

honourable conduct, and Mutongi finds Maragoli widows today to be disappointed with their unhearing government.

Mutongi is at her best when comparing the rich collection of court transcripts held at the Kakamega Provincial Record Centre with the hundreds of oral interviews she has done. Her widows are not merely litigants. Because she was able to locate specific Maragoli women who filed court cases and wrote petitions, Mutongi is able to place widows' self-representations within the context of a particular woman's life. Widows are in this account shown to engage with courts strategically, moving in and out of institutional arenas in pursuit of their own goals. But Mutongi's focus on widows' agency makes it hard to study the structures that constrained and governed their lives. This book says nothing about the legal codes by which the courts adjudicated conjugal disputes. Litigation may have been an arena where widows could make allies of sympathetic men. But court work was also structured by a set of criteria that distinguished right action from criminality. Mutongi says nothing about the structure of legal agency. Neither does she cast light on the intellectual and social work by which missionaries and other entrepreneurs standardized, codified and popularized new forms of 'Maragoli' culture. Her book commences in the late nineteenth century, and in consequence of this shallow chronology she can do little to contrast older forms of social organization with the novelties that Maragoli people encountered in the twentieth century. Mutongi's history of agency needs to account more fully for colonial power.

A second point of criticism arises from Mutongi's research methodology. This is an inescapably intimate book, for Mutongi grew up within the community about which she writes. The fact that Mutongi has known her interviewees since her childhood allows her to evoke their personalities in a way that other historians cannot. But she sometimes seems to take rather more licence than is appropriate. Some readers will feel uncomfortable with Mutongi's imaginative reconstruction of Maragoli suitors' efforts to circumvent government bride-wealth rules (pp. 125–6). Others will criticize the moralism in Mutongi's description of Quaker converts' 'pettiness' (p. 80), or in her judgements on one interviewee's scorn for her co-wife (pp. 112–13). Still others will wonder at the absence of a thorough review of the scholarly literature. Mutongi's knowledge of her interviewees' lives greatly enriches the book. But this intimate book would have been more compelling had the author occasionally taken a backwards step.

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A EUGENICS MOVEMENT IN KENYA IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

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Race and Empire: Eugenics in Colonial Kenya. By CHLOE CAMPBELL. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007. Pp. x + 214. £50 (ISBN 978-0-7190-7160-7).
KEY WORDS: Kenya, knowledge, science, social.

Well written and extensively researched, *Race and Empire* details the growth of a eugenics movement in colonial Kenya during the inter-war period. The bogus science linking race with intelligence found a sympathetic audience amongst Nairobi's white chattering class, who not only embraced the metropolitan idea of

eugenics but gave it a distinctive twist derived from the colonial context. Rather than sharing the British Malthusian fear of population growth, proponents of eugenics in Kenya were rather more concerned with African urbanization and modernization. Eugenics promised a form of social control over what Andrew Burton has recently labelled 'the African Underclass' and what colonial officials referred to as the 'detrilled native'. *Race and Empire* thus fits neatly into both the literature on the production of colonial knowledge and that on law, criminality and deviancy within African colonies.

Proving once again a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, leading lights within colonial society in Kenya during the 1930s championed the cause of eugenics. Although small in number, these advocates of eugenics were not short of influence. They included senior colonial administrators and their wives, members of the colony's legislature and even the owner of the *East African Standard* newspaper. Missionaries were notable by their absence. Campbell explains the support for eugenics amongst sections of European society as an attempt to resolve the contradiction of colonialism. After the Devonshire Declaration of 1923, the administration in Nairobi was rhetorically committed to the notion of African paramountcy while at the same time economically dependent, or so it thought, upon European settlers. African agitation for greater access to education from the early 1930s appeared to the settlers to be a worrying indicator of an erosion of white privilege. The appeal, to this extreme settler position, of a brand of knowledge that suggested that significant investment in African education was not just politically inexpedient but scientifically ineffective in combating failure is self-evident.

The book compellingly describes the interface between metropolitan debates and their colonial application. Campbell details the exchange of ideas between eugenicists in Nairobi, particularly Drs. H. L. Gordon and F. W. Vint, and London. However, Campbell is also alert to the considerable scepticism towards eugenics maintained by the Colonial Office. With Whitehall controlling the purse-strings, that scepticism ensured that eugenicist-inspired policies would not see the light of day. Instead eugenics remained an abstract concept rather than the inspiration for policy in any significant way. Ironically, in order to establish the control necessary for the implementation and monitoring of eugenicist experiments, an enormous expansion of health and educational provision for the African population was necessary. That expansion, however, was well beyond the means of the colonial government, and so eugenics died before it could have much actual impact on the lives of the African majority in the colony. The marriage of social progression and racism met its match in colonial parsimony.

That is not to suggest that Campbell sees no lasting effects of eugenics. As Campbell describes, the leading light in the Kenyan eugenicist movement, Dr. Henry Gordon, was, in his capacity as Visiting Physician at the Mathari Mental Hospital, able to exert a considerable influence over the development of notions of criminal insanity and the treatment of juvenile offenders. Furthermore, the advocates of eugenics left a lasting impression on the ideas of the infamous post-war psychiatrist, J. C. Carothers, despite the latter's preference for nurture over nature when attempting to identify presumed racially defined psychiatric characteristics.

While a sense of African reception is missing from the book, Campbell can hardly be faulted for this, given the subject matter and the need to be reliant on colonial archival sources. What would have been interesting to read more about was the reception of the debate amongst Kenya's Asian population. The book makes one tantalizing reference to the attendance of Indians at the public meetings held by the Kenya Society for the Study of Race Improvement, at which they

constituted around 10 per cent of the audience. Bearing in mind the Devonshire Declaration was provoked by Asian rather than African demands for equality with European settlers, Asians were clearly more than disinterested bystanders in any discussion of race and citizenship in colonial Kenya. More too could have been said of the Kenyan opponents of eugenics, particularly given the small minority of Europeans who participated in these debates.

In conclusion, *Race and Empire* is a powerful treatment of the limitations of colonial rule, the exchange and mutation of ideas between colony and metropole, and the complexity of notions of race that lay at the heart of the British imperial project. Innovative, theoretically sound and artfully constructed, it is highly recommended.

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN COLONIAL UGANDA

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Cultivating Success in Uganda: Kigezi Farmers and Colonial Policies. By GRACE CARSWELL. Nairobi: The British Institute in Eastern Africa; Oxford: James Currey; Kampala: Fountain Publishers; Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007. Pp. xii + 258. £50 (ISBN 978-1-84701-600-3); £16.95, paperback (ISBN 978-1-84701-601-0).

KEY WORDS: Uganda, agriculture, environment, peasants.

Grace Carswell shares empirical evidence from a small place which upsets our assumptions about the effects of colonial policy on colonized places. After examining twentieth-century changes in the lush southwestern Ugandan region of Kigezi, Carswell's conclusions challenge assumptions in environmental scholarship: modernizing policies did not always succeed, traditional systems were not always inefficient, population growth is not always bad for the environment, but these assumptions can be.

This historiographical contribution is in the form of two arguments which emerge from a decade of fieldwork. Carswell mined the local archives, the piles of dumped and dusty files which can reward only the patient. In 1996, she repeated a 1945 land survey to reveal changes in land use and in local perceptions of change. Photographs, both archival and her own, illustrate these changes. She sought the testimony of elderly men and women in the hills of Kigezi, which is featured in a series of boxed case studies throughout the book. Her fieldwork reveals surprising evidence: farmers in Kigezi did not adopt colonial cash crops; but despite this, and contrary to accepted wisdom, they implemented land management techniques which have to this day successfully maintained agricultural production and positive environmental change under a growing rural population.

The first argument that arises from this evidence is that scrutiny both of colonial pronouncements of the success or failure of policies and of the varying definitions of success and failure is far more illuminating than accepting and repeating them. The goal of the British in Uganda was the production of low-bulk, high-value, non-food crops for export, to finance the colonial administration and satisfy British market demand. The colonial state concluded that cash cropping in Kigezi was a failure. Carswell argues that this colonial failure was actually a success for Kigezi