

**Ethnic identity and the state: the dynamics of intra-and inter ethnic relations in the Mara river basin, 1900-2010**

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This thesis examines the dynamics of ethnic relations among the Kuria, Maasai and Kipsigis immunities from AD 1900 to 2010. These communities have lived for generations in the Mara River Basin which straddles both sides of the Tanzania-Kenya border. The study investigates why ethnic relations in the Mara River Basin oscillated between peaceful co-existence and hostile relations, and shows how ethnic identities and the state transformed over time, and the extent to which the two aspects influenced intra-and inter-ethnic relations in the area. The study employs an integrative approach of studying ethnicity whereby elements of the primordial, constructivist, cultural and political ecology theories are combined to analyze ethnic relations. Using triangulation of data from official publications, archives and oral interviews, the study found that in the history of inter- and intra-ethnic relations in the Mara River Basin, harmonious relations have always overridden hostile and conflictual ones. Harmonious relations were fostered through inter-marriage between members of different clans and ethnic groups, use of rituals to negotiate peace, patterns of inter-group trade and, periodic sports and games. However, such practices did not prevent people from fighting when the interests of one group or the other were threatened. The evidence available to this study shows that the main causes of inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts were cattle thefts and state-initiated programmes. Both the Kenyan and Tanzanian states intervened when ethnic conflicts occurred. The study arrives at two important conclusions: First, that there were significant similarities in the ways in which the Kenyan and Tanzanian states influenced individuals' construction of their identities and in how they shaped inter- and intra-ethnic relations. Second, over the entire period covered by the present study, the main forces which shaped individuals' construction of their identities and those which shaped inter- and intra-ethnic relations changed only in form; in essence, they did not change appreciably.