

that for the vast majority of Kenyans the only way to get to colonial Nairobi was on foot. But mechanized transportation still captured Kenyans' imaginations, especially since so many were denied the right to use it by the colonial state. Young migrant laborers often travelled gruelling distances by train and lorry and then used their earnings to buy bicycles, which they proudly showed off to jealous age-mates and skeptical fathers. What kinds of cultural meanings did Kenyans ascribe to mechanized transportation during colonial rule and how might those have carried over after independence? Moreover, where did the mechanics who maintained and resuscitated the earliest matatus learn their craft? Had they been apprentices at the colonial government-run Kabete Technical Training School or Christian missions like Tumatumu, or were they self-taught? Where did the first generation of owners get the money to invest in matatus? Were they tea and coffee planters or former colonial administration employees? In other words, the keys to matatus' contemporary success might be found further back in the colonial past.

Mutongi also opens up tantalizing questions about the cultures surrounding work, time, respectability, and corruption. The book showcases a recurring theme: tolerance by ordinary Kenyans of often intolerable conditions. 'All that mattered', one of Mutongi's interviewees explained, 'was that you got to the place of work on time' (42). Safety, comfort, and mistreatment mattered less than timely mobility and the earnings that it helped to facilitate. Furthermore, for all the tension between matatu owners and Kenya's political elite, why were wealthy entrepreneurs or politicians seemingly unable to capture the industry? So much of Kenyan economic life has come to be controlled by a small cadre of business and political interests, but matatu owners have managed to maintain their autonomy and independence. Lastly, the next stop in the history of public transport lies not in Nairobi, but out in the countryside. As Mutongi shows, matatus are everywhere in Kenya today, and we need historians to listen to the stories told by rural and small-town matatu owners, drivers, and customers. Have matatus reconnected the nation economically and culturally or have they fractured Kenya into short-distance, regional routes? These are topics for further research. For now, Kenda Mutongi's *Matatu* has given us a riveting account of late twentieth century political and cultural life in Nairobi through the eyes of Kenyan passengers and the home-grown industry on which their hopes and dreams depend.

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THE ELDER STATE IN COLONIAL KENYA

An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya.

By Paul Ocozbek.

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017. Pp. 368. \$34.95, paperback (ISBN: 9170821422649).

doi:10.1017/S0021853719000124

Key Words: Kenya, masculinity, postcolonial, oral sources.

The title for Paul Ocozbek's ambitious, compelling book is arguably somewhat misleading. Better names for the work may have been *Forging an Elder State*, or even better *Seeing Like*

an Elder State. An Uncertain Age is certainly passionately concerned with the vicissitudes of youth, as well as the dynamic tensions shaping traditional and emergent constructions of manhood in colonial and postcolonial Kenya. Beyond completing exhaustive archival research, Ocobock went to considerable lengths to conduct interviews with local men who shared recollections of their evasions or transformative involvements with vital forces, fields, and figures of British colonial power. These sets of interview data cast sharp light on the uneven reach and contradictions of all of the most aggressive branches of imperial power: legal-administrative, judicial, disciplinary, economic, and educational. Ocobock's critical reflections on the values and limitations of his collaborative oral-historical work are thoughtful and poignant. He accurately observes that 'listening to [these] voices allows us to see past the theatricality of the elder state and its archives' (24).

In final assessment, however, the most vital, recurrent concern of *An Uncertain Age* is not an exhaustive portrayal of the complexity of twentieth-century Kenyan youth experience. The project's main objective is rather to build a precise, multi-layered narrative of the complicated emergence, potency, and contradictions of 'the elder state'. This distinctive state was made and refined over decades by a vast spectrum of British figures who struggled to forge or repair what they saw as ideal regional forms of youth development and inter-generational relations. 'In Kenya', Ocobock states in the first chapter examining the birth of the elder state in the 1920s and 1930s, 'colonial officials saw something of what they had lost back in Britain: the comforts of pastoral hearth and home and the social contexts of patriarchs and older kin. They also worried that they had brought with them those same destabilizing forces that had driven British families to cities, broken them apart, and then released uncontrolled, undisciplined young men and women back into the streets.' In the hopes of countering the social and moral 'unravelling' of rural communities that could result from the intensifying development of a settler colony, these same officials 'seized on local institutions, like male initiation, which they imagined to have been imbued with unquestioned elder patriarchal power' (37–8).

By the end of the 1930s, most colonial officials knew that these feared processes of destabilization, urbanization, economic disorder, and youthful rebellion were all on the dramatic rise throughout Kenyan provinces, towns, and cities, foremost Nairobi. Each chapter of *An Uncertain Age* pursues a finely-textured case study of one or more dramatic initiatives undertaken by the state to exercise the moral-disciplinary authority over individual and collective youth development that contemporary Kenyan adults and communities could no longer manage to impose. The series of case studies that composes the bulk of *An Uncertain Age* make for compelling and often distressing reading. The workings of the elder state as a vast, often anxious, and vindictive engine of youth surveillance and disciplinary intervention became both more dynamic and more disturbing over the duration of British rule.

The 1950s marked the peak of this state's authoritarianism, as well as its idealistic zeal and brutality. Chapter Four investigates a massive expansion in caning across the colony in this decade. The increasingly commonplace use of Indian-made rattan canes ordered by the colonial governor to precise specifications 'linked an ever-expanding network of African and non-African adult actors and institutions wielding violence in competing yet complementary ways, all in an effort to exert authority over young men' (116). It comes as little

surprise that the Mau Mau rebellion figures very centrally in Ocobock's study of the late-colonial period. Nonetheless, the chapter devoted to Mau Mau's youthful sources and intensity, as well as the following one examining the pedagogical reform strategies and institutions that grew directly from the counterinsurgency, make for fascinating reading, at once illuminating and troubling. With the exceptionally perceptive, multi-layered study, coupled with photographs of the design, intentions, and social-educational regimens of the Youth Camp built at the remote site of Wamumu — a new institution through which British officials sought to create a cohort of Kenyan youth whose upright character and professional skills would spell the eternal defeat of Mau Mau — Ocobock's impressive work reaches its dramatic climax.

The final chapters examine the ongoing potency of the elder state — both as disciplinary-developmental ideal and an ensemble of political-pedagogical practices — across the post-independence regime of Jomo Kenyatta and even into the present century. Ocobock's passion for Kenyan studies is evident across every page of *An Uncertain Age*. That being said, his succinct, illuminating comparative engagements with new imaginings and attempted reconstructions of youth as they unfolded elsewhere — in twentieth-century England and other metropolitan nations and peripheries of empire — make the importance of the book resonate clearly beyond East African Studies.

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FORT NAPIER: LAST OUTPOST ON THE ZULU FRONTIERS

Last Outpost on the Zulu Frontiers: Fort Napier and the British Imperial Garrison.

By Graham Dominy.

Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016. Pp. xxv + 279. \$45.00, hardback (ISBN: 978-0-252-04004-7); \$30.00, ebook (ISBN: 978-0-252-09824-6).

doi:10.1017/S0021853719000136

Key Words: South Africa, military, masculinity, social.

In his new book, Graham Dominy suggests that in the current South African atmosphere, history has become as racially divided as South African society was under segregation and apartheid, with 'white' history being largely seen as irrelevant to the black population, and vice versa. The readjustment of entrenched ideas about a racialized past is a large task for a book about a small fort, but Dominy succeeds in writing a local history of the racial and cultural interactions of what was the earliest British imperial fort in Natal Colony.

The various regiments stationed at Fort Napier from its founding in 1842–3 until it was decommissioned in the early 1920s, established a constant British military presence on a sometimes unstable frontier with Zulu and Afrikaners. The regiments also served as a tie between English settlers and the home country, and helped reinforce the idea of the British Empire. The book is not concerned with the history of battles or of conquest.