

"Rites of Passage: Controversy Over the Role of Initiation Ceremonies for Cultural Identity Among Some Kenyan Societies: The Case of the Abagusii Community of South Western Kenya", in Bahemuka, Judith M and Joseph L. Brockington (ed.), *East Africa in Transition: Images, Institutions and Identities* (Nairobi, University of Nairobi Press, 2004), pp.245-265.

ABSTRACT

Many communities mark transition from childhood to adulthood with elaborate *rites of passages*. For some of these communities, these *rites* involve circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls. There is now a worldwide outcry against such practices, the loudest being that against clitoridectomy. This article attempts to show: (a) that the communities which perform such *rites* still continue to believe that these *rites* bestow upon the individual a certain specific social identity without which the individual cannot be allowed to perform certain specific roles as a member of that community, (b) why the practice of bestowing this identity is attracting controversy in modern societies and, finally, (c) how the controversy could be resolved by identifying the educational role such *rites of passage* are meant to perform among the communities that practise them.