

**The Culture of Politics in Modern Kenya**, Angelique Haugerud, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1995), ISBN: 0-521-47059-5, 266pp inc index, Price: £40, US\$59,95 (h/b).

Kenya has often been portrayed by liberal scholars as a success story, but Angelique Haugerud's account challenges that representation. The analysis in this book ranges from telescopic to microscopic fields of vision – from national political culture, oratory and the staging of politics to everyday struggles for livelihood among people in one rural locale during the past century.

As the author notes in the preface, the final book was influenced by the 1990s winds of change in Africa. For Kenya, Haugerud's attention was focused on the vigorous new political contests and heterodox political voices that now stormed the public domain – through popular music, theatre, sermons, court battles by human rights lawyers and politicians' speeches.

To provide the reader a sense of immediacy, this book gives one the contours of the public assemblies that were usually held outdoors, ranging from huge rallies of several thousand people to smaller gatherings of a hundred or so individuals seated on grass in the countryside and the city. The largest included gatherings in the capital city, Nairobi, held on patriotic national days and addressed by the president and other officials. As a unique political feature of Kenya, the book correctly notes that these assemblies or "*baraza*" are some of the few occasions for the public display of elite group cohesion and exclusiveness.

This study of Kenya is compulsory reading for all those focusing on donor politics, the state and the post-cold war regional politics in Africa. The author systematically analyses Kenya from the popular images and scholarly paradigms that have over the years been shaped by global forces that have ascribed the country a "success story" status based on progressing small-holder agriculture and absence of any coups which had become a routine means of transferring power elsewhere in Africa.

To understand Kenya in the post 1990 era, this book suggests that institutions like the "*baraza*" should be focused on to understand the nature of contending political and social forces in the country. It is submitted that the gatherings are an amalgam of security and danger, predicability and surprise, cohesion and conflict, conformity and creativity. Whilst most people have never really understood how a degenerating regime maintains itself as a contending force in politics, Haugerud's account shows how national political culture, as conveyed through the "*baraza*" is a prism that refracts local realities. Official rhetoric does not necessarily "fool" citizens, though it sometimes symbolically neutralises social divisions that might threaten social order.

The book, which is divided into six chapters, covers democracy issues, forms of domination before 1990, the colonial economy of central Kenya and finally, Kenya's political communities in a state of rapid flux in the early 1990s, formed around the shifting local, ethnic, regional and religious identities that are sometimes manipulated from above.

It is interesting to note that author identifies the post-1990 forces which called for a better democratic culture and respect for human rights and notes that the left-wing voice was missing. Given the unfolding processes and brutality of the regime, one would have been interested to know whether this voice would have changed anything. In my view, this analysis would have been very important given the fact that she acknowledges in the final chapter that the struggle for the control of the state in Kenya was not a battle over any proposed fundamental restructuring of the economy.

The strength of the book lies in its use of theatrical metaphors to illustrate why politics of spectacle, fantasy and image-making dominate this "post-modern" era. In this respect, the book becomes compelling reading. As correctly noted in this book, the daily dramas of state politics in Kenya invite artistic satire. The state as a political theatre conveys more tragic outcomes as well: lives lost, rights denied, poverty perpetrated.

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**Children, Medicines and Culture**, Patricia Bush, et al, Pharaceutical Products Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc. (1996), New York, ISBN: 1-56024-937-4, 420pp inc index, Price: US\$39,95 (h/b).

*Children, Medicines, and Culture* provides a multicultural, multidisciplinary look at how children in nine European countries and the United States are socialised into medicine use. The team of authors, comprised of social and medical scientists, takes a sociocultural approach to understanding why the use of medicines varies among countries. Their premise is that beliefs, expectations, and behaviours about medicines are learned in childhood and are influenced by families and the wider culture. Authors interviewed children and their families and discuss children's knowledge of medicines, their autonomy in medicine use, the attitudes of children and their parents about medicines, how children act as decision-makers, medicines kept at home, treatment of childhood fever, and alternative therapies.

Chapters in the book represent individual country reports and cross-national comparisons as the authors seek to understand how children are socialised into medicine use in Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, the former Yugoslavia, and the United States. It would be useful for