

MOI UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE MBEERE
(SIKAGO DIVISION) CAD 1500 - 1914

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ABSTRACT ♦

TOPIC: AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE MBEERE (SIKAGO DIVISION)
C.A.D. 1500 - 1914)

Africa is a continent prone to economic misfortunes which have prompted scholars to investigate the root cause of these problems. Under-development theories attribute Africa's problems to plundering by colonizing powers and by forces of Neo-colonialism in post-colonial era. On the other hand modernization theories have advocated importation of technology, capital etc. from developed world to assist in developing African economies. The measures advocated by these scholars have not been successful.

This study is an attempt to examine the evolution of various economic activities undertaken by the Mbeere to 1914. In this endeavour, their production mechanisms are explored and how the produce was distributed. Production entailed control, adaptation and manipulation of the environment to meet their needs. Industrialization was important to provide the implements needed by farmers, hunters and warriors. Economic activities such as agriculture and animal husbandry illustrate a clear evidence that the Mbeere not only produced for subsistence but had surplus which they sold to buy other commodities. This refutes the assertion that pre-colonial African economy was mainly subsistence. Hunting and gathering played an important role in supplementing other economic activities at the time of crisis. They hunted to get food, clothing, footwear and in the 19th century they did commercial hunting.

The last decade of 19th century brought devastating problems such as famines, droughts, diseases which affected most of Kenyan communities. The Mbeere used various measures to cope with these calamities. Their effect on the community is important in shaping their future attitude towards their neighbours.

The final chapter deals with advent of colonialism and the establishment of capitalist mode of production. The work shows that peasant encounter with capitalist economy not only occurred in highly potential areas but also in the so called marginal areas. This encounter had devastating effect on pre-capitalist mode of production as the Mbeere tried to adjust to the new demands such as paying taxes, forced labour, recruitment to work in the white highlands.

Theoretical Framework	8-10
Literature Review	10-11
Hypothesis	23-24
Methodology	25-26
Notes and References	27-28
CHAPTER TWO	
THE MBEERE, MICHOLONG AND SBITIL 1500 - 1700	29-32
Notes and References	33-34
CHAPTER THREE	
PEASANT FATHERING AND RECRUITING 1500 - 1700	35-38
Notes and References	39-40