

## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the historical trajectory of socio-economic and political transformation of Yimbo communities in Siaya County, Kenya: 1800- 2010. Initially, Yimbo was inhabited by small Bantu ethnic groups before the arrival of the descendants of Ramogi II. These ethnic groups included the Waluwanga, the Wareje, the Banyala (Jo mwalo), the Walowa, and the Wachipi, among others. This social matrix created a complex political and social arrangement with some ethnic groups in Yimbo being marginalized due to their social identity by the dominant group. Such inconsistencies were not critically examined by pioneer scholars on the subject of migration and settlement history of the study area, hence the need to critically examine the gaps in order to reconstruct the historical trajectory vis-a-vis the details that had been presented by pioneer scholars on this subject matter. The objectives of the study were: to investigate the origin, migration, settlement and transformation of communities in Yimbo up to 1895; to assess the impact of colonialism on socio-economic and political transformation of communities in Yimbo from 1895 to 1963; and to examine the transformation and state of inter-ethnic relations in Yimbo since independence (1963-2010). The study was carried out in Yimbo, Siaya County covering the period from 1800 to 2010. The study employed the Cycle of Race Relations Theory by Robert Ezra Park, which asserts that when different racial or ethnic groups interact, a particular series of events are sparked, namely contact, competition, accommodation and eventually assimilation. The study adopted historical research design, involving purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select respondents. Primary data was collected through oral interviews, focus group discussions and use of archival sources. Snowball sampling was employed to reach the respondents from the initially deliberately selected informant. Twenty-two (22) oral interviews, forty-two (42) key informant interviews and five (5) FGDs of ten (10) members each were conducted. In total, 114 informants participated in the research. Secondary data sources were collected from books, book chapters, newspapers, magazines, reports, theses, and journal articles to corroborate primary data. The gathered data was analyzed qualitatively through thematic and content data analysis. The study revealed that Yimbo region has witnessed a series of inter-mingling of different ethnic groups from the period of migration upto the post-colonial era marked by either population displacements through forceful means or co-existence enabled by trade, inter-marriage and sharing of resources like Lake Victoria. The study further established that against the background of ethnic and clan diversities, Yimbo featured in national politics in Kenya. Colonialism perpetuated the emergence of political consciousness that was expressed largely in terms of inter-ethnic competition, the formation of ethnic pressure groups and the religious movements through to 1920s and 1930s. Colonialism brought a change in Yimbo's administration by appointing their own chiefs, representation in the legislative council and democratic elections. The study concluded that after the pre-colonial and colonial rule in Yimbo, the change of administrative setup contributed to the colonial and post-colonial historiography of Yimbo region. The study recommended that people should rely on cultural tradition; sensitize the people on the importance of peaceful co-existence between different ethnic groups, and recognize the role of universities as forum for promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, and to fight against ethnic divisions. Areas for further research included examination of socio-cultural transformation of emerging ethnic groups like Somali, Kikuyu and Indians in Yimbo being that it is a multi-ethnic territory; a study of biographies on some personalities in Yimbo and their contributions to the socio-economic and political history of Kenya.