

This is a study of the history of social and economic adaptation of the Turkana of Kenya from 1850 to 1963. The study is based on primary and secondary sources in archives and libraries in Kenya and on oral interviews with some informants.

The study is set in the context of pre-colonial and colonial Kenya. The study set to investigate the impact of ecology and colonialism on the social and economic activities of the Turkana as well as how the Turkana people responded to the varied situations confronting them.

The study uses the following theoretical framework; ecological and articulation of modes of production. The theories have been brought into the study with a view of analysing the role of ecology in shaping human social and economic institutions. The study demonstrates the centrality of the interactions between physical environment and human population as crucial in understanding the dynamics of Turkana social and economic activities. In the process of interaction between the physical environment and human population as crucial in understanding the dynamics of Turkana social and economic activities. In the process of interaction between the physical environment and human population, there evolved viable, social and economic institutions among the Turkana. Among some of the social and economic institutions discussed are pastoralism, hunting, gathering, agriculture, fishing, age-set system, stock associateship and traditional legal system. The study therefore underscores the importance of both the physical environment and the Turkana, given that they (Turkana) did play a critical role in shaping the outcome of their social and economic organisation. Articulations theory has been applied in the study to demonstrate the impact of the capitalist mode of production on the pre-capitalist modes of production once incorporated into the capitalist mode of production resulted in historical relationship which tends to dissolve undesired elements while conserving useful elements in the former.

The process of intergration of the Turkana pre-colonial economy with colonial capitalist economy involved the use of coercive and non-coercive powers. Coercive powers involved unleashing violence on the people by the military personnel, seizure of livestock and punitive taxation. While non-coercive powers involved establishing institutions of chifdom as instrument of co-optation and local control. The process of integration led to the dissolution or distortion of certain features of Turkana pre-capitalist social and economic set-ups while conserving desirable institutions for the purpose of enhancing the functionality of capitalist activities in the region. The colonial capitalist policies introduced in the Turkanaland resulted in social and economic changes among the Turkana.

The study concludes that despite the destructive nature of the colonial state and capitalist structure through depastoralisation programmes and anti-raiding policies, forced labour and taxation, the Turkana were able to evolve various adaptive strategies. The Turkana people developed profitable and adaptive linkages between agriculture, wage labour and pastoralism as this study demonstrates.