



# History of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Bungorna, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts, 1875-1997

Kakai Pius

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**History of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Bungoma,  
Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts, 1875-1997**

**By  
Pius Wanyonyi Kakai**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
Kenyatta University**

**April 2000**

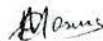
## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree  
in any other University



**Kakai, Pius Wanyonyi**

This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University Supervisors



**Prof. Eric Masinde Aseka**



**Prof. Gabriel Jal**

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## **DEDICATION**

**Dedicated to all those who cherish  
and enhance cordial inter-ethnic relations  
world-wide.**



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACK: -	Anglican Church of Kenya
ADC: -	African District Council
AWA: -	Abaluyia Welfare Association
BGM: -	Bungoma
BPU: -	Baluyia People's Union
BU: -	Bukusu Union
CEE: -	Common Entrance Examination
CMS: -	Church Mission Society
CAPU: -	Coast African People's Union
DC: -	District Commissioner
DO: -	District Officer
DP: -	Democratic Party of Kenya
DYM: -	Dini Ya Musambwa
Ed.: -	Editor
EN: -	Elgon Nyanza
ENDC: -	Elgon Nyanza District Congress
FAIM: -	Friends African Industrial Mission
FAM: -	Friends African Mission
FORD: -	Forum for Restoration of Democracy
FORD-A: -	Forum for Restoration of Democracy - Asili
FORD-K: -	Forum for Restoration of Democracy - Kenya
Fr: -	Father
GEMA: -	Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru Association
GK: -	Government of Kenya
IBEAC: -	Imperial British East African Company
ICJ: -	International Commission of Jurists
IMF: -	International Monetary Fund
KADU: -	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU: -	Kenya African Nation union
KANC: -	Kenya African National Congress

KAPP: - Kenya African Peoples Party  
 KAU: - Kenya African Union  
 KES: - Kitosh Educational Society  
 KIT: - Kitale  
 KIM: - Kenya Independence Movement  
 KLC: - Kenya Land Commission  
 KNA: - Kenya National Archives  
 KNC: - Kenya National Congress  
 KNP: - Kenya National party  
 KFA: - Kenya Farmers Association  
 KOLA: - Kenya Oral Literature Association  
 KPA: - Kalenjin Political Association  
 KSC: - Kenya Social Congress  
 Kshs: - Kenya Shillings  
 LAC: - Location Advisory Council  
 LNC: - Local Native Council  
 LUTATCO: - Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation  
 M. A.: - Master of Arts  
 MP (S): - Member (s) of Parliament  
 MT: - Mount  
 MUF: - Maasai United Front  
 NAO: - Native Authority Ordinance  
 NAC: - Nairobi African Congress  
 nd: - no date  
 NFD: - Northern Frontier District  
 NEMU: - National Election Monitoring Unit  
 NGO (s): - Non – Governmental Organization (s)  
 NKFA: - North Kitosh Farmers Association  
 NNADC: - North Nyanza African District Congress  
 NNANA: - North Nyanza African National Association

## **Definition of Key Terms and Expressions**

### **Luyia**

1. Abana be Likhanga – refers to guinea fowl off-spring
2. Babandu be bukusi – the price people
3. Biyobo or Barwa – used to refer to the Kalenjin in a pejorative way to imply that the Kalenjin were strangers and enemies to those who evoked the concept.
4. Becha na Omukhura: - those who came with flood.
5. Bukusi – Price
6. Chetoto – Harbinger
7. Chingabo – Forts
8. Endemu ya bebe – a legendary serpent which was killed by Mango
9. Esitabicha – is a post-circumcision ritual process carried out at the banks of a perennially flowing river.
10. Enyanja ya Walule – a name used by the Babukusu in reference to Lake Victoria.
11. Okhulia Yimbwa – Literally translated as ‘ eating a dog’. It is an expression applied to signify sealing of an agreement by two hitherto warring parties. The process involves the two parties stretching a puppy at both ends and one member slicing it into two halves as the two groups undertake an oath against fighting each other again.
12. Okhulichana -A post- circumcision initiation ritual carried out among the Abatachoni.  
The ritual is closely associated with the esitabicha.
13. Olukoba - a fort
14. Olurende - a swampy place
15. Omukasa - a clan head



16. Omwami - an overall leader of a sub-ethnic group. However, that of the Abawanga was given a specific title as Nabongo.

17. Siyanja barende - those who love and assimilate strangers.

### **Kalenjin**

1. Chepkumatishek: - a Circular mud or cowdung plastered shelter in which the Bok and the Bongomek lived in pre-colonial era.

2. Kalenjin: - it is in singular form. It means 'I tell you'. (PL Kalenjok).

3. Kapteeka: - bambooland.

4. Kirwagindet: - Chief (pl. Kirwagiik)

5. Kokwet: - a council of elders

6. Kotap mureen: - houses of warriors

7. Laitirian or Naitirian: - a village or fort head

8. Mogoriondet: - a rich person

9. Murenik: - warriors

10. Ngorinok: - a fortified camp in which the Bok lived during the pre-colonial era

11. Pororiosik (pl. Pororiet) - An area which is bigger than a village and comprise a group of clans separated from each other by natural features such as bushes, rivers, hills and escarpments.

12. Setanik: - Medicine

13. Tachoni: - we shall return

14. Worgoondet: - a prophet or the highest ritual leader among the Sabaot. (pl. Worgoik)

## **Somali**

1. Gurti: - elders assemblies
2. Shifta: - bandits

## **Kiswahili**

1. Madaraka: - internal self government
2. Majimbo: - pl. regions (sing. Jimbo)
3. Majimboism: - regionalism
4. Panga: - Machete

## **English**

**Ethnic:** the term is derived from the Greek 'ethnikos' which originally meant heathen, pagan, gentile, non-Jewish and non-Christian. However, with the passage of time, it seems that these negative connotations have been off-loaded. Consequently the concept 'ethnic' or 'ethnicity' is adopted and understood to mean an aspect of a community's self recognition as well as an aspect of its recognition in the eyes of outsiders

**Relations:** - co-existence between distinct identities within the borders in which the identities

May or may not be in contact with each other.

## ABSTRACT

This study recognises the significance of amity in ethnic relations in the development quests of the African continent. Inter-ethnic relations in this part of the world are constrained by various problems. The manifestations of such constrained relations in the form of co-operation, interdependence, suspicion and tension influence the nature of political discourses of identity. In certain cases the ethnic relations have been so bad that they have led to tragic consequences in parts of Africa. In other cases cordial inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic relations have resulted in peoples' economic growth, political stability as well as their social development. All these aspects are very interesting.

Rather than set out to study inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations in the whole of Africa or Kenya, this study is limited to a region which covers mainly Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and (the part of saboti Division of) Trans Nzoia districts. Major issues which are investigated include inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic interactions and their implications on the inhabitants' perception of nationhood. It is argued that inter- and intra-ethnic relations in the region under study are not only complex but also subtle to the extent that cooperation, interdependence and conflicts occurred either within specific ethnic or sub-ethnic composition as well as across ethnic confines. Furthermore, some skewed focus on inter-ethnic relations often lead to the weakening of nationhood as well as statehood as some political discourses of identity undermine the convergences apparently produced and reproduced by the nationalist ideology.

The theoretical paradigm employed in this study considers the various changes traceable in inter-ethnic relations, notably the conflict theoretical construct. This is largely a sociological

theory, however, its sociological orientation is off loaded to give allowance for inclusion of historical imperatives and discourse in its scope. Although the restructuring of social theories is still going on, this study adopts a historical perspective which is distinct from the emerging eclecticism and synthesis in social theory. It conceives conflict as a process of socialisation and interaction which involves the interplay of various social, economic and political factors that have shaped inter-as well as intra-ethnic relations. Within this conflict theory, the study has borrowed from Dahrendorf's views of conflict which is based on differential distribution of authority. In this context, Dahrendorf sees conflict as arising from conflict between the rulers and the ruled. Whereas this aspect emerges in the study, Dahrendorf's framework alone is not enough. Hence Simmel's aspect of sociation bolsters it. Besides, Simmel's prospect for the eventual conflict resolution and subsequent unity reinforces Dahrendorf's weaknesses. For Dahrendorf's analysis ignores the existence of conflict resolution. As the chapters unfold these two theorists' perspectives mutually reinforce each other and whenever need arises, the Fanonian model of violence as an emancipatory process is also integrated to analyse specific incidences of resistance within the study.

The inter and intra-ethnic relations surveyed in this study call for reconceptualisation beyond the level of cultural conversations to establish a mutuality of trust across ethnic frontiers that can even transcend territorial frontiers. As the chapters unfold, it is illustrated that the various ethnic collectivities in the area have a lot in common making it difficult to imagine about there being any ethnic group that can be defined as pure. The discussion reveals that the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaoth share not only in some clans and linguistic aspects but also in their history of origin as well as their cultural and economic interests. This

commonness makes the value of interdependence a strong mechanism which aims at bringing about conflict resolution.

The concept and rigidification of ethnicity have been associated with colonialism. However, the study shows that both before 1875 and during the period under review there were complex and subtle inter and intra-ethnic, and sub-ethnic relations involving co-operation, interdependence, suspicions and antagonisms. All these intricate relations have been adequately analysed by the various strands within conflict theoretical formulation

It also emerges that the conflict which arose within the colonial situation was not only inter-or intra ethnic or sub-ethnic. There was also an inter-racially skewed conflict which pitted Asians and Africans against white settlers. Similarly, the events and consequences of the two world wars further introduced another aspect of resistance by making African ex-soldiers conceptualise colonialism and nationalism in a broader trans-territorial perspective.

The study therefore finishes by proposing that historical study of inter-and intra-ethnic or sub-ethnic relations has a good base upon which conflict resolutions could be built. It cites cases of past attempts which enabled the three communities to co-exist peacefully and recommends that such steps plus others of contemporary times can contribute to conflict resolution

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Preamble**

This chapter provides an overview of the entire study whose focus is on 'History of Inter-ethnic Relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and (Saboti Division) of Trans Nzoia Districts. Its various sections include: The background to the problem whose concern here is to give a general historical, geographical and administrative context of the area under study. A section on literature review deals with some of the works on the theme of inter-ethnic relations internationally, regionally and locally. The statement of the problem follows and sets out what the study's preoccupation on inter-ethnic relations in the three districts investigates. There are also sections on the objectives of the study, research premises and significance of the study as well as on scope and limitation of the study. The chapter also discusses conflict theoretical formulation that the study adopts, the research methodology and the problems the study encountered.

#### **1.2 Background to the Problem**

Africa seems to be faced with the growing crisis of identity. The nature of this crisis may be conceptualised and understood within the modern conditions, and the context of colonial restructuring of precolonial societies. This study attempts a reconstruction of the history of the region of Kenya with a focus on Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts.

These three administrative divisions are adjacent to each other. They border the Republic of Uganda in the north-west. In Kenya they border Busia and Teso districts to the west and to the

south western sides are Kakamega and Lugari districts. The latter stretches from the south eastern and eastern sides, respectively. On the map in appendix iii, Lugari District had not been carved from Kakamega. At one section of the eastern side, Trans Nzoia, the more easterly district of the study area is bordered by Uasin Gishu and Marakwet districts in the east, whereas the north eastern side of Trans Nzoia District is bounded by West Pokot District. The entire region constitutes an area of 5,542 square kilometres (Trans Nzoia District Development Plan: 1994-1996:1, Bungoma District Development Plan, 1994-1996:1).

Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts are situated in Western Province of Kenya. Initially, Bungoma District included the present Mt. Elgon District. As one district, Bungoma then measured approximately 3,074 square kilometres (Makila, 1982:3). Here the Abaluyia and the Kalenjin ethnic groups are predominant. The Abaluyia sub-ethnic groups constitute mainly Babukusu and Abatachoni. On the other hand, the Sabaot form the main Kalenjin sub-ethnic group. These Sabaot comprise the Kony, Bok, Sabiny, Bongom and Somek (Kiliku, 1992:22). Minor ethnic compositions include the Teso and the Agikuyu. But the Agikuyu's entry into the region is relatively recent.

In 1993 Bungoma District was divided into two. The one whose area is 2063 square Kilometres and dominantly inhabited by Abaluyia retained the original name while the Sabaot dominated counterpart and measuring 936.75 square kilometres came to be known as Mt. Elgon. Mt. Elgon as it stands now previously formed a division in the then Bungoma District. The division was similarly known as Mt. Elgon. Hence the name has been retained to signify the district.

Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia District, on the other hand, is situated in the Rift Valley Province. The district covers an area of 2468 square kilometres, occupying approximately 0.42% of the Republic of Kenya and 1.4% of the Rift Valley Province (Trans Nzoia District Development Plan 1984/89: 1). According to the 1979 population census Trans Nzoia's ethnic structure indicated that the Abaluyia, Kalenjin and the Agikuyu account for more than 80% of the total population. In percentage terms, the figures are shown below:

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Luyia	49.5%
Kalenjin	22.6%
Agikuyu	10.3%
Other	17.8%

**Source: Trans Nzoia District Development Plan, 1984/88: 9**

Inter-ethnic interactions that date from pre-colonial days (Were, 1967; 1985:5-10; Wandibba, 1985:22-32; Aseka, 1989:22-52; Kakai, 1992) continue to the present time. Sometimes suspicions, tensions and even conflicts ensued. It is misleading to regard such conflicts as irrational outbursts due to tribal sentiments. They are products of historical forces of colonial maladministration and the workings of neo-colonialism (Magubane, 1969:534-535). In our study, suspicions and tensions have been occurring since the 1960s. Hence this research examines inter-and intra-ethnic relations which prevailed between 1875 and 1997 in order to depict how inter-and intra-ethnic co-operations, suspicions, tensions and even conflicts in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts have affected the issue of national integration.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

A considerable range of literature exists on inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts. However, there is need to examine related literature from various parts of the globe first for the purpose of analysis. Mazrui (1969a:102-122) states that the process of



national integration involves four stages of inter-relationship between different ethnic or cultural groups in the country. These stages are:- bare co-existence between distinct identities within the borders, relation of contact even if it may not be on friendly terms. In fact, he argues that in cases where the contact was as a result of conflict, that became the highest stage that resulted in integration. The third stage is relations of compromise, and the fourth and final one concerns coalescence.

Mazrui posits that this fourth stage is a coalescence of identities rather than a merger of interests. The groups' diversity of interests among ethnic groups would continue and the capacity for compromise would still be needed. He further argues that the process of national integration is what he terms a partialisation of group identities. In this process, the concerned communities begin to pay less attention to their coherence as distinct systems of life and begin searching for a new and major kind of total identity. This work by Mazrui appears useful for a work of this nature that is faced with the intricate question of inter and intra-ethnic relations in African societies. In this study, Mazrui's abstract and theoretical assumptions are validated in an endeavour to investigate the problem of inter-ethnic relations that have existed in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and (Saboti Division of) Trans Nzoia districts between 1875 and 1997.

Ahmed (199:63) states that the term 'ethnic' is derived from the Greek word 'ethnikos' which originally meant heathen, pagan, gentile, non-Jewish and non-Christian. It is from this word ethnic that ethnicity is formed. But; unlike its earlier meaning, its pejorative connotation is off loaded. J.A. Fishman (1977:15-26) explains that ethnicity is understood as an aspect of a community's self-recognition as well as an aspect of its recognition in the eyes of outsiders

(ibid: 6). Fishman further argues that the boundary between an ethnic collectivity and those that surround it is at least part of the meaning of ethnic experience per se. That is to suggest that self-recognition contains within itself a recognition that there are other collectivities whose ethnicities are different (Ibid: 26).

Furthermore, Fishman gives an alternative view embraced by other authorities on ethnicity. These authorities conceive some stages and varieties of ethnicity in which even the recognition of one's own ethnic collectivity is deemed minimal. Therefore, stages and varieties in which consciousness of boundaries and other ethnic collectivities cut across these boundaries are also deemed minimal. Fishman concludes his argument by stating that if the notion of ethnic identity requires heightened ethnic consciousness, then it needs not only boundaries but also opposition across boundaries for such identity to be most fully articulated.

On inter-ethnic relations, Ivo Banac (1992) tackles causes of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. He argues that as early as 1948 president Josif Tito feared conflicts that would ensue as a result of Montenegrin and Croatian populace resisting unification. Indeed, in the early 1970s there was tension that connoted a conflict over the future of Yugoslavia. In 1977, the Serbian leadership grumbled against the constitution. In 1980, it seized on the death of Tito as a signal to begin the unravelling of the federalist era (Banac, 1992: 1085-1093).

Banac contends that by 1991 when communism declined in Eastern Europe and the victory of the opposition in the 1990 elections in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Yugoslav people's army became increasingly isolated and determined to reject

further confederation. When Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in June 1991, war erupted prompting an obituary for Yugoslavia in the **Serbian Cultural Weekly**. The foregoing analysis indicates that ethnic tensions and conflicts do not just happen. They develop gradually over time. In tackling ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts, there is need to bear this in mind.

Kemal Kurspahic (1994) contends that different ethnic and religious groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina had for centuries lived together in mutual tolerance. He further asserts that the Bosnian conflict that resulted in many losses of human lives and properties was externally imported because of the 'Greater Serbia' project that was developed in Belgrade and aimed at conquest of other territories by force of arms. This work appears useful to this study. Its treatment of Bosnian case broadens the way inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia district is interrogated.

Mazrui (1969b) argues that ethnic relations leading to tensions and conflicts are a global affair facilitated by two revolutions of communications and identity explosion. He cites the 1967-1970 Biafra war in Nigeria as being an equivalent of the Scottish attempt at getting greater autonomy from Britain. On the side of Nigeria, Mazrui argues that the 'story of Biafra and the Ibo ethnicity is in part a story of the decline of Nigerian nationalism'. He further states that such decline could only be understood against a historical background (Ibid: 6).

Moreover, Mazrui and Tidy (1984:203-207; 219-222) depict gloomy effects on Biafra War in Nigeria as well as the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic relations in Rwanda and Burundi respectively.

Central in this work is similarly the question of identity. How does ethnic identity affect nationhood? This is an aspect that ought to be borne in mind in the course of research about inter-ethnic as well as intra-ethnic relations in any area of study.

Another useful analysis of ethnic relations in Nigeria is by Rotimi T. Suberu (1993). Suberu traces Nigeria's ethnic relations from 1914 to 1993. He argues that the need to consolidate the Muslim Hausa-Fulani, the Christian Igbo, the religiously bicomunal Yoruba and the minority ethnic groups into one single country sparked off various ethnic suspicions, tensions and conflicts. He points out that the minority communities felt that the bigger Nigerian communities neglected them.

He claims that the ensuing ethnic imbalance in the post independence Nigeria contributed to the collapse of the first Republic and the imposition of military rule in 1960 and the Biafra War of 1967-1970. This study is broad in scope for it discusses various ethnic groups in the entire Nigeria. However, our research is limited to three districts in Western Kenya though it has benefited from some insights from Suberu's work.

Ryan (1971) tackles social relations in the Horn of Africa seeing how the external factor contributed to the souring of ethnic and racial relations in the region. Referring to the Sudan, he brings out race and religion but not ethnicity as the main cause of the civil war. According to him, conflict in the Sudan has been caused by racial and religious sentiments. The Southerners claim that the Arabs in the Sudan are not Africans, but imperialists and racists who wish to maintain the social consequences of their enslavement of Africans. Southerners are

opposed to attempts by certain Northern elements to Arabise and Islamise the South that is Christian and traditionalist. Coming out of this work as a factor militating against harmonious relations in the Sudan is an aspect of culture. Ryan's text is useful in this study because it may guide reflections and analysis to be made in this study on the role of culture in facilitating or hampering inter or intra-ethnic relations.

Several works on ethnic relations in Somalia exist. However, only two are reviewed here. Dualah (1994) discusses the history of Somali clan relations since the pre-European times. He identifies the Hawiye, Digil, Dir, Rahanweyn, Darod, Isaq as among the main clans. These clans were sometimes suspicious or hostile to each other. Dualah argues that each clan has within Somalia another clan it considers its traditional enemy. But, Dualah's main thrust in this book centres on how Siad Barre employed inter-clan intrigues to dismember the once peaceful Somalia. Today, Somalia is perhaps the only existing country in the world without a central government (Ihonvbere, 1994).

Peter J. Schraeder (1993:13-17) also discusses ethnic relations in Somalia. He argues that the overthrow of Siad Barre regime did not end the conflict in Somalia. The blunder undertaken by the Hawiye to unilaterally appoint Ali Mahdi Mohamed as President incensed the feuding factions. The tense relations between the Isaq dominated Somali National Movement, (SNM), the Hawiye United Somali Congress (USC) and the Ogaden dominated Somali Peoples Movement (SPM) worsened. In May 1991 the SNM declared the former British Somaliland as an independent territory which was to be known as the Somaliland Republic. Yet the inter-clan and intra-clan conflicts in Southern Somalia continued to disturb peaceful existence.

This latter work on Somalia was limited in scope. Nevertheless, the two works are vital in challenging and stimulating further reflections in the collection of empirical evidence in the field.

In Uganda, Okulu (1974: 48-49) argues that ethnic relations in Uganda worsened because of the British colonialists who strengthened the idea of 'chosenness' or belonging to a royal family in some communities. The author states that during the colonial time, the Baganda believed that they were a 'super-tribe' because of their advantages over the rest of Uganda. At independence, the Baganda wanted their Kabaka Mutesa to become the ruler instead of Milton Obote. But the reluctance of the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) to make Mutesa the President was the beginning of Obote-Mutesa conflict which eventually threw the entire country into a lot of ethnic strife and violence which have continuously dominated inter-ethnic relations in Uganda.

Yoweri Museveni (1985), on the other hand, holds the view that the conflict that had existed in Uganda under the influence of his National Resistance Army (NRA) was a war against injustice, repression and dictatorship. He asserts that the war was 'anti-tribalism' and that it involved all Uganda citizens. The works of Okulu (1974) and Museveni (1985) are useful in this study for provision of adequate examples to understand the nature of the Kenyan inter-ethnic relations.

Literature on ethnic relations in Kenya is increasing. Soja. (1968) argues that in traditional African societies there was a constant state of flux. Cohesive communities were appearing and

disappearing, blending and breaking off as a result of an almost ubiquitous competition for land and animals. Organised raiding, efforts to resist it and the need to expand into new grazing or agricultural land created a fluid distribution of population and group loyalties. Apart from this, Soja further argues that conflicts and fighting took place not only among ethnically unrelated groups such as pastoralists and agriculturalists but also within groups who shared a common cultural background. For instance, the Maasai often engaged in conflicts among themselves over grazing land or other issues.

Ese, (1994) analyses ethnic conglomerations as having both merits and demerits. On the merits, he argues that ethnic groups promoted and nurtured the social, economic and political advancement of ethnic groups. He cites examples of the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO), the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association (GEMA) and the North Kavirondo Chamber of Commerce (NKCC) to bolster his argument. These ethnically based organisations not only assisted individuals in acquiring wealth and political power but also served as challenges to the Asian monopoly of retail and wholesale trade. This paper is useful in discussing various issues in this work.

Directly relevant to this study are the works of Odinga (1967) and Jan de Wolf (1977); Odinga (1967) mentions the existence of ethnic tensions between the Abaluyia and the Kalenjin ethnic groups in Western and parts of the Rift Valley provinces. But this work is sketchy and patchy on this aspect of inter-ethnic relations. Wolf argues that Masinde Muliro's claim of Trans Nzoia as part of Western Province sparked off inter-ethnic conflicts between the Kalenjin sub-ethnic collectivity and their Abaluyia counterparts. The Sabaot of Mt. Elgon burned down

houses, destroyed crops and drove away cattle belonging to Babukusu in the early 1960s. However, Wolf does not delve deeper into the whole issue of inter-ethnic relations bringing out how various ethnic groups related over time.

One document that has set out to investigate ethnic relations in Kenya, including those in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts, is the Kennedy Kiliku Report of 1992. The report posits that the Sabaot's demand for land had a major impact on the inter-ethnic relations in the area under study. Since independence, the Sabaot had been pressing as an ethnic group to be administered from Trans Nzoia instead of Bungoma because a good number of them are in Trans Nzoia. This work does not go deeper to discuss the various aspects of inter-ethnic relations in the area. But the report is basically focusing on ethnic clashes of the early 1990s. Hence, though useful, the work has left a lot of gaps, some of which constitute the purpose of this research.

Since the study endeavours to eventually suggest solutions to inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts in the districts, it is appropriate in this review to discuss some of the options offered by various scholars. Though tackling the theme of ethnic relations in an abstract manner, Mazrui (1969a) argues that sometimes the cumulative power of precedent made conflict resolution possible. For instance, experience of previous clashes among the Kenyan ethnic communities seems to have sharpened the capacity to discover areas of mutual compatibility on subsequent occasions of similar tensions.



The author further adds that awareness of reciprocal dependence could make conflict resolution among communities with tense relations possible. Finally Mazrui (Ibid) cites the possibility of having a shared ideology as instrumental in bringing about conflict resolution to ethnic groups that might have been hostile to each other. These suggestions, though presented in abstract form, are useful and may find validation or otherwise in this study.

In the Bosnian case, Kurspahic (1994: 138-139) suggests the role of professionalism as a possible solution in assisting to restore inter-ethnic harmony. Basing on journalism, Kurspahic maintains that journalists working for his newspaper, *Oslobodjenje* were drawn from Muslims, Serbs and Croats. As a team, these journalists signified the existence of ethnic harmony and tolerance because professional ethics guided their work. This fact comes out vividly clear in the following view that:

'As long as you [journalists] are free to write about things as you see them, as you think about them, as you feel about them, you do not have any problems with colleagues of different ethnic or religious backgrounds' (Ibid).

This professional idea is considered in the quest for conflict resolutions in situations where inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts are found to be tense.

Marc Michaelson (1993) identifies the procedures which Somali clans followed to restore tense relations among their members. He states that when violent confrontations occurred between clans in the struggle for extremely scarce resources in that scorching climate, gurti or elders' assemblies peacefully settled most disputes. The elders serving as legitimate representatives of

their clans, sub-clans or sub-sub-clans would typically sit around in a room for hours, days or months thrashing out items of contention until they reached a consensus.

Michaelson (Ibid) points out that some insightful mediators like the UN chief envoy Mohamed Sahnoun and US special envoy Robert Oakley perceived the need for a broader based regeneration of civil society. Hence they empowered local leaders and prominent citizens to participate in the local and regional conferences which aimed at bringing about peace to war torn Somalia. Clan elders, religious leaders, women, intellectuals and business people were actively involved. Consequently, broadening the scope of actors enabled the Somalis to begin taking control of the process of rehabilitation and reconciliation (Ibid: 56). The foregoing views are useful in helping us understand the complicated problem of inter-ethnic conflict and subsequent search for resolutions.

Writing about traditional conflict resolution measures in Kenya, Soja (1968:11) states that clusters of related people developed a veneer of unity based upon sets of linkages which cut across kinship lines. The author adds that although linkages did not always prevent internal conflict, they did provide a structure for co-operative actions against outside adversaries. Soja's views are useful to the study because of the probable pre-existence of culture linkages among inhabitants of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts.

Asoka (1994:6-12) suggests the need for a supra-ethnic value system in Kenya as a way to avoid ethnic suspicions and rivalries. He argues that a supra-ethnic democratic ideology would cater for our nation's collective interests, needs, expectations, priorities and ideals. Manundu

(1994:10) has similar views. He explains that individuals from differing ethnic groups in the country should evolve a sense of community with one another as economic, political and cultural inter-dependence. Manundu further argues that once a sense of community and purpose was developed, people would not feel threatened by shifts of power and wealth because increasing equality of power among ethnic groups leads to better national community rather than conflict. Aseka's and Manundu's works contribute to this study's quest for a social prophylaxis as the study focuses on better ways of minimising inter-ethnic suspicions, tensions and conflicts in the area.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

The literature review surveyed shows that there are very few studies, which have paid serious attention to ethnic identity, ethnic consciousness and ethnic relations in Kenya. There seems to be no thorough historical studies on the subject, although the problem is basically of a historical nature. Consequently, this study addresses issues on ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia districts from 1875 to 1997. The region was one of the hot-beds of inter-ethnic strife that culminated in the slaughter of fellow human beings by feuding ethnic groups prior to the 1992 multi-party general election in Kenya.

Of importance in this study are matters concerning how various ethnic groups interacted with their neighbours. In this perception, issues of inter-ethnic co-operation, inter-dependence as well as inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts are thoroughly investigated. Similarly, the analysis of the interactions also attempts to show how such relations impinged on the inhabitants' perception of nationhood. This study investigates the problem of ethnic consciousness in the

area under review and attempts to ascertain when these problems could have been minimal. Apart from this, the study gives possible justification for this state of affairs in the districts under investigation. Furthermore, it also inquires into the question of where ethnic consciousness was heightened in the area and proceeds to analyse consequences of this development.

Finally, the study advances possible suggestions, which would strengthen inter-ethnic relations in the area under review. In a nutshell, this is a historical study in social conflict mainly occasioned to a certain extent by ethnic particularism and consciousness.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The study seeks to:

1. Trace the historical pattern of interaction among the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts.
2. Identify and discuss factors that contributed to the emergence and exacerbation of inter-ethnic tensions.
3. Inquire into the role of societal stereotypes and hatred in relation to the question of ethnic identity and their perception of nationhood in the emergence of inter-ethnic conflicts.
4. Evaluate the extent to which knowledge acquired from past ethnic relations is useful in resolving ethnic suspicions and tensions.

## **1.6 Research Premises.**

The research aims at testing the following premises:

1. Various ethnic groups currently living in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts had established social and economic ties of interaction long before 1875 and those ties persisted thereafter.
2. Land ownership, land use and livestock ownership were major contributory factors in causing and continuing inter-ethnic suspicions and tensions in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts.
3. Occasional ethnic suspicious relations in the three districts undermined these communities' perception of Kenyan nationhood and promoted ethno-dimensional definition of community socio-economic and political interests.
4. The resolution of ethnic conflicts calls for a historical approach in terms of defining the problem historically and addressing all mistakes that have constituted the rallying point of ethno-centricism.

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

The following reasons justify this study:

1. There was a lacuna in the field of historical research about inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts. Available information was scanty and generalised. This study attempts a detailed and analytical account in order to understand the nature and implications of inter-ethnic relations in the districts.
2. One aspect of inter-ethnic relations was ethnic suspicions and tensions. This aspect had become increasingly evident in the recent past. Inter ethnic suspicions, tensions or clashes

experienced in parts of Western Kenya demanded that scholars from various fields of specialisation address this subject. This study humbly contributes to such an effort from a historical perspective.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

It is documented (Were, 1967, Makila 1978, Wandiba, 1985; Kakai 1992) that the Abaluyia and the Sabaot have settled in the area under study for several centuries. However, the study makes 1875 as a starting point for several reasons. Firstly, because the study focuses on investigation of the recent relations between the various ethnic groups which currently occupy Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts. The consequence of these relations led to inter-ethnic co-operation, inter-dependence as well as suspicions and tensions which are the themes of focus of this research. In spite of this date, whenever need arises, the researcher goes into the historical past to bring out more information to bolster the central argument of the study.

The period between 1875 and 1997 is well over a century. During this period, many aspects of inter-and intra-ethnic relations could be identified and analysed conveniently. Furthermore, the study is mainly limited to three districts because logistically, the area has a multiplicity of local languages and dialects that require patience and skills in obtaining data. Moreover, confining the research to this area has made it possible to carry out field research and compile data within framework of the time recommended for a Ph.D work.

## 1.9 Theoretical Framework

Conflict is endemic in all societies and there is no society that is predicated on eternal consensus ( Abraham, 19982:125 -128, Aseka, 1997b: 21). Conflicts enable people to identify what is wrong within society so as to re-evaluate their relations. When conflicts emerge, they affect the structures and relations within society (Lowilla, 1998). Therefore, the conflict theoretical paradigm encapsulates and connotes relations. These relations may range from bare co-existence between distinct identities within the borders to that of coalescence of identities. Within this range is the relation of contact which often includes conflict (Mazrui, 1969a: 103-105). According to Lowilla, conflict can be identified as either structural or violent. Structural conflict is embedded within the structures of the society. This is the violence which arises from unjust, repressive and oppressive national and international political and social structures (Assefa, 1996:43) Those subjected to it become victims of structural violence. This paradigm, therefore, is broadly relevant to the research.

Abraham (1982:105) states that foundations of conflict theory were laid by ancient philosophers and statesmen dating as far back as the third century before the Christian era. Classical writers like Heraclitus, and Polybius, Ibn Khaldun of the Medieval period, Niccolo Machiaveli of the Renaissance as well as modern European thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Jean Bodin and Gaetano Mosca were among those who have contributed to the development of conflict theory. European writers like Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes and Mosca analysed conflict in polity in terms of power relations. They made the state as their focus of analysis. Classical economists like Adam Smith and Robert Malthus further contributed to the development of

conflict theory. This latter group placed economic competition at the centre of their inquiry (Abraham, Ibid: 106).

Contemporary sociological conflict theory largely synthesised the two classical traditions. The theory based its primary focus on the unequal distribution of rewards in a society. Karl Marx was its leading proponent. C. Wright Mills, Ralf Dahrendorf and Andre Gunder Frank are among the noted conflict theorists of contemporary sociology. Conflict theoretical formations deal with interrelations between two or more units within a society. Racial tension, class war, religious conflicts, strikes, protests, student power movements, revolutions and peasant uprisings often become subjects of analysis (Ibid).

Abraham (1982:113-114) sets out essential postulation of conflict theory. The first postulate is that society is not a system in equilibrium but a nebulous structure of imperfectly co-ordinated elements which are held together by the coercion of some elements and the subjection of others. The second one is that society and its elements are in the process of incessant change although in varying degrees. Thirdly, he points out that society is a stage populated with living, struggling and competing factors. And the final postulate for this consideration states that the predilections to change in society vary in scope, nature, intensity and degree of velocity. These predilections may be latent or manifest, gradual or destructive.

The four assumptions are mainly derived from Dahrendorf's (Abraham, 1992: 125-128) version of conflict theory which bases exclusively on the relations of authority. Dahrendorf argues that social organizations are imperatively coordinated associations rather than social systems. He



sees authority structure, which is an integral part of every social organization, as leading inevitably to the crystallization of interest groups and inherent possibilities of conflict. Furthermore, Dahrendorf believes that in every imperatively co-ordinated association, there is a differential distribution of authority creating a dichotomy of positions of domination and subjection. Some are entrusted with the legitimate right to exercise control over others who are subordinate to the former (ibid, 125.)

The Dahrendorfian distribution of authority leads to the formation of two conflict groups corresponding to the two positions of control and subjection - those who give orders and those who take them. According to him, every association even the smallest office consisting only of the boss and the secretary involves two classes; the rulers and the ruled, hence inherent possibilities of conflict would arise out of incompatible interests.

While the assumptions of Dahrendorf are crucial in guiding this study, the over simplification of conflict to binary model is not observed. As the study shows conflict among the three communities of the 'Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot is complex and subtle. It is both inter and intra ethnic as much as it is caused not by authority alone, but also by other interests both within and outside the specific groups. Similarly Dahrendorf's perception of class as is discussed under Marxian view seems not applicable to the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot.

As already alluded to, Karl Marx represents a special brand known as macro-level conflict theory. According to him, the existence of different social classes is the continuous source of

inevitable conflict. Marx writes that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Furthermore, he argues that changes in the social structure occur through violent upheavals affecting class composition. For instance, Marx uses the antagonistic relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to bolster his case. The bourgeoisie or capitalists own the means of production and distribution while the workers own only their labour (Ibid 114-118). To apply this Marxian interpretation of social conflict theory entails the existence of class-consciousness that according to Lukacs (1974:51) consists of the appropriate and rational reactions imputed to a particular typical position in the process of production.

However, in this study, class-consciousness seems not to be clearly evident in the Marxian sense. As post-structuralists state, classes do not arise automatically out of the mode of production and are given no primacy in political struggles. The concept cannot be properly applied to Africa where the early class structure was not built on differing relations to the means of production (Drayton, 1995:11-13). Hence the Marxian version of conflict theory may not appear to be suitable for this research. Similarly, the liberal model of modernisation if couched in Western values of modernity may also appear unsuitable for the research.. Western imperialism was a vehicle of modernisation that in a way affected African societies (Ahmed, 1992:94). Its dichotomization of the precolonial African societies will be addressed in the analysis of the inter-and intra-ethnic relations.

Inter-ethnic relations presuppose ethnic consciousness. This consciousness may not be widespread or real. Sometimes it could be employed by local individuals in order to maintain power positions for themselves. In this way such individuals undermine and exploit the

supposed 'tribesmen' (Ibid). In this light, conflict theoretical paradigm is harnessed to bring out various aspects of inter-and intra-ethnic relations and occasional conflicts by analysing their contribution to the perception and enhancement of nationhood in the districts.

Theoretical facets which indicate that conflicts or tensions arose due to distribution of desirable benefits, differences between the individual and the society, cultural invasion as well as due to ideological differences are considered. This is where Dahrendorf's assumptions are useful because of the anticipatory conflicts that are sparked off due to differentials in the distribution of authority that calls into analysis the role of ethnic or sub-ethnic relations vis a vis their neighbours. But the analysis goes beyond Dahrendorfian model to analyze the differential distribution of land and property within the area under study as well as religious and stereotypical attitudes which influence and often excite antagonisms within inter and intra-ethnic relations

Since the aspect of sociation is equally important, George Simmel's model comes in to reinforce where Dahrendorf's version is weak. Simmel (Abraham, 1992:109 -10) believes that conflict is a form of sociation endemic in any interaction. But unlike Dahrendorf, he sees conflict as also leading to unity and strength within a group. This is important because the study in its **investigation of inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia Districts** also attempts to suggest means of resolving some of the conflicts so as to reinforce the feeling of nationhood. Furthermore, Frantz Fanon's (1968) psychological perceptions will be brought in whenever the inter-ethnic relations analysis goes beyond the physical and outward contact to involve the mental and psychological dimension as is the case

in investigating the activities of Dini Ya Musambwa in the fifth chapter. It is noted that conflict theory is sociological, nonetheless, it is employed to fit in with the historical context conducive to the research.

### **1.10 Research Methodology**

This study employees both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include carrying out oral interviews in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts among informants who might have lived in the area since the 1950s. To conduct the interview, the researcher was assisted by one main research assistant, Mr. Alfred Murumba Wamala and five minor research assistants. The researcher and his assistants used an open-ended questionnaire, note books pens and a tape recorder during the field interview .Of interest in the oral sources were folk songs, stories about earlier events and personalities. These features showed earlier relations that existed between the various ethnic groups among whom there are people who had useful information. Such informants were drawn from various ethnic groups. Others interviewed included members of religious and non-governmental organizations who worked in the area under study.

In selecting informants age was not a rigid factor. First the researcher employed research assistants to identify men and women, old and young, who were resourceful to this study. Then the researcher introduced himself or was introduced by research assistants before putting forward reasons for the research. Once informants accepted to be interviewed the researcher and his assistants started asking open-ended questions (see a sample provided in appendix V). Initially the researcher and his assistants used kiswahili and luyia depending on the ethnic

identity of informants. But as the informants became more intimate, kiswahili was avoided and Luyia dialects (*Olutachoni* and *Lubukusu*) were employed even within the Sabaot area because the informants were fluent in at least one of these dialects.

Also, documents in the Kenya National Archives (KNA) constituted the second component of primary data. The third components of primary data include post independent government documents. Materials relevant to the study were scrutinized and recorded in a notebook. This included colonial records, reports, letters and petitions from indigenous people. The post independence government documents include Development plans, parliamentary select committee on ethnic clashes and the document on the significance of Chetambe fort in Bukusu history

Secondary sources include books, journals, theses, dissertations, seminar and conference papers, government and non-governmental reports, magazines as well as newspapers. Information contained in the above documents were scrutinized and relevant items extracted for assimilation in the work. This marked the end of a major data collection.

Subsequently, the researcher analysed the contents for validity and reliability. For instance, if an informant gave information that was odd, several interviews were requested from him or her for clarification. On each occasion, questions raised aimed at assessing confidence of the informant. If he or she competently answered questions, his or her information was taken as valid and reliable. But if, on the second, third or even fourth interviews, the informant contradicted earlier information, the information was not automatically considered as valid and

reliable. But if on the second, third or even fourth interviews, the informant contradicted earlier information, the information was not automatically considered as valid and reliable. Where need arose further inquiry was carried out to eliminate any doubts from both primary and secondary sources. In total about thirty six interviews were carried out in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia districts. About twenty-one were with the Abaluyia ethnic group living in the area under study, while fifteen were conducted among the Sabaoth living in the same region investigated. About thirty one of the interviewees were above forty years whereas the remaining five were less than forty years. The oldest informant was 93 years while the youngest was 24 years of age.

Equally varied were the experiences of the informants. Some were colonial employees who served in the tribunal courts, tribal police, teachers and farm foremen. Others are respected custodians of local histories and traditions. Such elders are found in all the three communities under investigation. Among the youth whose ages range from 24 to 40 years are university graduates, primary and secondary school teachers as well as employees in local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They were interviewed using open-ended questions in a questionnaire and answers noted in notebooks. In the case of songs, they were tape recorded for smooth transcription and translation. Thereafter selected material was systematically arranged and harnessed in writing this thesis.

### **1.11 Problems Encountered**

For a person belonging to a different ethnic or sub-ethnic group to conduct research in another ethnic or sub-ethnic group's area is bound to encounter some obstacles. One such problem was primarily tied up with ethnic suspicions. For instance, some of the research assistants were denied interviews in Trans Nzoia, mainly because they did not belong to the same ethnic group

of the informants. Consequently, the assistants had to look for their friends who hailed from the informants' communities to help in the interview process. Though the product that came out of such interviews by proxy was not as detailed it was useful, especially when analysed along with materials collected among the same area by other research assistants.

In other instances some research assistants pretended to belong to neutral sub-ethnic groups before informants proceeded to give their information. A research assistant who belonged to Bukusu sub-ethnic group pretended to belong to the Tachoni sub-ethnic section before the Sabaot informants accepted to be interviewed. The Sabaot generally consider the Abatachoni as having been their ancient relatives with whom they can co-exist. Soon after the interview, the discussion continued on friendly terms about many other issues. As a result the research assistant told our informants that he belonged to the Bukusu community. However, the hosts continued being friendly because mutual trust had been established.

Research assistants also posed another challenge. This happened when some students learnt that their friends were helping with the field research and consequently requested to be assigned with similar responsibilities. The researcher considered their requests and instructed such assistants on what they were expected to do, gave out the stationery and allocated them their field areas. But the researcher also privately approached prominent informants in those areas and interviewed them independently. When one or two research assistants who had volunteered themselves failed to hand in their reports, the researcher would then rely on his own materials to do the analysis. But in the process, the experience showed that the latter

group of assistants was also interested in the little money paid to them instead of having interest in the research itself.

Otherwise, the snag, which would have arisen because of language, ceased to be a problem. Most Sabaot who were interviewed knew either one or both Bukusu or Tachoni dialects that are spoken by the Abatachoni and the Babukusu respectively. In other cases we retained Kiswahili as our language of interview and only used the Sabaot dialect when the interviewees articulated technical terms. Thus the actual interviewing process itself was enjoyable.



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the geographical, and administrative confines of what at the present constitutes Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzioa districts. The three districts that make up the study area of this work have had a long past of interactions both territorially as well as socially. An analysis of these territorial and social interactions since about 1875 to 1997 preoccupies the theme of this chapter. In analysing the geographical and administrative confines of the area under study, this chapter aims at tracing the historical process which took place before these three districts acquired the present frontiers. Furthermore, this chapter hopes to illustrate that physical features in the three districts and the implication of the nomenclatures of not only Mt. Elgon, but also of the districts themselves and the Saboti Division, portend conflictual relations.

Since physical features such as Mt. Elgon, the several hills and rivers in the area have an impact on the differential distribution of resources and people's habitation as well as the occupations, Dahrendorf's assumptions hold. The first assumption is that in every imperatively co-ordinated group, the carriers of positive and negative dominance roles determine two quasi-groups with opposite latent interests. The second assumption is that the bearers of positive and negative dominance roles organise themselves into groups with manifest interests unless certain empirically variable conditions intervene (Abraham, 1982:126)

Territorial features often portend implications about social or ethnic relations. Mazrui [1969, a, 103-105] has aptly articulated the framework in which this study perceives of the word

'relations'. According to him, 'relations' connote co-existence between distinct identities within the borders in which the identities may or may not be in contact with each other. The concept is also applied to imply coalescence of identities. The way the landscape is structured, with some parts being rocky or hilly while others plain and fertile, introduces into the terrain of relations sources of conflict because of the differential distribution of resources. Indeed, as conflict theorists [Abraham, 1982:108] contend, differential distribution of resources mark out certain places as more favourable than others. In addition, these territorial differentiations lead to specific cultural and social peculiarities. Often these peculiarities result in specific cultural groups being identified as ethnically different from others in the adjacent territories.

## **2.2 Social And Physical Landscape**

The theoretical positions are applied in the analysis of the social landscape of the general area of what is now Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts. Mt. Elgon which peaks 4,420 meters high [Nasimiyu, 1984:3] is a dominant feature in the area. This huge extinct volcano is on the Kenya-Uganda border and its influence is felt in all the three districts under study. In 1883 a Scottish man Joseph Thomson toured the Mountain area and was amazed at the existence of numerous caves on the mountain slopes. His impression of one of those caves suggests that it was:

“a yawning cavity about thirty feet deep, one hundred feet long and twenty feet wide. Cows and granaries occupied its centre, huts had been built into the walls. Children of the Nandi-related Kony or Sebei... scurried out of sight.” (Rotberg, 1971:188).

As it appears, the quotation describes more than the mere physical appearance of the cave and adds information concerning the inhabitants of the caves as well as their property. The subsequent chapter of the study examines the inhabitants and their preoccupation more

engrossingly. It was primarily due to the residence of the Kony on this mountain slopes that Thomson named the Mountain "Elgon" after the 'El Kony', a generic term for the Kony people. Of interest also is Thomson's preference of the name Elgon to 'Masaba' which was the Bukusu's [on the Kenyan side] and Bakisu's [on the Uganda side] name for the same mountain. In essence then, one notices that implied in the nomenclature are seeds of conflict, the extent of which will be discussed in chapters four, five and six. In the Dahrendorfian theoretical assumption, Thomson's act would be interpreted to be ascribing to the Kony dominance or authority over the other ethnic and sub-ethnic groups resident around Mt. Elgon. Hence for him, in the light of the framework, Babukusu, Bakisu and even other Sabaot sub-ethnic collectivities assume the negative and opposite roles which unless intervention is in force give rise to conflict.

While the racist Thomson had attributed the existence of those caves to the work of Egyptians [Ibid.], the indigenous inhabitants discounted that fact. Inspired with the quest for establishing the actual cause of the cavities, Thomson's colleagues pursued the exploration further in 1890. Jackson, Ernest Gedge, Dr. Archibald D. Mackinnon and James Martin together confirmed the indigenous people's version. Hence it was true that the caves were natural recesses formed by the erosive effects of underground water at the time when cave sites were buried under volcanic material discharged by the mountain [Rotberg, 1971:189].

Besides the imposing Mount Elgon, there are several hilly areas in the three districts. These include Cherangani hills in Trans Nzioa which reach an elevation of 3371 metres above sea level, the Kavujai, Lucho, Sang'alo, Mwalie, Mwibale and Webuye hills plus other small ones

in Bungoma District. These hilly areas were, in precolonial era favoured by specific groups, especially cattle herders for abundance of pasturage on the slopes. Consequently, certain communities acquired names that are synonymous to those hills. This nomenclatural process implied that either the names of specific clans were simultaneously transferred to the hills nearby or conversely, names characterising specific hills were generically transferred to clans that settled around them.

In this case Cherangani and Sang'alo hills probably acquired their names from those 'Cherangani' and 'Sang'alo' communities which settled within their vicinity, respectively. The soil texture of Mwalie with its varied stripes [which in Luyia were known as "**emialie**" led to the people who inhabited the nearby areas getting that characteristic name "**Mwalie**". The 'Cherangani' were a sub-ethnic group of the Kalenjin but are now assimilated into other groups while the 'Sang'alo' or 'Mwalie' communities are part of the Abatachoni and Babukusu sub-ethnic groups of the Abaluyia. In essence there is emerging an argument pointing to the fact that direct positive relations exist between landscape and the communities inhabiting the area.

The nomenclatural process had both direct and indirect bearing on the lowland areas. In Bungoma and Mt. Elgon (Bungoma District Development Plan 1994-1996: 1-2; Arap-Kisembe, 1978:17) the slopes of Mt. Elgon are generally gentle and cut by deep river gorges with frequent water falls. Of the rivers Nzoia, Kibisi, Kuywa (Terem), Kimilili, Lagok [Malaba], Malakisi, Sio, Kikai-Chwele, Kapkateny and Sosio, all apart from Nzoia rise from Mt. Elgon and flow throughout the year because of the sufficient amount of rainfall the region enjoys.

The **Bungoma Development Plan** estimates the rainfall average as ranging from 1250mm. to over 1800 mm. per annum with hardly a month without rainfall.

River Nzoia with Noigamet (**Trans Nzoia District Development Plan**, 1994-1996: 19) on the other hand originates from Cherangani hills. Other rivers in Trans Nzoia District include Kabewire and Kisawai whose sources are in Mt. Elgon and feed the Nzoia river, rivers Swam and Koitobos drain into Lake Turkana. But most rivers mentioned in the Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts ultimately feed River Nzoia on its increasingly voluminous flow into Lake Victoria. As in the other two neighbouring districts, Trans Nzoia receives fairly well distributed rainfall with an average annual precipitation of 1120mm. The slopes of Mt. Elgon in the west and Cherangani in the north east receive the highest amount of rainfall (1270mm.) while regions bordering West Pokot District receive the lowest (970mm).

Another important factor that would contribute to the trend of ethnic relations in the region under study is soil texture and composition. Nasimiyu (1984:31) argues that there is a fertile red soil around Mt. Elgon. But when looking at the texture in the whole area, the fertility ratio varies from place to place and also according to the structure of the soil. Ominde (1963:77-78) articulately illustrates two 'distinct types of soil in what he terms as the 'mountain region of Elgon' (What constitutes Mt. Elgon, Bungoma and part of Trans Nzoia districts). He argues that the alpine meadow soil alternated with shallow stony soils on the ridges. Ominde further points out that at the lower altitude, brown loam soils with rocky outcrops on the ridges alternate with alluvium or peaty swamps in the valleys. He highlights that the second category probably supported in 1960s and perhaps much earlier a dense forest reserve.

Discussing the soil texture of the foothill zone of Bungoma District, Ominde illustrates that soils are of dark red friable clays and sand clay loams on slope pediments which alternate with stony soils on higher ridges. According to his analysis, alluvium spread over the broad valley floors between the late 1950s and early 1960s. Evident in this discussion is the differential distribution of the soil types and structure. In this differential distribution is contained a force that ultimately would lead specific communities to prefer areas conducive to their livelihood and ignore others. In terms of the Darwinian dictum of survival of the fittest, some communities lacking such conducive resources for sustaining their livelihood would eventually contemplate employing conflictual methods to achieve their requirements. This study investigates this phenomenon in the later chapters.

In Trans Nzoia District, the soil texture in areas of close proximity to Mt. Elgon share some characteristics with those discussed for Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts. According to the **Trans Nzoia District Development Plan, 1994-1996**, the district is endowed with very fertile soil with high potential. This advantage gives Trans Nzoia opportunity to accommodate a variety of resources which include wildlife, cash crops, subsistence crops and forestry.

While this study is preoccupied with ethnic relations in the general expanse of the three districts, particular attention is given to Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and the Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia districts. These specific areas have similar geographical and social characteristics. Whereas Bungoma is generally inhabited by the Abaluyia sub-ethnic groups, Mt. Elgon District is dominantly a Sabaot home. The Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia District with an estimated

population of 203,283 is a mixed group of not only the Abaluyia and the Sabaot, but also with other Kenyan communities in varying numbers.

However, going by the nomenclature of the administrative entities, one cannot fail to recognise the fact that the naming had a Sabaot influence. Bungoma District for instance, was named after the Bongomek, a sub-section of the Sabaot sub-ethnic group of the Kalenjin. In the precolonial period, the Bongomek [known to the Abaluyia as *Abangoma* or *Bahangoma*] possibly resided in the vicinity of the present site of Bungoma town. That the post-independence government in 1964 preferred this name to be applied to the entire district [Makila, 1982:3] instead of an earlier name of "Elgon Nyanza" which was in existence since 1956 is significant in terms of ethnic relations. This consideration is also revisited in the subsequent chapters.

Incidentally, the name of "Mt. Elgon" District does not depart from the principle applied to the naming of Bungoma District. For the name was derived from the *El Kony* sub group of the Sabaot sub-ethnic community of the Kalenjin. As stated earlier, it was the European explorer Joseph Thomson [Rotberg, 1971] who arguably elevated the name *El Kony* by designating it as a reference name for the huge extinct volcanic mountain on whose slopes the *El Kony* sub group lived in 1883. In doing so Thomson subordinated names of other sub groups like Tonoek, Somek and Bok (Arap-Kisembe, 1978: 20-23) who also lived on the slopes of the mountain but whom Thomson may not have interacted with. Similarly, in preferring *El Kony*, Thomson appears to have ignored Masaba (Fontaine, 1969:179) another name by which the Abaluyia especially Babukusu and their close cognates, Bakisu of Uganda, identified the

mountain. Rotberg (1971) argues that although Thomson was aware of the Bukusu and Bakisu nomenclature, the explorer deliberately chose to ignore this name of Masaba for reasons best known to himself alone.

Be that as it may, since the 1883 incident, the name of “Mt. Elgon” was enlarged in scope to encapsulate not only the community living on the slopes of the thickly forested extinct volcanic mountain, but also the actual identification of Kenya's second largest mountain, as well as other administrative boundaries. Thus in the early colonial period, Mt. Elgon was administratively a sub-location of North Nyanza until 1930s when the name was used to refer to a location. In the 1970s Mt. Elgon was elevated to a divisional status within Bungoma District. Finally in 1993 the creation of Mt. Elgon District was publicly declared - thus administratively separating it from its Bukusu dominated Bungoma counterpart.

Saboti Division, unlike *Bungoma* and *Mt. Elgon* derives from the generic name of “Sabaot”. A name that represents all the sub-groups of El Kony, Bok, Bongomck, Somck and Tonock [Mosopisick]. Despite the apparently Luyianised nomenclature, of ‘Saboti’, there seems to have been a predominance of the Sabaot community inhabiting this division in the precolonial era up to the early years of the colonial period [KNA/PC/NZA/2/10/7: 1931-51, Kiliku, 1992:22]. As the current composition demonstrates, other Kenyan ethnic groups invaded the area in later years and ended up overwhelming the Sabaot numerically. While specific census is not available in the division to ascertain how many residents are Sabaot and how many are not, obtaining figures from the **Trans Nzoia District Development Plan, 1984-1988** can generally bolster the argument. The Development Plan points out the ethnic structure of the district with



the Abaluyia, Kalenjin and Agikuyu accounting for more than eighty percent [80%] of the total population. The table below demonstrates the actual figures as were contained in the 1979 national census.

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Luyia	128,025	49.5%
Kalenjin	58,644	22.6%
Kikuyu	26,630	10.3%
Others	46,204	17.8%

**Source: Trans Nzoia District Development Plan, 1984-1988 :9.**

Dominance of the Abaluyia at district level is similarly felt at the Saboti division. Yet this does not negate the substantial presence of the Sabaot in it. It is not only the co-existence of the Abaluyia and Sabaot in the division that is examined, but also where possible, relations with other communities are considered in the process.

Unlike the names of Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts, the naming of 'Trans Nzoia' has some English importation. Thus, the land that bears the name of 'Trans Nzoia', was during colonial years demarcated in such a way that it traversed River Nzoia. Indeed, before independence a lot of acres now found in Bungoma and Lugari- districts fell within the boundaries of Trans Nzoia District. However, at the moment a lot has been taken away from the district. It is also noteworthy that while some territories had been in either Trans Nzoia or Bungoma at different times in the past, the same cannot be said of Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia. Since colonial times, that Mt. Elgon land either had constituted part of North Nyanza, Elgon Nyanza or Bungoma districts. Yet at least in the later part of the colonial period, the Sabaot wanted to be administered from Trans Nzoia (Kiliku, 1992:22).

Hitherto, we have made mention of the presence of numerous cavities on the slopes of Mt. Elgon, often occurring between 6,000 feet and 7,000 feet contours above sea level. Though naturally created through erosion, caves had provided the Sabaot with habitation grounds in the precolonial times. In the neighbourhood of these cavities was limestone soil which contained salt licks for the cattle. Thomson (Rotberg 1971:189) observed that some of the caves accommodated entire villages. Furthermore, Rotberg (Ibid.) points out that these caves were inhabited only as temporary places of refuge. This comment in itself alludes to the existence of conflict and insecurity in the Sabaot neighbourhood. But this aspect is discussed in detail from chapter three onwards.

A brief identification of the kind of precolonial habitation of the Abaluyia, especially the Abatachoni and Babukusu of Bungoma District is also requisite. Charles W. Hobley's (1902:13-14) impressions give a glimpse of the way the Abaluyia of Bungoma District lived in the precolonial times. He wrote that:

“The Kavirondo [**Abaluyia**] people live in a rolling grass country having an altitude of from 3,800 feet to about 5,000 feet, and the country is much warmer and sunnier... part of the north Luyia clans live in walled and moated villages. In Ketosh<sup>1</sup> country [**Bungoma District**] north of the Nzoia river, the walled village reaches its highest development, some of their towns being practically forts.”

Gunter Wagner's (1949:12) fascinating portrait of one of the “walled villages” exposes present day generations to the architectural devices of the departed Luyia elders. He describes the fortress that:

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<sup>1</sup> Kitosh or Ketosh was a term employed by the colonialists to designate both the Abatachoni and Babukusu. Given that ethnic nomenclature, South Bungoma was known as South Kitosh while Eastern Bungoma was referred to as North Kitosh.

“The circular mud walls were about ten feet high and one or two feet thick. They had several entrances, which could be tightly closed with heavy logs. Round the wall ran a moat like ditch three or four feet deep (ibid).”

In the precolonial period there were very many such fortresses. By 1895 there were forts from slopes of Mt. Elgon to the eastern banks of the Nzoia River, and westwards beyond River Malaba (Makila, 1982:22). Two of the most historically significant ones are Lumboka in the western part of Bungoma town and Chetambe near the present site of Webuye town. The first one was constructed by members of the Bukusu sub-ethnic group. Whereas the Abatachoni sub-ethnic group, built the latter. The nature of these forts is discussed further in chapters three and four.

The works by earlier European writers demonstrate how the houses inside these forts looked. Hobley [1902:15] describes them as follows:

“All huts are round with conical thatched roofs. A portion of the hut is usually partitioned off for livestock. The huts are higher than those of the Nandi people. The walls are plastered with mud. When wood is scarce, the walls are made of reeds or 'Mtama' [sorghum] stalks plastered over.”

The excerpt amply suggests that insecurity abounded in precolonial Bungoma as it did in other parts of the area under study. Consequently, by housing livestock together with people, the precolonial Babukusu and Abatachoni hoped to protect animals against rustlers and wild predators. It was therefore to reinforce this perception of security that fortifications formed part and parcel of the 19th century Bungoma landscape.

As Ascka (1990:48) argues, these precolonial “defensive human agglomerations [fortresses] obtained most of their inspiration and initial impetus from the creative intelligence of

indigenous precolonial Kenyans.” Thus, whether one will be looking at the precolonial architectural devices of Mt. Elgon District, Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia District or Bungoma District, the Thomsonian notion of Egyptian influence on these should be discounted. The study has already shown that by Thomson's prejudice of attributing the presence of cavities in Mt. Elgon to outsiders, he blatantly erred and underestimated the intelligence of the precolonial Sabaot who inhabited the area. Given that the area under study is situated in the hinterland, it would be far fetched to approach the pre-colonial features which affected both the social and physical landscape with an outside 'donor' syndrome. The social and structural contours of the three areas under study emerged due to a series of geographical, social and political factors that punctuated ethnic relations.

### **2.3 Summary**

The chapter has charted out a background of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts in geographical and administrative terms. Furthermore, the chapter has attempted to connect the physical geographical landscape with the human habitation. In the process some of the characteristics of both the land terrain and the ethnic groups have been analysed suggesting possible areas where conflictual relations could be encountered. However, not much was delved into.

In facilitating the inquiry were Dahredorf's theoretical assumptions. Through the framework, it has been illustrated that the nomenclatures of most of the region derive from the Kalenjin whereas the names given by for example, Babukusu and Bakisu were ignored by Thomson. Besides, it has been pointed out using the paradigm that the differential distribution of land and

vegetation resources portend areas where pastoralists would prefer and those to be favoured by the mixed cultivators as well as pastoralists. However, the chapter has not automatically pointed out which of the three districts was more endowed with resources than the other two. This is based on the fact that very many factors discussed in the following chapters also account for why conflict arose especially in Mt. Elgon and Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia districts. The next chapter builds on this and discusses historical patterns of ethnic interactions during the period under investigation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 PATTERNS OF INTER-ETHNIC INTERACTIONS: 1875 TO 1894**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As the last sentence of the previous chapter intimated, in this chapter an attempt is made to discuss patterns of inter-ethnic interactions, especially between 1875 and 1894. The demarcation of the time limit is flexible to the extent that where necessary events that took place much earlier than 1875 are highlighted and critically examined. The purpose here is to illustrate that Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot interacted not only within the period demarcated but also even much earlier. Similarly, the chapter hopes to demonstrate that the interaction was complex and subtle and, therefore defies generalisations. Conflicts and cooperation occurred at the same time on all sides. The study employs the conflict theory as perceived by Simmel (Abraham, 1982:109) as a form of sociation endemic in any interaction. In such sociation there is a possibility of opposition, suspicion, curiosity or even hostility. But these elements do not always lead to negative disruptive consequences. They sometimes result in a united and strengthened group-interaction and relations.

Simmel's model here is preferred to Dahrendorf's because of its value for unity after conflict. This is unlike Dahrendorf who does not believe in the existence of conflict resolution (Abraham, 1982:112). Besides, the intricacies which are analysed in the chapter defy Dahrendorf's dualistic authority based conflicts. In this chapter, conflict and cooperation are brought into focus simultaneously among the three communities of the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot. Within the investigation, aspects of traditional conflict management is

discussed under Simmelian assumptions of achieving harmony among previously antagonistic groups.

Mazrui (1969a:103) undertakes some reflection on conflict formulations and emerges with a stimulating proposition. He argues that conflict relation or any form of interaction, for that matter, is a gradual process with several stages. He points out that there exist about four stages through which relations could be understood. Firstly, Mazrui points out a stage in which minimum degree of interaction takes place. At that level only bare co-existence takes place between distinct identities of ethnic, class, racial, or of any other nature within the borders. Secondly, he identifies the stage of contact involving minimal dealings of one entity with the other. Conflict does indeed constitute one such form of contact. Thirdly, he denominates what he calls the stage of compromise. This has dealings with diverse, complex and interdependent nature among concerned entities whether of class, ethnic, race or of other identities. The subtlety and complexity of interaction ultimately entail the presence of a climate of peaceful reconciliation. Fourthly, he demonstrates the existence of the stage of coalescence. Here a coalescence of identities is considered apart from interests. At this point, Mazrui clarifies that conflict of interests may persist while ethnic or class or any other identities coalesce. More of Mazrui's reflections about identities will be discussed in the later chapters.

Nonetheless, the notion of coalescence is useful in the discussion of patterns of inter-ethnic interactions in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts. It is worth noting that during the period under investigation, effort is made to give brief historical information about each of the three sub-ethnic groups of the Sabaot, (of the Kalenjin ethnic group) and the Abatachoni as

well as the Babukusu (of the Abaluyia ethnic group). The historical texts to be examined will be drawn from early pre-1875 past, community settlements in the area under research as well as their internal interaction and external interactions with their neighbours. In the process of analysis however, various aspects of relations in broader terms or relations in specific terms will be discussed. Wolf (1977:16) articulately posits that social relations involve four dimensions. They are (a) people with whom one is related through ties of kinship and marriage, (b) those with whom one combines to defend a common territory and to maintain peace within such an area, (c) those with whom one exchanges labour and food and (d) with whom one joins in worship and celebrations of rituals.

Relationships operate in a broader matrix of diverse and intricate relations of co-existence, interdependence as well as conflict. As the dimensions indicate, even in conflict situation there is co-operation and interdependence. Hence in diagnosing the construction of identity, several intricacies need to be scrutinised in varying contexts. Intensification, classification and crystallisation of identity appear to be embedded in various forms and structures of legitimation.

### **3.2 The Settlement and Interactions of the Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot**

Mention of the Abatachoni, the Babukusu and the Sabaot brings to the fore two controversial terms that must be addressed at the outset. These concepts are 'tribe' with its derivative 'tribalism' and 'ethnicity'. Mukaru Ng'ang'a's (1994:1) views get us right into the origin of 'tribe'.

His arguments suggest that: -

'The word 'tribe' is 'trubutus', that is tributary or third rate. Julius Caesar, the Roman Emperor, used it when he conquered and colonised people. The Roman conquerors distinguished themselves from their



colonised people. The Roman conquerors distinguished themselves from their colonised also by language. The conquered people's language was called 'vernacular' from the Latin word 'vanaculus'. When the British conquered Kenya, the indigenous people were classified as tribes (slaves) and the languages they used were classified as 'vernaculars; the languages of slaves.'

Jal (personal conversation 1998) disagrees with Ng'ang'a's definition. On his part, Jal holds that the term tribe is Scottish, and was derived from Gallic. 'Tribe means a large group of people occupying a continuous territory. The group usually speaks one language or a variety of the same language. The disagreement in the origin of the concept apart, it is interesting that soon after independence, post-independence Africa seemed to have reduced the use of 'vernaculars' as reference to African indigenous languages while to the contrary upholding the currency of 'tribe' in serious discourses as well as in ordinary dealings. Persistence with the appellation indicates that the word contains some positive values worth of articulation. To grasp the other side, contributions from social anthropologists become handy. Archie Mafeje's (Mafeje, 1971: 257, Drayton, 1995:8) perception is useful in this context. According to him 'tribe is a self contained, and autonomous community which practises subsistence economy with no or limited external trade.

Mafeje's perception as articulated in that context attempts to portray the African peoples' organisations in precolonial period as self-reliant. The fact that the communities had limited external trade or interaction may, though anthropologically conceived to be plausible, need some factual boost from history. Ogot (1996:16), basing his perception on examination of traditions of Kenyan precolonial societies submits that there existed a lot of integrations, inter-ethnic interactions, and even fruitful minglings and migrations. Ogot's standpoint will be

further illustrated when this chapter discusses the actual settlement and interactions of the communities. It suffices to point out that the concept of tribe has both positive and negative connotations (Ake, 1993).

Derived from 'tribe' is the word 'tribalism'. Gulliver (1969:11) posits that the derivative is evocative, carrying with it both the reference to tradition of what obtained in precolonial times and the element of contemporary divisiveness, unscrupulous partnership and lack of progress or the trappings of westernism. As a word then, 'tribalism' stands for backwardness and anti-progressive forces (Ogot, 1996:20). Yet this articulation is not all. There exist others (Leys, 1975:200; Mafeje, 1991:107; and Magubane in Drayton 1995:9) who see this phenomenon as an ideology. This ideology is threatening to undermine the nation-state. But tribalism if used to connote just an aspect of identity is not destructive as will be seen in this chapter.

Magubane, for instance, argues that tribalism is an ideological consciousness belonging to a primary group whose language, customs and myths bind the concerned members into a certain solidarity. As Osaghae (1994:233) avers, the consciousness becomes a process that transcends abstraction and often gets concretised for real material gains. But as the term tribalism is almost always conceived of in derogatory contexts, users reserve it for negative insinuation. For other purposes that signify positive values ethnicity is applied. Nonetheless, even 'ethnicity' historically, originated with negative connotations. Ahmed (1999:63) states that the term 'ethnic' is derived from the Greek noun 'ethnikos' which originally meant heathen, pagan, gentile, non-Jewish and non-Christian. But the passage of time seems to have off-logged the

negative and pejorative implications to instead impact it with the positive outlook. Hence, the words 'ethnic and 'ethnicity' are more positive than 'tribe' and 'tribalism'.

Moreover, true to what Nnoli (1995:9-10) holds, ethnicity is not such a simple notion. It does not exist in a pure form. The phenomenon tends to merge with other elements of social identity and solidarity like race, nation, religion, class, language and region. It is always closely associated with political, juridical, economic and other social views and demands that constitute its important ingredients as well. Nnoli (Ibid.) Barth (1969) and Øgot, (1996:20) further point out that ethnicity is not static. It is subject to change. New elements may appear in its content and outlook. Its links with other social phenomena may change posing new questions and problems.

The explicit dynamism of ethnicity or tribalism raises another issue. Can the phenomenon indeed be created? Justin Willis (1996:14) while discussing the emergence of Bondei of Tanzania and Bahweju of Uganda agrees to the possibility of creating an ethnic group. He avers that ethnicity is an ideological phenomenon which is created by people who constitute it and emphasises that the idea is not new or recent. The ways in which the concept is made vary and so do the possibilities for invention and remaking.

Willis' views as expressed in their conceptual contents are interesting for he does not guide us in understanding the manner in which his word 'create' is to be interpreted. In lexicon, the notion of 'create' is derived from 'creare'. And the word 'create' may probably stand for a number of applications. Firstly, it denotes bringing into being, causing to exist, especially to form out of

nothing. Secondly, the term suggests making, forming, constituting or bringing into formal legal existence. Thirdly, 'create' signifies investing with rank, or title. And fourthly, the phenomenon connotes constituting, causing, producing or giving rise to a condition among others.

From such definitions, one may infer that only the third definition may have some substance in relation to how ethnic groups acquire formal existence. Yet even in this third dimension some vagueness still shrouds its intended import. For instance, we would like to know where the label applied to an ethnic group comes from. Does it not have an origin? This insinuation becomes fictional. Yet this study is not concerned with fictional matters in its interrogation of relations.

In discussing the Bondei, Willis points out that there existed at least some of the populace of Bunde who were true Bondei. This means that starting with the small group of Bondei, more and more people from different other social groups joined to expand membership of the Bondei. In essence, there was an intricate process of 'Bondeisation' that involved the interaction, integration and intermingling of people across the ethnic barrier leading to a cross fertilisation of their ideas within the crucible of Bunde District. Whether the nomenclature of 'Bondei' is a mid- 19th century phenomenon or an earlier one does not seem to change the fact that bearers of the appellation have an earlier history than that of the 19th century. In fact, it would be safer for one to employ concepts suggestive of gradual processes in discussing the emergence of African communities instead of scholars merely appending dramatic, fictitious terms like that concept of 'creation'.

Creation when used to portray processes that result in social existence is two-fold. Firstly, the notion alludes to a mythical and biblical world in which all human species are creatures of God. Now such articulations are tricky because they do not necessarily contribute a lot to historical knowledge. Rather, they appeal to people's belief systems. Secondly, such imaginary terms when employed to depict processes leading to the existence of African communities are considered in the postmodern school of thought.

Postmodernists assert that all historical consciousness is an ideological product of the present and only reflects power relations in the present. For them the past does not exist. They also argue that even if the past existed, it cannot be known because direct traces are interpreted and hence invented by readers in the present. Besides, these advocates dismiss any existence of a genuine divide between fact and fiction (Vansina, 1994:217; Aseka, 1997a). Based on the foregoing propositions, one notices that to indulge in dismissing the past indiscriminately will be a sure way of destroying the legitimacy of history as a discipline.

Be that as it may, Fishman (1977:16) and Liebenow (1986:51) have attempted at identifying ingredients of ethnicity as a particular configuration of cultural norms, language, institutions and values that differentiate one group of people from others. The identity process is a dual matrix in which a collectivity's self-recognition gets reinforced by an aspect of recognition in the eyes of outsiders. These proceeding values constituting ethnicity are also enshrined in the concept of 'ethnic group'. Were (1985a:5) and Kurgat (1996) demonstrate that an ethnic group has a common name, language, culture, political organisation and an account of common destiny. Kurgat goes further and asserts that an ethnic group exists when those who belong to it

define themselves as such in relating with outsiders who also recognise the group identity. Therefore, this study applies the terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic groups' interchangeably.

Abatachoni and Babukusu are sub-ethnic groups within the broader Abaluyia ethnic collectivity. As a whole, it comprises eighteen sub-ethnic groups (Aseka, 1989:74, Kakai, 1992:3; Gimode, 1993). Other sub-ethnic groups include Abatirichi, Abedakho, Abesukha, Abanyore, Abamarama, Abashisa, Abatsotso, Abanyala (Nabakholo), Abakabrasi, Abawanga, Abamarachi, Abatura, Abakhayo, Abasamia Abanyala (Port Victoria or Abaongo) and Avalogoli,. During the early years of colonial domination, this general group was referred to as 'Bantu of North Kavirondo'. North Kavirondo was then an administrative district that is equivalent to the present jurisdiction of Western Province. But as Gunter Wagner (1949) argues, the concept of Abaluyia had begun gaining ground towards the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1942 the North Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association adopted the name Abaluyia (Osogo, 1966 and Wolf, 1977:191). It was on the basis of this political pedestal that this name began to acquire a wider application.

Aseka (1989:77) has argued that the term 'Abaluyia' literally means 'people of the same fire'. By the same token, it can be interpreted to stand for people of the same homestead or courtyard since the evening fire was a homestead affair. Hence, as the case seems to stand out at the moment, the concept refers to a unified entity of related communities whose emergence from diverse backgrounds and consolidation took several centuries. The most salient features of this unity are mirrored in the mutually comprehensible dialects as well as other cultural values

(Wagner, 1949). Details of these values are part of the broad assemblage that constitutes Buluyia cultural heritage. They, however, are not the prime purpose of this study.

During the period under study, both Abatachoni and Babukusu had already settled in the current confines of Bungoma District. Extensive discourses about their origins, migrations and eventual settlements have been eloquently addressed (Were, 1967a; Makila 1978; Simiyu 1982; 1991; Wandibba, 1985; Nakitare, 1991 and Kakai, 1992). Our interest in this chapter is to briefly comment on the settlement and interaction of the two communities as well as that of the Sabaot.

### **3.3 Abatachoni**

The Abatachoni, like most sub-ethnic collectivities of the Abaluyia, sections of the Kalenjin and Abagusi state that they originated from Misri. This claim raised various debates about the actual location of Misri. Was it at the present Misri (Egypt) or was it perhaps at Karamoja or Turkana? Were (1967a) thought that the latter place could be the one misconceived as Misri. However, Diop (1974:181), Ochieng' (1975, 48-54) and Kakai (1992, 35-37) maintain that ancestors who insist on the Misri origin could not possibly have mistaken the general location of the ancient Egypt whose terrain was much wider than the current political confines. It is argued that from their cradleland, ancestors of Abatachoni used various routes and eventually settled in Bungoma District and its neighbourhood. For instance, Abarefu, Abaluu, Abayumbu, Abamakhuli, Abatulu and Abachikha cluster (Abamuhongo, Abakobolo, Abachambayi, Abakabini and Abacharia) from the mythological Misri came over to Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi and used the Uganda side of Mt. Elgon before settling either at Mwalie or Mwibale.

Abangachi, Abasioya, Abakafusi, Abasang'alo, Abachimuluku, Ababichu, Abasamba and Abakusi did not use the Uganda side. They followed various routes within the terrain of Kenya.

Were (1967a) points out that by the sixteenth century, the earliest batch, Chetoto had arrived in the western areas of Bungoma. Specific areas included Mwalie, Mwibale and Sang'alo. It was from around these three locations that by 1875 Tachoni clans multiplied and later withdrew due to pressure for land and from Babukusu and spread out to occupy other easterly habitations such as Mabanga, Sitikho, Bokoli, Kimilili, Webuye and Lugari.

The period under study is a more recent one and it would be in vain to discuss the above processes of expansion, evacuation and subsequent settlements of ancestors of Abatachoni in isolation. Even their name Tachoni portrays an aspect of interaction and possible integration. An interaction which took place both among the Abatachoni themselves as well as with their neighbours who included the Babukusu and the Sabaot. It was pointed out (Kakai, 1992:50) that 'Tachoni' derives from *Tabichan* or *Kitabichan*. As a noun, *Tabichan* or *Kitabichan* signified people who initiated their youth through the *esitabicha*. This is a ritual process carried out at the banks of a perennially flowing river. Suitable places identified were always swampy, *olurende*. Still another source maintains that 'Tachoni' derives from *Tai Nyon* that means 'go and come back'. This latter version adds that the name was given to Tachoni ancestors in acknowledgement of the way they left their homes in the morning to initiate their youth at the *esitabicha* and returned in the evening.



All the foregoing versions affirm that Abatachoni acquired their descriptive name from the Kalenjin. Indeed, even at present the Kalenjin who were interviewed point out that 'Tachoni' signifies 'we shall return'. Thus, whatever was the root of this name, it is currently accepted that Abatachoni derive their name from their post-circumcision initiation rituals (Wandibba, 1985 and Nakitare, 1991). Also initially, ancestors of Abatachoni spoke a Kalenjin dialect (Were, 1967a and 1967b, Kakai 1992) and gradually dropped it and adopted their current Luyia dialect as a result of their interactions with such Luyia sub-ethnic groups as Babukusu, Abakabasi and Abawanga. Aspects of relations concerning the Abatachoni with especially the Babukusu and the Sabaot will be discussed later in this chapter.

It suffices to state that from Mwalie the clans of Abakamukongi, Abanyangali, Abachebukwa, Abarefu, Abakusi, Abakibeti, Abasituyi, Abalukulu, Abachibino, Abamalicha and Abatulu, who were not necessarily moving together, went and settled in places like Kibabii, Bokoli, Kibingei, Matili and Kamukuywa. Similarly other clans including Abahabiya, Abasamo, Abasang'alo, Abachikha, Abayumbu, Abalukulu, Abasonge, Abasioya, Abangachi, Ababichu, Abasamba, Abatulu, Abakubwayi, Abachimuluku and Abakafusi moved from any of the following locations of: Mwalie, Mwibale, Sang'alo and Sibembe to settle in various places such as Mabanga, Mwiya, Sitikho, Chalicha (Khaweli), Miilo, Matulo, Malaha, Chebosi, Kituni, Maraka and Mahanga (Chetambe).

What Chikati (1988:22) describes of the Babukusu closely resembles Abatachoni's clan organisation. Thus a clan among Abatachoni was patrilineal, exogamous and a territorial unit. It comprised all persons who basically traced their descent patrilineally to a common ancestor.

Individuals in the unit formed a community of interests. They refrained from intermarrying and often inhabited a common stretch of land that was by 1894 still enclosed in forts (*Chingoba*). However, territorial units of a clan were not completely impenetrable. Foreign clan members who were either friendly or related to members of host clans peacefully infringed upon the areas occupied by specific clans.

Each clan had its own political structure with its own head, *omukasa*. But in each fort where several clans were accommodated, all clan leaders were under the fort leader, often known as *laitirian* (Muse, O.I., 1991, Kapchanga, O.I., 1991, Makari, O.I., 1991, Wandibba, 1985). For instance, at Mwalie leaders included Namukongo of Ababichu clan and Munyeyi of Abangachi clan; at Mwibale were Simaweta Lumuli and Mwanja; at Sang'alo was Mwinami of Abasang'alo clan while at Mabanga was Manesi of Abahabiya. Yet on the overall, all these fort leaders ultimately succumbed to one leader known as *Omwami*. Initially, Namukongo received this authority until Munyeyi emerged as more popular and therefore more acceptable by more fort leaders than was Namukongo. Wandibba, (1985:23) describes the circumstances that led to Namukongo losing popularity in the following terms:

Namukongo of the Ababichu clan is reported to have been the acknowledged leader... However, Namukongo never used to throw feasts for his people as was expected of a leader. On the other hand, ... Munyeyi used to throw frequent parties. Because of this, Munyeyi eclipsed Namukongo and thus he became the acknowledged leader of the new amalgam.

The account that even though reflects what took place in the seventeenth century illustrates one very important requirement for a leader. A leader was supposed to be generous, judicious, authoritative and elderly. He chaired meetings of the elders whenever crucial issues that

portended danger to the entire community cropped up. Such roles will be discussed later in their proper context.

In those early days, the Abatachoni were both pastoralists and cultivators. It is worth noting that partly in an effort to protect their livestock, Abatachoni had hostile relations with some of their neighbours, especially the Nandi and the Maasai. From cattle, Abatachoni obtained meat, milk, and milk products, hides, blood and manure which was used in the cultivation of sorghum, eleusine and other edible crops such as maize. The land issue may not have been critical by 1894. More open space was still available since effective sedentary occupation had not completely taken place. By 1894 Abatachoni had spread to all the places listed above and beyond. During the same period the Babukusu had established themselves in the vicinity. It is to these Babukusu that the following sub-section will turn.

### **3.4 Babukusu**

Babukusu, like Abatachoni dominantly inhabit Bungoma and parts of Trans-Nzioa districts as well as in smaller numbers in other regions of Western Kenya. Their history has been clearly discussed by Were (1967a, 1967b and 1985b); Makila (1978, 1982); Nasimiyu (1984) and Simiyu (1991). Of interest to this study is the way Babukusu ultimately settled in the area under examination from their areas of origin. In the world of Misri via Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi, Were (1967a: 84-91) states that Babukusu were around modern Bukisu and Tororo regions in the seventeenth century. This fact is further reinforced by Simiyu (1991: 7-11) who argues that Babukusu acquired their name while inhabiting around Butiru, Bukobelo and Bubulo foothills. All these places now fall within Bukisu region of the Republic of Uganda.

According to Simiyu (Ibid.) 'Bukusu' is derived from a nickname previously given to a section of Bukusu ancestors then known as Banabayi [People of Mbayi]. The Banabayi entrepreneurs used Butiru hills as their bases from which they traded their merchandise upto shores of the Lake Victoria (*Enyanja ya Walule*). Banabayi exchanged iron products for other items at low prices. Since Banabayi's low prices were characteristic of their trade, other possibly Luyia speaking groups began to refer to these traders as *Babandu be bukusi* meaning 'the price people'. This reference seems to have been warmly received by Banabayi who gradually adopted the shortened form *bukusi*. On its own, the word '*bukusi*' means 'price'. Now how this concept got corrupted so as to become '*Bukusu*' is not clear. It suffices to say that Banabayi then became the earliest group to be referred to as Babukusu whereas the place where they populated changed its label from Butiru to Bukusu hills.

From Bukisu and Tororo regions Babukusu entered the present territory of Kenya in small often individual clan organizations. A crucial place associated with Babukusu's early settlement in the neighbourhood of Kenya is *Mwiala wa Mango* situated in the eastern part of Uganda and just across the Kenya-Uganda border when one approaches it through the Malaba route (Wameme, Khachonga and Otunga, O.I, 1998). The place is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, unlike earlier places, Mwiala is directly associated with its leader, Mango of Bakhurarwa clan. Mango is remembered due to his unusual courage which enabled him to single-handedly kill a deadly serpent (*'endmu ya bebe'*) that had terrorised and killed numerous people including Mango's children.

Furthermore, this killing of the serpent ushered in a new form of circumcision of young boys as relatives publicly observed. This method was different from the previous mode in which boys to be circumcised were operated upon privately [Makila, 1978:172]. Thirdly, it was while Babukusu were at *Mwiala wa Mango* that they attempted to learn about the identity of their neighbours who were settled at Mwalie. The significance of this ultimate identification and interaction will be discussed later in the study.

Even at such an early period right into the nineteenth century, Babukusu were livestock keepers as well as cultivators. This occupation is clearly reflected in the nature of their foodstuffs which comprised milk, blood, meat, eleusine meal, millet and sorghum beer (Were 1967b: 16). Bukusu expansion and spread from *Mwiala wa Mango* into their present locations of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzioa emerged from encounters with neighbouring ethnic and sub-ethnic groups.

The Teso were to a great extent responsible for Bukusu expansion and spread into new areas within Bungoma District. For instance, around the year 1850 Babukusu were driven from Bwayi (Mt. Ekore of Teso) by Teso invaders. Consequently, the majority of Babukusu fled eastwards into what is now Bungoma District. Their settlement was especially in the western and southwestern part of the district. Wandibba (1985:29) points out that such areas inhabited by the Bukusu included Mwalie, Siboti and the hilly country in the neighbourhood of Sirisia. Of course for Babukusu to occupy these places, Abatachoni who were earlier inhabitants were forced out to move further east to other areas as discussed above.

The foregoing makes it necessary for this study to discuss an early encounter between Abatachoni and Babukusu. In doing so, other important aspects of relations that were to be fundamental later on will emerge. While examining this encounter, the point should be made about the two sub-ethnic groups having a lot in common in terms of their origins, migratory routes and places of settlement.

For many years Abatachoni living at Mwalie and Babukusu at *Mwiala wa Mango* and other places stayed in isolation without full information about each other (Were, 1967a: 89). Yet there was profound sense of curiosity and urgency to venture and learn about the identity of those in their vicinity. It ultimately were Babukusu who acted first between 1812 and 1820 (Makila, 1982:9). During this period Kitimule son of Wetoyi from Batukwika Bakitang'a clan was sent to Mwalie, then inhabited by some clans of Abatachoni. Kibulo was the then leader at Mwalie.

Judging from oral sources (Makari, O.I., 1991), Kitimule was still an adolescent. Hence he was easily accommodated and allowed to accompany Tachoni youth on their cattle grazing missions. In this process, Kitimule observed how residents at Mwalie initiated their youth into a solemn post-circumcision initiation ritual locally referred to as *okhulichana* [Makila 1982: 9-10, Kakai, 1992]. Eventually, as is often natural to a growing up adolescent, Kitimule fell in love with Chebukwa, a girl from the Abayumbu clan. It was, therefore, not only his observations about the comprehensible dialect of Abatachoni and their initiation rituals which Kitimule reported back to Babukusu on his return, but he also went with a bride to demonstrate how similar those of Mwalie were to Babukusu.

A summary of what Kitimule reported has been variously translated and written. But all these agree in content. The quote below, therefore, succinctly evokes those earlier reports.

'They [Abatachoni] are one of our people who migrated from Mbayi. We have a common language with them; when I was there recently we understood each other perfectly well' [Makila, 1982:10].

With this report, Babukusu stopped referring to Abatachoni as 'Barwa'; a term that was used to describe Kalenjin related groups. Subsumed in the concept of 'Barwa' was an isolation and discrimination connotation that alerted Luyia communities against any possible danger that might be sparked off by such outsiders. However, the removal of 'Barwa' name did not lead to a replacement with an all-encompassing counterpart. Instead, the group was thence known as Bayumbu, deriving from the clan of Kitimuli's wife. Indeed, for long Abatachoni were referred to as Bayumbu. However, the rest of Abatachoni rejected this label since it subsumed the entire group under a clan's symbol. It was on such ground, that a cultural appellant was adopted.

The relations of brotherhood and intimacy which were revived since Kitimule's mission grew and enlarged to such an extent that Babukusu in their expansion assimilated some Abatachoni clans while also donating some of theirs to Abatachoni. Babukusu have philosophised over this assimilative process thus '*Siyanja barende*' (Makokha, 1993). This literally means that Babukusu love strangers.

By 1894, there were several clans with similar names among both Abatachoni and Babukusu as a result of this process of assimilation. These clans comprise the Abasonge, Abaengele, Abachemai, Abakibeti, Abasituyi and the Abamalicha. Incidentally, there are some clans

which though similar in both sub-ethnic groups exist in somewhat unrelated names. One of them is Abahabiya of the Abatachoni and the Bakolati of the Babukusu. To understand the closeness of the two clans one needs to analyse the various components of the Abahabiya. Indeed, under Abahabiya are Abakolati, Abamuruli and Abamumbwa. But with passage of time, people from the two clans do intermarry. That means currently these two clans are in fact considered as different from each other.

The similarity between Abatachoni and Babukusu did not rule out occasional tension during the period under study. Nakitare (1991:87) points to the cause of these occasional strained relations. He associates the strain to Abatachoni's feeling of having been edged out of their regions to the advantage of Babukusu's expansion. The episode at Mwiya best illustrates this tension.

At Mwiya lived the Abasamo clan of the Abatachoni under their leader Simaweta Lumuli (Were, 1967b:175; KNA: DC/EN/3/2/4: Political Records, Ethnicity). Simaweta's warriors allegedly insulted some Bukusu warriors and quarrelled over a buck that the two parties had killed. Their tempers reached a climax when reportedly Simaweta's men snatched Wetoyi Muyundo's cow. Wetoyi was a Mubukusu. In the fighting which ensued both sides sustained casualties and even deaths. However, Simaweta's group was defeated forcing Simaweta and his men to evacuate across the River Nzoia. This partly explains why some Abatachoni, especially from the Abasamo clan, are found in modern Lugari District.



The Simaweta incident of the 19th century is a brief interlude in a world of cooperation between Abatachoni and Babukusu against other ethnic entities. Examples showing the two groups' cooperating against external aggressors such as the Teso, Maasai and sections of the Kalenjin abound. But before discussing some of these incidents, this chapter first gives a brief history of the Sabaot.

### **3.5 The Sabaot in Mount Elgon District and Saboti Division of Trans-Nzioa District**

The Sabaot are a sub-ethnic group within the ethnic entity of Kalenjin. People of the Kalenjin ethnic collectivity comprise the Nandi, Kipsigis, Tugen, Keiyo, Marakwet, Pokot and Sabaot. Before acquiring the name 'Kalenjin' as their symbol of reference, the collectivities were generally identified as the Nandi related groups. During that time, the community now known as the Nandi was identified as the Chemng'ala.

Kipkorir (1973:73) asserts that the word 'Kalenjin' employed as an appellation for an ethnic group is a product of World War II broadcasts. In his wartime broadcasts, Chemallan frequently said 'Kalenjok' (Plu: I tell you) and Kalenjin (sing). At the same time Kalenjin servicemen in search of a widely accepted name by which to identify themselves arguably gave weight to Chemallan's phrases. Thus, in 1940s 'Kalenjin' had been given a rational connotation for newly emerging educated elite led by Taita arap Towett. Through these educated members 'Kalenjin' was gradually embedded as a label identifying people who were previously known as 'Nandi'. By this process an earlier identification symbol 'Nandi' was confined to the previous Chemng'ala sub-ethnic composition.

While it has been possible to link 'Kalenjin' nomenclature with a probable source of the word, 'Sabaot' does not lend itself easily to this articulation. Ominde (1963:99) and Were (1967b:19) are perhaps the main authorities who seemed to imply that 'Sabaot' is interchangeable with 'Kony'. However, not even Ominde and Were go out to boldly demonstrate how 'Sabaot' could have at one time been used to refer to 'Kony'. Hence, in this study, it is sufficient to point out that the Sabaot comprise sub-groups of the Kony, Bok, Bongomek, Somock and the Mosopisiek (KNA/DC/EN/3/1/2: 1920-1950s; KNA/DC/EN/3/2/4; Ominde, 1963: 96-132; Were, 1967a: 47-49; 1967b: 15-21; Kipkorir, 1973: 78; Arap-Kisembe, 1978 and Kiliku, 1992).

Each Sabaot sub-group settled in the present day Mt. Elgon District or Saboti Division of Trans Nzioa District individually and at different times. Consequently, we endeavour to analyse briefly each one of the communities to identify how their settlement patterns were by 1894.

The Kony are probably the oldest group occupying the slopes of Mt. Elgon and stretching into the Saboti Division of Trans Nzioa. Indeed there exists a source attesting to the ancestry of the Kony on Mt. Elgon (Were, 1967a: 47; 1967b: 20 Arap Kisembe 1978:30). This variant points out that King'oo and his wife Tamunae are the Kony ancestors who gave birth to children whose names were: Kupsomek, Kongin, Kibok, Kumosop, Kipsengwer and Kibongoin. It is further argued that each of these sons constituted a clan of the Kony. Yet when looked at keenly, one notices that they could generally represent sub-groups of the Sabaot, namely the Kony, Bok, Samek, Mosopisiek, and the Bongomek. The sources also point out that Konyland stretched from Mt. Elgon and the adjoining western territory across the border (in Uganda) to

Kapenguria and Kitale. It could be as a result of this perception that both Ominde (1963) and Were (1967b) considered the Kony as being synonymous with the Sabaot.

Be that as it may, Kipkorir (1973:78) asserts that Kony, Bongomek, Sabiny and the Bok point to Kong'asis in the (East) as their original homeland. Were (1967a: 47) holds that between 1598 and 1625 some Kony were already living on Mt. Elgon. Before settling on Mt. Elgon, however, some Kony claim to have been with the Sengwer and the Cherang'ani. Others still trace descent from Tugen's Kapsang'ut family (Arap Kisembe, 1978:32-33). This section under their leader Sang'ut moved into Mt. Elgon and initially lived on hunting as well as pastoralism. With time, the group evolved into Kipsang'ut clan with a reputable history of producing 'Worgoik [prophets] around Mt. Elgon. In this process, the Kipsang'ut clan was very important among the Kony and from it emerged important leaders whose contributions continuously spanned into the colonial period.

The Bongomek and the Bok (Were, 1967a: 49, 1967b: 15-19 Arap Kisembe, 1978:33-35) claim that some of their people originally belonged to the same group as the Sirikwa and that they formerly lived in Sirikwa area of Modern Uasin Gishu plateau. The Bongomek's entry into Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts was via Bukisuland in the present Republic of Uganda. Arap-Kisembe holds that some Bongomek are still in Bukisuland. In the nineteenth century, some of the Bongomek's settlements included Kiriboti, Webuye, Kabuchayi (Kagtai), Amukura (Ebwayi) and the Kamutiong hills.

The Bok accounts suggest that before moving to Mt. Elgon, they sojourned on Swam hills where they left some of their people. Given their late arrival around mid nineteenth century, the Bok and Sebeyi were preceded in Bungoma District by the Babukusu. Like the Bongomek, the Bok entered modern Bungoma and later Mt. Elgon districts through Bukisu land. On their route the Bok crossed the River Rokok which is known mostly as Lwakhakha or Malaba. In the encounter that ensued between the Bok, Bongomek and the Babukusu, there arose a cross-fertilisation of ideas. It is probably with the acknowledgement of this process that Arap-Kisembe asserts that the Bok and the Bongomek were influenced by the Babukusu in terms of acquiring fort-building and farming techniques. Similarly the two Sabaot groups influenced Babukusu in other ways (Wagner, 1949:12).

Mosopisiek is yet another Sabaot sub-division that has attracted the attention of scholars. Arap-Kisembe (1978:20-22) holds that 'Mosopisiek' has geographical connotations. It refers to 'in the high altitude'. 'Mosopisi' signifies people who live in Mosop. By this categorisation, Mosopisiek can refer to anybody, including the Kony, Bok, Sebei or even the Bukusu. These conglomerate of people are also locally known as Tonoek. Consequently, to study how these people eventually settled at the high forested areas of Mt. Elgon will require again analysing various components of Kony, Bok, Bukusu among many others.

It suffices to state that initially the Tonoek lived above the forested region between 6,000 and 10,000 feet high above sea level. This region was nicknamed *Kapteeka* (Bamboo land). Arap-Kisembe (1978:21) speculates that Kapteeka was ideal because of its relative openness, and

Tonoek cattle could be pastured on adjacent moorlands. Furthermore, clearing bamboo was much easier than hard trees of the lower belt.

By mid-nineteenth century, therefore, the Kony, Bok, Somek and the Mosopisiek were settled in North Malakisi and Mt. Elgon regions that stretch to Trans-Nzoia while Bongomek were scattered in hilly areas of Bungoma District. By the close of the century the Elkony lived in houses plastered with cowdung and enclosed within a fence composed of interlaced branches. Their grainstores adopted a Bantu pattern. Each store was supported on posts and had a conical removable cover. These stores were placed outside a protective fence (KNA/DC/EN/3/1/2: 1920's-1950's).

On the contrary, the Bok and Bongomek lived in circular mud or cowdung plastered shelters called *Chepkumatishiek*. Arap-Kisembe (1978:34) points out that due to the Bongomek's choice of settlement areas, their shelters were erected on rocky ground. The houses looked like granaries but with curved roofing. On the outside there was a fence made of boughs of trees. Fencing was a protective device against external predators.

The Bok lived in fortified camps called *Ngorinok*. In each of them stayed about one hundred people. Thus *Ngorinok* technology as was pointed out earlier, owes emergence to Bok's interactions with Babukusu at such places as Mungachi (Chonge). This same place is best remembered for another kind of relation that will be discussed in due course.

In their settlements, the Sabaot were essentially pastoralists herding cattle, sheep and goats. However, in the late nineteenth century rinderpest outbreak and raids from neighbouring ethnic groups compelled most of them including the Kony, the Bok and Bongomek to increasingly adapt cultivation of the fertile foothills of Mt. Elgon (Ominde, 1963:99; Arap-Kisembe, 1978:34). They planted tobacco, potatoes, bananas, millet and sorghum. These crops were carefully fenced in with branches of trees to protect them against wild animals such as elephants and the likes (KNA/DC/EN/3/1/2: 1920s-1950s). The Sabaot diet included meat, milk, porridge, blood and sometimes flesh of wild game.

Though discussion on the Sabaot focused mainly on broader sub-divisions, such as the Kony, Bok, Bongomek, Somek and the Mosopisiek, there actually exist smaller sub-divisions arranged on clan basis. Just like those among the Abatachoni and the Babukusu as well as other African communities, clans among Sabaot are exogamous. Various clans occupied a certain ridge. Arap-Kisembe (1978:36) argues that particular families shared camps. Within an enclosure or cave, mature boys and girls were separated from rooms of their parents and posted to their grandparents' houses. There were also separate camps for Murenik (warriors) called *Kotap Mureen* (houses of warriors).

Groups of Sabaot families constituted villages in which could be found members of several clans. Areas bigger than villages were *Pororiet*.(sing.*Pororosiek*). A *Pororosiek* comprised a group of clans separated from each other by natural features such as bushes, hills, rivers and escarpments. It was a territorial unit with a warrior group specifically for defence against external attacks.

Village heads were known as *Laitirian* or *Naitarian* (depending on local dialects). A *Laitarian* settled all sorts of disputes. He judged cases brought before him, and also divided land in the village so that all residents had enough to cultivate. A council of elders, *Kokwet* assisted him in judicial matters. This council comprised oldest age-set members. Here it is necessary to underscore the primacy of age-sets because they were not confined to the Sabaot but also functioned among the Abatackoni and the Babukusu. Indeed, Busia (1994:53) posits that age-set systems in precolonial African societies were central in concerned people's organisations. While this gerontocratic structure could easily be frowned upon as we approach the twenty-first century because of the current dominant democratic mood and people's demands for each person's right to make fair choices, in the nineteenth century seemingly the youth and women were reconciled to male dominated gerontocracy.

Several *laitariani* were under a *Kirwagindet*. Sometimes this senior administrator was a *Mogoriondet* or a rich person. A *Kirwagindet* identified himself by wearing a cloak of monkey skin which no one else might wear. He also wore a necklace of iron with pendants which were marks of his authority (Arap-Kisembe; 1978: 39).

A *Kirwagindet* (Pl. *Kirwagiik*) to be had to satisfy certain qualities before being selected to take up the office. These qualities included being tolerant, not having greed as well as not portraying tyrannical tendencies. He was expected to be wise and judicious. This was crucial because he settled disputes between villagers. Similarly, a *Kirwagindet* had to be consulted when a new village was to be set up. It is worthy noting that the office of *Kirwagindet* was not

hereditary. Hence, if in the family of a previous *Kirwagindet* nobody existed with fitting qualities, elders easily looked for candidates from other families.

Perhaps one crucial office that should be mentioned is of the *Worgoondet*, the highest ritual leader among the Sabaot. Each section of the Sabaot had a *Worgoondet* (pl: *Worgoik*) who exercised both spiritual and political duties. In spiritual matters, *Worgoik* performed their duties through dreaming. These ritual elders were important in inspiring Sabaot warriors during wartime and raiding seasons. Though they themselves never physically took part in wars or raids, *Worgoik* were rewarded with cattle obtained from raids. More about the *Worgoik* is discussed later in the study to highlight relations between the Sabaot and their neighbours, especially the Babukusu. Unlike the *Kirwagiik*, *Worgoik* office was hereditary.

So far our discussion has focused on settlements of the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot in various parts of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans-Nzioa [especially Saboti Division] districts. The subsequent section examines the attitudes the sub-ethnic groups had towards land by 1894. It is to this that our discussion now turns.

### **3.6 Land Value among Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot Before 1894**

In the preceding sections of this chapter, focus has been on settlements of various sub-ethnic communities in what are currently known as Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and [sections of) Trans Nzoia districts. As the various groups settled down to their various dimensions of socio-economic activities, it behoves us to examine how that engagement propelled the inhabitants'



sense of attachment to their land. This is crucial because this attachment eventually determined the people's relations amongst themselves as well as with their neighbours.

Nangedo's (1981:10) remarks are worth highlighting here. He argues that African land tenure was communal and guaranteed rights of access and control over land. It was, therefore, the communal responsibility to allocate pieces of land to community members if necessary. This control did not imply ownership of the physical parcel. Indeed, in the conceptualisation of land Africans did not include fixtures as being part of it. Perhaps this explains why Kibwana (1990:233) argues that individual autonomy in land matters was alien to precolonial land tenure system.

The foregoing is further emphasised by Nasimiya (1984:33) in her discussion on the Babukusu. She points out that land among Babukusu formed the focus of social relations. It was the clan's responsibility to control land allocation and dispersal. Individual members of the community could have rights over portions allocated to them, but such rights were restricted to rights of access and use of the land. It was a usufruct right.

Within this collective land tenure system, certain sections of individual allocations were open to communal use. These were grazing fields, salt licks, forests and their products, as well as public watering points in rivers and streams. The preceding did not apply only to Babukusu but also to their Tachoni and Sabaot neighbours. In addition, the Sabaot had rights to caves and hunting grounds (Arap Kisembe, 1978:65) which operated on *pororiet* basis.

Essentially then, on the threshold of the twentieth century, specific areas within the region under study were associated with particular sub-ethnic entities or sub-divisions. It would be in such context that people gradually began referring to such confines as ancestral land. However, that reference did not under those circumstances bar other people from neighbouring clans or sub-ethnic collectivities to settle in areas which were not associated with their clans or sub-ethnic communities.

This was true in Mt. Elgon area where because of the seemingly available pieces of unoccupied land a few Abatachoni and especially Babukusu gradually encroached on the Sabaot land (KNA/DC/NZA/3/14/23: 1944-1949; Mamati, O.I., 1997, Kimkung', O.I., 1997). With this encroachment, there was freed another opportunity of interaction and cross-fertilisation of ideas. Such processes and consequences of those interactions form the gist whose contents will unfold in the following sub-section.

### **3.7 Historical Linguistics and the Relations Among Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot**

The sub-section begins from the recognition that inter-ethnic relations can partly be determined by analysing aspects of languages spoken by communities under study. Furthermore, it is noted that subsumed in languages are cultural facets that can lead to coalescence or divergence. Christopher Ehret's (Simiyu, 1991:127) views on language and people's relations can best explain this phenomenon. He posits that 'for two [or more] communities to borrow vocabulary from each other, they must be physically in contact, unless it can be established that either they borrowed the vocabulary from a common language now dead or the vocabulary came by

filiation through an intermediary language. For the three sub-ethnic communities under discussion, Ehret's arguments apply in specific ways.

For instance, the Babukusu and the Sabaot border each other and often get intermingled to the extent that one cannot really talk of a boundary between the two communities (Simiyu, 1991:127). While most Abatachoni do not border the Sabaot, the fact that some do whereas others border and also are intertwined with Babukusu make the group likewise fit in Ehret's frame of assessment. In demonstrating word similarities among these three sub-ethnic collectivities, examples are drawn from agriculture, age-sets and other cultural nomenclature.

Ehret (1986:4) used the haricot bean to illustrate how the bean spread as a result of inter-ethnic interactions in Western Kenya. The linguist believes that haricot beans were introduced into Western Kenya from Uganda. This fact is supported by the root ganda found through the Luyia-Gisu dialect. The root spread in the form of oganda to Luo and from Luyia to Kalenjin in the shape makant with fossilised ma prefix imbedded in it. Indeed, Ehret affirms that the Terik, Nandi, Bok, Kony and the Keiyo dialects all have ma. In Ehret's estimation, the crop must have been known in the Kalenjin areas no later than the second half of the nineteenth century and in the Bantu (Luyia) speaking areas West of the Kalenjin still earlier than that. Using the movement of the idea of the bean, Ehret ably illustrates that inter-ethnic interaction in Western Kenya right into Uganda has a long history.

Unlike in discussing the spread of ganda, the following word similarities are not traced from their possible dates of origin or probable party that borrowed them from or loaned them to

others. A list of some concepts found among both Abatachoni and Babukusu on one hand as well as the Sabaot on the other may be useful to explain the nature of this interaction:

<u>Tachoni/Bukusu</u>	<u>Sabaot</u>	<u>English</u>
<u>Seer ([O]khusera)</u>	<u>Sea,t</u>	to raid
<u>Cub([O]khuchuba)</u>	<u>Cup</u>	to take oath
<u>Simiyu</u>	<u>Kemeu</u>	September-February/Hunger Season
<u>Baya ([O]khubaya)</u>	<u>Pai</u>	to keep cattle
<u>Saya([O]khusaya)</u>	<u>Sai</u>	to pray
<u>Taiywa</u>	<u>Taiywa</u>	rooster(cock)
<u>[O]khulata)</u>	<u>Lat</u>	Castrate

Sources: Simiyu (1991:131) and Nakitare (1991:35)

One common aspect among these words is their cultural connotation. Firstly, concepts on raiding and castration reflect the three communities' familiarity with dangerous cattle rustling, an activity which during the nineteenth century pitted Abatachoni and Babukusu against Kalenjin rustlers, especially the Nandi and to a less extent even the Sabaot and Teso. The Teso are not part of the Kalenjin, they fall in the category of the plain Nilotic speakers. During such attacks, it is argued that alliances against raiders were not based on ethnic similarity but often times on closeness of the raided with their neighbours. Indeed, Were (1967b: 18) brings out an incident where Babukusu and Bongomek allied in the nineteenth century against the Uasin Gishu Maasai. This alliance should not be surprising because there exist clan similarities among the two sub-ethnic groups. Some of these clans include:

#### **Babukusu/Bakisu**

Bamusomi Batoboso

Bakolati

Bamakhome

Bafumba

Basira

Babanjosi

Source: Simiyu (1991:134-135)

#### **Sabaot**

Toboswek

Kamakolatek

Kamakamek

Soosik

Kapserek

Kapnjosek

Secondly, the concept of castration connotes how the three communities selectively pruned bulls so as to leave only those deemed fit to inseminate cows. Just like the concept of castration, the product notion of 'OX' is equally similar in the three communities. They call an OX *eeyi* (Tachoni/Babukusu) and *Aeyi* (Sabaot) (Nakitare, 1991: 35). As to the root of this latter concept, Ehret (1968:129) asserts that Abaluyia (Tachoni/Bukusu) borrowed from the Kalenjin (Sabaot) or from the Southern Nilotic speakers. Whatever the source, word similarity cogently illustrates the existence of fruitful inter-ethnic relations between these communities.

The interaction is reinforced by the three communities of Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot sharing age-set nomenclature. The following are some of their age-sets:

<u>Tachoni/Babukusu</u>	<u>Sabaot</u>
Kolongolo	Korongoro
Kikwameti	Kwaimeti
Kananachi	Kaplelach
Kinyikeu (Kinyikewi)	Mnyikew
Nyange	Nyongi
Maina	Maina
Chuma	Chumo
Sawa	Sawo

Sources: Arap-Kisembe (1978: 11) and Simiyu (1991:135)

However, the last two may not be found among all Sabaot groups. As Simiyu illustrates, instead of Chumo and Sawo, some have Somoineu and Ndatwa. Furthermore, Arap-Kisembe (1978:11) seems to challenge the usually held view that these age-sets are cyclic. For he points out about four age-sets which existed among the Sabaot but are no longer in existence. They are Chepkuy, Limlim, Sewe and Nyengweny. Chepkuy is estimated to have been initiated as recently as between 1876 and 1888. Yet another variant is introduced among the Bok. According to La Fontain (KNA/DC/EN/3/2/4) the Bok had seven age-sets, namely Sowu,

Maina, Gabalyat, Korongoro, Gammenach, Gamnyikewa and Nyongit. This source, in essence, may be unique for it is generally understood that the Sabaot had eight age-sets.

Be that as it may, our discussion of age-sets leads us into having a glimpse of other dimensions of inter-ethnic relations. Both La Fontaine (KNA/DC/EN/3/2/4) and Simiyu (1991) as well as oral sources (Tendetti, O.I., 1997; Kimkung', O.I., 1997) agree that the Sabaot initially never had circumcisers for their youth. Some who were living within the neighbourhood of the Abatachoni (Kirui, O.I., 1997) relied on Abatachoni while those in Mt. Elgon obtained their circumcision experts from both Babukusu and other Kalenjin sub-ethnic groups. This dimension underscores the significance of inter-ethnic inter-dependence among these communities.

Inter-dependence was equally felt in trade transactions. Arap-Kisembe (1978:47) has argued that given their geographical location, Mosopisiek women wove baskets and sold them to the Bok and Babukusu in exchange for iron implements and food. Mosopisiek honey, skins and arrow poison were also taken to the low lands for barter. Initially the exchange was in small quantities because of problems of transportation. However, in later years, especially in the twentieth century, the volume of exchange commodities increased with the use of pack-animals. While this kind of inter-dependence went on, there were occasional sour relations among certain quarters of the communities. Consequences of such relations often found expression in violence or conflict.

### 3.8 Conflicts Between Babukusu and Sabaot

While the title seems all-inclusive, in reality conflicts affected specific sections of either community as other sections continued interacting peacefully. As Achola (1990:14) points out, the basis of conflict in any society is inherent in the economic substructure. Hence, conflicts that erupted at Mungachi (Cheptais) and Kikai in the late nineteenth century had economic causes. Chonge's war at Mungachi will be discussed first.

It is argued (KNA/DC/EN/3/2/4) that sections of the Sabaot harassed and even killed some Babukusu who crossed Cheptais area into Bukisu and back. Some of the Babukusu who were killed included Munialo Masisie, Lubisia Wenganga and Wakweika from Basonge, Basakali and Bamuki clans, respectively. These three were important leaders. In addition to killings, the Sabaot acquired many cattle from Babukusu through raids. These losses brought about the battle which has come to be designated as the 'War of Chonge'.

Chonge himself was a *worgoondet* (prophet) from the Mamarat clan. When Chonge sensed danger, he called the Bok *Murenik* and blessed them besides giving those *murenik setanik* [medicine] to fore-plant on possible paths the Bukusu warriors would use in attacking the Bok. The *setanik* ritual, was done to prevent Bukusu warriors from approaching Mungachi from the east, but instead to make the warriors change their directions at Kumobor and approach Mungachi from the south. The belief here was that by Babukusu approaching from the South would render them easy prey to the Bok warriors.

Incidentally, Bukusu warriors were forbidden by their prophets like Mutiambu Kitwangayi, Soita Kimukeyi and Situma Wachiye to attack Mungachi. But these prophets' advice was not heeded. Consequently, Bukusu and a few Tachoni warriors emerged from the following forts of Chegulo (Babichachi clan), Kisachi (*Bamalicha clan*), Kisielo (*Bakwangwa clan*), Kimoyi Wakamu (*Balaku-Bok*), Wakalakho Khapwondi (*Babulo clan*), Muchichi, Warunda (*Babuya clan*), Nasirima Wambwa (*Bamusomi clan*), Chekai (*Bawayila clan*) among others (KNA/DC/EN/3/2/4) went to fight a disastrous war at Mungachi. While the Bukusu war was generally against the Bok of Mungachi, some Bok supported Babukusu as did Abatachoni from Malicha and Abawayila clans.

Many warriors were killed in the war. According to Arap-Kisembe (1978:60) 'so much blood flowed to swell the adjacent Kabukaya stream and since then, Babukusu do not drink water from this river'. From that war, there was a change in the nomenclature of the place. The name *Wa Chonge* emerged probably to enable people remember the contribution of *Worgoondet* Chonge in preparing his kinsmen well enough to fight off Bukusu warriors. Such an interpretation could emerge basically from the side sympathetic to the Bok. But for those inclined towards Babukusu, this war could mainly be evocative of the defiance of Bukusu and allied warriors whose failure to heed their prophets' warnings resulted in a disastrous defeat.

Kikai or Kapkikai war which pitted some Bukusu warriors against the Kony and Pokot warriors appears to have been initially unintended. Though versions differ, several elements within the versions agree. For instance, Kimkung (O.I., 1997) argues that Soito a Kony *Kirwagindet* (chief) set out on a diplomatic mission to negotiate peace between the Abatachoni and



Babukusu. This source argues that when Soito's party arrived at Iyaya son of Munyeyi's (a Tachoni leader), they were warmly received. Iyaya slaughtered a cow for Soito and the two 'ate a dog' promising never to fight each other again. Instead, the two pledged to assist each other in the event of an external attack from neighbouring groups. This could be the incident that Nakitare (1991:87) argues took place on the River Sosio that in the nineteenth century formed some kind of boundary with the Kony.

After sealing a peace agreement with Iyaya of the Abatachoni, Soito went to Kukali's and Wandabwa's homes where he sealed similar agreements between his and Kukali's as well as Wandabwa's people. Both Kukali and Wandabwa equally warmly received Soito's party. Again both Kukali and Wandabwa were Bukusu leaders. Thereafter, the determined Soito and his party headed for Kikai's. Kikai's place was at what is now Kipchori, near Chepukaka. Kikai was another Bukusu leader.

As Manguliechi (O.I., 1997) explains, Soito's team was warmly received at Kikai's. The two leaders sealed a peace agreement similar to those conducted among the previous groups. Once the seal was accomplished both Soito's and Kikai's people started feasting. In that process the two groups disagreed. It is while giving details of this latter development that the two informants, Manguliechi and Kimkung, differ. Since both sources are highly regarded in their areas and among their people, this study finds it necessary to examine each of the versions critically.

Kimkung's version explains that since Soito's team arrived late in the evening, Soito and his warriors were given fire to warm themselves because they had been rained on. When Kikai's cattle came to the homestead, one of Soito's warriors was shedding tears due to the smoke which affected his eyes. This act was misinterpreted by Bukusu warriors to signify that Soito's warrior wanted to steal Kikai's cattle. As a result, Bukusu herdsmen secretly plotted to kill Soito and his men. Within a short time Soito and his men were pounced upon by Bukusu warriors who eventually killed Soito and most of his men. Only four of Soito's *Murenik* fled and reported back to their people the deaths of Soito and other people from his team.

Manguliechi's variant states that Kikai wa Nabakeni slaughtered a bull and prepared beer for his guests. When Soito's men were drunk, they began despising Kikai. They allegedly claimed that Kikai did not have strong warriors who could repulse any attack. As this ridiculing went on in the presence of Kikai's warriors, one of these warriors, Wakoli son of Weswa snatched Soito's spear and speared Soito to death. This sparked off a fight in which four of Soito's *Murenik* were killed. Only two escaped back to their kinsmen and reported Soito's and his *Murenik's* death.

Emerging from the foregoing, it is evident that each informant gives his information to make the opposite group appear as aggressors. Thus listening to Kimkung's explanation, one would have felt that Kikai's men were to blame. But when a person listens to Manguliechi's account, he or she will blame the incident on Soito's group.

Yet there is a third variant tradition recorded by Arap-Kisembe (1978:67) which reports that Kikai invited *Kirwagindet* Soito to his home. When he had arrived, Soito was tricked by Kikai who ordered his Bukusu people to kill the visitor. This happened at Ng'oli. This third account, certainly like the first one, lays blame of Soito's death to Kikai. In the absence of a neutral account, it will suffice for us to note that Soito's death sparked off a war involving Kikai's Bukusu on one hand and Soito's Kony in alliance with the Pokot on the other. Babukusu were defeated in the war. Kikai and his entire household were killed. Kikai's livestock and other properties were looted and shared among the Kony and Pokot warriors. The few Bukusu survivors fled from the area now called 'Kikai' to other areas like Nalondo and Mabanga.

### **3.9 Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution**

The foregoing discussion has hinted at the existence of various methods of conflict resolution which were applied in the pre-colonial Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot. The first method alluded to involves the use of traditional prophets. Prophets among these communities were entrusted with fore telling events to their people and if need be, cautioned concerned individuals or groups against undertaking apparently disastrous activities.

The Chonge war shows the role of prophets at work. Among Babukusu, prophets had discouraged warriors from embarking on a confrontation against the Bok because prophecy had revealed a likelihood of disaster befalling the Bukusu fighters. Thus, the act of stopping the warriors was a conflict prevention and resolution, which the warriors defied with disastrous results.

The Bok, on the other hand, were advised by their prophet, Chonge, to apply medicine and even plant some on the paths the Bukusu warriors would use in attacking the Bok. It appears the Bok *murenik* followed the instructions so properly that when their Bukusu combatants approached, the 'Bok counterparts easily trounced them. This aspect intimates that in the traditional world view of the three communities, prophecy was crucial in the conflict prevention and resolution matters. Indeed, when Bukusu warriors were trounced, it seems their elders simply accepted defeat as a lesson for the warriors' defiance of their prophets' advice.

The second method referred to in the previous section is known traditionally as 'eating a dog' which symbolically connotes sealing a peace agreement between previous antagonistic groups so that they stop fighting each other and instead assist each other or abstain when one of the signatories is attacked by a third party. This ritual required leaders to the previously warring parties cutting a young puppy into two halves as they swore never to fight each other (Manguliechi, O.I. 1997) again. Instead the participants either promised to assist each other or abstain. After the ritual the two parties then drank beer, ate meat and danced merrily. The roles of Iyaya, Wandabwa and Kukali demonstrate this.

During the battle between the Kony and their Pokot allies against Kikai's group of Babukusu, Iyaya's Wandabwa's and Kukali's groups abstained (Kimkung, O.I.1997). It would appear that the 'eating a dog' ritual engaged the participants psychologically so much that for any one to violate the agreement, a curse was feared to be placed on his or her group. Thus Kikai was condemned even by his Babukusu in songs which they still remembered at the interview (Kimkung, O.I.1997). Finally other forms of interdependence were useful conflict resolution

methods. They include intermarriages, trade exchanges and initiation ritual practices which required these three communities to share circumcisors. This latter aspect is discussed specifically among the Sabaot in the next three chapters.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter has argued that by the late nineteenth century the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot were already occupying areas currently forming Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans-Nzoia (Saboti Division) districts. Within these administrative confines, the three communities along with others interacted resulting in cross-fertilisation of cultures and ideas. It was as a consequence of this interaction that the communities co-operated, intermingled and often clashed among themselves. However, this chapter posits that where conflicts occurred, they did not involve entire sub-ethnic groups against others. But these conflicts were locally defined, meaning that as they did not affect the entire groups, other sections maintained harmonious co-existence and even inter-dependence. The chapter has also argued that interdependence, traditional prophecy and traditional ritual known as 'eating a dog' were useful in conflict resolution among the pre-colonial Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot. This was the kind of situation that had existed among these groups until the emergence of colonialism in Kenya and Uganda. It will be incumbent upon the next chapter to discuss how colonialism impacted on these prevailing relations among the local communities in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS FROM THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1945**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter picks up from where the previous one stopped and hopes to illustrate how colonialism was established in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans-Nzoia districts as well as the local communities' reactions to this new domination. Furthermore, the chapter aims at analysing the emerging matrix of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations which existed among the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot during these early years of colonialism. Similarly, this chapter aims at demonstrating that apart from ethnicity or sub-ethnicity, other factors affected relations among the communities in the area under study.

Unlike in the previous chapter where inter-ethnic relations operated in an indigenous dispensation of trading, intermarriage and other informalities, colonial capitalism, whose agent was the colonial state, proffered a different social milieu for inter-community relations. Rodney (1989:244) has correctly pointed out the negation of freedom such imperial presence imposes on the colonised peoples. Indeed, colonial forces achieve the withdrawal of freedom by introducing new authoritarian policies, administrative values and practices, all aimed at benefiting colonialists to the disadvantage of the colonised people. To be colonized, he argues is to be removed from history (Rodney 1989). Fanon (1968:37 - 94) ably articulates the intricate process colonialists indulge in to create their world. He points out that the colonial world is a dual world, a world that parcels out-groups as belonging or not belonging to a given race, a given species or a given religious creed.

Fanonian analytical model appropriates the psychological dimension of the colonial situation and is very useful in assisting the study bring out how relying on colonial policies, European colonialists grabbed African land and reduced them to squat and offer labour to the white settlers. Here the conflict which is psychological and physical takes a racial dimension. Given the component of authority which the whites assumed over local African communities, the differential distribution of this power down to the colonial agents lends Dahrendorf's and Simmel's variable also handy. Thus the variables of distribution of authority and other resources, the aspect of sociation and the concomitant psychological Fanonian aspects are considered in this chapter's investigation of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations among the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabat. In the whole exercise, colonialism reinforced and separated ethnic groups. Using colonial policies, some communities were discriminated against whereas some were inadvertently favoured (Gulliver, 1969:13; Leys, 1975:199).

New languages and forms of governance were imposed for the benefit of colonial masters. Both of these became burden to the colonised because the system inculcated in Africans an impression that it was only through imperial languages and forms of governance that the colonised could become civilised (Ki-zerbo, 1995:110; Mamdani, 1996:17). This psychological dose has had a long lasting impact on the African peoples. Indeed most of the African countries ended up adopting European language as a medium of instruction. This could not be equated with civilisation. But as it will abundantly be explained, the Lugardian concept of indirect rule simply legitimated governance strategies aimed at dominating Africans by subjecting them to vagaries of political and civil inequalities. Basically, colonial rule created new terrains of conflict which in all its manifestations, was experienced from the outset.

Abraham's (1982) discourse on conflict formulation further enriches our theoretical thrust. He argues that colonialism injects into the colonised setting exogenous conflict by disrupting hitherto existing social economic and political relations (Abraham, 1982:108) The consequent disruptions spark off hostilities pitting colonialists against the colonised on the one hand as well as among sections of the colonised on the other. It is in this mix up of associations in a colonial world that aspects of inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and (parts of) Trans Nzoia districts are analysed.

#### **4.2 Establishment of Colonialism in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts.**

Many theories explaining why some societies were colonised abound. These theories have focused on economic, strategic, national glory and atavistic dimensions (Kiwanuka, 1973; Ake, 1981:20 - 26; Schumpeter, 1994). It is not the intention of this study to delve into them. However, of interest here is to examine the nature of the establishment of colonialism in East Africa and authenticate what Mazrui (1969b: 8) describes as the desire to satisfy the British quest for 'bread and butter'. In this text, one of Britain's leading imperialists Cecil Rhodes is quoted as having impassionately urged his fellow country folks to set up colonies in which British surplus population could be settled. Rhodes also explained that such colonies would provide home industries with raw materials and new markets for goods produced in British metropolitan factories. In tracing the establishment of colonial rule in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia reflections are made on the late 19th Century reasoning of Cecil Rhodes'. The three districts under investigation are very fertile and appear to produce food in surplus



quantities. Besides the Mt. Elgon area was home to some wild life and luxuriant forest which were conducive for European viewing during leisure moments.

At present Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts fall in two different administrative provinces; the first two are in Western Province while Trans Nzoia is in the expansive Rift Valley. In the 1890s when the structures of colonial rule were under construction in the region, they all were in one province. This province, between 1894 and 1902, was known as Eastern Province. As a province that stretched upto the areas of Naivasha, the Eastern Province was under the British protectorate whose headquarters were in Kampala. But from April, 1902 (Were, 1967a: 167; Aseka, 1989:152) the province was transferred to the British East Africa Protectorate which roughly represents today's Republic of Kenya. In British East Africa Protectorate, the name of the province was initially known as Lakes Province before changing to Kavirondo and finally to Nyanza Province after 1909.

However, the present Nyanza Province is a much narrower territory than its antecedent Kavirondo region established in the early colonial years. Nyanza Province included the entire Nyanza, Western and parts of Rift Valley up to Naivasha. Inhabiting that colonial Nyanza were mainly Abaluyia, Luo, Gusii, Kuria, Kalenjin and Ilchemus communities. It took the British great expeditionary effort to bring these people under colonial rule. Many battles were fought as well as many other strategies employed by indigenous communities in an endeavour to resist colonial rule. Some of this resistance took the form of foot-dragging, social banditry, arson, poaching, theft, avoidance of conscription, desertion, migration, riots as well as battles which aimed at frustrating the colonial regime (Aseka, 1989:147). This study does not attempt

to analyse all the strategies. Instead, it confines itself to investigating how the Babukusu, Abatachoni and Sabaot were ultimately brought under effective colonial rule.

It is worth pointing out at this juncture that colonialism was not imposed on Buluyia in general or Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia in particular abruptly. In these places some camouflaged stratagems were employed. These included what the European imperialists mischievously called 'treaties' with local leaders. For instance in 1889, Frederick Jackson, representing the imperial British East Africa company (IBEAC) travelled to Mt. Elgon. In February of 1890 he signed a 'treaty' with Kirwagindet Kimingichi of Bok in Mt. Elgon. In addition, Jackson entered into blood brotherhood relation with the same Kirwagindet. (Were, 1967:157; Arap-Kisembe, 1978:80, KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/29B: 1949 - 56).

Blood brotherhood ceremony was not confined to the Sabaot, it was also performed in Gikuyu land between Frederick Lugard and Waiyaki whom the European had mistaken for the paramount Chief of the entire Agikuyu (Mwanzi, 1990:74). This ceremony was probably the highest expression of trust among African communities. Yet, we cannot say that both Lugard and Jackson were sincere in entering the brotherhood. Theirs was a trick to persuade the African leaders to allow Europeans to operate in those territories. More 'treaties' were signed with other leaders (Abami) in Buluyia. They include Namachanja Khisa of Bakhone clan among Babukusu in June 1890. Similarly, both Carl Peters of German East Africa and Frederick Jackson had entered 'treaties' of 'friendship and protection' with *Nabongo* Sakwa of Wanga Mukulu (Upper Wanga) at different times. Nabongo is a title among the Abawanga sub-ethnic group that referred to the sovereign or ruler of their kingdom.

Carl Peters signed first and soon after, when he had gone, Frederick Jackson arrived and exchanged 'treaties' thus nullifying Peters'. In their 'treaties' the two imperial agents wrongly believed that *Nabongo's* influence spanned the entire region of Nyanza. But the Imperial British East Africa company's influence was not cogently felt by the various communities in the entire Buluya. Hence, each sub-ethnic group continued operating as in the precolonial period. This mode was only forcefully shattered in 1894 during a resistance that took the form of the Lumboka-Chetambe war. The following sub-section will pre-occupy itself with the Lumboka Chetambe resistance.

#### **4.3 Lumboka - Chetambe War, 1894-1895**

Lumboka - Chetambe war has attracted the attention of many scholars (Mutoro, 1976, Makila, 1978 and 1982; Simiyu 1982 and 1991; Scully 19 and Kakai, 1997). This study aims at using this resistance to underscore the inter-ethnic relations which obtained at the outset of the indigenous people's encounter with the imperial forces and how the resistance impacted on inter-ethnic relations in subsequent years. In 1894, the year when the Lumboka - Chetambe resistance occurred, this event coincided with the British declaration of a protectorate over Uganda. Colonel H.Colvile, the first administrator of the British Protectorate despatched his commanding officer Frederick Spire to establish an administrative post at Mumias. Mumias, then known as Elureko (Were, 1967, Mutoro, 1976: 7, Aseka, 1989 and Murunga, 1998: 49-50) was one of the administrative headquarters of the Wanga Kingdom.

In the realm of ideas, Elureko has interesting connotations. Mutoro, and Murunga agree that the concept implies a trap. But what was trapped is given different values. Whereas Mutoro

highlights the capture and sale of slaves from other sub-ethnic groups, Murunga focuses on the acquisition of money after the sale of people's produce such as foodstuffs. Indeed, Mumias or Elureka was an important trading centre in Buluyia. Since the 1850s, the Arab-Swahili traders received shelter, rhino horns, ivory and slaves from their middlemen at Mumias in exchange for guns, clothes and beads. Sometimes the Arab-Swahili traders themselves traversed Bukusu land into Mt. Elgon area in search of large sources of ivory. In essence, by locating the colonial provincial base at Elureko, the British colonialists, perhaps, inadvertently elevated the stature of Wanga rulership to transcend the sub-ethnic confines and permeate to the entire Buluyia. To that extent, the very measure was contributory to the causes of the Lumboka - Chetambe resistance. In fact Lonsdale (1992:64) has submitted that the resistance was in part the fear by Babukusu for displacement by internal rivals who in this case could be Abawanga.

It has been explained (Were, 1967, Scully 19.n.d., Makila, 1982 and Nangulu, 1986:20) that Abawanga and Babukusu had often clashed in the 19th century. Similarly, conflicts existed between Babukusu and Nandi, Maasai and Iteso as well as against slave raiders. The consequence was for Babukusu to purchase guns for use in crucial moments against their enemies. Caravan traders using their base at Mumias, soldiers like Okwara Tindi and Namisi as well as deserters among them a Ugandan, Maridawa smuggled guns from Mumias base and bartered them to Babukusu in exchange for food or even refuge.

The British colonial administration demanded that Babukusu stop fighting other communities, surrender the guns in their possessions, hand over any deserters, accept British rule and provide labour for public works (Makila, 1982:195 - 197). Predictably Bukusu leaders refused to

surrender their guns which they had bartered with their own food or cattle, to provide labour for public works. They rejected succumbing to British colonial rule but they surrendered deserters to the Mumias colonial sub-station. This offer only provided an excuse for the F. Spire's colonial forces that consisted of several Abawanga, Abakhayo, Maasai and Swahili soldiers who went to invade Bukusu areas of jurisdiction in December, 1894.

The December 1894 confrontation took place at Lumboka fort. The fort that was constructed between 1836 and 1846 (Nangulu, 1986:20) is located between rivers Kibachenje and Sio. Lumboka fort had a deep moat that prevented easy entry by strangers. The fort belonged to a person known only as Bulimbo. Within the same locality was found Kibachenje fort whose leader was Mukisu, the father of one of Babukusu's brave warriors, Wakoli. At the ensuing clash, Wakoli's troops wiped out all invaders except one who survived narrowly and escaped to report to his bosses about the misfortunes of his colleagues. Wakoli himself shot dead a notorious soldier called Namisi. Furthermore, Wakoli and Wetoyi pursued another soldier of Abakhayo sub-ethnic group known as Okwara Tindi. But Okwara eluded them. According to oral sources, Babukusu also lost some of their members in the confrontation (Mangulicchi, O.L., 1997). Defeat and humiliation of colonial forces compelled them to prepare for another punitive confrontation against Babukusu. During this second expedition Charles W. Hobley (locally known among Abaluyia as Hobilo) was in charge of the Eastern Province after replacing Spire. Hobley's expedition was launched in August 1895.

Colonial troops comprised three Europeans namely, Major Wilson Grant (known among Abaluyia as Chilande) from Busoga, Captain Sitwell and a surgeon Dr. W. J. Ansorge. Their

African allies were drawn from Wanga, Bakhayo, Sabaot, Maasai, Teso, Swahili as well as Baganda, Basoga and Nubians. Some of these African soldiers joined merely for their own parochial motives. For instance, Wanga soldiers aimed at looting Bukusu cattle and food crops, the Teso and Sabaot wanted to revenge against earlier Bukusu attacks (Makila, 1982:200).

Armed with one Hotchkis, one Maxim gun, muzzle loading rifles, breach loading guns, M. II. rifles, spears, swords as well as bows and arrows, Hobley's troops invaded Bukusu warriors. The latter were however poorly armed in comparison with colonial invaders. Babukusu were armed with mainly spears, swords, bows and arrows, clubs and a few guns with a limited supply of bullets. Wakoli, Wamurwa, Walukela and Lumunyasi inspired warriors. Women sang war songs while warriors danced and drilled in preparation for battle (Makila, *Ibid*).

As a result of the fighting at Lumboka both sides lost their dear ones. But Babukusu sustained more losses. Wamurwa and Lumunyasi perished. Women and children were butchered. Consequently survivors fled to different directions including Malakisi, Sirisia, Misikhu and Bunyala across River Nzoia. Colonial forces destroyed both Kibachenje and Lumboka forts. Bukusu houses, granaries and food crops were burnt down. However, those invaders could not capture cattle (*ibid*). This failure probably infuriated the colonial forces.

The largest number of Babukusu fled eastwards passing through present day Bungoma town, Mabanga, fording across the flooded River Kuywa, going past Malaha until they reached Chetambe fort. Many people and livestock perished on the way due to starvation, exhaustion,

sickness and drowning. Chetambe fort belonged to Abatachoni. It was built on the edge of Webuye hill within the vicinity of the present site of Webuye town. The area currently known as Chetambe was previously referred to as Mahanga. Chetambe son of Yifile was the owner and leader [Laitirian] of the fort.

Chetambe fort was quite impressive. It measured 250 yards in diameter, walls were 10ft wide and 12ft deep. There were six gates on the fort. Four of them were major gates while two were minor. The major gates were used by elders as well as livestock. The two minor gates on the other hand were frequently used by children and women - in their daily activities such as fetching water and firewood. Several peepholes were made higher up round the walls (see appendix iv). It was possibly partly because of the solid-looking structure that persuaded Babukusu to seek refuge there.

However as argued elsewhere (Kakai, 1997:6-7) other factors were crucial in Babukusu's resolution to flee towards Chetambe. The mutually warm relations that existed between Abatachoni and Babukusu were taken into account. Indeed, apart from the two communities' sharing some clans like Abasonge, Abachemai, Abarefu and Abamalicha in common, there were intermarriages between the two sub-ethnic groups. Intermarriages here could be traced back to the days of Kitimule, son of Wetoyi as we have pointed out in the previous chapter. On arrival, Bukusu refugees were well received and treated (Simiyu, 1991). Hence it was at this fort that Babukusu prepared to put up a final and determined resistance against colonialism. In essence, by receiving Babukusu, Abatachoni at Chetambe's fort were simultaneously acknowledging their historical social links. Hobley's troops pursued Bukusu refugees right upto

Chetambe fort. At Chetambe, Makila (1982) Simiyu (1991), Kibutuli (0.1,1991) and Namunyu (0.1 1997) all agree that both the Abatachoni and Babukusu combined their forces and fought fiercely against invading imperial troops which retreated briefly.

Yet it is at this Chetambe fort, ironically, where some earlier authors either writing with scant correct information or consulting dishonest informants claimed that Abatachoni completely rejected assisting Babukusu. Osogo's (1966), Makila's (1978:161) and Simiyu's (1982) works fell victim to this argument. In fact Makila had misleadingly argued that Abatachoni inhabiting Chetambe fort never even waited for Babukusu to enter the fort before fleeing. According to that text, Abatachoni fled just on seeing a huge crowd of Bukusu warriors. Fortunately, Makila (1982) and Simiyu (1991) forcefully corrected that error.

Makila and Simiyu in their last cited works together with other sources affirm that Babukusu were warmly received and treated by Abatachoni. In addition, the sources point out that at Chetambe fort Bukusu warriors felt secure and prepared to make a last stand and fight in the name of their ancestral spirit (Makila, 1982; Nangulu, 1986, Simiyu, 1991). Besides, the Babukusu expected assistance from their Abatachoni hosts in the fort. Hence when the two groups fought against the colonial forces, this expectation was satisfied. But after the rewarding joint venture, something went wrong.

Tachoni elders including their ruler (*Omwami*), Sifuma Iyaya together with the fort leader (*Laitirian*) Chetambe summoned Bukusu elders and warriors to deliberate on whether to evacuate the fort or to continue the battle. To assist the two parties to reach a decision, elders



employed a traditional approach of drugging a black ram and handing it as well as an ivory tusk to messengers to deliver to Holey's troops. It was expected that should the sheep reach Holey's troops alive, all would be well. But were it to die on the way, it would portend a bad omen. In fact, when the messengers returned to the fort reporting that the sheep had died before reaching Holey's camp, elders immediately sensed that danger loomed in their area. Consequently, Chetambe exhorted the fort dwellers to evacuate (Simiyu, 1991, Kapchonga, O.I., 1991).

The imagery of associating Abatachoni with offspring of a guinea fowl (*Abana he Likhanga*) emerged at the time Chetambe made his exhortation. Arguably, Tachoni elders wanted Abatachoni and Babukusu to evacuate the fort secretly the way guinea fowls escape from danger unobtrusively (Kapchonga, O.I., 1991). This suggestion sparked off conflicting opinions among both Babukusu and Abatachoni. Most Babukusu and some Abatachoni refused to flee. Mr. Kibutuli states that even Tachoni women urged their men to either fight alongside Babukusu or else risk having the same women replace men on the battle front. War songs were sung by women to instil courage and fearlessness among those warriors. This observation points out the gender roles in the war. Thus women's major role was to inspire male warriors to fight.

At the final show of resistance there were Babukusu and Abatachoni. However, Babukusu were more in number. More Abatachoni and some Babukusu had fled from the fort (Simiyu, 1991:142) with their property to distant areas such as Magemo, Lugusi and Lugari. Consequently, when the cannon was fired demolishing the huge Chetambe fort allowing

Hobley's men to enter, members of both Abatachoni and Babukusu who had remained in the fort suffered tremendously.

Lumboka-Chetambe encounter was fought by warriors of Maina (1864 - 1874), Chuma (1877 - 1886) and Sawa (1888 - 1898) age - sets. Members of these age-sets were sons of elders who belonged to Kikwameti, Kinyikeu and Nyange. These age-sets were initiated roughly between 1812 and 1862. It was this later category of elders who were concerned with governance and judicial matters whereas the former dealt with military issues. Hence, it was the military group that faced the harshest brunt of Hobley's troops. Many lives were lost on both sides. But given the superior weapons used by colonial forces, Babukusu and Abatachoni side lost more. Yet the people's nationalist spirit seems not to have been crushed. It has persisted ever since.

At the conclusion of the war, Hobley's troops seized several people, mainly women and children as captives as well as about 2,150 head of cattle and drove them to Mumias. At the station, Lonsdale (1964; 1992:67) points out that Hobley's team retained 683 cattle, the remaining 69% of the booty was divided up between Abawanga, Abakhayo Baganda and Maasai auxiliaries. The various clan leaders of Abatachoni and Babukusu reclaimed the captured people at a prize. It was at this reclaiming parade that Namachanja son of Khisa outwitted his Bukusu and Tachoni colleagues. Whereas Sifuma (Tachoni leader) Wandabwa Musamali of Batukwika clan, Namasaka Kiteki, Makhaso of Bamusomi and Maelo Khaindi from Balunda clan chose selectively only captives who hailed from their respective areas of jurisdiction and even left out many of their own people despite the captives' yellings and protestations about being under those leaders' jurisdictions. Namachanja having been briefed

by his in-law Mumia, accepted all the remaining captives without bothering about their previous areas of residence (Scully, 19.n.d Wafula, 2000.). Shrewdness on Namachanja's side earned him colonial privilege as headman over Bukusu and Tachoni communities in the last years of the 19th century. Thus colonial governance with all trappings of repression was imposed on the Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot.

Consequently, the end of Lumboka-Chetambe war resulted in both Abatachoni and Babukusu promising the colonial administration that they would no longer settle in forts. Furthermore, Babukusu promised never to attack their neighbouring sub-ethnic groups again. Essentially, it was assumed that conflicts that had involved some of the Abawanga, Abatachoni, Abakabrasi, Abamarachi, Abakhayo, Babukusu, Maasai, Nandi, Sabaot and Teso and any other communities within the vicinity were to be done away with. Besides, Babukusu and Abatachoni were to surrender all weapons including guns, they were to dress in Western attire, pay war reparations as well as supply labour for public works. Bukusu elders understood the seriousness of the vow by using the traditional concept of 'eating a dog' which was referred to in the previous chapter.

Concerning relations between Abatachoni and Babukusu, some tension crept in Babukusu who considered Abatachoni as traitors who had fled at the Bukusu's hour of need. To Babukusu, the expression of *Abana be Likhanga* (guinea fowl offspring) which Abatachoni uttered when they evacuated the Chetambe fort was contemptible and a show of cowardice (Simiyu, 1982; Nangulu, 1986; Manguliechi, O.I 1997). To the Abatachoni, on the other hand, the expression was a show of intelligence and realism in acknowledging the superior military might of

Hobley's troops. Hence, Abatachoni branded Babukusu as *Becha na Omukhura* which literally means those who came with floods (Yiningilo, O.I, 1997; Manguliechi, O.I, 1997). The concept of 'floods' was to be understood as the military might of colonial troops. To that effect, Abatachoni blamed Babukusu for seeking refuge in their fort leading to its eventual destruction. This tense relation has persisted at the political level. This is best illustrated during campaigns for parliamentary seats especially in Webuye constituency. The Webuye constituency parliamentary hopefuls not only highlighted issues of bringing up projects but also publicly or privately introduced issues of sub-ethnicity between the two groups. However, at the social and economic levels there does not exist much damage as the discussion in the later part of this chapter and those that follow will illustrate.

#### **4.4 Colonial Agency in the Governance of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts**

As the preceding sub-section has intimated, the end of Lumboka-Chetambe resistance marked a clear ascent of Wanga domination in Buluyia and the Sabaot section of the Kalenjin. As colonial powers were shifting the Eastern Province from British Protectorate (Uganda) to British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya) on April 1, 1902, Mumia, the then Nabongo (ruler) of Wanga was similarly receiving official colonial recognition under the Headman Ordinance of 1902 as the Chief of Buluyia. Later in 1912, he was again recognized as official headman under the Native Authority Ordinance. All headmen and councils of elders in Buluyia then under North Kavirondo District were subordinate to him (Aseka, 1989:152). This feature marks what Mamdani (1996:16) refers to as creating a bifurcated system in which no indigenous institutions would be recognised although the indigenous people were expected to conform to European laws. Even the conformity did not lead to the indigenous people

acquiring their rights. Hence, the bifurcation was seen when indigenous leaders could only be employed to oversee and repress other indigenous people and not over Europeans who could be in similar areas. This bifurcation in which an indigenous ethnic community is favoured against others in the same territory was experienced all over Africa. Conspicuous cases were among the Songhai of French West Africa, Fula of Guinea Bissau and the Baganda of Uganda (Okulu, 1974:49; Drayton, 1995:10).

Between 1902 and 1912 Mumia went about entrenching himself by appointing mainly his Wanga relatives to serve under him in Luyia areas which were distant from Wangaland. This system was made more visible when in 1908 he and his brother Suleiman Murunga accompanied Geoffrey Archer, the then Acting District Commissioner (DC) of North Kavirondo to divide Buluyia into eight administrative units known as locations. These included Butsotso, Kabrasi, Marama, North Kitosh, Nabakholo, Samia, South Bukusu and Wanga.

No other representatives from other sub-ethnic groups of Abaluyia accompanied Archer. The implications were that some boundaries got demarcated not to the liking of elders in several of those eight locations. This evolved into seeds for future anti-Wanga resentments in Buluyia, Sabaot and Teso communities (Were, 1967a:167; Chikati, 1988:27). To rule over Abatachoni, Babukusu, Sabaot and Teso, Mumia recommended Sudi Namachanja, an omubukusu (sng.) and son of Mumia's friend, for south Bukusu while Murunga, Mumia's brother was to administer in North Kitosh which comprised Abatachoni, Babukusu, Sabaot and Teso communities. The split between South Bukusu and North Kitosh was mainly due to administrative reasons.

However, the use of Kitosh instead of Bukusu for North Kitosh was due to the fact that all the communities of the Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot felt comfortable with it and especially Abatachoni and the Sabaot opposed the name 'North Bukusu' being applied.

Mumia and his assistants were entrusted with the task of collecting poll and hut taxes as well as recruiting individuals from indigenous communities to offer labour for public works in road constructions and laying of bridges. In addition, during the outbreak of the two world wars, the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945), most able bodied young men were conscripted to serve in the wars as carrier corps (locally known as *Karioko*) or pioneer corps (locally referred to as *Panyako*), soldiers, constructors and they also manned road blocks . In some cases the conscripts were taken from schools into military lorries with false promises of being taken to places of non-military work only to land at military training depots (Wafula, 2000).

Moreover, the agents forced Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot among other African communities in the region to provide food and cattle for the army. Similarly the amount for taxation was increased to cater for the war fund. From a territorial point of view, John Ainsworth (Mungeam, 1980:52) estimated that when he was Military Commissioner for labour from 1917 to 1918, about 162,000 Africans were recruited for portage and transport operations. The same source points out that about 24,000 of the recruits perished in the war that had very little to do with the African welfare.

The agents carried out their tasks in an autocratic and brutal way resulting in tensions in their areas of jurisdiction. For instance, the Sabaot colonial chief Tendetti filed a complaint against the Bukusu encroachment on his community's perceived ancestral land on January 10, 1949 (KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/23: 1944 - 46: Section No. 15 Land Boundaries, Chief Tendetti's complaint). In his explanation, Tendetti contended that the authoritarian chief Murunga used to flog Bok, Bongmek and Kony in an attempt to compel them to work as porters or on road construction that took place between 1908 and 1909. But Tendetti, then an assistant of Murunga, could not challenge his boss, hence the Bok, Bongmek and Kony fled from Murunga's jurisdiction to different destinations including Eldoret, Kapenguria, Kitale and even Sebeyi in Uganda.

In the process, Babukusu who equally were partly escaping from Wanga and general colonial influence moved up the mountain to occupy land vacated by the Kony (Tendetti *ibid*, KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/1/1909:K. Dundas; Wagner, 1949:33). Indeed, both Wagner (*ibid*) and Wolf (1977:142) point out that many Babukusu migrated northwards and northeastwards since 1905 to escape the influence of colonial government. As a consequence upto twenty-five miles to the north of Mumias had very scant local population. According to Wolf, most of these Babukusu were headed for settler farms, whose establishment will be dealt with later in this chapter. Yet as Tendetti had asserted, some merely filled up the areas deserted by the Sabaot. Wolf (1977:09) supports this view by stating that Mt. Elgon area that was sparsely populated before 1950 started acquiring rapid increase in population between 1948 and 1962.

As the illustration intimates, actions of the colonial agents not only created physical but also structural conflicts. This violence as Assefa (1996:43) contends arises from the unjust, repressive and oppressive political structure. This impact causes such a psychological friction and disturbance that victims desperately look for emancipatory means. Essentially, therefore, the individuals who migrated away from Murnga and other colonial agents, frantically looking for peace by offering their labour in settler farms in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu or even crossed the international border into Uganda, were in their own way endeavouring to resolve their internal, psychological and physical violence which was caused by the colonial situation.

Even individuals who were opposed to forced conscription into the world wars joined the group, which moved into settler farms as resident labour. Wafula (2000) argues that some individuals among the Babukusu who did not want to serve in the two world wars took refuge in mission situations. This move predictably generated conflict of interpretations because the missionaries assumed the refugees genuinely wanted to receive the word of God, yet to the contrary the later merely considered the move as a deterrent to the brutal colonial agents from recruiting them to the wars. Hence, when missionaries discovered the refugees intentions, they rejected any more escapees. Of course, the action by missionaries also created sour relations between them and the local communities besides also losing a few escapees who would have eventually embraced conversion.

Nonetheless, the chain reaction to Bukusu migrants led to Murunga encouraging Abakhayo, Abawanga and Teso to settle around Kimilili and become farmers. Consequently, there is a large Wanga community in Kimilili who are mainly Muslim and to a large extent Bukusunized.



While areas in Southern Bungoma stretching upto Mt. Elgon were hardest hit by Murunga's authority, colonial administrator, H. H. Harne alleged in 1913 that Murunga's influence was less felt among Abatachoni. He alleged that Abatachoni had refused all colonial authority including road making (KNA/DC/EN/3/1/3: Political Records, H. H. Horne, 1-4-1913). Yet by 1916 when Sifuma Iyaya was replaced by his son Murumba as headman of Abatachoni under Murunga, the scenario changed.

All the three communities of Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot together with others staying in the three districts of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia felt the burden of payment of poll and hut taxes. Whereas some, especially Babukusu attempted fleeing from tax payment by going to Trans Nzoia to squat on white settler farms, the Sabaot devised other strategies. Arap-Kisembe (1978:23) argues that they evaded hut taxation by abandoning their houses to temporarily occupy caves. This revelation intimates the folly colonial agents embraced that numbers of houses (or huts as colonialists pejoratively called them) equalled numbers of adults resident in those specific areas. As each sub-ethnic group was devising survival tactics against colonial administrative agency, sentiments against Murunga were permeating throughout the area of Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot. The Murunga factor made the three file petitions to the colonial DC and Provincial Commissioners (PCs) rejecting his administration. But this stage of petitioning was reached as a result of the emergence of mission school educated crop of elite who assumed the task of speaking out on behalf of their respective communities (Wolf, 1977; Arap-Kisembe, 1978). Before turning to this latter group and the missionary impact on inter-ethnic relations we should next discuss how colonial policies led to the establishment of settler farms in Trans Nzoia.

#### **4.5 Colonial Land Policy and White Settler Farms in Trans Nzoia District.**

The colonial regime not only introduced new administrative values but also new terms of land ownership. These terms made nonsense of the African values embedded in the indigenous land tenure system in which the family, clan or ethnic community had the final say in land matters. The new values were ushered in Kenya as early as the late 1890s when Western Kenya was still administered from Kampala. In 1894 the Imperial British East Africa Company, a company initially charged with the governance of British Protectorate (Uganda) as well as the British East Africa (Kenya) protectorate on behalf of Britain promulgated regulations which permitted it to lease land for grazing, residential and agricultural purposes. In 1897 other regulations were promulgated allowing the Europeans to lease land for a duration of 21 years. The lease could however, be renewed if deemed necessary (Wafula, 1981:20; Kibwana 1990:234).

But with the official occupation of the colonies by the British government the land situation became more depressing. In 1901 the colonial government officially published the concept of Crown Land. In that year, the East Africa (lands) Order in Council reportedly defined Crown land legalistically as 'All public lands within the East Africa Protectorate which for the time being are subject to His Majesty by virtue of any treaty, convention or agreement, or His Majesty's protectorate, and all lands which have been or may hereafter be acquired by His Majesty under the "Lands Acquisition Pact, 1895" or otherwise howsoever' (Wafula, 1981:18). Assuming that Wafula's extract is correct, we can state that this definition which is loaded with a legalistic jargon actually snatched all pieces of land in the British East Africa Protectorate from communal indigenous ownership and converted it into the absolute property of the Crown.

Embedded in this definition was not only a colonial attempt to snatch the African land from the indigenous people, but also by the same stroke, to prevent Asians from acquiring land in the Kenya highlands which were branded as 'white Highlands'. The highlands grabbed by European settlers stretched for 17,000 square miles or 15% of the size of Kenya (Kenyanchui, 1992 :113). The concept of 'White Highlands' proceeds from the recommendations of J.W Gregory and Frederick Lugard. Gregory a geologist by profession, wrote that 'the Kenya highlands were suitable for European settlements because of their good climate and soils (Ibid: 112). Lugard even claimed that Europeans would find the area as climatically good as New Zealand, Australia or California, and that they would make Kenya a dominion within the British Empire.

Thus, when Charles Eliot who was the second commissioner of British East Africa Protectorate, together with Lord Delamare and colonel Ewart S. Grogan encouraged white settlers to come into the country, the settlers were already assured of the good conditions that existed in the land. Probably, it was due to this knowledge that white settlers used all means to keep out both the Africans and Asians from the highlands. Herein lay the seed for a racial conflict. Indians, for instance, demanded for equal treatment with the Europeans (Shiroya, 1994:35). The conflict was fought in the Legislative Council as well as through correspondence to London. A.M Jeevanjee was a great spokesperson for the Indian case.

But the battle pitting the two foreigners forced the European colonialists to invoke the African primacy as a conflict resolution against the Indian complaints. Thus the 'Devonshire white

paper' of 1923 and later European documents were insincere in claiming that they had put African interests above their own. Their continued acts in land and administrative fields revealed these Europeans selfish interests (Shiroya, 1994:35).

In 1902 the Crown Land Ordinance was promulgated preparing the ground for the acquisition of land by the Commissioner who in turn granted to European settlers chunks of land by evoking administrative powers which<sup>6</sup> allowed him to issue out land even without referring to the colonial or foreign offices in London for permission to be given. This Ordinance provided for the first time the commercial value to land in which foreigners could purchase it (Wafula, 1981:20). Thus colonial administrators could dispossess the indigenous community of their land and sell to Europeans at 2 rupees per acre or lease at a rental value of 15 rupees per 100 acres for a period of 99 years.

Exercising the same legalistic power in 1913, the colonial government recognised under the Crown Land Ordinance African occupied areas that were pejoratively branded as 'reserves'. The climax was in 1915 when the Crown Land Ordinance was entirely in the hands of the Commissioner of the British East Africa Protectorate and later in the Governor. In colonial parlance, the title of 'Governor' replaced that of Commissioner. The ordinance of 1915 defined Crown Land so widely that it included all land in the Protectorate even that which was occupied by the indigenous population. European settlers granted sales of such land held their land under individual tenure (KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/29B:1949-56 - Prior to 1932; Wafula, 1981:21, Kibwana, 1990:234). The duration of the tenure for alienated land was extended from 99 to 999 years. This kind of tenancy is in effect to this day.

It was in such manoeuvres that European settlers occupied a huge chunk of fertile land in Colonial Kenya. The wide region which colonialists branded 'White Highlands' included Trans Nzoia District. But unlike its present administrative boundaries, colonial Trans Nzoia's western boundary as by November 29th 1912 occupied a lot of the present areas of Bungoma, Lugari, Mt. Elgon and Uasin Gishu districts. The demarcation line ran from where River Kamukuywa emerges from Mt. Elgon forest, passing through the confluence of rivers Kibisi and Nzoia to finally reach River Kipkaren (or Sosian) opposite Marabusi Hill (KNA/PC/NZA/3/7/2/2 1912 - 1923 - Report on Eastern Boundary, North Kavirondo Reserve)

Communities affected by western boundary included the Abatachoni, Babukusu, Sabaot and sections of Uasin Gishu Maasai. Their leaders whose names were given as Arap Kiptek, Arap-Sangalo (Sabaot); Ngulette and Dingedinge (Maasai) as well as Kakai, Kalakate and Sifuma (Abatachoni) were ordered to move west of the boundary by the end of December 1912 (*ibid*). As oral interviews (Kapchanga, O.I., 1991; Yiningilo, O.I., 1997) suggest, these communities did not just obey the orders, they resisted until colonial forces destroyed houses and property belonging to those communities to forcefully evict them from the alienated land. Hence the alteration of tenural arrangements affected the matrix of ethnic relations in colonial Trans Nzoia. The status of the indigenous people changed to assume a squatter dimension.

The stream of colonial ordinances had effectively dispossessed indigenous communities of their 'ancestral' land and bequeathed to them the label of squatters whose prescription was to offer manual labour to the white settlers at very low pay. Land in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu having been alienated from local indigenous communities without paying anything was

consequently sold to European settlers at the rate of 6 pence per acre in 1908, 10 shillings per acre in 1912 and later one sterling pound (Aseka, 1989:244-246). To ensure that Africans could not change their employers voluntarily, a new law was passed in 1919 compelling all Africans in the colony to each carry an identification card, (*Kipande*) at all times when they were not in areas set aside for Africans, racially known as 'reserves' (Frost:1997:56).

The 'reserve' concept was itself derogatory. It implied that such areas were only important to settlers in as much as they contained people who could offer labour to the whites for low wages. So, to make that labour always available colonial machinery introduced taxes paid in cash money that was often obtained when Africans worked on those European farms.

As already referred to, it was not only due to the search for money to pay taxes that made members of Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot migrate to Trans Nzoia. Local pressure emanating from local disagreement also contributed to this phenomenon. Kosus, one of the Kony leaders, disagreed with his colleague and kinsperson Kiptek in 1920s resulting in the former fleeing from the area. Since Kosus was an influential person, his flight to Trans Nzoia led to most of his followers vacating their land in Mt. Elgon and squatting in Trans Nzoia. Furthermore, the need for more pasture land led to more Sabaot moving away from Mt. Elgon moorland into the Kisawai pasture land in Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia (KNA/PC/NZA/2/10/7:31-51: Forestry, North Kavirondo, Mt. Elgon 1931-1951, Arap-Kisembe, 1978:25). Going by accounts of Dominico Mazulu, and Chief Mulama to the Kenya Land Commission (KLC) of 1932, such movement had definite policies. The two elders stated that Trans Nzoia and Uasin

Gishu areas were considered by the Abaluyia as potential places for their settlements. (Wafula, 1981:32).

The entry of the migrants as well as Europeans into Trans Nzoia had its own consequences. For instance, the arrival of European settlers, especially in Saboti Division disrupted the Sabaot incipient recovery from the earlier Karamojong and Nandi raids. Those raids had made some Kony to flee from Trans Nzoia to seek refuge among their kinsmen of Malakisi in Bungoma District. But with the European intrusion however, the peace which was being restored went because the remaining Sabaot in Trans Nzoia were dispossessed of their land rendering them to become squatters on European settlers farms.

Furthermore, with the colonial gazettelement of Mt. Elgon forest area, there was exerted more pressure on pasture land. Consequently since 1930 Kosus and his followers together with other Sabaot crossed River Swam to settle among their Sebeyi kinsfolk in Uganda. But Kosus himself returned to Trans Nzoia where he stayed till his death (Arap Kisembe, 1978:108).

It is emerging so far that the colonial boundary separating the British Protectorate (Uganda) from the British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya) was not a social obstacle. Cross border interactions were frequent among these communities. On February 7, 1931, the Kakamega District Officer (DO) reported that the Sabaot made regular trips to sell their meat and baskets to Babukusu in Bungoma District as well as to Bakisu of Uganda in exchange for cereals and dried bananas respectively (KNA/PC/NZA/2/10/7: Forestry, North Kavirondo, Mt. Elgon 1931 - 1951). Yet when one community was fleeing from problems, it mainly fled to areas where its

kinspeople could be found. This explains why the Sabaot on crossing into Uganda settled among the Sebeyi. Though not much has been noted, when Abatachoni or Babukusu crossed into Uganda, their destination was among Bakisu. This trend calls into focus the value of mutual interdependence among the three communities of Abatachoni; Babukusu and Sabaot as well as with their kinsfolk, Bakisu and Sebeyi in Uganda. This interdependence continues to be highlighted in the next sub-section. It formed the bedrock of inter-ethnic interactions among the communities involved.

#### **4.6 The Impact Of Christian Missionary Education and White Farms on Inter-Ethnic Relations.**

The three components missions, Western education and White farms are all creations of the colonial situation in Bungoma, Mt Elgon and Trans Nzoia as indeed it happened in other parts of Colonial Kenya. These components' impact on inter-ethnic relations among Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot is crucial in introducing new aspects of social relations. These relations are not defined by ethnicity, but rather Christian denomination and labour values. All of them operating under exogenous conflict scenario, have often blunted ethnic considerations and instead sharpened denominational as well as labour counter-parts.

The Friends African Industrial Mission (FAIM) also known as Quakers were the first to open up mission centres and schools in Bungoma and later Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia areas. Opening its first mission station in Buluyia in 1902 at Kaimosi in Vihiga District (Mwenesi, 1980:163) the FAIM which later became Friends African Mission (FAM) due to its focus on the missionary activities with less emphasis on the industrial aspect gradually spread to other



areas including Lugulu or Kitosh station in August 1913. At Lugulu, the Quakers not only established a church but in addition opened up a mission primary school and hospital before 1920. Dr. A. B. Astock and Mr. J. W. Ford were pioneer missionaries at Lugulu between 1913 and 1920 (Kakai, 1992:174). Indeed Ford was so successful in interacting with the local communities that his name began to be used to represent Lugulu. Thus, Lugulu was also known as *Wa Fordi* (At Ford's).

Between 1920 and 1930 Quakers expanded rapidly in what was administratively known as North Kitosh which comprised eastern parts of present Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts. In 1921 there were 16 schools with an average attendance of 1,800 pupils. There were 12 full members of the registered Quakers. In 1926 the average attendance increased to 2,400 while the number of full members rose to 40. In 1927 there was an additional 133 members in schools with the total number of schools standing at 50. In 1928 European missionaries left Lugulu for unknown reasons without any replacement. Hence an African supervisor of schools and an African evangelist or pastor continued the work (Wolf, 1977:163). This aspect gave rise to emergence of new missionary education elite within the African fraternity. How this impacted on inter-ethnic or even intra-ethnic relations will be examined later in the work.

But for the moment we focus on the establishment and spread of other Christian missions. Next in influence in the area under study was the Catholic Church. Though its influence in Bungoma started in the 1920s, the first church was built in 1931 at Kibabii where two resident priests remained. Between 1925 and 1935 Catholic influence spread fast. With a strong dominance in southern part of Bungoma, Catholicism penetrated the areas of North Kitosh and

set up a Mission at Misikhu in the 1940s and another one at Elgon Club in Trans Nzoia in the 1950s (Wolf, 1977:114). Accompanying the Church Missions was the introduction of schools in the affected localities. In 1932 there were 2,000 catholics, in 1934 there were 4,000 and in 1945 about 11,000. Thus quite a sizeable number of catholics had developed. Like their Quaker counter-parts, a nascent missionary elite group emerged with new values which however were tilted in favour of Catholicism and poised antagonistically against other Christian denominations.

Other minor denominations among Babukusu, Teso and Sabaot who occupied southern Bungoma were the Anglicans and the Salvation Army. However, these two could not exert as much claim over the Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot as did the Catholics and the Friends African Mission. So, it will mainly be in discussing how Catholics and Quakers interacted that we shall point out how the missions affected inter as well as intra-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts.

Shilaro's (1991:130) finding that Christian missions undermined clan and ethnic affiliations among Abakabasi similarly applies to our study. Christian denominations introduced new social orders in which wider possibilities for social integration with people who belonged to other ethnicities or races emerged and even united them against social orders belonging to other denominations. Cases of the Catholics and Quakers interactions illustrate the preceding statement succinctly.

Wolf (1977:164) has explained how locational boundaries in colonial Bungoma marked the end of denominational influence. As has been referred to earlier, Catholics specifically operated in southern Bungoma whereas Quakers in eastern Bungoma. Yet each denomination wished to venture across those locational boundaries. This urge led to intra-sub-ethnic conflicts within Bungoma District. These conflicts started when Pascal Nabwana, head of Catholic Christians protested against Babukusu being split along religious denominational bases. He wanted Babukusu to continue peaceful co-existence among themselves irrespective of their denominational or religious persuasions.

But Quakers could not accommodate Nabwana's idea of denominational interpenetration (*Ibid.*, 165). When Catholics tried to establish their church in the Quakers spheres of influence in 1926 a fight broke out prompting the Local Native Council (LNC) to grant them one school in North Kitosh. The LNC was at the center of the colonial bifurcation of 'Native' and citizen (coloniser) framework evolved from the 1902 Village Headmen Ordinance and later the Native Authority Ordinance (NAO) of 1912. By 1924 therefore, the LNC replaced the NAO (Ascka, 1989:230). In 1929 the Quakers attempted counter penetrating areas of East Bukusu, perceived as strongholds of Catholic converts. The school, which the Quakers built in that domain, led to inter-denominational fighting between Catholics and Quakers. Finally, Chief Sudi Namachanja of South Bukusu, a devout Catholic and father of Kenya's first African Catholic Cardinal, Maurice Otunga, burnt it down.

This new dimension of intra-sub-ethnic relations grew to such extent that when Babukusu were protesting against Wanga domination, some Babukusu took sides with Murunga, a Muwanga

(Sing.) Chief who was badly disliked by most Babukusu. Indeed, the anti-Wanga sentiment was widespread in Buluyia. Besides among the Babukusu, other communities who included the Abanyore, Abashisa, Abamarama, Teso and the Sabaot also demanded for the removal of chiefs and assistant chiefs who were Wanga by sub-ethnicity yet imposed to rule over the mentioned people. Their places were to be replaced with those chiefs and assistant chiefs from those people's own sub-ethnic groups. However, the impact the inter-denominational relations had on this demand in Bungoma and Mt. Elgon will be examined shortly.

In the meantime, we focus on inter-ethnic relations on the white settler farms in Trans Nzoia District. On settler farms, indigenous communities lived as squatters offering lowly paid labour to white farmers. Inter-or intra-ethnic conflicts emanating from denominational rivalries before the emergence of *Dini Ya Musambwa* (DYM) an anti-white colonialists religion whose stress was in the support of African spiritual rites against foreign European religions, seem not to have been felt. In fact, Pascal Nabwana points out that people from different religious persuasions interacted peacefully even under one employer (Wolf, 1977:164). In this scenario, the employees from various ethnic groups interacted, inter-mingled and exchanged values that bound them together in the same colonial dispensation. Hence the use of Western farming techniques like the use of ox-ploughs which were introduced in Kenya by Europeans was spread among all resident communities as a result of this interaction.

For instance, the use of ox-drawn ploughs in Bungoma and Mt. Elgon was started by individuals who had seen the usefulness of the devices on settler farms in Trans Nzoia. Consequently, areas adjoining Trans Nzoia were first to employ the tool (Wolf, 1977:9).

Gradually the use of ploughs spread to the entire Bungoma and Mt. Elgon districts. In 1929 Quaker members at Lugulu set up a ploughing company. The practice of establishing ploughing companies was in line with improving agricultural production and thus indirectly the general standards of living of the communities. This collective spirit traditionally known among Abatachoni and Babukusu as *obulala* or *buambeni* dates well back to the pre-colonial period. However, the ox-ploughs were not yet introduced in the *Obulala* groups of the times. Between 1929 and 1936 Kimilili, which before 1934 included Mt. Elgon, had 45 ploughing companies. Teams brought together members of the three sub-ethnic groups of Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot. This is confirmed by Kimkung' (O.I, 1997) a Sabaot and former president of African Court Tribunal. He said that he learnt how to use an ox-drawn plough from an Omubukusu (sing.) of the Batasama clan in the early 1930s.

Later, the use of ox-drawn ploughs spread to Catholic dominated areas. Each ploughing company comprised between 4 and 5 farmers. Important areas associated with these companies include Chesamisi, Chwele, Kimilili and Lugulu. In such areas cash crops like cotton and maize were grown. Maize became an important cash crop in Bungoma in 1935 after completion of the railway that facilitated export. Pascal Nabwana (Catholic), Petero Wanyama and Philipo Mwangale (Quakers) were prominent farmers in the late 1930s and into the 1940s. Wafula (1981:7) estimates that by 1941 there were about 100 ox-carts. Ox-carts symbolised another technology that was handy in removing or transporting maize from farms for storing in homes and perhaps from homes to local marketing centres for sale. However, how this strategy of ox-carts spread has not been explained.

While Europeans in Kenya introduced this technology, the plough was not totally a foreign instrument on the African continent. Ploughs had been used in parts of north and northeastern Africa since time immemorial (Zeleza, 1993:92). These ploughs varied from region to region even within the same country depending on the soil conditions. In Tunisia, for instance, there were tooth ploughs, swing ploughs and frame handle ploughs. That this technology could not reach East Africa before colonialism was possibly due to the convenience the East Africans enjoyed with their traditional hoes.

It is evident that the colonial situation with a new religion encapsulating a multiplicity of denominations and its own variant of formal education and farming techniques put a mark on the inter-and intra-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia. New values brought individuals from the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot together against even their kinspeople whose values were antithetical to theirs. An examination of how this was manifested in the struggle against chiefs concretises this statement.

In Malakisi, it is argued that Quaker leaders organised a broad front comprising other Christians and traditional leaders to protest against Bukusu domination by Murunga, a Wanga chief. However, in that fight there emerged factions among Bukusu Quakers. Stefano Wekunda an Omubukusu supported Murunga. Stefano was further encouraged in this by Jacobo Weyombo, a Bok who even gave his daughter to Stefano. But since the anti-Murunga wave was stronger with most educated Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot demanding for his removal, measures were taken to slowly ease him out of chieftaincy in Bungoma.

In the initial stages the Assistant Chief Waluchio, Murunga's Wanga kinsperson was forced to resign as Assistant Chief of Kimilili in August 1930. His place was taken over by Musa Namutala Mayeku from the clan of Balisa. Finally in January 1934, Murunga was transferred to South Wanga whereas Namutala became chief of Kimilili. It appears that even in South Wanga Murunga was received with coldness (Murunga, personal communication, 1998). Here the issue of leadership made Mumia's sons resist having Murunga rule while the sons wanted to be the ones appointed. Simultaneously, Stefano was promoted to become the new chief of Malakisi and Jacobo was rewarded to become president of Locational Council. Chief Tendetti ascended to become chief of Elgon location (KNA/DC/EN/3/1/2:1920s - 1950s political Record, Wolf, 1977:173-75; Arap-Kisembe, 1978:114-119).

As can be discerned from the preceding paragraph, there evolved such warm relations between the Babukusu and Sabaot communities in Malakisi location that when the Bok were asked whether they would like to be administered in Malakisi under a Bukusu chief or would accept to have their area placed under Elgon location chieftaincy, the Bok preferred to remain under a Bukusu chief. Probably because they had one of their kinsmen appointed assistant chief. For Abatachoni, appointment of Musa Namutala to be their chief incensed them forcing their youth to protest violently. The sentiment was expressed even by the Tachoni Quaker youth in Namutala's location. To quell the protest, ringleaders were arrested and remanded at Kakamega, the then district headquarters of North Kavirondo. Furthermore, elderly Abatachoni appear to have condemned the violence as Makongolo Sanya, the man entrusted by the elders to disseminate traditional knowledge, customs and beliefs to the youth illustrates. Perhaps this brief quote may capture his sentiments as were recorded by Wagner (1949:493).

'You [Abatachoni] are always saying that the Bukusu are taking our chieftaincy from us, but you yourselves are living in discord with one another. You are living in your own country, what is it that the son of Mayeku [Namutala] is taking away from you? I hear that they have put you [police arresting and putting Tachoni youth] in jail at Esieywe [Kakamega]'.

Makongolo's sentiments may indicate a generation gap because according to him Abatachoni had assistant chiefs. That Namutala was boss over Abatachoni was not a big deal to the elder since that did not mean Abatachoni were dispossessed of their land. The longing by Tachoni youth as indeed it was by Babukusu during Murunga's time, Christians, though some may have been, indicated that new Christian values did not go deep enough to erase parochial ethnic or sub-ethnic feelings. The long period a child underwent in cultural socialisation often exposed an ethnic impact at crucial moments. Hence, for Abatachoni their discontent continued until 1960 when a Tachoni chief called William Chiwuli was appointed over a new location called Ndivisi.

Interestingly, the Bok honeymoon in Malakisi did not last long enough. After Stefano's chieftaincy and the immediate succession by Jeremiah Kukubo as chief in 1935, the situation changed. It is argued that for Jeremiah to have succeeded Stefano, he first won in a contest that pitted him against Jacobo a Bok. This victory possibly revived ethnic sentiments between the two sub-ethnic communities. Consequently, Jeremiah encouraged Babukusu to settle in the northern part of Malakisi taking up land that might have been used for future expansion by the Bok themselves. In April 1945 Bok elders complained that the chief always addressed public meetings using *Lubukusu* knowing fully well that most Bok were not conversant in that Luyia dialect.



Jeremiah was also accused of discriminating against the Bok in giving conscript quotas by taking three quarters from the Bok and only one quarter from Babukusu when the reverse should have been the case in the light of the huge number of Babukusu. Finally, the Bok accused the chief of denying to issue business licences to them even when they wanted to open new businesses in areas where they dominate. They pointed out that he mainly gave such licences to Babukusu (KNA/PC/NZA/3/14 23 - 1944 - 1949 Section No 16 Lands: Boundaries, Boundary Disputes and Walago (Bok). This new situation persuaded the Bok to request the DC of North Kavirondo, Capt. F. D. Hislop to transfer them to Elgon location where the Sabaot were a majority. However, on Tendetti's advice the request was turned down (*ibid*).

Jeremiah's dismissal in the same 1945 may indicate that he had several other shortcomings. For this chapter, his dismissal prepares us to see that if the Bok considered Jeremiah a Bukusu chauvinist, others from Bukusu community went much narrower and thought that he basically defended interests of the Bakiyabi clansfolk. Hence in the search for Jeremiah's replacement, individuals from other clans wanted persons from their own clans too to serve as chief. Bamusomi sponsored Daniel Simiyu, a Jeanes teacher and brother of ex-chief Stefano to challenge Jonathan of Bakiyabi clan (Wolf, 1977:175).

The idea of 'Jeanes schools' in Africa emanated from the inter-war period proliferation of village schools, especially in the early 1920s (Sifuna, 1990; 15-16), making missionaries and colonial officials to develop interest in how various charitable organisations tackled a similar problem in providing education for Black Americans. The interest led to the colonial authorities approaching the Phelps-Stokes fund for support to undertake an African wide study.

The Phelps-Stokes report recommended that the A.T. Jeanes experiment be adopted in training Africans as teachers within a very short time. This policy was endorsed by the advisory committee on native Education in British Tropical Africa. Therefore, the opening of the Jeanes school at Kabete for training Africans was both racially conceived and applied continentally among the British colonial territories. Whereas little conflict arose from the racist insinuation in the Jeanes school, the Jeanes school curriculum was to be discredited during the independence period, especially in Kenya.

In the period when the Malakisi chieftaincy was vacant, Chief Sudi of South Bukusu acted as chief in Malakisi location for a whole year. Sudi supported Daniel and a great number of Sudi's subjects turned up at the actual election where people lined up behind candidates of their choice. When this was pointed out to the DC Sudi's group was removed. Consequently, Jonathan won narrowly polling 949 against Daniel's 946.

In inter-clan contest, it was not only Daniel's side that tried to rig by importing voters from outside the location. Jonathan's side did the same. Wolf (1977:176) claimed that those imported to line up behind Jonathan came even from Uganda. A Mr. Zakaria, a friend of the dismissed Jeremiah returned from Uganda bringing with him other people to vote for Jonathan. This event brings out the fact that inter- or intra-ethnic or sub-ethnic relations were not merely shaped by ethnicity. That people often cite ethnic factors to justify some injustice may sometimes point to simplistic ways of resolving crises. Perhaps what should be necessary would require concerned parties to begin from perceived causes and delve deeper to establish the root causes.

If Jeremiah were an impartial ruler, other Bukusu clans would not have put up such spirited though unsuccessful manoeuvres aimed at blocking any candidate linked to Jeremiah's clan from succeeding him. Here again the perception of inter-territorial boundary among the indigenes is brought into question. What do such boundaries serve when they split people belonging to the same clan, sub-ethnic or ethnic group into two different political territories? Such issues will continue popping up especially in the post-1945 period. In the meantime let us briefly examine the evolution of some of the civil societies which will later be at the centre of articulating anti-colonial measures.

#### **4.7 The Role of Educated Elite in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia**

Emergence of a crop of elite with western formal learning introduced an enlarged scale in precolonial civil organisations. These organisations initially known as *huambani* or *ohulala* among Abatachoni and Babukusu started from the precolonial period. Even the ploughing companies referred to earlier conform to this concept. The *huambani* organisations were welfare in nature and aimed at improving standards of living among members. The members were not necessarily ethnic based for where there existed people of different ethnic communities like was the case near boundaries with Teso or Sabaot communities members from these communities worked together.

During the colonial era, *huambani* operated in new modes. Mission educated elite pioneered in setting up the associations aimed at promoting the welfare of Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot. For instance in 1936, the Babukusu pioneered other ethnic groups in Bungoma and Mt. Elgon in establishing Kitosh Educational Society (KES). This association lacked

denominational bias. Consequently, it brought together members from Kitosh - Abatachoni, Babukusu and some Sabaot communities. The primary concern of KES focused on health, education, agriculture and administration.

KES felt its members were discriminated against during the administration of Common Entrance Examination (CEE) for primary schools. These examinations were set using dialects such as *Olulogoli* and *Oluwanga* spoken by Southern Luyia communities. The society realised that it was from Kitosh area where maize produced on a more commercial scale provided enough resources from produce cess to run educational and health facilities in the entire North Kavirondo District. Consequently, the society started demanding for their own district as a measure to redress the disadvantage the members were exposed to. Given the Bukusu dominance in the society, Kitosh Educational society was renamed Bukusu Union (BU) in 1940 (Wolf, 1977:151). The BU founded independent schools and sent young people from especially Babukusu to train at Independent Teacher Training College at Githunguri after which they could offer services in the three independent schools in Kitosh. More of BU'S activities will be discussed in the post 1945 section.

Another form of *buambani* or *obulala* that emerged in the 1930s was North Kitosh Farmers Association (NKFA). In 1938 the Association comprised 150 members and had sold 10,000 bags of maize in 1937 (Wolf, 1977:50). Unlike KES, NKFA was arguably constituted on denominational bias. This explains why leading farmers like Pascal Nabwana were not members of the Association. Nabwana was a devout Catholic whereas NKFA consisted of only Quakers.

In February 1942 NKFA petitioned the Governor through the North Kavirondo DC Mr. Hunter, against the colonial discriminatory terms in marketing maize produce. The Association pointed out the better terms given to European farmers and wondered why Africans were not considered for the same (*KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/355:1939 - 1944 Section 15 Administration*). Though NKFA's requests were not immediately settled, one notices that as the colonial situation advanced, Africans in Bungoma and Mt. Elgon were keenly observing racial discrimination and openly 'speaking out their sentiments. This kind of awareness developed more in the post 1945 era. That dimension will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

#### **4.8 Summary**

In this chapter the colonial situation to 1945 has been discussed. During the time-span between 1894 and 1945, colonialism was entrenched in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts. Consequently, new colonial values embedded in christianity, western missionary education, and administrative policies brought a new dimension to inter-as well as intra-ethnic or sub-ethnic and also inter-racial relations. As the argument has unfolded, it has appeared that conflicts among ethnic or sub-ethnic groups have not been caused by mere ethnic or sub-ethnic consciousness. Some considerations have underlain ethnic or sub-ethnic factors. Thus when other Luyia people were up against Wanga domination, it was because of the brutal manner Wanga colonial agents violated values of those sub-ethnic groups in the process of carrying out colonial assignments. Translated within Bukusu intra-sub-ethnic relations, the same antagonism has been seen in the way Bamusomi and Bakiyabi spiritedly contested for chieftaincy of Malakisi location.

The emergence of mission educated elite has been portrayed as having received values which made the elite see beyond ethnicity. Views of Kitosh Educational Society as well as North Kitosh Farmers Association have been used to illustrate how indigenous communities protested against colonial racial policies. This development improved in stature in the post 1945. It is to this period that the next chapter will turn.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.0 DECOLONISATION AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS: 1945 - 1963**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter as was indicated in the previous one, aims at discussing the process of decolonisation and how this impacted on inter and intra -ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and (Saboti Division of) Trans Nzoia districts. In this focus the roles of Elijah Masinde's Dini Ya Musambwa, (DYM), Pascal Nabwana's Bukusu Union (BU) and political parties will be examined. But we need to point out that what was taking place in the three districts was not an isolated event. In the entire colony, the mood and the course of action was aimed at decolonization (Maloba 1989:185-193). Maloba points out that in 1945 the Kenyan political scene was marked with tension and inter-racial suspicion. This tension was characterised by the emergence of nationalism that was as a result of the African reaction against colonialism. As Shiroya (1994:26-29) argues, it is as old as colonialism itself. In fact this aspect was partly illustrated by our discussion on the Lumboka-Chetambe war at the close of the 19th Century. Similarly, Wafula's (2000) M.A. work analyses this period of decolonisation among Babukusu in more details.

However, since 1945 or about that date, new forces emerged on the Kenyan socio-political scene propagating for freedom from the colonial domination. Shiroya (1994:44-50) states that slightly more than 98000 Kenya African soldiers fought on the side of the British. About 64,000 of them served outside Kenya and their exposure in those foreign places greatly influenced the political thinking of the average soldiers. It made them politically more conscious and enlightened than those who were non-veterans. This is because Africans who

had taken part in the Second World War had seen that Europeans were not any better than Africans themselves. African soldiers had seen Europeans dying in the battlefields just like any other races. Furthermore, the War was fought on the pedestal of democracy, freedom and liberty whose reality was denied to Africans in their own national homelands. The need to have these ideals realised led ex-World War II African returnees together with the then increasing crop of mission school elite as well as those Africans working in other fields to set up indigenous political parties and societies through which the nationalists demanded to have the Africans treated with respect and given back the control of their countries.

Bildad Mwaganu Kaggia and General China are among those ex-world War II returnees who used their experience in foreign lands to propagate for independence. Kaggia explained that his visit to the Middle East enabled him to see Christianity as a stepping stone for colonialism. Consequently, he decided to discourage Africans from foreign religions. Therefore, the process of decolonisation had within it its own dialectics which involved Christian mission elites and its opponents. But all these groups focused their prime attention to the removal of colonialism physically, politically and as Kaggia's case intimates, psychologically. For the ex-world war II soldiers, the territorial nationalism rather than the ethnic one shaped their views. Indeed, the African ex-soldiers wondered why the colonial government could not settle them in Kenya highlands as was done to the white ex-soldiers who were allocated land in places like Trans-Nzoia and Uasin Gishu (Kenyanchui, 1992: 117).

Herein lay a racial conflict which later consolidated to such a force that eventually resulted in the final struggle for and achievement of independence by Africans. The situation of



Colonization engendered conflictual relations between the colonisers and the colonised on the one hand as well as among the colonised themselves on the other. For the first category, conflict was experienced because from the theoretical point of view, the presence of colonisers disrupts indigenous peoples' operations and in so doing deprives them of their rights as genuine owners in their own land (Shivji, 1989:46). This reality has been illustrated in the previous chapter where issues of land alienation, political domination as well as general social domination of Africans by Europeans destroyed the pre-colonial African order and led to inter-racial as well as inter- or intra-ethnic or sub-ethnic suspicions, tensions and conflicts. There were conflictual situations which operated both psychologically and physically among the communities affected. Indigenous groups definitely resisted these colonial malpractices socially and politically. In essence, the process of this conflict that was sparked off by external colonial forces, fits in Abraham's (1982:108) articulation of exogenous conflict theory.

Even in the entire colonial matrix, other internal inter-ethnic relations existed. As Mamdani (1982:184) advises, these intra-ethnic aspects should be unravelled so as to facilitate our understanding of the nature of conflict between ethnic groups in the largest polity. Exogenous conflict formulation comes in handy. Abraham (1982:108) argues that through an endogenous formulation inherent predilections to change need to be analysed. It is in this sense that the forces and other forms of association in the region which continue across ethnic barriers are examined. Each one of them is discussed in the respective sections of this chapter. The discussion starts with Elijah Masinde's *Dini Ya Musambwa* (DYM).

## 5.2 DYM as a Decolonising Agent

DYM that emerged in Western Kenya was actuated by religious, political and social grievances against colonialists (Were, 1972:85). It was led by Elijah Masinde son of Mwasame and popularly known as *okhwa Nameme* (meaning his mother hailed from Bameme clan of Babukusu). DYM blended Christian and traditional approaches together in articulating their grievances. Ordinarily, *Musambwa* connotes traditional values that were passed down from departed ancestors. In this context DYM aimed at championing indigenous values against alien colonial forces and their values. But given the colonial milieu within which DYM was operating, some foreign devices were integrated. These alien items included the use of the rosary and the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. It is instructive to note that even Masinde himself was brought up, educated and socialised in the Friends Africa Mission (FAM) between 1928 and 1935. However, in 1935 he was expelled from FAM for having married the second wife against the rules of Quakers (Shilaro, 1991: 164).

Perhaps one can justifiably understand why DYM adopted the Old Testament texts in which Biblical patriarchs practised polygamy. He embraced this in espousing African indigenous values. The Old Testament texts discuss various important patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Hosea among others. Furthermore, the Old Testament highlights activities of personalities like King Solomon and David who had many wives. This seems to have a legitimating influence on DYM adherents who saw no contradiction in using the Old Testament in their services. Masinde himself, however, never publicly quoted the text (Simiyu 1997:5). Just about the time of his expulsion from the

mission, Masinde started urging his followers to reject humiliation on European settler farms (Makila, 1982:2).

However, it was after his alleged conversation with God (Were) in April 1943 that DYM became increasingly active in Bungoma, Trans Nzoia, Kakamega, West and East Pokot and into Bukisu of Uganda (Were, 1972; Wipper, 1977; Wolf, 1977, Makila, 1982; Asoka, 1989: 370-371; Shilaro, 1991; Simiyu, 1997). Nonetheless, the conversation should not be understood to imply the genesis of the DYM. It is claimed that a Mr. Walumoli, one of Masinde's colleagues, received the message in the late 1930s. This could be the time when DYM began and became more assertive later. DYM was opposed to Christian teachings as espoused in the New Testament, conscript labour on government projects and European farms, the forceful carrying of passes or identity cards (Sing.-Kipande), colonial underpayment of Africans for the latter's services, and the colonial alienation of the African land. In general, DYM's declared aim was to drive Europeans out of Kenya and usher in independence which Masinde believed could be achieved by 1952 (Were, 1972:94; Makila, 1982:2).

The DYM leader and his followers demonstrated their emancipatory role in terms of violent intentions. For instance in 1943 he and his followers burnt down the Native Tribunal building and three maize and produce shops at Kamutiong'i situated on the slopes of Mt. Elgon. Furthermore, in 1944 Masinde and his converts assaulted tribal policemen and headmen who had been assigned to deliver conscript labour summonses to him and other local members. DYM also in 1944 burnt down the house of Bickford an agriculture officer whose peremptory manner of encouraging soil conservation earned him the wrath of many local residents. The

damage was valued at Kshs.32, 585/50 cents, which was an enormous amount of money at that time. This damage and subsequent violence certainly brought the DYM under critical scrutiny from colonial administration. This violence may be interpreted in Fanonian concept of violence that serves an emancipatory purpose.

In 1947 when Masinde accompanied by his converts toured the ruins of Chetambe Fort for inspiration from the spirits of ancestors who had perished in the Lumboka-Chetambe resistance against colonialism, the colonial authorities in the area panicked largely due to Masinde's violent activities. Moreover, Masinde addressed a huge crowd of people pointing out to them the evils which colonialism had committed against the people. Colonial attempts to arrest him resulted in his hiding that continued until February 1948 when his followers eventually betrayed him. Consequently, he was arrested and charged with sedition (Simiyu, 1997:18). Again in 1948, when there was convened a huge DYM gathering at Malakisi in the present Sirisia Division of Bungoma, the police forces fired live ammunition on the crowd killing eleven people and wounded sixteen others. This reality that the DYM was a very effective vehicle for anti-colonial movements in Bungoma District compelled the colonial authorities to arrest and deport Masinde to Lamu on the Kenyan Coast for indefinite isolation away from his converts. Perhaps one would discern in this deportation the colonial strategy of bifurcation. This strategy would imply that by taking Masinde very far from his domain, the inspiration of DYM would diminish almost certainly from among his supporters in the area of conflict.

But contrary to expectation, the DYM merely went underground in Bungoma while in Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, West Pokot, East Pokot and Bukisu the Dini-inspired activities

proliferated. The convictions of its adherents are succinctly brought out in a letter written to the DC of Mbale, Uganda by one of those DYM members. The contents of the letter included the demand for colonialists to keep off from disturbing the DYM worshippers, especially in Kenya. In addition, the petitioner declared that even if colonialists killed the DYM adherents, that would not discourage surviving members. The letter of course insinuated a threat to the lives of colonialists themselves. The crudity of the language used and the name exhibited the inherent danger in the threat. The colonial officials were led into confusion by the name the petitioner used in signing off as 'danger' (*Hatari*) (Were, 1972:90-91). Wipper (1977:209) ably captured the fact that the DYM was trans-ethnic for it demonstrated a phenomenon common among African movements of autonomous groups bearing the same name of spiritist ancestral values (*Musambwa*). So it was not entirely hinged on one individual. What the individual seemed to do was rekindling the spirit of yearning for perpetuation of indigenous African values. It is to that extent that DYM was embraced by Abatachoni, Abakabasi, Babukusu, Bakisu and Pokot among many others.

Yet given the dominance of Babukusu in the movement, other sub-ethnic groups of Abaluyia, the Sabaot and Teso used it as an excuse to request for either their own locations or district. Clear examples here include Abakhayo and Teso who urged the colonial administration to give them their own sub-district that could later on mature into another district. Senior chief Okwara of Bukhaya location was more articulate in this demand (KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/29: 1954 - 6; General Correspondence). Okwara argued that Abakhayo had nothing to do with the DYM activities. To him, the DYM was a Bukusu affair and Abakhayo whose cultural values were

allegedly not close to Babukusu's should administratively be removed from the Bukusu district. Representatives of Teso location similarly echoed these views.

Looking at Okwara's view, one comes out with a belief that he merely wanted an area where Abakhayo would benefit. His desired sub-ethnic groups of Abawanga, Abamarachi and Teso were plausible excuses. Otherwise, Abakhayo being a sub-ethnic group of Abaluyia have more in common with Babukusu than the Pokot who actually belong to the Kalenjin community. Nor was Okwara's view the only angle that revealed intra-ethnic conflict sparked off by the DYM. Indeed the Christians from within Abatachoni, Babukusu and Sabaot were opposed to it. This was evidenced by tensions that involved the two parties in colonial Kenya. For instance, when the DYM adherents burnt Bickford's house, they also set ablaze the FAM Church that was in the neighbourhood (Simiyu, 1997:17). Upto and after 1963 the DYM was a factor which helped in fomenting African nationalism at the local grassroots.

### **5.3 Bukusu, Sabaot and Tachoni Unions and Decolonisation**

There emerged Bukusu, Sabaot, and Tachoni unions that were essentially couched in sub-ethnic terms. The ethnic response was not unique given that ethnicity is a system of allegiances. The colonial bifurcation approach rigidified ethnicity and sometimes sub-ethnicity by drawing rigid administrative units. Because of these boundaries, fellow countrymen and country women were perceived as foreigners whenever they were found in locations which were dominated by members of a different ethnic or sub-ethnic group. It was in that manner that colonial administrators in Bungoma District wanted Babukusu and Teso communities living in Elgon

area to register with divisional authorities as foreigners in their ancestral homeland (KNA/DC/BGM/2/13/3: Divisional and Locational Boundaries).

In this incident Justo Wamocho writing on behalf of Babukusu and Teso living in Elgon location in 1958 accused the DO of Kimilili of discrimination against the two communities in favour of the Sabaot. The petitioner challenged the authorities to peruse previous correspondence in North Nyanza District to confirm that Babukusu and Teso had equal claim to Elgon location. He even went further by implying that should the two communities be forced to get clearance before conducting their affairs in Elgon location, the Sabaot should similarly be forced to register as foreigners in Kimilili before being allowed there. This kind of scenario encouraged ethnic or sub-ethnic groups to develop inward looking interests against their neighbours. Certainly this approach did not help much to enhance the nationalism that was supposed to be a trans-territorial phenomenon.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Bukusu Union (BU) was previously known as Kitosh Educational Society (KES). In that outfit it comprised the Abatachoni and Babukusu in the district. But the moment it changed its name to become Bukusu Union, some members of the Abatachoni withdrew and subsequently established their own union, the Tachoni Union although some of the Abatachoni still remained in the BU. The Sabaot Union on the other hand seems to have developed towards the later part of the 1950s (KNA/DC/KIT/1/1/1:1960 Trans Nzoia District Annual Report). The latter two seem to have concentrated on basically cultural issues including clitoridectomy as well as asking for their own locations (KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/54: 1931-51; Native Tribes and their Customs). This study will use the BU

to demonstrate the impact of these unions on the decolonization process. It is argued that ethnicity can be activated when the group sees the need to enforce internal discipline or present a common front in opposition to other groups or institutions (Arispe, 1992:7).

The Bukusu Union had welfare and political concerns. Under the auspices of the Kimilili Locational Advisory Council (LAC) and in conjunction with the Catholic Union the Bukusu Union collected funds to send students abroad for training at colleges and universities (Wolf, 1977:152; Chikati 1988:51; Wandibba, 1996:2-5). Prominent beneficiaries of these *harambee* funds included Masinde Muliro, Charles Wasike, Clement Wepukhulu, Hezekia Ngoya and Frederick Wakhungu. Looking at the list, one can conclude that the Bukusu Union beneficiaries were not exclusively Babukusu. Nor can one argue that the areas in which it collected funds were mainly Bukusu dominated. Oral interviews conducted indicated that the Union received contributions from all sections of the Abatachoni, Babukusu and even the Sabaot (Holi, O.I, 1996, Kisicro, O. I., 1997).

In its relations with the Southern Buluyia communities, the Bukusu Union felt that Northern Buluyia, which included Abatachoni and Babukusu as well as the Sabaot sub-ethnic group of the Kalenjin, were disadvantaged in the way education resources were distributed. This was despite the large agricultural potential in Bungoma. It became even worse when the Bukusu Union members noted that three quarters of their produce was used to develop Southern Buluyia instead of the Northern counterpart. Furthermore, the Union felt that continued use of Southern Buluyia dialects in examinations adversely affected its pupils. Consequently, since



the mid- 1940s the Bukusu Union started advocating for the creation of a new district where its members would stand to benefit in matters of education and other social welfare aspects.

The pressure for the split of the North Nyanza District was ultimately realised in 1956 partly due to the Bukusu Union's pressure and the support it had received from the African District Council (ADC) which had significant Bukusu representation. Yet this pressure was not enough. The colonial administration also considered the creation of a new district as beneficial in their effort to combat against DYM activities. Indeed, as early as 1954 when Bungoma was just an administrative sub-station, the Nyanza PC, C. H. Williams reported that the DYM disturbances that led to the setting up of the sub-station (KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/252:1953 - 1958 ADC Nyanza) had gone. To underscore the latter point, it is safe to observe that the district which became known as Elgon Nyanza comprised even sub-ethnic collectivities of the Abakhayo, Abamarachi and the Teso who had requested to be excluded from the new district. Furthermore, Simiyu (1997:27) has argued that the colonial forces created the Elgon Nyanza District so that these could probably undercut altogether the influence of Masinde Muliro in that district. All the foregoing illustrates that the district was to serve primarily the colonial interests. That in the process some African communities benefited indirectly was secondary to the principal designs of the division of the district into two virtually independent entities.

The Bukusu Union in 1940s advocated for the transfer of the Babukusu from the Kenya Colony altogether to Uganda Protectorate where their kinsmen, the Bakisu are found. From this point, one can justify that linguistically *Lubukusu*, the dialect of the Babukusu is much closer to *Lukisu* which was spoken by the Bakisu. These two are rather distant from dialects of Southern

Luyia sub-ethnic groups, especially the *Ohulogoli* of the Maragoli. Language problem in Buluyia raised some concern among the leaders of the Church Mission Society (CMS) who attempted to establish a standard Luyia dialect but met with great resistance (Whitely, 1969:115). According to Whitely, the Maragoli resented such efforts and demanded in the 1950s for recognition of the Olulogoli. This in turn sparked off similar demands from such communities as the Abatachoni, Abatirichi, Abawanga and the Babukusu. Perhaps it was the linguistic closeness of the Bakisu and Babukusu that persuaded the BU to wish to be closer to the Bakisu. However, their wish was not realised and so the Babukusu are dominantly in Kenya and Bakisu are in Uganda. This split and affinity calls in the question of nationhood and statehood. This issue may be discussed later in the next chapter.

On the other hand the Bukusu Union was not quite averse to the trans-ethnic nationalism that was articulated in various parts of Kenya through Kenya African Union (KAU). The very formation of KAU brought together members from different ethnic groups, including the Agikuyu, Luo and the Abaluyia. KAU opened branches at places like Kisumu, Nakuru, and Kakamega as well as in other parts of the country. Therefore, with branches in smaller towns, members from many ethnic groups registered. With this it was observed that some of the Abaluyia belonged to KAU and their ethnic or sub-ethnic organisations (KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/360 - 1937-1946: Section Administration).

One such person was John Victor Khatete who in 1946, as a member of KAU as well as Secretary to the Bukusu Union, petitioned the Rift Valley and Nyanza PCs against their regime's repression of Africans. He stressed that Africans needed liberty, freedom and right to

property. In addition, he intimated that Africans in Trans Nzoia were angry with the colonialists for the latter's destocking measures and colonial land alienation. Wolf (1977:152) lucidly points out that the Bukusu Union was outspoken in criticising the European act of expelling African inhabitants who had to make way for the European ex-servicemen that were offered land in what was racially branded "White Highlands". Perhaps it would be fitting to quote Khatete's words briefly to bring out his anger and perception against colonial destocking and land alienation activities. He argues in part that:

"If you [colonialist] are aiming to [sic] decrease the African cattle knowing that it is our wealth and our hope of living [sic], consider well. I will first command you to decrease your European cows and ours will come second...You yourselves will have to arrange as soon as possible to remove [sic] from the African lands including from Kamukuywa river, Lugari, Hoey's [Moi's] Bridge to Kitale. You are foreigners (KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/366, 1937 - 1946).

The Bukusu Union's sentiments were not isolated outbursts. They were well thought -out issues that were articulated by elite in the Union. These same issues were raised at another forum that represented the entire Abaluyia. Theirs was known as the Abaluyia Welfare Association (AWA). Various branches of this group in 1950 urged for European withdrawal and handing over of tracts of land in Kipkaren, Kamukuywa and Kaimosi. Thus one can see the conflict which was largely based on the colonised against the colonisers. Justifying the use of violence for emancipatory purposes, Frantz Fanon emphasised the psychological aspects of colonial domination and the violent resistance which this generated (Seidman, 1996).

Even if Fanonian psychoanalytical approach has some Marxian class inclination, it is integrated in the model formulated to harness aspects of Dahrendorf and Simmel with an appropriate psychological dimension. Indeed, through the dualism of the coloniser and the

colonised, there is a process of sociation which brings into interplay forces of unequal distribution, not only of authority and power, but also land along mainly racial lines. At the local level, the conflict degenerated to ethnic or sub-ethnic dimensions. This inequality caused by both indogenous and exogenous forces result in conflicts which are social, political, economic and psychological in nature.

Mazrui's (1969a) position here primarily illustrates the conflictual relations which operate within societies. As we have illustrated right from chapter one, he perceives conflict as the highest stage that could lead to integration. Herein lies the seed for conflict resolution and integration. This Mazruian view seems to be still cherished by him as his (Mazrui, 1993) work illustrates. However, he now grapples not so much with ethnic or inter-ethnic issues, as he does with globalism. According to him (Mazrui, Sunday Nation, January 22, 2000:16), globalism or globalisation consists of processes that lead to interdependence and the increasing rapidity of exchange across vast distances. Mazrui (*ibid*) further states that globalisation is the gradual villagization of the world. But does this also mean that the world has the compassion of the village? Herein lies another contradiction, for much as the world is globalised, it does lack the compassions of the village, some of which are manifested in inter and intra ethnic relations. In this study, conflict is discussed within the ethnic dimension of Bukusu Union and AWA, issues of land alienation, forced destocking, racism and the ultimate colonialism were a colony-wide and even continental concern. In order to highlight this concern in the areas of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia as well as beyond these confines, we turn to the next sub-division on political parties.

#### **5.4 Political Parties in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts 1945 - 1963**

The notion of 'political parties' in Africa was a colonial introduction to make African politicians compete for seats initially in the legislative council and later for other elective political posts through parties as vehicles "to such desired ends. Thus, people with similar political views join one party and competed for political space against other people in different political parties and ideals. Given the colonial scenario in which political parties were introduced, it was the educated elites who formed and propagated political parties and their ideals. In essence, there was multi-party situation in colonial Kenya.

According to Assefa (1996:52), multipartyism assumes that society would be better off if individuals and groups compete to sell their views in the market place of ideas and that views bought by the majority reflect the public will. The underlying assumption again is that such a process gives every one a chance to contribute to and participate in governance and political decision making. However, as the discussion in this section and those that follow intimate, there was unequal participation in both party formation and decision making. The inequality and the subsequent suspicions, tensions and conflicts give room for the application of Dahrendorf's and Simmel's comments on conflict theory.

The two theorists' views that conflicts arise out of dualistic inequalities in the distribution of authority in the process of socialization apply to our study. It is worthwhile to point out that the conflict here was racial and ethnic. Assefa (ibid) clearly explains how so many African societies have deep cleavages based on factors such as ethnicity and religion. Hence multi-party competition tends to exacerbate these rifts if not carefully handled.

As we have argued in the preceding sub-section, KAU was the first indigenous national multi-ethnic party to operate from about 1945 and after. However, with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952, KAU was banned by the racist colonial government in 1953. But since that time, the political organisation appears to have gone underground. In Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia anti-colonial politics after 1953 was conducted through the millenarian activities of the religio-political DYM. This situation continued until 1955 when the colonial government licensed the formation of African political parties at the provincial and not the national levels (Mazrui and Tidy 1984:106; Aseka, 1989: 387). For as much as provincial boundaries were largely ethnically derived, this policy facilitated pro-ethnic conscious politics as opposed to nation-wide approach.

The strategy was not accidental. This is demonstrated by the colonial government's refusal to register Argwings Kodhek's Kenya African National Congress (KANU) which was to be based in Nairobi. Kodhek had argued that the policy prevented the growth of nationalism (Shiroya, 1994:32). True to the strategy, the colonialists resisted Kodhek until after he had changed the name of KANU party to Nairobi African Congress (NAC). But as one could guess, Nairobi was, just as it is currently, a cosmopolitan city embracing a variety of ethnic groups and others, to say the least. Hence what the colonialists perhaps succeeded in doing was denying Kodhek's party the opportunity to be known outside the confines of cosmopolitan Nairobi.

Some of the political parties which emerged due to the ethnically packaged policy included Elgon Nyanza District Congress (ENDC), under the leadership of Muliro, which was dominant in Elgon Nyanza (Bungoma, Teso and Mt. Elgon districts) as well as the North Nyanza African

District Congress (ENDC), under the leadership of Muliro, which was dominant in Elgon Nyanza (Bungoma, Teso and Mt. Elgon districts) as well as the North Nyanza African District Congress (NNADC) whose leader was Joseph Daniel Otiende which predominated in North Nyanza (Kakamega, Butere-Mumias and Vihiga). The NNADC later changed its name to become North Nyanza African Nationalist Association (NNANA) (Mulaa, 1981:101; Aseka, 1989:387). These parties were active in Buluyia to the extent that their existence sparked off intra-ethnic rivalries in the area under investigation.

In 1957 during the campaign for election into the Legislative Assembly ENDC sponsored Muliro to run against Otiende from Maragoli, Wycliffe W. Awori from Busia who was also a former nominated member for North Nyanza constituency between 1952 and 1957 and Nathaniel Siganga from Bunyala Nabakholo. Others who joined the contest for the seat were W. B. Akatsa, and Joseph Kadima (Aseka, 1989:389). Muliro beat his opponents and became the first elected member for the North Nyanza constituency that comprised today's Western Province till 1961 when another constituency, the Elgon Nyanza was created for further political decentralisation in the area.

As a Legislative Member, Muliro strove to build a Luyia regional unity. But still some rivalries continued. Consequently, with the approach of the 1960s, his opponents looked for ways to establish other political alliances so that they could probably win in the subsequent elections for the Legislative Assembly.

In early 1959, the colonial government allowed the formation of territorially based political parties. Consequently, Muliro formed Kenya National Party (KNP) in July 1959. This party was supported by seven Africans, one European and six Asians who advocated for the

crownland and unused land in the highlands to be made available to Africans. In the early days of 1960, Muliro's KNP changed its name to become Kenya African Peoples Party (KAPP), perhaps to fit in with the urge for African majority voice to be heard (Bogonko, 1980:219 – 248, Aseka, 1989:393).

Similarly in early 1960 the Kalenjin Political Alliance (KPA) under Moi, and the Maasai United Front (MUF) led by John Keen and David Lemomo were formed to defend their ethnic lands against the perceived land hungry Agikuyu in the event of European departure. KPA in May 1960 expressed its interest in what is now familiar ethnic conflict hot-spots of Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Nakuru and Sotik, which the Kalenjin claimed as having been their homeland territories before the advent of Europeans. Here, one could begin to see that issues of inter-ethnic conflicts that emerged prominently in the late 20th century in Western Kenya could be discerned right from the late pre-independence period.

1960 was an important year in Kenyan politics. It was a year when some ethnically based political parties merged to form two main national political parties in their preparation for the historic Lancaster House conferences which ultimately led to the drafting of the first constitution of Independent Kenya. In early 1960, therefore, a late 1959 Kenya Independence Movement (KIM) which comprised mainly the Agikuyu related groups and the Luo changed and formed the Kenya African National Union (KANU). This party which was initially under the leadership of James Gichuru, Thomas Mboya and Oginga Odinga advocated for a strong central government. With this, it should be noted that the Agikuyu are the largest ethnic group in Kenya and the Luo are fairly very many but not to the level of the former. In fact, during the



first census of the post independence Kenya, the Luo were rated as the second largest ethnic group in the country. But since 1979, the census counting lowered them to the third largest community after the Abaluyia. Anyhow whatever the number, the Luo numerical dominance added to that of the Agikuyu could have sent fears and suspicions to politicians from other ethnic groups who suspected that the big two were upto no good for the security of the rest of the Kenyan people. The role of fear among ethnic collectivities seems crucial in determining political perceptions in many other African countries, including Nigeria. One delegate argued that his people in Northern Nigeria feared losing their opportunities to others (Young, 1982:90).

Based on the fears and suspicions about the interests of KANU politicians, KAPP of Muliro, KPA of Moi, MUF of Keen, Coast African Peoples Union (CAPU) of Ronald Gideon Ngala and Somali National Association (SNA) together met at Ngong in June 1960 and formed Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). It has been argued that KADU was composed of smaller ethnic groups. This may have been due to the decolonisation politics in which ethnicity was activated. Colonialism seemed to have exploited the situation to divide and rule Kenya. Otherwise, going by the census of the first post-independence Kenya, the Abaluyia could not be described as a small ethnic community. Indeed they formed the third largest ethnic group becoming very close to the population of the Luo.

Besides, not all the Abaluyia supported KADU. Quite a sizeable number of them supported KANU especially Otiende's NNANA, which was converted into a branch of KANU. Similarly Abakhayo, Abamarachi, Abasamia and Abanyala (Port) supported KANU. Furthermore, while

the merging of political parties was taking place, Musa Amalemba formed his own Buluyia People's Union (BPU) in 1960. It would appear from this point that Amalemba was not satisfied with the policies of the other parties. Besides, as will be argued later, some sub-ethnic groups from among the Kalenjin supported KANU in 1962. Hence the blanket generalisation which has been characteristic in analyses of the political activities on the eve of independence simply masked the intra-ethnic conflicts which were apparent at that time

From a Kenyan trans-territorial perspective, KANU propagated for unity and centralism. Its members favoured a strong central government. In an attempt to draft a constitution which would reflect their dream, the KANU leadership interestingly looked for constitutional advisors from India in the person of a Mr. B. Malik and later from the USA, a lawyer by the name of Thurgood Marshal, an African American. Now these two large leading democracies, India and the USA, on two different continents were, as they are now, organised on the basis of federalism. In that case, factors that could have inspired KANU nationalists to seek for advisers from the two democracies would lie in the two countries' support, in one way or another, for liberation struggles in Africa.

KADU went in for what was perceived as majimboism (Regionalism). White settlers such as Wilfred Havelock, Michael Blundell, R. S. Alexander among others allegedly thought out Majimbo as a strategy. The thinking was sparked off by the settlers who felt in the 1950s that Westminster parliamentary model could not be adopted in Kenya because it gave too much power to the majority (Odinga, 1967:226). In a word, KADU seemed to have argued that their strategy was sensitive to the rights of the minorities. But perhaps here again we should point

out that the concept of minorities should be construed in the ethnic and racial terms as opposed to gender, youth and other considerations such as physical disabilities. The leadership obtained their legal expert Dr. Edward E. Zellweger, a jurist from Switzerland. Switzerland's cantonisation was a form of federalism that may have inspired KADU to pursue their *majimbo*. This expert was assisted by a counterpart for the settlers' parties.

The regional or *majimbo* constitutional framework has continued to generate heated debates in the country since independence. Perhaps we should briefly examine what it entailed at the time between 1960 and 1963 when Kenya achieved its independence. KADU stood for strong regional governments. The KADU constitution perceived Kenya in six regions (Majimbo) with control over land, primary and secondary education, taxes for local use, the police force and a local government in each. The advocates argued that only matters of defence, foreign affairs, currency and higher education could fall under the central government. In their argument, KADU adherents cited examples of Switzerland, Australia, USA and UK as successful countries where regionally based governments worked.

Furthermore KADU advocated a bicameral legislature made up of an Upper House and a Lower House (Odinga, 1967:230; Bogonko, 1980:254; Okondo, 1995). Seen from the present, one notices that the bicameral parliament was aimed at ensuring that checks and balances are instituted in the process of legislation. Yet given the nationalist movement of the 1960 and 1963, this aspect seemed to have been lost for whatever reason. Instead, KADU advocates were seen as anti-nationalists, unpatriotic and tribally divisive (Okondo, 1995:33). Indeed, in a recent book review article, Anderson (1998: 343) wrongly contrasts "KADU's regionalism

against Kenyatta and KANU's nationalism". One would rather he contrasted KADU's regionalism with KANU's centralism.

KANU's project on the other hand was to establish a strong central government controlling all important organs of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The party political vision was entrenched on national unity. Here, one would notice that such unity presupposed a totalizing ideology that sought to bring together every manifestation of political interest or collective action (Mkandawire, 1997:18). This nationalist view was advocated by Kenya's forceful group of debaters among whom were Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya and Jomo Kenyatta. However, it appeared to have been swallowed entirely by the mutuality of political expedience in many participants. Analysts and observers of the Kenyan decolonisation scenario have often not risen above the patronising spirit in this politics to understand its causal dynamics. The fear that totalizing forces could ultimately usher in autocratic regimes was probably far from the ordinary Kenyans' minds.

Anyhow, each party went to the Lancaster House conference well convinced in their contracted centralising or decentralising ideals and was determined not to yield. It had to take some element of treachery for a 'compromise' to be reached. For according to Odinga (1967) Kenyatta persuaded his KANU team to accept whatever political format which the Colonial Secretary, Maudlin would put forward and leave the rest to be addressed when they were back at home and in political power. As Odinga (1967:234) states, Kenyatta on his arrival metaphorically reassured his supporters that when KADU looked at the 'face of the

constitution,' they would think it was a cow, but when they tried to milk it they would find it was a donkey.

So Kenyatta's 'cow-donkey' metaphor revealed his intentions to frustrate the Lancaster House brokered constitution from the outset. According to that constitution Kenya was to have a strong central government, and a two bicameral parliament. The central government was to control external affairs, defence, international trade, customs, major economic development and raising of development funds from overseas. This was mainly part of KANU's proposal. From KADU's framework the brokered constitution allowed for the division of the country into six *majimbo* with regional assemblies. Regions could derive power from the constitution to control agricultural land, primary and intermediate education, local government and public health. (Odinga, 1967:230; Bogonko, 1980:269).

Even the bicameral parliament was defined basically from KADU's point of view. It was to consist of the Lower and Upper Houses. The Lower House was to comprise members elected by universal suffrage from single member constituencies. The Upper House on the other hand was to be made up of representatives of the existing districts, with a member from each. The task of the Upper House was to guard the constitution against unnecessary amendments whose motives were to serve some form of parochial personal interests. The Upper House had power to delay bills except those relating to money (*ibid*). This framework essentially appears to have anticipated future misuse of power and thus the dual chambers would provide the necessary democratic mechanisms of checks and balances against such parochial manoeuvres for personal rather than national gains.

Land preoccupied both parties at the Lancaster House conference. The seriousness of the land question forced Julius Gikonyo Kiano of KANU to recommend in 1962 that land and property rights should be enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Moi of KADU readily supported the suggestion. Moi's argument was that unless Kiano's idea was accepted, the Kalenjin community would be apprehensive about their land security and this would even result in ethnic conflicts. He pointed out that land essentially belonged to ethnic communities but not Kenya (Maloba, 1989:184).

Stemming from Kiano's and Moi's views, land was enshrined in the Bill of Rights. But the mood and implication of the Bill of Rights were biased. Shivji (1989:46) lucidly articulates the bias inherent in the Bill right from its formulation. Shivji traces its genesis in the English Bill of Rights of 1679. The English Bill was exclusively for the Englishmen. But as it has been articulated in Locke's theory of the 'natural rights to life, liberty and property or the 1789 French Revolution's universalisation of the 'Rights of Man and Citizen' that bias has stuck. For instance, in the colonial era 'man' did not include the colonised person. Similarly, as we argued in the previous chapter, 'native' was excluded from the notion of 'citizen. Going along this argument, one would submit that the views of our representatives about the Bill of Rights were perceived within a patriarchal paradigm. To that extent, representatives could not see land portending a future of causing conflict in the light of gender issues. This threat has so far been latent. In fact one could argue that patriarchy was a continent-wide problem. Imam (1997:19) laments that in Nigeria both peasant and middle class women in the North are still discriminated against in terms of inheritance rights, access to education, choice in marriage, control in children and rights to divorce.

Land issues in Kenya took a significant position in the campaigns of the two parties. At the local and national level, the electorate was often briefed about implications of the Lancaster brokered constitution by their representative political elite. In Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia the key players were Muliro and Daniel Mossi. Muliro's perception, as he told the 1962 Boundaries Commission, was that Kitale should form the headquarters of the Luyia dominated Western Region. In the middle of 1962 he laid a foundation stone in the middle of the sports stadium at Kitale and tried to annex it in a symbolic way as the capital of the Western Region. Muliro's argument which was supported by Abaluyia elders was that before the Kalenjin had settled in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu, these areas were inhabited by the Abaluyia (Wolf, 1977:193, Kiliku, 1992:22, Wandibba, 1996:19; KNA/PC/NZA/4/14 :5 Provincial And District Boundaries: 1962).

Muliro's argument was at variance with the wishes of the Sabaot, some of whom were in his Elgon Nyanza constituency. The Sabaot leadership under Mossi told the 1962 Boundaries Commission that they wished to be administered from Trans Nzoia and to be included in the Rift Valley Region together with fellow Kalenjin. To help argue their grievances more cogently, the Sabaot formed the West Kalenjin Congress (WKC) in September 1962. Mossi was president of the party. They claimed that Trans Nzoia was a Kalenjin land.

In essence the question of land in general or Trans Nzoia in particular brought a rift between the Abaluyia and the Kalenjin. In the confines of this study, Babukusu and the Sabaot were brought to a collision course. Tension and suspicion reigned. A similar situation had arisen in 1946 over Kimilili-Kamukuywa boundary. In the 1946 conflict, chief Tendeti's son was

injured. The Kony had argued that Babukusu had encroached on their land and as a consequence their livestock starved (KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/23:1944-49). On September 29th, 1962, the General Secretary of WKC complained to Trans Nzoia DC that his Kalenjin people, the Sabaot living in Elgon Nyanza District were mistreated by the Abaluyia. Consequently, they wanted the DC to allow the Sabaot to transfer to Trans Nzoia District and register as voters there. The WKC's effort probably arose out of their frustrations in pursuing their concerns through the Bukusu dominated ADC of Elgon Nyanza. It was recorded in 1961 that councillors in that ADC tended to deliberate matters from an ethnic angle (KNA/PC/NZA/4/4/114/ADC of Elgon Nyanza, 1961). In such manner the minority Sabaot concerns were not given fair attention. This frustrated the community.

However, in the views of the WKC, it was better to have the Kalenjin to represent them in both Upper and Lower Houses (KNA/DC/KIT/1/5/8:1962-1963: Registration of Voters and General Correspondence, Odinga, 1967:244, Wolf, 1977:194; Kiliku, 1992:22; and Ogot, 1995:67). The tension worsened when the Boundaries Commission refused to respond to the WKC recommendations. Instead the commission hived off some 150,000 acres of land from the colonial Trans Nzoia and added them to the Western Region in form of settlement schemes on both sides of the River Nzoia. Of these, 95,000 acres were in Bungoma. This led to the creation of Kamukuywa, Naitiri, Tangaren, Kibisi and Ndalul schemes. In reaction, the WKC transferred their allegiance from KADU to KANU. Hence the conflict that emanated from socio-economic issues got enlarged to add a political component to it. The WKC believed that by throwing their weight behind KANU, in the event that the party won, WKC's wishes relating



to land would be addressed favourably. Whether the WKC's wishes were adequately tackled or not will be discussed in the next chapter.

Of interest in this chapter is the fact that due to differences between the Abaluyia and Sabaot communities about where Trans Nzoia should fall, the two people's relations were strained. This strain led to violence, cattle raids and counter raids and damage to property, especially in the Mt. Elgon area. Furthermore, the conflict caused the Sabaot to abandon KADU in which most of the Kalenjin sub-ethnic groups vested their interests and chose to support KANU. The argument here is that the support was not so much dictated by mere ethnicity as by other social and economic benefits that the electorate hoped to receive. The 1963 general election campaign social setting may be adduced in order to shed more light.

In that general election two candidates stood in the Mt. Elgon constituency. One was Mossi, a Sabaot who stood on a KANU ticket and another was Thomas Matifari, a Muluyia-Tachoni sub-ethnic group-who contested the seat on a KADU ticket. Normally, the Sabaot considered the Abatachoni as their cousins. Indeed they had favourably acknowledged Matifari's brother Shadrack Mamadi's 'olugongoship' (rulership) in Kapsakwony in the 1950's. The ancestors of these two Tachoni personalities had lived in Mt. Elgon since early 19th century. Therefore, by the middle of the 20th century, one would not possibly be justified to consider them as '*lamek*' which in literal translation means 'aliens' (KNA/DC/KIT/1/5/8: 1962-1963; Mmadi, O.I.1997).

But on noticing that Matifari was contesting against Mossi for Mt. Elgon constituency, trouble started. People's houses, especially when the owners were suspected to be Matifari's or KADU

supporters, were burnt down, their livestock was raided and the whole strategy was to expel them from Mt. Elgon. By refusing to support Mossi, the choice of most of the Sabaot, such people were immediately labelled as aliens or Bukusu who were to be evacuated from the area of the Sabaot (Kimkung, O.I., 1997). Even Matifari's car was set on fire (Masheti and Okombo, 1998:70). In the confrontation, Arap-Kisembe (1978:123) explains that some Babukusu and Teso who had been assimilated into the Sabaot fought as allies against the non-Sabaot. So whereas ethnic or sub-ethnic labels and other stereotypes were exchanged in the conflicts of 1963, the main underlying factors were economic and political issues.

### **5.5 Inter Ethnic Relations in Non-Political Situations**

The last paragraph has hinted at the dimension of harmonious inter-ethnic interactions between the various communities that inhabited Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia in the era of decolonization. It is this often calm and imperceptible interaction which this sub-section sets out to address. Here our argument is to point out that social relations operating in any locality are subtle, complex and defy the norms of blanket generalisations. To illustrate this dimension, we shall address the areas of formal education and social welfare. But even in these aspects some undercurrents of tension and suspicion may emerge.

Western formal education was introduced in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia areas informally by missionaries and later by the colonial government. This move started much earlier than the period under scrutiny in this chapter. It suffices to state that the spread of Western education took a South-North dimensional approach. In the case of Bungoma, this type of education came in from Kakamega that was by then known as North Nyanza District.

Indeed among the first teachers in Bungoma were those from Kakamega where Christian missionaries had already put up elementary and later secondary schools. Thus, true to the Bukusu Union complaint in the pre 1956 period, although Bungoma constituted a quarter of the entire North Nyanza District, it had only 18% of the aided primary and 10% of the intermediate schools of North Nyanza (Wolf, 1977:189). This shows how social service provision such as education was skewed favourably towards Kakamega. This enabled the district to produce enough teachers so that some of them were dispatched to Bungoma. This may further explain why examinations were set using the Southern Luyia dialects.

In Bungoma, Western education gradually spread towards Mt. Elgon. Teachers in this latter area were mainly Babukusu. Like the case was with teachers from North Nyanza, Babukusu used *Lubukusu* in their educational instruction. This factor was not well received by the Sabaot of Mt. Elgon. But due to their lack of adequate Sabaot teachers as well as schools, they had to bear with the situation (Maruti, O.I, 1997).

There are cases when Sabaot pupils feared being discriminated against during selection into intermediate schools that were mainly situated in the Babukusu dominated areas. Informants alleged that using Sabaot names caused some who had passed in their examinations to be left out during selections to higher classes. To avoid possible discrimination, some Sabaot pupils adopted names that resembled those used by Babukusu (Chebet, O.I, 1996). Chebet himself a retired education officer, claims that he adopted the name '*Juma*' to escape discrimination

Kakasha (Masheti and Okombo, 1998:58 - 60) echoes this point. He claims that in 1953, he failed to join Shamberere Boarding School because his name was struck out due to tribalism. Kakasha further claims that in his place, a Bukusu pupil who had not performed well was taken instead. Again in 1958, Kakasha alleges having failed to join Kamusinga on ethnic grounds. This argument seems tricky because it raises doubt about the whole colonial system of selection. Since it is not easy to get those who took part in the actual selection to justify their action, one can safely use this argument as a pointer to inter-ethnic mistrust between the two communities. Besides, the name 'Juma' is not Luyia in origin because it borrows from the Swahili name of the fifth day in a week, Friday or *Ijuma*.

Many African communities in Kenya have incorporated this nomenclature in their naming systems. A similar example is 'Barasa', a name derived from Monday. During colonial days, many public meetings (*Baraza*) were held on Mondays. Hence children born on Mondays were often given the name 'Barasa' as a commemorative signal. In fact 'Baraza' was adopted by a local Kiswahili newspaper that was published by the Standard Group of Newspapers and in circulation throughout the 1960s and 1970s but are no longer in publication. Whatever the case, the use of *Lubukusu* as a medium of instruction in schools where both Babukusu and Sabaot learnt, partly contributed to reasons for most Sabaot elders' fluency in that dialect. Even the interviews this researcher conducted in Mt. Elgon and Saboti areas attested to the fact that a good number of Sabaot spoke *Lubukusu* and to a smaller extent *Olutachoni*. However, those who spoke *Olutachoni* had initially lived in areas dominated by Abatachoni in both Bungoma and Lugari districts.

Chebet argues that on the eve of independence, the Sabaot had very few primary schools. These included Kaptama, Kapsakwony, Kapkateny and Cheptais primary schools. This number contrasts with many primary schools founded in the other parts of Bungoma District where the FAM, the Catholics and the Salvation Army were actively engaged in setting up churches, elementary schools and even hospitals. In fact, on the eve of independence several secondary schools had come up in the non-Sabaot areas of Bungoma. They included Friends School Kamusinga that enrolled both arts and science streams for form five in 1962. Also Bungoma and Kibabii secondary schools were already functioning fully (KNA/PC/NZA/4/4/78: Annual Report, Elgon Nyanza, 1961).

This anomaly in the setting up of schools and other infrastructures during the colonial period did contribute to the souring relations between Babukusu and the Sabaot. This came about in the presence of many of the Bukusu educated youth who easily out-competed their Sabaot counterparts in the few job opportunities in the Mt. Elgon area. This factor will be revisited in the next chapter. But for the moment it is worthwhile to argue that the Babukusu and other Abaluyia benefits were mainly coincidental. The prime beneficiaries were colonialists and their agents. Education in the colonial period was aimed primarily at preparing Africans for economic exploitation by colonialists and their agents. Thus that Mt. Elgon was not lucky in receiving schools may essentially be due to its terrain and the Sabaot semi-nomadic pastoral characteristics which often were not conducive for the dissemination of Western education which favours sedentary communities.

With regard to welfare, the various communities in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia interacted fairly comfortably. The interactions ranged from their working together in community development projects, assisting the needy, as well as intermarriages that brought the communities socially closer. We have already discussed how various ethnic or sub-ethnic groups co-operated in '*buambani* or *obulala*' in the previous chapter. Therefore, this process continued even in the decolonisation period. Members worked together in ploughing, planting, pasture clearing, spring protection, digging coffee holes, preparation of vegetable seed beds and even beer drinking (*KNA/DC/EN/1/ 4:1959: Elgon Nyanza\_District Annual Report*, Askwith, 1995:191, Kirui, O.I, 1997).

Besides, all the communities living in the area under study assisted each other in several ways. One mode of assistance is known among Abaluyia as *okhwekekha*. This was a process in which a person assisted a needy relative or friend with a cow, an ox or generally several cattle. The strategy in that form of assistance was to gradually enable the recipient to have access to milk, manure, cow dung or ploughing oxen. The system was supportive and facilitated enablement of those who were poor. Such cattle when allowed to stay at the recipient's home for a longer period, on being reclaimed, the owner gave a token price often in form of a calf or its equivalent in appreciation for the care the recipient had undertaken in looking after the cattle. From such gesture, a person who was needy slowly started acquiring some wealth in that way. Makokha (1993) has eloquently discussed that practice as having existed among the Babukusu and their neighbours. This information is widely supported by informants from both Abatachoni and the Sabaot (Kirui, O.I, 1997; Maruti, O.I, 1997).

*Okhwekekha* was not the only way in which cattle changed hands among the people of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia. Cattle were also exchanged through intermarriages. This social undertaking has a long history and was not adversely affected by the conflicts that involved their different communities. Even when some of the Babukusu and Sabaot were often engaged in hostilities, their kinsmen continued to marry across their ethnic frontiers. In the subsequent bride price negotiations, cattle got transferred to the homes of brides. As a further result, more links were cemented which could again allow for inter-ethnic cooperation and assistance.

Inter-ethnic intermarriages led to cross-fertilisation of cultural values. These included sharing of names from both sides of the couples. Similarly, practices such as clitoridectomy gradually got introduced in non-practising communities especially to uncircumcised brides who got married to the Sabaot. In the early 1990s such practice raised tensions in Mt. Elgon, however, in the colonial period up to the eve of independence, no controversy was encountered. Mrs. Tendeti (O.I, 1997) argued that usually brides from non-Sabaot clans would be teased, derided and sometimes persuaded by their Sabaot women-folk until they finally resolved to undergo the ritual. It is possible to submit that such pressure never sparked off any controversy in the last years of colonialism because clitoridectomy was still highly regarded by not only the Sabaot but also the Abatachoni and some clans of the Babukusu. This fact is bolstered by the seriousness with which the North Nyanza ADC deliberated on this matter in 1951. It considered why force was to be used in stopping some of the Abaluyia from continuing with the practice of clitoridectomy (KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/54:1931-51 Native Tribes and their Customs:

Circumcision). It was even the non-Sabaot, especially the Abatachoni, Babukusu and Nandi whose female circumcisers went to practise the ritual expertise in the Mt. Elgon area.

Clitoridectomy seems to have been carried out differently in various parts of Africa. Imam (1997) explains some of these methods as involving amputating the nerve and muscle of the clitoris, cutting off the lips of the vagina and stitching and closing the lips of the vagina. The description evokes some revulsion in the practice that forced precolonial authorities in Lesotho and the Akan people to out-law the ritual. The practice of circumcision for males in Elgon area, on the other hand, took place by engaging traditional surgeons from other ethnic groups. However, due to interactions and transmission of values and skills through inheritance, the Sabaot have gradually acquired their own female as well as male circumcision experts (Kirui, O.I, 1997; Tendeti, O.I, 1997).

## **5.6 Summary**

This chapter has examined inter and intra-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and the Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia districts in the decolonisation period from 1945 to 1963. During this period various ethnic and sub-ethnic communities reacted differently towards the saga of decolonisation. It has been argued that the DYM, BU, AWA and emergent political parties had one thing in common, that they all did not want colonialism and its repressive tendencies. However, how they went about the actualization of their decolonisation quest depended on each ethnic or sub-ethnic group's interests. As 1963 approached, some sections of Buluyia and Kalenjin aligned with KANU while others championed KADU.



Besides, the chapter has argued that outside political conflicts and tensions, the three communities continued to co-operate, intermarry and carry out other projects together. In essence, this chapter has pointed out that the specific relations that one may wish to highlight may require some form of historical contextualization. Generalisation would mask the actual situations, which obtained in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia. The old social structure was defined by a complex system of mutual relations that survived ethnic conflicts. To further analyse the nature of subsequent inter-and intra-ethnic relations in post independence period we turn to the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **6.0 INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE ERA 1963 - 1997**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Unlike in the previous chapter, this one aims at discussing inter and intra-ethnic and sub-ethnic relations in independent Kenya. 1963 is a special year in Kenyan social, economic and political history. It marked the demise of 68 years of British colonialism ranking Kenya as the thirty-fourth African independent country (Odinga, 1967:253). This important national achievement introduced from the outset a new dimension of inter-ethnic relations in the country. The emergent dimension meant that inter-ethnic relations be examined in the way they have impacted on the whole issue of nation-building, citizenship and ethnicity.

In diagnosing these issues, the role of the artificial colonial boundaries is highlighted. The colonial boundaries crudely split people sharing similar values into different colonies. Cases in point include the Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Somalia. For instance, the colonial boundaries between Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia crudely split the Somali clans into three different political territories to live side by side with other compatriots whom they may not have wished to stay with in the same political unit. The same applied to the Abaluyia, Kalenjin, Luo and Teso who because of the arbitrary colonial boundaries split their kinspeople into both Kenya and Uganda. The Maasai and the Kuria were equally adversely effected when European colonialists drew the Kenya-Tanzania boundary.

This chapter therefore, discusses the complex relations of statehood, nationhood and ethnicity and demonstrates how they unfolded in post-independent Kenya, between the 1960s and 1997.

In facilitating this interrogation, aspects of continuity as well as change are highlighted. It is noteworthy to acknowledge from this stage that change is fundamentally an essential aspect of socialization. Change may be positive or negative. Yet that very outcome cannot make change avoidable in any social process. Hence, where such changes give different signals to recipient members of a society, conflict often emerges. Sometimes this may be as a consequence of ideology, such as that which emerged in the global politics of the cold war. In that era, people who were perceived to be capitalist-oriented clashed ideologically and in some cases militarily with their alleged socialist or communist adversaries. These conflicts emerged due to the nature in which resources were distributed among the citizens of concerned nation states.

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This being the case, the chapter finds conflict formulation as pertinent in guiding the discourse. The entire territory of the present day Kenya in general and in particular the areas of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia have experienced conflictual moments in the process of coming to terms with the requirements of the post independence era. The various ethnic communities in the entire country and specifically for this study those in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia had their own aspirations. They celebrated the independence of Kenya while anticipating the new national government to give back to them what the concerned citizens thought previously belonged to them or their ancestors. They were ready to express their aspirations violently if need be.

## **6.2 Nationhood in Diversity**

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, Kenya's independence did not come easily. Various struggles both militarily and constitutionally were undertaken. Indeed to secure the

decolonisation of Kenya, a lot of intrigues from various Kenyan ethnic collectivities had to be overcome in the colonial metropole through a series of conferences which were held at the Lancaster House in London between 1960 and 1963. Two outstanding challenges were posed by the Somali of North-Eastern Kenya and the residents of Kenyan Ten Miles Coastal Strip (*Mwambao*) which stretched from Kenya's border with Tanzania upto Kipini in the North, covering two thirds of the Kenyan Coast (Nasong'o, 1999, 176). The Somali of what was known as 'Northern Frontier District' (NFD) wanted to join their ethnic Kinsmen in Somalia and Ethiopia to form the Greater Somalia. Similarly the Arabs of the Ten Mile Coastal strip demanded that either their autonomy be granted or they be allowed to join Zanzibar so that they would be administered by the Sultan of Zanzibar as was the case before 1895 when the British colonialists acquired the strip at an annual cost of seventeen thousand sterling pounds. The Mwambao group may have been influenced not only by ethnic considerations to join the Arabs of Zanzibar but also because of religious factors. Like in Zanzibar, most Mwambao residents are Muslims.

In the first general elections that were carried out in May 1963 and won resoundingly by KANU, the North Eastern districts of Garissa, Mandera and Wajir boycotted (Odinga, 1967, 233; Nasong'o 1999, 175). Therefore as Kenya celebrated its June 1st 1963 marking the attainment of the *Madaraka* (internal self-government) the question of nationality and allegiance to the new state was still fragile. Territorial boundaries were clear because everything remained the same as what existed during colonialism. But something that required nurturing was the potentiality for constantly absorbing but not obliterating new cultural groups (Cohen, 1995:36). This process- popularly known as nation-building was bumpy and for the Northern Kenya it even led to

military option being considered against Abdirashid Ali Shermarke's Somali Republic were diplomatic measures to fail in 1967. But even before the battle that pitted soldiers of the Republic of Somalia against Kenyan army, the North Eastern Kenya was placed under a state of emergency in December 1963. It may be worthy stating that for the Abaluyia to have readily settled down within the Kenyan boundary when some of their members were in the Republic of Uganda attests to the ability of the Abaluyia's representatives in convincing their members to stay in Kenya. Otherwise, as we discussed in the previous chapter, some groups such as BU wanted to be in Uganda.

The question of ethnic consciousness and how this interacts with the broader one of national consciousness is critical in the evolution of national allegiance. Its unresolved paradoxes introduced new conflictual challenges to the post-independence Kenya. This scenario only became less pronounced from the 1980s when some of the die-hard advocates of the Greater-Somalia began surrendering their weapons to the Kenyan government. Softening, President Moi departed from Kenyatta's hardline approach to the Somali question, on succeeding Kenyatta following the death of the latter, by appointing Somalis to key positions in the public service. These included Maalim Mohammed, Mahmood Mohammed, Mohammed Yusuf Haji and Mohamed Isahakia. The new Somali president who succeeded Shermarke, Mohammed Siad Barre usurped power on October 21, 1969 and became lukewarm towards the Kenyan Somali interests throughout his rule until he was deposed in 1990 (Dualeh, 1994, Nasong'o, *op. cit.* 176).

However, the MWAMBAO case was not stubborn. On October 5, 1963, the Kenya government undertook to constitutionally recognize the Muslim faith and law, Arabic language and the right

to land ownership in the Coastal Strip. This agreement was strengthened three days later by another one between the governments of Britain, Kenya and the Sultan of Zanzibar in which the 1895 agreement was revoked and the Kenya Protectorate (Coastal Strip) was declared part of the Republic of Kenya (Nasong'o *ibid*, p. 179).

Consequently, when Kenya celebrated its December 12, 1963 with a *majimbo* (federal) constitution, the issue of nationhood was still fragile. Sub-national sentiments within each of the seven regions were strong. For each *jimbo* (region) was defined by a dominant ethnic group. Thus in Western Region are the Abaluyia, the Rift Valley comprises the Kalenjin and the Maa-speakers, in Central are of Agikuyu, in Eastern are the Akamba, Ameru and Aembu whereas Coastal consists of the Mijikenda and Swahili, Nairobi is a cosmopolitan city of all ethnic and racial groups. The latter was to serve as the seat of the Central Government. And the Northern Region that was still keen on secession are of the Somali ethnic group which includes the Oromo clans such as the Gabra, the Noran, the Sakaye and the Orma. All the regional nomenclatures, apart from that of Nairobi were all given English connotations. P.H. Okondo (1995:148) one of the diehard advocates of *Majimboism* criticizes this nomenclature. He suggests that Western Region should have been named 'Buluyia' and 'Nyanza' given a Luo epithet i.e. 'Ramogi or Piny Luo'. This was to reflect dominant ethnic groups in the region.

In the *Majimbo* constitution each of the constituent regions was to have a Regional Assembly which was to make its laws, control elementary and intermediate schools, agricultural land, a separate police force, judiciary and its own civil servants. All this was to derive directly from the constitution but not from the Central Government. In this context Western Region was to

enjoy some amount of autonomy because most of its governance would have been confined to Kakamega, the regional headquarters. The Central Government on the other hand had a two-chamber parliament-the Lower House or House of Representatives and the Upper House or the Senate. The Central Government in addition controlled foreign affairs, defence, secondary and tertiary education, finance, natural resources and international trade. Herein is found the seed for conflict both at a political as well as social level. For as argued in the previous chapter, Kenyatta had termed this *Majimbo* arrangement a 'cow-donkey' affair which he was set to frustrate. Another seed that would later herald conflictual relations among Kenya's ethnic groups was in the clause on land.

The clause on land intimated that all Kenyan ethnic groups had to drop all claims to the land that was alienated by the colonial government, either given to the British settlers or treated as the Crown or Government land. It was further agreed that in independent Kenya, land could only be acquired through purchase. There were to be arrangements made for the Africans to purchase such lands from settlers (Odinga, 1967; Kuria, 1993:21). Funds on loan basis were provided by the British Government to the Kenyan Government to be used in enabling Kenyans buy back the alienated lands from white settlers who were to leave the country after independence or shortly before. This kind of setting, when one takes into account the nature of acute unequal development since colonial Kenya, was bound to pose tricky issues to the first post-independence Kenya government right from 1963.

How well such issues were to be addressed depended on the manner in which the culture of trans-ethnic nationhood was to be carried out. Indeed trans-ethnic nationhood was important

because the Kenyan territorial borders, like any other African country in the colonial period, were drawn splitting various ethnic groups into different territories artificially. The arbitrariness in the colonial boundary drawing is evident in the fact of the Somali ethnic quest for Greater Somalia. Some of the Somali are in Somalia, others in Ethiopia while still others are in Kenya. Similarly, the Maasai were split into Kenya and Tanzania. The Luo were also split between Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Tanzania while the Kuria were shared between Kenya and Tanzania. The Teso, Abaluyia, and Kalenjin were strewn between Kenya and Uganda. To persuade each of these groups to minimise parochial ethnic loyalties and emphasise trans-ethnic national loyalty entailed harnessing sincere rules of action, morality, law and system of pan-ethnic administration including an appeal court system and a set of separate institutions (Were, 1992; 8; Cohen, 1995; 36).

These concerns preoccupied Kenyan leadership throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. Nation building as Mazrui (1993:436) ably argues implies widening of horizons of identity of parochial ethnic units to include larger and complex units such as the state. Now whether this was achieved or not will be evaluated in terms of the manner in which inter-ethnic groups responded first, from a general national perspective, and secondly, and more specifically, from the inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts.

Right from the outset, KANU party adherents worked hard to frustrate the *Majimbo* framework. Between 1963 and December 12, 1964 all KANU members of parliament were persuaded, at times coercively, to cross-over into KANU making Kenya a *de facto* one party state. The main argument then was to avoid unnecessary fragmentation of the Kenyan people. Little did such



KANU proponents like Odinga (1967:284-5) realise that by removing the checks and balances contained in the *majimbo* package this would leave room for abuse of office. The removal of key clauses of the *majimbo* constitution took place through constitutional amendments that culminated in the entire re-writing of the constitution in 1969 (Nasong'o 1999, 180). At the end of the re-writing Kenya got rid of regions and in their place, provinces under Provincial Commissioners (PCs) were re-established as they were during colonialism. Similarly, only one chamber of the National Assembly replaced the *majimbo's* two chambers.

The re-writing also resulted in the vesting of immense powers in the presidency. The presidency was to exercise great powers tending the holder of the office towards authoritarianism (Anyang Nyong'o, 1989). He became a constituency Member of Parliament, the head of state and also the head of government. These kind of powers enabled the president, to use Okondo's (1995:78) expression, to sit on the throne in parliament like a monarch. The president has powers to appoint his deputy, the vice president, the cabinet, secretary to the cabinet as well as the controller and auditor-general at his discretion without even subjecting his nominees to parliamentary vetting. Thus the authoritarianism which continued into the 1990s had its roots in the scrapping of the *majimbo* constitution.

Furthermore, the immense powers the new constitution invested in the presidency ultimately impacted on the inter-ethnic relations. As Nasong'o (1997:13) argues, there arose a skew in the allocation of state resources which has lingered on to date. This skewing in Kenyatta's regime was towards the Agikuyu, his kinsmen and kinswomen. Several scholars and political commentators have highlighted this ethnicity in the dishing out of jobs, funds for projects.

institutional equipment among many other favours. Similarly, some of the scholars have further argued that Kenyatta used those powers to enable his kinsmen and kinswomen to obtain fertile tracts of land in the now conflict-ridden Rift Valley Province at the expense of the perceived indigenous communities of the Kalenjin and Maasai (Leys, 1975; Muriuki, 1979; Were 1983 and 1992; Aseka, 1989:448; Eshiwani, 1991; Kanyinga, 1995; Nasong'o, 1997).

Ley's (1975) and Odipo's (1999) analyses of the land and job allocation problems give credence to the views of the preceding scholars. Leys argues that in order to address the issue of landlessness in Kenya in the 1960s, the government settled some on *harambee* settlement schemes, others were absorbed by the process of private purchases of large farms by co-operatives or companies and the president regularly 'handed over' large farms to hundreds of assembled people at well publicised ceremonies. This policy led to a further large-scale immigration of the Agikuyu on the land in the Rift Valley which was regarded by the various Kalenjin groups as traditionally their own.

Leys points out that initially the affected Kalenjin communities merely remained mute. But in the second half of the 1960s it became clear to the Kalenjin that they could soon lack land for themselves in the Rift Valley. Violent episodes resulted. In addition, in 1969, Jean Marie Seroney published the 'Nandi Hill Declaration' claiming all settler-held land in the area for the Nandi sub-ethnic group alone. But since Kenyatta's influence was immense, Seroney's declaration was faulted and he himself was arrested, prosecuted for treason and made to pay a heavy fine. In the meantime more Agikuyu land buyers continued moving into the Rift Valley

(Leys, 1975:228 - 230). This trend clearly sowed seeds of discord that were later to contribute to the souring of inter-ethnic relations in the Rift Valley in the later post Kenyatta years.

Odipo (1999:8) concerns himself with the way public offices were dished out in 1974. His choice of 1974 aims at demonstrating how things happened as Kenyatta aged and therefore either consciously or unconsciously relied on his kinsmen to run public offices, whether they merited those offices or not. Odipo argues that in 1974, out of a cabinet of 20 ministers, seven of them or one third hailed from the Central Province that was predominantly inhabited by the Agikuyu. Of the seven, five came from Kiambu. At the University of Nairobi that was the only university in the country, all the ten top administrative positions were held by members of the Agikuyu community. This scenario was reflected at the top posts in the Finance Ministry and its related institutions, at the Kenya Ports Authority, in the Ministry of Defence with the exception of the Armed Forces Command, in the Office of the President among many others.

In fact, of the eight PCs, four came from Central Province. Muriuki (1979:39 - 44) and Eshiwani (1991) reinforce Odipo's view. Muriuki clearly points out that the Agikuyu's disproportionate over representation at the cabinet level was equally visible in the manning of the civil service and parastatal bodies. Muriuki even states that the Kiambu Kikuyu's easy access to Kenyatta was a gateway to their acquisition of farms and businesses as well as huge bank loans. Yet the same could not be done to other Kenyans. The Abaluyia's marginalisation thus started during Kenyatta's regime. Key politicians from among Abaluyia were either denied strategic posts, or if they proved stubborn they were detained as Martin Shikuku's case shows.

What these examples show was a growing culture of ethno-dimensional political consciousness that seemed antithetical to territorial nationhood. However, as has also been in the same light, not all sections of the Agikuyu benefitted equally from such arrangements. Kiambu, the home of the then president, always received more attention than the other districts in Central Province. To that extent, intra-ethnic consciousness and rivalries as well as conflicts emerged. Nonetheless, of interest to this discussion here is the fact that these examples gave rise to the now popular notion of ethnic groups whose members occupy the highest offices have a turn to 'eat' their own share of the national cake.

Kituyi (1999:10) in a research on the pastoral communities, argues that the perception of certain communities claiming to have their 'turn to eat' the national cake stems from a pastoral culture. He explains this situation that '...it derives from the traditional herding mentality where depleted fortunes were interpreted to mean abundant luck in some other part of the territory'.

Whether this explanation correctly portrays the actual beginning of the notion of 'eating' among communities is beside the point. But of importance is the seeming replication of what obtained during Kenyatta's leadership in the era of Moi. Moreover, it has been pointed out that the Kalenjin under president Moi have unfairly enjoyed a relatively greater advantage in receiving job allocations, funds for projects, equipment for schools, recruitment into certain training institutions among many other privileges when compared with other communities in Kenya. For instance, in 1997 a concern was raised in the National Assembly about why thirty-five out of sixty five DCs were Kalenjin when this ethnic group is not even among the top three in numerical majority (Barkan and Chege, 1989; Imanyara, 1991; Murungi, 1995; Nasong'o, 1997).

Sunday Nation September 19, 1997, 2). The analysts point out that within a short time, using the advantage of having one of their own at the presidency, the Kalenjin have overshadowed the Abaluyia in development projects. Yet before Moi took over, the Abaluyia were way ahead of the Kalenjin and other related groups.

It appears that, this trend frustrated efforts of entrenching the culture of a stable nationhood in the country. National integration is seemingly sacrificed on the alter of ethnicity or sub-nationalism. When such ethnicity or sub-nationalism reigns, conflicts and confrontations are likely to loom inside the national territory. Sometimes this perception may encourage some members of the nation to long for transferring their citizenship to neighbouring countries where their co-ethnics reside. The sub-section below will trace how inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia operated within the context of what has been portrayed at the national territorial level.

### **6.3 Inter-Ethnic Interactions in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Between 1963 and 1997**

In the previous chapter we have pointed out that towards the close of colonialism members of Abaluyia, especially Babukusu and Abatachoni were staying among the Sabaot on the slopes of Mt. Elgon. This interaction was similarly encountered in Trans Nzoia where most members of Abaluyia and Sabaot went to in search of employment on settler farms. Besides, even the Sabaot were living in the lowlands of Bungoma, especially around Malakisi and Webuye among the dominant ethnic Abaluyia group. The Teso also occupied parts of Mt. Elgon and Bungoma in addition to being concentrated in their own Amakoro Division of Busia District. Consequently,

when various political parties campaigned in such multi-ethnic areas, party support was predominantly secured on ethnic lines. As it was indicated in chapter five, the Sabaot supported KANU while the Abaluyia, especially the Babukusu and Abatachoni supported KADU. With the eventual victory of KANU and the ascendancy to political power by KANU, the Sabaot felt victorious and used their opportunity to settle some scores with those persons or ethnic groups that the Sabaot perceived as 'lamek' or enemies whose trust was unreliable.

It is crucial to point out that the 1963 independence celebrations were conducted when the Sabaot were still nursing their disappointments with the 1962 Boundaries Commission which left most of them in the then Elgon Nyanza (Bungoma) District contrary to their popular wish of being united with their kinsfolks who were in Trans Nzoia District. By being administered from Trans Nzoia, the Sabaot were going to be in the Rift Valley Province that is inhabited by the Kalenjin majority (Odinga, 1967:244-5; Wolf, 1977:196.; Kiliku, 1992:22-25). The belief in seeking for ethnic majority was grounded in the hope that at the negotiating table in local government, the Sabaot would be sympathetically considered and in essence the Sabaot expected more development projects being implemented were they to be in the Rift Valley.

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Looked at in this context, one understands why the Sabaot were not happy even after receiving their own constituency and Member of Parliament, Mossi unlike in 1961 when they were represented by Muliro. Indeed that gain was insignificant considering that a good portion of what should have been transferred to Trans Nzoia was allocated to the Western Province. The area affected included Kamukuywa, Kibisi, Lugari, Matunda, Naitiri, Ndalua and Tongaren (Wolf, 1977: 193-195; Aseka, 1989:477; Kiliku, 1992:22). That means the Sabaot hope to acquire

these areas was thwarted. Furthermore, even in Trans Nzoia, they were not to get free land. They had to purchase it just like any other citizens. Hence the Sabaot frustration exploded in their burning of houses, destroying crops and raiding for livestock which belonged to the Babukusu and their associates.

Even houses, crops and livestock belonging to the Abatachoni were not spared. Matifari, the candidate who had challenged Mossi for the Mt. Elgon constituency had his car set on fire in the clashes. Yet under ordinary circumstances, the Sabaot consider the Abatachoni as their offshoots who had gone further to the south but promised to return to their Kalenjin group later. In fact the Kalenjin interpretation of 'Tachoni' is 'I will return'. In essence, what caused the conflict was not mainly ethnic but rather politico-economic expectations and the politicisation of ethnicity. Mzee Kimkung' (O.I 1997) explained this reality articulately. He accused Matifari of behaving like the Babukusu and accepting to be used to weaken Mossi's chances of winning in the contest for the Mt. Elgon constituency. As far as one can see from this, the Sabaot considered the Babukusu as '*lamek*', enemies who had encroached on their land and even assumed lordship over the Sabaot. This attitude was so entrenched among ordinary Sabaot that they could not see Murunga's reign as having connections with Wanga sub-imperialism. The Sabaot have internalised the view that autocratic Murunga was a Mubukusu. Utterances by Masai arap Kakasha and Hezron Kipseret (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:68:121) illustrate this point very clearly. In actual fact, the Sabaot perceived the Babukusu as having presented another aspect of sub-ethnic imperialism over the Sabaotland.

However, the main fear of the Sabaot was their numerical minority in the largely Luyia dominated Western Province. Kakasha (*ibid:71*) voices this sentiment clearly. He argues that the Sabaot were afraid of being in Western Province, because with only one MP in the entire province they could not expect much progress to be made in Mt. Elgon. The burning, destroying and raiding activities of the Sabaot were aimed at making the post-independence government feel the depth of their political desire and transfer their area into Trans Nzoia. But this quest remained unachieved in the 1960s when they continued being administered in the Western Province.

Besides, the belligerence towards the Babukusu by the Sabaot endangered those Sabaot who were living in the lower parts of Bungoma. As Kakasha explains, Babukusu also revenged by torching houses which belonged to the Sabaot who were residents in the Babukusu dominated areas. Indeed some of those who were affected were forced to migrate to establish new homes in Mt. Elgon areas. This trend of the two groups clashing and some being forced to migrate for security was to be repeated in the early 1990s. What the inter-ethnic conflict of 1963 implied was the weakening of nationhood in the areas under study. As has been mentioned, the antagonism resulted in the Sabaot referring to the Babukusu and their allies as *lamek* who were to be expelled from the Sabaot area. The Babukusu to the contrary retorted that the Sabaot were '*Biyobo*' or '*Barwa*' which meant enemies, strangers whose gibberings were queer. These stereotypes and retorts were conceived as the unbearable insults that fuelled more antagonism (Kimkung', O.I, 1997).



The period between 1964 and 1968 seems to have witnessed calm in the inter-ethnic relations perhaps because the hostilities associated with party politics were reduced as a result of the dissolution of KADU. However, some of the Babukusu and Abatachoni who had been targeted by the Sabaot were forced to sell their land parcels and purchased others elsewhere. Matifari, for instance, ultimately bought a piece of land in Trans Nzoia where he stays to date. But his other family members still stay and continue to operate businesses in Mt. Elgon (Tendeti, O.I, 1997, Kimkung', O.I; 1997; Mamati, O.I., 1998). Apart from business contacts, the various ethnic communities in Bungoma and Mt. Elgon interacted in learning institutions, religious functions, fund raising, cultural rites and even marriage ceremonies. In fact Kimkung' (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:139-140) underscores the importance of the Babukusu to the Sabaot. He explains that circumcisers of the Sabaot boys have always been hired from the Babukusu. As such, whenever the Sabaot and the Babukusu clashed, the former suspended circumcision of their boys for lack of circumcisers. This only resumed when the war was over and peace restored between the communities. Kimkung' introduces an important dimension of interdependence of the various communities in Bungoma and Mt. Elgon. This dimension is crucial when peacemakers look for conflict resolution because they can rely on the aspect of interdependence and base on it to emphasize why the various ethnic communities in the area should co-exist harmoniously.

The realisation that the Babukusu were crucial to the initiation process of the Sabaot boys did not completely eliminate the possibilities of future antagonism. As such, in 1968 this antagonism exploded again into an open conflict. Mulongo (O.I, 1997) accuses Mossi the then area MP for inciting the Sabaot to rise against the Babukusu who are staying in the Mt. Elgon area. Similarly, Mossi accused the latter of disrespecting the Sabaot and also of ridiculing them as

cattle rustlers. This suspicion of raiding is bolstered by Mulongo who confirms that the Babukusu believed that the Sabaot stole cattle which belonged to them and sold them to the Sebeyi who are nationals of Uganda. This connection of cattle rustlers with Ugandans means that the causes of conflicts between the Sabaot and the Babukusu could be resolved when security precautions are undertaken on the common border between Kenya and Uganda. Herein is again the issue of nationality and nationhood evoked when one is dealing with communities living across international borders. This problem was raised by Liebenow (1986:51) when he argued that nation-building must contend with the potential for conflict arising from the arbitrary inclusion of members of several indigenous ethnic groups within a single colonial and later independent sovereign state.

Kaipei (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:51) argues still in the same vein as Mossi that the Babukusu never wanted to recognise the Sabaot as people capable of administering themselves. Consequently, the Sabaot were fighting in order to be recognized. Here, Kaipei recounts the achievements that the Sabaot assumedly obtained through such conflicts. These achievements include the creation of a Sabaot constituency called "Mt. Elgon". The other one was when for the first time they had kinsmen appointed as chiefs. In essence, in 1968 the Sabaot were engaged in a number of violent ventures. They were fighting for recognition. Wolf (1977) has shed more light on the 1968 confrontation. According to him, the Sabaot who were in North Malakisi had demanded to have two representatives in the Bungoma County Council to strengthen their voice in the Babukusu dominated Council. Mossi had threatened to demand for a Sabaot district if the North Malakisi views were not addressed.

In the confrontation that ensued, several people lost their lives on both sides. Wolf (*Ibid*) states that about five people were killed. Of the five, two were allegedly Sabaot and three were Babukusu. Many others on either side sustained injuries. Yet given the extensive interaction between the ethnic communities in the region, the opposing camps could not possibly be rigidly categorised as the Babukusu fighting against the Sabaot. Certain interests were at stake.

Indeed, when the peace was restored in the area, it was found out that one of the two alleged Sabaots who were killed was actually a Bukusu who had been assimilated in his adult life. Wolf posits that there were many such Sabaot born and bred as Babukusu and even had relatives among the Babukusu. Yet the assimilated ones pretended that they could not speak *Lubukusu*. The system of mutual relations highlighted in the previous chapter is evident here in the sense that most Sabaot who live near their common boundary with the Babukusu comprehend and speak *Lubukusu*.

Both the 1963 and 1968 conflicts were short-lived and when they ended, the two ethnic communities resumed their mutual dealings and forms of peaceful interaction. Yet because of political interactions, some uneasiness arose among some of the sections of those communities. Consequently, in 1975 there erupted another confrontation that involved basically the Babukusu against the Sabaot and their allies. As happened in the previous conflicts, the non-Sabaot accused Mossi of incitement. This anti-Mossi sentiment continued even after the 1975 conflict. Therefore when Wilberforce Kisiero a Sabaot and former employee of the Kenya Farmers Association (KFA) expressed his interest to run for the Mt. Elgon parliamentary seat against Mossi, he was already assured of a sizeable support provided that he demonstrated his readiness

to recognise and encourage the mutuality in inter-ethnic relations and co-existence within the constituency (Kisiero, O.I, 1996). Kisiero seemed to have understood the essence of this mutuality and articulated appropriately the need for mutual inter-ethnic co-existence in the region. This resulted in his victory against Mossi in the 1979 general election.

Between 1979 and 1991, life in the region seemed to be devoid of the previous open political confrontations. What seemed to have been not wiped out completely were the sporadic cattle raids. They did not assume worrisome proportions that would arouse ethnic animosity and rock the peace that was prevailing in the area. But that peace could not be interpreted to have meant the absence of tensions and frustrations. Bramwel Kisiero (*ibid*) explains that throughout those years, the "Sabaot received a raw deal". During the period of the recruitment of candidates for Teacher Training Colleges, Medical Training Colleges and Police College at Kiganjo among others, very few Sabaot were selected in comparison with those who were recruited from the Babukusu. The Kisiero sentiment is echoed by both Kakasha and Chesari Kintai (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998) who bitterly explained that the Babukusu had exploited the Sabaot initial lack of interest in Western formal education. They turned this to their advantage. The Sabaot sought to get out of this predicament by advocating for their own district in which they would be free from the Bukusu domination. For as long as their desire was not met, the Sabaot remained tense in their relations with the Babukusu.

In the words of Hezron Kipseret (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:127) a district granted to the Sabaot would free them from the Bukusu suppression and discrimination. He alleges that the long duration the Sabaot endured while requesting for their district was because the Babukusu,

through their leaders, tried to block such requests. One may locate this argument in the fact that in the Bungoma County Council as well as in Parliament, the voice of the Sabaot was swamped by that of the Babukusu. The latter were numerous in the local authority right from the colonial time.

Letepo Psirmoi gives an account (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:154) of the plight of the Sabaot in the post-independence era that is instructive. In this account he comments that

'We [Sabaot] were under-represented. We had only one Member of Parliament, two councillors and in the Bungoma Farmers Union we had very few representatives. These people [Babukusu] could not be out-voted in priority programmes'.

In this statement, Psirmoi indicates that democracy that ignores minority interests is faulty. Rather than resolving conflicts, it leads to many other problems. Hence the best option is a democratic framework which is sensitive to minority concerns.

In the independence era, some of the Bukusu politicians were at different times, in the Cabinet. They included Muliro who had wanted the entire Trans Nzoia to be under the Western Province, Nathan Munoko and Elijah Mwangale. On the other hand, the highest position the Sabaot politicians were appointed to was at the level of mainly Assistant Ministers. The Bukusu Cabinet Ministers from Bungoma District used their ministerial offices to exert on critical questions and, therefore, played a role in frustrating the Sabaot political quests. This explains the long held distrust of the Babukusu by the Sabaot.

#### **6.4 Inter-Ethnic Relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts in the 1990s**

The 1990s saw the impact of several winds that affected the region. The application of the concept of 'winds' in discussing inter-ethnic relations in the three districts stems out from the comment of Bera (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:9) in response to questions from members of Kenya Oral Literature Association, (KOLA). He argued that the 1990 and 1991 ethnic conflicts were sparked off by the winds of pluralism and multi-party politics. In these winds were inherent various factors. In this study, we adopt the concept of winds to reflect on the political causation of events in the region. The adoption of the term 'winds' on the African continent is not recent. It dates back to the time of the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, the person who first used the concept to describe the changing African political situation in 1960.

In the context of Bera, 'winds' refers to causes whose origin was far beyond the terrain of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia. In essence, Bera was alluding to external factors in influencing relations in the area under study. Indeed, one could argue that given the interconnectedness and interactions among Kenyans, there is need to give this concept its due attention. The possibility that the 1990s marked a political watershed not only in Kenya but also in most of the world gives credence to the Macmillan concept of the wind of change.

Mazrui (1969b: 12) argues that communication facilitates the process of social contagion. One part of the country, region or world may through communication begin to emulate or imitate happenings in the other part of the country, region or world. This communication in the Cold War era was illustrative of the ideological conflict between the Eastern socialist bloc and the Western capitalist and liberal bloc. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent

desovietisation of the USSR from late 1980s into the early 1990s, there were changes in ideological winds. There was an ebb in the socialist wind and there was a neo-liberal onslaught that sought to entrench capitalism throughout the world. Western liberal project assumed the global dimension in a social process that has come to be known as globalisation. According to Aina (1996:8-12), globalisation is not defined by most scholars in a clear and precise way. The concept is often used more descriptively or integrated within a broader analytical framework emphasizing the construction of a world order, or the action and consciousness of agents initiating and responding to the making of these orders.

Nonetheless, the so-called globalisation sought to create a world order that is skewed towards Western vision of the global. Its neo-liberal orientation has been imported into Africa in a loosely perceived multi-party package of democracy. But this is not an outfit that is born out of the struggle of the masses. It has been conceived and packaged in the West and finally transported to Africa with its Western justifications which veil its inherent forms of inequality, exploitation, domination, conflict and injustice (Shivji, 1989; Muriuki, 1995: 5-24; Mamdani, 1995: 43-62; Aina, 1996:8-12). According to Mamdani (*Op cit*: 55-56) this outfit reminds one of nineteenth century liberals who presumed it to be their [Western liberals] manifest destiny to bring culture to the African continent.

On the African continent, the crusaders of this brand of democracy equated it with multi-partyism, accountability and transparency. These terms, as it later proved were confined to the political and economic space. Even when the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) became the ideological watchdogs of this thrust, the focus remained entirely limited to the

political and economic space. The two watchdog institutions of global capitalism were poised against authoritarianism, corruption and mismanagement of institutions that threatened Western capital investment prospects.

The Dahrendorfian parameters of dualism in conflict apply. The two watchdogs of IMF and World Bank adopting the colonisers or neo-colonisers' mentality used their financial advantage to impose repressive and often unrealistic directives to the African governments. At this level, the conflict was not just ethnic but racist and camouflaged in their claims for democracy. It is in this context that protests from African political leaders, such as the Kenyan President Moi, could be understood. Moi has often been quoted as referring to IMF's and World Bank's demands as racist and oppressive (Morton, 1998). They did not at the initial stages base all their demands on the social movements that could address all trans-ethnic issues which this wind generated. Indeed, as it was witnessed on the Kenyan political scene, despite pretensions by Kenyan multiparty crusaders who claimed to be guided by the neoliberal principles of democracy, accountability and transparency, ethnic and racist parochialism appears to have coated the 'democratic' crusades (Muriuki, 1993:19). Similar ethnic manifestations appear to have influenced the 'democratic' elections in Niger in 1992; Mali 1992, Cameroon 1992, Burundi 1993 and Ethiopia 1993 (Bakâry, 1998:9).

Multi-party crusaders most of whom hailed from the Central, Western, Nyanza, Eastern and Coast provinces and the pro-neo-liberal press which seemed well tailored in the goals of the wind of change often linked authoritarianism, mismanagement and corruption not only with the single-party rule of KANU but more specifically highlighted the ethno-dimensional operations of



the Kenyan leader, a Kalenjin. The inevitable consequence of this was the scare of losing power and the devising of survival mechanism against the wind of change. In a counter-strategy, the frightened KANU stalwarts from the Kalenjin community sought to forestall the efforts of pluralist advocates who were drawn mostly from the clergy, lawyers and politicians by reviving the *majimbo* quest and resorting to repressive political measures and appropriately arguing that the country's ills started during the Kenyatta era. The multi-party activists, especially Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia, proposed holding a public referendum at Kamukunji grounds in Nairobi in July, 1990 whose objective was to discuss the need for reintroducing multi-party democracy in Kenya. The two were arrested and detained prior to July 7, 1990. But still the crowd went to the venue anticipating to listen to speeches by multi-party advocates and in the process engaged the police who had been assigned to disperse the gathering. As a result, many people were injured and about twenty were killed by the police. This event is now referred to as the *saba saba* rally (Kiliku, 1992:7). The concept of '*saba saba*' derives from the fact that the confrontation took place on the seventh day of July, the seventh month of the year 1990.

The concern and discomfort among KANU party politicians increased when in August 1991, leading politicians like Odinga, Muliro, Martin Shikuku, George Nthenge, Philip Gachoka and Ahmed Bamahriz announced the formation of the Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) as a pressure group (Kiliku, 1992:7). The ethno-dimensional thrust of politics became clear in the counter strategy when the KANU politicians, especially the Kalenjin politicians conducted a series of rallies between 8th September, 1991 and 17th October, 1991 threatening multi-party proponents with dire consequences if they insisted on pursuing their political agenda. Among

notable venues were Kapsabet, 8th September, 1991, Kapkatet, 21st September, 1991, Narok, 28th September, 1991; Machakos, 7th October 1991 and Mombasa, 17th October, 1991.

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It appeared that at the first two venues, the Kalenjin politicians were forthright in asserting their intentions to advocate for *majimboism* to counter multi-partyism. Furthermore, the same politicians vowed to use their *majimbo* threat as a means of forestalling the multi-party crusade. They threatened to expel communities of the multi-party advocates whose 'motherland' was perceived to be outside the Rift Valley from the region (Kiliku, 1992, **The Weekly Review**, March 20, 1992). In addition, the Rift Valley politicians resolved at the Kapsabet rally to take action against FORD members and fight anti-establishment figures using all means at their disposal. Members even resolved to ban these multi-party advocates from entering in the Rift Valley as long as they advocated for multi-partyism. Those threatened pointedly included Paul Muite and Muliro. Muliro was to die mysteriously a few months later on his return from a trip to London at a time when his party, FORD was badly divided. The local press fanned the political tempers by reporting whatever transpired at the rallies to their readers (Kiliku, 1992:8-10).

Going by the information, one detects various aspects of identity emerging. Firstly, the rallies were convened as KANU rallies. To that extent, KANU party politicians from not only the Kalenjin communities but also other Kenyan communities attended and even addressed the crowds. Secondly, the idea of introducing *majimbo* based on communities' perceived ancestral homes gave rise to another aspect of identification that was antithetical to the first one. In the latter case, even KANU stalwarts whose homes were not perceived to be in Rift Valley were threatened (Kiliku, 1992). For they were, just like the pluralist advocates, all likely to be flushed

out. Ethnic tensions were heightened. Ethnic sentimentality and political hostilities led to clandestine activities that led to the publication of anonymous leaflets. These were distributed in specific areas of the Rift Valley and Western Kenya, calling on members of specific communities to quit within a given time limit. Lastly, some of the KANU politicians appear to have sponsored warriors who unleashed their political threats of evicting the so-called aliens. The warriors resorted to the use of dangerous instruments such as arrows and 'pangas'. Instead of debates and purposive dialogues to resolve their political and ideological differences against those advocating for pluralism, the use of force was adopted.

Given the massive influence the politicians command among their electorates, the ethnic question led to a political polarization on the basis of tribe from which Kenya has never fully recovered. For it should not be forgotten that pluralist activists also used pejorative language against KANU, the Kalenjin and their pastoral neighbours especially the Maa-speakers (Kiliku, 1992). Hence, when in October 1991, the first confrontation erupted on Meteitei farm of the Nandi District pitting a Nandi against a Luo, it required the slightest interpretation to raise tensions beyond individual level to assume an inter-ethnic dimension. Hence within that dimension, ethnic conflict often came to be referred to as ethnic "cleansing". It spread to various parts of the Rift Valley and Western Kenya in quick succession. Events seemed to be well planned while the real planners remained disguised. Ultimately other parts of Kenya such as the North Eastern, Coast and Eastern provinces were affected by conflicts. This situation rendered the country insecure.

Affected districts included Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, West Pokot, Trans Nzoia, Kakamega, Kisumu, Kericho, Nandi, Kisii, Nyamira, Bomet, Narok and Bungoma among others. Almost in all these areas, the Kalenjin or Maasai fought it out against other communities, including the Agikuyu, Luo, Abaluyia and the Abagusii who were living in the former groups' neighbourhood. The immediate crime seemingly committed against the Kalenjin and Maasai communities was the emergence of multi-party propagators from among the latter non-Maasai and non-Kalenjin groups. The conflict resulted in immense loss of life and property. The Kiliku (1992:78) report estimated that about 779 people were killed, 654 injured, 1,236 arrested and 54,000 people were displaced from their homes. These figures included some of the pro *majimboists* and multi-partyists as well as some of the innocent victims who were caught in the cross-fire between the warring parties.

The situation worsened with the approach of the 1992 multi-party general election. The government was placed in an awkward position. It was hard for Kenyans to believe that the government did not have a hand in fanning the conflict. The Catholic Bishops wrote a pastoral letter in which they accused the government of complicity in the ethnic violence. Similar accusations came from the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Kenya Chapter of International Law of Jurists (ICJ) among others (**The Weekly Review**, March 27, 1992:12).

These accusations may appear puzzling. However, they were made when the government appeared lethargic in the measures it adopted in quelling the clashes. These measures sharply contrasted with its actions in 1984 when the same government swiftly moved in to stop the

clashes that had pitted the Nandi against the Abaluyia at Kapkangani in the Nandi-Kakamega region (*The Weekly Review*, March 20/1992:10).

These suspicions by government critics have persuaded some scholars to characterise the Kenyan conflict as its alternative to civil wars which are experienced in other African countries (Jal, Personal Communication, 1999). This school of thought suspects the application of conspiracy theory by government agents to instigate inter-ethnic conflicts as a way of defusing an otherwise explosive national conflict which could easily result in civil wars. The truth is that conflicts have been in Kenya in both the Kenyatta and Moi eras. But they have been tackled at local inter-ethnic levels. To this extent, one may argue that this theory probably fortifies the stance adopted by the clergy, professionals, politicians and other government critics in their belief because of the delay by the government to identify and prosecute the main brains behind the conflicts of the early 1990s in many parts of Kenya.

The ethnic tensions and clashes which emerged in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia in the 1990s were symptomatic of a wider national problem. It is in this respect that the communicative agency of the press and the electronic media may be evaluated. Through the press, radio, newspapers and television, Kenyans and other readers, listeners or viewers were bombarded with information and opinions on these episodes from different localities. Sometimes the information appears to have been exaggerated. The media highlighted some issues that seemed untruthful, like the existence of imported arrows in the clash areas, while at other times, the press highlighted the issues that only served to excite and inflame sectional or parochial considerations (Kiliku, 1992:72).

In the area under study, the residents were highly influenced by these events and their media interpretation or the expression of political opinion about them. This explains why, as stated before, Bera ascribed the causes of the 1991-1992 ethnic conflicts in Mt. Elgon to the winds. The Sabaot are a sub-ethnic group of the Kalenjin. Therefore, whenever they perceived that other community leaders were anti-Kalenjin, the Sabaot automatically took sides against the perceived enemies of their kinsfolks. At the same time, many of the Abaluyia easily associated with FORD activists because some of their kinsmen, including Muliro and Shikuku were its founders. In essence, unlike the conflicts of previous decades, the conflict of the early 1990s was to a larger extent influenced by multi-partyism. Ethnicity seems to have been deployed to serve as a vehicle of manipulating the people into political violence to meet the interests and goals of politicians.

There was a localizing dialectic in all these. The political leaders of the Sabaot and Babukusu traded accusations and counter-accusations. For instance, while some of the Babukusu politicians accused Kisiero, the Mt. Elgon MP and Assistant Minister for instigating the clashes by the Sabaot in a bid to create their own district (**The Weekly Review**, April 24/1992), Kisiero on his part accused Mwangale an MP in Kisiero's neighbouring Kimilili constituency and also Cabinet Minister of inciting the Sabaot to attack the Babukusu and cause confusion and hatred among the two communities (**The Weekly Review**, February 28/1992:66). Whatever the case, in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia, the Kalenjin were pitted against the non-Kalenjin whom the attackers perceived as outsiders in the concerned localities. In Bungoma, the dominant Babukusu in revenge also attacked the Sabaot members who had stayed among the

former for a very long time. In the ensuing confrontation, people were killed, houses were torched, and livestock was raided earning the Sabaot another nickname - *wosianju* or house burners. The victims were forced to stay in makeshift camps in relatively safer areas.

Fanonian articulation of violence as an emancipatory means becomes relevant here. Fanon's notion of violence is Marxist in the sense that for Marx, violence is the midwife of history. The existentialist Marxist predecessor of Fanon, Jean Paul Satre (1950) also shared with Fanon the view of the emancipatory role of violence. Satre brings out the point which was also made by Fanon that what contributes to the revolutionary potential of the peasant is his or her economic deprivation and suffering. Indeed the Sabaot basically perceived the Babukusu as local imperialists who caused a lot of deprivation to the Sabaot.

An incident where a non-Sabaot's cattle were raided is here captured to illustrate the plight of those affected in the 1991 and 1992 ethnic conflicts. James Baraza Eraru belongs to the Teso ethnic group. He explains how their cattle were raided:

'Our grade cow was stolen during the clashes. In fact my father [paternal uncle] lost eighteen herds (sic) of cattle. This was in 1992. All the eighteen were stolen on the same day. It was a terrible experience. I remember how it happened. They came at night... at around 10.00 p.m. The homestead was scaring, when you looked at it, there was smoke all over and torches were on. You would think they were electric lamps like a town well lit at night. My dogs started barking. People were talking outside. I (woke) up my wife so that she could witness what was going on. She got scared and went waking up children. Later my father (uncle) got out and started yelling. "These people (the Sabaot) are stealing my cows". He repeated this again and again. By now the cows were being taken up the hills...' (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998:41).

Another incident from the Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia intimates a similar distressing plight affecting the clash victims. Elina Naswa Simiyu (Kiliku, 1992:27) described how on December 26, 1991, her home was attacked and houses burnt down to ashes. Naswa suspected that among the attackers were the Sebeyi from Uganda. In this connection one notices once more the role of ethnicity in the whole matrix of social relations. In Africa the nature of kinship relations and ethnicity is compounded by patron client relations. The political elite (bourgeoisie) is not always perceived to stand in such contrast with the rest of society as Fanon's (1968) analysis suggests. Ethnicity is a form of identification which interacts with other forms of identification like gender, class, religion and social movements (Aseka, 1997b:3). The Sebeyi were assisting their Sabaot cousins to expel the *lamek* though the '*lamek*' were compatriots of the Sabaot. In fact, Naswa herself was a KANU official. Hence, if the conflict was on purely party lines, her home and property would have been spared. But because Naswa belonged to the Babukusu sub-ethnic group of the Abaluyia, she was lumped up together with the FORD activists. This angle appears to allude to the fact that ethnicity overshadowed all other political ideals leading to a retrogressive ethnically defined behaviour which hindered a would be free dissemination and exchange of political views between different political parties and their respective adherents in Kenya.

Clash victims were forced into makeshift camps on church compounds, schools and market centres. In Bungoma the camps were set up at Chwele, Chebukaka, Kimilili town, Namutokholo, Namwela and Sirisia. In the Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia, the camps were pitched at Endebess and Kaprerwa trading centres. The victims living in the makeshift camps stayed in a state of deprivation, desperation and with very few organisations providing



them inadequately with normal or logistical support. Having fled from their homes with nothing, these Kenyans were increasingly reduced to the conditions of becoming political refugees in their own country. They were at the mercy of humanitarian organisations and individuals for their supplies of food, medicine, clothing and other human requirements. Moreover, there was a state of insecurity in such camps. In fact warriors attacked some of these camps with bows, arrows and 'pangas' [machetes] killing some of those who sought refuge there. A case in point was at Lukhome trading centre where some displaced people who had sought refuge there were attacked by an allegedly Sabaot armed group who using bows, arrows and 'pangas' killed an elderly Luyia man (**The Weekly Review**, April 3, 1992:9-10).

Ordinary life was largely disrupted. Learning could not continue in schools, especially in Mt. Elgon and even Trans Nzoia where most of the teachers were non-Kalenjin. As a result of such adverse strife, the schools in clash areas were temporarily closed because the non-Kalenjin teachers fled from the area and even demanded to be transferred. Bera (Masinjila and Okombo, 1998) argues that to help calm down the Sabaot warriors, the Sabaot teachers gathered information from their pupils about what their parents planned next and used that information to discourage further clashes. Though their efforts may not have achieved much, they illustrate how professional intervention may strategically be relied on to reduce inter-ethnic violence. In essence, the few Sabaot teachers who employed their intellect to help in alleviating the intensity of inter-ethnic conflict fit in Fanon's (1968) category of progressive intellectuals who are creative and imaginative.

However, most other intellectuals in the region appear to have been compromised. They played partisan roles and contributed to the spread of the conflict. But, for the business people, some of their customers were also affected. Hence their profits declined as a result and those whose livelihood depended almost entirely on business were adversely affected. At that level, matters had degenerated to retrogressive ethnicity. In such a situation, a person from one ethnic group automatically suspected and even killed another whose ethnic group was different merely because the killer wrongly assumed that anybody from the 'enemy' community was also individually an enemy who should be fought and be killed. This state of affair seems to have disrupted peaceful inter-ethnic relations and marriages for that matter.

In Bungoma the Sabaot were prevented by their hostile Bukusu neighbours from going to Kimilili town for business. The few who strayed and were identified were set upon and killed by the Bukusu youth with a certain degree of impunity. Even Kisiero, the Mt. Elgon MP could not freely travel through lower Bungoma at the height of the conflict (Kiliku, 1992). Indeed, most of Kisiero's press releases, filed between 1992 and early 1993, were made in Kitale, a fairly more multi-ethnic town than Kimilili.

Because the conflict occurred in 1992 the year of the general election, it in one way or another, influenced the campaign process and more importantly, the final results. The situation was not unique to Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia. The entire country's general outcome revealed that ethnicity was a crucial factor in determining where a political party won votes. The outcome perhaps contradicts the original notion of party politics. The notion was imported into African

political life without any modifications to make the parties reflect African real life situations. Thus, the results usually reflect what operates on the ground but not what exists in party policies.

On the December 29, 1992 general election, there were several parties that participated. They included the ruling KANU which was formed in 1960, FORD-Kenya (FORD-K), which split from the original FORD, FORD-Asili (FORD-A) yet another splinter group. FORD before splitting was a formidable pressure group which had effectively fought for the reintroduction of multi-partyism. But soon after the removal of section 2A that had banned multi-party politics in Kenya from the constitution, and the subsequent re-legitimisation of multi-partyism in the country, the pressure group was transformed into a political party bearing the same name, FORD.

However, FORD as a political party soon split because of differences that arose among its founder members. Odinga led one faction whereas Matiba and Shikuku the other. As the general election approached both factions were registered as two separate but weaker parties. Odinga's became FORD-K and Matiba's FORD-A. Other parties included the Democratic Party of Kenya (DP), Kenya National Congress (KNC) and the Kenya Social Congress (KSC) among others. KANU's presidential candidate was Moi, a Kalenjin from the Rift Valley while FORD-K was Odinga, a Luo from Nyanza. FORD-A candidate was Matiba, an Agikuyu with his fellow kinsman, Kibaki of DP both from Central Province were strong contenders. Chibule wa Tsuma of KNC a Mijikenda from Rabai and Moseti Anyona of KSC, an Omugusii did not put up spirited presidential campaigns. In fact Tsuma even lost his contest for a seat in the parliament (NEMU, 1993, *The Weekly Review*, January 1, 1993).

For the strong contenders of the presidency, it was mainly in their home provinces with their ethnic predominance that they scooped the largest percentage of votes. The table below gives performance figures of the four leading contenders of the presidency in five provinces.

PROVINCE	D.T. arap Moi	K. Matiba	M. Kibaki	O. Odinga
Nairobi	62,410 (16%)	165,553(44%)	69,715 (18%)	75,888 (20%)
Central	21,918 (2%)	630,194(60%)	373,147(35%)	10,668 (1%)
R. Valley	981,488(71%)	214,727(16%)	98,302 (7%)	75,465 (5%)
Nyanza	17,554 (15%)	10,299 (1%)	51,998 (6%)	581,490(75%)
Eastern	290,372(37%)	79,436 (10%)	392,481(50%)	13,673 (2%)
Western	219,187(39%)	214,060(38%)	14,404 (2%)	98,822 (17%)
N. Eastern	46,420 (72%)	7,188 (11%)	3,259 (5%)	5,084 (8%)
Coast	188,296(62%)	33,399 (11%)	32,301 (10%)	42,796 (14%)

Source: The Weekly Review January 1, 1993 P. 5

The table indicates that Moi scored the highest (71%) in his Rift Valley Province, the home of the Kalenjin and the Maa speakers. The two communities formed the bedrock of Moi's supporters. It was in this province that the phenomenon of ethnic cleansing took place displacing voters from other communities which were perceived to be anti- KANU. In this way, those people who were displaced and were living in makeshift camps may not have had time to vote. Matiba scored the highest (60%) in his Central Province, eclipsing his kinsman, Kibaki who garnered only 35% because the voters perceived him as a spoiler of opposition votes (Finance, February 15, 1992:14-15).

This situation changed during the 1997 general election because Matiba did not participate in the campaigns. Consequently, Kibaki garnered more votes in the Agikuyu dominated Central and Nairobi provinces than any other presidential candidates received. But to his advantage in 1992,

however, Kibaki performed best in Eastern Province where the Agikuyu associates, the Ameru, Aembu and the Akamba afforded him 50% of the votes. Odinga firmly clinched the ethnic votes in Nyanza Province where his Luo members predominated by garnering 75%. But the victory of some of these personalities may not be explained by parochial ethnicism. They had other attributes that convinced voters to pick on them instead of other contenders.

It makes sense to argue that Moi's performance outside his Rift Valley Province was not entirely based on ethnicity. His party associates and his own performance in other provinces contributed to his receiving at least 25% of the total votes in the at least five provinces thereby meeting an important constitutional requirement. Besides, Moi enjoyed the advantage of incumbency. This advantage enabled him to use state resources and power more easily than his opponents could do. It can be argued that this led to unfairness caused by the nature of uneven playing ground (Nemu, 1993:75-80).

However, the ethnic violence that preceded the general election adversely affected him in other provinces. As we pointed out earlier, there was difficulty in exonerating the government from blames because of its failure to stop the conflicts as swiftly as was expected. However, every historical process is characterised by social struggles. Conflict is a continuous feature of any human society. It has its cause and its effect (Aseka, 1997b:5). For Mamdani (1996, 8) it is a dimension of both power and resistance. Power reproduces itself by exaggerating difference and denying the existence of an oppressed majority.

The political agency in the politicization of ethnicity is an enterprise of political elite. Their political demagoguery sometimes mythologizes the political experiences. There have been varying accounts of the election behaviour in Kenya. In Bungoma and Trans Nzoia, the election results for the three leading presidential contestants in every constituency were as shown below:

CONSTITUENCY	D.T. arap Moi	O. Odinga	K. Matiba	M. Kibaki
Mt. Elgon	20,295	4,632	665	
Kimilili	4,085	24,798	6,015	
Sirisia	4,159	21,369	3,492	
Kanduyi	6,714	15,935	23,899	
Webuye		13,468	7,062	7,179
Sabaoti	10,517	19,959	8,319	
Kwanza	9,370	14,705	3,476	
Cherangani	11,871	6,294	4,917	

Source: The Weekly Review January 1, 1993 P. 16 and 19.

As the table illustrates, Bungoma and Trans Nzoia were predominantly opposition zones<sup>1</sup>. KANU the ruling party was made unpopular in all the constituencies basically because of the lethargic way its security personnel handled ethnic violence that preceded the general election. Indeed in areas where KANU scored good votes, the number of the Kalenjin voters was relatively higher. This was true in Mt. Elgon, Saboti, Kwanza and Cherangani constituencies. Besides, KANU and its parliamentary candidates in those constituencies did a lot of campaigning to convince voters to return KANU and president Moi to power. Furthermore, most voters in Cherangani were happy with the KANU contender, Kipruto arap Kirwa's frankness and commitment in sticking out his political life by challenging alleged ethnic clash inciters despite

<sup>1</sup> The situation was the same in 1997 general elections. But in the place of presidential candidate of FORD-K. was Michael Kijana Wamalwa, a Bukusu. The former party boss Jaramogi Oginga Odinga died in early 1994.

commitment in sticking out his political life by challenging alleged ethnic clash inciters despite his standing on a KANU ticket. His singular voice in the KANU dominated community endeared him even to the non-Kalenjin public<sup>1</sup>.

Public resentment was widespread among the non-Kalenjin voters who nursed grievances against the KANU manner of governance. The apparent reluctance of the party to swiftly stop the inter-ethnic violence or what were considered as politically motivated clashes, merely aggravated the situation. In these highly ethnicized elections the leading opposition parties which received parliamentary seats in the area were Ford-K and Ford-A. Here the Muliro legacy and the political stature of Shikuku played vital roles in popularising Ford-K and Ford-A. Of course the parties and their parliamentary candidates who were selected to run on those party-tickets also played an equally important role. The dismal performance by DP in the region was only broken in Webuye where its parliamentary candidate Alfred Wekesa Sambu worked harder against the general pro-Ford-K milieu. He, however, still lost the seat to a FORD-K man, Musikari Kombo (The Weekly Review, January 1, 1993).

At the national level, the 1992 election outcomes introduced another phase in the intra-ethnic relations. The way in which votes were delivered either enhanced inter-ethnic co-existence or harmed it. This could be seen soon after the election when more ethnic violence appears to have erupted in various parts of the country. The MPs, especially those in the opposition, issued statements in defence of individuals or entire members of their communities who were suspected to have been mistreated by KANU supporters. Cases in point included the Agikuyu, Abaluyia and the Luo MPs. But even those in KANU, such as the Maasai and Kalenjin similarly issued

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<sup>1</sup>. Kirwa's fearless crusade against certain malpractices culminated in his winning a Martin Luther Junior award from the US Embassy in Kenya in 1996.

threats. Some like the Abaluyia and the Luo even threatened to break away from the Republic of Kenya to form and become part of Uganda. What was at stake was the Kenyan statehood and nationhood. This reality forced a disturbed editor of **The Weekly Review** to comment that:

'When the gods are about to destroy, they first make mad. It would seem that the gods are about to destroy Kenyans. They have sent a pestilence madness into our midst-tribal madness..., a growing tendency by every ethnic group to portray its interests as paramount and threatened by every other ethnic group, increasing ethnic insecurity compounded by every ethnic group's overbloated sense of righteousness that fuels inter-ethnic violence. (Hilary Ngweno, **The Weekly Review**, October 29, 1993: 1).

At least the obtaining circumstances that forced Ngweno to despair have since ebbed. But between 1993 and 1997, various leaders openly donned various labels. They were ethnic warriors when staying in their constituencies and used every opportunity to speak out against the sufferings or marginalisation of their electorate. But in parliament, they often assumed diplomatic stature and used debate to convince the government to attend to certain problems facing their voters in their constituencies (Kituyi, 1999:10).

In Bungoma and Trans Nzoia, 1993 was characterized by a persistence of inter-ethnic suspicions, tensions and even conflicts. The Sabaot who had voted predominantly for KANU demanded to be given their own district and thereafter be transferred from the Western Province to the Rift Valley which was considered as the ancestral home of all the Kalenjin. Consequently, in September 1993, the president announced the creation of Mt. Elgon District by hiving off what used to be Mt. Elgon sub-district from Bungoma. The area MP and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, Kisiero declared at the installation of the DC of the new district that the 'Sabaot would never again allow other ethnic groups to buy land there (**Monthly News**, September, 1993:13).



The creation of an ethnic district ushered in another dimension in the Bukusu-Sabaot inter-ethnic relations. This was probably because Mt. Elgon was created in appreciation of the Sabaot votes, which were cast for KANU. This sentiment was openly articulated by the Bukusu MPs who included John Munyasia, Kituyi and Kombo. The latter argued that the creation was ill intentioned given that it had a population of fewer than 150,000 people (*Ibid*: 14).

Not all the Sabaot were happy with the creation. They wanted that Mt. Elgon District be transferred from Western Province to the Rift Valley where the Sabaot would be together with most of their other Kalenjin sub-ethnic groups. Kakasha's (Masingila and Okombo, 1996:71) views can best be used to articulate the Sabaot concern that:

'In Western Province, the discrimination the Sabaot were subjected to at the district level has only been moved higher to the provincial level. Given that we have only one MP, it is difficult for us to influence the allocation of any development project in Mt. Elgon district.'

Yet the sentiments raised by these ethnic spokesmen seem to have failed to take cognisance of the fact that the Mt. Elgon District may not be the only one lacking many essential projects in the province. Busia as a district may equally complain of being ignored. Alternatively in the Rift Valley, if the Sabaot opinion shapers cared to comment about the plight of the Pokot or Marakwet, the views in the Mt. Elgon District could equally change. For while people in West Pokot are in the Rift Valley with their fellow Kalenjin majority, we learn that 95% of the Pokot struggle to survive and raise their families in an environment of poor leadership. (Fr. Gabriel Dolan, **Sunday Nation**, February 7, 1999:22).

In addition, it appears the views of Kakasha about the position of the provincial headquarters in allocating resources possibly alludes to some kind of ignorance about the role the District Focus for Rural Development Strategy which was introduced in 1982 plays in locating project funds at the district level (Moi, 1986:60-62). Whether the strategy has been useful or a failure (**Sunday Standard**, February 21, 1999:11) does not reverse the fact that the provincial headquarters do not play big roles in allocating resources to districts. Perhaps what the Sabaot people underscore in their longing to be administered from the Rift Valley Province is a seeming persistent bias and fear of being among the non-Kalenjin people. Dubow (1994:361) explains that persistent bias and fear lend credence to the notion of ethnicity as a social construct whose distinctions are created and maintained as a result rather than in the absence of social interaction.

Perhaps the ethnic dimension has been whipped so much by Kenyan politicians as a safeguard against their looming threats to their political bases in whichever areas they operate from. This explains why many have clamoured for the creation of ethnically or sub-ethnically defined districts in order to have the concerned ethnic groups achieve some relative dominance in the new districts as contrasted to their earlier minority numbers in their old districts. In a sense, ethnicity appears to be a subjective process that can be dangerously activated. In Western Province, this has led to the creation of more new districts in addition to that of Mt. Elgon. They include Teso, Lugari and Butere-Mumias. Elsewhere in Western Kenya, other districts which were created included Suba, Rachwonyo and Bondo in Nyanza Province, while Koibatek, Marakwet and Bureti are in the Rift Valley Province.

Others who have claimed for their own district included the Abatachoni of Bungoma. It would appear that their chief concern is to use the split from the rest of Bungoma to get one of their members win a seat to parliament. Chetekeyi (O.I, 1997) articulated this concern better. He argued that the Abatachoni living in Webuye had wished to take their son to parliament but their efforts were frustrated by a large population of the Babukusu. But the issue of who to represent them appears to be a mere rhetorical rather than substantive question since the Abatachoni in other areas have been elected to parliamentary seats without necessarily going for creation of their own districts. Cases worth citing include Jonathan Werangai Masinde and Burudi Nabwera in Lugari as well as Noah Wekesa in Kwanza constituencies respectively.

In that connection, perhaps ways should be found in highlighting desired qualities suited for a person to be elected in specific areas. Ethnicity should not be the most crucial factor. Even though one may talk of an inter-ethnic relations paradigm, the ethnic quests culminating in ethnic districts are not commensurate with the pluralist ethos of the time in which people should be talking about ethnic pluralism. It is incumbent upon politicians to appropriate the language that stresses unity in diversity. It is not possible at present to reserve a district that can accommodate only one ethnic or sub-ethnic group. Even in the Mt. Elgon or Teso districts, there are other communities living side by side with those perceived to be indigenous communities to those areas.

## **6.5 Summary**

It has been the argument in this chapter that inter-ethnic relations in the post-independence Kenya have generated profound paradoxes which need to be addressed. Residual feelings of

ethnic allegiance require proper analysis in a setting of ethnic plurality despite the retention of colonial boundaries that marked a continuation in splitting various ethnic collectivities in different territories. The Sabaot and the Abaluyia of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia were affected by this colonial arbitrariness. This aspect made it difficult to cement nationhood with such border communities. Subtle questions of citizenship and ethnicity point to fundamental conjunctions which complicate inter-ethnic perceptions and relations.

Similarly, the post-independence setting introduced new dimensions in inter-ethnic relations in the area under study and calls for a skilful treatment of the issue of ethnicity. New constituencies and new administrative boundaries have been created as a way of coming to terms with ethnicity. New external influence has also further interfered in the inter-ethnic relations not only in the area under study but nationally. The fluidity and contingency of ethnic identity have been demonstrated in this chapter. In illustrations, the chapter has explored globalisation and its neo-liberal package of multi-party democracy and its implication in the Kenya of the early 1990s.

Hence in resolving conflicts which ensued in the process, the chapter has highlighted specific contributions made by professionals, political elite, interdependence and the role of the state in monitoring cross-border contacts and inter-ethnic relations. Furthermore, the chapter has pointed out that conflicts which emanate from inter-ethnic interactions assume an ethnic outfit in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia as in other parts of the country where a mosaic of factors such as land conflicts, political manipulation, economic grievances and the communicative agency of the mass media have been in play. To this extent, one would suggest that caution be

employed by persons in responsible positions to avoid unnecessary manipulation of events and information.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have highlighted issues and interrogated paradigms on the question of ethnic identity and consciousness and examined the broad theme of inter-ethnic relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and the Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia districts, between 1875 and 1997. The study has established that inter-ethnic relations have operated in a complex and subtle manner that defied superficial and simplistic blanket judgements. It has been evidenced that right from the precolonial times, inter-ethnic interactions have been complex and dynamic. This was evident in the emergence of the sub-ethnic groups of the Abatachoni, Babukusu and the Sabaot. Each one of them has actually borrowed cultural values from the others. Even their historical accounts of origin are related, despite the fact that the Abatachoni and the Babukusu are sub-ethnic collectivities within the Abaluyia ethnic entity which is yet a sub-section of the Bantu linguistic grouping, while the Sabaot are a sub-ethnic group of the Kalenjin who are a component of the Nilotic speakers.

If the three sub-ethnic groups' emergence could be taken to represent general processes through which sub-ethnic or ethnic groups emerge, it would, therefore, be wrong to argue that we have ethnic or sub-ethnic compositions that are pure. They have all had interactions and exchanged ideas, values and cultures overtime. Even when some conflicts arose, they did not force entire sub-ethnic or ethnic groups on one side of the battle field against the other sub-ethnic or ethnic collectivities on the other side of the fighting field. Illustrations in this study have shown that in fact, some sections of the warring groups assisted enemies of their section. The Bongomek often in the precolonial period assisted the Babukusu against the Kony. Still in the early 1960's, some Babukusu who had been assimilated into the Sabaot allied with the latter to fight against the former. There were, therefore, transformation of norms through cultural contestation and

negotiation. Ethnicity was not rigid and that is why there were ambiguities and conflictual precepts emanating from the shifting in the representational sensibilities within the same ethnic grouping.

Essentially, the study has argued that conflicts do not arise because of sheer ethnicity. Ethnicity or ethnic identities as a component of people's form of identification are not bad in themselves. Katana Mkangi (Daily Nation, March 27, 1999:7) ably articulates this point. He explains that ethnic differences are communities' national crucibles. They can be overlooked, but they can never be underestimated. Therefore, their good values should not just be thrown away. Instead those values should be taken advantage of. It is from ethnic compositions that nations emerge through the process of the Mazruian partialising or minimising ethnic interests and emphasizing trans-ethnic or trans-territorial values to become part and parcel of the national whole.

This study has demonstrated that what seems to tarnish ethnicity then is the manipulation by specific individuals. The politicians seem to have taken the leading share of blame in this aspect. Whether one is looking at the area under study or basically the entire country or the African continent, politicians have abused ethnic identities to forge specific armies for their own parochial political interests.

The study has explained that the genesis of politicising ethnicity rests within colonialism. Embedded in the colonial ideology was the construct directed at intensifying, clarifying and crystallising of identity. Through the process of divide and rule, certain ethnic groups assumed some advantages over their counterparts. When post-independence African leadership inherited

the divide and rule strategy, they worsened it by even entrenching sub-ethnic suspicions and hostilities. The majority identities inferiorized the minority identities thereby leading to the legitimization of minority power and self-determination.

It was in the light of this that what could have been an ethnic-free reintroduction of multipartyism was manipulated and couched into majoritarian ethnic terms with the consequent inter-ethnic conflicts in not only the area under study but also in many other parts of Kenya. This misuse has convinced Osaghae (1994:147) writing from an African continent –wide perspective, to argue that ethnicity often plays a dysfunctional role for the process of political development.

But as we have argued in this study, ethnicity in itself should not be blamed. The blame should be placed on the manipulators whose idioms and political rhetoric became the basis of organising and channeling experiences of co-ethnics in the contest for power. The politicisation of ethnicity led to beliefs and practices that circumscribed discriminatory distribution of resource allocations, the diminishing resources and the seeming absence of democratic visionary leadership that would be responsive to the plights of the minorities. In this order of political practice, the minorities have been disadvantaged while being fair to the wishes of the majority. These conditions have contributed to some extent, to the dysfunctionality of ethnicity.

However, the study has illustrated that inter-ethnic cooperation and interdependence existed right from the precolonial period and still continue up to the present time. In the area under study, this is demonstrated through the intermarriages, practices of initiation rituals, teamwork that was

termed as *obulala* or *buambani* among others. In modern circumstances, this has continued at centres of learning, working, worshipping, trading and entertainment. This good side of inter-ethnic relations should be relied on in bringing about conflict resolutions. Indeed, in the precolonial Africa, inter-ethnic marriages were an aspect of cementing lasting relations. Namachanja Khisa of Kabula area in Bungoma District employed the strategy to reduce the otherwise hostile relations that existed between his people and the Teso. Mazrui (1969a) could have had these kind of cases in mind when he proposed that knowledge of how conflicts were settled in the past is a useful guide to a people trying to resolve existing antagonisms.

This study suggests that ways should be found through which mutual trust could be restored among people from various ethnic groups. It has illustrated how conflicts arose because of mistrust, suspicion and subsequent hostilities across ethnic frontiers. Some of the mistrusts have some history of perceived social injustice. Thus for mutual trust to be restored, first the actual causes of the injustice should be addressed more seriously within the context of fitting corrective measures undertaken to the satisfaction of the conflicting groups. In the pre-colonial times, respected elders from both sides of the ethnic groups played the role of resolving such issues. Soita's diplomatic mission among Abatachoni and Babukusu where he sealed a peace agreement known as 'eating a dog' illustrates this conflict resolution dimension.

However, the changed circumstances require not just respected elders alone. They should be assisted by respected professionals, members of the clergy, NGOs, the youth, the women and even politicians themselves who are directly or indirectly associated with the conflicting groups. The success of the transactions lies in mutual ethnic willingness to frankly address the root



causes and prescribe remedies without seeming to lean unnecessarily towards any side. Furthermore, the side that may be found to have been the aggressor should also be ready to accept the verdict before a change of heart and subsequent restoration of trust is established. All this takes a long time because human perceptions and attitudes adjust slowly. But it is always good to start the process. In every ethnic group there are consensual and dependable pillars on which mutual trust could be established gradually until it is there to prevail and appreciated by all.

Assefa's (1996:43-52) submission on conflict resolution is worth pondering over. He argues that conflict resolution which leads to peacemaking, involves a restructuring of relations from an order based on coercion to one based on voluntarism; from relations characterised by hierarchy to one marked by equity, participation, respect, mutual enrichment and growth. The entire process brings about reconciliation or '*counciliatus*' a Latin word for assemble. But the concept goes much deeper than just conflict resolution.

As Assefa (*ibid*) explains, reconciliation has greater and more profound implications. These implications usher in spiritual dimension into the peacemaking process and probably create access to the more deep-seated affective base of the antagonists' behaviour, enabling them to examine critically their own attitudes and actions. This process, may in turn, spur the antagonists to accept responsibility, confess and ask for forgiveness and seek for mutually beneficial solutions. Herein lies the role of religious leaders in conflict resolution process.

For religious leaders to perform their roles truthfully, they firstly, begin by recognising and confessing if any, the roles they may have played in contributing to injustice and conflict, both within their own ranks as well as in society. This dimension requires that religious leaders seek for mechanisms with which to foster the spirit of confession within their congregations and call them into a community of repentance and forgiveness before advancing to the lay section of the society, where to reconcile former adversaries into a community of patriots requires that the peacemakers be themselves reconciled and united. In essence, the public show is not what makes conflict resolution work. But the trust comes from the spiritual and psychological engagement of both adversaries and reconciliators, be they religious, psychiatrists or other respected members within the affected societies matter a great deal.

Once mutual trust is established, any reform package people suggest will be received as an essentialised package duly agreed upon by all. As has been illustrated in the preceding chapters, both KADU and KANU had positive values that could have been blended to nurture a good project of the Kenyan nation-state. But because ethnic suspicions, competitions, and manipulations were allowed to prevail, authoritarianism was entrenched to destabilize the initial national gains. For instance, the bicameral parliament that would have provided the badly needed checks and balances was systematically weakened and finally removed.

Another step needs to be taken to reintroduce these measures without necessarily whipping up ethnic sentiments. At the moment, general resistance to ideas about the reintroduction of *majimbo* should be interpreted in the context of the same inter-ethnic suspicions, fears and mistrust. This same interpretation was reflected in some politicians' rejection of multipartyism in

1992. To attain an effective positive change requires a good political will. Kwame Nkrumah recognized the importance of this political will-power well enough to have urged African countries to seek first the political kingdom. Yet having seen what is happening as we are at the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we hasten to qualify that we need an enlightened and responsive political kingdom.

On the basis of the conflict theoretical formulation, the premises we set out to test and the objectives we aimed at achieving have adequately led us to believe that history can play a role in harnessing past relations to help in resolving current inter-ethnic conflicts. In this discourse Dahrendorfian framework of conflict based on authority and Simmelian formulation hinged on sociation, were employed largely because they mutually guided the study analyse aspects of conflict which resulted from differential distribution of not only authority but also other desirable resources both economic and social.

Since conflict cannot arise in a vacuum, Simmel's perception of sociation which is endemic in any interaction has immensely guided the study and allowed room for discussion of conflict resolution. Thus in this aspect, Simmel is more useful than Dahrendorf's views for the latter rules out the notion of conflict resolution, alleging that it deals with causes rather than expressions of social conflict (Abraham, 1982:112). Surely, given that conflict is part and parcel of any society, there should be a mechanism through which conflicts have to be resolved for life to have a good meaning.

Whenever need has arisen to introduce a new angle of analysing some violent incidents, Fanon's (1968) psychological model has been called into context for tackling the decolonisation incidences such as those sparked off by DYM movement. Fanon's view of violence as an emancipatory strategy fitted into the world view of DYM members whereas the version of nationalists who formed political parties and believed in debates could not. For the latter, therefore, Dahrendorf's and Simmel's versions applied. In all these perspectives, Mazrui's (1969a) outlook is introduced because of his apt contextualisation of conflict within the process of sociation. As we have illustrated in the text, Mazrui sees conflict as the highest stage of social contact. Even if his worldview is now globalised, Mazrui's view of sociation seems not to have changed as is illustrated in his discourse in Mazrui, (1993).

Using data obtained from the field, the Kenya National Archives and the secondary literature, we found out that issues of interethnic trust, inter-dependence and cooperation were crucial in the past. They helped neighbouring communities to resolve their differences and even forged new alliances against outsiders. The Sabaot, for instance allied with Abatachoni and Babukusu to fight off the Nandi cattle raiders. What it means is that the resilience of interdependence in inter-ethnic relations is a very crucial asset that has been employed in resolving conflicts. It can be employed in building nationhood and even humanity in general. All these depend mainly on the political environment. In the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when many globalist values are setting in, sometimes with divisive consequence, humane relations that worked to boost inter-ethnic values should be employed to ensure that Kenya and other African nations move forward confidently into the increasingly hegemonic globalising future.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of Oral Informants

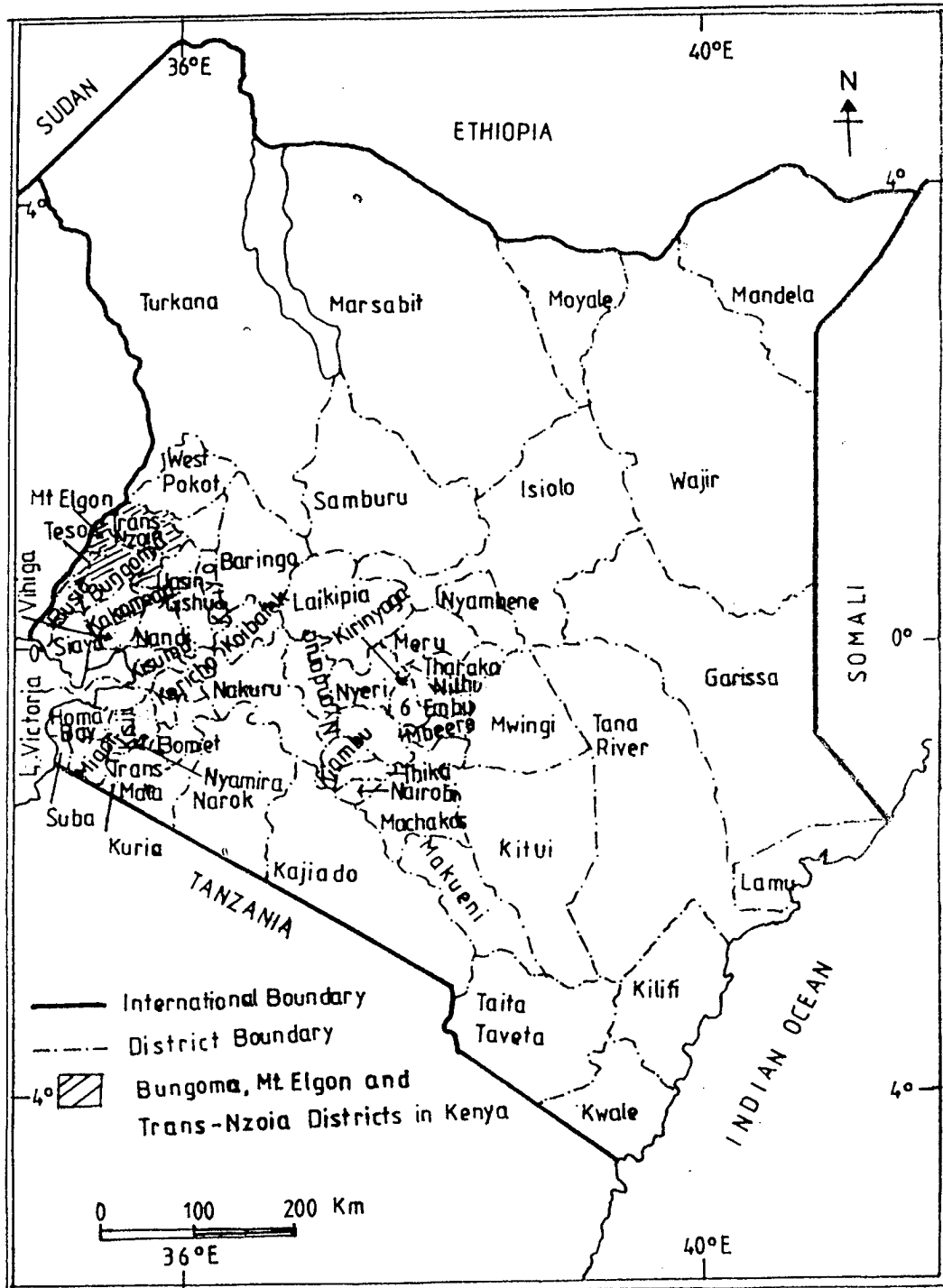
<u>Name</u>	<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>
Chang'ole, Kiboi C. 72 years	Sabaot	1-7-97
Chebeti, A. 57years	Sabaot	15-6-96
Chemtai, M. 25 years	Sabaot	5-2-96
Chepkoch, S. 68 years	Sabaot	15-6-96
Chetekeyi, K. 56 years	Tachoni	3-3-97
Chemaeki. P.K –	Sabaot	4-3-97
Holi. E. . 56 years	Tachoni	14-12-96
Jal. Gabriel (Lecturer History Department)		30-6-96
Kapchanga, M. 90 years	Tachoni	20-3-91
Kamboa, C.K. 48 years	Sabaot	2-7-97
Khachonga, C. 75 years	Bukusu	13-12-98
Khaemba, S.M. 70 years	Bukusu	4-3-97
Kibutuli, S. 91 years	Tachoni	17-3-91
Kimkung' N.S. 90 years	Sabaot	14-6-97
Kirui. N.I 50 years	Sabaot	13-2-97
Kisiero, B. 46 years	Sabaot	10-1-97
Kiptek, A.T. 49 years	Sabaot	2-3-97
Makari, W. 73 years	Tachoni	22-3-91
Mamati, M.-	Tachoni	25-11-97
Makhanu, W.W. 31 years	Bukusu	13-2-97
Manguliechi, W.67 years	Bukusu	17-6-97
Maruti. H. –	Bukusu	11-2-97
Mulongo.S.S. –	Bukusu	2-3-97
Murunga G. (Lecturer History Department)		31-7-97
Muse. R.M. 93 years	Tachoni	1-3-91
Mwanja, N.C. 63 years	Bukusu	2-7-97

Namunyu, J. 82 years	Bukusu	24-5-97
Namukongo, S.K. 75 years	Tachoni	23-7-97
Nashan, H. 24 years	Sabaot	4-3-97
Ndiema, B.C. 43 years	Sabaot	3-3-97
Ngeiywa, K.D. 48 years	Sabaot	15-6-96
Otunga, S. 68 years	Bukusu	10-12-98
Tendeti, H. 65 years	Sabaot	26-5-97
Tendeti (Mrs) –	Sabaot	26-5-97
Twing'ong, H. 43 years	Sabaot	2-3-97
Wanwa, M. 34 years	Sabaot	2-7-97
Wameme, W. 65 years	Bukusu	10-12-98
Yiningilo, J.S. 72 years	Tachoni	7-9-97

## Appendix (II)

### Map of Kenya

#### LOCATION OF BUNGOMA, MT. ELGON AND TRANS-NZOIA DISTRICTS



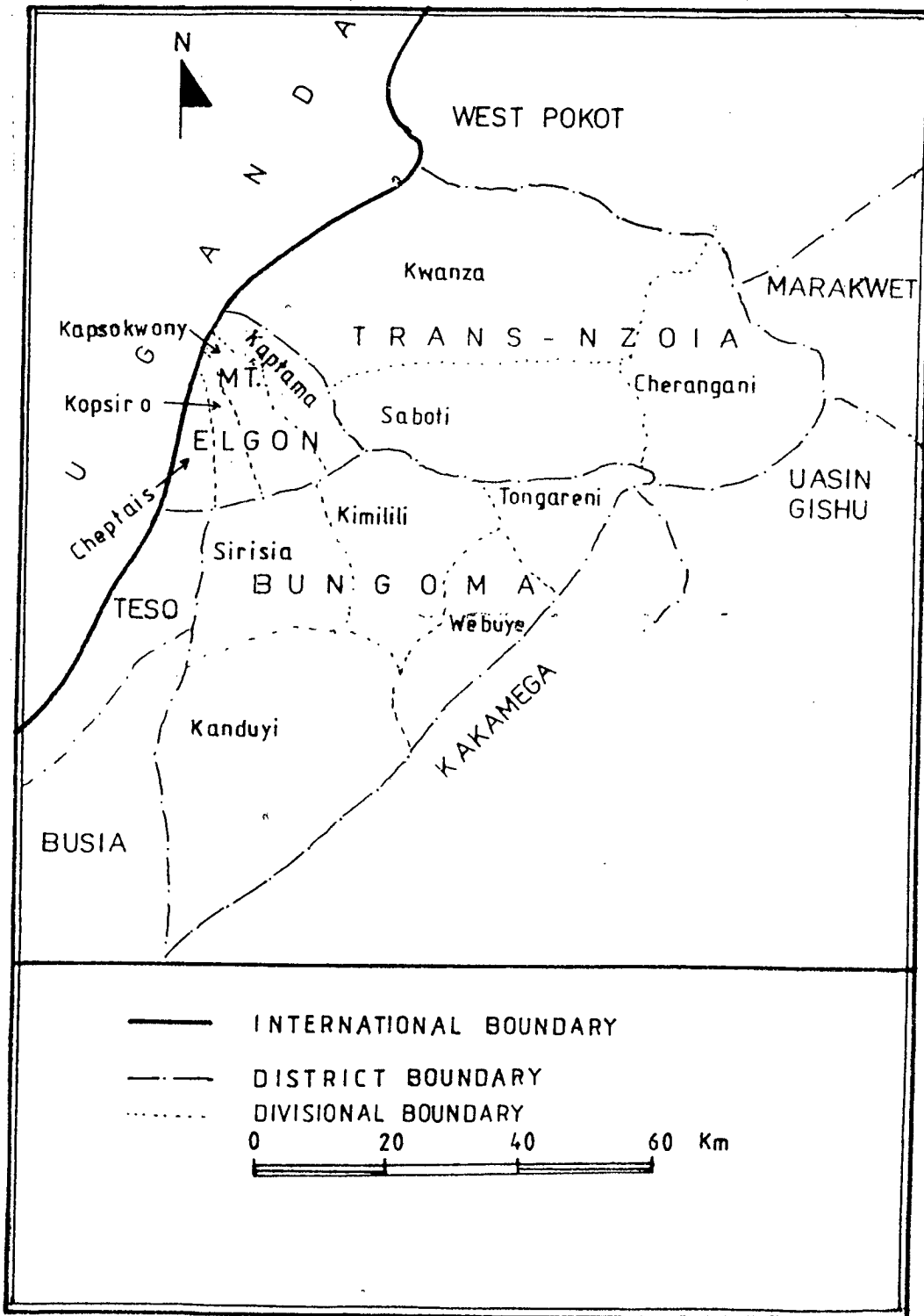
SOURCE: District Development Plans 1997-2001



### Appendix (III)

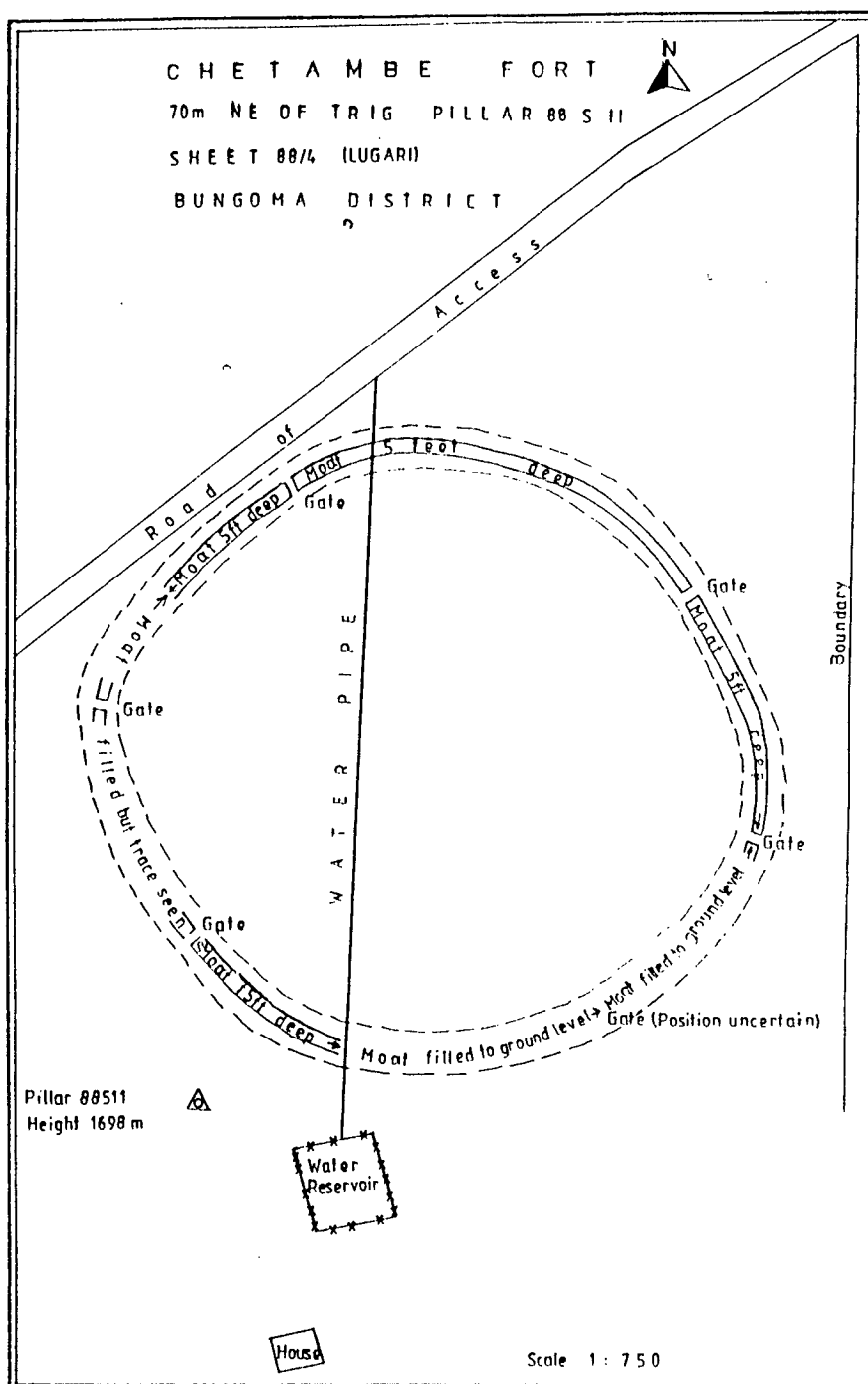
Map of Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia Districts

#### BUNGOMA, MT. ELGON AND TRANS-NZOIA DISTRICTS



SOURCE: District Development Plans 1997-2001

### A Sketch of the Chetambe the Fort



Source: Makila, 1982:14

**Appendix V**  
**A Sample Questionnaire**

**A. Background Information**

Name: -

Age: -

Sex: -

Ethnic Group: -

Clan: -

Praise Names: -

Educational Background: -

Address and Location Residence: -

Date: -

**B. Information on Inter-Ethnic Relations**

1. How Long have you lived in this area?
2. Did you settle in this area as an individual or you settled here as a family, clan, sub-ethnic group or entire ethnic group? Explain.
3. Please give a brief history of your Community. Trace migratory routes of your ancestors, where they settled for specific periods and where possible identify specific events, which are associated with where your ancestors stayed. Do you remember which period this was? Explain.
4. Which other ethnic or sub-ethnic groups live here? Have they lived here for a long time? Explain.
5. How have you as an individual or a clan, sub-ethnic group or an ethnic group related with each one of the other clans, sub-ethnic groups or ethnic groups? Explain.
6. Do you remember any major aspects of relations you have had together? i.e. aspects of inter-dependence, trade, co-operation, intermarriages, wars etc. Explain them in details and the period of particular aspects of the relations.
7. What occupations or professions do you, your clan, sub-ethnic or ethnic groups engage in? Have the occupations been changing or similar since traditional times? Explain.

8. What are the occupations or professions of your neighboring communities? Have your neighbours' activities boosted cordial relations between your people and your neighbours? Explain.
9. How do you, your clan, sub-ethnic or ethnic group initiate young members into adulthood? Do you have similar initiation rituals for both men and women? Explain. When did your group start initiating your young members into adulthood? Did you borrow the practice from your neighbours? Explain. Have initiation practices brought about any ill feelings or conflict between your group and that of your neighbouring communities? Explain.

**C. Factors for specific Inter-Ethnic Relations.**

1. What factors may have contributed to the emergence of ethnic tensions in your area? How long ago can you remember? Did your ancestors have a similar experience? Explain.
2. Please explain how the following could have contributed to worsening of relations between you as an individual, your clan, sub-ethnic or ethnic group and your neighbouring clans, sub-ethnic or ethnic groups; - land, population, job allocations, educational opportunities, religion, politics, natural disasters i.e. drought, epidemics and stereotypes.

**D Personalities**

1. Identify some leading personalities in your clan, sub-ethnic or ethnic group who tried to cement mutual inter-ethnic co-existence. When did they live? How did they go about ensuring that neighbouring clans, sub-ethnic or ethnic groups lived in harmony? Assess their efforts: - were they successful? Explain.

NB: This is a flexible questionnaire. It was enriched in the field. The nature and mood of the informant dictated how the researcher went about his work. Further probing questions emerged from most of the items indicated here.