

OPENING REMARKS BY LOTTE HUGHES (Open University)

Session One: Presentation on the research project ‘Managing Heritage, Building Peace: Museums, memorialisation and the uses of memory in Kenya’¹

For Kiswahili translation, see end of document.

‘modern heritage and memory share a common origin in conflict and loss. Monuments, museums, and memorials are inseparable from the powerful modern moods of nostalgia and longing for authenticity as well as escalating desires for roots and origins.’

Ferdinand de Jong and Michael Rowlands (2007)²

Karibuni to this opening presentation. First, I want to say a few words about the research project and issues arising, before very briefly mentioning some of my particular research interests. I will then hand over to my colleagues Annie Coombes and Karega-Munene who will describe aspects of their own research.

Put simply, we wanted to find out how Kenyans are, in their many different ways, engaging with heritage, history and memory in the early 21st Century. We wanted to understand the different levels at which this was happening – local, regional, national – and the connections between them. We were particularly interested in the phenomenon of community peace museums, which are in many ways unique to Kenya – although peace museums do exist in other parts of the world. When we began our project in October 2008, it was an exciting and challenging time to be doing so, for a range of reasons including:

- the post-elections crisis and questions this threw up, during the long and painful post-mortem, around identity, nationhood, ethnicity, and deliberate forgetfulness about history (historical amnesia)
- the ways in which cultural heritage was being used in post-conflict peace and reconciliation efforts, especially at grassroots level

¹ Funded by the Arts and Humanities Council of the UK (AHRC). We wish to warmly thank this donor, and also the British Academy which funded an earlier UK-Africa Partnership element of the research carried out by Lotte Hughes (Open University) and Karega-Munene (USIU).

² De Jong and Rowlands (eds), *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

- the upsurge in memorialization of and debates about Mau Mau and liberation struggle since the official ban was lifted in 2003
- democratization and the widening of democratic space, which has allowed *wananchi* to start reclaiming their histories and heritage as a fundamental human right
- the government's heroes and heroines project, which sparked nationwide debate about who deserved to be hailed as a hero, and why
- National Museums of Kenya was developing the first ever 'history of Kenya' exhibition at Nairobi National Museum, which finally opened last November
- the constitutional review process was reaching a crucial stage, leading to a new *katiba* in which rights to cultural heritage are enshrined for the first time.

It was, we felt, very important to capture this 'crossroads moment' in modern history, and try to understand and analyse from our different perspectives (history, art history, anthropology and archaeology) what was happening and why. We seemed to be witnessing a renaissance in grassroots heritage activities in particular, which no other scholars had previously studied. Equally, the state sector was also undergoing rapid change due to the EU-sponsored restructuring of National Museums of Kenya (NMK).

It became apparent to us that, in common with other postcolonial states in Africa, heritage custodianship was highly contested, heritage management centralized and top-down, and too little space was allowed for alternative voices and interpretations to be heard. This was evident, for example, in harsh heritage laws and debates around them, though cultural heritage policy has since loosened up considerably and become more people-friendly; the new constitution is set to deepen this trend and further decentralize heritage management. However, many *wananchi* (citizens) – who are themselves key heritage stakeholders – were expressing a craving to take charge of their own heritage, and said they felt marginalised and distanced from state museums; millions have never visited one. Many said they did not entrust heritage to state managers. A deep distrust of the state and how it functions does not simply apply to Kenya's heritage sector, of course, but is widespread – a symptom of decades of colonialism, post-independence neo-colonialism, corruption and dictatorship.

Also, while the state tends to be most concerned with tangible heritage – monuments, mausoleums, exhibitions, parks and game reserves – we found that the non-state sector was much more concerned with intangible heritage, which is often conflated with the concept of *living heritage*. This means intangible or symbolic aspects of inherited culture, such as language, oral traditions, popular memory, spirituality, music and dance, indigenous knowledge and a holistic approach to nature and social relationships. This is evident in many of the community-led initiatives we have chosen to study, in different parts of the country. It is a positive sign that state heritage managers are also coming to appreciate and support this aspect of national heritage, though usually for commercial and tourism reasons.

Informants everywhere have expressed great anxiety about modernity and loss – this was a constant theme, not only among elders but younger people too. Central to this was a deep concern about loss of history, heritage, memory, language, and ultimately identity itself. One Maasai man, for example, Simel Ole Letoya Tiapusha, told an interviewer:

The old people who used to pass on history and culture to younger people are becoming few. Life has also become so hectic that people rarely sit together to discuss and share information about life, culture, livestock, environment and lifestyles.³

For this and other communities, loss of land and natural resources was another major concern: “Our land is dying, if we do not act now we are all doomed”, said elder Kiuri Kimaru, a resident of Karima Sacred Forest.⁴ In the face of such threats, NGOs have mobilized people to take action to defend their localities.

But Kenya does, if anything, suffer from a *surfeit* of identity and identity politics, which can be highly divisive. Research shows that there is certainly no danger of identities being lost. It is important, we suggest, to identify the many *shared* histories, memories and cultural traditions that link your different communities and characterize what Kenya is today – a rich heterogeneous society, not a bundle of competing sub-nationalisms. This (competing sub-nationalisms) is what politicians want to create and use, for their own selfish ends. Peace education, undertaken by some community peace museums in local schools, tries to empower

³ Interviewed at his home at Oloogurman village, Kajiado District, by Michael Tiampati for this project.

⁴ Quoted in Kariuki Thuku, *The Sacred Footprint* (2008), p. 23. Published by Porini Association, Nairobi.

the youth to resist such political manipulation. The state has also introduced some aspects of peace education in schools. More broadly, cultural heritage – if celebrated in an inclusive, pan-ethnic way – can be a potent tool for development, social cohesion and long-term peace. We hope that our collaborative research and this workshop, in its own small way, can contribute to that process.

It is important to celebrate unity in diversity, rather than use the idea of conserving discrete cultures to retreat even deeper into ethnic enclaves – which is a distinct danger of the cultural heritage renaissance we are witnessing. Let us remind ourselves of what Bethwell Ogot said in a 2002 keynote address to a constitutional review seminar on culture, ethics and ideology. He noted that practically all the 42 or so ethnic communities in Kenya are

hybrid societies. By the end of the 19th Century African societies in the future Kenya were already all contaminated by each other in a complex, interdependent human world. There were no watertight ethnic categories. (My emphasis)⁵

As for individual folk heroes, Prof. Ogot described how Waiyaki wa Hinga, for example, was a Maasai among the thousands who took refuge among the Kikuyu of Kabete between 1880 and 1890, at a time of famine and epidemic. He became assimilated by the Kikuyu, changed his name, and is now known as a Kikuyu hero. Conversely, Maasai prophet Olonana had Kikuyu ancestry. Ogot cited Prof. Gideon Were's revelation, from his researches in western Kenya, that up to 40 per cent of the Baluhya clans were originally Kalenjin. Prof. Godfrey Muriuki, researching the history of the Kikuyu, concluded that perhaps half or more of the population in Mathira and Tetu were of Maasai origin, as a result of intermarriage. Along the coast 'interdependence and cultural fluidity was even more pronounced' according to Ogot.

So let us keep in mind these shared histories, and the essential fluidity of culture, as we discuss the rich complexity of Kenya's cultural heritage, past present and future.

My research interests

Very briefly, I will just say that my research focused on five main subjects:

⁵ Bethwell Ogot, 'Building on the Indigenous in Constitution Making'. Keynote address, Seminar on Culture, Ethics and Ideology, 7-8 February 2002. Report of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission. Seen online.

- community mobilization around the conservation of a sacred forest, Karima in Nyeri District, the subject of a forthcoming book chapter
- linked to this, globalised discourses around environmentalism and indigenous rights; and relationships between the local and the global, between local and international NGOs, which can be fraught because of competing agendas and structural inequality between players (in the North and South)
- fieldwork among Maasai south of the Ngong Hills, where one of the first community peace museums was established (Seu-Seu Museum, at Olosho-oibor)
- the development by NMK of the new history exhibition at Nairobi National Museum, and plans for a travelling history exhibition on resistance and struggle up to 1963
- Mau Mau memorialization, historical revisionism, and the forging of a master narrative about liberation struggle and nationhood. This is the subject of a journal article which will be published in July/August 2011.

Finally, I want to thank all our Kenyan friends who generously gave of their time to share ideas and knowledge, and contribute to the research. You have enormously enriched it, and we hope you have also gained; this was a two-way learning experience. This workshop is intended to 'give something back' and to provide you with an opportunity to network, dialogue and find ways forward together.

Kiswahili translation⁶

Nawakaribisha nyinyi wote kwa mkutano huu. Kwanza ningependa kuongea kwa ufupi kuhusu utafiti na matokeo yake kabla ya kuongea zaidi kuhusu utafiti wangu binafsi. Baadaye nitawatambulisha wenzangu Annie Coombes and Karega-Munene ambao wataongea zaidi kuhusu utafiti wao.

Kwa ufupi tulikuwa tunataka kujua jinsi Wakenya wanavyotumia njia tofauti kuhijusisha na urithi, historia na kumbukumbu zao karne hii ya ishirini na moja. Tilitaka kuelewa jinsi haya mambo yanavyotendeka hapa vijijini, kwenye mikoa na katika nchi nzima na uhusiano uliopo katika njia hizi tofauti. Kilichotuvutia zaidi kwenye utafiti ambao umetuleta hapa ni makumbusho ya jamii ya amani ambayo ni ya kipekee hapa Kenya, ingawaje makumbusho ya amani yanaonekana kwenye mataifa mengine duniani.

⁶ Translation by Wanja Knighton, and checked by Karega-Munene.

Utafiti wetu ulianza mwezi wa kumi mwaka elfu mbili na nane. Huo ulikuwa wakati mwafaka wa kuanzisha utafiti huu. Kwa upande mwingine ulikuwa pia ni wakati mgumu kwa ajili ya sababu zifuatazo

- ghasia baada ya uchaguzi zilisababisha watu kujiuliza maswali magumu kuhusu utambulishi na ukumbusho na kujisahaulisha kwa maksudi kuhusu historia
- jinsi urithi wa kitamaduni unavyotumiwa kuwaunganisha watu baada ya ghasia za uchaguzi kuanzia mashinani
- Kuongezeka kwa ukumbusho na majadiliano kuhusu vita vya Mau Mau baada ya kuondolewa kwa marufuku ya kisheria kuhusu Mau Mau na serikali mnamo mwaka elfu mbili na tatu
- Demokrasia ambayo imesaidia wananchi kudai historia na utamaduni kama haki ya kibinaadamu
- Miradi ya serikali ya mashujaa ambayo imezusha mijadala kuhusu ni nani anahitaji kutambuliwa kama shujaa na kwanini
- Nia na mipango ya nyumba ya kumbukumbu ya kitaifa ya kuunda maonyesho ya historia ya Kenya kwa mara ya kwanza kabisa; maonyesho hayo yalifunguliwa mwezi wa kumi na moja mwaka uliopita
- Ugeuzi wa katiba ambao umetambua kwa mara ya kwanza haki ya utamaduni

Tulipokuwa tynafanya utafiti wetu tuliona ni muhimu kujihusisha na mambo yaliyokuwa yanayotokea katika historia na pia kuelewa kwa njia nyingi (kwa mfano historia, sanaa, utu na akiolojia) ni nini ilikuwa inasababisha haya mabadiliko. Mtokeyo yaliyoonekana ni kwamba utamaduni ulikuwa unaanzia mashinani na yazaidi ni kwamba huu utamaduni ulikuwa unakua. Tuligundua pia huakukuwa na wasomi ambao waliokuwa wamejadili haya mambo. Vilevile, mabadiliko yalikuwa yanaonekana katika mambo ya serikali, haya madadiliko yalionekana baada ya mradi ambao ulianzishwa na muungano wa jumua ya ulaya, mradi huu ulisaidia mabadiliko katika vile nyumba ya kumbukumbu ya kitaifa inavyolida utamaduni.

Katika mataifa mengine ambayo yalipitia ukoloni, tulikuja kugundua ya kwamba uwekaji wa mila za kitamaduni unagombaniwa wana. Maongozi yake pia yanaongozwa kwa mpangilio mkali hivi kwamba watu wengine hawawezi kutoa maoni au matafsiri yao binafsi kuhusu mila na tamaduni. Hii ilionekana vizuri ukiangalia sheria zilizopo kuhusu urithi, sheria hizi ni kali na za kudhuru. Lakini ni vizuri kutambua yakwamba katiba mpaya imesaidia sana kuwezesha maoni mengine kutolewa. Wananchi ambao ndio wadau wa utamaduni walikuwa wanaonyesha hamu ya kutawala utamaduni wao lakini walihisi hawana sehemu ya kusaidia au kujihusisha. Hii ndio maana hawakujihuzisha na makumbusho ya kitaifa, na milioni wa watu hawajawahi kutembelea Nyumba ya Kumbukumbu ya Kitaifa. Wengi wao pia walisema hawakuamini serikali inaweza kuangalia tamaduni zao vizuri. Shuku kubwa kwa taifa na vile inavyo fanya kazi haionekani Kenya pekee, inaonekana kwa mataifa mengine na ni dalili inayoonekana baada ya karne nyingi za ukoloni na maomboleo ya ukoloni, rushwa na udikteta.

Mara nyingi serikali huwa inahijuzisha na utamaduni unaoonekana kwa mfano, maonyesho, makaburi, na mbuga za wanyama. Utafiti wetu ulitwezesha kugundua ya kwamba miradi ya

utamaduni ambayo haijaanzishwa na serikali ilijihuzisha na utamaduni usiogusika na unachanganya mambo mengi na unajihuzika na utamaduni uliohai. Kusema utamaduni uliohai inamaanisha utamaduni usiogusika kwa mfano lugha, mapokeo simulizi, makumbusho maarufu, mziki, michezo, mambo ya kiroho, na kadhalika. Haya mambo mabaya yalionekana wazi katika miradi ya mashinani inayoongozwa na jamii ambayo tulifanyia utafiti. Huu utafiti ulifanyika kwenye pande nyingi za inchi na inaonekana ya kwamba meneja wa miradi ya serikali wanafurahia na pia kupa msaada hii miradi hata ingawa ni kwa ajili ya biashara na sababu za utalii.

Watoa habari kila pahari walieleza wasiwasi walio nao kuhusu usasa na upotevu wa historia – huu wasiwasi ulionekana kwa wazee na vijana kila pahali. Zaidi ya haya watu wengi walikuwa walihofia kwamba historia, utamaduni, kumbukumbu, lugha na kujijua. Mzee mmoja mmasaai kwa mfano, Simel Ole Letoya Tiapusha alimwambia mtafiti wetu: Wazee waliokuwa wanawaachia vijana historian a utamaduni wanaziki kuwa wachache. Maisha yamekuwa na shughuli nyingi mpaka siku hizi watu hawakaai pamoja kuongea na kujadiliana kuhusu maisha, utamaduni, mifugo na mazingira.

Kwa huyu mzee na makabila mengine, ukosekaji wa mashamba, na mambo ya mazingira ni mambo ambayo yanawapa wasiwasi mwingi: mzee Kiuri Kimaru anayeishi katika msitu mtakatifu wa Karima alisema, dunia yetu inakufa na tusipobadilisha mienendo yetu dunia inaisha. NGO imeunganisha watu kuwahamasisha ili wachukue hatua kulinda mazingira yao. Inchi ya Kenya inateseka kwa uongezeko wa siasa zinazohusika na utambulisho, hizi siasa zinaweza kuleta utengano sana. Utafiti umeonyesha kwamba hakuna hatari ya kupoteza utambulisho. Tungependa kupendekeza ya kwamba ni muhimu kutambua historia ya pamoja na pia pia kumbukumbu na utamaduni na kuunganisha hizi katika makabila yote yaliyo Kenya. Hizi historia za pamoja ziweze kudumu pamoja na sio kuwa zinashidana. Wanasiasa wangependa kutumia hizi historia za mapoja kujisaidia wenyewe bila kuwafikiria wengine. Masomo ya amani ambayo yanafundishwa na community peace museum kwenye shule. Haya masomo yanajaribu kuwapa vijana nguvu waweze kupinga na kukataa maendesho ya kichinichini ya wanasiasa. Serikali pia imeanzisha masomo ya amani katika mashule. Kwa ujumla, urithi wa utamaduni unasherehekewa kwa uunganishi na pia unaonekana kama njia moja wapo ambayo inaweza kuendeleza amani kwa muda mrefu.

Tunatumaini ya kwamba utafiti wetu ambao tumefanya na ushirikiano wa wengine nahii karakana itasaidia kuendeleza hii kazi.

Ni muhimu kusherehekea umoja vitu tofauti vinapounganika badala ya kudumisha tamaduni tofauti ambazohazijihuzishi na uungano kwamaana hizi zinadumisha utengano – hii ndio hatari tunayoshuhudia tulipokuwa tunafanya utafiti. Ningependa tujikumbushe yale maneno Bethwell Ogot alisema wakati wa seminari ya ugeuzi wa katiba alipoongea kuhusu utamaduni, maadili na itikadi. Alisema ya kwamba, makabila yote ya Kenya ambayo ni karibu arobaine na mbili ni makabila ambayo yamechanganyika. Katika mwisho wa karne ya 19 makabila yote yalikuwa yamechanganyika.

Professa Ogot alieleza kwamba Waiyaki wa Hinga alitoka kwenye kabila la wamasaa ambaye aliomba ukimbiza kwenye kabila la wakikuyu huko kabete miaka ya 1880 na 1890 wakati wa ukarme. Alikuzwa katika tamaduni za wakikuyu na sasa anajulikana kama shujaa

ambaye alikuwa mkikuyu. Pia nabii wa kimasaa Olanana anaouasili wa wakikuyu. Professa Ogot aliendelea kusema ya kwamba Professa Gideon Were amefanya utafiti ambao umeonyesha ya kwamba asilimia 40 ya wabaluhia wanazo asili zao kutoka kwa wakalenjin. Professa Godfrey Muriuki alifanya utafiti ya historia ya wakikuyu na akahitimisha ya kwamba nusu au zaidi ya nusu ya idadiya watu wanaoishi Mathiria na Tetu ni wamasaa au ni watoto wa doa kati yaw a maasai na wakikuyu. Huko Mombasa makabila tofauti yameweza kushirikiana na kuishi pamoja. Ningeomba tukumbuke haya mambo tunapo jadili urithi wa utamaduni wakati wa kale, sasa na siku zijazo.

Utafiti wangu binafsi ni:-

wa kifupi ningependa kuongea kidogo kuhusu utafiti waku binafsi ambao unahusu :
Udumisho wa msitu mtakatifu wa karima huko wilaya ya nyeri. Hii ni sura mojawapo ambayo naiandika katika kitabu changu. Utafiti niliofanya kwa wamaasai nilipokuwa Ngong Hills. Hii ndio iliyokuwa jamii ya kwanza kuanzisha peace museum.

Na mwisho ningependa kuwashukuru marafiki zetu hapa Kenya ambao walijitolea sana kutusaidia. Walijitolea sana na pia walitupa maoni yao tulipokuwa tunafanya huu utafiti. Tumeelimika sana na tunatumai pia nyinyi mmesaidika . Hii karakana inajihuzisha na kutoa shukrani na kuongeza elimu na pia kutoa fursa ya kujadiliana ili tuweze kuendeleza elimu tutakayopata.