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SPECIAL ISSUE ON NAIROBI

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PREFACE

This special issue of *African Urban Studies* deals with ethnographic and anthropological views of Nairobi and was prompted by the need to take stock in the field of urban anthropology as it has been conducted in the largest city in East Africa. During the past decade there has been an appreciable number of intensive, participant-observation studies conducted in various sections of Nairobi. For example, Marc Ross and Nici Nelson, at different times, have studied the squatter settlement of Mathare Valley; David Parkin worked in the city council housing estate of Kaloleni in the late 1960s; David Clark and more recently Lucy Jayne Kamau have conducted studies of the Nubians of Kibera; Janet Bujra investigated class and poverty in the low income section of Pumwani from 1970 to 1972; Joyce Mook studied Maragoli migrants to Nairobi during the early 1970s; Thomas Weisner spent 1968-1970 and 1972 studying Abaluyia migrants residing in Kariobangi Estate and their network of relationships with their rural homelands; Gary Ferraro investigated the effects of urbanization on extended family patterns in the Dagoretti section of Nairobi in 1969 and 1970; and there are others. Many of these studies, to be sure, have employed diverse methodologies and have been guided by differing theoretical concerns. Nevertheless, it may be useful to pull together some of the data derived from these various segments of the city to help to arrive at a more comprehensive view of sociocultural change in Nairobi.

We have selected papers which are anthropological in approach; all use field research; have a holistic, ethnographic technique; and cite other urban anthropology studies as references. The editors are both sociocultural anthropologists, and we wanted to present some fairly recent urban anthropological approaches to the study of change in Nairobi. We realize that many excellent studies of Nairobi not employing a participant-observation or ethnographic format have direct relevance to many of the issues raised in this volume, but we were unable to include more owing to limitations of space. In addition, a good number of the recent studies that did meet the criteria could not be included because they had been published previously. It is our hope, however, that this special issue of *African Urban Studies* will stimulate a more comprehensive collection of papers on Nairobi that would accommodate both previously published and unpublished works. We hope to encourage scholars who have worked in other African cities to compare their data and hypotheses with these and the increasing number of other new studies of Nairobi.

Our special thanks go to each of the fine contributors with whom we worked in preparing the final set of papers and to the other social scientists who suggested names, places, or topics for inclusion.

Gary Ferraro
Thomas Weisner