Introduction

The middle decades of the twentieth century in East Africa, from the 1940s to the early 1970s, were a time of prodigious intellectual and cultural activity. Political and social change across the region after 1945 led to a transformation in the cultural landscape too. The 1940s and 1950s were characterised by harsh repression and colonial violence but also saw East Africans seize new opportunities, for example to study overseas, which had previously been tightly controlled by colonial states in the region. At home, new and expanded universities both produced an intellectual elite and provided the spaces in which much of this cultural work took place. This reached the wider public through new newspapers, magazines, and the products of new publishing houses. Their audience was created with the development of mass literacy and the foundation of politically engaged civil society organisations, such as trade unions. Critically, much of this activity was funded externally, first as part of late-colonial efforts to remake the British empire and to contain anti-colonial nationalism, then by Cold War actors determined to influence the course of decolonization.

The cultural products of this age have proved to be fertile sources for historians over the past twenty years, as well as, increasingly, for literature scholars. Newspapers in Zanzibar, popular music in Nairobi, women's literature in Kampala, pulp fiction in Dar es Salaam, "small magazines" on university campuses – all these have allowed scholars to reframe histories of decolonization, race, urbanization and nation-making.[1] This book takes inspiration from this work. But by foregrounding initiatives that were explicitly regional – working across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania – and by placing renewed emphasis on the conditions of cultural production, we make a different argument.

In her study of the Latin American economists of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, the historian Margarita Fajardo writes that they "reclaimed the category of Latin America as a region at [a] moment in which the division of the world into regions was an exercise of geopolitical and intellec-

1 Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Emily Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Christopher E. W. Ouma and Madhu Krishnan, "Small Magazines in Africa: Ecologies and Genealogies," *Social Dynamics* 47, no. 2 (2021): 193–209; Anna Adima, "Anglophone Women's Writing and Public Culture in Kenya and Uganda, 1959–1976" (PhD thesis, University of York, 2022); Daniel Heathcote, "Postcolonial Culture in Nairobi's Margins 1963–c.1982" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2024).

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tual domination".[2] In a similar vein, we argue, East Africans did not only build ethnicities, nations, and cities, but also reclaimed and put into service the very category of East Africa itself. From having been a category which had at different points served the needs of British colonial governance or settler power, East Africa became instead, as the Kenyan writer and intellectual Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o recalled of his student days at Makerere College, Uganda, in the early 1960s, "a place where the impossible seemed possible".[3]

In the post-1945 period, the peoples of Kenya, what is now Tanzania, and Uganda had little choice but to give significant thought to what it meant to be East African. Across the world, federations became a key part of the toolkit of late colonial governance.[4] European policymakers initially saw regional federations as a viable foundation for a new brand of imperialism, allowing for the more effective administration of the constellation of smaller, lightly staffed colonies. As the hubris of a "second colonial occupation" gave way to the realities of decolonization, federations were refreshed both to protect European interests in a post-colonial world and as a vehicle for new leaders to gain standing in a global order stacked against them.[5]

As elsewhere, the experiment in federation in East Africa was stillborn. Incompatible with the demands for sovereignty made by the peoples of the four territories, the formal plans for federation after individual states attained independence were swiftly abandoned by the region's new rulers. Regionalism in other forms survived. The East African Common Services Organization (1961–67) and, most importantly, its successor, the East African Community (1967–77) led efforts to govern shared infrastructure and to enhance regional trade and development.[6] But the Community lasted only a decade before collapsing.[7]

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2 Margarita Fajardo, *The World that Latin America Created: The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in the Development Era* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 15.

3 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Birth of a Dreamweaver: A Writer's Awakening* (London: Harvill Secker, 2016), 222, also quoted in Ismay Milford et.al, "Another World? East Africa, Decolonisation, and the Global History of the Mid-Twentieth Century," *Journal of African History* 62, no. 3 (2021): 409.

4 Michael Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment.'" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24 (2013): 21–40.

5 Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), chapter 4; Merve Fejzula, "The Cosmopolitan Historiography of Twentieth-Century Federalism," *The Historical Journal* 64, no. 2 (2021): 477–500.

6 Chris Vaughan, "The Politics of Regionalism and Federation in East Africa, 1958–1964," *The Historical Journal* 62, no. 2 (2019): 519–40.

7 Arthur Hazlewood, "The End of the East African Community: What are the lessons for Regional Integration Schemes?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 18, no. 1(1979): 40–58.

At first glance then, the fate of the idea of East Africa looks like a typical story of the imagined political communities of decolonizing Africa. As an example of the type of community bigger than the nation described by Frederick Cooper, East Africa appears to fit the now-orthodox approach to the historical study of Africans' experience of the mid- and late-twentieth centuries.[8] From one perspective, it is easy to trace the decline in East African political and economic integration through a story of increasing political authoritarianism and economic decline. From this angle, East Africa was just another of the things that fell apart.[9]

But running alongside this story of declining political and economic integration is a history of ambitious cultural projects designed by their architects in some cases to sustain Western influence in the post-colonial world, in others to assert East Africa's cultural sovereignty.[10] This cultural and intellectual domain of activity is the focus of this book. The book is organised around a set of intellectual and cultural organisations and activities – education, publishing, the print and broadcast media, and the labour movement – which in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in East Africa were all in different ways embedded in a regional as well as a national and global context.

Intellectual activism in each of these spheres was practised by an overlapping, and in some cases tightly connected set of actors, as the example of Bethwell Ogot illustrates. Ogot was simultaneously an academic historian; a public intellectual; an editor of the *East Africa Journal*; an ally of labour and political leader, Tom Mboya; and a publisher. On university campuses, in media houses, in public debate, and in the workplace, Ogot and his contemporaries navigated institutions which were embedded in colonial hierarchies and in "modernization" projects. Those late colonial frameworks continued to shape institutions long after independence and acted as a limiting force on people's ability to turn them to decolonizing ends.[11]

This was the world of individuals such as the Kenyan journalist Francis Khamisi, the Tanzanian poet and Swahili scholar Mathias Mnyampala and the Ugan-

8 Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

9 Robert H. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

10 Caroline Ritter, *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); Daniel Tödt, *The Lumumba Generation: African Bourgeoisie and Colonial Distinction in the Belgian Congo* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021); Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (East African Publishers, 1992).

11 Mahmood Mamdani, "Between the Public Intellectual and the Scholar: Decolonization and Some Post-Independence Initiatives in African Higher Education," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2016): 68–71.

dan magazine editor Rajat Neogy. It was characteristic of many, though by no means all, of the individuals who appear in this book that they had studied at institutions of higher education in East Africa or overseas, that they were mobile, and that they were based in East Africa's growing cities. They were predominantly but not exclusively men. They were individuals who, for different reasons, found languages of ethnic patriotism less compelling than did some of their contemporaries. There are echoes here of the intellectual culture described by the intellectual historian of West Africa Ousmane Oumar Kane, drawing on Kwame Anthony Appiah's term, as "Europhone". Frequently writing in the regional lingua francas of English or what was known as "Standard Swahili" rather than vernacular languages, they were aware of the stakes involved in making this choice.[12] Just as significantly, they consciously wrote, published, and spoke to and on behalf of a wider constituency across contemporary East Africa. The actors that we will meet in this book were not a detached elite. Instead, they shared many characteristics and experiences with their target audiences in the region: mobility; urbanization; at least the aspiration – if not the opportunity – for formal education at the advanced secondary and tertiary level; and employment in organisations connected to the social, political and cultural projects of the decolonizing state.

Individuals such as Ogot embraced nationalisms that encompassed various strands of social democracy, liberalism and pan-Africanism. They knew the ambivalence of funding received from a range of national and international sources, supplied in the context of a battle to win converts to one side or the other in the global Cold War, but at certain points made the decision to rely on funding from such sources to pursue their intellectual and cultural projects.[13] These actors were not utopian in their outlook, even if they were in some of their writings.

Initially, these actors developed their thinking in creative tension with ideas of community, nation, and internationalism espoused by the more radical thinkers and activists to their left, as well as the authoritarian populists and autochthons from the right. But increasingly over the 1960s, the space the actors

12 Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), 8; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a contemporary discussion of this point, see Ali A. Mazrui, "The English Language and Political Consciousness in British Colonial Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 4, no. 3 (1966): 295–311. On the making of "Standard Swahili" see Morgan Robinson, *A Language for the World: The Standardization of Swahili* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2022).

13 Peter Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature, and the Cold War," *Modern Language Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2015): 333–68.

and institutions we discuss in the chapters below inhabited was occupied by their critics from the left and right. The external connections which had once been a source of strength increasingly were turned against them by their critics. Over the course of the years we explore in this book, the broad and capacious nationalisms of the independence moment, which could encompass a wide variety of ideological orientations, found themselves under increasing pressure, exacerbated by Cold War dynamics and by the diverging political strategies of East Africa's nation-states.[14] Political leaders now encountered former allies, such as trade unionists, as potential threats to their authority and acted to contain them, closing down some spaces and limiting the room for manoeuvre of others. Critical voices asked whether anything had really changed. In 1971, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o articulated the challenge clearly: "Today, the more blatant racial aspects of our education have been removed. But the actual educational system which aimed at producing subservient minds which at the same time looked down upon the rural peasantry and the urban workers, has not been radically altered. In our schools, in our universities, Europe tends to be at the centre."[15]

This book zooms into the contradictions embodied in these institutions and this moment, to tell a story about region and nation, and about decolonization and its limits in East Africa in the mid-twentieth century, from the 1940s to the 1970s. The case of East Africa shows, as recent scholarship has also shown for other parts of the world, that regions continued to matter after political independence, including in sometimes unexpected ways that we might not see if we focus only on the political and economic dimensions of region-making and un-making.[16]

But more than that, we argue that independent East Africa, understood as a decolonizing category, was forged by East Africans, even as it was also shaped by colonial inheritance and the geopolitics and funding streams of the Cold War. In some cases, the individuals undertaking region-making were the same as those engaged in making nation-states in the same time period, but not always. Rather than understanding themselves to be operating within discrete geographical

14 The historian Carolien Stolte captures this sense in referring to the "more closed and fractured world" of the 1960s. Carolien Stolte, "Introduction: Trade Union Networks and the Politics of Expertise in an Age of Afro-Asian Solidarity," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019): 344.

15 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Towards a National Culture," *East Africa Journal* 8, no. 11 (1971): 15.

16 Martin Thomas, *The End of Empires and a World Remade: A Global History of Decolonization* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024), 39–41; Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the making of the modern world* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Yasser Nasser, "Asia as a Third Way? J.C. Kumarappa and the Problem of Development in Asia," in *The Lives of Cold War Afro-Asianism*, eds. Carolien Stolte and Su Lin Lewis (Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 121–42.

layers – the global, regional, national, and local – our sources are insistent on the extent to which lives played out across, between, and within these different registers, in ways that were sometimes complementary and sometimes in tension.

This is not an elegy for a world which might have been. Instead, it is a work of recovery of an intellectual and cultural space produced in a particular moment, the legacies of which persist. We are not suggesting an "origin myth" of contemporary East African regionalism, but the book does help provide an explanation for the revival of regional cultural and governmental institutions in the period from 2000 to the present. Moreover, it sheds new light on the dynamics of nation, region and globe which, while situated in a particular moment, nevertheless echo across space and time.

Mid-Twentieth-Century East Africa in Historical Context

Our focus in this book is on a very particular moment in East Africa's mid-twentieth-century history. But that period cannot be understood in isolation from the deep history of exchange and mobility which preceded it. Archaeologists and historians have traced the interlocking regional systems through which people moved and goods and ideas were exchanged in East Africa's deep and more recent past.[17] From the late eighteenth century, the development of the caravan trade created altered cultures of mobility and exchange with new infrastructural underpinnings.[18] "East Africans" as a distinctive community (or set of overlapping communities) existed first as consumers, enslaved and free labourers, and migrants; only later were they also intellectuals, journalists, broadcasters, and political leaders (to say nothing of police officers, soldiers, and other agents of colonialism). One need only look back a few decades prior to the onset of formal imperial rule to see a range of comparable processes to those described below of the making of an East African regional community.

As Jeremy Prestholdt explains, nineteenth-century East Africa defied easy European categorization, refusing as its peoples did to conform to expected racialised tropes. East Africans instead acted as savvy consumers of European, North American and Indian goods. Through their consumption, the network of trading routes through which products reached their markets, and the opportunities

17 Stephanie Wynne-Jones, *A Material Culture: Consumption and Materiality on the Coast of Precolonial East Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

18 For example, Stephen J. Rockel, *Carriers of Culture: Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-Century East Africa* (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2006); Thomas McDow, *Buying Time: Debt and Mobility in the Western Indian Ocean* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2018).

trade presented for social and cultural exchange, a precedent for a later East Africa cohered through the century.[19] And at the heart of this nascent regional community were the men, women and children of the trade caravans: the porters, the camp followers, and the families that hauled the goods of exchange along the trading routes that connected an incipient East Africa, stretching from the coast to the Great Lakes. They were, in Rockel's characterisation, carriers of culture as well as ivory.[20]

Nineteenth-century East Africa was, as both Rockel and Prestholdt make clear, a cosmopolitan space. But it would be incorrect to assume that histories of cosmopolitanism, mobility and exchange in East Africa were entirely dependent on exposure to global networks and processes. The instinctive cosmopolitanism exhibited by many of the actors in this book had another deep, more regionally rooted history. Approaching questions of mobility and exchange from a very different historiographical perspective – that of environment rather than trade or labour – Richard Waller's account of the nineteenth century in inland territories of the region reveals how these themes were no less integral there than at the coast or along caravan routes. Ecological diversity coupled with the ready availability of land encouraged interaction and migration as household responses to periods of crisis, such as drought. Immediately prior to colonial rule, whether looking at the coastal urban centres, at burgeoning settlements along caravan routes, or along new frontiers of inland migration, one is struck by, in Waller's words, the "high degree of interaction, mobility and cooperation which gave rise to the proliferation of local networks of exchange, linking different economic and social groups, which were a salient feature of 19th century East Africa . . ."[21]

However, much of what Waller describes proved incompatible with the imposition of colonial rule in the late nineteenth century, which acted to freeze patterns of settlement. The establishment of new borders, both internal to states and between states, put a check on certain kinds of mobilities, while at the same time colonialism encouraged (and indeed compelled) other kinds of mobility. In the early years of European rule, this particularly took the form of new routes of labour migration along which young men travelled to earn the money they needed to pay colonial taxes and to marry. Later, young men, and some young women, travelled for education too.

19 Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

20 Rockel, *Carriers of Culture*.

21 Richard Waller, "Ecology, Migration and Expansion in East Africa," *African Affairs* 84, no. 336 (1985): 348.

After the First World War, German East Africa, renamed Tanganyika, came under British rule as a League of Nations Mandate. While the hope of some British politicians that this could create a settler-dominated federation in East Africa was thwarted, and there were significant differences in how colonial rule was practised across Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar, nevertheless the infrastructures of British colonialism served to create commonalities and spaces of exchange. As we will explore further in Chapter two, we can see echoes of this in the print media of the time, for example, in the exchange of newspapers between Kenya and Uganda in the early 1920s, the circulation of the Tanganyika Education Department's Swahili-language periodical *Mambo Leo* beyond Tanganyika's borders, and the ways in which the Kenyan government periodical *Habari* reprinted items from *Mambo Leo*.[22]

The period after 1945 inherited the connected region we have traced, but was, at the same time, also distinctive. This was a time which Frederick Cooper rightly framed as characterised by "possibility and constraint".[23] European – and non-European – empires were shaken by the Second World War, but not destroyed. During the war and in its immediate aftermath there was a new urgency to the British colonial project in East Africa, a "second colonial occupation" in the words of D.A. Low and John Lonsdale, the contours of which we will discuss in more detail below.[24] Global decolonization and the Cold War added particular layers to the specificity of this historical moment. And there were wider social and economic changes underway, for example in East Africa, as elsewhere, it was a time of rapid urbanization, which continued in spite of the efforts of colonial government – and in some cases their post-colonial successors – to restrict the ability of East Africans to live in towns.[25]

If our period of interest was distinctive, so too was the geography of East Africa in this historical moment. Had the focus of our research been on *fin de siècle* East Africa, then the centre of cultural gravity would have been Zanzibar. The migration of both free and enslaved labour; trade; integration into global net-

22 Emma Hunter, "Colonial Government Periodicals in 1920s East Africa: *Mambo Leo* and *Habari*," in *The Edinburgh Companion to British Colonial Periodicals*, eds. David Finkelstein, David Johnson and Caroline Davis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 317–330.

23 Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 167–96. See also Cooper's work more broadly.

24 D. A. Low and John Lonsdale, "Introduction: Towards the New Order, 1945–1963," in *History of East Africa*, vol. 3, eds. Donald Anthony Low and Alison Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 1–6.

25 Andrew Burton, *African Underclass: Urbanisation, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2005); Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life*.

works; and the influence of educational establishments tied to both Islam and Christianity meant Zanzibar in that period sat at the heart of East Africa's imagined community.[26] Half a century later, however, and Zanzibar was, if not wholly absent, more peripheral than it had once been in the eyes of the writers of many of the sources on which we rely here. Within Zanzibar, there were fierce debates in the 1950s as to whether, as the historian G. Thomas Burgess writes, the islands were "outposts of the mainland, extensions of East Africa" and "largely an African cultural space", or should be "regarded as part of a multi-cultural Indian Ocean world, with allegiance to Islam being one of its primary distinguishing features?"[27] But meanwhile the hubs of the East African intellectual project had shifted westwards, largely because of where colonial economic and political power was situated in the late colonial period. The infrastructure of print media, intellectuals, cultural producers, and their consumers followed. Critically, the colonial capitals also came to host the key higher education institutions that were the hothouses of the mid-twentieth-century regionalism we explore here.[28] Kampala, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and not Zanzibar provided the ecosystem in which this book's actors thrived and in which the category of East Africa came to the fore. For these reasons, Zanzibar features infrequently in this book.

With a changed territorial composition of the imagined East Africa and political context, what Prestholdt terms the "taxonomies of East Africa," imposed upon the region by external actors, similarly flexed.[29] The late colonial project in East Africa was refracted through the specificities of how the region was understood, spatially as well as temporally. A sense that East Africa was "behind" other parts of Africa and other parts of the world, and that independence must thus necessarily lie further in the future than was the case for other regions, was embedded in the colonial thinking of the time. Echoes of this way of thinking can be found in the writings of the East African nationalists, trade unionists and intellectuals who were actively engaged from the 1940s in planning for the region's future, and in those of the international foundations and organisations, such as UNESCO, which were also increasingly involved in outlining this future after the Second World

26 Morgan Robinson, "The Idea of *Upelekwa*: Constructing a Transcontinental Community in Eastern Africa, 1888–96," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 81, no. 1 (2020): 85–106.

27 G. Thomas Burgess, *Race, Revolution and the Struggle for Human Rights in Zanzibar: the Memoirs of Ali Sultan Issa and Seif Sharif Hamad* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 18.

28 Zanzibaris were among those who travelled to Makerere for higher education. For a list of those who studied at Makerere between 1929 and the early 1950s see Roman Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills: the Politics of Islamic Education in Twentieth-Century Zanzibar* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 542–543. See also Nathaniel Mathews, *Zanzibar was a Country: Exile and Citizenship between East Africa and the Gulf* (Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2024), 14–15.

29 Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, 147.

War. This temporal understanding of East Africa persisted even as the transition to political independence was underway, for example in terms of literature, the idiom of "catching up" was an important theme for participants in the famous Makerere "Conference of African Writers of English Expression" of 1962.

Race and the future of European settlers and South Asian communities loomed large. Visitors who came to East Africa from West Africa were shocked by the segregationist form taken by colonial rule in East Africa.[30] It was not only the British who thought of West and East Africa as distinctive domains. Shobana Shankar describes the way the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, which was created in 1950 charged with "establishing India's soft power in Africa", saw East and West Africa in very different terms. India's divergent strategies towards West and East Africa, she argues, "involved a denigration of East Africa as a region and East Africans as 'unprepared' for certain kinds of transnational projects".[31]

This iteration of a regional moment in East Africa was a product of the very particular conjuncture of political, governmental and economic circumstances of the era of political independence. The institutions which existed at the moment of independence had been shaped in the 1940s and 1950s, when regional modes of governance were understood as a technocratic solution to the challenge of delivering services on a small budget across large geographical distances.[32] This in turn had its roots in an earlier political and governmental moment.

Regional Structures of Governance in the Twentieth Century: From Closer Union to EACSO to EAC

As a political label, by the 1940s "East Africa" carried the baggage of colonial projects aimed at creating a political union in the region which would bring together Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda.[33] When Tanganyika became a League of Nations Mandate under British administration after the First World War, Leo Amery, appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1924, saw an opportunity to bring together governance of the East African territories now under British rule. This was a prospect welcomed by Kenyan settlers who saw it as a path to settler dominated self-governance but resisted by others for the same reason. A series of ef-

30 As we will see in Chapter four.

31 Shobana Shankar, *Uneasy Embrace: Africa, India and the Spectre of Race* (London: Hurst, 2021), 72.

32 Vaughan, "The Politics of Regionalism"; Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment'".

33 For a detailed account of regional integration in the colonial period, see Claire A. Amuhaya and Denis A. Degterev, *A Century of East African Integration* (Springer Nature, 2022), 33–47.

forts to create "Closer Union" ended in 1931 with a UK Parliamentary Joint Select concluding that "the time is not yet ripe" for any form of political unification.[34]

But if political union was stopped in its tracks, nevertheless the years which followed saw growing economic integration and an expansion of areas in which the provision of government services took place on a regional basis. In June 1922 it was announced that there would be a shared single currency, the East African Shilling, for Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda.[35] From 1927, the three territories were also part of a shared customs union. As with the currency, this was a case of adding the League of Nations Mandate of Tanganyika to shared arrangements which already existed between Kenya and Uganda.[36]

In 1926 the Conference of Governors was established. This was an advisory body, which met annually "to discuss such matters as customs tariffs, railway rates and scientific research activities." There was also "a permanent secretariat through which it directed the work of the East African Meteorological Service, the Statistical Department and the East African Inter-Territorial Language (Swahili) Committee".[37]

In 1945, the British Government set out plans for a new body, the East Africa High Commission. While this was in no sense a political union, and the territorial governments continued to have responsibility for "basic administration and police services, health and education, agriculture, animal health and forestry, labour, housing, public works and other subjects", the High Commission represented a new phase in that, as Jane Banfield explains, "[t]he High Commission proper was conceived of as a single authority and not, like the Governors' Conference, as members representing the advisers of the Governors".[38] There was also a growing list of services for which the High Commission was responsible, including new bodies of the post-war era such as the East African Literature Bureau.

As independence approached, services once delivered by the High Commission were transferred to the newly established East African Common Services Organisation (EACSO) as a prelude, many hoped, to a future political union. Having started as a colonial project, this was a moment when regional unity as a political project

34 Nicholas Westcott, "Closer Union and the Future of East Africa, 1939–1948: A Case Study in the 'Official Mind of Imperialism,'" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth history* 10, no. 1 (1981): 68.

35 Karin Pallaver, "From German East African Rupees to British East African Shillings in Tanganyika: The King and the Kaiser side by side," *African Studies Review* 66, no. 3 (2023): 637–655.

36 Westcott, "Closer Union," 68. Kenya and Uganda were in a shared customs union from 1917.

37 Jane Banfield, "The Structure and Administration of the East African Common Services Organization," in *Federation in East Africa: Opportunities and Problems*, eds. C. Leys and P. Robson (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1965), 30.

38 Banfield, "The Structure and Administration," 33.

was embraced, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, by East Africa's political leaders. In 1963 Julius Nyerere confidently asserted that "[a] federation of at least Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika should be comparatively easy to achieve".[39]

This turned out not to be the case. How much had changed in just a few years is captured in the journalist Tony Hughes's 1969 revised edition of his 1963 book *East Africa: The Search for Unity: Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar*. Where the 1963 version was optimistic about the prospects of federation, the 1969 edition had a new name: it was now called simply *East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda*, and it struck a far more sombre tone about the prospects for regional unity. "Barring some traumatic event which may throw the countries together", Hughes wrote, "there is no near likelihood that an East African Federation will be achieved."[40] Instead, a Treaty of Cooperation was signed in June 1967 to form the East African Community of Tanzania (Tanganyika now united with Zanzibar), Kenya and Uganda. And so, Hughes concluded, "[t]he problem for the foreseeable future will be to ensure that Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, in spite of political and economic differences, continue to appreciate how important it is to make their Treaty of Cooperation work."

The East African Community was not a political union, nor did it undo the changes which had happened in the preceding years which had undermined economic integration, such as the creation of separate currencies across the three countries.[41] As Nyerere explained in August 1967, "The treaty does not inaugurate federation, neither does it inaugurate an economic utopia. What it does is to lay down a realistic basis for the co-operation, on equal terms, of three sovereign states."[42] What it also did was to provide a home for the remaining services shared across the Community's members, now from headquarters in Arusha in north-eastern Tanzania rather than Nairobi.

For contemporary observers who wished to see more and deeper economic integration, the signing of the Treaty for East African Co-Operation in June 1967 was a hopeful sign. Writing in Bethwell Ogot and J.A. Kieran's edited volume *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*, published in 1968, the economist Dharam

39 Donald Rothchild, "From Federalism to Neo-Federalism" in *Politics of Integration: An East African Documentary*, ed. Donald Rothchild (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1968), 1.

40 Anthony Hughes, *East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 260.

41 Kevin Donovan, *Money, Value and the State: Sovereignty and Citizenship in East Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), Chapter one.

42 Julius Nyerere, *The Nationalist*, 9 August 1967, 1, cited in Donald Rothchild, "The East African Community," *Papers on the East African Community*, Occasional Paper No. 47, Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Program of Eastern African Studies, Syracuse University, 17–18.

Ghai wrote that "[p]rior to independence, the East African countries had achieved a degree of economic integration which was unique in Africa", but this co-operation had, he continued, recently been "in retreat".[43] For Ghai, the establishment of the East African Community marked a crossroads, which could see this retreat reversed.[44] In his chapter in the same volume on independent East Africa, Ali Mazrui emphasised that while "[i]n some ways the three countries are drifting apart", he concluded that their different approaches "all go to give East Africa a certain richness and inventiveness", and the potential to learn from each other. He concluded that "[p]erhaps the cause of East African regional integration is not dying after all, it is merely undergoing the pangs and agonies of profound transformation."[45] But just ten years later, this first iteration of the East African Community had collapsed.[46]

Region-making in a Changing World

This history of the high politics and economic policy of East African region-making and unmaking forms part of the background to the story told in this book. So too does the wider international social, economic and political environment which helped to provide the impetus for region-making. In economic terms, in contrast to the 1930s when global economic crisis meant constrained (colonial) budgets, and in contrast also to the renewed climate of austerity that characterised the later 1970s, the quarter of a century after 1945 constituted a time of relative optimism about economic development and about global measures to address economic inequality between richer and poorer nations though redistribution.

The aftermath of the global depression of the 1930s saw a global shift in thinking about economic development, and a new focus on the responsibility of states to deliver this, as the historian Frederick Cooper has emphasised.[47] This gathered pace after the Second World War and was increasingly internationalised, with the establishment of the new post-war international institutions of the

43 D. P. Ghai, "Contemporary Economic and Social Developments," in *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot and J.A. Kieran (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), 384–385.

44 Ghai, "Contemporary Economic and Social Developments," 386.

45 Mazrui, "Independent East Africa," 369.

46 Hazlewood, "The End of the East African Community."

47 Frederick Cooper, *Decolonisation and African Society: the Labor Question in French and British Afric*a (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds. *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In colonial contexts, the 1940 British Colonial Development and Welfare Act and the funding it established for activities badged under the banner of "development", as well as the 1946 French establishment of FIDES (Fonds d'Investissements pour le Développement), heralded a new approach to economic development by Europe's colonial states.[48] In the mid-1960s, the idea of a Marshall Plan for Africa, modelled on the Marshall Plan for European reconstruction following the Second World War, was still a refrain in the United States.

With political decolonization processes gathering pace across the world, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, established in 1964, provided a space in which newly independent states could collectively consider what a new kind of economic order could look like. Its counterpart, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), was convinced that regionalism was an essential prerequisite for the rapid development envisaged by such a new order. To the likes of the Kenyan politician Tom Mboya working within the ECA, with individual states lacking the capital and infrastructure to deliver such development, the pooling of planning, resources and expertise at a regional level seemed to be a matter of economic survival.[49]

Economic development was understood to be fundamentally intertwined with social and political development. For the historian Joanna Lewis, "the Second World War enabled Colonial Office thought and practice on welfare in Africa to be morally and financially rearmed".[50] In the Colonial Office in London, an awareness of a changed international environment and the need to demonstrate concrete actions to work towards self-government was coupled with the impact of the arrival of Labour party politicians in government, perhaps most notably Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1946 to 1950. The immediate post-war years saw a focus on social welfare initiatives around, for example, community development, mass education and the development of trade unions, causes close to the hearts, Lewis reminds us, Creech Jones and his colleagues for whom "[m]ass education for citizenship appealed to the collective memory of the origins of the Labour Party."[51] But plans devised in the Colonial

48 Corrie Decker and Elisabeth McMahon, *The Idea of Development in Africa: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 134; 137.

49 Hoover Institution Archives (hereafter HIA), papers of Tom Mboya (hereafter TM) 10/6, Tom Mboya, "Regional Integration: Political and Economic, with Special Reference to East Africa," paper presented at Vienna Institute for Development conference, Vienna, 10–15 June 1968.

50 Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya 1925–1952* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 360.

51 Lewis, *Empire State-Building*, 314.

Office in London, as Lewis also emphasises, took on a distinctive form in the racially stratified societies of East Africa.

This environment shaped the kinds of institutions which were created in East Africa in the 1940s. A new generation of colonial officials and experts of various kinds, many of them enthused by a desire to contribute to East Africa's "development", in all its dimensions, understood that new ways of doing things were needed. Where institutions such as the East African Swahili Committee, the successor of the Inter-Territorial Languages Committee which had been established under the auspices of the Conference of Governors, had once simply excluded East Africans from membership, they now, in the 1940s and 1950s, sought to incorporate East Africans in the committee, and editors of the Committee's journal anxiously worried about their failure to appeal to potential East African readers.[52]

These anxieties were illustrative of the limited parameters through which these institutions faced changing times after 1945. They sought to incorporate East Africans into existing structures, not to remake those structures. Meanwhile, as the British prepared for independence, they were preoccupied with continuing to influence political and intellectual culture both on their own behalf and, in the context of the growing strains of the Cold War, on behalf of a wider Western world united against communism. In London, the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office carefully monitored the circulation of communist books and newspapers in British colonies and protectorates, and considered how best to place their own anti-communist printed material or support the creation of this material by others.[53]

In turn, a new generation of East Africans both sought to make use of existing institutions while at the same time expressing frustration with the limits of those institutions and the ways in which they remained embedded in colonial ways of thinking, imbued with paternalism and racism. While for some, the mood of this period was one of possibility and opportunity, it was also experienced as anxiety, nervousness or peril as individuals and communities asked themselves what

52 As explored in Chapter five.

53 Adam LoBue, "'They Must Either Be Informed or They Will Be Cominformed': Covert Propaganda, Political Literacy, and Cold War Knowledge Production in the Loyal African Brothers Series," *Journal of Global History* 18, no. 1 (2023): 68–87. On British anti-communist print material more broadly, see Adam LoBue, "Preventive, Pre-emptive and Educative: Political Literacy, Anti-communism, and Cold War Knowledge Production in East Africa, 1949–1979" (PhD thesis, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2025). On the IRD and IRD activities in general, see Rory Cormac, "British 'Black' Productions: Forgeries, Front Groups, and Propaganda, 1951–1977," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 4–42.

would happen next.[54] "Our beloved country that is Kenya is at present passing through a critical phase in its history," wrote Shekue Ali, the secretary general of the Kenya African Muslim Political Union, in 1961. "It is a phase full of fears and suspicion, jealousies and rivalries, trouble and turmoil."[55]

It was a time of rapid change, when the world was shifting quickly. East Africans did not have to look far to see examples of how Cold War actors and European neo-imperialism could combine to devastating effect for the cause of African freedom. To the west, the Congo Crisis triggered by Belgian subversion of its newly independent former colony offered one terrifying possible future. As Tom Mboya wrote in 1961 to Thomas Kanza, then the Congo's ambassador to the United Nations, "the Congo situation could easily be repeated in my own country Kenya. We have a lot in common and we share these problems and anxieties".[56] Further south, Europeans were digging in for a fight in the settler apartheid, Anglophone and Lusophone states. "There is no reason for us to suppose that the Kenya settler would be any different if power were handed over to him today," Mboya observed in 1960.[57]

This context helps explain why many individuals actively imagined regions as an important foundation of a new and more equal world order which, they thought, could result from a political project of regionalism. "East Africa" was given new meaning by the political leaders of the independence era who went from organising anti-colonial activity on a regional level to advocating for an East

54 Cooper, "Possibility and constraint"; Giacomo Macola, "'It Means as if we are Excluded from the Good Freedom': Thwarted Expectations of Independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964–6," *Journal of African History* 47, no. 1 (2006): 4–5; Ismay Milford, *African Activists in a Decolonising World: The Making of an Anticolonial Culture, 1952– 1966* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 172–207.

55 HIA TM 9/7, Ali to Ngala & Gichuru, 6 May 1961.

56 HIA TM/63/7, Mboya to Kanza, 3 May 1961. This was a fear which the colonial government in Kenya consciously stoked. In November 1960 the Provincial Information Officer for Coast Province wrote to Ian McCulloch, Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in Nairobi, suggesting that publicity should be given to events in Tanganyika and Congo which "could, but must not be allowed, to happen here." McCulloch replied to say that this was an "excellent suggestion", and that work was already underway to include reports of events in the Congo in Kenya's vernacular newspapers. KNA AHC 1/45, f. 20, Letter from K.J.A. Hunt, Provincial Information Officer, Coast Province to Ian McCulloch, Public Relations Officer, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 12 November 1960; f. 21, Letter from Ian McCulloch to K.J.A. Hunt, 13 December 1960.

57 HIA WS/15/5, Mboya, "A Message to the People of Kenya," undated but 1960, 4. On these dynamics in the case of Zimbabwe, see Brooks Marmon, *Pan-Africanism Versus Partnership: African Decolonisation in Southern Rhodesian Politics, 1950–1963* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023).

African Federation.[58] The argument that "unity is strength", which was so important for nationalist movements seeking to bind their followers together, was extended to the transnational level as well. A united East Africa, so the argument went, would be greater than the sum of its parts and would allow the region to take its rightful place in the world.

In 1967, the Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere spoke of East Africa as an example of how African unity would be built up step by step, through cooperating with neighbours.[59] He argued that "talk of All-African cooperation and understanding can only too easily degenerate into meaningless cliches", and "[i]f it is to become meaningful it must be put into practice at a neighbourhood level". This was never solely an elite vision. Opinion polls conducted by the Marco Survey Company in Nairobi throughout the early 1960s attested the widespread popularity of East African Federation. In 1963, 96% of Kenyan, 82.5% of Tanzanian and 88% of Ugandan respondents (1,400 people equally spread across the nations in total) judged federation to be "desirable".[60]

We can see the same mood of opportunity coupled with nervousness in terms of the opportunities and risks posed by new funding streams from governments, institutions and agencies around the world at a time when the pursuit of independence ran up against fears of neo-colonialism. For those developing cultural or intellectual projects which required resources, there were new funding possibilities. For those seeking education overseas, there were scholarships from newly independent India, the USA, Israel, and from the USSR and eastern Europe. For those seeking to establish new publishing enterprises, funds flowed from institutions such as the CIA-front organisation Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), founded in 1950 to ostensibly promote free cultural expression through anti-communist conferences and publications across the globe.[61] These new sources of funding provided the motor for thinking in imaginative ways, but the actors we study in this book were always aware of the limits and contradictions of this moment and what was at stake in accepting such funding. The revelation in 1967

58 Ismay Milford, "Federation, Partnership, and the Chronologies of Space in 1950s East and Central Africa," *Historical Journal* 63, no. 5 (2020): 1325–48; Vaughan, "The Politics of Regionalism".

59 Julius Nyerere, "Speech by President Nyerere at the TANU National Conference: Mwanza: 16/10/67," *Mbioni* 4: 5–6 Nov–Dec 1967: 26.

60 Marco, *Public Opinion Poll no. 13, Who Wants an East African Federation?* (Nairobi: Marco, 1965), 1.

61 Thomas William Shillam, "Shattering the 'Looking-Glass World': The Congress for Cultural Freedom in South Asia, 1951–55," *Cold War History* 20, no. 4 (2020): 441–59. Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte Lerg, eds. *Campaigning Culture: The Journals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

that the CCF's funds in turn came from the CIA was a dramatic moment for East Africa's writers and artists.

By the 1970s, ambitious visions of a new economic order were fading away. The first oil price shock had a dramatic impact on the region's economies.[62] In sharp contrast to what in retrospect were the well-resourced years of the 1960s, funding streams dried up and East Africans now had to undertake "intellectual and cultural work in times of austerity".[63] Institutions such as the East African Literature Bureau disappeared, a victim of the collapse of the East African Community.

Sources and Methods

This book contributes to a growing focus on region in historical scholarship of the twentieth century, both as a framework of analysis and as a focus of study.[64] In his recent book, the historian Kevin Donovan describes a "regional turn" in historical scholarship which, he writes, allows historians to work "at the various scales East Africans produced and subverted in the course of the twentieth century".[65]

In East African historical scholarship, regional and transregional frameworks of analysis have shed new light on the social changes which nationalism and the creation of new nation-states heralded, and the impact this had on individuals whose lives and sense of political community had been shaped by mobility within older imperial geographies.[66] One such disruption can be found in the ways in

62 George Roberts, "The First Oil Shock: February 1974 and the making of our times", *African Arguments*, 20 February 2024, accessed 4 March 2024, https://africanarguments.org/2024/02/the-first-oil-shock-february-1974-and-the-making-of-our-times/.

63 Emma Park, Derek R. Peterson, Anne Pitcher and Keith Breckenridge, "Intellectual and Cultural Work in Times of Austerity: Introduction," *Africa* 91, no. 4 (2021): 517–531.

64 Which we discuss in Milford et al., "Another World". See also Thomas, *The End of Empires and a World Remade*, 41.

65 Donovan, *Money, Value and the State*, 11.

66 For a West African case study, see Marie Rodet, "Old Homes and New Homelands: Imagining the Nation and Remembering Expulsion in the Wake of the Mali Federation's Collapse," *Africa*, 88, no. 3 (2018); Marie Rodet and Brandon County, "Genre, génération et contrôle de la circulation des personnes entre le Mali et le Sénegal a l'heure de Modibo Keita (1959–1968)" in *Femmes d'Afrique et émancipation: entre normes sociales contraignantes et nouveaux possibles*, ed. Muriel Gomez-Perez (Paris: Karthala, 2018). On nationalism more broadly see illustratively, Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Giblin, eds. *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005); James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012); Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and*

which long histories of regional and transregional mobility ran up against the dynamics of border-making, national registration and post-independence nation-building. In his recent study of Zanzibari diasporic nationalism, the historian Nathaniel Mathews draws attention to efforts by the Zanzibar National Party and the Zanzibar and Pemba's People's Party to limit migration from the mainland in the late 1950s, driven by concerns about voter registration and the potential implications for election outcomes.[67]

Labour mobility was not only a characteristic of Zanzibar's economy. In 1961, according to Joseph Nye, 11% of Tanganyika's workers were from outside Tanganyika, of whom 6,000 were from Kenya, while in Uganda nearly 10% of workers were from Tanganyika and Kenya. In both Tanganyika and Uganda trade unions put pressure on post-independence governments to restrict labour migration with consequences for migration patterns.[68] In the Ngara region in Western Tanzania, Jill Rosenthal's interviewees told her that the 1960s was a time when they stopped travelling to Uganda for work in order to build the nation at home instead. The reason, they said, was "*Mwalimu* Nyerere", who taught them that "instead of making money for others in Uganda, we could make money for ourselves. Develop ourselves. Develop Tanzania".[69]

Alongside social histories drawing attention to the ways in which cross-border mobility both continued and changed in the aftermath of political independence, a growing body of work has returned to study the political and economic projects of regionalism in Eastern Africa, first through an attempted East African Federation and later through the East African Community.[70] The institu-

the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935–1972 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); George Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar Es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War, 1961–1974* (Cambridge University Press, 2021); Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq, "Historicising Nationalism in Africa," *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 4 (2018): 893–917; Emma Hunter, "African Nationalisms," in *Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism*, Volume 2, eds. Cathie Carmichael, Matthew d'Auria and Aviel Roshwald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 280–299.

67 Mathews, *Zanzibar was a Country*, 36–40.

68 Joseph Nye, "The Extent and Viability of East African Co-operation," in *Federation in East Africa: Opportunities and Problems*, eds. C. Leys and P. Robson (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1965), 47.

69 Jill Rosenthal, *From migrants to refugees: the politics of aid along the Tanzania-Rwanda border* (Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2023), 57.

70 Julie MacArthur, "Decolonizing Sovereignty: States of Exception along the Kenya-Somali Frontier," *American Historical Review* 124, no. 1 (2019): 108–43; Keren Weitzberg, *We Do Not Have Borders: Greater Somalia and the Predicaments of Belonging in Kenya* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2017); Vaughan, "The politics of regionalism"; Kevin Donovan, "Uhuru Sasa!: Federal Futures and Liminal Sovereignty in Decolonizing East Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and*

tions of regionalism, such as the infrastructure of railways, harbours and airlines, currencies and banking, customs and markets, their rise and their fall, have a rich and growing historiography.[71]

This book builds on and complements this history, focusing on spaces of intellectual and cultural production, the importance of which in creating the region was well understood at the time. In his contribution to *Zamani*, Ogot and Kieran's history of East Africa which was published in 1968, Ali Mazrui argued that the key question was not, as for many of his contemporaries, that of who was preventing unity from being achieved, but rather of "how that unity came to be there in the first place". Mazrui sought greater recognition of Uganda's role in this, a role which, he argued, had many aspects, not least of which was Makerere's place before independence as "in effect if not in name, the 'University of East Africa'" which "helped to produce a regional intellectual elite."[72] Writing a few years later, in his 1974 PhD thesis entitled "The East African Intellectual Community", Geoffrey Warren Reeves wrote that "There are strong grounds for regarding East Africa as a basic unit for the study of intellectual life", in spite, he continued, "of the fact that East Africa is dismantling its inherited regional economic institutions, and has dropped all serious discussion of political federation".[73]

In its source material, this book is built on deep engagements with both the outputs of the print and intellectual culture of the day and its associated archive. This entails significant engagement with the physical artefacts – the magazines, the newspapers, and other texts – of the time. In foregrounding textual sources, especially material written and published in East Africa during the period, this book is part of an ongoing reappraisal of periodicals, newspapers and magazines, often with a circulation limited in numbers or duration, which goes beyond seeing them as commercial failures or straightforwardly products of their financer or censor.[74]

History 65, no. 2 (2023): 372–398; Geert Castryck, "Bordering the Lake: Transcending Spatial Orders in Kigoma-Ujiji," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 52, no. 1 (2019): 109–32.

71 E.g. Donovan, "Uhuru Sasa!"; Donovan, *Money, Value and the State*; Patrick Y. Whang, "Regional Derailment: The Story of the East African Railways," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 12, no. 4 (2018): 716–734.

72 Mazrui, "Independent East Africa," 355.

73 Geoffrey Warren Reeves, "The East African Intellectual Community" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1974), 6.

74 Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, "Neglected Historiography from Africa: The Case for Postindependence Journals," *The Journal of African History* 64, no. 1 (2023): 5–12; Mahvish Ahmad, Koni Benson, and Hana Morgenstern, "Revolutionary Papers: The Counterinstitutions, Counterpolitics, and Countercultures of Anticolonial Periodicals," *Radical History Review* 2024, no. 150 (2024): 1–31; Ouma and Krishnan, "Small Magazines in Africa: Ecologies and Genealogies"; Emma

These texts themselves, some easier to locate and more complete in survival than others, in libraries across Africa, Europe and North America, provide one important strand of source material. This book is, however, also the product of deep dives into institutional archives across those three continents. In East Africa, we consulted state archives, private collections and university library holdings in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, institutions sometimes in the process of reconstruction after the period of crisis, austerity and structural adjustment in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.[75]

Drawing on official sources and deposits of personal papers such as the Murumbi Africana Collection at the Kenya National Archives (KNA), we observed the weight of colonial structures pressing upon East African citizens in making their new worlds, as well as diverse local and globally connected strategies debated and deployed to build that future. The very existence of such collections of papers in the East African region was itself dictated by the political developments and challenges of the period we study. For example, Joseph Murumbi's weighty benefaction survives in the country of his birth because of his stellar political career as Kenyan foreign minister and vice-president, cultural collector and patron of the KNA.[76] By contrast, much of the correspondence of Rajat Neogy, the editor of Uganda's *Transition* magazine, was confiscated and destroyed by the Ugandan police following his arrest for sedition in 1968 by Milton Obote (see Chapter one).[77] Sparse remnants of Neogy's letters now exist primarily in the archives of his Euro-American sponsors, the CCF – and highlighting what they deemed important to keep – at the University of Chicago in the United States.

Hunter, "Newspapers as Sources for African History," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2018, accessed 24 October 2018, http://africanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-228; George Roberts, "The Rise and Fall of a Swahili Tabloid in Socialist Tanzania: *Ngurumo* Newspaper, 1959–76," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 17, no. 1–2 (2023): 1–21.

75 For example, see the collaborative work of restoring archival collections in Uganda involving colleagues from the University of Michigan, Makerere University, Mountains of the Moon University, Cambridge University, Kabale Univesity, Busoga University, British Institute of Eastern Africa and beyond, accessed 15 January 2024, https://derekrpeterson.com/archive-work/. For a defence of African state archives, see Nana Osei-Opare, "'If You Trouble a Hungry Snake, You Will Force It to Bite You': Rethinking Postcolonial African Archival Pessimism, Worker Discontent, and Petition Writing in Ghana, 1957–66," *The Journal of African History* 62, no. 1 (March 2021): 59–78.

76 Ismay Milford and Gerard McCann, "African Internationalisms and the Erstwhile Trajectories of Kenyan Community Development: Joseph Murumbi's 1950s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 57, no. 1 (2022): 111.

77 Peter Benson, *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

This is then also a story of archival dispersal across the globe, particularly in North America, with all issues of scholarly and passport privilege that entails. In one sense, this dispersal is a product of the very histories we excavate. The fact that Tom Mboya's family entrusted his papers to William Scheinman, Mboya's American friend and ally, ensured that this invaluable set of records survived the efforts by Kenyan state after 1969 to silence Mboya's memory. There are also matters of finance that explain the migration of Africanist documents away from Africa. The records of the *Transcription Center* (TC), housed at the University of Texas-at-Austin, provide a case in point. Founded in 1962, the TC functioned from London as a hub and sponsoring organisation for African writers and artists, most famously the young Wole Soyinka, producing radio programming, advertisement and financial support to amplify African artistic production on the continent and across the world. The CCF also sponsored TC with a small core grant, but the entrepreneurial TC director Dennis Duerden increasingly relied upon commercial arrangements with western institutions such as the West German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* and numerous American university libraries, which purchased TC outputs, to make ends meet. When the CCF withdrew its grant in 1967, and commercial income also dried up, Duerden faced crippling institutional and personal financial constraints such that he was forced to sell the TC collection to those with the ability to pay and quickly. After prolonged correspondence with UCLA and Northwestern University African studies departments in the 1970s, Durden eventually sold up to UT-Austin, such that one of the most important archival collections on African literature of the 1960s now sits in central Texas.[78]

As Lara Putnam reminds us, there are scholarly and ethical implications in this type of multi-site research.[79] A nuanced physical investigation of these archives remains advantageous, even in a digital world, to draw from the crucial "'grey literature' of international institutions – the reams of memos, reports, paper machinery of organisation and institutions, and sub-strata of bureaucratic documentation – impossible to digitise in their magnitude."[80] Physically inspecting the TC periodical *Cultural Events in Africa* – on its poor-quality paper, the back of its old drafts utilised as office stationery once the foolscap had run out –

78 Harry Ransom Center, "The Transcription Centre: An Inventory of Its Records at the Harry Ransom Center", accessed 18 February 2025 at https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingaid.cfm?eadid=00447; Jordanna Bailkin, "The Sounds of Independence? Lessons from Africa and Beyond at the Transcription Centre Archive," *History Workshop Journal* no. 78 (2014): 229–245.

79 Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows they Cast," *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (2016): 377–402.

80 Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, "Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Asia and Africa," *Radical History Review*, 131 (2018): 176–182.

tells us something intimate about the hand-to-mouth nature of the organisation that a digital reading might not. Holding the documents can matter. More importantly, there is the question of privilege. Hostile visa regimes, costs of travel, and a host of other challenges have resulted in significant injustices and barriers to the engagement of Africa-based scholars with these resources. The fact that we enjoy the privileges that come from employment at relatively wealthy, western universities is not incidental in the writing of a book such as this.

As we delved deeper into the cultural and intellectual spaces which were organised on a regional basis or which crossed national borders, we increasingly came to ask questions about the origins of these institutions, the funding sources which powered them, and the opportunities as well as constraints of the 1950s and 1960s. The challenges of intellectual and cultural production in the era of decolonization demanded entanglement with institutions which had been established to pursue different aims, often at odds with those of the actors we study.

The result is an intellectual history of East Africa, both in the sense that our interest is in the history of ideas and the institutions which enabled the production and sharing of those ideas, and in the sense that this story has at its heart a particular group of mid-century intellectuals. We pay attention to the material underpinnings of intellectual production, as well as the Cold War circuits which shaped the circulation of knowledge and exchange of ideas, as, for example, in the role of the UK Foreign Office's Information Research Department in placing anti-communist materials into circulation in East Africa's public spheres. This focus helps us to bring to life important aspects of the intellectual worlds of East Africa in this period.

The individuals who come to the fore in this book were not solely those who might conventionally attract the label of "intellectual". They did not all work in universities, though many did, often, as in the case of the late Bethwell Ogot, combining a university career with a wider role as a public intellectual. In recent years, individuals like Ogot have turned to memoir to reflect on their lives and the world they built in the 1950s and 1960s.[81] These rich memoirs powerfully capture the intellectual culture of those years, and this book both draws on these memoirs and enters into dialogue with them. We hope by recovering aspects of their activities at the time and the networks of which they were a part we might contribute an additional layer to contemporary conversations. These individuals and their life stories provide a compelling window onto the period in part because they frequently moved between and interacted with multiple institutions, intellectual and linguistic communities, publications, funders, and states – both

81 Ogot, *My Footprints*.

East African and foreign. At times, they appear as brokers between different (often conflicting) visions for East Africa's future. Attending to these processes of brokering is one way in which we can narrate the constraints that cultural, social and intellectual projects faced.

Although individuals thus feature prominently in this book, institutions play an important part in the way that we structure our analysis. There are several reasons for pursuing this approach. Studies of individual actors – often canonical thinkers and statesmen – have demonstrated the depth and range of ambitions for a society liberated from colonialism. Yet, when relied on too heavily, the writings, speeches and even correspondence of individuals, taken at face value, give a skewed picture of the optimism of the period around independence: this optimism was often performative and pragmatic rather than naïve or short-sighted. Through institutions and the publications that existed around them, we can build a picture of a wider, non-canonical cast of actors (even if the biographies of many are difficult to reconstruct) and see more of the frustrations and anxieties that characterised the labour of trying to make different visions work in practice.

We therefore recognise institutions, as other scholars have, as rich sites for understanding both the weight of the colonial past in the immediate post-independence period and the possibilities that existed for discussing and rethinking everyday politics in practice.[82] Institutional behaviours – the recording of minutes, the creation of committees, the writing of press releases – were central to colonial governance, yet the institutions in this book were far from being simple colonial relics. Intellectuals and organisers viewed reformed or newly created institutions as useful vehicles for their projects. If these institutions at times proved vulnerable to being co-opted or constrained by vested interests, they were also more resilient and more influential than their opponents (in seats of power, for example) assumed. Institutions therefore offer a way to acknowledge the power of both the state and its personality politics – on which important scholarship on East Africa has already focused – but to simultaneously elaborate on societal spaces beyond this. Institutions shaped the thought and work of the people within them as well as the other way round. They thus merit a more prominent space in explanations of why the projects and intentions of these actors were in many cases only partially realised.

82 Edgar C. Taylor, Katherine Bruce-Lockhart, Jonathon L. Earle and Nakanyike B. Musisi, "Introduction," in *Decolonising State and Society in Uganda: The Politics of Knowledge and Public Life*, eds. Katherine Bruce-Lockhart, Jonathon L. Earle, Nakanyike B. Musisi and Edgar C. Taylor (James Currey, Suffolk, 2022), 9; Katherine Bruce-Lockhart and Jonathon L. Earle, "Researching Institutional Life in Modern Uganda," *History in Africa* 45 (2018): 189.

We should also clarify what we are not doing. This is not primarily a history of the ideological work of imagining an East African federation or of a political project of regionalism, though we have written about this elsewhere and learnt a great deal from other recent work which has focused on these ideas.[83] At times, the individuals, organisations and publications we explore thought explicitly about what East Africa was, and what greater integration might mean, and some of these discussions will feature in what follows. But at other times East Africa was a category which did not need to be defined, and was not linked to a specific political project or predetermined geographical delineation. From its foundation in 1967, the East African Community envisaged expanding beyond Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya to include neighbouring countries, though by the time of its collapse this had not been achieved. This fluidity to what East Africa might mean as an institutional project and a geographical space is important to emphasise. While some used it to mean Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, others had something more or less expansive in mind.

As this discussion suggests, writing about "region" and region-making can pose challenges. The term "region" is itself often hard to pin down. Writing about the growing attention from scholars of International Relations to the importance of regions in world affairs, Rick Fawn notes that the term is used in different ways in different disciplinary traditions, so that while geographers tend to use the term to mean a space smaller than the nation-state, international relations scholars typically use it to mean a supra-national space or body.[84] Though, Fawn, concludes, "*region* need not mystify". There is, Fawn suggests, scope for flexibility in defining what a region is, and, he emphasises, "[r]egion need not have institutional forms to be one", though the making (and, we might add, unmaking) of such institutional forms is an important object of study.[85] In mid-century East Africa, "region" was similarly used in some contexts to refer to sub-national units, and we will see this usage at some points in this book. In Tanzania after

83 E.g. Vaughan, "The Politics of Regionalism"; Chris Vaughan, Julie MacArthur, Emma Hunter and Gerard McCann, "Thinking East African: Debating Federation and Regionalism, 1960–1977," in *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unity Projects*, eds. Matteo Grilli and Frank Gerits (Cham: Palgrave, 2021): 49–75; Marc Matera, "Pan-Africa, African Socialism and the 'Federal Moment' of Decolonization," in *Socialism, Internationalism, and Development in the Third World: Envisioning Modernity in the Era of Decolonization*, eds. Su Lin Lewis and Nana Osei-Opare (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), 55–74; Fejzula, "The Cosmopolitan Historiography"; Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*.

84 Rick Fawn, "'Regions' and Their Study: Wherefrom, What for and Whereto," *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 11.

85 "[H]istorians and political scientists", Fawn notes, "are said to 'know a region when they see one'." Fawn,"'Regions' and their study", 12. In his recent study of the modern Middle East, Cyrus

independence, for example, the colonial-era administrative structure of provinces was transformed into an administrative structure of regions. In Kenyan political debate around the time of independence, the language of federalism and regionalism was used to refer to a decentralised political model, as advocated by the Kenya African Democratic Union, in contrast to the more centralised vision put forward by the Kenya African National Union (KANU) which ultimately won out.[86] We should also stress that we use the terms "regionalism" and "region-making" loosely, rather than to refer specifically to the building of political, economic or administrative structures of integration.

This book is also not a history of the making or remaking of an East African identity, although this was important to some of the individuals we encounter in this book, sometimes alongside other identities including national ones, sometimes in preference to other identities. In the latter category, Anna Adima has explored the ways in which the British-born writer Barbara Kimenye, who moved to East Africa with her Tanganyikan husband Bill Kimenye, identified as an East African and was in turn claimed in this way by East Africans.[87] A claim to an East African identity was also common among East Africans of South Asian heritage, such as the Ghai family. For those who were, in this era, coming to understand themselves and to be understood by others as members of a "minority" community, East Africanness could be the foundation of a claim to belong in an uncertain world.[88]

Indeed, in many ways, East Africa's South Asians were notable regionalists in our period. East African South Asian political life had from its outset been intrinsically regional in scope. The premier political lobbying group, founded in 1914, was the East African Indian National Congress. Local South Asian Chambers of

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Schayegh borrows from Europeanists the idea of the "historical meso-region", such as Scandinavia or the Balkans, which does not necessarily reflect geographical borders and which might be part of a larger whole. This is not a "mental map", it is, rather, "fluid in space", sharing some of the "structural traits" that constitute it as a region with neighbours. While helpful as a "heuristic device", historians should, Schayegh argues, be careful of not "reifying" such spaces. Schayegh, *The Middle East and the making of the modern world*, 20.

86 David M. Anderson, "'Yours in Struggle for Majimbo'. Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonization in Kenya, 1955–64," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, no. 3 (2005): 547–564; Anaïs Angelo, *Power and the Presidency in Kenya: the Jomo Kenyatta Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 22.

87 Anna Adima, "Mixed-ish: Race, Class and Gender in 1950s–60s Kampala Through a Life History of Barbara Kimenye," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 16, no. 3 (2023): 355–374.

88 Faisal Devji, "A Minority of One," *Global Intellectual History* 7, no. 6 (2022): 1058–64.

Commerce were intensely regional in organisation from the 1920s to 1960s.[89] The origin of militant trade unionism in East Africa, the 1937 strike of Punjabi artisans, was also consciously organised across Nairobi and Dar es Salaam by a young Makhan Singh.[90] More widely, a plethora of Gujarati, Cutchi, Sindhi, Punjabi and Goan communities spread across urban East Africa during the colonial period, connected by transnational associational life and family businesses that would often comprise linked shops across Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and beyond. These communities enjoyed what sociologists described as the "entrepreneurial advantages of belonging" – an economic comparative advantage derived from diasporic networks across the Indian Ocean, but also increasingly across the East African region over the mid-twentieth century.[91] Such connection, oceanic and regional, drove what Gaurav Desai termed an "Afrasian imagination" in the rich genre of East African Asian creative writing that emerged.[92] But, it was also such extraterritoriality, amidst the stark racialised material inequalities of East African cities, that would leave East African South Asians open to the popular condemnations of economic exploitation that would culminate in the 1968 Kenya Asian crisis and ultimately Idi Amin's expulsion of 1972.

Structure

We focus in the book on a number of institutions which, in different ways, had their roots in the late colonial moment, and the intensification – though importantly not creation – of regional networks at that time. The book moves across a series of spaces – print media, universities, trade unions and their associated colleges, publishing houses and language committees – which provided the institutional underpinnings of East Africa's flourishing intellectual and cultural life in the period immediately after independence. Many had late colonial roots but in

89 Robert Gregory, *Quest for Equality: Asian Politics in East Africa*, 1900–1967 (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1993); Sana Aiyar, *Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Robert Gregory, *South Asians in East Africa: An Economic and Social History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

90 Zarina Patel, *Unquiet: The Life and Times of Makhan Singh* (Nairobi: Zand Graphics, 2006), Chapter four.

91 Stein Kristiansen and Anne Ryen, "Enacting their Business Environments: Asian Entrepreneurs in East Africa," *African and Asian Studies* 1, 3 (2002): 165–186; Gijsbert Oonk, "Gujarati Business Communities in East Africa: Success and Failure Stories," *Economic and Political Weekly* (May 2005): 2077–2081.

92 Gaurav Desai, *Commerce with the Universe: Africa, India, and the Afrasian Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

the years immediately before and after independence, a new generation of East African intellectuals and cultural producers sought to turn these institutions to anti-colonial ends while also creating new institutions, free of colonial baggage but often much more closely tightly tied to the national and nationalising projects of new states and frequently dependent on external funding.

We start with what is perhaps the most iconic manifestation of 1960s East Africa's intellectual project, the magazine *Transition*. The premier literary journal of Africa's 1960s, *Transition* published almost all East Africa's public intellectuals in the 1960s. But it was just one part of a network of Africanist cultural institutions that shared content, contacts, and funders – most notoriously the CCF – to push the boundaries of post-colonial African cultural production, including the Chemchemi Cultural Centre in Nairobi, Nommo Art Gallery in Kampala or *Black Orpheus* in Ibadan. The writers and artists on these stages and in these places were tied into colonial-origin structures even as new endeavours like the University campus journals *Busara*, *Nexus* and *Penpoint* Africanised at pace. This chapter describes a close-knit but combustible world of people and venues at the cutting edge of defining the shape of future intellectual East Africa. *Transition* and the intellectual networks it sustained proved short-lived.

The second chapter takes a step back from the singularity of *Transition* by introducing regional circuits of news and current affairs – especially in print, as well as broadcast media. There was nothing unique about *Transition's* regional distribution or ability to attract authors and readers from across East Africa. Writers, editors and readers had been forging a regional print culture for many decades already by the time Neogy's journal attracted international attention, whether through commercial, government or religious publications. These regional circuits, we show, were embedded in the structures of the colonial (and later post-colonial) state and in international flows of capital. Focusing on two case studies of publications which could, in different ways, be understood as regional, the newspaper *Baraza* and the periodical *East Africa Journal,* we trace their material, political and personal underpinnings from the late colonial period to the 1970s. Newspapers and periodicals constituted a space of public deliberation, and some looked to regional ventures as a way to rethink news and current affairs amid the demands and expectations of decolonization, but a changed political and financial landscape made the picture look very different by the late 1970s.

Chapter three turns to the university, both as an institution that (re)produced a regional intellectual elite, and as one site where this elite sought to put regionalism into practice. The chapter spans colonial-era Makerere University College, the short-lived University of East Africa (1963–70), and post-independence campus politics and intellectual life in its constituent colleges in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi

and Kampala. Colonial visions for organising higher education along federal lines placed multiple constraints on the nature of the institutions that emerged, and arguments in favour of national universities were present from the outset. We argue, however, that the constitutional life of the federal university is only one part of the story. East African universities continued to be spaces where academics and students alike pursued East Africa as an intellectual project: a regional perspective was central to discussions about the level of state involvement in universities, and about how to make higher education relevant to the realities of post-independence Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This wider purview complicates a narrative of a regional university doomed by its colonial foundations and inevitably closed down by the nationalist ambitions of new states.

The fourth chapter considers a dimension which is often forgotten in histories of intellectual and cultural life in East Africa, but which captures important elements of our story. This chapter explores the development of a distinctive East African trade unionism, told through the figure of Tom Mboya and with a specific focus of the short-lived regional institution of the African Labour College. In his memoir of life at Makerere in Uganda in the 1950s, Sidney Colman recounted efforts by colonial officials to stop Tom Mboya speaking at Makerere. Colman recalled that they "argued that if he were to be allowed to lecture, against their wishes, we should restrict him to trade unionism and not permit him to wander into 'politics'." They had, Colman continued, failed to grasp that trade unionism "was an unavoidable part of East African politics".[93] As we explore in this chapter, trade union connections were one very important way in which ideas circulated and regional connections were forged in the 1950s and into the early 1960s.

Transition was published in English, though the question of whether intellectual and cultural liberation was possible in a colonial language was repeatedly tackled in its pages. If the 1960s saw the flourishing of an Anglophone intellectual and cultural world, it also saw a new phase in the development of Swahili as a language of intellectual and cultural production and as a regional lingua franca. Chapter five situates these developments in the context of long-running arguments over the question of whether Swahili should serve as a regional language, a question which both united and divided culture brokers across the region.

The sixth chapter explores the institutions and actors who undertook to remake infrastructures of book publishing as an essential building block of East Africa's future. The world of publishing that supported East Africa's intellectual and cultural life was both vibrant and fragile. Efforts to transform colonial-era

93 S.J. Colman, *East Africa in the fifties: a view of late imperial life* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1998), 121.

institutions, such as the East African Literature Bureau, and to create new publishing houses, such as the East African Publishing House, faced multiple challenges, from the threat of foreign-owned commercial publishers to the difficulties of distribution in a landscape shaped by colonial under-investment. Here, we explore debates over the definition of "indigenous" publishing and then follow these debates into concrete attempts to counteract the weight of foreign competition through state intervention in the publishing process, from printing to distribution. With the closure of the Kenya-Tanzania border, regional initiatives faltered, but some of the publishing infrastructure they had sustained outlived them.