

# Introduction

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**GENERATION HAS LONG** formed a key theme of Africanist scholarship. For much of the twentieth century anthropologists produced classic monographs on age-grades and age-sets in rural societies, frequently observing how formal rituals such as initiation and marriage mark the passages of the life cycle and endow Africans with status, control over resources, wisdom, and civic virtue. They characterized gerontocracy and patriarchy as systems of order and/or dynamic tension, and correctly observed that, at least in male society, no concept or social category surpassed generation both in terms of its importance in governing relations and as a source of values and sensibilities. In no way fixed or immune to internal or external pressures, patriarchal discourse and ritual served as references and anchoring principles that were inherited, contested, and reinvented over time.

Although anthropologists developed a series of well-rehearsed understandings and explanatory terms such as age grades and age sets, their ethnographies did not always examine how, particularly in the colonial era, the common understandings and institutions that had long governed relations between generations—and which constituted a key means by which Africans maintained social order—were experiencing profound and often irreversible change. The major exceptions were studies animated by colonial worries over the perceived decline of “tribal” discipline. What is perhaps more obvious now is that, as young people in Africa migrated in greater numbers to towns and cities, their immersion in a new world of urban tastes, sounds, and stimuli, and new encounters with diverse peoples and conditions led to relative anonymity and often a process of personal reinvention and the embrace of new identities. Generation lost its fixed currency and was often reduced to the status of a secondary or tertiary category—and for most scholars a conceptual afterthought. And as the village and clan in Africa lost integrity—at least in the eyes of many observers—as reportedly timeless and self-enclosed entities, so also in Africanist literature did the concept of youth lose its once seemingly immutable aspect. While some anthropologists and others sought to understand and chart the endurance or demise of gerontocratic values and control over the young, most scholars by the 1970s chose, if anything, to simply note the

youthfulness of their actors, to recognize youth as a transitional category, while paying little attention to the label as a discrete social—or analytical—group.<sup>1</sup> Most anthropologists no longer considered generation fashionable or compelling and turned toward the study of other categories such as gender, class, and ethnicity. Historians were particularly uninterested in generation as a conceptual tool.

Of late, however, this has begun to change. After absorbing some of the recent advances made in African studies, scholars now find themselves better placed to reexamine categories such as generation that once had, and continue to have, descriptive power. And as historians begin to assume the same confidence regarding the examination of postcolonial Africa as they have long possessed in their analyses of colonialism, they will likely find the endurance of generation as an ordering principle and means by which Africans explain the world as a promising field of research. In the first decade of the twentieth century scholars have, fortunately, revisited youth, and a number of major, interdisciplinary conferences have taken place with generation as the organizing theme. An important literature on the subject is emerging.<sup>2</sup> As an academic topic, it appears that youth has—so to speak—come of age. This is equally true of East Africa as of other parts of the continent.<sup>3</sup>

Some publications chart the emergence of a “youth bulge” in African populations.<sup>4</sup> However, youthful predominance has in fact been characteristic of African societies for at least half a century now. Taking mainland Tanzania as an example of continent-wide trends, the first reliable national census in 1948 discovered 45 percent of the population was under sixteen and almost 90 percent under forty-five. In the 1957 census the percentages of those under sixteen and forty-five were broadly similar. Breaking the age groups down further one discovers a full 70 percent of the population was 29 or under. Children remained the dominant group; those from birth to age fourteen constituted 42 percent of the overall population. By contrast, that section of the population which might be characterized in the African setting as having reached full maturity—those over forty who as elders would have achieved positions of seniority and power in local societies—represented a mere 17 percent of the total population. The main features of this lopsided age distribution continued throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. In the most recent 2002 census those aged twenty-nine or under constituted 76 percent of the total population; those forty and older, 17 percent.<sup>5</sup> Given the numerical preponderance of the young in Africa, the recent scholarly interest is hardly surprising. Indeed, when children and youth have formed a demographic majority from at least the middle of the last century, one may ask why youth has not attracted more attention and, in particular, why generation has not been at the heart of historiographical analysis.

Population statistics suggest that the young matter, but they don't explain why or how. Probably the greatest proportion of recent interest in youth derives, unsurprisingly, from the questions raised by Africa's demographic imbalance, which is often blamed for a series of social, economic, and political problems. Many now embrace the term “youth crisis,” the general contours of which include accelerating

urbanization, chronic underemployment, delinquency, violence, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. This crisis appeared more obvious in the late twentieth century, when many states in Africa were no longer able to maintain patrimonial ties and networks sustained over previous decades, and underwent a process of contraction and at least partial collapse. In the 1980s and 1990s hundreds of millions of young people were less able to look to the state to provide a minimum of security, employment, or education. Failures on the macro political level worsened an already intense competition over scarce land, work, and schooling. Michelle Gavin observed that “[m]any of Africa’s youth are [now] caught in a Peter Pan scenario gone terribly wrong. Try as they might, they cannot seem to become adults.”<sup>6</sup>

While observers disagree over the precise relationships between demography, underdevelopment, weakening social ties, and political crises, it is hard not to see a broad correlation among all of these, or that youth may serve as both victims and unwitting agents of general crises. Jon Abbink noted that although young people are often victims of a “faulty modernization,” and that to be young in Africa has come “to mean being disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginal,” it is also true that “[b]y their sheer numbers, their availability, and their eagerness to take up anything that may relieve them of conditions of poverty, idleness or ennui, youth are easily recruited by political parties, armed groups or criminal networks.”<sup>7</sup> The title of Abbink and van Kessel’s edited collection, *Vanguards or Vandals*, illustrates the ambiguous position in which many youth find themselves today. The phenomenon of the child soldier, of a boy or girl at the same time vulnerable and ultra-empowered, speaks tragically of the limits to which young people in Africa could be pushed at the end of the twentieth century by poverty and hopelessness. Exploited by thugs and warlords who force them to perform ritualized acts of inhuman violence—in a modern-day perversion of what in precolonial times was a fairly common warrior ethic—gun-toting youth have played an obvious role in state collapse from Somalia to Sierra Leone. In this instance global media images do not necessarily deceive; they suggest the capacity of youth—in limited and specific locations—to both resist and reproduce systems of violence and exploitation, to both desire and destroy a social order that provides a minimum of security and opportunity.<sup>8</sup> According to Frederick Cooper, the “blockages of generation” in the late-twentieth century produced an “apocalyptic destructiveness” among young people.<sup>9</sup> The crisis of the postcolonial state is at least partly a crisis of the process of maturation, particularly for males.

Few would disagree with the term “youth crisis.” Discerning the extent to which the crisis has contributed to—or been the consequence of—the weakening of Africa’s social fabric and the decline of the state remains, however, one of the more challenging research agendas in African studies. Gavin observed that “[i]t is easy to develop a generalized sense that “youth bulge” is code for marauding, angry young men,”<sup>10</sup> even though such violence has become a way of life for only a relative unfortunate few. Another continual temptation is to assume that generational conflict and the youth “crisis” are only about as old in Africa as the millions the term is intended to represent, when in fact it is much older. Nor is

youth involvement in crime and violence anything new; the service rendered by child and youth soldiers to latter-day warlords has its precolonial analogue, when during the slave trade youth in Africa performed a similarly destructive role for equally exploitative elders.

Another temptation is to consider youth violence a problem unique to Africa—an example of African exceptionalism—or to be certain that there is something in youth that is inherently violent. It's also easy to ignore the social, economic, and political contexts of violence. No one has perhaps drawn more attention outside the academic community to Africa's youth crisis than Robert Kaplan, for whom—in his travels through West Africa in the 1990s—young men were “out of school, unemployed, loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatened to ignite.” Visiting a slum in Cote d'Ivoire, Kaplan observed, “Geology, like the birthrate . . . appeared to be unduly accelerating. Here, young unemployed men passed the time drinking beer, palm wine, and medicinally strengthened gin while gambling on pinball games. . . . These are the same youths who rob houses at night in more prosperous Ivorian neighborhoods. . . . The decaying, vegetal odor . . . was intense. Nature appeared far too prolific in this heat, and much of what she created spoiled quickly.”<sup>11</sup> Kaplan's remarkable claim that crowds of unemployed men in West Africa constituted a serious potential threat to the security and stability of Western societies became, after September 11, 2001, more or less accepted wisdom in the sphere of American policymaking, as fears of terrorism spawned by poverty and injustice overlaid worries about the capacity of the West in an era of globalization to quarantine itself from Third World crises.

Most scholars working in Africa would probably disagree with such an assessment; moreover, we consider it our duty to understand, with some degree of sympathy, the social origins of such violence, and to resist the slur of “senseless” violence often imputed to African societies. Yet the character of youth violence in Africa is not always clear. What is it that strikes the observer most immediately or remains after long reflection—the strategic and rational aspects of violence or instead its lumpen and whimsical cruelty? Donald Donham reminds us that “one of the crucial properties of violence” is “the inherent potential to ‘unmake’ the social world, to create murk and uncertainty. Sometimes analysts will not be able to rise above this murkiness, and pretending to do so may be one of the most serious kinds of misrepresentations of violence.”<sup>12</sup> The difficulties of rising above such uncertainty may explain why sometimes we, like Kaplan, depend on literary evocations of the “youth crisis” and employ similarly apocalyptic and totalizing terms to describe its violence. For example, youth in the 1990s, due to lack of education and employment, were “a smoldering fire ready to burn African urban areas.”<sup>13</sup> Youth are often the “mutant citizens of the modern nation, purveyors of its violent undersides.”<sup>14</sup> “Illegality has become the norm for young people and their territory for affronting the permanent counter-violence of the state.”<sup>15</sup>

The uncertainties inherent in understanding the origins of youth violence extend also to any assessment of the global or continent-wide conditions faced by contemporary African youth; in some treatments “youth” becomes a catchall

existential category that encompasses all the subaltern despairs—and desires—of the postcolonial condition. Such youth are also sometimes hard to pin down. They are at the center and the periphery; they are at the forefront and at the margins; they are empowered agents, and they are hapless victims; they are everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing. Yet not entirely so: they do overwhelmingly tend to be urban, hypercosmopolitan in their consumer tastes and cultural repertoires, and utterly precocious in their rejection of their elders and the social imaginary of the postcolonial state. In the memorable words of Mamadou Diouf, youth in Africa are engaged in “the radical questioning of the nationalist discourse, of its imaginary and the totality of its texts.” They have “embraced irregular ways and adopted dissident and unconventional practices that transport them towards worlds where Africa is either absent or ignored.”<sup>16</sup> Youth are seeking “the constitution of individuality on the margins of the ethnic group, citizenry, and the state.” They reject “the past of ancestors, traditions, and the state.”<sup>17</sup>

There is no denying the distance between pre- and postcolonial Africa, or that patriarchal and nationalist narratives have in some settings been eclipsed. Yet such an exclusive emphasis on precocious resistance and the “logic of rupture”<sup>18</sup> invites a corrective response. The same applies to a more general fixation shared by journalists and academics alike on youth violence. Both Frederick Cooper and Jay Straker have recently and separately called for more attention to the “invisible” and “inaudible”<sup>19</sup> cousins of the hyperhip left out of such accounts. “Before African youth becomes intellectually recast as a protean social collective that operates mysteriously beyond the nation-state and the entire postcolonial epoch,” Straker writes, “one should check in with the local youths to find out precisely what is on their mind at the millennial turn.” He asserts, based on his research among secondary school students of Guinea’s forest belt, that the world evoked by some scholars would appear “strange to the great majority of African youth struggling to forge optimal lives in settings where, for the foreseeable future, matters of nationhood, state authority and local socio-cultural customs still impinge powerfully on everyday life.” Straker’s young informants “eschew rather than embrace or embody socio-historical rupture.” They “seek improved possibilities for productive citizenship within the structures of community, nation and epoch they already know, love, and hate.”<sup>20</sup>

Generation *does* help to explicate contemporary crises, both as an idiom for ordering social and political relations and as a language of values and attitudes centered, for example, on such questions as how a boy becomes a man. The quest for masculine respectability, which animates young political actors, officers, and child soldiers to wage war or make peace, seems at the very heart of the matter. Yet it is a mistake to assume that all the study of generation can possibly yield are further insights into war and conflict in African history. Generation speaks to the core of social sensibilities in Africa and how they are reproduced and reinvented over time.

As the study of generation continues to develop, we will likely see more works that seek to gender our understandings of “youth.” While both males and females

are included in the language of generation, its emphasis was and is masculine. In precolonial patriarchal societies, men were the leading antagonists in contests over access to public power, women, and ritual authority. John Iliffe observes that “[c]ompetition for wives in polygynous societies made conflict between male generations one of the most dynamic and enduring forces in African history, whereas the ample availability of land minimized other forms of social conflict.”<sup>21</sup> Richard Waller notes that in colonial times, “youth” had more relevance to the experience of males; adolescence was largely a male category.<sup>22</sup> For girls and women, the lines of conflict were more commonly drawn along lines of gender than generation. In light of the complex and fluid ways in which individuals have sought through the maturation process to become men or women, it is likely that separate studies of male and female and generations will continue to emerge. The pursuit of both masculine and feminine success and dignity have been key animating principles of historic change, in Africa as on other continents; the most violent crises of maturation have been predominantly male crises, hence the male bias in the scholarly literature.<sup>23</sup> With the recent rise of violence as a specific category of research, the male bias to youth studies will likely continue.<sup>24</sup>

In general, generation embodies a rich and shifting language of rights, duties, and expectations that in the past and until now helps explain what Africans perceive to be the bases for both social order and chaos. To what extent gerontocratic values have endured or deteriorated and how these processes relate to images of past order and present chaos seem to make up a promising research agenda. Certainly the decline of village institutions, secret societies and rituals dedicated to reproducing knowledge, respect, and discipline, and the incapacity of the post-colonial state to sustain modern institutions of comparable pedagogical power appear relevant to the questions asked by a growing assortment of observers of Africa’s contemporary “youth crisis.” How did children and youth in precolonial times learn the duties and rights of membership and belonging? And how do they arrive at such notions today? Generation seems important enough for scholars to be willing to engage with rather than walk away from the category’s subjective meanings, especially when they remember that such contingency, when compared with that of other identities, is in no way exceptional. This collection aims to address some of the existing absences in the study of youth and generation, offering exploratory accounts of the position of youth in East African societies over the past two centuries.

### Youth in East African History

Scholarly reluctance to study youth in part derives from doubts about the label’s utility as an analytical category. What usefulness does a term have if it refers to a possible majority of the population, or does not seem to be discrete, homogeneous, or possess any constant boundaries in terms of class origins, interests, worldviews, gender, or even age? Definitions of “youth” emerge out of local idioms and circumstances and are constantly shifting, located somewhere between ten and as

much as forty-nine years of age.<sup>25</sup> It's easier to simply note the youthfulness of historical actors, or that youth play a key role, both positive and negative, in the continent's history and current conditions, than to work toward a set of common understandings about youth that are neither banal nor easily assailable. How can youth be defined? How is the category constructed? Is youth a primary or secondary identity? Are young people to be known as "youth" or by some other name? Do youth share distinct characteristics as a stage in the life cycle? With the intelligibility of youth agency in doubt, generation has frequently served as an ambiguous and obscure reference point on historiographical maps.

It's helpful to remember that in twentieth-century East Africa, generation constituted both a hard and a soft conceptual category, both an "ancient" and a temporary cultural label. Youth appeared as a recognized phase in the life cycle, carefully framed and enshrined by a continuous cycle of public rituals, and possessing a host of well-established understandings regarding its characteristics and functions. Young males were often cast as warriors, servants, or tolerated delinquents. In such communities a high value was placed on age, reproduction, continuity, and security. Where discontinuity was more decisive, however, youth emerged less as a phase in the life cycle than as a historical cohort. Youth were defined less by a set of inherited discursive constructs than by unique historical circumstances and narratives that set their generation apart from others before or after, and which allowed a greater degree of negotiation, flux, and invention.

A vast anthropological literature has emphasized youth as an "ancient" category and has asserted that generation in East Africa to varying extents determined men's access to authority, status, women, and ritual power. The reverse was also true: distinctions in male society between autonomy and dependency were expressed locally through generation. In some groups, pastoralist societies in particular, generation embodied a series of precise and highly articulated rankings, each rank or age grade possessing a considerable degree of affinity and connectedness, and with its own codes of discipline. Although women sometimes employed their own age rankings, the tensions embedded in relations between female generations did not as often provide the substance of village ritual, since public authority remained largely a masculine preserve, in protest of which the women often organized. Eisei Kurimoto and Simon Simonse note that women did not overlook "the opportunity the system offered them: to unite in opposition to the men."<sup>26</sup>

Male initiation rites, meanwhile, celebrated seniority and provided instruction that reinforced age deference as a principle necessary for communal cohesion. They institutionalized stratification, promised eventual advance, and gave generational antagonisms an acceptable and controlled public expression. They were "as much arenas for power games" as "a mechanism for dealing with corporate tasks or a ceremonial façade for gerontocratic power."<sup>27</sup> In most agrarian societies, meanwhile, social promotion was achieved through the institution of marriage. A "youth" was typically a bachelor without the resources, as yet, to marry and to exercise authority over the labor of his wife or wives and children. Marriage wasn't just an initiation that ended an age of reputed irresponsibility; it signaled

a man's promotion, however contested, to the rank of overseer. Thus if Marx defined classes according to their access to modes of production, anthropologists have repeatedly described how, despite endless local variations, access to women and reproduction determined men's generational status.<sup>28</sup> The manner in which juniors in Africa have historically been cast as clients in relation to their elders has been as real as class divisions between workers and capitalists in Europe.

Such systems were characterized by conflict as much as cooperation. Female agency, for example, often complicated conflicts between junior and senior males over women, cattle, and land. All-male generational disputes were sometimes forgotten when women sought to renegotiate their rights as wives and daughters. Junior and senior men formed alliances when their control over wives and daughters was threatened.<sup>29</sup> Or not. Justin Willis writes that in precolonial East Africa junior-senior male relations were characterized by constant strain, hostility, insubordination, and the potential for violence. Young men posed serious challenges through their indiscriminate cattle raiding or when they seduced the wives of their elders. "Men's collective power was threatened by the sexual power of women and the sexual weakness of men. . . . The seductive power of women regularly breached the imagined solidarity of elder men, creating disputes amongst those who claimed to control society."<sup>30</sup>

Youth referred not only to a system of ranks but also to a world of social expectations, of ideas of duty, honor, and virtue. While Meru youth in precolonial Kenya were supposed to abstain from alcohol and sex, and display their bravery and cunning through cattle theft and combat, their elders were exempt from such expectations.<sup>31</sup> Such social mores were most sustainable during periods of security and social stability; in conditions of natural catastrophe or social crisis, youth rebelled against such standards. When youth in large numbers were unable within the village or clan to marry and assume adult status, the patriarchal principles that served as the bases for village ethics lost meaning and force. Age corresponded less and less with generation, inheritances were postponed or lost completely, and junior status extended indefinitely. Such delays undermined the capacity of the old "to manipulate knowledge and re-invent tradition"<sup>32</sup> and encouraged juniors to look for exit options from dependence on their seniors. When young men were no longer convinced they could realize respectability through their patience, conformity, and best efforts, they looked for alternative ways of advancing their status outside the community. Through migration, long-distance trade, or slave raiding they could escape a system that failed to offer promotion, or only did so after what young men regarded as intolerable delays. Warlords able to acquire guns and ranks of young followers threatened lineage systems that awarded power and privilege according to ancestry and seniority.<sup>33</sup> Young men turned to violence as an opportunity, then and now, to seize and usurp power, women, and status, especially in conditions of deteriorating patrimonial ties.

While gerontocratic practices and discourses endured throughout the twentieth century, changing political and economic conditions forced revision and adaptation. Colonialism introduced unprecedented tensions between youth and

elders, in part through the contradictory ramifications of policies pursued. On the one hand, as they erected early structures of colonial governance the British sought to access legitimacy in East Africa by identifying and associating colonial rule with established indigenous, mostly gerontocratic, sources of authority. Under indirect rule officials invariably turned to elders in their attempts to understand, and to order, local societies; in doing so they fossilized relations between young and old at a time of unprecedented change. Indeed, Christianity, capitalism, and urbanization infinitely complicated generational relations. “Two aspects of [colonial] subjection most offended men of honour [i.e., elders],” observes John Iliffe, “. . . loss of authority over the women and young people of their homesteads.”<sup>34</sup> From the early colonial period elders voiced perennial complaints bemoaning the degenerative impact of foreign influences on youth behavior.<sup>35</sup> As in other parts of the world, such complaints had cyclical characteristics as one generation contrasted nostalgic, idealized versions of their youth with the behavior of their successors.<sup>36</sup> The pattern extended into the postcolonial period as familiar concerns continued to be voiced.<sup>37</sup>

For many Africans, their colonial journeys compelled an encounter with at least selected elements of the modernist package. They went to school, migrated long distances, worked for wages, and became responsible for their own bridewealth payments. They adopted new religious identities and became “self-made” men and women of the towns. Colonial conditions undermined the categorical stability of generation as young people reevaluated their roles, rights, and duties in society, in reference to accepted wisdom and the texture of public rituals, as well as a new set of social and economic relationships of unique colonial provenance. In such circumstances young people gained the analytical distance to question the validity of gerontocratic discourse and the assumption that superior age should automatically endow their elders with specialized knowledge, wealth, or ritual power. Their distance from patriarchal expectations only increased when colonial policy began to shift around 1940. During World War II and its immediate aftermath officials abandoned elders as conservative relics of an outmoded African past—though they often retained a certain administrative and rhetorical utility—in favor of a younger generation exposed to colonialism’s more progressive aspects.<sup>38</sup>

By the postwar years, seniority was in many respects no longer celebrated so much as youthfulness—both by the colonial state and younger educated Africans who increasingly came to share a developmental rhetoric in their analysis of African problems. The experience of young people in a range of colonial institutions produced new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As they distanced themselves from networks that defined juniors as subjects of their seniors, young people came to support and to elaborate a discourse of rights that came to challenge both patriarchy and the colonial state. Juniors possessed more exit options from years of servitude to their seniors, or at least the choice between different forms of servitude. Young people in one way or another sought to redefine their rights and obligations as both subjects and citizens. Jean-François Bayart claimed that “the period of the whites became one of insolence, where ‘children’ ‘with fire in their belly’ broke

their silence.”<sup>39</sup> Among the Giriama of Kenya, “youth” became synonymous with money and social independence.<sup>40</sup> Young Gusii women eloped with their male lovers and fought over the nature of marriage with both their fathers and husbands.<sup>41</sup> Makonde elders in Tanganyika lamented in the 1950s that young migrant laborers had “lost all their manners. They are too proud.”<sup>42</sup>

Mission Christianity fed off generational tensions. The new faith promised young Meru of Mt. Kenya redemption not only from sin, but freedom from the blessings and curses of the ancestors and older generations.<sup>43</sup> The missions reshaped the process of maturation, particularly for girls, whose initiations they considered obscene. They had new things to say about sexuality, work, play, courtship, and marriage, and structured opportunities for advancement according to observed obedience to Christian norms.<sup>44</sup> Mission schools taught new notions of masculinity and femininity and forms of duty and discipline that separated juniors and seniors, Christian and non-Christian youth. Seeking to become men and women, youth negotiated the conflicting pressures and influences of patriarchs and missionaries.<sup>45</sup> As Richard Waller has recently pointed out, the erasure of rites for both young women and men left them often uncertain of their status.<sup>46</sup> Warrior bands were abolished, and village ceremonies and festivals died out. Education, Christianity, and capitalism combined to end, or at least dramatically modify, the formation of formal age-sets and the intense group solidarities that such rankings aroused.<sup>47</sup> In Meru, local elders, in alliance with the colonial state, sought to end the initiation through excision of girls into womanhood.<sup>48</sup> Youth left their home societies and sought inclusion in colonial towns, where the means to achieve social promotion were often improvised rather than inherited.<sup>49</sup> Immediately influential was the ideal of “productive masculinity, tamed by work and made responsible through the obligations of marriage and citizenship, and of modern wifhood that taught girls the disciplines of a new but still subordinate domesticity.”<sup>50</sup>

It is, however, easy to overstate the revolutionary dimensions of social change in the colonial era. The new ideas and opportunities were in no way equally extended to all. Waller writes that elders “continued to hold most of the cards throughout the colonial period. They controlled marriage, access to land and livestock, education, employment, and also the social knowledge that the young would need to survive and prosper. . . . Only the most alienated youth were beyond their reach.”<sup>51</sup> Though references in oral histories and colonial archives to the new autonomies of young men and women are legion, most youth, especially in rural areas, remained dependent on their seniors. And if the cultural and economic currents of colonial rule did help to produce educated, commercial, and working “classes” that embraced the progressive rhetoric of late-colonial developmentalism, the flip side was a growing class of young Africans whose contact with modernity was rather more ambiguous and who, colonial officials believed, had a solvent effect on traditional social order. The colonial state, despite its progressive rhetoric, was still largely reliant on “tradition,” the health and vitality of which it viewed with as much concern as African elders solicitous of social stability and customary order.

Thus the new kinds of youth autonomy drew considerable comment among British officials who, deeply concerned with “detrribalization,” discovered idleness and delinquency, though they had been there all along. They defined the moral order of the towns as inferior to that of the villages and worried over the potential emergence of an urban crowd of materialistic youth with little respect for their seniors or the laws of the land. The very presence of underemployed young African men, no longer considered “tribal” but not yet worthy of urban respectability, was seen as a contamination of the disciplined and ordered municipal environment the colonials sought to create. Officials and some African elders separated youth into two categories, depending on their perceived success in embracing modernity: useful youth and their disorderly, loafing, and criminal counterparts. These two categories formed a dialectic in East Africa during the 1950s and embodied the hopes and anxieties of officials attempting to control the process of modernization and to either resolve or ignore its contradictions.<sup>52</sup> For female youth, behaving badly was defined not so much in terms of their labor as their sexuality.<sup>53</sup>

To counter the perceived ill effects of urbanization on “detrribalized” young men, the British expelled them from townships, and encouraged “rational recreation” through youth associations such as football teams and the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts were meant to instill lessons in service and fraternity,<sup>54</sup> whereas team sports would promote a sense of fair play, time discipline, and obedience to authority. Football teams and their clubs of fans did in fact provide some of the most formative influences on young men in colonial times, producing friendships, reputations, and memories lasting lifetimes. They provided new forums for masculine display, as well as anticolonial agitation.<sup>55</sup> Colonial schools, meanwhile, were meant to cultivate discipline and a sense of citizenship in a world empire and provided novel ways for young men to assert their masculinity that were intellectual and careerist; for young women, the emphasis was on how to become “modern” wives and mothers, not to mention independent wage earners.

Despite the proliferation of schools, Scouts, and sports, the British still worried. It became common for officials to correlate youth, the city, and nationalism, and to construe willingness to question the authority of seniors with a challenge to the legitimacy of colonialism. This was actually no fantasy: nationalist movements were quick to invoke generational categories and to call into official existence youth as one of several privileged agents. They did not hesitate to employ labels arranged by their own imagination and subjective reading of history, and which resonated with local understandings. They sought to mobilize coalitions in either support or rejection of “natural” principles of patriarchy and clientelism. At times nationalists appropriated historical memories of generational deference in order to cement party unity and to distribute institutional power and responsibilities. Youth served in nationalist associations in order to earn merit through which to obtain patronage from their seniors. At other times nationalists put (relatively) young men firmly in charge, prepared to challenge the authority of the elders. Young educated Zanzibaris, for example, regarded themselves a vanguard generation, endowed by history to perform, in their island’s revolution, the

role of agents of progress as defined in their own universal, cosmopolitan terms.<sup>56</sup> East African students who went abroad and then returned were representative of an increasingly assertive urban culture and often at the forefront of what Cooper refers to as the new “politics of citizenship” of the 1940s through the 1960s.<sup>57</sup> Youth in the nationalist era thus assumed roles of either vanguards or clients, in reference either to an imagined transnational generation of “modern youth” or enduring forms of patriarchy.

The role of young men in nationalist mobilization can also be seen as part of their ongoing struggle to make claims on adulthood and as an assertion of their masculinity. Waller writes about crowds of young people “looking for confrontation, reputation, and self-esteem.”<sup>58</sup> They mixed protest with the search for fun, display, and distraction. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale have argued that youth seeking manhood took to the forests to become Mau Mau fighters more readily than their elders as a form of resistance to an alien power that most inhibited their social mobility. The male Kikuyu search for land, autonomy, virtue, and manhood was at the heart of the “moral and intellectual” context of Mau Mau.<sup>59</sup> The Mau Mau insurgency may in fact be taken as a case study of the late-colonial crisis of maturity in East Africa and the violence it sometimes engendered.

Nationalists after independence also upheld patriarchal values. They sought to “immunize themselves from a politics of citizenship and stake their futures on a more personalistic, clientalistic form of politics.”<sup>60</sup> They employed modern techniques of mass mobilization to get youth to fulfill their allegedly ancient obligations. They awarded the state a pedagogical mandate and asserted themselves as great elders or teachers. If the primary metaphor for President Julius Nyerere’s version of socialism in Tanzania was the family, then youth were theoretically obligated to serve their nationalist elders as readily as their parents or village elders. In this context young people were obliged to consider whether or not their displays of commitment would be sincere or purely instrumental, and to what extent the prosperous nationalist elite could legitimately and appropriately clothe themselves in the sacred mantle of the ancestors. The politics of generation after independence were at the same time inclusive and exclusive: the state recruited, celebrated, and foregrounded the vitality of youth on the public stage. And yet the state also excluded images of youth that appeared to conflict with the nationalist imperative of building the nation and its selective invocation of African traditions.<sup>61</sup> Imagining the postcolonial state as a precolonial family inevitably provoked quarrels. Youth were supposed to serve as the indebted servants of a new order but stood accused of some of its most flagrant transgressions. When they wore bell bottoms and miniskirts during a time of “cultural revolution” in Zanzibar, they were rounded up, beaten, and detained.<sup>62</sup> When, in 1966, Tanzanian university students protested against compulsory National Service, they were collectively rusticated as punishment for their ingratitude toward the state.<sup>63</sup> While such incidents lack the spectacular quality of, say, a decade of insurgency in Sierra Leone, in which young subalterns in the 1990s produced a bloody and “grotesque caricature of revolution,”<sup>64</sup> they do reveal profound

tensions in East Africa between the competing notions of patrimonialism and democratic citizenship.

Thus independence from colonial rule did not resolve debates and questions about the status of young people in East Africa as either subjects or citizens. Is citizenship founded upon an ethic of contractual rights or a sense of obligation, submission, and sacrifice? Does citizenship imply a voice in community debates or participation in the implementation of the decisions of one's seniors? Is authority exercised in reference to democratic or gerontocratic principles? Are citizens sovereigns or instead juniors whose status derives from their familial bond with the supreme elder of the nation? Does the state assume merely a regulatory function or a parenting role? Is citizenship based on a neutral and secular balancing of competing individual interests or integration in a national/familial effort toward an objective considered by all to be good?

These were questions asked in East Africa at least through the 1970s. By the end of the century some of these debates had receded in correspondence with the contraction of the postcolonial state and its demonstrated inability to assert itself as a parent or patriarch, particularly in an international environment increasingly hostile to such displays. In the context of the passing of the first generation of nationalist elders, bankruptcy, civil war, or the demise of statist strategies of economic development, the links between ruling elites and the ancestors have been severed or at least seriously disturbed. Family metaphors no longer suffice; ruling factions are forced to seek new avenues toward popular legitimacy. This is especially true for postcolonial cities, where a new generation has emerged for whom nationalist claims have little potency. In East African cities a social imaginary founded on the myth of consensus has collapsed.

## Chapter Overview

The opening two chapters examine links between generational relations, youth, and conflict in nineteenth- and twentieth-century East Africa. The impact of contemporary African wars on youth has inspired an important and burgeoning literature in recent years in which internal conflict is seen to have had a notable impact on local youth, which has in turn exacerbated a spiral of social breakdown and violence. From Sierra Leone to South Africa, political tension and diminished life chances have led to the resort to violence with momentous consequences for the social order.<sup>65</sup> In his chapter on war and youth in nineteenth-century East Africa, Richard Reid provides a historical context to this debate. Dramatic socioeconomic change resulting from increased contact with an expanding global economy exacerbated tensions both within and between East African societies at this time. In certain areas, notably what is now central Tanzania, a dramatic breakdown of order occurred in which youth were both victims and perpetrators. The rapacious impact of Mirambo's *ruga-ruga* betrays a distinct similarity to what has become the depressingly familiar phenomenon of child soldiery in contemporary African conflicts. According to Reid, the apparent increase in

violence in nineteenth-century East Africa was associated with mounting tensions between generations. External influences in many cases proved solvent of the social structures through which historically adulthood had been negotiated. With the restriction in opportunities to attain adulthood, young Africans were more frequently led to adopt violence to achieve maturity. Negotiation of adulthood also lies at the heart of the second chapter by Dave Eaton on generational relations in pastoralist communities in the northern Rift Valley. Much of the academic literature and political commentary on this area describes a breakdown of social bonds occurring in the recent past between the young and old associated with commoditization and the proliferation of modern weaponry. The situation is viewed by many as critical, with diminishing paths to adulthood leading, as in Reid's discussion of nineteenth-century East Africa, to the spiraling incidence of cattle raiding and violence. Taking a rather longer view than most previous commentators, and utilizing evidence stretching back to the early colonial period, Eaton instead demonstrates the durability of local age systems in the negotiation of power between generations. The pessimism of much commentary on the position is in part associated with judgmental assumptions by one generation about preceding ones, arising from unwelcome and seemingly uncontrollable external influences. Pokot elders, for example, link the proliferation of modern arms with a degeneration in the behavior of Pokot youth. However, while superficially the claim may appear persuasive, Eaton demonstrates that neither changing behavior among young Pokot men nor the increase in guns has necessarily led to an increase in violence that many assume. As we shall see, commonsense assumptions associating external influences, social change, and the perceived degeneration of youth have formed an abiding concern among those in positions of power in East African societies up to the present.

The next three chapters explore the experience of three generations who, for contrasting reasons, matured at pivotal moments in their countries' history. In his chapter on a generation coming of age in early colonial Ubena, James Giblin explores its position in what John Iliffe coined the "age of improvement," when young Tanzanians abandoned armed resistance against the colonizer and instead pursued the more developmental goals of education and economic advance. Although this was clearly a time of massive social, cultural, and economic change, Giblin highlights important continuities in Bena society. Although Bena youth may have adopted novel means to attain adulthood—notably through association with colonial institutions, in this case missions—the pursuit of maturity was a timeworn social process. Moreover, even the novel means adopted by young Bena—although in many respects alien and subversive of a moral order that shaped precolonial society and which remained normative for Bena elders and others in Bena society—appear to have had less impact on intergenerational relations than one might first assume. These remained negotiated rather than conflictual, with a "culture of mutual obligation and responsibility to kin remain[ing] robust" both within and between generations. In Hélène Charton-Bigot's chapter a cadre of the educated African elite in post-Second World War Kenya is described

as pursuing its own determined path to improvement via university attendance, despite the manifold obstacles provided by a discriminatory education system. Independent and ambitious, these Kenyan youth exceeded the expectations of earlier generations and of a colonial system intent on limiting their development: a system that generally associated Africans with immaturity. Through determination and ingenuity they gained access to higher education abroad, which provided opportunities in adulthood that far exceeded those envisaged by more conservative British officials and settlers. In turn they contributed to the wider national maturity associated with emancipation from colonial rule, before going on to play a central political role in post-independence Kenya. This was a key generation in the region's political history, and this chapter provides important insights into the political context of its maturation as well as the role of education in the attainment of adulthood. The context facing our third "generation of change," that of educated and less-educated youth in late-colonial urban Tanganyika, as discussed by Andrew Burton in the next chapter, proved far less propitious for achieving the expectations of advance generated by dramatic socioeconomic change starting in the early 1900s and accelerating substantially after the Second World War. Exposed to the cash economy and to the commodities of consumerist society to a greater extent than previous generations, being products of a substantially expanded postwar colonial education system, and imbibing a heady atmosphere of economic and political advance associated with late-colonial developmentalism and with the inexorable nationalist march to independence—members of this generation had high hopes of their progress to adulthood. This was reflected by an accelerating wave of migration to urban centers, where—seemingly—youthful ambitions had the best chance of being realized. Cruelly, however, by the mid-1950s an enduring problem of unemployment was emerging in urban economies throughout the region that had previously been characterized by labor scarcity, a problem fed in large part by the heady aspirations of these youthful migrants. As it turned out, a shortage of urban opportunities to achieve social and economic independence was to prove a substantial obstacle for young urbanites that has persisted—if not intensified—up to the present.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine shifting conceptions of youth and generation in colonial East Africa. While colonialism had significant repercussions for intergenerational relations, and for ways of thinking about these, both chapters in the end emphasize the fundamental resilience of indigenous modes of thought and social organization. Richard Waller describes the tensions surrounding the Maasai warrior age-grade of *murran* in twentieth-century Kenya. With the imposition of pax Britannica, *murran*'s precolonial role as community defenders and livestock gatherers was considered obsolete. Instead, lacking any positive role, *murran* were viewed by Maasai elders and British officials as idle and unruly, and efforts were made to control them, including an unsuccessful attempt to abolish *murran*-hood altogether. However, as Waller observes, *murran*hood was an integral part of the larger social organization of age and an important stage in the process of "becoming Maasai," and *murran* resisted such initiatives. For them *murran*hood

continued to provide more effective models of masculinity and citizenship than any alternative institutions introduced under colonialism. In the next chapter, Carol Summers considers youth as a metaphor in Ganda social and political thought. She describes three ways of thinking about youth. The first is a developmentalist rhetoric in which Uganda and Ugandans are portrayed as being in their adolescence, first enunciated by colonials but adopted by Ganda activists in the postwar period as a narrative that implied a natural passage to self-determination and maturity. Summers then discusses contrasting Ganda conceptions of youth. The first, associated with the Bataka movement of 1940s/50s Buganda, emphasizes the complementary relationship between elders and their grandsons as heirs of an uncorrupted inheritance, bypassing an intervening generation contaminated by colonialism. The second examines ideas surrounding the cathartic aspects of succession between generations particularly associated with the appearance of a new kabaka. Such diffuse conceptions of youth, cautions Summers, severely complicate any straightforward interpretation of youth as an analytical category.

The political role of youth is the focus of the next chapters on mainland Tanzania and revolutionary Zanzibar. James Brennan and Thomas Burgess both examine efforts to control the political threat posed by youth and, through institutional discipline, to channel youthful energy in a state-sanctioned manner. Chapter 8 is primarily concerned with Dar es Salaam, where, like Summers, through his analysis of the political history of youth in the town Brennan highlights the relational aspects of local understandings of youth. An educated elite, dismissed as impudent youth by established groups within the urban population in the interwar years, grows into power following World War II as the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and in turn identifies a succeeding generation as a threat to the sociopolitical order. The organization of a party youth league enables the political class to exert control over a rapidly expanding class of urban youth, both through patronage in the provision of employment and through the policing role of the league itself. Like the TANU youth league on the mainland, Zanzibar's revolutionary Afro-Shirazi Party in the 1960s/70s also devised institutions aimed at the control of this potentially destabilizing section of the population. These included its own youth league, however, Burgess in chapter 9 focuses instead on a network of camps aimed at inculcating nationalist spirit and discipline among postsecondary island youth. These were supposed to act as a kind of revolutionary finishing school, exerting a model influence in particular over what was perceived as a class of dissolute youth emerging in urban centers and instilling the developmentalist habits appropriate to this nation-building generation. Like other youth-centered institutions such as Zanzibar's Young Pioneers and Youth League (and TANU's mainland equivalent), the camps were a product of the high nationalist period following independence. With the economic and political position of the government in serious decline by the 1980s support for such institutions was substantially reduced or withdrawn entirely. Moreover, as Brennan observes in mainland Tanzania, the spiraling numbers of urban youth at a time of rapid urbanization severely undermined the capacity of party and state "to

manage and act as patrons for young, employment-hungry men.” Nevertheless, as Burgess observes, in Zanzibar the youth camps actually “lingered on and continue to this day as one of the few relics of what in the islands is regarded universally as a more disciplined time.”

Chapters 10 and 11 examine youth in connection with sexuality and gender. Both chapters provide insights into the HIV/AIDS pandemic and youth in contemporary East Africa. In his chapter on patterns of early sexual behavior among young Africans in interlacustrine societies in twentieth-century Uganda and Tanzania, Shane Doyle provides important historical background to the contemporary debate surrounding sexuality and HIV/AIDS. He identifies shifts in youthful sexuality occurring in particular from the late colonial period, when accelerating socioeconomic, cultural, and even legal change was associated with an increase in premarital sex. Evidence of change dating to this period belies assumptions later made by elders at the time of the emergence of HIV/AIDS, attributing the rise of the disease to increasing promiscuity among the generation reaching maturity from the 1970s. Here once again we note the tendency of elders to not only assume the worst of succeeding generations but also to idealize the experience and behavior of their own. Doyle observes that HIV/AIDS has in fact resulted in significant risk-reducing changes in the sexual behavior of young people but that this has “not yet altered the perception of most elders in Great Lakes societies that youthful sexual morality is in terminal decline.” In the penultimate chapter, Joyce Nyairo and Eunice Kamaara’s analysis of two recent Kenyan texts connected to HIV/AIDS sheds light on not only the potency of the pandemic in the popular imagination but also on enduring aspects of gender relations among youth. The furor surrounding a text purportedly written by an HIV/AIDS victim at Moi University in particular provides fascinating insights into sexual politics of a student body in contemporary Kenya. In contrast to Doyle’s observations in Uganda, Nyairo and Kamaara find among their cohort of youth little evidence of changes in sexual behavior arising from the presence of HIV/AIDS. They ascribe this to inappropriate official approaches to tackling the pandemic that offer little hope and tend to reinforce a gender imbalance among youth that in part is responsible for its spread.

Justin Willis’s closing chapter, while also focused primarily on contemporary Kenya, provides another example of enduring concerns that have been perennially reiterated from the colonial period, at least, up to the present. In his discussion of the 2005 moral panic surrounding the impact of foreign alcoholic drinks on Kenyan youth Willis provides a recent illustration of anxieties over the contamination of youth by alien influences. The Kenyan government provided a token response to public concern by banning the advertisement of such drinks. “The ban,” Willis observes, “was the consequence not of clear evidence of a youth drinking crisis, but of wider anxiety about youth, through which this lobbying became drawn into discursive efforts to create an authentic morality.” Willis’s chapter demonstrates the enduring strength of narratives of degeneration that have featured prominently in many earlier chapters.

Indeed, in varying forms the theme of youth's degeneration features in most of the chapters herein. From an increased propensity to violence among young warriors in Reid's account of nineteenth-century conflict to the purported collapse of sexual morality of young Ugandans and Kenyans in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, as described by Doyle and Nyairo and Kamaara. Continuities are likewise evident in perceptions of behavioral decline in Waller's and Eaton's depictions of Kenyan pastoral societies in colonial and postcolonial Kenya. Even in those chapters where concern over supposed degeneration isn't foregrounded, such as Burton's and Brennan's discussion of urban politics in Tanzania or Burgess's account of Zanzibar youth camps, youth's perceived susceptibility to indiscipline arising from socioeconomic change often prompts action on the part of the state and/or elders. This tendency to view youth in terms of crisis can be explained largely by the unprecedented sociocultural, political, and economic forces shaping East African societies from the nineteenth century. This was a time of dramatic change and the reshaping of local cultures of authority, honor, and exchange often had significant repercussions for generational relations. Elders and/or those in positions of authority perennially identified foreign influences, which they had a restricted ability to control, as exerting a malign influence on youth. The rose-tinted spectacles invariably adopted by elders in viewing their own youthful past in comparison to the conduct of contemporary youth reinforced pessimism over declining behavior. Moreover, in a context where intergenerational tensions were frequently the product of competition over resources it was often in the interests of elders to denigrate their juniors.

The vigor of young males has a long history of being harnessed by men in power to advance their own cause, and the preoccupation with controlling youth over the *longue durée* forms another theme at the heart of the collection. Exertion of greater control over youth was generally motivated by material or political self-interest, a perceived need for discipline, or a combination of the two. In Eaton's and Waller's discussion of the Pokot and Maasai, for example, the need for order is invoked, though the material benefits of elders' control are clearly evident. Likewise, the imposition of discipline among Tanzanian urban youth as described by Burton and Brennan, although characterized as a social necessity, had clear political benefits for those exercising power. Charton and Burgess, meanwhile, examine institutional efforts to channel youth in colonial and postcolonial Kenya and Zanzibar aimed at producing cooperative subjects at a time of rapid social change. Shifts in social mores, authority, and economic organization promoted deep anxiety among officials and elders that was often ameliorated by initiatives aimed at molding youth. However, the limited impact of those institutional initiatives described by Charton and Burgess indicate how wider social forces usually overwhelmed state attempts to moderate change, as is borne out too, by Willis's account of the moral panic surrounding youth and alcohol in twenty-first-century Kenya.

Generational tensions were in part a product of shifting expectations among youth regarding their obligations and responsibilities, which also figure prominently

in many chapters. What was expected by and of youth changed dramatically over the century and a half covered by this collection. Although, as we have seen, this could often result in conflict between generations, Giblin describes how a time of great change, in which young people's expectations and outlook fundamentally shifted, was successfully negotiated in part through the adaptation of old social mores. Idioms of kinship in early colonial Ubená are shown to have had a resilience and suppleness that made them key relational tools at a time of socioeconomic transformation. This is further exemplified by their later use by nationalists in the shaping of youth as a political category, as discussed by Summers, Brennan, and Burgess. Moderating—and/or placating—the expectations of youth and establishing its responsibilities to the new nation was a key project in early postcolonial East Africa, in which invocation of kinship idioms played a useful part. Postcolonial politicians were no doubt aware that changing expectations among youth had already had profound long-term consequences for East African societies. They were, after all, products, of a late-colonial generation located at the cutting edge of political and demographic transformations in mid-twentieth-century Kenya and Tanzania, as described by Charton-Bigot and Burton. Initiatives arising from the rising aspirations of late-colonial youth in these countries had by independence transformed their political and urban landscapes.

THIS BOOK represents the first extended collection of essays examining African youth in historical context. It forms an important contribution to a burgeoning literature on contemporary youth that has emerged in African studies in recent years. Given both the long demographic predominance of youth in the region and the often central role of generation in African social order and understanding, it is perhaps surprising that such a collection has taken so long to appear. Above all, youth as a category should matter to scholars because it matters to Africans. When it does not matter to Africans, when they do not understand their own circumstances and relations at least partially through the language of generation, then such labels need not concern scholars. Generation, however, does matter; indeed it's hard to understand culture and history in Africa, either ancient or contemporary, without grasping how Africans employ this category as a means by which to order the world, explain social differences, and to determine manners, social customs, and aspirations. The language of generations speaks to how boys and girls become men and women, helps define notions of masculinity and femininity, and informs local ideas of what is right and what is wrong.

## Notes

1. Africa is not unusual in this regard. In Western societies too the concept of "youth" as a discrete social category is a relatively recent one, arising in the course of the twentieth century. For an old, though useful, overview, see John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations 1770–Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

2. For instance, conferences were organized by the University of Edinburgh (2002), University of Leiden (2003), Northwestern University (2003), Amherst College, and the African Studies Association (2003). For examples of the growing literature, see the collections edited by Barbara Trudell, Kenneth King, Simon McGrath, and Paul Nugent, *Africa's Young Majority* (Centre for African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 2002); Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel, *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005); Alcinda Honwana and Filip de Boeck, *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005); and the special issue of the *African Studies Review* 46, no. 1 (2003).

3. As illustrated by a spate of recent PhD research on youth in East Africa: see, e.g., for Zanzibar, G. Thomas Burgess, "Youth and the Revolution: Mobility and Discipline in Zanzibar, 1950–80," Indiana University, 2001; for mainland Tanzania, Eileen Moyer, "In the Shadow of the Sheraton: Imagining Localities in Global Spaces in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania," University of Amsterdam, 2004; for Uganda, Kirstin E. Cheney, "The Pillars of the Nation: Child Citizens and Ugandan National Development," University of California, Santa Cruz, 2004, and for Kenya, Paul Ocobock's forthcoming thesis at Princeton on youth in colonial Nairobi. Themed issues on East African youth (*Africa Today* 51, no. 3 [2005], and the *Journal of African History* [*JAH*] 47, no. 1 [2006]) are also representative of this trend.

4. E.g., Michelle Gavin, "Africa's Restless Youth," in *Beyond Humanitarianism*, ed. Princeton Lyman and Patricia Dorff (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2007); Robert Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

5. In 1967 those aged between birth and 29 represented 69 percent of the population, those over 40, 20 percent; and in 1978, respectively, 71 percent and 18 percent. Census data comes from Government of Tanganyika, *African Census Report 1957* (Dar es Salaam, 1963), 25–31; Government of Tanzania, *1967 Population Census Vol. 4: Economic Statistics* (Dar es Salaam, 1971), Table 301; Government of Tanzania, *1978 Population Census Vol. 5* (Dar es Salaam, 1982), Table 6; <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/census/pdf/Evaluation%20and%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Age%20Structure.pdf>.

6. Gavin, "Africa's Restless Youth," 71–72.

7. Jon Abbink, "Being Young in Africa: The Politics of Despair and Renewal," in *Vanguard or Vandals*, ed. Abbink and van Kessel, 3, 5, 7.

8. Less well known, yet perhaps more ambiguous, has been the phenomenon of youth vigilantism, the Nigerian manifestation of which has drawn considerable scholarly interest. See the essays by David Pratten, Murray Last, Laurent Fourchard, and Fatima Adamu in *Africa* 78, no. 1 (2008); Johannes Harnischfeger, "The Bakassi Boys: Fighting Crime in Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies* (*JMAS*) 41, no. 1 (2003): 23–49; Insa Nolte, "Identity and Violence: the Politics of Youth in Ijebu-Remo, Nigeria," *JMAS* 42, no. 1 (2004): 61–89; Wale Adebawwi, "The Carpenter's Revolt: Youth, Violence and the Reinvention of Culture in Nigeria," *JMAS* 43, no. 3 (2005): 339–65; Kate Meagher, "Hijacking Civil Society: The Inside Story of the Bakassi Boys Vigilante Group of South-eastern Nigeria," *JMAS* 45, no. 1 (2007): 89–115; Daniel Jordan Smith, "Violent Vigilantism and the State in Nigeria: The Case of the Bakassi Boys," in *States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Edna Bay and Donald Donham (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 127–47. For Kenya, see David Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence, and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya," *African Affairs* 101 (2002): 531–55.

9. Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective," *JAH* 49, no. 2 (2008): 189, 194.
10. Gavin, "Africa's Restless Youth," 74.
11. Kaplan, *Ends of the Earth*, 16, 19.
12. Donald Donham, "Staring at Suffering: Violence as a Subject," in *States of Violence*, ed. Bay and Donham, 28.
13. Edna Bay, Introduction to *States of Violence*, ed. Bay and Donham, 10.
14. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth: From the Past to the Postcolony," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Alcinda Honwana and Filip de Boeck (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), 20.
15. Tshikala Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa," in *Makers and Breakers*, ed. Honwana and de Boeck, 222.
16. Mamadou Diouf, Afterword to *Makers and Breakers*, ed. Honwana and de Boeck, 229, 231, 232.
17. Mamadou Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: African Youth and Public Space," *African Studies Review* 46, no. 1 (2003): 7.
18. Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa," 217.
19. Jay Straker, "Youth, Globalization, and Millennial Reflection in a Guinean Forest Town," *JMAS* 45, no. 2 (2007): 302; Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint," 194.
20. Straker, "Youth," 302, 314–15.
21. John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 95.
22. Richard Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," *JAH* 47, no. 1 (2005): 82, 83.
23. The reconstruction of the crises of female maturation has also recently been undertaken. See, for example, Lynn Thomas, "'Ngaitana (I Will Circumcise Myself)': The Gender and Generational Politics of the 1956 Ban on Clitoridectomy in Meru, Kenya," in *Gendered Colonialisms in African History*, ed. N. R. Hunt, T. Liu, and J. Quataert (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 16–41; Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005); Brett Shadle, *Girl Cases: Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiland, Kenya, 1890–1970* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006).
24. For a review of literature on violence in Africa, produced mostly by anthropologists, see Donham, "Staring at Suffering," 16–33.
25. Youth's problematic nature as an analytical category is highlighted by the fact that in many sub-Saharan countries life expectancy barely exceeded broader definitions of youth. A recent survey of statistics on youth put life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa for those aged fifteen at just forty-three. Serguey Ivanov, "Existing Youth Development Indicators and Data on Youth," copy at [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ydiSergueyIvanov\\_Demographicindicators.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ydiSergueyIvanov_Demographicindicators.pdf).
26. Kurimoto and Simonse further claim, "Women's age-sets do not form a coherent system in themselves. They do not have the neatly balanced pairs that can unite people and split them according to a mechanism of complementary opposition. Their principal reference is the male system," Eisei Kurimoto and Simon Simonse, Introduction, to *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition*, ed. Kurimoto and Simonse (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 19. In the same volume, Kaori Kawai asserts, "Women's age categories serve as a compromise between socio-cultural constructivism and biological determinism. . . . [A]lthough age categories are determined by systems and rules, they also take the natural facts of fertility and birth

- into account" ("Women's Age Categories in a Male-Dominated Society: The Case of the Chamus of Kenya," 165).
27. Kurimoto and Simonse, *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa*, 6–7.
  28. Peter Geschiere, *Village Communities and the State: Changing Relations among the Maka of South-Eastern Cameroon since the Colonial Conquest* (London: Kegan Paul, 1982).
  29. See the doctoral dissertation of Margot Lovett, "Elders, Migrants, and Wives: Labor Migration and the Renegotiation of Intergenerational Patronage and Gender Relations in Highland Buha, Western Tanzania, 1921–1962," (Columbia University, 1996).
  30. Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850–1999* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 55.
  31. Jeffrey Fadiman, *When We Began, There Were Witchmen: An Oral History from Mount Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
  32. Mario Aguilar, "Gerontocratic, Aesthetic and Political Models of Age," in *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa*, ed. Mario Aguilar (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), 24.
  33. See Richard Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns and Meanings of State-Level Conflict in the 19th Century* (Oxford: James Currey, 2007).
  34. John Iliffe, *Honour in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203.
  35. See, e.g., *ibid.*; Joanna Lewis, *Empire State Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925–52* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 135; Andrew Burton, *African Underclass: Urbanisation, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 74.
  36. For the cyclical, generational anxieties surrounding youth delinquency in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain, see Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (London: Macmillan, 1983).
  37. See, e.g., for the "undesirable percentage of children [who] have acquired rotten behaviour" in contemporary Uganda, the book of manners and parenting by Henry F. Mirima, *Shaping Modern Behaviour*, 3d ed. (Fort Portal, 1997), 2; and for Maasai elders bemoaning lack of respect and the individualistic ways of postcolonial youth, Dorothy L. Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 257, 273.
  38. For a useful introduction to shifting colonial policy in the 1940s, see R. D. Pearce, *Turning Point in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1982).
  39. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1993), 113–14.
  40. David Parkin, *Palms, Wine, and Witnesses: Public Spirit and Private Gain in an African Farming Community* (London: Intertext, 1972).
  41. Shadle, *Girl Cases*.
  42. J. Gus Liebenow, *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania: The Case of the Makonde* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 231.
  43. Fadiman, *When We Began, There Were Witchmen*, 175–254.
  44. Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa."
  45. The impact of Islamic knowledge, belief, and custom on youth and generation has received less attention, especially in East Africa. For West Africa see Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Lamin Sanneh, *The Crown*

and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997). Young men constituted a core element of Sufi converts and likely gravitated toward Sufi orders in part out of a general desire to access a more universalistic system of belief than village pantheism.

46. Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," 81.

47. Sometimes the rise of ethnic politics, such as when smaller entities like the Kipsigis merged into a larger identity like the Kalenjin as a defense against powerful ethnic rivals, was responsible for the summary reform of existing age-systems. See Toru Komma, "Peacemakers, Prophets, Chiefs, and Warriors: Age-Set Antagonism as a Factor of Political Change among the Kipsigis of Kenya," in *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa*, ed. Kurimoto and Simonse, 186–205.

48. Thomas, "Ngaitana." For the process in East Africa of female maturation in Western schools in the colonial and postcolonial periods, see Corrie Decker, "Fathers, Daughters, and Institutions: Coming of Age in Mombasa's Colonial Schools," in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Mary Ann Porter, "Resisting Uniformity at Mwana Kupona Girls' School: Culture in an Educational Setting," *Signs* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 619–43; Amy Stambach, *Lessons from Mount Kilimanjaro: Schooling, Community, and Gender in East Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Lynn Thomas, "Schoolgirl Pregnancies, Letter-Writing, and 'Modern' Persons in Late Colonial East Africa," in *African Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 180–208. For female youth culture more generally, see Zubeida Tumbo-Masabo and Rita Liljestrom, eds., *Chelewa, Chelewa: The Dilemma of Teenage Girls* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1994); Minou Fuglesang, *Veils and Videos: Female Youth Culture on the Kenyan Coast* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 1994).

49. For excellent studies of changing constructions of modern masculinity in Africa, see Stephan Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher, eds., *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

50. Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," 78.

51. *Ibid.*, 87.

52. Thomas Burgess, "Mobility and Discipline: Colonial Age Discourse in Tanzania," in *Rethinking Age in Africa: Colonial, Post-colonial and Contemporary Interpretations of Cultural Representations*, ed. Mario Aguilar (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006), 50–51; Paul Ocobock, "Joy Rides for Juveniles': Vagrant Youth and Colonial Control in Nairobi, Kenya, 1901–52," *Social History* 31, no. 1 (2006), 39–59; Burton, *African Underclass*.

53. Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," 83. For the younger generation of Haya youth making their way in colonial Kenya, see Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

54. See, e.g., Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

55. See, e.g., Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), chap. 5; Tadasu Tsuruta, "Simba or Yanga: Football and Urbanization in Dar es Salaam," in *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*, ed. James R. Brennan, Andrew Burton, and Yusuf Lawi (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2007), 198–212.

56. G. Thomas Burgess, "An Imagined Generation: Umma Youth in Nationalist Zanzibar," in *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence from Tanzania: Essays in Honor of I. M. Kimambo*, ed. Gregory Maddox, James Giblin, and Y. Q. Lawi (London: James Currey, 2005).
57. Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint," 172.
58. Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," 89.
59. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley 2: Violence and Ethnicity* (London: James Currey, 1991).
60. Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint," 179.
61. See, e.g., Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures"; Andrew M. Ivaska, "Negotiating 'Culture' in a Cosmopolitan Capital: Urban Style and the Tanzanian State in Colonial and Post-colonial Dar es Salaam," PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2003; and Ivaska's forthcoming monograph, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
62. Thomas Burgess, "Cinema, Bell Bottoms, and Miniskirts: Struggles over Youth and Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2 (2002): 309–11.
63. Andrew Ivaska, "Of Students, 'Nizers,' and the Struggle over Youth: Tanzania's 1966 National Service Crisis," *Africa Today* 51, no. 3 (2005): 83–107. For a history of university student protest in Kenya, see Maurice Amutabi, "Crisis and Student Protest in Universities in Kenya: Examining the Role of Students in National Leadership and the Democratization Process," *African Studies Review* 45, no. 2 (2002): 157–78.
64. Ibrahim Abdullah, "I Am a Rebel: Youth Culture and Violence in Sierra Leone," in *Makers and Breakers*, ed. Honwina and de Boeck, 186.
65. See, e.g., Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996); Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935–1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).