

This study examines the evolution of Mumias into an urban centre. It adopts and critiques the Weberian approach to urbanization and also re-asserts the underdevelopment perspective of unequal exchange and uneven development. In the framework of the underdevelopment theory, the place of merchant-capital in the development of Mumias is explained. The study demonstrates the relevance and/or lack of it of these theories in understanding the physical structure and social processes that characterised the evolution of Mumias from its earliest time to the year 1940.

The study begins on the premise that there is no standard of determining an urban centre and that the Wanga had their own form of urbanism. The whole question of urbanization has to be re-examined and defined beyond Western definition straitjackets. The functionality of the Wanga urbanism is demonstrated in the importance of *Itookho*, the traditional name for the capital. The idea of *Itookho* is central in the urbanism of the Wanga. Its location, functions and changing character were a product of the centres response to the local needs and aspirations of the Wanga and their gerontocracy. The politico-administrative imperatives of the institution of Nabongo and the attendant socio-cultural and economic roles were pertinent aspects that defined *Itookho*. The place of the Maasai in the changing nature and functions of *Itookho* is also underscored in the study. By 1860, *Itookho* had evolved into a key aggregation of humans for socio-cultural purposes in its urban evolution.

The study proceeds to examine the interlude between the traditional nature of *Itookho* and the exceedingly powerful presence of British colonialists. Attempts are made to illuminate the impact of the Arab-Swahili presence in *Itookho* including their commercial and religious legacies. It is shown that the Arab Swahili reached *Itookho*, as a direct response to growing mercantile needs at the Coast. The Arab-Swahili mercantile incursions in Wanga in the era of Nabongo Shiundu made his *Itookho* re-named Kwa-Shiundu which became largely cosmopolitan. With such a cosmopolitan composition, the morphology of Kwa-Shiundu was gradually transformed. However, by 1894, when British colonial designs in Kenya became apparent, Islam had not effectively taken root in Kwa-Shiundu and the European presence and the Arab-Swahili lack of evangelical zeal accounted for the subsequent decline of the Arab-Swahili influence. The study analyses the impact of the Arab-Swahili merchant-capital on the Wanga and other parts of the Buluyia social formation.

The establishment of the colonial state in Buluyia is given prominence in the study. It emphasizes the importance of grasping the colonial racial dichotomy in analysing and understanding the social processes evident in Mumias. Its colonial transformation was based on this dichotomy and its declining nature after 1928 is associated to colonial policies. The study also highlights the role of Indian merchant-capital in the post 1900 history of Mumias and proceeds to offer a penetrating assessment of the conflicting place of Indian trading needs European settler agricultural demands in Mumias. Evidence is adduced to demonstrate how the African needs were sand-witched between the Indian and European interests. Consequently, the evolution of a viable network of Wanga traders was stifled. This explains why Mumias 'decayed' after 1928 when the district headquarters was moved to Kakamega. These shifted emphasis from Mumias as greater focus went to other towns in the region. But the inability of the royal Wanga family to transform their political clout over the British into economic prowess is seen as a fundamental issue. The rest of the Wanga traders remained petty traders. The unprivileged

entrepreneurial skills of the less connected local traders were easily petered out of competition by Indians. Thus the Wanga initiatives in trade and the local dynamic in the urban growth of Mumias were undermined.