Mutongi, Kenda: *Matatu. A History of Popular Transportion in Nairobi*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2017. ISBN: 978-0-226-13086-6; 352 S.

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Histories of the city, racial segregation, and transportation have seen a renaissance in recent years, intersecting through analyses of urban planning and the ways people have moved to negotiate colonial and postcolonial cityscapes.[1] Kenda Mutongi makes an exciting contribution to this timely body of scholarship. In her seven-part monograph, Mutongi elegantly weaves a history of Nairobi street life into the high politics of Kenyan state making and the growth of the country's economy. Mutongi centers her narrative on matatus, the vividly painted minibuses and large vans that have served as Nairobi's unofficial system of mass transport since at least the 1960s. Describing the vehicles as a „circulatory system," she places matatus at the heart of the expansion of Nairobi as a postcolonial city and Kenya as an independent nation in the wake of segregationist settler colonialism (p. 5).

The entire book focuses on the postcolonial period except for Part One, which covers the founding of Nairobi as a British hub of colonial governance and European and South Asian social life at the turn of the 20th century. Mutongi argues colonial rule in Kenya was marked by a lack of mobility for Africans. Harsh identity card requirements, labor laws, and segregated urban and rural planning restricted movement, particularly to and within the capital city. Under British rule, Africans were expected to physically and metaphorically stay „in their place" (p. 24). Part Two of the book historicizes the growing use of jalopies after independence to promote mass, private transport among a rapidly increasing urban population. While segregationist laws quickly changed with the formal end of British rule, Mutongi's portrayal of a complete rupture from stationary life under colonialism to urban mobility soon after independence is less well supported. This section of the book overlooks existing scholarship on Kikuyu and Luo rickshaw drivers in Nairobi in the 1920s, taxi drivers from multiple parts of the colony after World War II, and these workers' civic engagement in the colonial city.[2] Nevertheless, Mutongi convincingly demonstrates that attempting to control transportation was integral to the colonial segregationist project. The subsequent ability to move more freely lay at the core of building the new Kenyan nation and the aspirational and racially fraught politics that accompanied it.

In the heart of the book, Parts Three, Four, and Five, Mutongi details cycles of deregulation and regulation of matatus under Kenya's first two presidents between the 1960s and late 1980s. Drawing from newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, and interviews, she recounts how the beloved patriarch and first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, used his speech at the celebration of the 10th anniversary of Kenyan independence to publicly exempt matatus from road licensing requirements (p. 72). Kenyatta made his decree in the face of escalating public tension over the matatu industry, competition between matatus and the colonial-era Kenya Bus Service, concerns over road safety, and the high demand for mass transport in the rapidly expanding city. In 1984, Kenya's second president, Daniel Arap Moi, reversed Kenyatta's decree by directing the parliament of the one-party state to pass a sweeping set of matatu regulations on another anniversary: two years after the failed 1982 military coup that attempted to depose him (pp. 111–114).

Mutongi fleshes out these histories of high-level state deliberations with analyses at multiple levels of socio-political life in Kenya's capital city and nation. She foregrounds

[1] Two recent works of many on transportation, segregation, and the city are Anke Ortlepp, Jim Crow Terminals. The Desegregation of American Airports, Athens, Georgia, 2017; and Anindita Ghosh, Claiming the City. Protest, Crime, and Scandals in Colonial Calcutta, c. 1860–1920, New York City 2016.

[2] Frank Furedi, The African Crowd in Nairobi.Popular Movements and Élite Politics, in: The Journal of African History 14/2 (1973), pp. 275–290; Wunyabari O. Maloba, Mau Mau and Kenya. An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt, Bloomington 1998, p. 58; and David Anderson, Histories of the Hanged. Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire, London 2005.

how control of matatus was the turf on which discussions of foreignness and citizenship, development and economic growth, and Africanization of the previously segregated city and national economy were waged. Some of the richest excerpts in the book center on Joseph Nderi and the Matatu Vehicle Owners Association (MVOA). Nderi headed the MVOA from the organization's founding in 1968 until its legal disbandment under Moi's regime in 1988. The data on Nderi and other matatu owners Mutongi presents are gripping. They range from humorous and nostalgic anecdotes of the early days of the matatu business, when mechanics cobbled together rickety vehicles out of metaphoric grit and spit and forged drivers' licenses, to chilling discussions of Nderi's torture in police custody for leading industry opposition to new regulations (pp. 33–36, 54, and 152–154). Mutongi's use of Meja Mwangi's novels to describe the unemployment, slumlords, homelessness, and anxieties male youth faced in 1970s Nairobi similarly offers rich accounts of everyday life in the growing city (pp. 85–86). What emerges is a multi-layered narrative woven out of the state politics of matatu regulation, vehicle operators' mobilization, and quotidian experiences of urban life.

Parts Five, Six, and Seven chronicle the vehicular arms race of the matatu industry during economic liberalization of the 1990s and early 2000s and the connected histories of public corruption, democratization, growing economic inequalities, and gang control of the matatu world. The Moi regime's use of Youth Wingers from Kanu (the dominant political party) to exert pressure in matatu parking lots in the run up to Kenya's first multi-party elections in 1992 is a fascinating history through which Mutongi illustrates the enduring centrality of the politics of private, mass transit to that of the state. The same is true of the book's discussions of Mungiki, the secretive organization calling for a return to Kikuyu „tradition" in the face of politically stoked ethnic violence over land in Kenya's Rift Valley. Like the Youth Wingers, Mungiki's members used violence, protection, and cartel-like practices to dominate Nairobi's matatu operations in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In her analysis of state-sanctioned organized crime, Mutongi builds the scaffolding of a history of masculine youth, ethnicity, and work. Given the richness of her sources, the choice not to more deliberately analyze those themes or engage with relevant existing literature is puzzling. A large body of scholarship exists on the moral economy of masculinity and youth during colonialism, both among predominately Kikuyu-speaking communities (which Mutongi portrays as composing a large portion of Nairobi's matatu industry) and more broadly in East Africa.[3] Before she chronicles the involvement of youth organization members in the matatu industry at the turn of the 21st century, Mutongi repeatedly depicts matatu ownership, mechanical work, driving, and conducting passengers as worlds dominated by Kikuyu-speaking men. The analytical silences surrounding what this says about the making and remaking of genders, ethnicities, and labor in Nairobi and broader Kenya leaves the reader hungering for more, especially given the richness of existing scholarship on these topics in earlier time periods of Kenyan history. This omission feels particularly surprising when juxtaposed with the framework on stages of capitalist development Mutongi lays out in the introduction and first two chapters (see, for example, pp. 24 and 33–35). The analysis here feels retroactively tacked on and does not extend into the body of the book, leaving a disconnect between the nuanced depth of the bulk of Mutongi's narrative – which weaves high politics with street life in the postcolonial city and nation through the thread of the matatu – and the initial framing centered on teleological theories of social enterprise and develop-

[3] For a few examples, see John Lonsdale, Authority, Gender, and Violence, in: E.S. Odhiambo / John Lonsdale (eds.), Mau Mau and Nationhood. Arms, Authority, and Narration, Oxford 2003, pp. 46–70; Luise White, Separating the Men from the Boys. Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Central Kenya, 1939-1959, in: The International Journal of African Historical Studies 23/1 (1990), pp. 1–25; James Brennan, Youth, the TANU Youth League and Managed Vigilantism in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1925-73, in: Africa. Journal of the International African Institute, 76/2 (2006), pp. 221–246; Andrew Burton / Hélène Charton-Bigot (eds.), Generations Past. Youth in East African History, Athens, Ohio, 2010; and Paul Ocobock, An Uncertain Age. The Politics of Manhood in Kenya, Athens, Ohio, 2017.

ment economics.

Mutongi's book ultimately offers a lyrical and fine-tuned account of the city and its inhabitants. Foregrounding the men who owned and operated matatus, the range of people who rode them, and the politicians who tried to regulate the industry, Mutongi effectively uses the matatu as a vehicle through which to understand the connected histories of city-building in a segregated post-colony, urban life, and the political economy of Kenya. The period since the late 1960s is temporal terrain historians of Kenya and much of Africa have just begun to cover, in part because of the relative lack of centrally located, governmental archival material when compared with the colonial period. Mutongi fleshes out this history with rigor and detail. The result is a book that interlaces high politics and street life into a well-crafted whole.

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