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Mutongi Kenda. *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. xv + 256 pp. Photographs. Maps. Glossary. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \ \$50.00. Cloth. \ \$20.00. Paper.

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African Studies Review / Volume 52 / Issue 03 / December 2009, pp 198 - 199

DOI: 10.1353/arw.0.0303, Published online: 18 October 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0002020600004509

How to cite this article:

Mildred A. J. Ndeda (2009). African Studies Review, 52, pp 198-199 doi:10.1353/arw.0.0303

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WOMEN AND GENDER

Kenda Mutongi. *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. xv + 256 pp. Photographs. Maps. Glossary. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$50.00. Cloth. \$20.00. Paper.

In this intriguing book the author situates her experience as a paternal orphan within the colonial and postcolonial histories of Maragoli widows in western Kenya. The book is local in its focus, but by comparing the experiences of Mutongi's mother and other relatives in the colonial and postcolonial periods, the analysis reaches conclusions that could be replicated in many areas of Kenya, showing the effects of recent changes on the lives of widows across the country.

The book is interesting and easy to read. The merger of oral and archival evidence lets the data speak clearly to the reader. The voices of the respondents are clear, and their stories are vividly captured as the author engages them in dialogue; however, with such intimate engagement on the part of the author, the reader is left to wonder how well Mutongi has extricated herself from the oral sources to gain perspective as a historian. Such intertwining information captures the interaction of the researcher with her respondents; similarly, past experiences are expressed fully within the reality of the respondents' current life circumstances. Hence the book is not mere narration or a compendium of information; instead, it inserts the respondents' voices and experiences within clear theoretical constructs. However, a major weakness is the respondents' inability to explain adequately certain gender stereotypes regarding the exercise of male power.

The theme of *kahenda mwoyo* ("worries of the heart") runs through the book. As captured in the author's narrative style, the presentation of these "worries of the heart" illustrates the value of oral interviews in reconstructing historical experience. Initially the widows seek to address their concerns within traditional mediation practices. But these worries vary over time: new colonial occurrences, such as the creation of Christian villages and the postcolonial setting, generated new worries of the heart—and similarly brought new "real men" into the story. Mutongi clearly indicates both the transformations of these worries of the heart and the changing set of individuals expected to deal with them over time.

Gender stereotypes are evident when widows garner support through their expression of deep sorrow. A widow's expectation that her worries would be dealt with favorably, despite her continued presence in rampant rumors and gossip, makes her position ambivalent. The effects of patriarchy appear throughout the text. Every aspect of the differing contexts of traditional, colonial, missionary, and postcolonial contexts is gendered; within these frameworks women's feelings are easily disregarded. For instance, widows described how, in hearings to express their grievances over the unfair loss of land, male elders often controlled the proceedings; redress

was achieved only when women approached the situation exuding submission and fear before men.

Over time, the women turned to increasingly diverse sets of allies who they hoped would deal with their changing circumstances, irrespective of race and ethnicity. In the eyes of the women, those visibly useful to a widow assumed the status of “real men” or “true men” or even a “real true *msungu*” (white man) (90, 104, 131). Although the meaning of “real, true” in the context of the European is problematic, the phrase is nonetheless indicative of the transformation of the inclusive character of Maragoli culture. These words became axiomatic; they emphasized a good person.

The rubric of widowhood runs throughout the text and is located in the widows’ day-to-day interactions with the changing colonial and postcolonial experiences. While the status of widowhood remains constant, in independent Kenya a widow has become a citizen, which transforms the “worries” discourse—and those mandated to deal with them. Those now in positions of power to address the problems of widows are people with positions in national politics, positions with too many complicated responsibilities for appropriate and urgent action, because those concerned are not “real good men.”

The conclusion is effectively interlinked with the introduction; through this interaction it explores some of the unfinished issues. The result is that the reader is brought back to consider the widows’ continuing circumstances—and the attitudes of Mutongi’s respondents as they react to a nostalgic past and a disappointing present.

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Kathleen M. Fallon. *Democracy and the Rise of Women’s Movements in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. x + 168 pp. Map. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. References. Index. \$50.00.

Aili Mari Tripp, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa. *African Women’s Movements: Changing Political Landscapes*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Tables. xvi + 263 pp. List of Acronyms. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$85.00. Cloth. \$25.99. Paper.

Over the past decade, a spate of new books and articles has documented the hard-fought political battles of contemporary sub-Saharan African women, as well as their many significant accomplishments. By and large, the books record and reflect upon events on the ground in Africa over the last two decades. In some cases, African women’s movements have been at the forefront of struggles to overthrow authoritarian regimes and usher in more democratic ones; in others they have taken early advantage of