



# The Peoples of Kenya up to the 19th Century

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# Origin migration and settlement of the people of Kenya

## Background of the Kenyan people

- ❑ The people of Kenya are of diverse origin and background
- ❑ From archeological evidence show that East Africa is regarded as the cradle of humankind.
- ❑ Kenya also was a home of hunter gatherer community and evidence of their culture has been found at Gambles cave and Njoro River cave near Nakuru
- ❑ Examples of the early inhabitants include - the Okiek, Dorobo, Athi and Gumba. These people seem to have been assimilated or forced to move out by stronger invading groups like the Bantus and the Nilotes.
- ❑ Another earliest inhabitants in Kenya were the Cushites

# The Cushitic Speakers

## The Eastern Cushites

### Migration and Settlement

- ❑ The eastern Cushites include the Borana, Somali, Oromo, Gabra, Rendile and Burji
- ❑ They originated from North of Kenya from either Somali or Ethiopia.

### The Oromo

- ❑ They arrived in Kenya in the 16th century and settled on the eastern shores of L. Turkana
- ❑ By 1600 A.D they had reached the coast where they pushed the Mijikenda and the Pokomo.

## The Borana

- ❑ The Borana are part of the Oromo speaking people of southern Ethiopia
- ❑ Their migration occurred in the last quarter of the 19th century. They settled in Wajir, Marsabit and Moyale
- ❑ At about 1900, more Borana groups fled into Kenya
- ❑ Today they occupy the area north of river Tana.

## The Somali

- ❑ They are the largest single group of eastern Cushites in Kenya
- ❑ By 10th century, the Somali were already living in Mogadishu. They were threatened by the Oromo and started moving southwards

# The Southern Cushites

## Migration and Settlement

- ❑ The Southern Cushites migrated into Kenya from Ethiopian highlands. They were pastoralists
- ❑ They occupied the grasslands of Kenyan highlands between 2500 and 3000 years ago
- ❑ Only a few of the Southern Cushites are found in East Africa today. They include the Iragi, Boni and Burungi of Tanzania and the Dahallo and Sanye of R. Tana Basin in Kenya
- ❑ They seem to have been absorbed by the Bantus and the Cushites

# Reasons for the migration of the cushites

1. They were looking for grazing land for their animals
2. There was population pressure in their original area
3. To escape from clan or family feuds
4. Outbreak of diseases
5. To flee from constant attacks from their neighbors
6. To satisfy their spirit of adventure.

## Results of the migration of the Cushites

1. They moved with their livestock farming in areas to where they settled
2. Their settlement led to war over land ownership
3. They displaced the Mijikenda and the Pokomo
4. They led to expansion of trade with their livestock products which they exchanged with the grains from the Bantus
5. Their migration led to increased population in the areas where they settled
6. They introduced some cultural practices in Kenya, e.g. the practices of circumcision, age set system and taboo against eating fish among the Bantu
7. They led to intermarriages between them and other groups
8. They were influenced by the Bantu into acquiring land, mixed farming and iron working.




## The Bantu

- a. The term Bantu refers to a people who speak related languages.
- b. They are the largest language group in Africa
- c. They originated from south eastern Nigeria and Cameroon or Congo basin
- d. They moved southwards and settled in east, central and southern Africa.
- e. Their migration was slow and gradual
- f. From the Congo, those who eventually settled in Kewya migrated in two groups
- g. One through Uganda direction and the other from the direction of North-East Tanzania, to the south of L. Victoria
- h. The former became the Eastern Bantu and the latter, the Western Bantu.

# Map showing Bantu Migration



# Reasons for their migration

- I. To escape from drought and famine
  - II. Being farmers, they were searching for fertile land
  - III. To escape external attacks from their neighbours
  - IV. To escape from diseases and epidemics
  - V. To satisfy their desire for adventure
  - VI. Knowledge of iron working enabled them to increase food production which led to population pressure, and this forced them to move to other areas.
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# The Western Bantu

They include the Abakuria, Abagusii, Abaluhya and Abasuba

They are referred to as Western Bantu because they settled in the western part of Kenya.

## The Abaluhya

- a. The Abaluhya consist of people with various origins. They are descendants of Bantu speaking immigrants from western Uganda, Maasai, Kalenjin and Luo groups
- b. The earliest Luhya immigrants began converging in their present land between the 2nd half of the 15th century and the first half of the 17th century. By the 1st half of the 17th century Luhya migration had been completed.
- c. They absorbed other groups such as Southern Nilotes
- d. They interacted with the Maasai, and the Luo
- e. Interaction with several communities led to the existence of many clans among them the Abaluhya.

# The Abagusii

- a. 'Misri' is indicated as their home of origin
- b. By 1500 they migrated eastwards from Mt. Elgon down River Nzoia Valley and settled at Yimbo and
- c. near Ramogi Hill at the beginning of the 16th century
- d. By 1550 A.D the Luo pushed the Abagusii from Alego to Kisumu where they settled by 1600 A.D.
- e. They later moved from Kisumu to Kano and further Eastwards where they conflicted with the Kipsigis and Maasai
- f. By the second half of the 18th century they had settled in the fertile Kisii highlands.

## The Abakuria

- a. They originated from Misri (Egypt) then to Mt. Elgon where they dispersed and moved to the Luo shores of L. Victoria alongside the Abagusii, where they settled briefly and interacted with the Southern Cushites and the Luo
- b. By 1800 A.D. they had all settled in South Nyanza.

## The Abasuba

- a. These are descendants of refugees from Busoga and Buganda who were forced to flee from Buganda rulers persecutions
- b. Others were displaced by incoming Luo
- c. They settled in Rusinga and Mfangano Islands of L. Victoria
- d. Over the years the Abasuba have been considerably influenced by the Luo culture.

# The Highland Bantu

They include the Akamba, Agikuyu, Ameru, Aembu and Mbeere.

## The Eastern Bantu

- a. The Eastern Bantu can further be divided into coastal and Highlands Bantu
- b. These are the Bantu speaking groups to East of the Rift Valley, all the way to the coast of Kenya.

## Coastal Bantu

- a. They include the Mijikenda, Pokomo and Taita
- b. They moved from west of L. Victoria through northern Tanzania to the Taita Hills
- c. From Taita Hills the Bantu migrated in a north-eastern direction along the coast and settled at Shungwaya.

## The Mijikenda

- a. They trace their origin to Shungwaya where they were forced to move southwards by the Oromo
- b. They settled in fortified villages just inland from the coast
- c. Each of the nine groups settled in their own separate ridges known as kayas
- d. The nine groups are, Kauma, Giriama, Duruma, Chonyi, Jibana, Karibe, Kambe, Rabai and Digo
- e. By 19th century the Mijikenda had interacted and established themselves as middlemen in the long distance trade between the Akamba and Waswahili at the coast.



## The Pokomo

- They migrated from Shungwaya and settled along the R.Tana where they interacted with the Cushitic communities and Waswahili.

## The Taita

- a. They are a people of mixed origin
- b. They originated from Shungwaya and their first settlement was at Marigea Hill in the 16th century
- c. Today they live on three hills known as Daivida, Sagalla and Kisigani

# Migration and Settlement

## The Akamba

- a. They are said to have come from Mt. Kilimanjaro where they had settled at about 1300 A.D. From here they moved to Taita hills.
- b. They later moved to Chyulu and Mbooni Hills between 15th and 17th centuries
- c. Because of population pressure they were forced to migrate to Kitui, Iveti, Kiluugu, Mariakani and other areas by the early 19th century.

## The Agikuyu

- a. Their myth of origin refers to Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga in Murang'a as their place of origin.
- b. But the Agikuyu seem to have moved Southwest from the coast at around 1400 AD
- c. They followed Tana River and as they moved some broke off and settled in different parts of Central Province.

# The Ameru

- a. The Ameru claim that Mbwa at the coast was their place of origin
- b. From Shungwaya the Ameru pushed into Igembe and Tigania regions
- c. They moved further into the interior crossing River Tana and finally settled to the East of River Tana (Tharaka)
- d. The Chuka settled to the West of R. Tana
- e. The Mwimbi, Imenti, Tigania and Igembe also settled west of the Tana River.
- f. The Aembu and Mbeere
- g. They claim to have originated from Igembe and Tigania where the Aembu moved southwards finally settling near Runyejes and Kiambere
- h. The Aembu settled to the South West of Mt. Kenya and Mbeere to the South East of Mt. Kenya.

# Results of the Migration of the Bantus

1. Their migration led to increased population in the regions where they settled
2. They intermarried with the people they came into contact with
3. They spread the knowledge of iron working to other communities
4. Their settlement led to the expansion of trade between them and their neighbours
5. There was increased cultural interaction
6. Some communities were displaced e.g. Gumba
7. They spread agricultural practices in Kenya
8. Inter-community conflicts increased especially over land
9. Their settlement also led to population redistribution e.g. Dorobo moved to forested areas.

# The Nilotes

## River-Lake Nilotes

### The Luo

- ✓ They are believed to have originated from Bahr-el-Ghazal region of Southern Sudan
- ✓ From here they migrated to Pubungu, Pakwach in Uganda where they settled by 1450 A.D
- ✓ They later moved into Kenya in four distinct groups:-

#### (i) Joka-Jok

- They were the first to move out of Uganda
- They settled on Ramogi Hill in the present day Siaya District by 15th century
- They later spread to Sakwa, Alego, Asembo and other parts of Nyanza.

## **(ii) Joka-Owiny**

- They were the second to arrive in Kenya from Uganda
- They settled in Sogoma in Alego where they arrived in the 17th century
- They later moved to settle in Kisumu, Nyakach and South Nyanza.

## **(iii) Joka-Omolo**

- They came from Northern Bunyoro, settled temporarily in Ibanda and Bukoli before moving on to Ugenya and Gem
- They pushed Abagusii and Abologoli out of Yimbo
- They spread to Alego at the beginning of the 18th century.

## **(iv) The Abasuba**

- They are a mixture of Bantu refugees from Buganda and Busoga in Uganda who intermarried with the Luo and settled on the L. Victoria islands of Mfangano and Rusinga Gwasi area
- Most of them adopted the Luo culture

# Reasons for the migration of the Luo

- 1) Population pressure which forced them to move to other areas
- 2) Internal feuds
- 3) External threats
- 4) Spirit of adventure
- 5) Diseases and epidemics affecting both people and animals
- 6) Drought and famine forced them to move in search of food
- 7) Being pastoralists they migrated in search of fresh grazing lands and water for their animals.

# Results of the Luo migration

1. Intermarriages
2. They assimilated some Luhya and other groups in the region
3. They increased the population in the region where they settled
4. Trading activities increased
5. They displaced the Western Bantus and the Maasai
6. Adoption of agriculture alongside pastoralism.

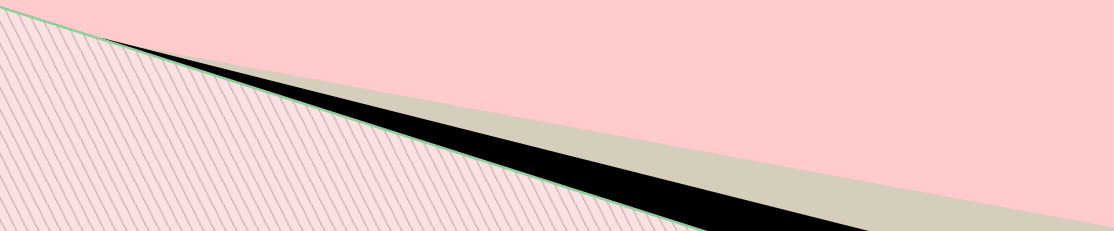


# The Plain Nilotes

## Migration and Settlement

- They include the :- Maasai, Iteso, Samburu, Turkana and Njemps
- They entered East Africa from an area north of L. Turkana, South West Ethiopia at around 1000 A.D.

## Reasons for Plain Nilotes migration

1. They were looking for fresh grazing land and water
  2. Outbreak of cattle and human diseases
  3. Drought and famine
  4. Population pressure
  5. Internal and external attacks
  6. Spirit of adventure.
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## **The Iteso**

- They came from the direction of Ethiopia or Sudan and settled at present day Karamoja
- Others moved south-eastward to eastern Uganda
- The others moved to western Kenya and settled there.

## **The Maasai**

- They originated from north of L. Turkana
- By the 17th century they had moved into Uasin Gishu plateau from where they spread southwards along the Rift Valley to occupy Laikipia and Ngong areas.

# Results of the migration of the plain Nilotes

1. Their settlement increased conflicts and insecurity in the area where they settled
2. They displaced the southern Cushites
3. They assimilated some communities e.g. Dorobo
4. and Sirikwa
5. Led to enrichment of language They intermarried with their neighbours They promoted trade in the region with Agikuyu and Akamba .
6. Increase of population in the area
7. They adopted circumcision and age set system from the Southern Cushites
8. They acquired the practice of farming e.g. the Iloikop Maasai (Kwavi).
- 9.

# The Highland Nilotes

## Migration and Settlement

- Highlands nilotes include the Kalenjin speakers namely, Tugen, Nandi, Kipsigis, Marakwet, Pokot, Sabaoti, Keiyo, Kony, Okiek, Bongomek and the Terik
- They originated from south west Ethiopia north of lake Turkana
- They moved southwards and settled on the slopes of Mt. Elgon which became their major dispersal area.

## Terik

- From Mt Elgon they moved southwards and arrived in modern Asembo in Western Kenya between 1652 and 1733
- Then they moved north to present day Tiriki in Buluyia
- Today they live in Nyang'ori. Tugen
- From Mt Elgon they moved South East and settled in Eldamaravine, Kabarnet, Cha moi-son hills, Kamasia hills, and Kabartonjo

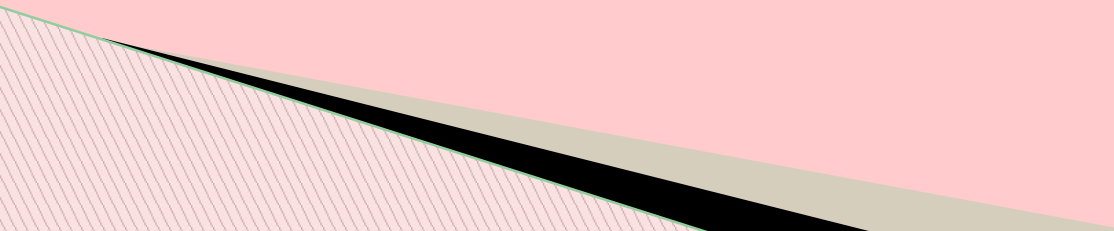
## Kipsigis

- They moved South East from Mt Elgon and settled near L. Baringo
- They met the Southern Cushites whom they displaced and absorbed others
- Later they moved to Belgut and Kipsigis where they forced the Abagusii to move and settled there.

## Nandi

- They moved southwards to Tot, then to Tambach and later Rongai finally settling at Aldai.

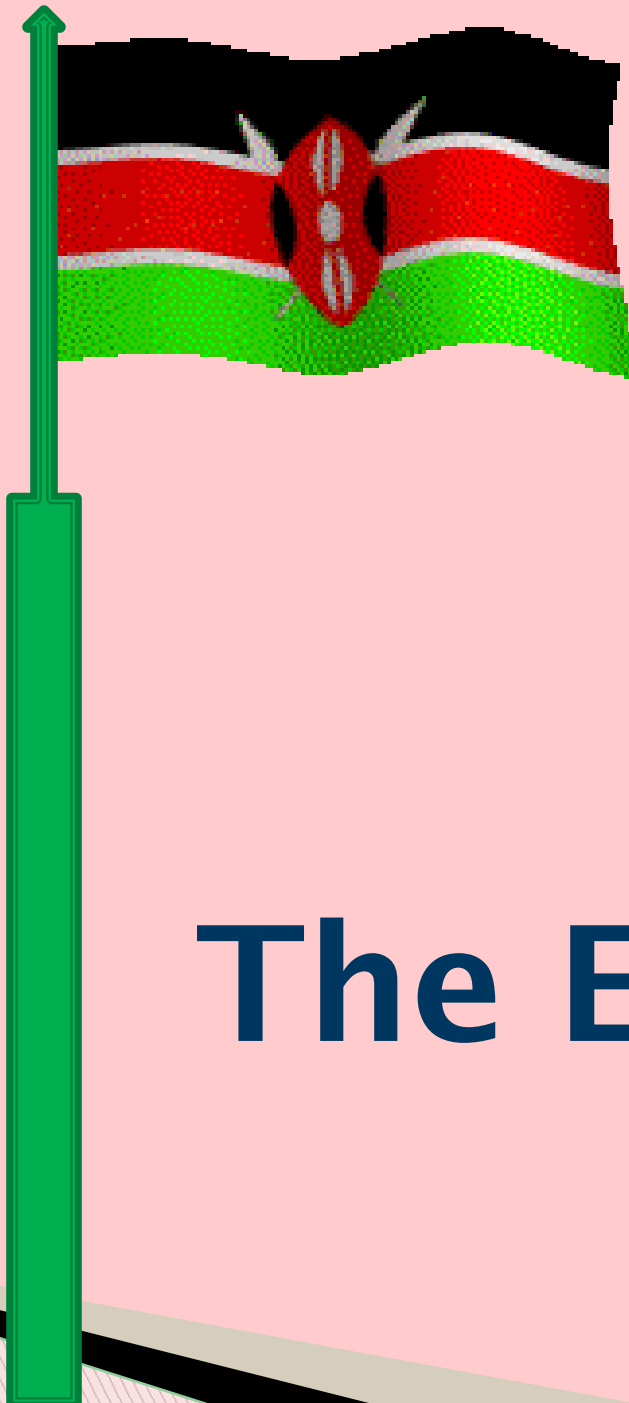
## Reasons for the migration of the highland Nilotes into Kenya

1. Increase in population led them to move to other areas
  2. There were external attacks
  3. Internal conflicts
  4. Drought and famine
  5. Outbreak of diseases and epidemics
  6. The spirit of adventure
  7. External factors from their neighbours
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## Results of migration and settlement of the Highland Nilotes into Kenya

1. They intermarried with their neighbours e.g. the Abagusii and the Luo
2. They displaced the Maasai and forced them to move to other areas
3. Population increased in the region where they settled
4. Some of the Kalenjin groups assimilated and absorbed some communities e.g. the southern Cushites
5. Trading activities increased in the region where they settled
6. Their migration and settlement increased inter-community conflicts e.g. fighting with the Maasai over cattle and pastures.



**The End**

