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## DIVIDUAL AFRICA: NODAL ISSUES OF TRADITION AND CONTEMPORANEITY

### I. INDIVIDUALITY AND DIVIDUALITY OF AFRICA\*

One popular African proverb says: “The strength of the fish is in the water. His strength is in his proper surroundings.”<sup>1</sup> This proverb illustrates the irreducible interdependence of the living and non-living components of the world,<sup>2</sup> their ontic and functional dimension in the great tradition of the continent. The traditional wisdom of African inhabitants is variously applied in today’s situation of the world and gains new interpretations. Water, the closest environment that determines the “strength” of its members, is often aban-

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<sup>1</sup> In the language of the Mambwe community it reads: *Maka ya nswi yalu mu luzi*; Alice WERNER and Archibald N. TUCKER, “Mambwe Proverbs,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 10, no. 2 (1940): 455–57.

<sup>2</sup> The recent experience of the pandemic could have been a fruitful lesson for humanity about the primacy of the elements of reality; see Anna KAWALEC, “COVID-19 as the Primary Agent,” *Social Anthropology* 28, no. 2 (2020): 295–96. But was it?

done today by young Africans in order to follow an imagined better life, with which they associate the economically prosperous world of Europe.

The adjacent environment, understood broadly to include both social and cultural, often, but not always, provides individuals with a sense of security—a tamed world—because they constitute its parts.<sup>3</sup> This security, even if it is not of an economic nature, is not tantamount to “good life” in the sense known and systematically developed in the Western world, but it is the foundation of an individual’s life as part of the community. The idea of “good life” inscribed in the sapiential traditions of many societies around the world rarely glorifies a comfortable life. Rather, the value of justice through hard work is indicated as principal, as evidenced in another African proverb: “You cannot get cattle and be fat (or lazy).”<sup>4</sup>

The characterization of justice through work captures thus the individual, as well as social and environmental, dimensions of good resulting from human activities which take into account responsibility for all elements of the relationship. Such justice indicates global, universal law, resulting from systematic observation, as well as from an attitude of commitment, as captured by Tim Ingold in the existential formula: “Along with the others whose company we share (albeit temporarily), we are all fellow travelers in the same world.”<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the idea of justice resulting from human work, beneficial for the individual, the community and the environment, is also commonly present in the current works of many African thinkers and activists. Their conceptions integrate the past, tradition and dynamics of the current complex and heterogeneous situation in Africa. Influential authors include the Zambian creator of the philosophical idea of humanism, Kenneth Buchizya Kaunda,<sup>6</sup> and the Kenyan-Swiss professor of pan-African philosophy and theology

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<sup>3</sup> *Dividuality* is a category opposite to individuality (divisibility/indivisibility), which has been formed in the anthropological tradition and applied in this discipline to socio-cultural analyzes and interpretations. On its types and genealogy, especially in the context of the anthropological concept of person, see among others, Anna KAWALEC, *Osoba i Nexus. Alfreda Gella antropologiczna teoria sztuki* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> KAWALEC, *Osoba i Nexus*, 458. In the same sense: “The bee is bad if it does not work. The lazy bee gathers no honey” or “The pot wandered, some day the potsherds will return” (ibid.).

<sup>5</sup> Tim INGOLD, ed., General introduction to *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture and Social Life* (London–New York: Routledge, 2003), xviii.

<sup>6</sup> He gives one principle of African humanism: “Humanism declares that a willingness to work hard is of prime importance without it nothing can be done anywhere” (“Zambian Humanism, 40 Years Later,” *Sunday Post*, October 28, 2007), <https://africasocialwork.net/african-philosophy>.

John Samuel Mbiti,<sup>7</sup> or professor Lovemore Mbigi from Zimbabwe, who based his originally African philosophy of management on the principle of balance between factors social, political and technical, and on *Masibambane*.<sup>8</sup> These contemporary African authors are active participants in the ongoing “cultural change”, not only through the description of the African world as it is systematically observed,<sup>9</sup> but also through committed initiatives to form the identity awareness among African societies which are undergoing changes so intense that they are compared to rapid revolutions.<sup>10</sup>

Many different reasons have caused—and continue to cause—Africans to become accustomed to Western ideas and economic conditions,<sup>11</sup> this dynamic “cultural change”. However, the element of the “zero point” of both anthropological research and, above all, individual and social experience is the prime, and quite universal, belief that “home is best”.<sup>12</sup> Home is a symbol of water for the fish, the ancestral environment from which the individual draws the content of the formed identity, as well as energy and life force.

Bronisław Malinowski, describing Africa “from a bird’s eye view”, divided it into three parts—first geographically, but then on the basis of the ongoing cultural change under the influence of colonization.<sup>13</sup> The conclusions he reached at the end of the 1930s can be expressed in the words that

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<sup>7</sup> See John Samuel MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> See Lovemore MBIGI, *The African Dream in Management* (Randburg: Knowledge Resources, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> See Bronisław MALINOWSKI, “Introductory Essay on the Anthropology of Changing African Cultures,” in *Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa*, ed. L. P. Mair (London: International African Institute, Oxford University Press, 1938).

<sup>10</sup> Malinowski’s reference to Dr. Mair’s thesis (*ibid.*).

<sup>11</sup> One of the first multidimensional analyses of the dynamic situation in Africa since the beginning of the 20th century are works of Bronisław Malinowski devoted to contacts and cultural change, diffusion, as well as the scientific grounding of practical, applied anthropology; see e.g. his “Introductory Essay on the Anthropology of Changing African Cultures” in *Methods and Study*; “Practical Anthropology,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 2, no. 1 (January 1929): 22–38; “The Scientific Basis of Applied Anthropology,” *Atti dell’ VIII Convegno—‘Volta’—4–11 October 1938* (Rome: Reale Accademia d’Italia), 5–24. The Polish edition has a collective title, *Kultura i jej przemiany*, and was published by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN in 2000. Among the more recent diagnoses of economic and cultural change in Africa, an article by Paul Nchoji Nkwi should be mentioned, “The Ethnography of Development: An African Anthropologist’s Vision of the Development Process,” in *The Cultural Dimensions of Global Change: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. Lourdes Arizpe (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 217–43; available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000106548>.

<sup>12</sup> “Wszędzie dobrze, ale w domu najlepiej” (Home, sweet home) goes a Polish proverb.

<sup>13</sup> MALINOWSKI, *Introductory Essay*.

Michel Montaigne<sup>14</sup> wrote down in the 16th century in the 30th chapter of his *Essays*, when this Renaissance thinker foresaw the tragic consequences for the newcomers from South America—the loss of their happiness and peace forever. These effects are the result of newcomers being “bitten” by profits as well as comfort and French “high culture”. Such contact is a deadly “bite”<sup>15</sup>—the process of this “disease” can be euphemistically called a “cultural change”, as Malinowski did. One can see in it an inevitable consequence of the revolution and the evolution of global processes. Such a perspective guides the first group of texts presented in the present issue of the *Annals of Cultural Studies*, dedicated to “cultural change” as a conglomerate of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the Kenya.<sup>16</sup>

Malinowski noticed and accepted the situation of Africa being “bitten” by the West and the loss (or, as he wrote, “change”) of its original identity. He consistently paved the way for applied anthropological research, analyzing these ongoing cultural changes. He considered ethnographic research on the primitive states of African communities as unsuitable for anthropology. He rejected methods of reconstructing the past, even those reconstructions that resulted from the remembrances of the oldest inhabitants of Africa. Rather, he promoted the “psychological reality of the present”<sup>17</sup> as one of the “zero-point” dimensions of disciplinary research. However, this Polish-British researcher was also aware that this psychologicality is only one of the compo-

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<sup>14</sup> “Three of these people, not foreseeing how dear their knowledge of the corruptions of this part of the world will one day cost their happiness and repose, and that the effect of this commerce will be their ruin, as I presuppose it is in a very fair way (miserable men to suffer themselves to be deluded with desire of novelty and to have left the serenity of their own heaven to come so far to gaze at ours!), were at Rouen at the time that the late King Charles IX. was there” — Michel MONTAIGNE, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, trans. Charles Cotton, ed. William C. Hazlitt (1877); available as e-book at [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm#link2HCH\\_0030](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm#link2HCH_0030).

<sup>15</sup> Even today, however, few communities are aware of this mortality. A unique place I am acquainted with is the southwestern USA, where communities, such as the inhabitants of Taos, Acoma and a few others, consciously and with great rigor defend the identity and traditions of the community. I described some of my experiences in my “Stand-up comedy as a hallmark of western culture,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2020): 1788753, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342743753\\_Stand-up\\_comedy\\_as\\_a\\_hallmark\\_of\\_western\\_culture](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342743753_Stand-up_comedy_as_a_hallmark_of_western_culture); also in the editorials to previous issues of *Annals of Cultural Studies*: Anna KAWALEC, “Integral Aesthetics. Project: Introduction to a Timeless Controversy over Contemporary Art,” *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* 12, no. 1 (2021): 7–18; KAWALEC, “Dialogue about Art: Introduction to ‘What is Art? Horizons of the Creator and Recipient’,” *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* 13, no. 4 (2022): 7–19.

<sup>16</sup> On the genesis, purpose and structure of the project, see the second part of this introductory article.

<sup>17</sup> MALINOWSKI, *Introductory Essay*.

nents of the reality studied by the anthropologist. The margin that applies to all empirical sciences: a set of objects that are never fully defined—numerically or qualitatively—that is, studied, conventional, and above all methodologically and ideologically determined by the West<sup>18</sup>—also troubles anthropology.

The margin that applies to all empirical sciences: a set of subjects that are never fully defined—numerically or qualitatively—that is studied, conventional and, above all, determined methodologically and ideologically by the West—includes anthropology.

In such a situation, when we take into account the methodological challenges of anthropology and other disciplines formed in the Western circle, as well as cultural determinants, it might be worth at least taking into account a different approach, omitted by Malinowski<sup>19</sup> and many classics of the discipline—one based on the category of “the spirit of comedy”. This is a very fruitful category, originated by Alfred Gell—a British anthropologist, about whom his student, now a professor, Eric Hirsch wrote that in meetings and classes there was some tension between the seriousness of the anthropological school (the famous LSE tradition) and the lecturer who he was careful not to take either the discipline or his scientific status dead seriously.<sup>20</sup>

Another approach could also be considered, based not so much on a critical approach which blindly trusts reason, but on taking into account the truth of the “heart”, as Blaise Pascal concisely and enigmatically described the intuitive-emotional-fideistic attitude of a human being (in a sense also of a researcher).<sup>21</sup> This attitude coincides with that of simple people with common sense. This attitude characterized the “cannibals” of Michel Montaigne’s essays, who could not understand why Europeans worship a child (king) in-

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<sup>18</sup> Ingold raises the repeatedly reported core problem of anthropology (and the problem of other disciplines undertaking cross-cultural research) and illustrates this determination as follows: “How can a discipline whose project is rooted in the intellectual history of the Western world meet the challenge presented by non-Western understandings of humanity, culture and social life without undercutting its own epistemological foundations?”, while the uniqueness of the discipline he described as follows: “Perhaps uniquely among academic disciplines, anthropology thrives on the art of its own perpetual deconstruction”; INGOLD, General introduction, p. xvii.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Clifford GEERTZ, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Alfred GELL, *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams*, ed. Eric Hirsch (Berg: Oxford–New York, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Blaise PASCAL, *Pascal’s Pensées* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1958); available as e-book at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>.

stead of a strong and socially distinguished person. For Pascal, the world of the Europeans was a world of invented and conventional ideas and rules, incompatible with reality.<sup>22</sup> The world of France before and during the Enlightenment was striking in its dissonance between the style and common sense. However, this could be noticed especially by those who came from a different world at that time—characterized by simplicity, diligence and closeness between humans and nature. In that brief period of Genevan culture, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had such a unique opportunity, and most of his works were devoted to a direct or indirect critique of the hypocrisy and demoralizing influence of “Paris”,<sup>23</sup> flagrantly different from the natural order of Geneva, as Rousseau remembered the city from his childhood.

Undoubtedly, the above discussion does not exhaust all types of research approaches. Nor is it intended here to accomplish that. Rather, my intention is to outline different perspectives, possibilities, even at the cost of creating a bit of confusion, so that the reader is legitimized to and can stand in a slightly more simple (naive) attitude before the phenomenon of the “culture” of a community and communities of a certain continent. This subject is not considered even by the native African thinkers and practitioners mentioned above, although they are committed in their attempts to form pan-African ideas.

Due to the acceptance of methodological barriers of (Western) disciplines, but above all due to the diversity and dynamism of the components of the African world, in this issue of the *Annals* we present the reader with a diverse work, essentially consisting of two parts: the first includes the results of research by an international team studying the African culture of one geographical area, Kenya, and the other which, while mainly concerned with one area (Zambia), deals with practical and theoretical issues of the traditions of various communities in that region, pointing to the clash of the Western and African experiences. This second part, diverse in style, deals with a complex but separate problem—the clash of cultures, points of view, and sensibilities. The texts in this part follow from the experiences of interns and students of Applied Anthropology at the John Paul II Catholic University

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<sup>22</sup> A problem raised since antiquity. Pascal, however, saw an even stronger dissonance between reality and created types of conventions (mainly social ones) than did his contemporaries Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard (*Simulacra and Simulation* [University of Michigan Press, 1994]).

<sup>23</sup> Rousseau spoke especially on this subject in the context of the Enlightenment ideologues’ postulate to build a theater in Geneva in his *Letter to M. d’Alembert...* See Anna KAWALEC, “Pomiędzy naturą a kulturą – widowiska według Jeana-Jacques’a Rousseau,” *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 21, no. 4 (2012): 225–39.

of Lublin, who did pro-social practice in Zambian centers, in cooperation with VIDES International, run by the Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco.<sup>24</sup> Their reports bring novelty and freshness, surprise, disappointment and delight. They are stories of young people from Europe (the exception is the article on John Mbiti's concept of human work by Luke Anjo, a Nigerian graduate of Polish philosophical studies), who face the Other for the first time, whom they want to help, whom they want to accompany in everyday life. These stories are either more theoretical or practical in nature—yet in each of these reports one can find elements of an anthropological, philosophical and completely non-disciplinary experience—personal and everyday. All of them teach the recipient—as in Greek tragedies and comedies<sup>25</sup>—the optimal choice of action in the complex—full of relationships, parts and determinations—world of their existence.

Such integrated wisdom seems to be the best teacher for an anthropologist interested in the richness of the “variables” of existence and the diversity of social and environmental parts of the human being, because—as another African proverb in the language of the African Mambwe community says: *Uwila ukayembukisyu mu ukwi*, which can be translated as “stupidity brings sin even against one's relatives”.<sup>26</sup>

## II. THE PERCEPTION OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE KENYAN COASTAL REGION: RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION OF TRANSFORMATIONS\*

Cultural heritage is an asset that is living and transforming, though it can also pass away or become fossilized. Fossilization occurs when cultural heritage is recognized as original or named authentic only in certain forms, and

<sup>24</sup> VIDES International, <https://www.vides.org>; Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco, <https://salesiansisters.org>.

<sup>25</sup> Anna KAWALEC, “Comic Agents: From a Poetic to an Anthropological Paradigm of Comedy (Aristotle and Alfred Gell),” *AGATHOS: An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2016): 7–23.

<sup>26</sup> WERNER and TUCKER, “Mambwe Proverbs,” 455, 457.

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usually by people outside the group whose heritage is being considered. It is then that the preservation discussion becomes a trap in which the intent to secure the endangered culture leads to prohibitions on altering it; even by people to whom the culture belongs. As culture transforms in response to contemporary pressures, alterations and adaptations are perceived as threats to the preservation of this original form. I agree here with Barbara Glowczewski, who in observing the culture of Aboriginal Australians in last decade of the 20th century, noticed them being denied the right both to participate in national development and to retain their Aboriginal identity. Glowczewski argued against such a “double bind”, supporting the Aboriginals’ right to construe and transform their identities, beliefs and practices in light of ongoing technological change. Glowczewski openly stated that the Aboriginals should “reclaim their traditional rights as hunter-gatherers,... taking off to the bush the equipment of twentieth century campers: a car, guns, electrical gadgets, packing materials and other non-recyclable products”. She was of the opinion that environmental conservation can be compatible “with the changes that are involved in the contemporary survival of human beings”.<sup>27</sup>

Glowczewski’s reflections neither refer just to Aboriginal Australians, nor are they outdated. The situation of African peoples and their cultures is similar, even now, in the third decade of the 21st century. Therefore, cultural researchers most commonly attempt to prove ethnographic authenticity, or participate in cultural and economic growth of country, reconfiguring a common future but overlooking the importance of lived traditions. It should be recognized then that transformation of cultural practices is a “natural phenomenon” and “[t]he myth of authenticity should here be abandoned.”<sup>28</sup> Practices that form intangible cultural heritage are essential for the emergence and development of human societies, together with the use of language and tools, with which they are connected. Their transformations occur due to changes in historical, social, and economic conditions. It is important to understand this and not to immobilize them in museums, allowing cultures to transform and being active and wise in their preservation.

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<sup>27</sup> Barbara GLOWCZEWSKI, “Dynamic Cosmologies and Aboriginal Heritage,” *Anthropology Today* 15, no. 1 (1999): 5.

<sup>28</sup> Aleksandra LUKASZEWICZ ALCARAZ, “Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Australia’s Desert: Context, Debates, and Analysis,” *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts* 6, no. 4 (2019): 357, <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajha.6-4-4>.



UNESCO first recognized the importance of preserving tangible cultural heritage in its New Delhi Recommendations of 1956 and 1962. The 1964 Venice Charter focused on historic and artistic characteristics of material heritage, and on man-made environments having cultural or aesthetic meaning—that is, on tangible cultural heritage. This undoubtedly is a commendable development, even as the focus on materiality and judgements of professional experts rightly appeared to many as a decidedly Eurocentric approach. The agency addressed those criticisms with the recognition of intangible cultural heritage and the need to safeguard it, which was formalized in the 1982 Burra Charter, the Washington Charter of 1987, the 1999 Paris Recommendation, and in the Krakow Charter of 2000. Both types of cultural heritage overlap and should be understood as complementary. Practices taking place in material environments require material objects for their accomplishment, while material environments and objects gain meaning as they are filled with lived experience. Neither are things simply to be catalogued and exhibited in museums. Even ancient ruins should be viewed in light of the life that fills them with meaning. As John Dewey remarked about the Parthenon, an emblem of European cultural heritage: “The one who sets out to theorize about the esthetic experience embodied in the Parthenon must realize in thought what the people into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own homes and on our own streets.”<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, cultural heritage must be protected wisely, mindful of the transformations it undergoes with the passage of time. These transformations are related also to the material side of cultural heritage—that is, both performative and semiotic. Preservation should be mindful of both sides: lived experience and written history; walls and meanings; objects and forms of doing that are marked with cultural footprints.

Within the project “Transcultural Perspectives in Art and Art Education” (TPAAE), realized in the years 2020–2024 and funded by the European Union, researchers from Pwani University (Kenya), the University of Macerata (Italy) and the Academy of Art in Szczecin (Poland) focused on transformations of the Kenyan coastal region’s cultural heritage. TPAAE research shows an interesting division between tangible and intangible cultural heritage there. This arises because most of the material cultural heritage—ruins of historic cities of Gede, Mnarani, Jumba and elsewhere—is of Swahili origin.

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<sup>29</sup> John DEWEY, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), 4.

These sites are advertised in tourist guide books, but are poorly maintained and they are of little relevance to surrounding communities comprised of the nine Mijikenda tribes that form the majority of the coastal population and historically have been subordinate to the Swahili and Arab people that prevailed in the region. However, for the Swahili population on the Coast that concentrated in the urban centers of Mombasa and Malindi, the ruins ensure a kind of continuity. Apart from the tangible, the Swahili people also have their intangible cultural heritage, which is alive and largely not questioned, as it goes in accordance with Islam, which is an important religion on the Coast.

We find a different situation when turning to the cultural heritage of the Mijikenda people, who came to the Coast of Kenya in 16th century descending south from Somalia. Being bush people, they did not leave behind much tangible cultural heritage, which in their case includes huts, arms, *vigango*—sculptures carved in wood that represent deceased elders—and other small items that might be considered rather as intangible cultural heritage as linked to practices of living, fighting or memorializing the dead. The Mijikenda are witnessing many aspects of their intangible cultural heritage being abandoned as younger generations seek to meet the social expectations of life in mainstream Kenyan society.

Tracking the perception of transformation of cultural heritage on the Kenyan coast—that is, community engagement with its meanings and functions—was a TPAAE research objective. Researchers engaged in this path of investigation naturally divided their focus on Swahili and Mijikenda cultural heritage, providing a broad overview of how they are perceived in the region. It should be stressed that these courses were taken together by European and Kenyan researchers, who cooperated in their investigations and whose differing views complemented each other. Giuseppe Capriotti from the University of Macerata worked with Ibrahim Busolo Namunaba from Pwani University to explore Swahili cultural heritage. Busolo analyzed the archeological, historical and anthropological literature of the Swahili people and their material culture, parsing its origins, development and the influences it exerts on Kenyan culture and the country's educational system. Capriotti added a field investigation into the perception and meaning among different groups, including local Swahilis and Mijekendas, and foreigners, of Swahili material heritage. This dual look grasps the history and the reception by these groups of that cultural heritage. Tsawe-Munga Chidongo from Pwani University introduced Aleksandra Lukaszewicz of the Academy of

Art in Szczecin and Flavia Stara of the University of Macerata to traditional Coastal cultures, including their religions, beliefs and practices. Chidongo's work encompasses Mijikenda sacred forests, called *kayas* and recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites, in terms of the challenges they face from population growth, including the need for arable land and demand of timber for building. Chidongo's view is complemented by Lukaszewicz's case study that places traditional healing, witchcraft and witch-hunting in a contemporary context. She examines the unexpected effects of abandoning tribal adjudication practices that make community elders charged with caring for *kayas* as easy targets in witchcraft cases.

Lukaszewicz and Stara both are aware of the risks involved in applying one's own categories to foreign contexts. Lukaszewicz reveals discrepancies in the understanding of spiritual jobs and witchcraft, and in the concept of the court for witches between Europe and East Africa, which, due to different histories and different organizations of community life and distribution of spiritual jobs, mean different things, causing that the abandonment of traditional practices related to witchcraft have a negative social impact that seems hardly imaginable to European viewers unaware of the East African cultural context. Following Clifford Geertz' advise about the need for transparency with regard to the cultural starting point of the observer,<sup>30</sup> Stara makes explicit the methodologies that ensure distance for Europeans in their encounters with exotic cultures. Geertz' approach places importance on analyzing details and fragments over unified and synthetized categories, because for him, a researcher cannot achieve an objective representation of a culture but only create its impression. European researchers implementing this methodology offer a perspective that differs from that of their Kenyan colleagues, whose broader historical and cultural overview focuses on specific phenomena.

The research presented in the following papers speaks to the transcultural perspective embedded within TPPAE. It is a response to three main strategies for the reducing the otherness that results from globalization: egocentrism, logocentrism and ethnocentrism. These intimately connected forms are mutually reinforcing when used as strategies to face otherness. Their shared goal is to neutralize otherness and replace it with something habitual. In order to appreciate the importance of cultural diversity, individuals must expe-

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<sup>30</sup> Clifford GEERTZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

rience otherness in the first person. To this end, it is necessary to make the other the starting point of our thinking; that is, to see ourselves through the eyes of others. Such heterological thinking is the starting point for the research of which the effects are hereby presented.

More than ever, a transcultural perspective is essential for the appreciation of cultural diversity and, as such, for recognizing the importance of defending and promoting tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Transcultural education is a useful tool for helping individuals to engage with the cultural differences that they experience even in the immediate environment. And to reflect on identity, because it is not possible to think of identity without otherness. Transcultural interpretations of social contexts imply a relational connection that can mediate between an irreducibly fractal self and the many forms of otherness. As the understanding of others is conditional on the understanding of oneself and vice versa, then the process of transcultural education is one of self-knowledge and of self-education in relation to otherness. The research presented here supports recognition of the value of preserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage and opening it to the transformations that result from community and social development as cultural hybridization weaves new social fabrics.

Existing investigations into both types illustrate what cultural property represents the Kenyan Coast, its history (be it ruins, fabrics, witchcraft, dances, etc.), and its development. In addition to taking up this type of information, these articles analyze how the value of heritage is perceived and recognized by the communities (and not what is an intrinsic value).

Tangible and intangible heritage is important only if local communities—and the wider world—feel and recognize its value. Compared to existing literature that is composed of studies on cultural heritage, this text raises one more question. True social and economic enhancement starts from the recognition of value: the proposed volume questions precisely how much communities recognize themselves in a heritage worthy of being preserved, supported and funded. There are numerous publications on Swahili culture on the Kenyan Coast, but there is no text, such as the one proposed, capable of covering the vacuum of analysis on how those communities perceive and appreciate their existing heritage amid the storm of the transformations imposed by international tourism and slow decolonization. The present issue combines explorations in both tangible and intangible heritage, looking processually at heritage—considering it not just as external assets but as something that is psychologically and physically perceived, interpreted, and lived.

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DIVIDUAL AFRICA:  
NODAL ISSUES OF TRADITION AND CONTEMPORANEITY

Summary

The editorial consists of two parts. The first part is an introduction to the complexity of the cultural contexts of the African continent, focusing on this complexity as a specific and important structure of the cultural reality of the world. The second part introduces the issues undertaken by the TPAAE project team, devoted to the traditions and transformations of the Kenyan Coastal Region.

**Keywords:** contextuality; dividuality; transformations; Africa; Kenya

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Z ZAGADNIEŃ TRADYCJI I WSPÓŁCZESNOŚCI

Streszczenie

Artykuł wstępny składa się z dwóch części. Pierwsza jest wprowadzeniem w złożoność kontekstów kulturowych kontynentu afrykańskiego i ukierunkowaniem na odczytanie owej złożoności jako specyficznej i istotnej struktury rzeczywistości kulturowej świata. Druga część wprowadza czytelnika w zagadnienia podjęte przez zespół projektowy TPAAE, poświęcone tradycji i transformacjom kenijskiego regionu przybrzeżnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kontekstualność; podzielność; transformacje; Afryka; Kenia