

## 1. African Potentials, Customary Knowledge and Institutions, and Persistent Face-to-face Interactions

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Ohta's project is entitled "Comprehensive Area Studies on Coexistence and Conflict Resolution Realizing African Potentials." The term "African Potentials" encompasses knowledge and social institutions generated and utilized by African peoples to initiate conflict resolution and achieve coexistence. Ohta argues that we must reject romanticizing, mystifying, or essentializing the African "tradition". Africa has repeatedly interacted, opposed, and adopted aspects of Western and Arabic / Islamic cultures and, in the process, has transformed and recreated itself.

Researching relationships between Turkana pastoralists of northern Kenya and international refugees, Ohta observed that these groups developed various spontaneous relationships at the individual level. He coined the term "African Potentials" to denote their ability to sustain face-to-face interactions, create consensus and agreement, compromise in negotiations, avoid impatient conclusions, and avert social ruptures.

Unlike modern court systems, which rely on retributive (punitive) justice, customary institutions of conflict resolution rely on restorative justice, aiming to repair the disrupted social order. Ohta argues that restorative justice becomes effective through active participation (face-to-face interactions) on the part of both offenders and victims. It is, therefore, very important to provide a space (place) where people can actively participate in the deliberation process.