

**The Evolution of the Multi-Ethnic Community in Turbo Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya 1895-1963**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this article was to explore the historical and socio-political dynamics that shaped the formation of multi-ethnic community in Turbo sub-county of Uasin Gishu County of Kenya and analyses the evolution of these relations within the above time frame. Initially inhabited by diverse ethnic groups including indigenous communities such as the Sirikwa, and later Nilotic Purko and Uasin Gishu Maasai as well as the Kalenjin. The region experienced dynamic ethnic interactions marked by migration, trade, and occasional conflict. The arrival of European settlers in the early 20th century transformed Uasin Gishu's pastoral landscape, with colonial policies fostering land dispossession, labor exploitation, and ethnic divisions. Between 1906 and 1936, labor migration intensified as African communities such as the Nandi, Abaluhya, Agikuyu, and Luo moved to settler farms, contributing to a multi-ethnic workforce despite colonial attempts to enforce ethnic separation. Tensions over land, livestock, and labor continued through the 1940s, exacerbated by the Swynnerton Plan and the Mau Mau Uprising. However, post-independence land-buying schemes fostered ethnic integration, ultimately creating a diverse community in Uasin Gishu, despite lingering ethnic divisions.

**Key words:** Kenya, Multi-Ethnic Community, Turbo Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County.

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### **Introduction**

The belt of land running South-west of Mt Elgon into the Rift Valley is what is known as the Uasin Gishu plateau (Ehret, 1971). Knowledge of the indigenous inhabitants of Uasin Gishu is very scanty (Ehret 1971: 173, Darel, not dated manuscript). According to Ochieng (1975:21) this is because Rift Valley (the plateau included) is an outcome of lengthy historical process which involved socio-cultural, economic and political development and inter-mixture of the diverse populations settled in this part of Kenya. From extant tradition and literature, the earliest inhabitants of Rift Valley were the Khoisan (ibid: 21). The next known people after them and the southern Cushites were the “early” southern Nilotic people who later differentiated themselves into the Dorobo, Kalenjin, Ateker, Dadog and possibly Sirikwa people (ibid:25).

Thus varied historical accounts indicate that Uasin Gishu plateau was occupied by different ethnic groups. In the early period of the present millennium, Ehret (1971) contends that the ancestors of the Kalenjin were living somewhere in Uasin Gishu. The Keiyo and Marakwet are said to have occupied the eastern rim of the plateau before 1890 (Kanogo, 1987:11). The Nandi seem to come into being in the early 17th century along the southern Nandi escarpment. They gradually expanded northward by absorbing people of various other Kalenjin groups into their community and settled from sometime in the 18th century on into the 19th century in Uasin Gishu (Ehret,1968:173) much possibly from around Mt Elgon (Were,1987:48,Were,1968:190).

Traditional evidence suggests that the Bagishu who are closely related to the Bukusu of Bungoma occupied the Uasin Gishu plateau before they were driven out to the east of Mt Elgon by the Maasai, Nandi and perhaps the Abyssinians between A.D.1517 and 1652(Were,1968:188, Were 1987:53). Oral traditions also point Sengwer (Sengeli) in Uasin Gishu plateau as the origin of the ancestors of the present Abatachoni (Ehret, 1971:68).

The Maasai and Nandi mythical tales indicate that the Turbo-Kipkaren area in the Uasin Gishu plateau was occupied by pastoralists, the Sirikwa, referred both ethnic groups as ‘the people who were here before us’ (KNA, DC/UG/2/1,1961). This corroborates Darel’s work that stone kraals called *mokwen* were excavated in the area.

From linguistic, historical, oral and archaeological evidence, the Sirikwa, as a people, are thought to have possibly been the ancestors of the present-day Kalenjin people of the highlands west of Kenya's Rift Valley (Sutton, 1987). Between AD 1600 and 1800 the Sirikwa seem to have established close contacts with the majority of the eastward and southward expanding Kalenjin families who were migrating or sojourning in Sumo and Wareng (or Uasin Gishu plateau) (Ochieng 1975,74). The Sirikwa were ousted by the Uasin Gishu Maasai, also referred to as *kibwobek* (Matson, 1972) towards the middle of the 18th century who took over large area of the land for grazing their cattle (ibid). During the last thirty years of the 19th c the Nandi became most powerful people in western Kenya. The Nandi occupation of a fresh territory happened on the basis of a unit known as a ‘*bororiet*’, which is political union based on territorial and military functions. The ‘*kokwotiwek*’-

formed the basic military group based on homesteads. The inhabitation occurred either forming new political unit or migration of a section of the original unit (Matson, 1972:25-26).

Despite territorial conflicts, the communities in Turbo Sub-county shared a complex web of social relations. These included kinship ties, marriage alliances, cooperative trade, and joint participation in religious and cultural rituals. Barter trade, particularly during times of famine, was a key aspect of these relations. This network of interactions helped mitigate potential conflicts, with communities often establishing norms and laws to govern their coexistence and avoid manipulation mostly from leaders who use ethnicity to advance their selfish agenda.

### **The Rise of Nandi Power**

By the late 19th century, the Nandi had emerged as the dominant power in western Kenya. The rise of the Nandi as a military power was largely due to the decline of the Maasai power (Were,1987:48) caused by civil wars that began about 1813 and also being weakened by natural factors such as locust invasion, pleuro-pneumonia among their cattle, and small pox (Were,1987:65- 66). The *kibwobek*, the Maasai in Uasin Gishu, were eventually exiled by the Nandi, after a major battle at Kipkarren-the Nandi name for “the place of the spears” (Darel, 1, not dated manuscript). After removal of Maasai from Uasin Gishu and Siwa, the Nandi accessed the entire grazing region of Uasin Gishu plateau (Oboler, 1985:19, Matson, 1972).The Nandi's military success thus allowed them to control vast territories in Uasin Gishu, which they utilized for grazing cattle. The consolidation of Nandi power marked a turning point in the region's ethnic dynamics, influencing the social and political landscape of the area.

Before colonization, Uasin Gishu was a vital pastoral land for the Nandi people, who occupied the plateau for centuries. The land was rich in pasture, making it ideal for the Nandi's cattle herding lifestyle. However, this began to change with the arrival of European explorers and settlers in the late 19th century.

### **European Exploration and Initial Colonial Presence (1890s-1902)**

In the 1890s, European explorers such as Joseph Thomson and Ewart Grogan passed through the Rift Valley, including Uasin Gishu, and noted the area's agricultural potential. Thomson's 1883 expedition identified the area as an ideal location for settlement (Thomson, 1968:274) and Grogan's 1904 exploration of the Mau escarpment further highlighted its agricultural prospects, particularly its potential for farming wheat and other crops. This drew the attention of European settlers and the British colonial government, marking the beginning of European interest in the plateau. By 1904,many white settlers streamed to Kenya and Uasin Gishu plateau was their hot spot.Initially,the plateau was designated by Lord Chamberlain for jewish settlers but it received resistance from other white settlers especially the British settlers (Trzebinski 1985:62).The Jewish settlement in the area,therefore,did not materialize (Kareithi,Standard,2011).

Between 1894 and 1902, Uasin Gishu was administered as part of Uganda, with British offices located in Kampala. However, by 1902, administration shifted to Kenya, and the British colonial government began to exert greater control over the region.

### **Nandi Resistance and the British Military Response (1895-1905)**

The Nandi, who had occupied the plateau for generations, resisted the British colonization of their land. They mounted fierce opposition to the encroachment of European

settlers, leading to a series of military confrontations. The British, in response to what they deemed the “recalcitrant tribe” of the Nandi, launched military expeditions between 1895 and 1905 (Ochieng’, 1975). These expeditions were intended to suppress Nandi resistance and pave the way for European settlers.

In 1905, the Nandi were defeated, following the killing of their leader, Orkoiyot Koitalel Arap Samoei, by Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen. The death of Samoei marked the collapse of Nandi resistance, and the Nandi leaders, disheartened, accepted peace terms from the new British commissioner. Subsequently, the Nandi were relocated to the Nandi reserve, where their movement was strictly controlled, effectively ending their control over the Uasin Gishu plateau (KNA, DC/NDI/5/2, 1944).

### **Settlement of European Farmers (1904-1910)**

Following the Nandi defeat, European settlers, primarily from South Africa, began to establish large farms in Uasin Gishu. The region’s fertile land, ideal climate, and proximity to labor sources, including the Nandi and neighboring communities like the Abaluhya, made it attractive to European settlers. In 1903, W.F. Van Breda became the first European to apply for land in the region, and in the subsequent years, other South African settlers followed suit, including J.A.J. Van Reinsburg, who organized the “Reinsburg trek” to settle in the area (KNA, DC/UG/2/1, 1961).

By 1910, the presence of European settlers was unmistakable. The settlers, many of whom were Afrikaners, took advantage of the land's fertility, particularly for wheat farming. However, they faced challenges such as a lack of experience in farming and unfamiliarity with the local planting seasons. Consequently, some settlers struggled to cultivate crops, relying on the local population for food. Despite these challenges, the area became increasingly productive as settlers expanded their farms.

### **The 1913 Land Eviction and the Rise of European Dominance**

In 1913, a land eviction policy was implemented, which saw much of the land in Uasin Gishu leased to European settlers. This policy, along with a land auction held in Nairobi, facilitated further European expansion. However, this shift in land ownership disadvantaged the Afrikaners, who struggled to acquire large farms in the region. Despite their early involvement in settling Uasin Gishu, the Afrikaners were unable to establish a geographically cohesive community due to their limited success in securing land leases.

The British settlers, in contrast, consolidated their control over the fertile lands of Uasin Gishu, which further entrenched the colonial system. The region’s agricultural productivity continued to rise, as European settlers increasingly dominated the farming industry.

### **Creation of Native Reserves and the Formation of Ethnic Divisions**

A significant aspect of the colonial land policies was the establishment of "native reserves" for African communities. The creation of these reserves separated different ethnic groups, including the Nandi, Abaluhya, and others, and restricted their movement and access to fertile land. This policy not only served to control the African population but also sowed the seeds of ethnic division, as different communities were forced into specific territories. The reserves became the basis for the ethnically defined administrative units that characterized colonial Kenya and contributed to the eventual ethnic consciousness that shaped the country’s social and political landscape.

### **Labour Contracts and its impacts(1906-1936)**

The development of Uasin Gishu's agricultural economy during the colonial era heavily relied on African labor. As African labor became scarce, colonial authorities' devised strategies to ensure a steady supply, such as establishing reserves, introducing taxes, enforcing the *Kipande* identity system, and utilizing forced labor. These measures pushed many Africans to migrate to settler farms in search of work, as overcrowded and unproductive reserves became increasingly untenable (Van Zwanenberg, 1972).

Key labor systems that emerged included squatting, Kaffir farming, and migrant labor. Kaffir farming, which had roots in South Africa, involved settlers allowing Africans to cultivate land in exchange for rent paid in livestock, crops, or cash. However, colonial administrators opposed Kaffir farming because it potentially granted Africans land ownership rights and because laborers in this system were protected under the Master and Servant Ordinance of 1906 (Kanogo, 1987). By 1904, squatting replaced Kaffir farming. This arrangement saw Africans living on settler farms to tend livestock and cultivate land, though they were often taxed, pushing them further into wage labor (KNA, C0/533/54914).

Squatting was particularly appealing to European settlers and significantly contributed to the migration of various ethnic groups to Uasin Gishu. The Nandi, for instance, were among the first groups to settle as squatters in the region. Encouraged by settlers in need of labor, they began migrating to Uasin Gishu in 1912 (KNA, DC/NDI/3/2, 1912). By 1919, their numbers had grown as demand for labor, especially in cereal production, rose (KNA, Nandi Annual Report, 1919-1920). The Nandi's migration was motivated not only by the need for work but also by their desire to escape colonial restrictions on cattle raiding and collective punishment (Youe, 1988).

The Nandi, primarily pastoralists, were attracted by the highlands' abundant grazing fields, which had become scarce in their homeland. They also continued their traditional practices of lending cattle to friends. In return, Nandi warriors assisted settlers by hunting lions that threatened livestock. Their success in finding fertile grazing lands in the settlements further encouraged others to join.

World War I further exacerbated labor shortages, as the creation of the "Carrier Corps" to transport military materials increased demand for labor. Many Africans avoided military service by seeking work on farms (Savage, 1962). By 1918, settlers faced significant labor shortages, despite the presence of squatters, particularly as they shifted to large-scale farming. To address this, the British government introduced a soldier settlement scheme, opening land to ex-soldiers. This, however, led to further land alienation for Africans, driving even more migration to Uasin Gishu (Youe, 1988).

Other ethnic groups, such as the GEMA communities, Kipsigis, Abaluhya, and Abagusii, also migrated to Uasin Gishu in search of work (Youe, 1988). The Marakwet and Keiyo, who had occupied the Uasin Gishu plateau before colonialism, resorted to squatting after losing land to European settlers (Van Zwanenberg, 1975). Similarly, the Kipsigis, who lost land in Sotik, sought grazing land on settler farms (Korir, 1976). Smaller groups, such as the Pokot, Turkana, and Cherangany, also migrated to Uasin Gishu in search of wages to pay taxes (KNA, PC/RVP 2/3/1, 1928-1946).

The Abaluhya community contributed significantly to the labor force in Uasin Gishu. European settler agents traveled to recruit them, often with the involvement of chiefs who were bribed to force their people into labor contracts (Clayton & Savage, 1963). One example is Bukusu chief Murunga M'Mukaria, who played a crucial role in recruiting men to work on farms in Uasin Gishu (Native Labor Commission Report). The Agikuyu, who had lost land in

central Kenya due to European appropriation, also migrated in large numbers in search of labor opportunities (Kanogo, 1987). Many Agikuyu came from Kiambu and Limuru, areas where they had become landless.

By 1937, a diverse range of ethnic groups, including the Agikuyu and Luo, were employed as wage laborers in Uasin Gishu (KNA/PC/RVP 2/3/1, 47). This labor system facilitated the creation of a multi-ethnic community, with people from various backgrounds working together on settler farms. The different ethnic groups, including the Abaluhya, Kalenjin, Agikuyu, Abagusii, Luo, Akamba, and others, cooperated in tasks like ox-ploughing, maize stalk burning, and crop planting. Despite their differences, these groups coexisted peacefully and participated in barter trade, exchanging livestock and crops. Social spaces, such as butcheries and posho mills, also promoted interaction.

However, colonial authorities took steps to limit inter-ethnic interaction by enforcing the *Kipande* identity system, introduced in 1919. This system required Africans to carry identification cards with fingerprints and ethnic reserve details, reinforcing ethnic divisions (Frost, 1997). Despite these efforts, the labor migration that occurred during this period led to the formation of a multi-ethnic community in Uasin Gishu. While the colonial authorities aimed to keep these communities separate, this division ultimately contributed to the development of exclusionary ideologies based on ethnicity and territory, laying the groundwork for future nationalist movements.

#### **The Squatter Stock Problem and its impacts 1937-1944**

The squatter stock problem in Uasin Gishu during the 1937-1944 period had significant implications for the formation of a multi-ethnic community. By the early 1930s, many Nandi squatters had become wealthy, acquiring large herds of cattle, goats, and sheep (Huntingford, 1950:73). Unlike other squatters, the Nandi were more attracted to the good pastures for their cattle than to the wages offered by European farmers. As a result, the Nandi were relatively self-sufficient, relying on livestock rather than wage labor.

However, by the late 1930s, the rapid increase in livestock, especially cattle, led to tensions with settler farmers. With an expansion in cereal production, settlers sought to control the growing number of livestock, which posed risks for their crops and exotic livestock. Farmers' associations such as the Soy Farmers Association and the Uasin Gishu Farmers Association sought to regulate the number of squatters and their livestock (Groen, 1974). The Nandi, in particular, expressed their dissatisfaction with these measures, seeking alternative land and migrating to other regions. By 1938, the squatter stock had grown to over 100,000, with many squatters being Nandi and Agikuyu (KNA/PC/RVP 2/8/13).

The increase in migration and the need for more land prompted changes in laws to restrict squatters from keeping livestock. Many Nandi and other ethnic groups sought to relocate to nearby areas, leading to labor shortages in Uasin Gishu (KNA/PC/RV/2/8/10). The end of World War II and the return of European soldiers to farming further exacerbated the land demand, as settlers needed more land for cash crop production. The Kalenjin, whose population and livestock were also expanding, sought additional grazing space.

In April 1944, Nandi squatters met with the District Commissioner to protest regulations that forced them to reduce their stock. Despite these complaints, squatters were not allowed to retain their livestock, leading to further migration. Many left for neighboring areas such as the Pokot and Uganda, while others settled among the Abaluhya in North Kavirondo. This migration reflected the solidarity and interconnectedness of African communities before colonialism. However, those unable to leave Uasin Gishu had no choice

but to comply with settler regulations. By 1946, the District Council had implemented laws prohibiting squatters from keeping livestock, citing the need to prevent Africans from gaining land ownership rights (KNA, PC/RVP 2/3/1).

As many Nandi squatters left the region, the need for wage labor increased. To fill the labor gap, settlers recruited workers from neighboring reserves, including the Luo, Teso, Agikuyu, Akamba, and Abaluhya (Kanogo, 1987). This migration led to a significant shift in the demographic makeup of Uasin Gishu, and contributed to the development of a multi-ethnic labor force in the area. However, it also brought tensions between different groups, particularly between the Nandi and the Agikuyu. Settlers often characterized the Agikuyu as hardworking and familiar with agriculture, in contrast to the "lazy" pastoralist Nandi (Klopp, 2001). This stereotyping fueled inter-ethnic animosity, which persisted in the years following independence.

The 1940s also saw an influx of people from other regions, as harsh colonial policies and the threat of conscription during World War II drove groups like the Sabaot, Babukusu, and Tachoni to Uasin Gishu. These groups sought refuge from oppressive chiefs and the conscription system, finding work on European farms. As the movement of squatters continued, land shortages intensified, especially as settlers increasingly employed mechanization, reducing the need for manual labor (Klopp, 2001). With no opportunity to reclaim their land, many indigenous Africans began to resent non-ethnic groups, resulting in conflicts and divisions.

### **Land Displacement and Ethnic Tensions**

Colonialism in Kenya was marked by policies that systematically dispossessed Africans of their land and resources, leading to deep social fractures. By the 1940s, a number of African communities, particularly the Nandi, Agikuyu, and Kalenjin, were faced with severe disruptions to their traditional systems of land ownership. The introduction of squatter systems and new forms of land tenure was a key factor in these tensions. The policy of 'destocking'—removing cattle from land—was implemented during this period to control grazing and resources, but it was perceived as a means of disempowering indigenous groups, particularly those whose economies were built around pastoralism, like the Nandi (Kakai, 2000). These policies, along with others, aggravated ethnic animosities, as African communities began to view each other with increasing suspicion, particularly regarding land use and access.

For instance, in 1949, the Nandi, Elgeyo, and Kipsigis formed a union to fight against the destocking measures that disproportionately affected their pastoral economy. This was one of the earliest signs of collective resistance against colonial policies that were seen as detrimental to their ethnic and economic interests. At the same time, the Agikuyu, who had a more settled agricultural economy, adapted more easily to the new systems of land ownership, which introduced title deeds and private land ownership (Sorrenson, 1968). This created a divide, as the Agikuyu were able to secure land more effectively, while the Nandi and other pastoral groups found themselves increasingly marginalized.

By the late 1940s, ethnic tensions in the Turbo area began to escalate, primarily due to the influx of Agikuyu settlers. These settlers were seen by the indigenous Kalenjin as intruders, which further deepened inter-ethnic divisions. The Agikuyu were viewed with distrust, partly because of their success in acquiring land and their perceived political consciousness, which contrasted with the more traditional, pastoral way of life of the Kalenjin. This period also saw a rise in ethnic consciousness, with African communities

beginning to defend their territorial claims based on ethnicity and land ownership (Annual Report, 1957, Internal Tribal Affairs).

### **The Mau Mau Uprising and Ethnic Relations**

The Mau Mau Uprising of the early 1950s significantly altered the dynamics of ethnic relations in Kenya, particularly in regions like Uasin Gishu. The Mau Mau was primarily composed of the Agikuyu, who were fighting against British colonial rule and the exploitation of African labor and land. However, this rebellion was not without its own ethnic tensions. The Agikuyu were often viewed by other ethnic groups, such as the Kalenjin, as self-serving and exclusionary in their pursuit of independence. The Mau Mau fighters were frequently accused of being “Agikuyu chauvinists” who sought to drive out non-Kikuyu ethnic groups, particularly those who had settled on land in the so-called “White Highlands” (Wamwere, 2008).

The idea and perception of ethnic labeling such as chauvinists and such like, was further compounded by colonial propaganda, which sought to divide ethnic groups along lines of loyalty to the colonial state or the independence movement. The Nandi, for example, developed an antagonistic attitude toward the Agikuyu, in part due to perceived injustices during the colonial period, such as the destruction of their livestock by the colonial authorities during the State of Emergency. The British authorities, in turn, used this division to their advantage, by promoting the idea of a "divide and rule" policy that fostered mistrust and competition between ethnic groups.

The Nandi, who were primarily pastoralists, found themselves at odds with the Agikuyu, who were more economically advanced and settled in the region as squatters on European-owned farms. These tensions were exacerbated by the fact that many Agikuyu, who had been displaced from their own lands, sought refuge in the Rift Valley, a region traditionally inhabited by the Kalenjin. This influx of Agikuyu settlers was viewed by the Kalenjin as a threat to their land and cultural identity.

### **The Impact of the Swynnerton Plan and Land Privatization**

The Swynnerton Plan of 1954, which aimed to provide African farmers with land title deeds, further deepened ethnic divisions, especially in regions like Uasin Gishu. The plan allowed African farmers to acquire land individually, leading to the creation of a landowning class. However, it also entrenched a two-tier system, where wealthy landowners gained access to large tracts of land, while the poor, including many Mau Mau returnees, were left without land (Leys, 1975). This policy exacerbated the socio-economic divide between ethnic groups, particularly between the Agikuyu and the Kalenjin.

The Nandi, who had been heavily affected by land dispossession during the colonial period, found themselves unable to compete with wealthier ethnic groups who could afford to buy land. As a result, many Nandi squatter families were left landless or were forced to sell their cattle in order to secure land. This led to a further decline in their pastoral economy and heightened tensions between them and the Agikuyu, who had become more economically secure due to their acquisition of land.

The Swynnerton Plan also had the unintended consequence of fostering competition for land in the Rift Valley. As African farmers sought to secure land in what was considered the “White Highlands,” ethnic groups began to stake territorial claims based on their ancestral connections to the land. This competition for land was often accompanied by ethnic conflict,

as groups like the Nandi sought to protect their traditional grazing lands from encroachment by settlers from other regions (Jones, 1965).

### **Political Mobilization and Ethnic Alliances**

By the 1960s, ethnic tensions in Uasin Gishu reached a boiling point, with the formation of political alliances aimed at protecting ethnic interests. In 1960, the Kalenjin formed the Kalenjin Political Alliance (KPA) to defend their land and protect it from what they saw as encroachment by non-indigenous groups, particularly the Agikuyu. The KPA sought to exclude the Agikuyu and other ethnic groups from settlement schemes in the Rift Valley and advocated for the return of land to indigenous communities.

The Kalenjin's demands for land were based on the belief that the Rift Valley, and particularly Uasin Gishu, was their ancestral homeland and should remain under their control. This sentiment was reflected in political rhetoric, as evidenced by statements made by Kalenjin leaders in the 1960s, who argued that the Agikuyu should be pushed back to Central Kenya, as they were seen as "intruders" (East African Standard, 1961).

As independence approached, the issue of land ownership became increasingly politicized, and ethnic groups began to align themselves with political leaders who could protect their interests. The Agikuyu, who had benefitted from the support of Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of Kenya, found themselves in a position of power. Kenyatta's government favored the Agikuyu, who had long been established as a politically influential group due to their access to education, economic resources, and land. This led to further resentment from the Kalenjin, who felt marginalized and excluded from the benefits of independence.

### **Formation of a Multi-Ethnic Community**

Despite the ethnic tensions and conflicts that characterized the period of decolonization, the 1960s also saw the emergence of a multi-ethnic community in areas like Turbo sub-county. The land buying schemes that followed independence allowed people from different ethnic backgrounds to purchase land and settle in the region. This created a diverse community that included not only the Kalenjin and Agikuyu, but also groups like the Abaluhya, Luo, and Abagusii.

These land-buying schemes were instrumental in promoting inter-ethnic integration, as they allowed people from different backgrounds to live and work together. In some cases, ethnic groups who had once been in conflict began to forge alliances through intermarriage, trade, and social interaction. Over time, the community in Turbo became a microcosm of Kenya's broader ethnic diversity, with individuals from various ethnic groups coexisting and sharing in the economic opportunities that the region had to offer.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Uasin Gishu Plateau has undergone significant transformation over centuries, shaped by both indigenous dynamics and colonial influences. Originally a multi-ethnic region, it was home to diverse communities such as the Cushites, and Kalenjin, who interacted through trade, intermarriage, and shared cultural practices. The arrival of European settlers in the early 20th century disrupted this balance, leading to land dispossession, labor exploitation, and the creation of ethnic divisions. Despite these challenges, migration patterns and labor systems contributed to the development of a multi-ethnic community in the region. Ethnic groups, including the Nandi, Agikuyu, Luo, and Abaluhya, engaged in cooperative agricultural activities, setting the stage for future nationalist movements. However, tensions

over land ownership, labor, and resources continued to fuel ethnic rivalries, especially during decolonization. The post-independence period saw attempts at fostering inter-ethnic integration through land-buying schemes, but the legacy of colonialism and ethnic competition remained a defining feature of Uasin Gishu's social and political landscape. The historical interactions among various ethnic groups shaped the region's socio-political structure, laying the foundation for the diverse and interconnected community seen in the area today. The article asserts the need to promote inter-ethnic cooperation, understanding, and dialogue to reduce the potential for conflict.

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