

of the genocide. Remembrance in Namibia is situated in a society, which is characterized by a high degree of inequality, and economic as much as cultural disparities. Nevertheless, social sub-groups do not create their perspectives on history independently; discourses are often tightly interwoven. In a complex and highly ambiguous way, the state often impacts these discourses and launches its own version of historical facts.

Jan-Bart Gewald and Henning Melber's contribution also deals with the commemoration of the genocide in Namibia. They focus on the politics of remembrance among the Herero and in the ruling party SWAPO, thereby concentrating the debate on two key groups in the debate. They explore to what extent internal debates on the genocide have contributed to identity constructs. The first paragraphs are devoted to a historical reconstruction of the process of social and cultural reconsolidation of the survivors of the genocide after the fall of the German colonial state in 1915. It is shown that reference to the genocide was indeed crucial in the process of ethnic resurgence, which rapidly evolved in the 1920s and 1930s. In a well-founded argument, it is shown that the reconsolidation of a traumatized community is primarily based on the concept of a homogeneous 'traditional' society meeting colonial oppressors at eye-level and fighting heroically for its land and wealth in livestock. Ancestral rituals and other religious practices are construed as continuities between pre-genocide and post-genocide society. The ruling party SWAPO 'discovered' the topic of genocide when it was still active as a liberation front in the pre-1990 period. SWAPO focused not so much on the genocide but rather on the heroic deeds of anti-colonial resistance. In a final paragraph, the authors discuss to what extent a state can co-opt other forms of memory by 'colonizing' public space and inscribing its version of history onto the landscape. Gigantic monuments are in line with canonized, hegemonic versions of remembrance. Whether they finally contribute to the muting of other forms of collective remembrance remains to be seen in the future.

There is no space to discuss the other highly interesting papers in this volume. All in all, the volume at hand offers a good overview of the debate on the genocide and presents the Namibian side as well as the German side. Clearly, it is the view of scholars on the debate. While it is apparent that the historians' and social scientists' positions impact on the debate, I would still think that their views and opinions strive for a higher degree of objectivity and impartiality than those of activists and political decision-makers. The volume is of great help to all those Germans and Namibians dealing with the other side professionally as scholars and politicians. It is a clear-cut and very readable account of the debate on the genocide.

*University of Cologne*

MICHAEL BOLLIG

## WIDOWHOOD IN KENYA'S COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL HISTORY

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*Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya.* By KENDA MUTONGI. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Pp. xv + 256. £50 (ISBN 0-226-55419-8); £12, paperback (ISBN 0-226-555420-1).

KEY WORDS: Kenya, Christianity, courts, law, women.

*Worries of the Heart* is not women's history in the conventional sense. Widowhood is a social situation, not a biological identity. Mutongi's focus is on how

Maragoli women in Western Kenya shaped their relationships with other people. Through a variety of rhetorical strategies, Maragoli widows have, over the course of Kenya's colonial and postcolonial history, obliged male elders, government officials and other arbiters to treat them mercifully. Widows had once articulated *kehenda mwoyo*, their 'worries of the heart', around their husbands' graves. During colonial times they brought their worries to bear in new venues. In open-air meetings where they poured out their sorrows to their male kin, in the law courts where they pleaded their cases, and in petitions and other documentation, widows emphasized their vulnerability and embarrassed their hearers. By their rhetoric, they led male power-brokers to act in their favour. Mutongi studies the strategic engagements that Maragoli widows made with government institutions, and in so doing she offers an intimate history of women's agency.

This is not an abstract work of legal history. Mutongi's book is in many ways a history of a people, and it bursts with character and life. The book starts by describing the awful series of battles by which British military men subjugated the Maragoli region in the late nineteenth century. War, livestock disease and smallpox unsettled human populations, and left many children fatherless. Some of these orphans attached themselves to the Friends African Mission station in Kaimosi, which was established by American evangelists in 1902. Their mothers thought them to be truants. They loudly poured out their worries, calling on their male relatives to discipline their sons. For their part, widows' wayward sons practised the disciplines of 'practical Christianity'. Their right-angled houses were testimonies to the Quakerly virtues of sobriety and cleanliness. But in the mid-1930s, Quaker converts' lined-up villages came unstuck, as the economy of gold mining led landholders to consolidate their holdings at dependents' expense. During this era of land consolidation, widows found themselves imperiled. Mutongi uses an extensive series of oral interviews to reconstruct how widows behaved in courts. Women had to be deferential in the litigation of the 1930s, representing themselves in such a way as to prick Maragoli elders' consciences. They had also to guard their reputations outside the courtroom, for, as Mutongi shows, widows' fortunes were always closely allied with their sons' welfare.

During the 1940s a new generation of women found themselves endangered by their husbands. Hundreds of Maragoli men left home to serve in the King's African Rifles, forming hasty marriages with rural women. Mutongi argues that soldiers' unfamiliarity with their wives accounts in part for the moral panic that gripped Western Kenya during and immediately after the war. Maragoli conservatives' public chastisements of urban prostitutes convinced some husbands that their wives needed physical punishment. Women used the courts to defend themselves against husbands' abuse. Mutongi argues that, following a series of reforms, the courts in the 1940s were more able to hear women's voices. Widows used litigation to embarrass sons-in-law who abused their wives, appealing both to British conceptions of justice and to Maragoli ideas about proper masculine conduct.

In a further chapter of political practice, Maragoli widows during the 1960s took up the language of Kenyan citizenship to challenge male relatives' efforts to monopolize their land. Postcolonial Kenya's government promoted land reform as central to its efforts to reform the rural economy. But Maragoli widows found it hard to protect their interests. In the over 200 petitions that Mutongi has unearthed, widows represented themselves to local officials as oppressed citizens. The abstract language of rights got them a hearing in the national arena. But Maragoli widows lost their rhetorical advantage in representing themselves as citizens. Bureaucratic institutions cannot be moved by emotive appeals about

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.

*Selwyn College, University of Cambridge*

DEREK R. PETERSON

## 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