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| Autore | Peatrik Anne-Marie |
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| Sommario/riassunto | Weaving together ethnography and history, this book offers an in-depth analysis of the pre-colonial polity of the Meru of Kenya and its radical transformations from 1908 through the 1950s. It addresses the manifold issues of initiation and the politics of belonging, unravels the intertwined life courses of men and women, and disentangles the web of family life and the handover of power across political generations. Restoring two well-known instances of Meru politics to their rightful place the enigmatic mûgwe and the famous njûûri ncheke-the book also offers a fresh reading of the controversial story of Mbwaa. It sheds light on the crisis of the 1930s affecting male and female initiations, and establishes a link with the demographic transformations and the radical shift that occurred during the 1950s. A Complex Polity renews the issue of the historicity of political generation-set systems in Meru, |

as well as elsewhere in Kenya and eastern Africa. More broadly, the work aims to promote comparative anthropology to enhance knowledge of African pre-colonial democracies and polities, and a deeper understanding of social and cultural change in the *longue durée*, linking precolonial and postcolonial Africa. "Peatrik's book is not a simple ethnographic monograph, it is an innovative analysis on the topic of age grades... Her study lies, in its own right, among the classics of ethnology and among the most original and comprehensive works on this subject. It is recommended not only to the africanists and the anthropologists, but also to those who are interested in studying social and political systems." Bernardo Bernardi, author of *The Mugwe, a Failing Prophet*, and of *Age Class Systems*.
