

**BUTERE-MUMIAS DISTRICT**

**INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**BASELINE SURVEY**

*of*

**COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

*in*

**BUTERE-MUMIAS DISTRICT**



1<sup>st</sup> March 2006

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## THE GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY OF WESTERN PROVINCE

The Western Province of the Republic of Kenya was initially designated the Eastern Province of Uganda by the British colonizers until 1902. With regard to tracing the origins, the cultural and linguistic connectedness and the geographic setting of the of the population of this area today, these people really belong to the Western hills of the Great Rift Valley and the interlacustrine area of modern Uganda, the setting outlined in Map 1 above. The people of Kenya's Western Province, the Kalenjin, Luo and Abaluhya, migrated through, mingled with each other and settled here before 1895, a time when land was plentiful and 'wandering' a way of life.

The dominating geographical feature of the area where Western Province lies is Lake Victoria, linking together the countries at the centre of the African Continent: Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania. It has been suggested that at some distant time in the past the size of this lake was far more extensive, reaching the Kisii Highlands in the South-East and to Mount Elgon in the North-east, whose caves are said to have been carved out by the action of fresh water.

To the east of the lake is an elevated undulating plain extending between the Nyando Valley in the south to Mount Elgon in the north, with the River Malaba to the west and the Nandi Escarpment to the east. This is the area which the incoming colonialists from Europe chose to call North and Central Kavirondo from 1895. North Kavirondo was renamed Western Province at independence in 1963, wherein lies Butere-Mumias District established in 1998, the focus for this profile.

Moving through the southern part of North Kavirondo in 1889, one traveler observed that, "the country that lies between the Yala and Lusimu Rivers is one vast sea of tall grass ten feet high, dotted here and there with big trees and sparse clusters of smaller ones"<sup>1</sup>; At a later date another visitor became quite lyrical, saying "the gardens of the Africans shine in a large variety of different hues: maize, sorghum and millet fields, interspersed with groundnuts, simsim and beans. Dotted over the landscape are patches of darker green of banana groves surrounding homesteads, occasionally broken by stretches of pastureland or swampy valley bottom"<sup>2</sup>. The area now called Butere-Mumias District lies at the centre of North Kavirondo/Western Province. At the centre of the district lies the town of Mumias. This town became the administrative centre of the Kingdom of Wanga after 1650, changing its name according to the reigning monarch or Nabongo. An observer travelling in 1883 wrote, "Next day we resumed our march for the chief town of Kavirondo, Kwa-Sundu, (Shiundu being the Nabongo to 1882). We passed over fertile, rolling country watered by a perfect network of rivulets ... the district seemed to be strewn over with colossal boulders ..."<sup>3</sup>. In 1920 it was recorded that, "Mumias lies on a bed of Lava on a low ridge just south of the River Nzoia. The soil is exceedingly fertile and a considerable amount of tree planting has been carried

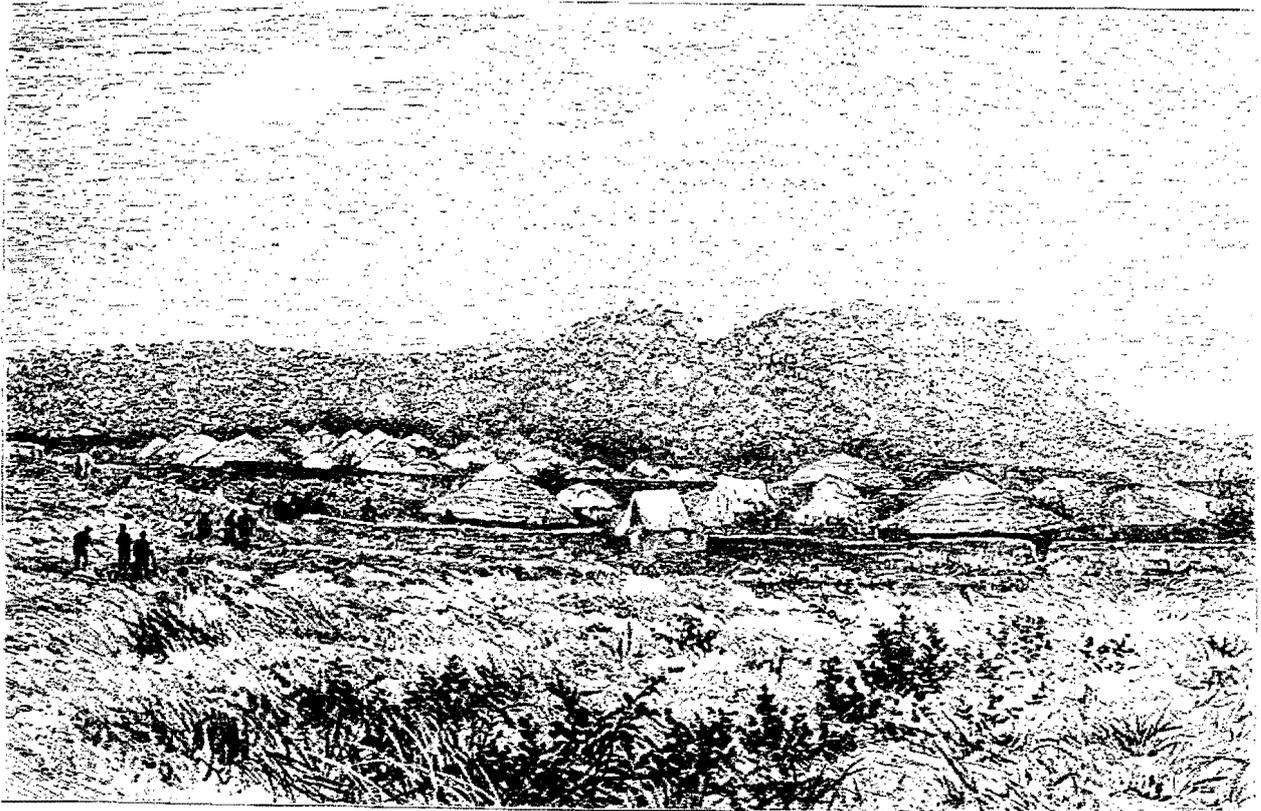
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<sup>1</sup> 'Early days in East Africa' by Fredrick Jackson (1889)

<sup>2</sup> 'The Bantu of Western Kenya' by Gunter Wagner (1947)

<sup>3</sup> 'Through Masailand' by Joseph Thomson (1883)

out, but the place is very unhealthy due to the surrounding swamps. <sup>4</sup>" North Kavirondo was frequently noted as "a savannah zone obviously capable of supporting a settled population."



Village of Kabaras, Kavirondo

In summary, Western Province has extremely fertile red soil, at an altitude of 3,500 to 7,500, the climate is agreeable with gentle breezes. The rainfall is 61.7" to 76.3" the centre, Butere-Mumias District, having the lower rainfall. There are two growing seasons each year, based on the Long Rains in April/May and the short rains in August/September. The area is well-watered with two major rivers in spate all the year round. The biggest is the Nzoia, flowing north-east to south-west from Mount Elgon and the Uasin-Gishu Plateau, dividing Butere-Mumias in half. Into this river flows the tributary River Lusimu from the east, springing from the Nandi escarpment. Further south flows the River Yala (Lukose), arising also in the Nandi Hills which on nearing the Lake forms a huge swamp. The mouth of the Yala is just three miles south of the mouth of the Nzoia as they flow into Lake Victoria. All these rivers are strewn with boulders and rapids and largely unnavigable. It is emphasized time and again that "the greater part of Kavirondo is one of the most fertile and economically advanced regions in Kenya"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> 'A Handbook of Kenya Colony' (1920)

<sup>2</sup> Op Cit.

## THE CULTURE OF THE PEOPLE OF BUTERE – MUMIAS DISTRICT, WESTERN PROVINCE

In the Southern areas of Western Province the people lived in villages of up to 30 huts, often surrounded by thorn hedges. This suggests that the environment was peaceful, the predators mainly wild animals. To the north in places like Kabras, Bukusu land and Wanga, the people were more accustomed to fortify themselves in walled villages, surrounded by moats, some so large and strongly built they were fortresses. This suggests that the environment was generally unsettled and subject to invasion by people like the Teso to the West, the Maasai to the east and the Luo from the South – west and from within. In addition, conflict was common between sub – groups within one ethnic group.

Throughout the Province the people were active farmers, with a preference for cultivation in the South where population was denser and land scarcer, and a preference for cattle, sheep and goats in the north where population was thinner and land more plentiful. Throughout the area mixed farming was practiced, with poultry common. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century apparently the favoured crops were sorghum (mtama) and millet (wimbi), the traditional staple crops of Africa, with only a limited production of maize. In addition, sweet potatoes, simsim, beans, bananas and pumpkins were plentiful. The cultivation cycle was directed by the elders, crop rotation was practised and cultivation intense.

Besides these crops and animal husbandry basic to their economy, the people hunted game using dogs, caught hippos in the rivers by digging camouflaged pits, speared elephants in teams of hunters, caught quails in decoy traps and fished using rod, hook and line plus basket traps (dema). They used to travel across rivers in dug – out canoes. They built "ingenious and strong suspension bridges of creepers<sup>5</sup>" across the Nzoia, Lusimu and Yala Rivers. They manufactured iron in scattered areas, especially Samia, and produced pottery and leather goods.

Travelling through the Butere-Mumias area in 1883, one traveler with an eye for detail recorded, "What impressed me most was the surprising number of villages and the generally contented and well-to-do air of the inhabitants<sup>3</sup>". "We passed along a perfect lane of people, all carrying baskets of food which they were dying to dispose of for beads. There was honey, milk, eggs, fowls, beans and so on.<sup>3</sup>" The same writer observed that the people speak a Bantu Language so like Kiswahili that "My men had no difficulty in making themselves understood.<sup>3</sup>" In fact he noted that the Luhya dialect was like Kiganda which the Swahili and Kamba traders quickly picked up in their travel.<sup>3</sup> " At one village adjacent to Mumias, as this traveler approached with his party, a war cry was suddenly raised and "within one hour several thousand warriors were collected together from this populous region.<sup>3</sup>".

In economic, social, religious and legal culture the people of Butere–Mumias District and beyond were largely homogenous, as you will learn by further extensive reading of the references appended and from the more detailed divisional profiles. It is only in the case of

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<sup>5</sup> "Eastern Uganda Ethnography" by C.W. Hobley (1902)

<sup>3</sup> Op cit.

their origins, the Abaluhya of Western Province stories are diverse, a mingling of Bantu, Kalenjin, Luo, and Maasai, who today are united by their common language: Oluluhya!

### **MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT**

The whole area now known as the Western Province of Kenya and the eastern border of Uganda where the Basoga and Bagisu now live, "was subjected to tremendous migrational movements in the last 400 years<sup>6</sup>" from about 1500AD. These migrational movements involved people like the Highland Nilote Kalenjin, the Bantu Abaluhya, the River Nilote Luo and the Plains Nilote Maasai and Iteso.

Before 1895 people moved about basically because land was plentiful and the practice of 'wandering' a way of life. In addition, migration was common because young warriors of all origins were curious and adventurous, as young men commonly are, seeking a 'better country'. But this natural tendency to move was also encouraged by population explosion, overstocking, the menace of tsetse flies and sleeping sickness adjacent to rivers and lakes, of mosquitoes and malaria, and famine. In addition, as population increased filling available land, so family disputes caused further movement, and finally large-scale war. For example, at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century the Abalogoli moved from the area of Kisumu to Seme and thence to present day Maragoli, pushed by hostile groups of Kalenjin and Maasai. Again, some of the present people of Marama moved into the area of Butere –Mumias District due to the "endless 19<sup>th</sup> Century wars between the Luhya under the Kings of Wanga and the Gem and Ugenya Luo.<sup>6</sup>".

These "tremendous migrational movements" from 1500 AD, as well as causing a large number of people to migrate, also brought about their mingling. Mingling by inter-marriage was normal in peacetime, but during war the warriors/men were killed as a general matter of policy, while women and children were forced to join the conquering communities. Thus today in Kenya's Western Province, while communities of Abaluhya, Kalenjin, Luo and Iteso exist identified by the language they speak, if you were to trace the precise origins of clans and families, you would find that the tribes are mixed up, the clans intermingled and individuals displaced into alien communities. As one researcher comments, "this remarkable heterogeneity in the ethnic composition of the region makes its history not only interesting and exciting, but a united whole.<sup>6</sup>" Thus, while the Abaluhya of Western Province have a common language and customs, their origins according to oral traditional are diverse and complex.

#### **1) ABORIGINAL PEOPLES (See Map 2 Below) (5)**

It is not possible to trace clans which exist today in Butere-Mumias as aboriginal groups. Most research into oral sources took place in the 1940s to the 1970s (see references) when the old were well-informed, having been trained from their youth in the oral history of their clans. Almost all the information gathered suggests that every modern clan among the Abaluhya had an oral history of migration. However, there is archaeological evidence

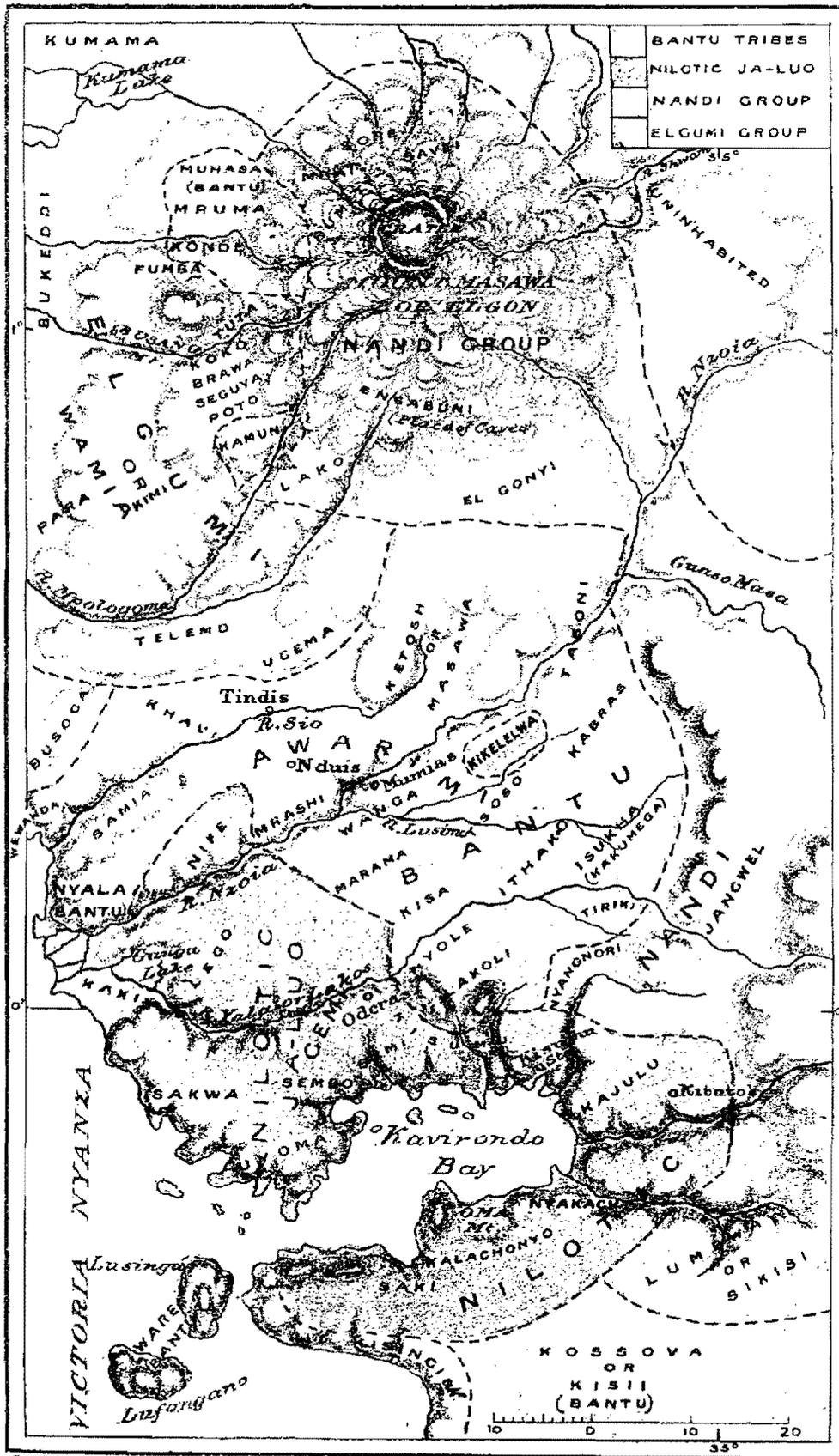
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<sup>6</sup> 'The History of the Abaluhya of Western Kenya, 1500 to 1930' by Gideon S. Were (1967)

in Western Province of stone-age sites, for example in the valley of River Yala, where there is an early iron-age culture based on the discovery of dimple-based pottery. In the north of Western Province and stretching east into Uasin Gishu is linguistic evidence of an aboriginal cushitic community, existing in oral literature, especially among the Kalenjin as the Sirikwa. These aboriginal groups were evidently absorbed by the incoming migrants and are now only identifiable in oral history and an admixture of cushitic vocabulary.

**MAP 2: EASTERN UGANDA**

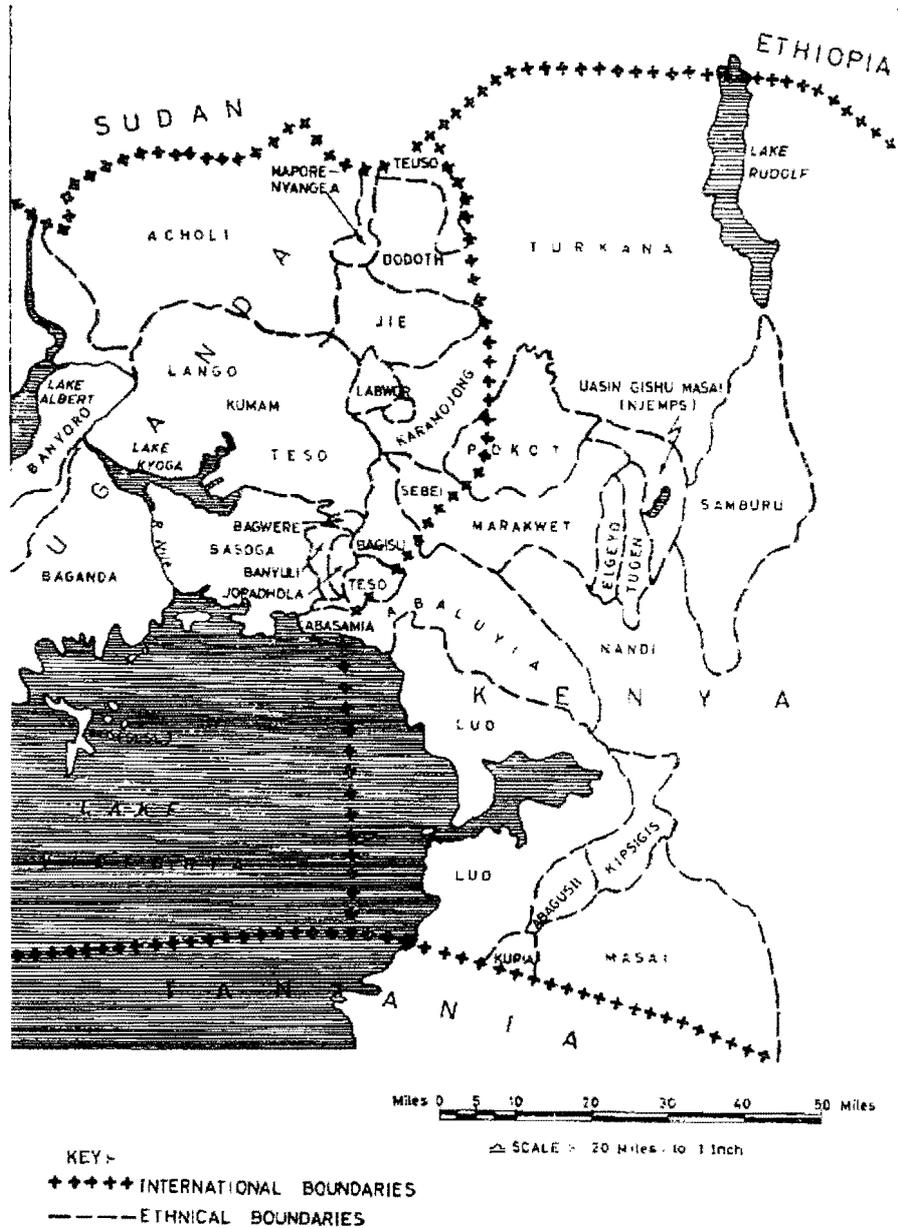
Map of Kavirondo and neighbouring country, Brit. E. Africa, showing racial distribution



Darbishire & Stanford.

1901.

**PEOPLE OF WESTERN KENYA AND UGANDA**



**2) THE PASTORAL NILOTES**

The Highland Nilote Kalenjin who have had substantive influence in Western Province are the Nandi plus those who remained in the dispersal point around Mount Elgon, the Kony (El Gonyi), the Bongomek (Abangoma), the Bok (Walaku) and Sebeyi (Sebei). All these groups have an oral tradition of origin in Abyssinia, north-west of Lake Turkana. From there they appear to have migrated to the Uasin Gishu Plateau, where they seem to have mingled with the Sirikwa, and thence to Mount Elgon, settling there around 1600AD.

The Nandi settled in their present home on the eastern borders of Western Province by 1650, from where they fought and mingled with the migrating Luhya groups, sharing their custom of male circumcision. The Terik hived off from the Bongomek of Mount

Elgon, moving south to Asembo around 1700 and mixing with the Abatirichi. Luo invaders caused them to move to present-day Tiriki, where they mingled with the Luhya and Nandi, adopting a Luhya dialect. Other clans of Kalenjin origin who adopted the Luhya language include clusters dwelling in Ndivisi, Trans Nzoia, Bukura and Kabras. In addition, the Abashieni of South Marama and the Abamulembwa, Abatobe and Abanashieni of Wanga also have stories of Kalenjin origin.

The Plains Nilote Iteso have traditions of origin in Abyssinia and the Sudan to the north-west of Lake Turkana. They migrated south-west of Mount Elgon into eastern Uganda. They are said to be related to the Turkana of north-west Kenya and the Karamajong and Jie of eastern Uganda. They arrived in the area of modern Bugishu and Busoga by 1650. By 1800 they had moved to their present home straddling the Kenya-Uganda boarder, causing the Ababukusu and Bamasaba to migrate in turn to their present homelands in Western Kenya.

All the River Nilote Luo have stories of origin in south-east Sudan. They migrated with their long-horned cattle south, following the course of the River Nile to Pakwach. From this dispersal point, groups moved west to form the Alur, others went due south establishing the Babito Dynasty of the of the Kingdom of Bunyoro and the Acholi and Lango. Other groups migrated eastwards, then south-east, forming the Japadhola of eastern Uganda and the Luo of Kenya, who settled along the eastern shores of Lake Victoria around 1600, displacing earlier Bantu Luhya clans. Both the Nandi to the east and the Luo to the south west, being pastoralists, were organized for warfare and contributed to continual migration away from conflict in the area of Western Province, right up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **3) THE CULTIVATING BANTU**

Though the language and culture of the Bantu of Western Province are closely related, their origins are ancient and diverse. The generic term for these people, 'Abaluhya', was coined in 1926 for political purposes in order to encourage a spirit of unity among the numerous, often small-scale and fiercely independent localized clans. Because the origins of these people is so diverse and because they have inter-mingled with each other and other ethnic groups for so long since before 1500, even research workers in the 1940s to '70s, when the people were fluent in oral history, found the tracing of their origins highly complicated. However, one point is very clear, that a major dispersal point for many Luhya clans was south Busoga in eastern Uganda, itself settled from 1500AD. Today the loss of local knowledge makes it impossible to bring further light to bear on the subject. Herewith is a summary of this complex and mysterious story!

Some of the earliest Luhya people to settle in Western Province were the Ababukusu. They with their brothers, aboriginal Abagishu and Abamasaba, led by the three sons of Mundu, trace their origins to the north of Lake Turkana, pushed by the Nabibia

(Abyssinians) to the Uasin Gishu Plateau around 1500AD. Here their population increased and groups moved west, skirting Mount Elgon to the south and settled on the Uganda/Kenya border. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, in conflict with the Iteso, they were pushed east into their present territory.

The history of the Kingdom of Wanga is rich in stories of migration and settlement and will be expanded upon under the profiles for Mumias, Matungu and South Wanga Divisions. The earliest clans to settle in the modern area of Wanga arrived between 1450 and 1600. These were the Abamuima who established the nucleus of a kingdom at Imanga. Other clans who settled at this time include the Abamulembwa, Abanashieni and Abatobe. According to oral tradition, they are related to the pastoral Elgon Kalenjin who, mingling over the years with Bantu clans, adopted Oluluhya as their language and agriculture as their basic economy. Today the kingdom of Wanga is composed of 30 clans. The ruling clan is the Abashitsetse, through whom positions of leadership are inherited. The Abashitsetse are said to have originated from a dispersal point west of Lake Albert in Uganda, from where they moved through Bunyoro where they may have learned Bahima traditions of kingship, thence through Busoga and South to Kisumu. Here they dispersed, one group moving north/north-east to settle in modern Tiriki. According to both Tiriki and Wanga oral traditions, Wanga, the fabled founder of the Wanga Kingdom, led a group of Abashitsetse to Imanga where the Abamuima were dominant and eventually took power in the Kingdom of Wanga, moving its capital to Mumias. Since, of the 30 clans claiming allegiance to the Kingdom, only 12 trace their descent from Wanga and his origins in Tiriki, clearly the stories of origin within Wanga are diverse. For example, the Wanga clan called Ababongo are said to be related to the Luo of Alego who moved into Wanga during a severe famine around 1850.

The Abasamia are also made up of several clans with diverse stories of origin. For example, the Abakhekhe settled at the major dispersal point in Busoga around Ibanda. From 1650 they began to migrate south into Malakisi and thence to the shores of the Lake in modern Samia. Other stories place Samian origins in Sigulu Island in the Winum Gulf. They finally settled in their present home by 1850, where they became famous as iron workers, producing tools for cultivation and weapons for war.

There are a variety of stories of origin among the people settled in the Khwisero Division of Butere-Mumias District, including those of clans originating in Samia. Around 1650, due to family disputes, groups of Abasamia moved south into Kisa or modern Khwisero. The earliest immigrants were Ababiru under the leadership of Wabiru. Then, led by Muchitsa, further groups of Abasamia settled in Kisa, namely the Abachero, Abatayi, Abayonga, Abakambuli and Abalakayi. However, the dominant clan in Kisa were the Abashisa who are evidently related to the dominant clan in Idakho, the Abashimuli. According to oral tradition, the Abashimuli were part of the aboriginal clan in Kisa and Idakho, the Abashisira. Around 1600 a group of Maasai Abashimuli are said to have mingled with the Abashisira and dominated the whole area, influencing other Kisa clans such as the Abashisa, Abakhobole and Abamani. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the people of

Kisa, with no unifying system of chiefs and therefore somewhat unruly, began to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Wanga Kingdom to their north.

**Map 3: Wanga Kingdom<sup>7</sup>**

(showing present day boundary and sub-locations)



<sup>7</sup> "Western Kenya texts": Research by G.S. Were (see 6:1967)

In the same way, the Banyore of Western Province have diverse stories of origin. An aboriginal group of Abanyole lived in the modern area of south Busoga on the shores of the lake. Their dispersal was apparently set off around 1300 when one group migrated to Central Nyanza in Bondo and Gem, eventually settling in modern Bunyore. By 1600 more clans moved into the area, mingling with the Banyore. These include the Abamuli, who today live in Gem, Tiriki and Kisa, as well as Bunyore. The Abamuli also have traditions which relate them to the Abashimuli of Idakho, of Masai/Nandi blood. The Ababayi of Bunyore are said to be related to the Ababukusu, and the Abalako with the Gem Luo, where their cousins, the Jousere, reside.

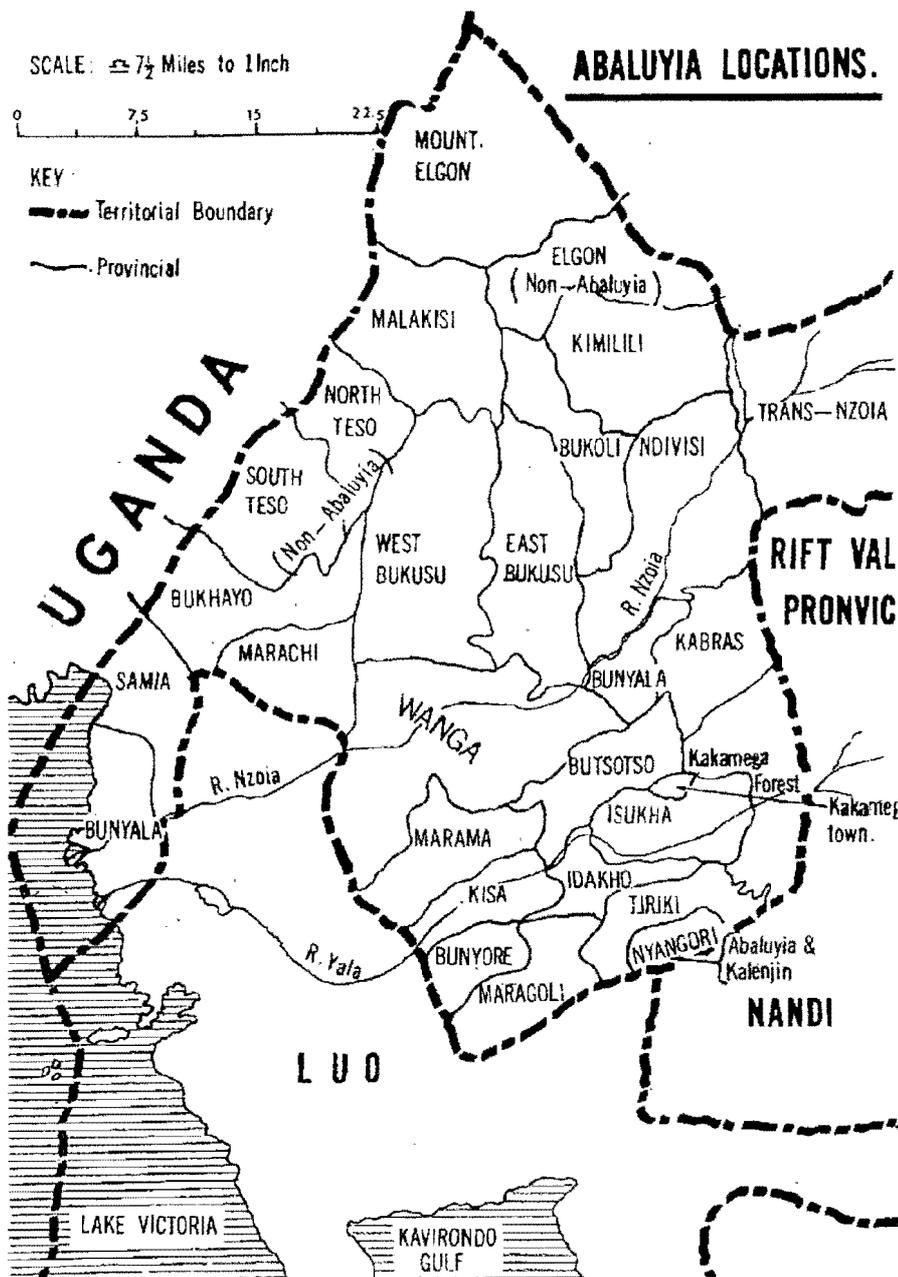
Among the Maragoli are stories that they originated in Busoga in eastern Uganda and first migrated south to the area of Seme in the Winum Gulf. They then moved north to the area of Maseno and thence east to their present location. Another story of origin relates how the ancestors to the Maragoli moved down the Nile into southern Uganda and crossed the lake in boats around 1700. These boats were then separated in a storm. One group arrived in Kisumu and travelled north led by Omulogoli, to found Maragoli. Another group led by Omugusii moved south-east to found Kisii. These people are certainly related by language and customs as well as tales of origin. In addition, they also mingled with other Bantu groups and the River Nilote Luo.

By 1650, the area of modern Marama in Butere Division of Butere-Mumias District was settled by several independent communities. Among the earliest clans to enter south Marama were the Abashieni. By origin they were of Kalenjin stock, related to the Bongomek and Bok of the Elgon Kalenjin. They apparently migrated from Elgon through Shiamanyinga (Mumias) to south Marama by 1600. Another wave of migration originated in Bugishu in eastern Uganda. A group of ancestral Bantu moved south into Alego where they seem to have clashed with the incoming Luo. They were pushed along the valley of the River Yala and eventually passed through Kisa into south Marama. The migratory movements of the Abamarama included the Abamukhula, Ababoko, Abamanyulia, Abamatundu, Abamukhuyu, Abashihongo, Abamunali, Abakura and the Abatere. The latter are said to be related to the Abalukhole of Tiriki and the Abashitsetse of Wanga. Meanwhile the Abalafu settled in north Marama, having migrated from Busoga through Samia, Busia and thence to Broderick Falls near Kitale. Their clans include the Abalukokho, the Abachenya of Ugenya Luo extraction, the Abashirotsa, Abebokono, Abashihaka, Abashikanda, Abashibanga and Abamukoa. The Abalafu claim a relationship with the Abashieni of south Marama and with clans settled in Wanga of Kalenjin extraction. Much of the restless movement within Marama is probably associated with the endless 19<sup>th</sup> Century wars between the Gem/Ugenya Luo and the expanding Kingdom of Wanga. It was in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the Abamarama began to pay tribute to the Kingdom of Wanga to their north.

In summarizing the migration and settlement of Kenya's Western Province, I have focused on the peopling of Butere-Mumias District and the areas surrounding that modern administrative area. Of other Luhya-speaking people, like the Idakho, Isukha, Kabrasi,

Tachoni, Banyala, Bakhayo, Batsotso and Bamarach, little has been said. However, it can be stated categorically that these people have equally complex stories of origin, have moved and mingled pushed by war famine and disease, as well as a sense of adventure, as much as the people of Butere-Mumias District and its surrounds. For further information, read the Divisional profiles and the attached reading list.

**MAP 4:**



## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF BUTERE-MUMIAS DISTRICT IN COLONIAL TIMES 1895-1963**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The history of Western Province from 1895, when Britain formally established the Protectorate of Kenya, to 1963, when independence was declared, is essentially one of a North-south divide.

The people of the north included (west to east) the plains Nilote Iteso, the highland Nilote Elgon Kalenjin groups, the Ababukusu of east and west Bukusu, Malakisi and Kimilili and the Banyala of Kabras. All these people have a traditional economy of cattle-keeping, with some cultivation of maize and beans. The land they lived in was more suited to pasture, so the population density was relatively low. As cattle keepers they were organized on military lines and had a history of conflict with the colonizing British. However, as British rule became established, the people in the north settled down to law and order. To the east in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu European settlers developed large-scale plantations for cereals and dairy farming. With the advantage of plentiful land, the indigenous people in the north also established large-scale farms for cereals and dairying. The major highway from Kampala to Nairobi and the railway promoted the export of food produce. Thus the export of maize from this area rose from a few hundred bags at the end of the 1920s to 36,577 in 1934. Farms of over 40 acres yielded rich harvests of maize, sorghum, cotton and dairy products. At this time the Ababukusu owned over 200,000 cattle producing cream for Kenya and Uganda.

In the South of Western Province the people largely cooperated with the colonizers, led by the Nabongo of the Kingdom of Wanga, Mumia, who already, according to oral evidence, held sovereignty over the whole of modern-day Butere-Mumias District. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Wanga Kingdom proper extended over Mumias, Matungu and South Wanga Divisions, while the people of Marama Division were paying the Nabongo tribute. By 1895 the people of Khwisero Division were also beginning to acknowledge Wanga sovereignty. Thus, when Mumia extended friendship first to the officials of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) from 1890 to 1895, then to the British Colonial power after 1895, recognizing a powerful ally in his struggle with the Ababukusu and Luo, the whole of modern Butere-Mumia District clans tended to be cooperative too.

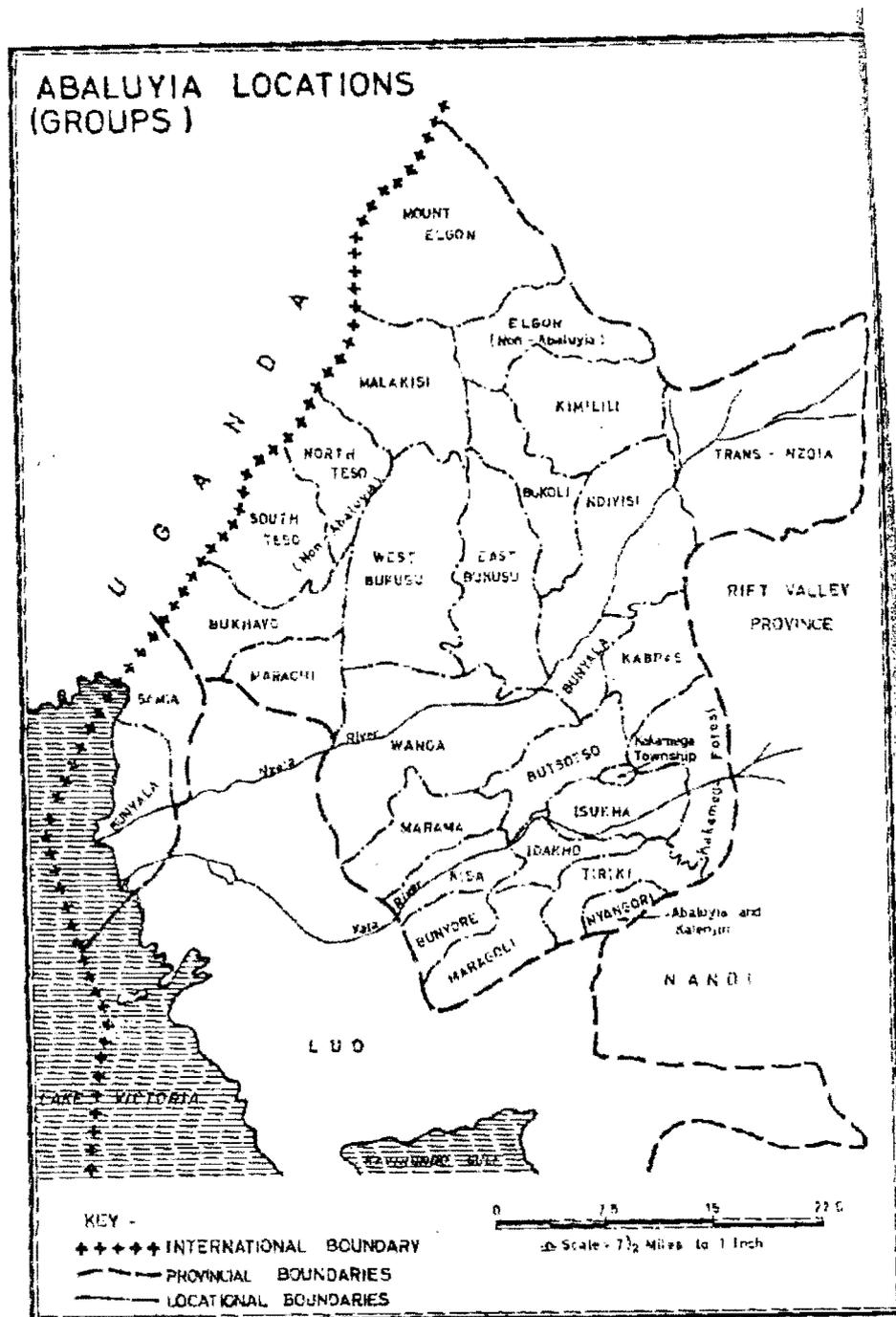
Many Christian churches became established in the south of Western Province; the Quakers in Maragoli, the Church of God and the Anglicans in Bunyore, the Church of God, Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Khwisero, the Anglicans in Marama, the Catholics in Mumias, where Islam was already well established by the Somali and Swahili traders who had begun to infiltrate by 1840. The further south, the denser the population in this fertile region suited to cultivation, and the scarcer the land. Save for a few in the area of Kaimosi, no European farmer settled here as land was not available for plantation farming. A visitor in 1947 noted that when he turned south and south-west from Mumias beyond the River Nzoia, little change from tradition could be noted, the shambas were small, the schools and dispensaries few and far between<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Op. Cit

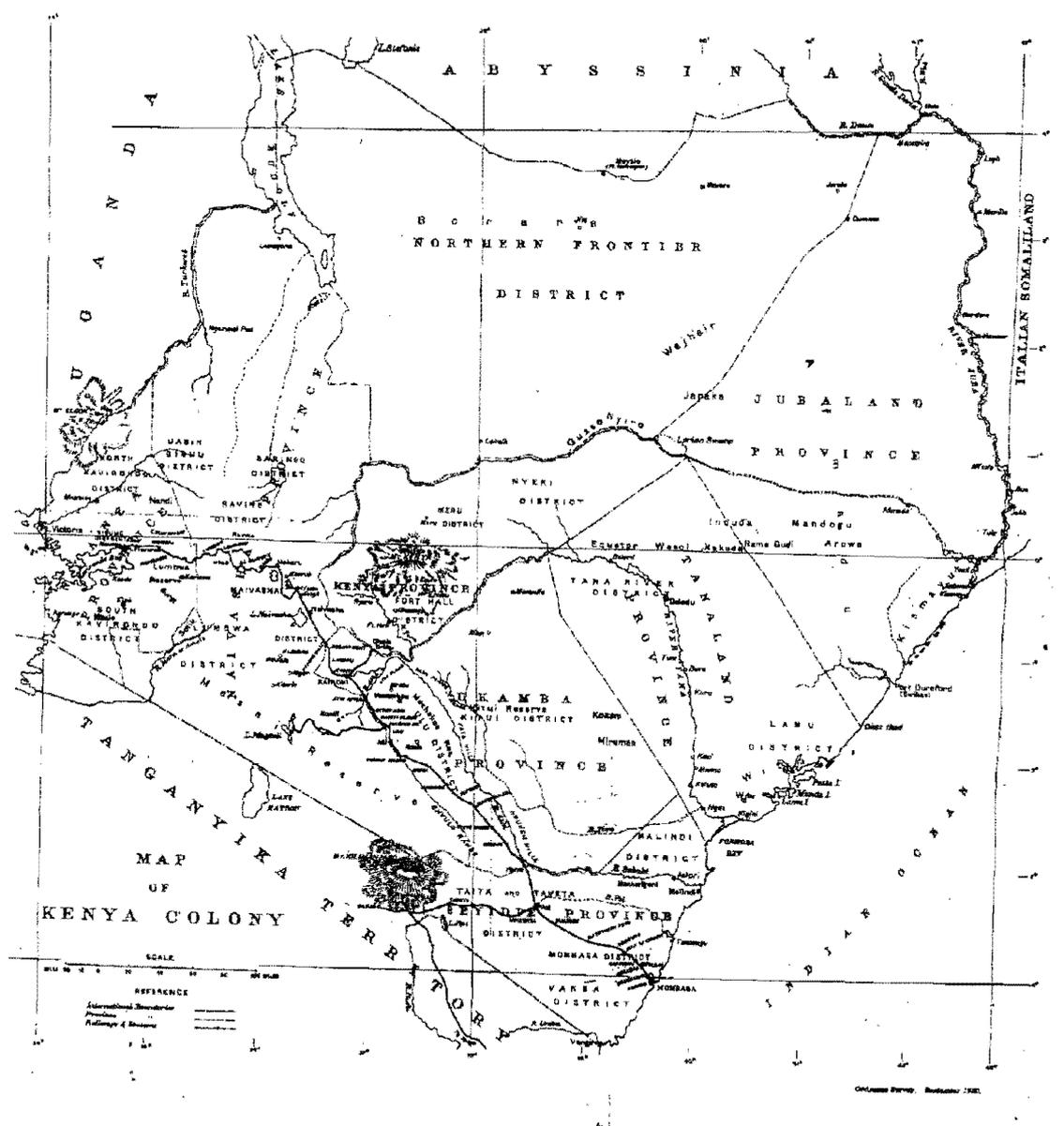
Such a north-south divide is reflected today in economic and social imbalances like access to national schools and university training, where the new 'middle class' from the north tend to predominate, an issue which needs to be addressed by local leaders and central government, as the densely populated south of the province is being marginalized!

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL & POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS TO 1963**

**MAP 5:**



**MAP 6: KENYA COLONY 1920**



During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century a trade route from the coast of Kenya was mapped out by Arab, Somali and Swahili traders, passing through the centre of the part of Western Province carved out as the administrative area of Butere-Mumias District from 1998 to 2009. This was the shortest route to Uganda and therefore a well-worn road to the trading station at Elureko, which became known as Mumias. It was along this route that one of the first Europeans to reach this area, Joseph Thomson, arrived in the town in 1883. At that time he evidently appreciated the prosperity and hospitality of the people, with their rich diet and traditions of trade. Thomson was followed in 1889 by IBEAC officials eager to access the ivory trade. By 1903 it was reported that 3,000 pounds of ivory were brought for sale in Mumias from Bukusuland. But ivory encouraged gun running between Somali & Swahili traders and local people such that unrest and conflict became endemic. So by 1907 the ivory trade was banned. Along with traders came European travelers bent on gaining influence, like the German

expedition led by Carl Peters, who rested in Mumias in 1890 on his way to make a treaty with the Kabaka of Buganda.

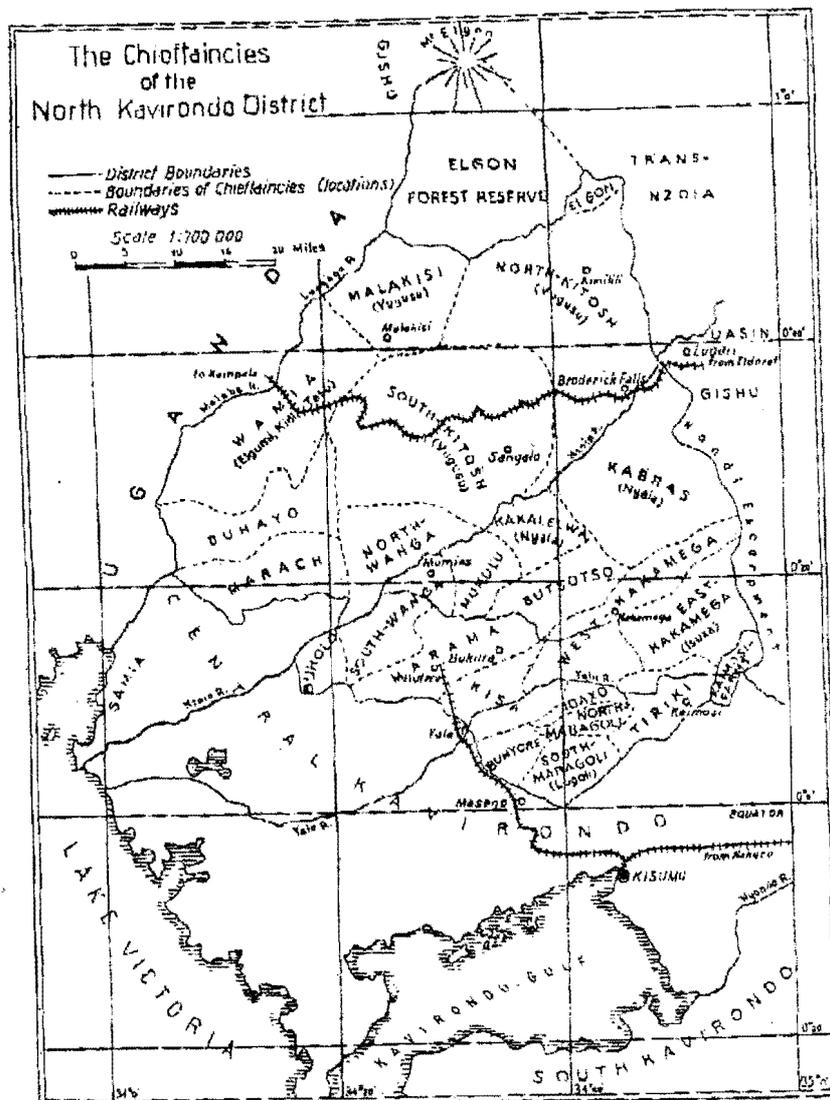
In 1894 Commissioner Colville of the Protectorate of Uganda founded a sub-station at Mumias, with a contingent of 50 Sudanese soldiers to establish law and order. In 1895, C.W. Hobley, formerly of IBEAC, became the first sub-commissioner to open up British administration in North Kavirondo/Western Province, stationed at Mumias. In the same year a contingent of 5000 warriors from the Wanga Kingdom, together with Maasai and el Kony, over 1000 Baganda led by General Kakangura and the Sudanese soldiers, all under 2 British officers, set out to subdue the Ababukusu and Abanyala, who had been regularly attacking trading caravans. In 1896 Schlatters road reached Mumias from Nairobi. In 1899 taxation was imposed, which by 1910 became a combined hut and poll tax for men who migrated from Western Province in droves to get employment to pay this tax. In 1902 North Kavirondo was transferred to Kenya colony and chiefs began to be appointed, with Mumia of Wanga eventually being installed as the Paramount Chief of the area. (See Map 6, (6))

By 1901 the railway from Mombasa had reached Kisumu and Indian, Swahili and Arab traders began to settle throughout Western Province. By 1903 there were 65 such traders in Mumias and by 1908 Indian shops sprang up in Marama and Yala. In 1904 the road linking Mumias with Yala was built, joining the Kisumu-Busia highway. By 1905 people in the south were beginning to sell their produce in Kisumu, while imported clothes and bicycles began to appear in local shops. But new diseases were also causing havoc, such as the rinderpest epidemic of 1910 in which 50% of cattle died. A Catholic hospital was built in Mumias in 1910 and in 1911 an Education Department was established and schools began to spring up. From 1912 people began using savings banks, Singer sewing machines spread and agricultural extension services were established.

In 1920, due to the malarial nature of Mumias environment, the administrative capital of North Kavirondo was moved to Kakamega. This town began to flourish especially after 1930 when gold was discovered in the area, encouraging the influx of European gold diggers and the employment of thousands of local men. In 1924 Sang'alo Veterinary Station was set up, the first dispensaries built and the Local Native Council appointed in Mumias. In 1931 the Government Kakamega High School was set up, together with the Government Hospital. In 1936 the Kisumu-Kakamega all-weather road was built and the Agriculture college at Bukura opened.

Christian Missions were first established in Elgon in 1894. In 1904 the first Catholic Mission was founded in Mumias. In 1912 Chief Mulama gave land at Butere for the Anglican Church CMS Mission. By 1937 six missionary societies had put down roots in Western Province.

**MAP 7: SPREAD OF ADMINISTRATION**



The Quaker Church (Friends) had 103 schools, the Church Missionary Society (CMS: Anglican) 103, the church of God 78, the Catholics 41, the Salvation Army 19 and the Pentacostal Assemblies of God (PAG) 14. There were 547 schools in all, with 16% of the population identified as Christian, 41,000 protestant and 13,000 Catholic. In Mumias were a preponderance of Muslims, with pockets in other places like Maragoli.

By the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World war in 1939 Indian traders were common in the area, the Nakuru-Kampala and Nakuru-Kisumu-Butere railway lines were complete, and there were four hundred miles of all-weather roads in North Kavirondo. Uganda in the west under indirect rule and with no settlers, had a well developed indigenous economy which had a substantive influence on economic development in North Kavirondo. The value of exports in maize, cotton, simsim, pulses, hides, ghee, cream and so on, was rapidly increasing, as was the value of imports of clothes, food, agricultural implements, bicycles, sewing machines, cigarettes, soap and so on.

Meanwhile, with the spread of education and the increase in gainful employment, the people of Western Province began to build networks of opposition against colonial dictatorship! By the 1920s many people were attracted to the East African Association initiated by James Beuttah of Murang'a. The North Kavirondo Taxpayers Association influenced the people to demand their rights as tax payers. In 1934 the North Kavirondo Central Association drew together leaders in national opposition. From 1936 political agitation increased against the power of appointed chiefs. Then between 1939 and 1945 162,000 soldiers were recruited from Kenya to fight for the Allies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the majority from Nyanza Province or western Kenya. 24,000 died. It was their experiences during and after the war that encouraged soldiers to join the already organized dissidents to spearhead the Nationalist Movement which led to independence in 1963.

### A CONCLUSION

"The city was called Babylon, because there the Lord mixed up the language of all the people, and from there he scattered them all over the earth!"

*Gen. 11 v 9*

Since 1963 Western Province has continued to develop in the ways outlined above. By the present day in 2006 the Province is divided into 8 districts: Bungoma, Busia, Butere-Mumias, Kakamega, Lugari, Mount Elgon, Teso and Vihiga. There are thousands of primary schools, hundreds of secondary schools, dozens of colleges, three with university status. Now most people would identify themselves as muslims or Christians. There are numerous hospitals, hundreds of dispensaries and private clinics run by retired medical personnel. There are thousands of community-based organizations (CBOs) in the urban and rural areas. There are dozens of towns and hundreds of trading centres, with an increasing number of financial institutions such as banks. There's money in Western Province and the velocity of circulation of this money increases daily as income is boosted by employment opportunities, retirees' pensions and the promotion of income-generating activities throughout the rural and urban areas by CBOs.

But the north/south divide in Western province remains! The further north you travel the more economic activity is evident, the less dense the population, the larger and more flourishing the towns. The roads are wide and tarmacked, focussing on towns and leading to Nakuru and Nairobi. The railway, though not yet expanding as it should, still works. The further south you travel the less economic activity is evident, the denser the population, the fewer and smaller the towns. Fewer roads are broad and tarmacked and the railway has stopped functioning altogether for over 5 years!

A glance at Butere-Mumias District at the centre of Western province tells the same story of a north/south divide. Plantation sugarcane farming has brought money and an increase in velocity of circulation to Mumias, Matungu and South Wanga Divisions. Southward, Butere

Division has also benefited economically from sugarcane, but to a lesser extent as the distance from the factory in Mumias is greater. Khwisero Division, with its dense population and tiny shambas, is not in the out-growers area and has no substantive cash crop. There are far more primary and secondary schools in the north, including high cost schools with all the facilities to excel in exams. There are better equipped hospitals and dispensaries, there are bigger towns and more financial institutions and facilities to support CBO income-generation and social activities. Take time to seek out statistical evidence of a north/south divide, which is plentiful. For example, Mumias Division with about 130,000 people, is served by a well-run hospital and many doctors, public and private. Khwisero Division with about 110,000 people, has no active hospital and NO qualified doctor to serve the suffering community! In 2004, 60 children from Mumias Division were called to national schools, NONE were called from Khwisero Division!

This brief profile of Butere-Mumias District and Western Province tells the people of the area that they have a rich cultural heritage, diverse and mysterious, of adventure, mingling and unity based on a way of life which is similar and an adopted, mutually comprehensible language called Oluluhya. The people call themselves and their leaders to unite with one voice in historical pride to focus on developing our province, and specifically Butere-Mumias District at the centre, in unison.

"Do not ask for whom the bell tolls .... It tolls for THEE!"

*John Donne*

Mrs. Jill Inyundo  
B-M ICDP Patron  
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1.8.06



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