

**THE EVOLUTION OF KAKAMEGA SETTLEMENT INTO AN URBAN
CENTRE BETWEEN 1920-2010**

BY

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Abstract

This study examined the historical evolution of Kakamega town, through adoption of the Weberian approach to urbanization and the modernization theory. The underdevelopment theory was also incorporated. The work commenced with an in-depth look at the migration and settlement of the Abaluhya (elsewhere referred to as Luyia or Abaluyia) and specifically the Isukha and the Batsotso sub- groups who dominate the present day Kakamega town. Also included was the origin of the name Kakamega and that three versions emerged in this study. The contribution of the aliens to the development of Kakamega town was also examined, essentially with the transfer of colonial headquarters of Western Kenya from Mumias to Kakamega in 1920. A detailed analysis of the underpinnings for the transfer was also discussed. Moreover, the colonial racial dichotomy and the political economy of the colonial and post-colonial state were underscored in an effort to reveal the historical development of the town. The study analyzed the impact of the Indian merchant capital on the Isukha and Abatsotso residents of Sheywe (the former name of Kakamega) and indeed other parts of Buluhya. Further, the contributions of the social sector (education, religious and health institutions) towards the evolution of Kakamega were also assessed. Special attention was given to the influence of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology on the rebirth of Kakamega town in recent times. Methodologically, archival assessments of colonial documents and colonial administrative reports were core to the stud. In addition, development reports and key informants' accounts played an essential part in providing the needed information for this study. Interviews of elderly persons (mostly) were conducted and recorded using a tape recorder. The findings of the study were thereafter displayed in a historical narrative that was then documented by the researcher in a thematic and chronological manner. The researcher also identified areas for further study.