

Managing Heritage, Making Peace: History, Identity and Memory in Contemporary Kenya.
By Annie E. Coombes, Lotte Hughes, and Karega-Munene. London; New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2014. Pp.258. USD\$60.81 hardback.

Since 1882, when Ernest Renan observed that nationalism involves getting history wrong, scholars have shown interest in how state leaders use historical reconstruction to bolster national identities and consolidate political control. Increasingly, attention is being given to the importance of non-state actors in contestations over historical narratives and strategies towards national integration. Annie E. Coombes, Lotte Hughes, and Karega-Munene contribute to this area of research by exploring civil society-led efforts to reconstruct memory and heritage in modern-day Kenya. Through case studies that feature local and national efforts to commemorate some of Kenya's most contentious historical events, the authors show that ongoing constructions of "Kenyan-hood" are tied to myths about heritage and ethnicity, present-day fears, and claims to territorial space and political power. They argue that at a time when identity is becoming increasingly politicized, and "state-orchestrated amnesia" remains the order of the day, local initiatives to safeguard heritage in ways that contribute to a shared national identity are crucial to the prevention of future conflict as Kenya continues to struggle with the legacies of colonialism and political violence [3]. The chapters are written as separate case studies, but they work well together. A short, co-written conclusion by Hughes and Coombes helps in this regard. The first-hand research that underpins the volume makes this an important book for highlighting the potential of grassroots contributions to reconciliation while reminding us that attempts to reconstruct memory and heritage at the local level cannot be separated from state and international agendas.

Karega-Munene, of Nairobi's United States International University, opens the book with an overview of formal museums in Kenya and an analysis of Community Peace Museums (CPMs), which emerged in the mid-1990s as a counter to the cultural and historical silences found in institutionalized galleries. Annie Coombes, of London's Birkbeck College, contributes two case studies contrasting local and national commemorations of Mau Mau. Historian Lotte Hughes, presently of Open University and known for her work on early colonial Kenya, takes an in-depth look at local, national, and international influences on efforts to have the Karima forest recognized as a "sacred grove." Hughes also concludes the book with a chapter analyzing the neglect of history in official constructions of Kenya's national past.

The tension between history and cultural heritage is a pervasive theme throughout the book. Whereas history is increasingly viewed as irrelevant and outdated, heritage is emerging as a powerful tool for relating claims about memory to contemporary issues. Perhaps the most blatant portrayal of this dichotomy appears in Karega-Munene's juxtaposition of formal museum culture and the newer model offered by CPMs. Karega-Munene demonstrates that the cultural remoteness of Kenya's colonial museums, which denied access to black Kenyans until well into the 1940s, has continued in a more symbolic fashion via present-day National Museums of Kenya (NMK). NMK's taxidermy exhibits and ethnographic objects continue the Leakey family's interest in natural history, but fail to address the thornier periods of Kenya's past. In contrast, CPMs feature African cultures and arts, as well as more recent histories that incorporate subaltern voices and foster dialogue about nationhood and identity. By presenting museums as "alive, rather than dead entities," curators of CPMs are challenging institutional approaches to

heritage management, and asserting the need to engage with history in ways that address modern-day realities [39].

While the authors take an optimistic view of the potential for heritage initiatives to create a multicultural national platform, they are not blind to the frequent manipulations that take place by local, state, and international actors. In her analysis of Gikuyu efforts to obtain rights to the Karima forest, Hughes shows how heritage sites are recognized as symbolic capital; claims of ancestral ties and sacred duties of stewardship become politically salient means of recovering group autonomy. She also demonstrates that local claims for recognition and territory can be driven by national politics and international agendas. For example, debates over sacred heritage sites and the adoption of indigenous peoples' discourses have intertwined with evolving political semantics. Shifts in terminology can be seen in Kenya's 2010 constitution, which proscribes protections of cultural and indigenous heritage including "community forests, grazing areas, or shrines" [100]. International and environmentalist NGOs have also complicated claims to sacred spaces, offering funds to "authentic" and "indigenous" initiatives that correspond with broader agendas and publicity needs.

Coombes' treatment of Mau Mau commemorations in Chapter two offers both hope and caution for community heritage initiatives. The focus of the chapter is the Lari Memorial Peace Museum (LMPM) in Kimende. The museum, which commemorates the 1953 double massacre at Lari, stands as one of the more successful attempts to reconstruct Mau Mau history in a way that recognizes the experiences of Kenyans on opposing sides of the conflict. The museum's walls memorialize the names of both Mau Mau and Home Guards who lost their lives in the massacre. Likewise, its artifacts represent a multitude of ethnic groups. The contrast between LMPM and other community peace museums – five of which Coombes visited in the course of her research – emphasizes its unique outlook among local commemoration practices. Far more common are museums that preserve the singular experience of one group over cross-culture commonalities. Such efforts fuel antagonisms caused by political representations that divide Mau Mau history into heroes and villains. Despite the pitfalls, Coombes heralds the work of the LMPM as a crucial step in providing "an alternative vision and model of civil society," in which culturally based understandings of the past can heal divisions between hostile constituencies [54].

As with any good book, this one leaves us with several questions and challenges for further study. Historians will no doubt lament the tendency to see history as incapable of achieving the authenticity and inclusion needed to address contemporary issues. Separating history from heritage is much easier done on paper than in reality, and future studies will likely need to spend time unraveling the complex connections between history, myth, memory, and heritage in reconstructions of identity. This reader also questions whether the rising desire for Kenyan-hood – which Karega-Munene suggests is there for the government to take advantage of – is not rather an indication of local appropriation of techniques previously recognized as instruments of the state. Whatever the answers to these queries, the volume demonstrates that community heritage initiatives are a critical area of investigation that deserve further incorporation into emerging work on collective memory, nation-building and reconciliation.

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