

Creativity and Entrepreneurship of Traditional Leaders in Africa

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The end of the 20th century was marked by a revival of traditional leadership in many parts of Africa. This move shifted the political order of African nation-states in a way that was unknown years before. Whereas in West and South Africa traditional leadership had been integrated in one way or another into the post-colonial orders, in East and Central African States traditional rulers were brutally abolished by post-colonial regimes. Political leaders who had long time been backed by military power and international networks lost such support as a consequence of the new post-socialist world order. International monetary regimes pushed African political leaders to reform their political economies in favor of democratic models. In this moment of political crisis traditional leaders became a source of power and mobilization of political voters. The new world order opened up a field of political creativity and emancipation for traditional leadership as an alternative moral order and as a counter-balance to national and global power players.

This paper discusses the return of kingship in Uganda in the early 1990s and invites for a debate about the creativity and entrepreneurship of African monarchical institutions. It shows how discourses of power, sacredness, morality and legitimacy influenced the creativity and inventiveness of 'tradition' in a modern setting. The focus of the paper is directed towards the revival of the Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara, which is located in the Republic of Uganda at the border of the Democratic Republic of Kongo. Since 1994 the King of Bunyoro-Kitara has become a social agent and 'crisis-manager' in the wrangle of Ugandan monarchies for political power, economic survival and ethnic-cultural representation. The paper debates the idea of 'Ethnicity Inc.' as it has been suggested by the Comaroffs and as it can be observed in the king of Bunyoro-Kitara's efforts to re-create a symbolic and material foundation for his kingdom. The paper furthermore poses questions about such innovative organization as 'The Forum of Kings' which has recently been launched by the Libyan president Colonel Gaddafi as an umbrella institution for traditional leaders all over Africa. Bunyoro-Kitara is one of the members of this Forum and as such an agent of political change in the international order of power relations.

