

Reimagining the Gendered Nation

Citizenship and Human Rights in Postcolonial Kenya

Explores the complex and intersecting dimensions of gender, ethnicity, and culture on women in the Global South, as well as the central roles of women in resisting colonial rule, and their foundational contributions to post-independence constitutional reform and nation building. For all the effort and attention women across the Global South receive from the international human rights community and from their own governments, human rights frameworks frequently fail to significantly improve the lives of these women or their communities. Taking Kenya as a case study, this book explores the reasons for this, emphasising the need to understand the effects of the legacy of local colonial and postcolonial histories on the production of gendered identities and power in modern Kenyan cultural and political life. Drawing on interviews with women in Nairobi and rural areas around Lake Victoria in Kenya, the author examines their access to, and experiences of, civil and political rights and citizenship, beginning with the colonial encounter, following these legacies into modern times, and the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution. In four thematic chapters, Kenny discusses women as victims and objects of cultural violence, the myths of the sorority of African women, women as victims of political and state violence, and women as actors in national political processes. In revealing that international human rights interventions have in fact reproduced the very patterns, structures, and hierarchies which are at the core of women's disenfranchisement and marginalization, the book provides new insights into the difficulties women face in accessing their rights and will be invaluable for scholars and NGOs working in developing states. Published in association with the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

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