningful citizenship refers to the way in which rights are exercised,
or the effective practice of citizenship. It is concerned with the ability and
environment for realization of rights and discharging of duties within
a polity in ways that have practical implications for all citizens' lives.
Meaningful citizenship is an extension of an idea about democratization
that could both explain a stalled or aborted democratization exercise,
and suggest what citizens are doing in that instance. Citizens are, of
course, still practicing some sort of citizenship across all of postcolonial
Africa regardless of where they rank on a scale of democracy or freedom
or any other quantitative or qualitative index of political outcomes. In

[5] Manby 2009, 2.
[6] Dereje 2008.

this framework, Ethiopia provides an excellent and not entirely unique context for considering what citizens do to create and expand citizenship both during periods of democratic reform and in the intervening periods when authoritarian traditions and structures are resurgent.

This book is also about the citizenship of that Anywaa woman as a *woman*. Ethiopia's expanding citizenship trajectories are multiple, contested, and contradictory. The emancipatory projects of the past fifty years have dramatically challenged some categories of unequal citizenship and left other projects as yet mostly unfulfilled. This is strikingly the case when considering questions of the equality of women, both legal and actual, as contrasted with the equality of at least some members of ethnic communities. In part this suggests that although there is exciting potential for expanded citizenship across the developing world, where there are competing emancipatory projects, trade-offs may be made that too frequently privilege one form of equality over another. In Ethiopia, opportunities for expanded citizenship gains for women, and the attendant benefits to their families and communities, have been mostly missed in recent decades. Although a vibrant and productive – albeit acrimonious – debate in Ethiopia and abroad has radically altered the nature of ethnic group relations in the country, discussions of the democratization of the home, the family, and the neighborhood remain muted, particularly at the level of national discourse.

Writing specifically about the political process of elections, journalist and longtime observer of Ethiopian civic life René Lefort insinuates that citizenship in Ethiopia is a revolutionary idea with limited daily relevance to most of the citizens for whom it is intended. Lefort argues, with regard to the 2010 landslide victory of the ruling regime and the utter failure of all political opposition, that the vast majority of Ethiopians, residing as they do in isolated, rural communities, "have a vision of the world where absolutely everything is determined by divine will, including who is in power. They feel they have no right to choose."[7] Implicit here is an observation on the state of the citizenship project in this country. It lies at the heart of this book, too – that citizenship in Ethiopia is incomplete and so contested as to be a project of construction. Although I take a decidedly more optimistic view of Ethiopian citizens' present understandings of what their social and political potential is, I share an interest in excavating the state of the citizen in contemporary Ethiopia, as a window into political and social development in the country and for its potential

[7] Lefort 2010.

to shed light on broader concerns of conflict, underdevelopment, and
inequality in Africa and across the globe.

Ethiopian Citizen Creation and Citizenship Expansion

Ethiopia is the focus of this study because there is arguably no better
case of the dynamic and contradictory processes of citizen creation and
contestation than this diverse and divided country in the Horn of Africa.
Nevertheless, citizenship has been generally understudied in the African
context. Democratization in Ethiopia has been neither an obvious nor
linear process. Nor has it been only an elite-led or western-imposed
process. It has always been driven by a variety of diverse social group-
ings in pursuit of precisely the goods of meaningful citizenship that are
the focus of this study: recognition, participation, and, centrally, equal-
ity of lived experience. At the same time, the three political regimes of
post–World War II Ethiopia have each introduced successive packages
of institutional reforms meant at least in part to address grassroots
quests for citizenship. The history of modern Ethiopia is a complicated
web of citizens, subjects, partial citizens, and rights legally granted but
not fully realized. Still, Ethiopia has become a state through the diffi-
cult task of expanding its community of members, and in a sense each
generation – as well as each regime – has played its part. Contemporary
federalism is only the latest iteration of a modern project of expanding
equality in a developing country. What the current political arrange-
ment addresses – and does not address – is all part of the story of
Ethiopian citizenship.

But what is unique about Ethiopia today that makes it such an ideal
context for this study? After decades of a nation-building strategy that
emphasized centralization and assimilation, the country embarked in the
early 1990s on an experiment with federalism and decentralization that
was explicitly organized along ethnic lines. Ethiopia's constitutional and
institutional reforms were wide-ranging and controversial, both within
the country and internationally. Radical social reforms were made –
most prominently the granting of self-determination rights, including the
right to secession – for members of ethnic communities as groups, or
"Nations." The preamble to the constitution vests power in ethnic groups
by opening with these words: "We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
of Ethiopia." Ethiopia is home to at least 75 ethnolinguistic groups in a
total population of at least 85 million people, the second most populous
country in Africa.

Federalism in Ethiopia is yet another institutional and social project toward citizen creation and citizenship expansion in the country.[8] Each political regime in the modern period in fact reformed and expanded citizenship in Ethiopia in meaningful ways. This has never been without controversy, in large part because the very notions of public and private life inherent in a citizenship model are antithetical to some historical traditions of hierarchy and social order that have framed core elements of Ethiopian society. Nonetheless, citizenship has been created and expanded through the reforms of each of these modern political regimes in Ethiopia, constituting a vibrant, contentious, and fundamentally hopeful national conversation on social, political, and economic life. It has been the persistent fact of ethnic conflict and the content of institutional reform that has captured most analytical and political attention in prior studies. The addition of a study of citizenship to the existing debates about political developments in Ethiopia sheds new light on accomplishments and future challenges, not only for Ethiopia but also for similarly diverse, divided, and democratizing countries in Africa.

One of the reasons that Ethiopia is often seen as an outlier in Africa is that it was not colonized by a European power. Yet despite the lack of effective European colonization, Ethiopia is similar to the rest of the African continent in critical ways. Its borders were defined by the processes of colonization occurring in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both externally and internally. The political complexity of simultaneously pursuing empire expansion and a blend of treaties and wars to keep European powers at bay, as well as the impact of Italian occupation, pushed Ethiopian monarchs at the turn of and well into the twentieth century to focus on rhetoric and actions that fostered a "dualistic nationalism"[9] more like its long-standing rival, Egypt. In the Ethiopian case, this was staunchly anticolonial in the international arena and a "unique case of African imperialism"[10] at home, within the borders of an expanding state. The development of an Ethiopian national identity was created through practices, policies, and beliefs about ethnic and

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[8] Federalism in Ethiopia was referred to as "ethnic federalism" for some time, denoting the distinct priority given to ethnic communities in the federal arrangement created by the 1995 Constitution. An ethnofederal state is a federal state in which "at least one constituent territorial governance unit is intentionally associated with a specific ethnic category" (Hale 2004, 167). Clearly, Ethiopia's federal arrangement is ethnically structured, but I tend not to use this now-controversial term despite my more neutral meaning.

[9] Powell 2003, 6.

[10] Keller 1988, 45.

gendered groups within that expanding empire. Ethiopia's lack of effective European colonization does not mean that it does not share interesting tensions over the nature and extent of meaningful citizenship along the lines of most of the other postcolonial African societies. Even its historical particularity does not diminish the essentially "liberatory"[11] nature of contentious citizenship struggles in Ethiopia, such as those for formerly marginalized ethnic communities and women, as this book considers.

Ethiopia's diverse ethnolinguistic and religious composition, which is mirrored across Africa, makes its attempts to establish and consolidate a national identity contentious, as has been the case in other postcolonial states. Despite successive political regimes that aimed to undermine and even eliminate its potency, the persistence of ethnic identification, both in formal political and social organization and in its symbolic power, suggests that it is a deeply felt identity. What makes the argument about meaningful citizenship – empirically tested in Ethiopia – relevant to postcolonial Africa is the way in which certain kinds of claims, such as ethnic and gendered claims by citizens, can be read as liberatory and democratizing rather than atavistic or primordial, as both the western media and dominant political regimes would have us conclude. Meaningful citizenship expands our lens on democratization by focusing on what citizens do in the intervening years – outside of elections or running for political office – on how and why they send their children to school or join community associations, or, especially, challenge hierarchies and inequalities in the home, village, and community.

There is one point that should be made unequivocally at the outset. As it will be clear to the reader who finishes this text, this is not a laudatory study of the present Ethiopian political system. I do not conclude that Ethiopia has achieved or is even aspiring to be a liberal democracy. Nor is it a polity approaching so-called participatory democracy. This project is not intended to assess the level of democratization achieved through a federal model or under the current ruling regime. Evidence suggests that after a relatively brief period of political opening in the late 1990s and the early part of the twenty-first century, the regime has returned to somewhat familiar patterns of political and social control. This is in line with the cautionary note of one recent study of postcolonial citizenship in Africa in which the authors point out that "new identities and struggles emerge from a complex web of new and old power relations….

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[11] I draw the term "liberatory" from the idea of "Africa's second liberation" in Osaghae 2004; see also Zuern 2009.

The nature of citizen participation may as often be patterned by existing relationships rather than conforming to the more abstract democratic promise of these new institutions."[12]

Ethiopia is a deeply hierarchical and traditional society, one in which complex and generally rigid relations of authority structure nearly every exchange, making political transformations slow and nonlinear. The legacy of authoritarian political institutions and leadership styles will take some time to be effectively altered, in large part because the sources of authority and power are created at the family and community levels. These sources of power are generally understood as hierarchical and male and are persistently dominated by elites from specific ethnic communities and parts of the geographic space called Ethiopia. I consider the general state of politics in Ethiopia in the Conclusion. Although it is doubtless true that the topics, methods, and locations I studied in 2001 and 2003[13] can no longer be studied at this time, the fact that they were so transparently and cogently explored then has much to say about Ethiopian citizenship expansion in the modern period.

What I do assert in this study of citizenship is that, despite political and economic contradictions and asymmetries, Ethiopia has seen an exciting and unprecedented project of citizenship expansion. That these changes have occurred in a country that is relatively diverse and economically underdeveloped and that has a strong tradition of hierarchical authority is both hopeful and instructive to a community of states aspiring to improved quality of life for all. This argument hinges on much more than the legal citizenship that arrived late to Ethiopia and is arguably still denied in practice if not in law to many. First, however, it is important to distinguish among the citizenship meanings in this text and in Ethiopia particularly.

In contemporary Ethiopia, there are a number of citizenship categories that overlap and even compete for prominence with respect to the kinds of citizenship this book discusses. There is a *zega*, a citizen in the legal and formal sense; that is, a person who holds membership in a state, with the attendant rights and responsibilities. The very fact that the contemporary word for a citizen derives from a word that only ninety or so years ago referred to one who was "subdued" or "subject" is highly informative. There is in a sense a direct link from subjecthood in early modern political development to the present-day citizen, female or male, Oromo,

[12] Robins et al. 2008, 1073.
[13] L. Smith 2005.

Amhara, or Anywaa. It suggests much about how historical trajectories of
citizen creation and citizenship expansion were developed and on which
contemporary social movements must build. Anthropologist Donald
Donham (and others) has argued that the idea of a fixed territory in
which all were counted as citizens did not exist in Abyssinia historically
and only came to be gradually understood to be foundational to political
life in the modern period. He says:

Abyssinians, that is, those who spoke Semitic languages and who were Orthodox
Christians, lived in a certain territory – what I have called the core. But Abyssinian
power, and during the twentieth century, Shewan power in particular, was never
thought to be limited to that sphere. Rather, it radiated out from the centre. The
people who happened to reside in the far peripheries were not Abyssinians....
This whole history appears to be encapsulated in the word that came eventu-
ally to mean citizen, *zega*, "subdued," "subject," "obedient." Gradually, *zega* came
to be applied to anyone within the boundaries of the modern state, under the
dominion of the nation.[14]

In addition to this expanding legal category of citizenship, there is
another crucial type of citizenship implicit in this historical understand-
ing and reflected in the constitutional designation under the present polit-
ical arrangement of *beher, behereseboch, ina hizboch*, generally translated
as the "Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples" of Ethiopia. The 1995
Constitution and present political dispensation identify these groupings
as the bearers of rights that would grant meaningful citizenship as I refer
to it here.

   This book really is about the *behereseboch*, the "nationalities," and *hiz-
boch*, the "peoples," as well as the *setoch*, the women, of Ethiopia, more
than the *zeganet*, or legal citizenship of these individuals. It is precisely
the tension, however, and even the contradiction between social models
of conformity and hierarchy and the normative aspirations of meaningful
citizenship, that make the Ethiopia case fascinating and instructive for
a study of citizenship. What I demonstrate empirically through the case
studies in language policy, self-determination claims, and gendered and
ethnically based social and political movements is that even in contexts
where power is shaped differently from western liberal contexts, mean-
ingful citizenship is nonetheless a project of the aspiring citizens as much
as state agents and political elites. Not only may clientelist or paternalistic

[14] Donham and James 2002, 43. In the footnote, Donham notes the shift in definition in
    linguistic dictionaries as indicative of this, from the 1920s when *zega* was translated as
    "dependent subject," to the 1970s when "citizen" was given as one of its meanings. Still,
    it is striking that in Leslau (1976), *zega* is both subject and citizen.