



future, and one that will appeal to both a specialist audience and undergraduates on a variety of degree courses.

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Mickie Mwanzia Koster

The Power of the Oath: Mau Mau Nationalism in Kenya, 1952–1960

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Much has been written about the Mau Mau war in Kenya since the 1960s. One of the most recent trends in this vast and multifarious literature is to focus on the nature of the British counterinsurgency, and the horrors of life ‘behind the wire’ in Kenya’s detention camps (Anderson 2005; Bennett 2012; Elkins 2005). The granting of compensation in 2013 to more than five thousand Kenyan victims of British torture during Mau Mau, alongside the release of the ‘migrated archive’, confirmed the bloody and brutal nature of British colonial rule. In Kenya, the compensation case has generated renewed public interest in Mau Mau stories. It has also revived problematic debates about how Mau Mau should be understood and remembered, raising difficult questions about who did and did not fight for Kenya’s land and freedom, and who did and did not benefit from that fight once Kenya gained independence in 1963.

In *The Power of the Oath*, Mickie Mwanzia Koster engages with these debates through a detailed social history of the evolution and structure of the Mau Mau oath, which committed those that took it to the violent struggle against British colonial rule. By highlighting the ways in which the Mau Mau oath helped to forge cross-ethnic unity during the war, Mwanzia Koster argues for a historiographical shift away from viewing Mau Mau as a Kikuyu war, and presents us with a nationalist movement that was embraced by non-Kikuyu communities (the book focuses specifically on the participation of Kamba people in Mau Mau). For example, in Chapter Three, Mwanzia Koster deconstructs the different stages of the Mau Mau oath, as well as the symbolism used during Mau Mau oath ceremonies. Although there were common themes and elements to all Mau Mau oaths, they also contained ethno-specific meanings that could vary according to the participant and location. According to Mwanzia Koster, it was this flexibility that enabled Kenyans of different ethnicities to unite behind the Mau Mau movement, and formed the basis for Kenyan nationalism (p. 76).

The book is also an exploration of the changing form and function of ritual oathing in Kenya, a spiritual practice used to establish truth, social order, and

justice, with a focus on Kikuyu and Kamba communities. This is the book's outstanding feature. Mwanzia Koster deals with the gendered nature of oathing practices, showing how women broke social taboos and recast traditional gender boundaries through their participation in the Mau Mau oath, as well as the movement more broadly, though some questions are left unanswered about the contested aspects of female participation in what was previously a male domain. Mwanzia Koster also connects the contemporary place of ritual oathing within the Kenyan political sphere to the criminalization of oath practices by the British colonial authorities as part of its counterinsurgency strategy. Mwanzia Koster argues that Mau Mau oathing became more dangerous and secretive after 1952, when the practice was outlawed by the British, and this led to a change in the image of oathing in Kenya, which many still associate with criminality. The final chapter of the book deals with oath purification, the process by which those that took the Mau Mau oath – committing them to kill Europeans as well as Kenyans that did not support the movement – were able to reintegrate into society after the war.

Throughout the book Mwanzia Koster contrasts British colonial depictions of the Mau Mau oath with the testimonies of oath takers to produce a rich and multilayered social history. The Mau Mau oath is demystified and emerges as a religious and political act of resistance that was embraced across ethnic boundaries. Mwanzia Koster therefore achieves her aim, and successfully writes the Kamba into the history of the Mau Mau struggle, showing how the oath facilitated the internalization of the movement among Kamba recruits.

However, although the book provides insights into the performance of nationalism during Mau Mau, the analysis of this is one dimensional, and the call for a historiographical shift is overstated. Most accounts of Mau Mau do acknowledge the participation of non-Kikuyu communities in the war. At the same time, the most compelling recent studies of Mau Mau have shown that the war was not simply a struggle between Kenyan nationalists and British colonialists, but also opened up conflict and divisions within and between different Kenyan communities (Branch 2009). These divisions have informed much local politics in Kenya in the postcolonial era. The book's main weakness is therefore its failure to adequately address the complexities of participation (or not) in Mau Mau, the oath, or nationalist struggles more broadly. The affiliations people choose during times of war are often ambiguous, change over time, and reflect an array of personal dilemmas, even among members of a community that know each other intimately and share the same values. So while Mwanzia Koster's book does throw light on Kamba participation in Mau Mau, it nonetheless brushes over the issue of forced oathing, while the court cases discussed in Chapter Four reveal quite explicitly the divisive, as well as unifying, power of the oath.

References

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Peter J. Spiro

At Home in Two Countries: The Past and Future of Dual Citizenship

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Dual citizenship is increasingly common in the modern world, and yet the status continues to challenge and subvert our basic understandings of the relationship between the individual and the state. It is also a topic that has only recently attracted scholarly interest. An exception to this is the work of Peter Spiro, an American legal scholar who has been writing on the topic for almost two decades. His latest book, *At Home in Two Countries: The Past and Future of Dual Citizenship*, compiles this work and presents a broad sweep of the history leading to our current state of wide acceptance of dual citizenship. Whilst the focus is on the United States, the book draws upon examples from around the world to highlight how dual citizenship has gone from being a reviled status, to one that is not only widely accepted, but becoming more common every day.

The first half of the book covers a period in which dual citizenship was seen by states and the international order as something disruptive and problematic. In order to avoid diplomatic disputes over individuals, states sought to regulate and suppress dual citizenship. The necessity of doing so was not questioned. Where laws were ineffective, societal norms and moral opprobrium stepped in.

In the first two chapters Spiro describes the role of expatriation as part of states' efforts to reduce the incidence of dual citizenship. Throughout the early nineteenth century, many countries refused expatriation, reflecting the view that individuals were subjects who owed perpetual allegiance to the sovereign, even if they had migrated and naturalized in another country. This position began to put European states in conflict with the United States, which was keen to protect its new citizens from impositions by other states. By the mid-nineteenth century, a shift from *refusing* expatriation to *requiring* expatriation had happened, and the Bancroft Treaties between the United States and numerous European states had set expectations in this regard. The United States also sought to consolidate its own practices on expatriation, beginning with the 1907 Expatriation Act, which set out the conditions under which someone could be expatriated and established provisions to force those