East Africa in Transition
East Africa in Transition
Images, Institutions and Identities

Edited by
Judith M. Bahemuka
Joseph L. Brockington

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Preface

Over the past decade, there has been a growing awareness in sub-Saharan Africa that institutions of governance are critical to the achievement of sustainable human development. These institutions also play a crucial role in the promotion of democracy and partnerships building in all areas that are essential to the advancement of developmental goals. A plethora of recent initiatives has been put in place. The initiatives aim to tackle the various aspects of collapsing institutions and unethical identification ventures.

East Africa’s position in the present world order can only be explained if the full ramifications and implications of globalization are put at center-stage. One has to see the nuances and hidden meanings behind institutional identities both at personal and collective levels, ushering them to the global identities. Furthermore, synergy has to be created between the local and the global for the survival of the institutions.

In order to have a meaningful exchange of ideas on the above issues, the International Learning Centre (ILC) at the University of Nairobi, with support from the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) and Kalamazoo College, brought together, in July 2001, leading scholars from the Universities of Dar-es-Salaam, Makerere and several Kenyan institutions. These were joined by a group of twenty scholars drawn from the collaborating universities and colleges in the United States of America.

*East Africa in Transition: Images, Institutions and Identities* was the theme of the 2001 Symposium. The goal was to challenge the common thinking about countries undergoing transition, to re-examine the process of change as it occurs in all areas of modern life. An examination of the process of change, however, was deemed not sufficient. As the contributions in this book show, the scholars were also concerned with the impact of transition on images, identities and local institutions. The editors hope that the
papers contained in this volume will contribute to the understanding and shaping of the process of change in East Africa.

The challenge to the scholars and policy makers against the backdrop of all the identified institutional weaknesses, convoluted identities and poor self images is to aggressively participate in global partnerships, at the same time creating an enabling environment that will nurture the emerging identities.

Several questions have been put forward in the book. Chief among these questions is what, in a holistic manner, informs and moulds the East African identity. Is it the shared colonial heritage including the legacy of artificial political borders? Is it a product of ethnicity and/or home locale? Could it be the similarity among the languages within the region? Is it the commonality of the struggle of all the peoples of East Africa to take their place in the global village? Is identity the product of self-actualization or a local response to global pressures?

These questions, and many more, were parts of the conversations held during the Nairobi Symposium. Certainly, the book does not provide all the answers to these questions. There is the need for continued study and for serious self-reflection by all of the parties and communities involved in the transition process. Likewise, there is need for communities to forge closer ties at all levels and in all areas both within the region and across the seas.

The editors hope that this volume will provide useful reading to students of humanities and social sciences. The book should also be of interest to policy makers involved in transforming the dream of East African Co-operation into a reality. It should be of use to development practitioners as well as NGOs involved in the transition of the three East Africa States.

Finally, the editors are grateful to some individuals and institutions that have supported both the International Learning Centre, the Symposium, and the production and publication of this book. The Andrew Mellon Foundation (USA) has generously funded the activities of the Global Partners. We would like to thank the Foundation most sincerely. Prof. Crispus M. Kiamba, Vice
Chancellor, University of Nairobi, provided logistical support to the symposium, while the Director for the office of International Programmes and Links, Prof. Ken M. Mavuti, extended a helping hand both during the preparations for the symposium and the eventual working on the papers for publication.

Special thanks to Dr. Jo Ellen Parker, President, Great Lakes Colleges Association for his continued guidance and support to the International Learning Centre. The University of Nairobi Press has taken the challenge to publish this volume. The Editors are grateful for the commitment of Ms. Pauline W. Mahugu and Mr. Kimaita J. Kirimania throughout the process.

Dr. Joseph L. Brockington
Kalamazoo College

Prof. Judith Mbula Bahemuka
New York

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List of Contributors

*Kithaka wa Mberia* is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Linguistics & African Languages, University of Nairobi. Besides phonology—his area of specialization—he is interested in sociolinguistics. He has published articles in both areas in refereed academic journals. His published creative works include *Natala, Mchezo wa Karata, Bara Jingine* and *Kifo Kisimani*. He is a co-editor of a children’s book titled *The River Without Frogs*. He is also the author of *Njama* which was seen on both the stage and the screen as *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*.

*James M. Njihia* holds an MBA from the University of Nairobi and is currently pursuing his doctorate in Operations Management and Information Systems. He is a lecturer in the Department of Management Science at the University of Nairobi. He specialises in the application of systems concepts in education, knowledge and information management and emergence in entrepreneurship.

*Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o* is a Political Scientist who has taught at the Department of Government and Public Administration at the University of Nairobi. Currently, he is the Minister for Planning and National Development with the Kenya Government.

*Lauren Yonder* is a Sprunt Professor of French at Davidson College. His primary areas of research are Francophone African Literature and translation. He has published articles in *Contemporary French Civilisation, French Review* and *International Quarterly*.

*Moses Golola* is the Deputy Director of Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA).

*Florida Karani* is a Professor of Education and is Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs at the University of Nairobi. Previously, she held the position of Principal of the College of Education and Distance Learning at the Kikuyu Campus of the University of Nairobi.

*Lenah Nakhone* holds a Ph.D. from the University of Nottingham (UK) and is a senior lecturer in the Department of Soil Science, Egerton University.
Winnie Mitullah is a Senior Research fellow with the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. She has published widely in the areas of Microfinancing and Transformation of African Societies.

Parvin Alizadeh is an Associate Professor of Economics at Dennison University. Her primary areas of research are developmental state, female employment, and global commodity chains. She has conducted research in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia. She recently published an article in The Brown Journal Affairs and is editor of The Economy of Iran: dilemmas of an Islamic state, published by IB Tauris, December 2000.

Jeffrey Bookwater is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Montana. He specialises in African economic development and economics of the household. He has done extensive fieldwork in Eastern and Southern Africa, focusing on land use and household decision making. He recently published work on the determinants of subjective well being in rural South Africa in Social Indicators Research.

James Michael Warner is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the College of Wooster. He has worked, researched and taught throughout most of East Africa. His current fields of research include gender-based household modelling and fiscal decentralisation in Africa. He has recently published in World Development.

Gingyera-Pinycwa is the head of the Department of Political Science at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. He has published widely in the areas of State formation in East Africa and also in formation of democratic governance in Africa.

Peter Wanyande is the Dean, Faculty of Arts at the University of Nairobi where he is also the professor of Government and Public Administration. He has published extensively in the area of governance and public policy.

Katana Mkangi is a Sociology Professor at the United States International University in Nairobi, Kenya. He formerly taught at the University of Nairobi. His area of specialisation is political and development sociology.

Nahashon Ndung’u is a senior lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya from where he obtained his doctorate. He is chairman of the same department.
Solomon Monyenye is the head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Nairobi. Previously, he was the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

Helen Mwanzi is an Associate Professor of Literature at the University of Nairobi. She is a professionally trained teacher of English Language, French and Literature in English. She has published short stories in various anthologies; several Guides to the study of secondary school course books; and scholarly essays in Daisaku Ikeda and Africa, East Africa in Transition Volume 1, and in Writers Speak.

Isaac Wasike is a lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Nairobi. His area of specialisation is archaeological heritage of Kenya. He is working on his doctoral programme at the University of Nairobi.