

used it to protest postcolonial development plans that alienated Maasai land for use as private hunting concessions, which threatened to further impoverish Maasai communities in the name of national economic development. Hodgson clearly celebrates these aspects of Maasai culture that provide women with tools to resist breaches of their moral order. But does culture so understood also limit debate about how to deal with practices such as FGM? Drawing on universal human rights discourse, postcolonial urban elite women launched campaigns to prohibit FGM in the name of “progress.” Hodgson sees the anti-FGM campaigns as a problem of power, not culture, in which these elites attempt to speak for the poor. Listening instead to Maasai women (which women?), Hodgson quotes them as arguing “these are not our priorities” (121). Instead, Maasai women’s priorities are political and economic empowerment in the face of increasing impoverishment. However, since Maasai women are also concerned that their daughters be marriageable, they are thus complicit with the continuation of FGM. Across the border in Kenya, Nice Leng’ete, a young Maasai woman, has launched a campaign to end FGM that has helped at least 15,000 Maasai girls avoid being ritually cut (Jina Moore, “She Ran From the Cut, and Helped Thousands of Other Girls Escape, Too,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 13, 2018). Anti-FGM campaigns are clearly about power, but also about those who wield culture as a tool of power.

Unresolved in Hodgson’s excellent new book is the fuller discussion of the relationship between law and justice. Hodgson is strongest on how law can cause injustice, but she is less clear on how law and courts can be an instrument of political and economic empowerment in the face of impoverishment and oppression. Precisely because of these big issues, Hodgson’s *Gender, Justice, and the Problem of Culture* speaks to a wide range of disciplines and should find pride of place in our curricula.

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Emma Hunter. *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy, and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 259 pp. Paper. £21.99. ISBN: 9781107458628.

This thoughtful book explores how Tanzanians engaged with some of the many languages of progress, democracy, freedom, and citizenship circulating in the mid-twentieth-century world. Rather than telling this story from the outside in, by following the importation and adoption of foreign concepts on African soil, Emma Hunter grounds her inquiry in the historical realities of Tanzanian social and political life under colonialism, emphasizing how local thinkers mediated this process by selectively reframing

external ideas to fit their own indigenous discursive traditions and popular concerns.

In exploring the changing ways in which Western idioms intersected with Tanzanian lexicons, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania* takes the reader outside of the narrow sphere of elite politics and into the realm of popular debate among literate, newspaper-reading publics. Hunter mines a vibrant Tanzanian press, read alongside archival sources, to reveal the complex and diverse ways in which educated voices reworked old vocabularies and styled new ones to make sense of an era of political transition between 1945 and 1967. Her book uncovers a fascinating landscape of ideas in motion, suggesting important new conceptual avenues for future research on decolonization and democracy in Africa as well as modeling new methodological strategies for such analysis.

Political Thought and the Public Sphere opens with an introduction and first chapter that argue for the existence of a distinctly public political sphere in late colonial Tanzania. This realm was characterized by the growth of a semi-autonomous Swahili-language print culture and a dynamic grappling with certain global discourses of political development. Hunter's next two chapters examine how Tanzanian colonial subjects interpreted the languages of democracy and representation popularized by international institutions such as the United Nations and the colonial regimes themselves. Specifically, Hunter unpacks the wide range of sometimes contradictory interpretations of these terms, documenting how they were deployed by advocates of conservative political agendas promoting older hierarchies as well as more radical calls for substantive equality.

Next, the book scrutinizes the work of a local ethnically based citizens' union in Kilimanjaro, illustrating how campaigners for an elected paramount chief creatively fused new ideas of political community to older norms. *Political Thought and the Public Sphere* returns to this local context later on to examine how the nationalist party of TANU (the Tanganyika African National Union) challenged Kilimanjaro elites' legitimacy by mobilizing different ideologies of freedom. The meaning of "freedom" in mid-century Tanzania more generally is the subject of the prior chapter, in which Hunter demonstrates how this ideal resonated with Tanzanians' calls for strengthened social ties and relations of dependence, rather than simply entailing a liberal conception of individual autonomy.

This had important implications for early postcolonial politics, discussed in the final two chapters. In light of Hunter's previous analysis, the fairly rapid closing down of spaces for dissent and opposition in 1960s Tanzania seems less puzzling or paradoxical than conventionally assumed. Instead, what came to be the dominant, somewhat restrictive understanding of political membership in the Tanzanian nation-state emerged from and was consistent with prominent strands of debate among literate publics in the late colonial period.

At times, Hunter's careful attention to the precise contours of political language used by historical actors contrasts with her own use of terminology.

Further elaboration on the theoretical implications and intellectual genealogy of some of the analytical concepts deployed, such as “public sphere,” would have been instructive. Additionally, Hunter sometimes presents newspaper writings as disembodied articulations without providing accompanying contextual evidence that might allow the reader to grasp the human dimensions of these expressions. However, this reflects an inherent limitation of the sources that simultaneously make *Political Thought in Tanzania* an original and enlightening study, and the book does offer concrete characters to anchor the floating world of words when examining local debates in Kilimanjaro. Hunter’s adeptness at moving between the specificity of such particular cases and the broad discussion of abstract ideas on a global scale is facilitated by her lucid writing and engagement with an impressively wide body of comparative scholarly literature. These features help make this book at once accessible to non-specialists and meaningful to Africanists. They also confirm that the core insights of *Political Thought in Tanzania*, starting with but hardly limited to its basic premise that popular political deliberation should be taken seriously as the subject of nuanced intellectual history, will significantly and productively shape scholarly discussions in many fields for years to come.

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CENTRAL AFRICA

Nancy Rose Hunt. *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. Paper. 376 pp. \$26.95. ISBN: 978-0-8223-5965-4.

Nancy Rose Hunt’s newest work, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo*, forgoes conventional the narratives of colonial brutality and indigenous trauma prevalent in other histories of the Congo. Though Hunt still acknowledges the vast state-sponsored violence committed under the regime of King Leopold II and the Belgian colonial state, she chooses instead to focus her study on the diverse ripples resulting from the colonial legacies that surfaced in the period following colonization. In examining anxiety and healing, among other themes, Hunt is able to synthesize new perspectives from underutilized sources, thereby generating multifaceted narratives beyond those of indigenous powerlessness. In particular, Hunt crystalizes the idea that indigenous activities were significant enough to generate colonial insecurities, ultimately creating the “nervous state.”

In Chapter One, Hunt articulates the standard literary narratives of Edmund Morel and Joseph Conrad’s works—which were some of the first accounts of the abuses in the Congo Free State—in tandem with more