

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE NUBIANS AND ABAGUSII
COMMUNITIES IN KISII TOWNSHIP LOCATION, KISII COUNTY, KENYA, 1963-
2013**

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ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE
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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my mum Teresa Moraa for the support she gave me during my studies.

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First, I give my sincere thanks to the Almighty God for the gift of life, good health and His continued blessings throughout this academic journey. Second, I wish to express my gratitude to the institutions that supported this study. I am grateful to the Kisii University administration for granting me the opportunity to pursue my postgraduate studies. I also acknowledge the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi for providing access to archival materials. My appreciation further goes to the Kisii National Library and the Kisii University Library for allowing me to access the scholarly resources that were essential to this research.

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on socio-economic interactions between the Nubians and Abagusii communities in Kisii Township Location, Kisii County, Kenya, 1963-2013. This study examined the socio-economic characteristics of the Abagusii and Nubian communities in Kisii Township Location between 1963 and 1978; analyse the impact of the Abagusii on the Nubian community during their interactions in Kisii Township Location, 1979-2002 and assess the influence of the social-economic interactions between the Abagusii and the Nubian communities in Kisii Township Location 2003-2013. The study was guided by two theories; Ethnic Stratification postulated by Donald Noel in 1968, and Ethnic Identity Theory postulated by Phinney in 1991. The first theory aimed in understanding whether the Abagusii community have any dominance over the Nubians and the nature of this dominance; the second theory clarified the neglect and failure of the Kenyan government to constitutionally recognize the Nubian as a community in Kenya. This study utilized Historical research design which was used to provide an arrangement of historical events in a chronology manner. The study targeted both Nubians and Abagusii communities who are living in Kisii Township Location, Kisii County. People with specific knowledge such as clan elders, chiefs, sub-chiefs, Islamic religious leaders and Christian religious leaders, were also targeted because they have vital information about the Nubians living within Kisii Township Location. Purposive and Snowball sampling procedures was used to identify 40 informants for the study. A pilot study was carried out in the neighbouring Bogiakumu sub-location. The secondary data sourced from books; journals; seminar papers; theses; dissertation and archival sources. Primary data was obtained through use of oral interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The analysed data was reported in form of narrations coupled with first hand quotation from the primary data. The study found out that the Nubians as ex British solders settled in Kisii in 1938. The socio-economic interactions between the Abagusii and Nubian was found to be hostile, constructed and superior and inferior community relationship. The Nubians' economic, social and cultural heritage has disappeared and the once proud and respectable community is vast becoming an endangered minority in Kenya. They have suffered through victimization and marginalization through land issues, citizenship, development, profiling and stereo typing just to mention a few. This has impeded the community's active participation in leadership and by extent development despite being one of the oldest communities in Kenya. This has made them vulnerable to exploitation by politicians who use them as pawns to secure and land key leadership positions, which has in turn hindered their participation in governance and created sublime divisions among Nubians in not only their homeland but the country as a whole. The study is important because it will help to identify the contribution of Nubians towards Kenya's cultural heritage. It will also enrich historiography of Ethnic interaction not only in Kenya but also globally.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CRIN	Child Rights International Network
EIT	Ethnic Identity Theory
EST	Ethnic Stratification Theory
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KNA	Kenya National Archives
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
OSJI	Open Society Justice Initiative

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Abagusii The Abagusii are a Bantu-speaking ethnic community indigenous to Kisii and Nyamira counties in south-western Kenya. In this study, the term refers to the host community residing in Kisii Township Location that interacted socially and economically with the Nubian community between 1963 and 2013.

Arabic Arabic is a Semitic language spoken across the Middle East and North Africa and is the liturgical language of Islam. In this study, it refers to the language used by the Nubian community for religious instruction and worship in mosques.

Ekegusii Ekegusii is the indigenous language spoken by the Abagusii people of Kisii and Nyamira counties. In this study, it refers to the primary language used by the Abagusii in their social and economic interactions within Kisii Township Location.

Ethnic Identity Ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group based on shared ancestry, language, culture and traditions. In this study, it refers to the sense of identity maintained by the Nubian community while interacting with the Abagusii community.

Ethnic Stratification Ethnic stratification is a system in which ethnic groups occupy unequal social, political or economic positions within a society. In this study, it refers to the unequal social and economic relationship between the Abagusii and the Nubian communities as explained by Ethnic Stratification Theory.

KiNubi is a creole language spoken by Nubian communities in East Africa.

KiNubi

In this study, it refers to the native language spoken by the Nubian community residing in Kisii Township Location.

Kiswahili is Kenya's national language and the principal lingua franca used for communication among different ethnic communities. In this study, it refers to the language commonly used by the Abagusii and Nubians in their social and economic interactions.

Kiswahili

Nubians are an ethnic community whose historical origins are associated with northern Sudan and southern Egypt and who later settled in different parts of East Africa. In this study, the term refers to the Nubian community residing in Kisii Township Location between 1963 and 2013.

Nubian

Socio-economic interaction refers to the social and economic relationships established between individuals or communities through activities such as trade, employment, education, religion, settlement and cultural exchange.

**Socio-economic
Interaction**

In this study, it refers to the interactions between the Abagusii and the Nubian communities in Kisii Township Location from 1963 to 2013.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social and economic interactions between different communities have always been part of human history. When people move from one place to another, they often come into contact with local populations, leading to various forms of engagement and exchange. The experience of Chinese communities in Indonesia offers a good example of this. However, their presence should not be viewed in uniform terms. Those who settled in the Indonesian archipelago came from different regions of China, each with its own cultural traditions.¹ Over time, as they became part of Indonesian society, they adapted to local conditions and customs. In doing so, they formed new cultural identities neither entirely Chinese nor entirely Indonesian. These identities emerged over several generations through ongoing interaction, adaptation, and blending of cultural practices.² As a result, Chinese Indonesians today represent a community shaped as much by local influence as by their ancestral roots.

Aminah and Moliner³ argue that migration history significantly shapes integration, especially when distinguishing between individual and chain migration. Migrants arriving in large groups often rely on internal support networks therefore limiting interaction with the broader host society. This has particular relevance in France, where integration follows a Universalist, republican model that emphasizes individual citizenship and rejects formal recognition of

¹Pratama, Sandy, et al. "Chinese Poor Social and Economic Transformation in Bangka (An Overview Between Stigma and Reality)." In Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPS 2019), Jakarta, Indonesia, 12 November 2019. Brussels: European Alliance for Innovation, 2020.

² Ibid

³Aminah Mohammad-Arif and Christine Moliner, "Introduction, Migration and Constructions of the Other: Inter-Communal Relationships amongst South Asian Diasporas," *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 1 (2007).

ethnic or cultural group identities. Within this framework, assimilation is expected at the individual level, with collective identities especially those seen as conflicting with secularism viewed as obstacles to social cohesion. The principle of *laïcité* underpins this model and is enforced through policies such as the 2004 law banning conspicuous religious symbols, including Islamic headscarves and Sikh turbans, in public schools. Such measures reflect the expectation that religion remain private, as public expressions of faith are perceived to challenge the republican order.⁴

Throughout African history, communities have engaged in both long-distance migrations and localized interactions. These engagements took various forms ranging from cooperative exchanges to hostile confrontations. Trade, intermarriage, education, employment, warfare, raids, games and travel were among the most common means through which groups related to one another. In many cases, communities that lived in close proximity developed shared values, symbols and worldviews, which in turn reinforced their ethnic cohesion.⁵ This sense of cultural familiarity often led to strong bonds within ethnic groups, making them more likely to act collectively in times of need. Africa's historical landscape was also marked by the rise of early civilizations and complex institutions. In ancient civilizations such as Egypt, for instance, economic and social life appeared to reflect a communal ethic one that prioritized collective welfare and resisted forms of radical individualism, suggesting a worldview rooted in social responsibility rather than personal gain.⁶

Movements of people across regions led to profound shifts in cultural expression, belief systems, and economic practices. As communities encountered one another, intermarriage became a vital mechanism for forging alliances and blending linguistic traits, often giving rise

⁴Talal Asad, "Reflections on *Laïcité* and the Public Sphere," *Items & Issues* 5, no. 3 (2005): 1–11.

⁵ Otite O. Sociology: Theory and applied Lagos: Malthouse. (1994).

⁶ Ibid

to new dialects and shared identities. The exchange of artisanal skills such as iron forging, pottery making, basketry and blacksmithing allowed for the diffusion of practical knowledge essential to daily life and local economies.⁷ Religious ideas, particularly those rooted in Islam and Christianity, gained prominence through such encounters, gradually altering spiritual landscapes. These interactions also laid the foundation for commercial towns and centers of knowledge, including the famed city of Timbuktu. At the same time, rivalry over resources and territorial dominance occasionally escalated into conflict, as seen in episodes of warfare between Cushitic and Bantu-speaking groups. Cultural borrowing extended into naming conventions and social practices, reflecting a broader pattern of influence and adaptation.⁸ Yet, as new customs took root, many indigenous beliefs and traditions gradually declined, reshaped by the enduring effects of contact and change.

Inter-community interactions have produced significant socio-economic effects, many of which were enduring and often unavoidable. In both pre-colonial and colonial African contexts, these encounters shaped social and economic developments in complex ways. While some fostered cooperation, assimilation, and mutual benefit, others led to conflict and inequality. Ethnic tensions, frequently driven by competition over land, jobs and natural resources, contributed to social fragmentation and economic disruption. Bonacich⁹ notes that increased contact between groups can heighten rivalry over scarce resources, deepening existing divisions. Nonetheless, inter-ethnic cohabitation sometimes facilitated economic collaboration and cultural exchange. In colonial Zimbabwe, for instance, interactions between the British,

⁸David O. Akombo, Baruti I. Katembo, and Kmt G. Shockley, *Uwenzi: The Pan-African Factor, a 21st-Century View* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2015).

⁹Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," *American Sociological Review* 38, no. 5 (1973): 583–594.

Shona, and Ndebele brought about profound changes, including the erosion of indigenous cultures, the deepening of economic disparities, and the loss of African political autonomy.¹⁰

In Namibia, ethnic identity has significantly influenced land ownership and access to resources. The Herero people have long faced exclusion from the country's land wealth, despite their central role alongside the Nama in resisting German colonial invasion. Although the Ovambo ethnic group comprises the majority of Namibia's population, estimated at 2.5 million, the Herero, representing about 10 percent, have experienced persistent political and economic marginalization.¹¹ While the Herero once held notable influence, this changed after independence, as the Ovambo assumed dominance in political leadership and public administration. Herero leaders have repeatedly raised concerns about unequal resource distribution, particularly land, but with limited success.¹² This has led to overcrowded Herero settlements, while vast tracts of land in Ovambo areas remain underutilized. These disparities reflect the enduring socio-economic constraints imposed through systemic exclusion.

The interaction between the Pokot and the Turkana in Kenya has been a long-standing one. These communities had their social formation based on the pre-capitalist economic system of pastoralism. This has been mainly the basis of their interaction as they search for pasture and water for their animals. This means that their dominant mode of production was pastoralism. However, their interaction has been characterized by coercion, animosity, and conflict, mainly over livestock. This has eventually resulted in social problems such as loss of lives, land, and

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Innocentia Tracy Hoxobes, *The Politics of Ethnicity and Nation-Building in Namibia* (PhD diss., University of Johannesburg, 2023).

¹² Ibid

displacement of the subjugated community. It has also led to economic challenges such as loss of livestock and land.¹³

Extended interaction between the Luo and Abasuba led to the progressive assimilation of the Abasuba, significantly threatening the preservation of their cultural identity. Devin notes that increased social contact often cultivates familiarity and a sense of closeness, which can foster integration. However, in this context, such proximity resulted in the absorption of Abasuba traditions into Luo culture, leading to cultural endangerment. Economically, the Abasuba began to adopt fishing as a livelihood a practice historically associated with the Luo demonstrating how cultural contact can reshape subsistence patterns. In contrast, the relationship between the Luo and the Nandi, particularly in the border regions, has been strained. According to Ayoti¹⁴, disputes over territorial boundaries have frequently escalated into conflict, thereby undermining the socio-economic development and peaceful coexistence of both communities.

The cross-border conflicts between the Kipsigis and Abagusii along the Sotik–Borabu border arise from historical grievances, political incitement and socio-economic inequalities. While these communities have long shared a tense coexistence, structural inequalities rooted in colonial land policies and post-independence governance failures created fertile ground for recurring tensions.¹⁵ The politicization of ethnicity, especially during the multiparty transition in the 1990s, intensified divisions as leaders mobilized support along ethnic lines, often inciting violence during elections. Concurrently, land scarcity, cattle raiding, and high youth

¹³ R. P. Devine, “Persistent Conflict between the Pokot and the Turkana: Causes and Policy Implications” (PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2016).

¹⁴ H.O. Ayot, *A History of the Luo-Abasuba of Western Kenya from 1760-1940*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, (1979).

¹⁵ Hellen, M. Omwenga. "Cross border Conflicts between the Kipsigis and Abagusii of Kenya, 1963-2002." Master of Arts Thesis, Kenyatta University (2016).

unemployment compounded local grievances.¹⁶ The inability of state institutions to effectively mediate disputes or ensure equitable access to resources allowed cycles of violence to persist leading to displacement, destruction and entrenched ethnic animosity.

Due to the fact that no community can live in isolation, the socioeconomic linkages that exist between communities are a sensitive topic that is being debated all over the world across the world. According to Omenya¹⁷ this matter has garnered a significant amount of interest from academics and scholars. In terms of the ways in which different ethnic groups engage with one another on a local, national, and international level, the Nubians are not distinguished from other ethnic groups.

Since their arrival in Kenya in the early 1900s, the Nubian people have expanded to a population of approximately 100,000 people at the present time¹⁸. When it comes to East Africa, the Nubian people are not a single ethnic group; rather, they are a collection of individuals who come from a variety of different tribes. The construction of their collective identity has been influenced by a number of factors, including their shared history, Islamic faith and their active participation in the military. According to Nasseem¹⁹ the majority of the Nubians who lived in East Africa were individuals who were descendants of former British soldiers who had served in Sudan. After a revolt in 1897, the British decided against repatriating the population and instead distributed it around Kenya.²⁰ Kenyan Nubians have been classified as stateless because of their ethnicity's uncertainty. As far as social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Gordon Onyango Omenya, "The Relations between Asian and African Communities: A Comparative Study of Nyanza and Western Provinces, 1900–2002" (PhD diss., Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, 2015).

¹⁸ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2009). *2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census Volume 1A: Population Distribution by Administrative Units*

¹⁹ Zubairi B. Nasseem and Doka Wahib Marjan, "The 'Nubians' of East Africa: A Discussion," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 13, no. 1 (1992): 196–214.

²⁰ M.O. Makoloo. *Kenya Minorities indigenous People and Ethnic Diversity* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2005)

Kenyan life are concerned; they are the least visible and underrepresented. This is because they have been silent victims of discrimination in Kenya for as long as they have been here.²¹

Slave troops of the Egyptian army who were stationed in southern Sudan in 1885 are thought to be the ancestors of Nubian people. After this incident, armed forces from British and German East African colonies recruited them and transported them out of Sudan into East Africa. Former military personnel were free to live in the vicinity of their former bases or garrison towns during this time period. As a result of this, Nubian settlements were founded in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, where the Nubians were given land to build homes and crop. Most of these settlements are still around today, albeit the Nubian cultures in these three countries have evolved in various ways.²²

Modern Nubians speak Nubian languages. They are part of the Nilo-Saharan phylum's Eastern Sudanic branch. Nilo Saharan languages of the Eastern Sudanic branch were spoken by the Kerma people of upper Nubia, according to Claude Rilly.²³ The Nubians are a mix of individuals from many different parts of Sudan and the surrounding areas that merged to become a new, military and Islamic community. They formed the basis of a new ethnic group that developed in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This implies that they do not have common ancestry or distinct original homeland.²⁴

Despite having lived in Kenya for over a century, a significant number of Nubians have yet to receive formal recognition as Kenyan citizens. As a reward for their service as soldiers under the British colonial administration, the Nubians were allocated approximately 4,000 acres of land on the outskirts of Nairobi an area that later came to be known as Kibra. Today, Kibra

²¹ Ibid.

²² D. Adriaan. J, "The Nubis of Kibera: A Social History of the Nubians and Kibera-slums" (Master's Thesis, University of Leiden, 2011).

²³ Ibid,

²⁴ Ibid, p. 58.

stands as one of the largest informal settlements on the African continent, with a population estimated at around 900,000 residents. Roughly half of Kenya's Nubian population estimated at about 100,000 currently resides in Kibra. Beyond this settlement, many Nubians remain concentrated in isolated and marginalized villages, reflecting their continued socio-spatial exclusion.²⁵

The Kibra settlement residents of Nairobi, Kenya encounter problems of marginalization. As a result, they have been involved in a land dispute with other towns. The current dilemma can be traced back to the Nubian struggle for official land rights. In Kibra, the flood of migrants and ethnic community polarization have exacerbated the problem²⁶. As the government reclaimed Kibra's property in the 1970s and 1980s, many Nubians were evicted as a result of the legal status of their claims to the land. The government and the Nubian community are still at odds. In addition, tensions have existed between the Nubian population and other ethnic groups in Kibra and between landlords from other groups and their Nubian tenants.²⁷

The longstanding land conflict between the Nubian community and the majority populations in Kenya has been worsened by the Nubians' minority status. Their limited numbers have continued to work against them, particularly in matters relating to political power and representation.²⁸ As a small community with little influence in national or local politics, the Nubians have had few opportunities to champion their land rights or broader social concerns. This is clearly illustrated by the case of Yanus Ali, the only Nubian to have served in Parliament between 1969 and 1974. Despite his position, Ali failed to gain meaningful backing from

²⁵CRIN (no date). Kenya: How to get recognized- Nubian children and the struggle for citizenship. <https://www.kenya-how-to-get-recognized-> .

²⁶ S. F. Joireman and R.S. Vanderpoel, In search of order: State systems of property rights and their failings. In Joireman, S.F. (ed) *Where There is No Government*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). 129-152.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸ Elfversson, Emma, and Kristine Höglund. "Home of last resort: Urban land conflict and the Nubians in Kibera, Kenya." *Urban Studies* 55, no. 8 (2018): 1749-1765.

fellow legislators when addressing land issues affecting the Nubians.²⁹ This lack of support reflects a broader pattern of political exclusion, which explains why Nubians in areas such as Kibra have remained unable to secure elected positions or effectively advocate for their community's interests.

Since Kenya gained independence in 1963, the Nubian community has been systematically denied the fundamental rights that come with citizenship. In the early 1990s, the government made an attempt to address this injustice by setting up vetting committees meant to recognize Nubians as citizens and to provide them with the necessary documents to access essential services.³⁰ However, this process was largely ineffective. The vetting procedure demanded excessive documentation, making it extremely difficult for most applicants to succeed. As a result, gaining legal recognition as Kenyan citizens remained a major struggle for many Nubians. Further, the local committees established to handle Nubian claims often acted as obstacles, causing further frustration within the community. Nubian children were excluded from citizenship from the moment of birth, repeating a pattern of marginalization. Further, the requirement that one must be 18 years old to apply for a national identity card created yet another barrier to securing full legal status.³¹

The Nubian presence in the Kisii highlands was a direct result of this demobilisation of the military³². Historically, the Kisii area was part of the wider South Nyanza region. In World War

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Thuo, Lucianna, and Caroline Kioko. "Marginalisation in Kenya in historical perspective (1963-2021): The starts, false starts and the last promise." Kabarak University, 2023.

³¹ Ibid

³² Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) and Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA). *The Nubian Community in Kenya v. The Republic of Kenya*, Communication 317/2006. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2015. <https://statelessness.uwazi.io/en/entity/je5v4c9l4x/metadata?raw=true>.

I, Kisii became a site of colonial administration and military activity. Originally a British colonial outpost, the town was set up by soldiers fleeing from German gunfire on Lake Victoria.

Historical and sociolinguistic studies have found their precise location in Kisii to a very specific enclave³³. The Nubian community in Kisii is predominantly and most notably found in Nyanchwa Estate. Nubian Rights Forum³⁴ confirms that a small group of less than 20 families settled in Kisii Town specifically in 1914. Their descendants today still live mainly in Nyanchwa Estate, which overlooks the central business district of Kisii Town. The Kisii Nubian community is small, unlike the large Kibera settlement in Nairobi. Sources mention “Kisii” as a general place of settlement near Kibigori, Migori and Oyugis but the urban place is Nyanchwa³⁵. This community is situated in the heart of Gusii highlands and has been able to maintain its own identity as a significant minority community in the largely Abagusii population.

Acquiring citizenship status often entails navigating a range of complex challenges. In the context of intercommunal relations, it is noteworthy that the nature of interaction between the Nubians and Abagusii differed significantly from other forms of ethnic engagement. Their relationship was structured within an organized framework, primarily because Nubians did not own land independently but resided within territories administered and inhabited by the Abagusii. This unique spatial arrangement shaped the character of their social and economic interactions.

³³ibid

³⁴ Nubian Rights Forum. "The Nubians (History and Evidence of Marginalization)." *Nubian Rights Forum Kenya*. Accessed 2025. <https://www.nubianrightsforum.or.ke/the-nubians-history-and-evidence-of-marginalization/>.

³⁵ Conference Presentation, 2022. "Dynamics of multilingualism among ethnic minorities: The case of the Nubians of Kisii Town of western Kenya." *Sociolinguistics Symposium 22*. Accessed via Ex Ordo. <https://programme.exordo.com/ss22/delegates/presentation/354>.

The Kisii Nubian community is a major research gap in the existing scholarship on Nubians in Kenya. There is a large literature on the larger Kibera Nubian population, but the Kisii Nubians have been accorded very little scholarly attention. This neglect is not merely a matter of demographic size but a critical lacuna in our understanding of Nubian history, identity formation and inter-ethnic relations. This study sought to address this gap by critically examining the patterns and nature of interethnic engagement between Nubians and Abagusii communities from 1963 to 2013. It specifically explores areas such as commerce, employment, intermarriage, settlement trends, and access to public services, with the objective of understanding how these interactions influenced social cohesion, integration, and intergroup relations within the urban context of Kisii Township.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nubians in Kenya predominantly reside in urban areas such as Kisumu, Kibera and Meru. In Kisii County, they are mainly found in Nyanchwa Estate. Since independence, Nubians have been considered a minority group, as reflected in the 2019 national census, where they were categorized as ‘others.’ Although various efforts have been made to integrate them as Kenyan citizens, many Nubians still live in distinct Nubian villages. Despite this marginalization, Nubians have maintained social and economic interactions with local communities in their areas, an aspect that has received limited scholarly attention. Most existing studies focus on Nubians in Kibera, Meru, often overlooking those in other regions, such as in Kisii County. This oversight emphasizes the need to explore the lives of Nubians in Kisii and their interactions with the Abagusii community in Kisii Township. This study, therefore, conducted a comprehensive examination of the socio-economic relations between the Nubians and the Abagusii in Kisii County during the period from 1963 to 2013.

1.3 General Objectives of the Study

The study investigated socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii of Kisii Township Location in Kisii County, 1963-2013.

1.4 Specific Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives guided the study:

- i. To examine the socio-economic nature of the Abagusii and Nubian community in Kisii Township Location, 1963-1978.
- ii. To analyse the impact of the Abagusii on the Nubian community during their interactions in Kisii Township Location, 1979-2002.
- iii. To assess the influence of the social-economic interactions between the Abagusii and the Nubian communities in Kisii Township Location 2003-2013.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the study:

- i. What was the socio-economic nature of the Nubians in Kisii Township Location, 1963-1978?
- ii. How did the Abagusii influence the Nubians during their interactions in Kisii Township Location, 1979-2002?
- iii. What were the socio-economic effects of the interactions between the Nubians and the Abagusii communities in Kisii Township Location, 2003-2013?

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study was conducted among the Nubians and Abagusii of Kisii townships, Kenya. The study set out to start in 1963 when Kenya gained its independence. Similarly, this was the period that the residents' social-economic lives had started to improve under the newly

independent Kenya. A critical assessment of the existing body of literature reveals a lack of comprehensive scholarly engagement with the social-economic interaction of the Nubian and Abagusii communities. There is no known study focusing on the socio-economic interaction of the Nubian and Abagusii, a gap this study seeks to fill. The conclusion of the study was held back until 2013 because that was the year that the Kibaki rule came to an end. The minority groups, and the Nubians in particular, had high hopes that the new regime that came into power in 2010 and the constitution that was established would be able to alleviate the suffering of the many minority groups that exist within the country.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is crucial to communities in Kenya and beyond who seek to live in mutual understanding, cohesion, and harmony while appreciating cultural diversity. Also, this research can equip the County Government of Kisii and the national government with relevant information to formulate policies that address the challenges faced by minority groups. Thus, the study may be used by policymakers in developing inclusive frameworks. Lastly, this study is essential to researchers interested in the Nubian contribution to Kenya's cultural heritage and in enriching the historiography of ethnic interaction both locally and globally.

1.8 Research Premises

The study was premised on the following;

- i. Socio-economic interactions shaped the relationship between the Abagusii and the Nubian community in Kisii Township Location from 1963 to 1978.
- ii. Abagusii community influenced the social and economic conditions of the Nubians in Kisii Township Location between 1979 and 2002.
- iii. Continued socio-economic interactions between the Abagusii and Nubians impacted intercommunity relations in Kisii Township Location from 2003 to 2013

1.9 Research Assumptions

- i. Data collection instruments employed for data collection yielded reliable and precise information.
- ii. Informants provided truthful accounts and responded accurately to the study's inquiries.
- iii. The selected participants were a fair and sufficient representation of the target population.

1.10 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the Nubians and Abagusii who reside in Kisii Township. The study was only confined to the Socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and the Abagusii Communities of Kisii Township Location in Kisii County, 1963-2013.” The year 1963 provides a good starting point for this study because this is the time when Kenya marked its independence. The year 2013 was taken as the terminal point because this is the period when Mwai Kibaki's tenure came to an end. Therefore, a period of more than 50 years provided a good time frame to undertake the research to establish how the interactions between the Nubians and Abagusii have influenced each other. The previous interactions were assessed as they directly affected how later developments affected interactions between communities. They directly influenced the effects of interactions between different communities in Kenya, giving a good ground on the origins and development of interactions.

The research encountered various limitations, first limitation of this study was restricted geographical scope, being limited to Kisii township, Kisii county. While this allowed for a focused and detailed analysis, it also constrains the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Kenya, where socio-economic and environmental conditions may differ. Second, in some areas, the researcher faced suspicion from community members, hindering data

collection. This was addressed by involving local elders, whose influence enabled access to households and trading centers for effective engagement with respondents. The researcher also faced language barrier, given that the participants comprised both Nubians and Abagusii. To overcome this, research assistants were engaged to facilitate clear and effective communication between the researcher and the informants.

1.11.0 Literature Review

1.11.1 Introduction

This section reviews the literature that is relevant to the topic of study. It is meant to reveal the empirical gaps in the reviewed work on the subject of study. As part of the arrangement, the researcher has reviewed the literature under the following themes, socio-economic interactions of the Abagusii and Nubian community in Kisii Township Location, 1963-1978, impact of the Abagusii on the Nubian community during their interactions in Kisii Township Location, 1979-2002 and the influence of the social-economic interactions between the Abagusii and the Nubian communities in Kisii Township Location 2003-2013. These themes correspond to the three aims of this study.

1.11.2 Socio-economic nature of the Abagusii and Nubian community in Kisii Township Location, 1963-1978

Munro-Hay³⁶ has written on the political and cultural transformations of ancient Nubia. He has attempted to discuss how the collapse of the Meroitic kingdom led to the rise of new groups such as the Nobatae and Blemmyes, who asserted autonomy and introduced new socio-political dynamics. He has detailed accounts of how kings such as Silko, Eirpanome, and Tokiltoeton combined Meroitic royal traditions with Byzantine-Christian elements to establish their legitimacy and unite their people. Munro-Hay³⁷ maintains that these kingship models, alliances, and cultural assimilations were powerful instruments in stabilizing Nubia during foreign influence and internal conflict. His work has provided a wide range of knowledge on how diplomatic relations, religious conversion, and trade arrangements (such as the Baqt treaty with Muslims) shaped Nubian society. This study is useful in tracing how political alliances, cultural integration, and economic negotiations similarly structured socio-economic interactions

³⁶Stuart C. Munro-Hay, "Kings and Kingdoms of Ancient Nubia," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 29 (1982): 87–137.

³⁷ Ibid

between the Nubians and the Abagusii communities in Kisii Township, especially in areas of trade, cultural adaptation, and peaceful coexistence.

In ancient Northeast Africa, Naunton³⁸ notes that the interactions between the Nubians and Egyptians were shaped by a long history of rivalry and cooperation, especially along their shared southern border. During the New Kingdom period, Egypt expanded into Nubia, establishing military control and encouraging trade and cultural assimilation. Nubians contributed significantly to Egypt's economy by supplying gold, ivory, incense, cattle, and even soldiers. In return, they gained access to Egyptian administrative systems, religious institutions, and material goods. Over time, these exchanges led to mixed settlements, shared labor systems, and intermarriages, particularly in regions like Lower Nubia. This study is relevant to the present research as it highlights how economic needs, geographical proximity, and political circumstances can foster lasting socio-economic interactions between neighboring communities. Therefore, the insights are useful for examining how similar forces may have shaped the relationship between the Nubians and the Abagusii, particularly in trade networks, migration patterns, and social integration.

As Adams³⁹ points out, the traditional narrative of Nubian history has long relied on assumptions of successive migrations and racial replacements to explain cultural change. In his analysis of archaeological findings from the Nubian salvage campaigns, he charts a continuous cultural evolution from the Neolithic to the Islamic periods, emphasizing environmental influences, particularly fluctuations in Nile flood levels, as primary drivers of settlement patterns. He argues that, while earlier interpretations linked cultural shifts to invasions or racial differences, recent empirical evidence undermines such claims, revealing a population that

³⁸Alan B. Lloyd, ed., *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, vol. 52 (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

³⁹William Y. Adams, "Continuity and Change in Nubian Cultural History," *Sudan Notes and Records* 48 (1967): 1–32.

maintained biological and cultural continuity over millennia. This continuity, he suggests, challenges outdated theories of civilizational progress as externally imposed and instead highlights the internal adaptability and resilience of Nubian society.

As displacement progressed following construction of the Aswan High Dam, Nubians in Egypt faced the loss of their ancestral lands and were resettled in state-planned settlements which failed to meet their cultural and spatial needs. As Agha explains:

Nubians employed nostalgia as emotional labor to construct a disembodied territory, maintaining their cultural identity through oral traditions, literature, and community spaces despite displacement.⁴⁰

These nostalgic spaces became critical in preserving Nubian identity across generations, even in diaspora settings such as Cairo, Alexandria, and the Arab Gulf. Although physically removed from their ancestral homeland, Nubians continued to build social networks and communal bonds, shaping how they engaged with host communities.⁴¹ This process of identity preservation and community-making amidst displacement is significant to the current study as it provides insights into how Nubians in Kenya, particularly in Kisii Township, have drawn from similar historical experiences of loss and adaptation to shape their socio-economic interactions with the Abagusii community. These virtual and cultural ties likely influenced integration strategies, trade relations, and social coexistence in Kisii between 1963 and 2013.

A study by Hillelson⁴² shows that the Nubians trace their origins to Kordofan, from where they migrated into the Nile Valley in distinct groups, some moving toward Dongola and others settling in areas such as Jebel Midob. Despite later exposure to Christian and Islamic influences and interactions with Arab, Libyan, and Egyptian communities, Nubians maintained a distinct

⁴⁰Menna Agha, “Nubia Still Exists: On the Utility of the Nostalgic Space,” *Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2019): 24.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴²Sigmar Hillelson, “Nubian Origins,” *Sudan Notes and Records* 13, no. 1 (1930): 137–148.

linguistic identity, with dialects such as Hill Nubian and Nilotic Nubian continuing to be spoken in different regions. This background is important to the current study as it helps explain how Nubians in Kenya, who were relocated during the colonial period, have managed to preserve their ethnic identity while interacting economically and socially with surrounding groups. The study examines how this historical experience of movement and settlement informs present-day relations between the Nubians and the Abagusii, particularly in trade, housing, employment, and community participation.

1.11.3 Impact of the Abagusii on the Nubian community during their interactions in Kisii Township Location, 1979-2002

In Nubian Egypt and Sudan, Carruthers⁴³ found that UNESCO's archival efforts during the Aswan High Dam project were focused on preserving ancient monuments but largely disregarded the living Nubian communities facing displacement. While massive resources were allocated to relocate temples, the forced migration of Nubians was framed as a modernizing national project, rendering their present socio-economic life invisible in the official record. The archives, however, inadvertently captured traces of the displaced communities such as laborers, background settlements, and forgotten ethnographic notes which now offer a counter-narrative to official heritage discourse. Carruthers shows that these "permeable records" allow us to reclaim submerged histories and link them to present struggles for recognition and return. This study is significant to the current research in explaining the historical roots of Nubian displacement and marginalization insightful for understanding how Nubians, as a diasporic group, have come to interact socially and economically with host communities such as the Abagusii in urban settlements which include Kisii Township. It

⁴³William Carruthers, "Records of Dispossession: Archival Thinking and UNESCO's Nubian Campaign in Egypt and Sudan," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 9, no. 2 (2020): 287–314.

reveals how past exclusion continues to influence contemporary integration, identity negotiation, and economic participation.

Fushiya's⁴⁴ work on Sudanese Nubia outlines how archaeological activities were historically dominated by external researchers who excluded local communities from interpreting and managing their heritage. Although she acknowledges Nubians' strong cultural ties with nearby historical sites, the study does not fully address how this long-standing exclusion has limited local involvement in heritage-related economic and social development. While community archaeology is proposed as a solution, the analysis lacks a deeper critique of the academic and institutional barriers that still hinder genuine participation. This is significant when examining socio-economic interactions between the Nubians and Abagusii, as it highlights how unequal recognition of cultural identity and heritage can shape intergroup relations, resource access, and shared economic spaces.

In Christian Nubia, Crowfoot⁴⁵ found that despite the spread of Christianity and exposure to Byzantine influences, traditional socio-political systems such as matrilineal succession and indigenous rites of passage remained central to Nubian life. These customs, including practices around kingship, inheritance, and ceremonial dress, persisted even after centuries of religious transformation, indicating a deeply rooted cultural resilience. This study suggests that Nubians maintained a complex cultural identity grounded in pre-Christian norms, which they adapted to new religious and political structures. Such historical continuity offers insight into how Nubians today may carry forward traditional values and social systems when settling in new regions like Kisii. When examined in modern interactions with the Abagusii, this resilience may shape how Nubians engage in social integration, intermarriage, and local economic

⁴⁴ Tomomi Fushiya and C. Smith, "Sudanese Nubia: Archaeology and Local Communities," in *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology* (Cham: Springer, 2020).

⁴⁵ John Winter Crowfoot, "Christian Nubia," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 13, no. 1 (1927): 141–150.

activities, influencing inter-community relations. This stands in contrast to modern assumptions that migration results in total cultural assimilation and instead supports the view that historical cultural systems inform present-day socio-economic behavior.

Mahajubu⁴⁶ provides a detailed historical account of the Nubians in Uganda, tracing their presence from the colonial period beginning in 1894 up to their official recognition in 1995. He explains that the Nubians, originally brought in by the British as soldiers, were not immediately accepted as a Ugandan ethnic group. Over the years, they endured political exclusion, cultural marginalization, and religious discrimination, especially due to their Islamic beliefs. Despite this, they managed to survive and establish themselves through practices such as intermarriage, trade, and military service. Islam was a unifying cultural foundation that gave the Nubians a sense of identity and belonging. During Amin's regime, they gained political prominence but later faced persecution, forcing them to rely on resilience and strategic adaptation. Their journey involved resistance and negotiation, using avenues such as the courts to claim rights and recognition. Mahajubu's⁴⁷ account will be useful in our study of the influence of colonial and post-colonial states on the identity preservation of minority ethnic groups.

Yet on the other hand, Zirker⁴⁸, writing on the political and military history of Uganda and Tanzania, presents a notably different perspective. He examines how the Nubians in Uganda were deliberately constructed by colonial authorities as a "martial race," occupying privileged military positions that gave them considerable power, especially under Idi Amin's regime.

⁴⁶ A. Mahajubu, P. Khanakwa, and F. Musisi, "Facing Social-Political Challenges: A Historical Examination on the Survival Methods of the Nubi Ethnic Minority in Uganda," *African Journal of History and Culture* 11, no. 4 (2019): 35–42.

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Daniel G. Zirker, "Tanzania and Uganda: Contrasting Similarities," in *Forging Military Identity in Culturally Pluralistic Societies: Quasi-Ethnicity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 53–68.

During this period, the Nubians held influential roles in the army and government, shaping national politics through ethnic alliances and exclusionary practices. However, Zirker also highlights how this dominance eventually collapsed after Amin's downfall, leaving Nubians politically weakened and marginalized. This trajectory of shifting status from military elites to sidelined minorities offers valuable insight into the present study. It helps explain how Nubians in Kisii Township, carrying memories of both authority and marginalization, may have drawn from these historical experiences to shape their socio-economic interactions with the Abagusii community, particularly in areas such as settlement, employment, security roles, and local trade.

1.11.4 The influence of the social-economic interactions between the Abagusii and the Nubian communities in Kisii Township Location 2003-2013

Although Balaton-Chrimes⁴⁹ concentrates on the broader experience of the Nubian community in Kenya, her analysis offers relevant insights into the socio-economic relations between Nubians and other ethnic groups such as the Abagusii, particularly in urban settings like Kisii Township. Her work highlights how the Nubians' ambiguous citizenship status has historically limited their access to land, formal employment, and state resources. As a result, Nubians have often depended on informal economies and negotiated relationships with local communities to secure livelihoods. These conditions influence how they interact socially and economically with dominant communities, often from a disadvantaged position. While the study does not specifically explore the Kisii context, it helps frame the ways in which systemic exclusion shapes everyday inter-ethnic engagements ranging from access to markets and services to residential and occupational spaces between the Nubians and host communities such as the Abagusii.

⁴⁹Samantha Balaton-Chrimes, *Ethnicity, Democracy and Citizenship in Africa: Political Marginalisation of Kenya's Nubians* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016).

On the contrary, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights rejects the claim that the Nubian community in Kenya failed to exhaust domestic remedies. In Communication 317/2006, the Commission found that despite pursuing legal action including a 2003 High Court petition the Nubians faced procedural delays, discriminatory vetting for identity documents, and ineffective remedies.⁵⁰ Their statelessness rooted in colonial conscription and post-independence exclusion was reinforced by denial of ID cards, land rights, and basic services, violating Articles 2, 3, 5, and 14 of the African Charter. These challenges continue in Kisii Township, where Nubians and Abagusii live in close proximity.⁵¹ The Nubians' lack of legal recognition and secure land tenure limits their access to formal employment, education, and property ownership, often confining them to informal sectors. This situation directly affects socio-economic interactions with the Abagusii, shaping patterns of trade, labor relations, and social integration in Kisii Township Location, Kisii County.

In his study of the Nubians of Kibera, de Smedt⁵² demonstrates that the community's lack of formal land ownership has been central to their socio-economic marginalization. Despite their settlement in Kibera dating back to the colonial era, Nubians were denied legal title to the land they occupied, undermining their access to basic services, security of tenure, and influence in urban governance. He shows that land insecurity weakened their economic foundation, particularly as control over rental income diminished with the influx of other communities. He further observes that Nubians struggled to maintain their identity and status as they transitioned from respected ex-soldiers to a politically insignificant minority within an expanding slum. Nubian ethnic identity was shaped and later challenged by changing state structures and socio-political contexts. This analysis is important in understanding socio-economic interactions

⁵⁰ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Communication 317/2006 – The Nubian Community in Kenya v. The Republic of Kenya, accessed May 7, 2025,

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Johan de Smedt, "The Nubis of Kibera: A Social History of the Nubians and Kibera Slums, 1902–1968" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2011).

between the Nubians and Abagusii communities, as it underscores how disparities in land access and historical recognition can influence inter-community relations, economic positioning, and social inclusion.

Njogu⁵³ has written on the transformation of socio-economic relations between the Nubians and the Ameru of Meru County, Kenya. She focuses on the historical migration, settlement, and interaction of Nubians in Meru from 1925 to 2014. She examines the Nubians' origin, enlistment in the King's African Rifles, and settlement in areas such as Mjini slum and Kibra Ndovu. She discusses how trade, intermarriage, and religious practices shaped relations with the Ameru, and how these dynamics changed under the Kenyatta, Moi, and Kibaki regimes. Njogu also addresses political exclusion, limited land access, and cultural assimilation. Although Njogu has focused on the socio-economic relations between the Nubians and the Ameru in Meru County, her study does not address the experiences of Nubians in Kisii Township, thereby creating a geographical gap.

In his study of the Nubian community in Kisii Town, Mose⁵⁴ explains how this group has managed to retain its native language, KiNubi, despite being surrounded by Ekegusii speakers for almost one hundred years. He points out that Nubians commonly use several languages, including Arabic, Ekegusii, Kiswahili, and English, which reflects their complex multilingual lifestyle shaped by faith, family ties, and historical experiences. His findings help this study understand how language plays a central role in shaping Nubian identity and daily interactions. However, his discussion does not fully address the broader social and political challenges faced by Nubians as a minority group in the country. While his work offers valuable insights into

⁵³Njogu Esther Muthoni, "Social-Economic Relations Between Nubians and the Ameru of Meru County, 1925–2014" (PhD diss., Kenyatta University, 2017).

⁵⁴Peter N. Mose, "Multilingualism and First Language Maintenance: Nubian Language Speakers in Western Kenya," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 12, no. 4 (2018): 248–269.

language use and preservation, exploring the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities is still necessary. This study seeks to address this gap by examining these broader aspects.

No known study has explored the socio-economic interactions between Abagusii and Nubians during the entire post-independence era from 1963 to 2013. Current academic studies on Kenyan Nubians mainly focus on either the colonial period, which ended in 1963, or issues that have emerged in more recent times, particularly after 2000. The important fifty-year period that covers independence (1963-2013), the Kenyatta era, the Moi administration, and the early Kibaki governance remains largely unexplored as a continuous historical narrative. Most existing studies about Kenyan Nubians concentrate on the Kibera community in Nairobi. Other Nubian communities, like the one in Kisii Township founded in 1914, have not been examined in detail. The only research on the Kisii Nubians, conducted by Mose⁵⁵, focuses primarily on language preservation and overlooks socio-economic interactions.

Current literature has targeted specific themes such as colonial military history, legal citizenship status, land disputes, and language preservation, while largely ignoring other areas. Topics related to socio-economic interactions such as trade, employment trends, housing markets, intermarriage, social ties, and economic growth have been significantly neglected. No research has specifically looked into these socio-economic aspects within the Kisii context. Most of the existing literature comes from political scientists, anthropologists, legal experts, and linguists. Historical methods, particularly the use of archival materials, oral histories from older community members, and long-term studies across different political eras, have not been adequately applied to examine Nubian communities beyond Kibera.

⁵⁵Peter N. Mose, "Language Preservation Among the Nubian Community in Kisii Town," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 12, no. 2 (2018): 120–145.

1.12. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical approach is a vital aspect in research. Different proponents have postulated, advanced, and discussed many theories concerning interactions between communities. In this study, two theories will be used; Ethnic Stratification Theory and Ethnic Identification Theory.

Theoretical approach is important in research as a good and well-thought theory is needed to guide the proposed research process. Different proponents have postulated, advanced, and discussed many theories concerning issues interactions between communities. Ethnic Stratification Theory (EST) postulated by Donald Noel in 1968 was used in this study. EST is a system of stratification wherein some relatively fixed group membership such as race, religion or nationality is utilized as a major criterion for assigning social position. EST argues that ethnic stratification is the basis of all biases in the society and can easily lead to marginalization of other societies.⁵⁶

Further, EST argues in favour of social stratification. Regarding EST, marginalization of individuals and groups is dominantly caused by stronger groups that subdue the minor and feeble groups. This in turn results into ethnic stratification on the basis of race or ethnic groups. In applying the strengths of this theory to the study, the theory suits the study since the Nubians which was originally an ethnic group is currently considered as underprivileged stratum in Kenya while other communities are considered as super strata. The Abagusii eventually dominated the Nubians in a number of major aspects such as socially, economically and politically. Since the study focuses on social and economic interactions and transformation of

⁵⁶Donald Noel, Theory of the Origin of Ethnic Stratification, 1968. Accessed from <https://academic.oup.com/article> on 2nd February, 2020

the Nubians and the Abagusii, and in which the Nubians appear to be socially stratified as underprivileged group, the EST finds its relevant standing.

However, few criticisms have been advanced on the EST. As argued by Lieberman⁵⁷ that ethnic stratification cannot be fully done away with from the society since breeding it among ethnic groups makes people stronger in terms of unity and solidarity. Such groups are most likely to move towards creation of their own separate nation-state. This might be of great detriment to a nation that is already sovereign and that which seeks to marshal the citizens towards one common direction. In this regard, the existence of ethnic stratification should be discarded in the sense that it brings acrimony and disharmony in the society. Hence the use of the following Theory below:

There is a need to use this additional theory to address current social grievances of the Nubian community. In this connection, the study will use Ethnic Identity Theory (EIT) which Phinney postulated in 1991⁵⁸. Ethnic Identity refers to a person's social identity within a larger context based on a cultural or social group membership. In our increasingly diverse society, issues related to ethnic identity have become of utmost interest to many psychologists across the globe. Members of different ethnic groups proudly express that ethnic identity is a fundamental aspect that defines their identity, giving them high self-esteem.⁵⁹ William Cross advanced one of the earliest models of Ethnic and Racial Identity Theory in which he described African-American identity developments. Cross explains that in each stage of the development of individuals, they negotiate to understand the culture around them. In this way, what is crucial

⁵⁷ S. Lieberman. *Stratification and Ethnic Groups*, 1970. Accessed from, <https://doi.org/stratification-ethnic-groups/> on 7/2/2021.

⁵⁸ S. Phinney. *Ethnic Identity and Self-esteem: A review and integration*. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 13, 193-208, 1991.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

is that they either seek racial or ethnic identity. The proponents of EIT are also in support of the argument of cross.⁶⁰

EIT finds its rightful footing in the study in view of the above. This is so because the main concerns of the Nubian community is ethnic identity which disadvantages the community politically, socially and economically when that identity is not constitutionally enhanced. Should ethnic identity of the Nubians be recognized constitutionally, then their political, social and economic situation would be better off in the society and Kenya as a whole. Therefore EIT relevantly supplements the use of EST which only addresses ethnic stratification that leads to marginalization, leaving out the aspect of ethnic identity, which produces marginalization status.

However, there are criticisms that have been advanced on the Ethnic Identity Theory (EIT). Kingsley and Moore⁶¹ argue that Ethnic Identity places individuals in situations characterized with inequality in the society rather than encouraging identification of ethnic groupings which is an invaluable aspect needed for a healthy functionality of every society. Although these are true criticisms, the researcher still found EIT useful in this study.

The previous critique does not dismiss EST and EIT. Instead, it points out their limitations in the context of the Abagusii-Nubian interactions in Kisii Township from 1963 to 2013. The identified gaps include linearity, erasure of agency, monolithic assumptions, lack of temporality, recognition optimism, individualist bias, positivity assumption, and nation-state framing. These issues highlight the need for changes. A suitable theoretical framework is necessary to analyze the socio-economic interactions between Abagusii and Nubians.

⁶⁰W. Cross. Negro-to-Black conversion experience. *Black World*, 20, 13-27, 1971.

⁶¹ D. Kingsley and W. Moore. "Some principles of stratification" *American Sociological Review* 10(2): 242-249. 2002. Accessed from, <https://www.stable/2085643>, on 6/2/2021.

1.13. Research Methodology

1.13.0 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kisii Township, located in Kitutu Chache South Sub-County in Kisii County, Kenya. Bonchari Sub-County surrounds Kitutu Chache South to the west, Nyaribari Chache to the south, Kitutu Chache North to the north, Nyamira County to the east and Rachuonyo South Sub-County of Homa Bay County to the north-west. The study location was conducive for this study because it has clusters of the Nubian community.

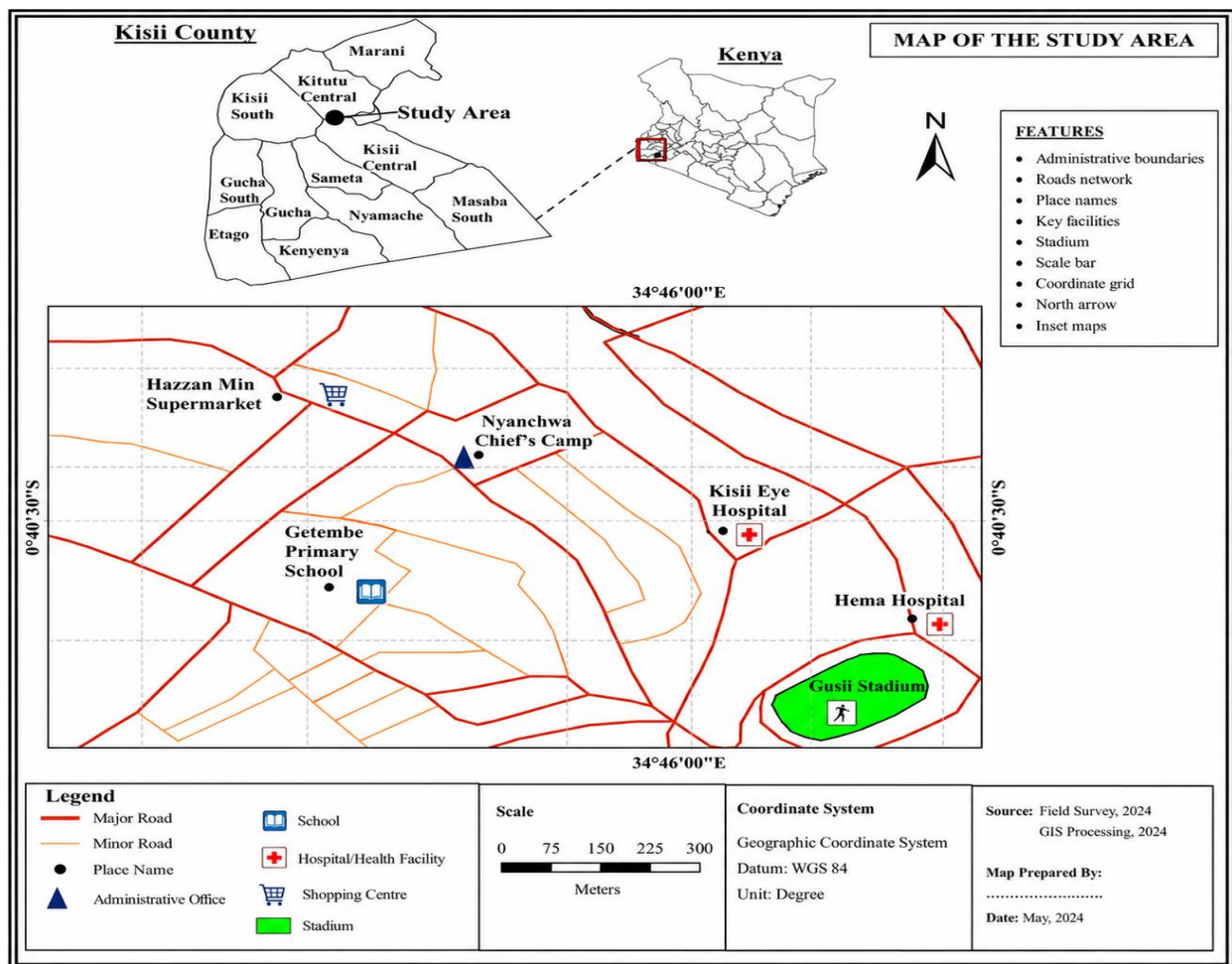


Fig 1: Map showing Kisii Township as the study area

Source: Hesbon John, 2024.

1.13.1 Research Design

This study adopted a historical research design involving the systematic collection, evaluation and interpretation of data related to past events. According to Brundage⁶² the design focuses on gathering reliable and authentic historical sources, including written records, objects and documented evidence. It emphasizes understanding the context and connections of events to develop a meaningful narrative. Historical analysis is used to explore past experiences that can inform present concerns. In this study, the design provided a framework for tracing the social-economic interaction of the Nubian and Abagusii communities in the period 1963-2013.

1.13.2 Target Population

The study targeted residents of Kisii Township aged 18 and above, specifically from the Nubian and Abagusii communities. The Nubians were the primary focus of the research, while the Abagusii were included due to their regular interactions with the Nubians in the region. Community leaders including chiefs, clan elders and religious figures were also engaged in the study, as they possess relevant knowledge about the Nubian community's involvement in government affairs and operate within areas where Nubians reside.

1.13.3 Sampling Techniques

Informants for the oral interviews were identified through purposive and snowball sampling. According to Campbell et al.⁶³ purposive sampling allows the selection of informants with specific experiences or insights relevant to the study's objectives. In this study, the approach enabled the researcher to engage participants whose perspectives offered meaningful insights into the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities. These

⁶²Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*, 6th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017).

⁶³ Steve Campbell et al. "Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples." *Journal of research in Nursing* 25, no. 8 (2020): 652-661.

participants included chiefs, clan elders and religious leaders who possessed relevant knowledge and experience. Following the initial identification of participants, the researcher employed snowball sampling to access individuals who possessed relevant and specific knowledge essential to the study. Parker⁶⁴ notes that snowballing sampling enables the recruitment of participants by allowing initial respondents to recommend others who hold pertinent attributes aligned with the study's objectives. Therefore, the researcher asked the initial informants to recommend others with relevant insights, particularly those knowledgeable about the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities.

1.13.4 Sample Size

The researcher determined the sample size based on the principle of data saturation. As Saunders et al.⁶⁵ explain, saturation is considered to have been reached when subsequent interviews fail to produce new insights. The repetition of responses indicates that the central themes have been adequately explored, rendering further data collection unnecessary. The sample size for this study consisted of forty informants, established upon the attainment of data saturation. This cohort included thirty-three individuals categorized as general informants and seven designated as key informants.

1.13.5 Data Collection Procedures and Instruments

The study utilized primary data and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through two main sources: oral interviews and archival data. Prior to the oral interviews, an extensive review of archival materials was conducted at the Kenya National Archives. The analysis focused on

⁶⁴ Charlie Parker, Sam Scott, and Alistair Geddes, "Snowball Sampling," in SAGE Research Methods Foundations (London: SAGE Publications, 2019).

⁶⁵ Benjamin Saunders et al., "Saturation in Qualitative Research: Exploring Its Conceptualization and Operationalization," *Quality & Quantity* 52 (2018): 1893–1907.

documents detailing colonial administrative policies on the social economic interaction of the Nubian and Abagusii communities. One advantage of archival research is the ability to minimize response bias, as the data were collected independently of the researcher's presence. Further, it is a cost-effective method since the information is pre-existing. Despite these strengths, archival sources may present limitations, including potential data inaccuracies. To address these challenges, the study employed oral testimonies and written records to corroborate and strengthen the archival evidence. Oral interviews constituted a vital component in the acquisition of primary data, serving to authenticate and enhance the information derived from archival sources. To facilitate fieldwork, the researcher first acquired an official letter of introduction from Kisii University, which was subsequently used to obtain a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

Primary data was collected through oral interviews comprising open-ended questions. The language of interaction Kiswahili, Ekegusii and English was selected based on the respondent's fluency. To preserve the integrity of the information, the researcher employed both audio phone recorder and manual note-taking throughout the interview process. The recorded interviews were transcribed each day and organized according to the study's objectives and key themes to support a clear and focused analysis. Using interview schedules allowed the researcher to gather information directly from participants and to follow up on unclear responses for clarity and accuracy. This method also enabled the researcher to observe participants' body language and tone, offering deeper insight into their responses. However, while effective, this approach was also time-intensive, requiring careful planning and patience during both the interviews and the transcription process.

Apart from primary sources, the study also drew on secondary data accessed through libraries and online platforms. This included books, newspapers, research papers, dissertations and theses both published and unpublished. These materials helped provide background, supported

the interpretation of findings, and allowed for comparisons with the data gathered through interviews and archival research.

1.13.6 Validity and Reliability of the Study Instruments

Validity is concerned with the accuracy and meaningfulness of the inferences derived from a study, thus enabling the researcher to confirm the precision and appropriateness of the instruments employed in measuring the intended phenomena.⁶⁶ The researcher employed open-ended questions to allow for an in-depth understanding of participants' views, thereby supporting the credibility of the findings. Additionally, oral interviews were carried out using standardized questions and procedures for all respondents, and the responses were systematically documented to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. Reliability denotes the extent to which a data collection instrument yields stable and consistent results across repeated administrations.⁶⁷ Reliability in data collection is achieved when an instrument consistently captures the intended results with minimal discrepancies. To evaluate the reliability of the tools employed in this study, a pilot test was conducted in the neighbouring Bogiakumu sub-location. This process assessed both the clarity and alignment of the instruments with the research objectives, thereby enhancing the credibility and dependability of the data obtained.

1.13.7 Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection from both primary and secondary sources, the researcher proceeded to conduct a critical and systematic analysis to establish the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information gathered. Primary data, which had been obtained through

⁶⁶Martyn Hammersley, "Assessing Validity in Social Research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods*, ed. Pertti Alasuutari, Leonard Bickman, and Julia Brannen (London: SAGE Publications, 2008), 42–53.

⁶⁷Anne Bruton, Joy H. Conway, and Stephen T. Holgate, "Reliability: What Is It, and How Is It Measured?" *Physiotherapy* 86, no. 2 (2000): 94–99.

oral interviews and recorded using a mobile audio device, was immediately transcribed to English language (in cases where the data collected was not in English) to safeguard the originality and prevent distortion of meaning. During transcription, careful editing was undertaken to enhance clarity and coherence. This involved eliminating irrelevant remarks and unnecessary repetitions to ensure that the data was precise, complete, and well-structured.

Following transcription, the researcher carefully examined the data in detail to identify and understand the major issues raised. The information was then categorized thematically to align with the objectives of the study. On the other hand, secondary data, obtained from library sources such as books, journals, and reports, was subjected to content analysis. This secondary data was integrated with the field data to strengthen the research findings.

Thematic content analysis guided the organization of the study into coherent chapters, each corresponding to particular historical periods, including the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Furthermore, secondary materials underwent critical assessment to confirm their relevance and to substantiate the themes and sub-themes that had emerged from primary data. This process ensured that the study was grounded in credible evidence and that the final interpretations reflected a balanced consideration of all available information.

1.13.8 Ethical Considerations

Before commencing fieldwork, the researcher obtained the necessary clearances, including a formal introduction letter from Kisii University, which facilitated the acquisition of a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Initial engagement with local authorities was undertaken to seek logistical support and foster cooperation within the study area. The purpose and academic nature of the research were clearly communicated to the selected participants. The researcher clarified the role of assistants involved in the process and assured participants that their involvement was voluntary. Ethical

considerations were observed by informing respondents of their right to decline participation or withdraw at any stage without consequence. Consent was formally sought from all participants, including approval for the use of their photographs and verbatim in the final report.

1.14. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the statement of the problem, assumptions, significance, scope and limitations of the study. The subsequent chapter will examine the socio-economic nature of the Nubian community in Kisii Township during the period 1963 to 1978.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC NATURE OF THE NUBIANS IN KISII TOWNSHIP: 1963-1978

2.0 Introduction

The advent of independence in Kenya in 1963 ushered in a period of national optimism, as political control transitioned from colonial authorities to African leadership. However, this new political dispensation did not necessarily translate into equity for all communities. Among the most affected were the Nubians of Kisii Township, a small but distinct ethnic group whose ambiguous legal and political status continued from the colonial period into the first years of independence. This chapter examines the Nubians' socio-political positioning in Kisii from 1963 to 1978, a critical period under President Jomo Kenyatta's leadership. It explores how their religious identity, cultural customs and marginalization shaped their interaction with the surrounding Abagusii community, while analyzing the socio-economic and legal.

2.1 Kenya's Independence

The principle of self-help, which had long existed within African communities before colonial rule, acquired renewed significance during Kenya's transition to self-government in 1963. Under the leadership of President Jomo Kenyatta, it was redefined as a national development philosophy and closely associated with the concept of Harambee. Kenyatta presented Harambee as a call for unity, collective responsibility, and hard work, arguing that these values were essential for achieving economic progress, national cohesion, and political stability. He publicly emphasized this vision during his Madaraka Day address in May 1963, urging Kenyans to work together in building the newly independent nation.⁶⁸ According to Balaton-

⁶⁸ Jeremiah Ole Koshal and Kathleen Patterson, "A Kenyan on Servant-Leadership: Harambee and Service," *International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 4, no. 1 (2008): 17.

Chrimes⁶⁹, the position of the Nubians at Kenya's independence in 1963 was characterized by profound uncertainty rather than full incorporation into the new nation-state. Although Kenya had become their only home after decades of settlement and military service under British colonial rule, neither their citizenship nor their land rights were clearly defined when the British transferred power to the Kenyan government. Lone notes:

When Kenya received independence in 1963, the Indians were offered the choice of obtaining either British or Kenyan citizenship.⁷⁰ This implies that colonial-era minority communities brought to Kenya, such as the Nubians and Asians, remained vulnerable after independence, as their citizenship, political inclusion, and sense of national belonging were increasingly contested. Amir⁷¹ observed that members of the community anticipated repatriation to Sudan once political conditions stabilized, while others assumed they would automatically acquire Kenyan citizenship by virtue of their long-term residence and service to the colonial regime. However, due to the colonial government's failure to formally address their legal status and land tenure rights prior to departure, many Nubians were not issued title deeds for the lands they occupied. Abdi narrated:

The municipal council only issued allotment letters to the earlier Nubian settlers, rather than formal title deeds. As a result, no official land titles were granted to members of the Nubian community, and any title deed allegedly held today is often viewed with suspicion, as it is widely believed that none were ever formally issued to their forebears.⁷²

It is clear that the historical exclusion of Nubians from formal land titling processes reflects a broader pattern of marginalization, where state institutions failed to recognize their longstanding claims to land ownership despite decades of settlement. This exclusion was symptomatic of deeper structural inequalities entrenched during colonial rule. Similarly, as

⁶⁹ Balaton-Chrimes, "The Nubians of Kenya," 163.

⁷⁰ Salim Lone, "The Lost Indians of Kenya," *The New York Review of Books*, October 7, 1971.

⁷¹

⁷² O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Getembe, on 30/05/2021.

Balaton-Chrimes⁷³ observes, upon independence, President Jomo Kenyatta inherited a country fragmented along ethnic and administrative lines divisions institutionalized by the colonial government's system of eight provincial administrations. Rather than dismantling these colonial structures, Kenyatta opted to maintain and adapt them, reinforcing a hierarchical socio-political order that continued to disadvantage minority communities such as the Nubians. This continuity of colonial governance practices contributed to the Nubians' prolonged statelessness and exclusion from key state resources which include land rights.

Disparities in land allocation and development among ethnic groups became increasingly evident under President Jomo Kenyatta's administration and persisted into the tenure of his successors. Van Arkadie⁷⁴ observes, land policies implemented during the independence era were instrumental in restructuring land ownership patterns to serve ethnic and political interests. These policies disproportionately favored political loyalists through the allocation of large tracts of fertile land, often at the expense of marginalized communities. Among those adversely affected were the Nubians, including those who had settled in Kisii. At independence, the Nubian community faced a steep decline in both social status and economic well-being. Deprived of the military leverage they had once enjoyed under British colonial rule, they found themselves without the institutional or political tools necessary to assert their land rights in the new nationalist dispensation.⁷⁵ Consequently, they were ill-prepared to navigate a political landscape increasingly characterized by ethnic patronage, elite land accumulation, and exclusionary governance. In Kisii Township, like in other urban areas, politically connected individuals engaged in land grabbing with impunity. The Nubians, being

⁷³ Balaton-Chrimes, "The Nubians of Kenya."

⁷⁴ Van Arkadie, Brian. "Reflections on land policy and the independence settlement in Kenya." *Review of African Political Economy* 43, no. sup1 (2016): 60-68.

⁷⁵ Balaton-Chrimes, S. *Ethnicity, Democracy and Citizenship in Africa: Political marginalization of Kenya's Nubians*. Ashgate, Alder shot. (2015).

few in number and lacking legal title to the land they had long occupied, were particularly susceptible to dispossession. This led to the systemic denial of land ownership to Nubians and the continued erosion of their historical settlements: Mohammed noted:

The Kisii people grabbed a lot of land from the Nubians, Land given to them by the British colonial masters. Although the Nubian were ex-soldiers, they did not fight for it or have a high appetite for land like their Kisii neighbours.⁷⁶

The statement highlights how the historical disempowerment of the Nubians, coupled with post-independence ethnic power dynamics, rendered them particularly vulnerable to land dispossession. This vulnerability was reflected by Yusuf who emphasized:

According to the map, Nubia stretched from Kisii Township to *Mwanyagetinge* to *Genesis* but currently the Nubia is confined to Kisii Township.⁷⁷

Although Kenya experienced economic growth and stability in the years following independence, this progress did not benefit all communities equally. As Garst⁷⁸ explains, the economy during the 1960s was largely driven by small-scale farming and commercial agriculture which include pyrethrum, tea and coffee production. These sectors became central to the country's development and wealth creation.⁷⁹ However, for the Nubians who had no formal land ownership the situation was very different. Since land was key to economic participation and progress, their lack of legal land rights meant they were left out of the country's main source of prosperity. While other communities used land to build livelihoods and wealth, the Nubians remained excluded and economically disadvantaged. Their historical

⁷⁶ O.I., with Mohamed Mohamed, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

⁷⁷ O.I., with Yusuf Abbakar, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

⁷⁸ Garst, Ronald. "The Spatial Diffusion of Agricultural Innovations in Kisii District, Kenya." PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1972.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

marginalization, now reinforced by landlessness, meant they could not fully participate in the nation's growth.

2.2.1 Nubian Interaction with the Abagusii during the Kenyatta regime, 1963-1978

At independence, President Jomo Kenyatta prioritized national development by pursuing policies aimed at reducing poverty, expanding employment opportunities, and improving the living standards of Kenyans.⁸⁰ In 1964, the Ominde Commission was established to reform Kenya's education system in line with these national objectives. It recommended the gradual expansion of universal primary education, improved teacher training, increased school infrastructure, and the integration of formerly segregated schools into a unified national system under a common curriculum to foster national cohesion.⁸¹ Khasim observed:

During the Kenyatta administration, Getembe Primary School admitted both Nubian and Abagusii pupils, creating a shared educational environment that encouraged sustained interaction between the two communities. Through classroom learning, co-curricular activities, and everyday social engagement, Nubian children developed friendships with their Abagusii counterparts, facilitating cultural understanding, and their gradual integration into the local community.⁸²

This demonstrates that integrated schooling served as a key avenue for sustained interaction, social integration between the Nubian and Abagusii. Kiswahili formed part of the curriculum at Getembe Primary School and served as the principal medium of instruction. As Nubian and Abagusii pupils learned and communicated in a common language, they interacted more freely within and beyond the classroom.⁸³ Karim⁸⁴ argues that the shared use of Kiswahili strengthened communication, facilitating closer social and socio-economic relations between

⁸⁰ Anaïs Angelo, *Power and the Presidency in Kenya: The Jomo Kenyatta Years*, African Studies 146 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁸¹ Republic of Kenya, *Kenya Education Commission Report, Part II* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1965).

⁸² O.I., with Faraj Navie, at Kisii Township, on 5/06/2021.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ O.I., with Shek Shakir Karim, at Masjid Al Mur, mosque, Kisii, on 5/06/2021.

the Nubians and the Abagusii. This interpretation is corroborated by Makinda and Turner⁸⁵, who observe that the post-independence government integrated formerly segregated schools into a unified public education system and introduced a standardized curriculum that made Kiswahili a compulsory subject.

In 1976, the Gachathi Commission was established to review Kenya's education system and align it with the country's development needs. Concerned by rising unemployment among school leavers, it attributed the problem to an overly academic curriculum and recommended greater emphasis on science, mathematics, technical, and vocational education to equip learners with practical skills and promote self-reliance. It further called for the expansion of educational opportunities to support the country's social and economic development.⁸⁶ During this period, Abdi⁸⁷ observes that Nubian enrolment in public schools and colleges increased steadily. As they studied alongside Abagusii learners, they developed social networks that facilitated communication, broadened access to education and employment, and strengthened socio-economic interaction between the two communities.⁸⁸ These educational reforms expanded access to schooling while creating opportunities for sustained interaction between the Nubians and the Abagusii. As a result, education became a key avenue for strengthening socio-economic relations between the two communities, as demonstrated in the subsections below:

2.2.1.1 Social organization of the Nubian

The Nubians' distinctive mode of dress and Islamic faith set them apart from other communities living in Kisii. Initially, they occupied both Kisii Township and its surrounding areas.

⁸⁵ Samuel M. Makinda and Marianne Turner, "Language Hierarchies and Human Rights: Kiswahili, English and (Other) Mother Tongues in Kenyan Schools," *Critical African Studies* 18, no. 2 (2026): 286–299.

⁸⁶ Republic of Kenya, *Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (Gachathi Report)* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1976), 33–34.

⁸⁷ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

However, during the Kenyatta administration, they were confined to settling within Kisii Township. A key informant narrated:

*“Nubia walipokuja, walikaa huko town, Kisii hutukuwa tunawatembelea na walifanya vitu zao huko, hunge waelewana meaning that, when the Nubians arrived they settled in town currently, Kisii township. We could not visit them, they did their own things which were distinct”*⁸⁹

The Nubian mode of dressing, culture, customs and Islamic religion made then distinct. This is in agreement with Namaswa⁹⁰, who says that Nubian identity encompasses common beliefs, mannerisms, and rituals. In order to show respect, a young guy greeting an elder should place his hands on his chin and then on his forehead.⁹¹ Another aspect of Nubian identity affirmation is done through socialization, as noted by Adam⁹², and this extends beyond the physical, mental, and community aspects of what is known as "Nubianness.". This concurs with the remarks of a Nubian elder who noted:

*“Hao Nubia waishi pamaja tungu kitambo, wamefundisha watoto wao mila yao na ni vigumu Munubia kuacha uisilamu. Meaning that the Nubians live communally and they impart their cultures and customs to their children making it difficult for a Nubian to change from their Islamic culture”.*⁹³

Findings from the oral interviews revealed that Islam was the predominant religion among the Nubians. All Nubian respondents identified themselves as Muslims, reflecting the integral role of Islam in shaping the community's identity and everyday life. In describing the religious composition of the community, one Nubian elder observed:

⁸⁹ O.I., with Ogote Geoffrey, at Kisii Township, on 4/06/2021.

⁹⁰ Mark Namaswa, “Walking through Kibra’s Nubian Culture,” *This Is Africa* 7 (2015).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Adam Hussein Adam, “Kenyan Nubians: Standing Up to Statelessness,” *Forced Migration Review* 32 (2009): 19–20.

⁹³ O.I., with Mohamed Mohamed, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

“Nubians are Muslims, they are born and live in Islam”.⁹⁴

Islamic region was so pronounced such that they build their mosques where they worship and had their children attend *madrassa*. As Islam culture, their dead were buried in cemetery and in Islamic culture. Similarly, Namaswa⁹⁵ points out that most Nubian children are enrolled in madrassas, Islamic religious classes where they are taught Islamic law. This suggests that madrassas were the primary means by which Nubian children learned about their culture. The revelation that:

“We have lost all our land to our Kisii neighbours, currently our cemetery was grabbed and we have an active case in court, we will fight for until we get the land back”⁹⁶

The implication is that the cemetery holds a lot of value socially and culturally since those who were buried in the cemetery were their parents, or grandparents. The respect for the dead was held dear amongst the Nubians. The fighting for the cemetery land in court was a testimony that they valued their culture and respected their dead.

Nubians participated in marriage. Their marriage was Islam. In Islam, polygamy was encouraged for those members of the society who were able to provide for their families. Marriage was only permitted to virginal women since the Nubians would not tolerate premarital unions in any kind. A Sheikh presided over the ceremony, which was usually held late at night in a mosque or at the girl's home.⁹⁷ First, the boy initiates a connection with a girl before he and his girlfriend inform their parents. However, some orthodox families continue to choose suitors for their daughters against their daughter's wishes. This was done in accordance with Islamic

⁹⁴ O.I., with Said Abdallah, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

⁹⁵ Namaswa, “Walking through Kibra’s Nubian Culture.”

⁹⁶ O.I., with Yusuf Abbakar, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

⁹⁷ O.I., with Mohamed Mohamed, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

tradition, which dictates that parent should be free to arrange the marriage of their children anyway they see right.⁹⁸

During oral interviews, it was evident that most of the Nubians confessed to be married in polygamous marriages. When asked if they would marry Christians, Kisii Township residents said that if they did, the Christian would have to become a Muslim. A Nubian clan elder in Kisii Township noted that;

*“Mradi mwenye anataka kuolewa, yaani msichani akubali kusalimiswa, basi ndoa itaendelea. Meaning that provided that the bride was to convert to Muslim, then the marriage will take place.”*⁹⁹

The statement by the clan elder meant that during Kenyatta regime when the Nubians did not even interact with the Christians freely, marrying a non-Muslim was not possible. Islamic laws on marriage were not compromised at all. Islamic laws were supreme and other cultures come last.

Circumcision was a practice that Nubians held. Boys were circumcised when they were very young, few days after birth. According to Islam, circumcision was one of the requirements that was mandatory to all males born in the Nubian community. The practice of circumcision for boys was still alive and well. The religious belief that Abraham was commanded to circumcise all the males in his household on the eighth day, as recorded in Genesis 17:23, was the basis for the Nubian practice of male circumcision. They circumcised their little sons as soon as they were born. Nubian males were circumcised as young as three months or three weeks old, according to Namaswa.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, as demanded by the Quran, it took place without fail. As a clan elder noted:

⁹⁸ Johan Victor Adriaan de Smedt, *The Nubis of Kibera: A Social History of the Nubians and Kibera Slums* (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2011)

⁹⁹ O.I., with Yusuf Abbakar, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁰⁰ Namaswa, “Walking through Kibra’s Nubian Culture.”

“We circumcise our boys when they are very young, even though they do not know they were circumcised. We do so to fulfill the Quran laws that demand so”.¹⁰¹

The Nubians were known to perform female circumcisions. In Nubian culture, female circumcision is referred to as Taaru, and this process involved the removal of the external female genitalia in its entirety or in part.¹⁰² According to the author, female circumcision was first practiced among the Nubians while they were slaves in Egypt. When they were soldiers in the Egyptian army, this was the case. According to an oral interview with a Nubian elder in Kisii Township, circumcision is a cultural tradition and a religious command in the Nubian community. These findings are also in line with those of Johnson (2009), who claims that the Nubians adopted this custom and carried it with them when they migrated to Kenya and Uganda.

Grannies typically select when their daughters should be "cut" when they are between six and 10 years old, a practice known as female circumcision.¹⁰³ As a rite of passage from childhood to womanhood in the traditional African civilization, girls were circumcised to reduce their sex urge and prevent them from becoming prostitutes.¹⁰⁴ According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2016), female circumcision was motivated by sexual activities, primarily a belief in virginity and chastity. WHO (2016)¹⁰⁵ echoes these sentiments. According to experts, female circumcision is viewed as what by those who practice it.

The cut was scheduled for extremely early in the morning by a midwife, and the girls had no idea what was in store. As one of the key informants noted

¹⁰¹ O.I., with Mohamed Mohamed, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁰² Balaton-Chrimes, “The Nubians of Kenya.”

¹⁰³ Johan De Smedt, “‘Kill Me Quick’: A History of Nubian Gin in Kibera,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 201–220.

¹⁰⁴ Sarah Boseley, “Big Pharma’s Worst Nightmare,” *The Guardian*, January 26, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ World Health Organization, “Female Genital Mutilation,” last modified January 31, 2025, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

“During our time, it was our tradition to circumcise girls. I was circumcised when I was a small girl. Without circumcision you could not get married” ¹⁰⁶

Since female circumcision unlike male circumcision took place to prepare girls for marriage, girls were eligible for marriage after undergoing this rite of passage. Key informant in Kisii Township noted that a party with family, friends, and neighbors was organized, and they were all invited. The girl received a number of gifts. Note that circumcision was merely a prelude to marriageability for girls between the ages of six and twelve.¹⁰⁷ Scholars agree that only circumcised women were eligible for marriage, as shown above. ¹⁰⁸

The Islamic law mandates that the dead be buried within 24 hours after death in Nubian funeral procedures. This information was obtained from a key informant interview with an elderly Nubian man in Kisii Township (special cloth for burying the dead according to Muslim customs). Following a burial, women were allowed to visit the deceased. All of these features are derived from Islam. Briefly said, Islam more strongly influences the Nubian way of life. Quran or Mohamed's hadiths explained every element of their everyday lives, including marriage, initiation rituals, clothing code and cuisine.

Religious education was of utmost importance to the Nubians since it taught them how to live according to Islamic law. The importance of secular education has been overlooked in the past. An oral interview with a clan elder in Kisii Township voiced his frustration that:

“Nowadays the schools have denied our children time to attend madrassa, during our time and our parent’s times, madrassa was compulsory for all the young Muslims and there was sufficient time for that”. ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁰⁷ O.I., with Faridah Sakina, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁰⁸ Silberschmidt, M. “Women Forget that men are the Masters

¹⁰⁹ O.I., with Yakub Khasim, at Kisii Township, on 5/06/2021.

Secular education was avoided by Nubians because of their dread of Christian influence, according to Silberschmidt.¹¹⁰ Boys spent their time wandering the slums of Mjini and participating in dholuka dances as a result of this. Smedt¹¹¹ adds that the Nubians' only education was the informal one. The women were confined to their houses, where they were taught the skills necessary to be excellent spouses, such as sewing food coverings and making traditional dishes. The author also points out that boys were educated how to be good soldiers and were expected to join the military when they were adolescents during the Second World War.

2.2.1.2 Economic activities of the Nubians

The Nubians carried out subsistence and economic operations. Speaking with a Nubian Elder in Kisii Township revealed that Nubians farmed a variety of crops and also raised livestock, including cows and goats, on their small plots of land.¹¹² This is in agreement with Leplongeon¹¹³ notes that the Nubians performed subsistence activities and agriculture was the basis of the Nubian economy, notably in their modest farms allotted to them by the British. Cattle, sheep, and goats were also grazed by them.

Similarly, Baskets of Africa¹¹⁴ reveals that Nubian women marketed their baskets to the people. According to an elderly Nubian woman interviewed in Kisii Township, the Nubians eat a variety of foods such Bumia, Goruka, Kisira, and Vitumbua. Aside from this, the locals could

¹¹⁰ V. V. Silberschmidt et al., “On Material Immanent Ratchetting of Two-Phase Materials under Cyclic Purely Thermal Loading,” *Archive of Applied Mechanics* 69, no. 9 (1999): 727–750.

¹¹¹ De Smedt, ““Kill Me Quick,”” 205.

¹¹² O.I., with Amir Osman, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹¹³ Alice Leplongeon et al., “A Comparative Look at Technical Traditions in the Horn of Africa and the Nile Valley at the End of the Pleistocene,” *Séances de la Société préhistorique française* 20 (2023): 39–73.

¹¹⁴ Baskets of Africa, “Weaving Nubian Baskets,” accessed July 27, 2026, <https://basketsofafrica.com/weaving-nubian-baskets/>.

buy Gurusa and Anjera, which they sold.¹¹⁵ In agreement with Namaswa¹¹⁶ findings, who explains that Kisira is a meal made from fermented simsim paste and maize and wheat flour. He also mentions that Gurusa is also known as Anjera, a type of flatbread. The lebere, another Nubian delicacy, reveals that the Nubians' diet was more closely related to that of the Swahili people.

An oral interview with a Nubian village elder in Kisii Township stated that it was the Nubian who introduced gin (Changaa) commonly referred to as wete in Kenya.¹¹⁷ Smedt¹¹⁸ states that the Nubians in Kisii Township were the primary producers of gin, which they traded in exchange for other food or farm implements. Furthermore, because they were without work, every Nubian family brewed the gin, regardless of religious affiliation.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the socio-economic situation of the Nubian community in Kisii Township from 1963 to 1978, the first fifteen years of Kenya's independence under President Jomo Kenyatta's leadership. Several key conclusions come from this analysis.

First, the shift to independence did not improve the Nubian community's legal or political status. Despite living in Kenya for a long time and serving the British colonial government as soldiers, the Nubians were not included in the new nation on equal terms. The Kenyatta government kept colonial administrative structures that continued to disadvantage minority groups, and Nubian claims to land and citizenship were routinely ignored or turned down.

Second, land loss was the main way the Nubians were marginalized. The colonial government's failure to issue formal title deeds, combined with post-independence land policies favoring

¹¹⁵ O.I., with Faridah Sakina, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹¹⁶ Namaswa, "Walking through Kibra's Nubian Culture."

¹¹⁷ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹¹⁸ De Smedt, "Kill Me Quick," 205.

political allies, led to widespread land grabbing by Abagusii individuals with connections. The Nubians lost large areas of land, reducing their settlement area from a wide region to a small part of Kisii Township. Losing the Nubian cemetery—land with deep cultural and religious importance—marked this dispossession.

Third, the Nubians kept a unique social and religious identity focused on Islam. Their Islamic beliefs influenced every part of their social structure, including marriage customs (which prohibited marrying non-Muslims without conversion), circumcision practices (for both genders), funeral rites, and education (favoring madrassa over secular learning). This unique identity provided internal strength and cultural continuity, yet it also set the Nubians apart as outsiders in a predominantly Christian Kisii.

Fourth, the relationship between Christianity and Islam in Kisii Township during this time was marked by coexistence rather than active interaction or conflict. The two religious groups lived alongside each other with little communication, keeping separate institutions and distinct practices. Marriages between the two faiths were rare due to Nubian conversion rules, and social distance was reinforced by residential separation. However, some economic interaction happened, especially through the Nubian production of illicit gin, which created business relationships across religious lines.

Fifth, the Nubians' economic activities reflected their lack of land and marginalization. They practiced subsistence farming on small plots, engaged in food production and trade (mainly by women), and produced illicit gin. The gin trade, despite its legal risks and conflict with Islamic rules against alcohol, became a key economic activity for many Nubian families. These activities provided for their basic needs but did not allow for wealth accumulation, leaving the Nubians economically exposed and reliant on informal sectors.

Finally, the years 1963 to 1978 established patterns that would continue and deepen in later decades. The Nubians' unclear legal status, land insecurity, religious uniqueness, and economic marginalization were clear by the end of the Kenyatta era. These conditions influenced their interactions with the Abagusii community, marked by social distance, economic exchanges without political integration, and vulnerability to land loss.

The chapter has shown that the Nubian experience in Kisii Township from 1963 to 1978 cannot be viewed merely as an extension of colonial marginalization or as a simple tale of post-independence exclusion. Instead, it is a complex history of adapting, resisting, and surviving—a community that maintained its unique identity and cultural practices while navigating a political and economic system that put them at a disadvantage. The Nubians kept their Islamic faith, marriage customs, and community organization even as they lost land, endured economic challenges, and stayed outside the political mainstream. This resilience, rooted in cultural and religious identity, would be crucial for their continued survival in Kisii Township and their changing relationship with the Abagusii community in the following decades.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ABAGUSII INFLUENCE ON THE NUBIANS DURING THEIR INTERACTIONS IN KISII TOWNSHIP LOCATION: 1979-2002

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of presentation the results of objective two of the study. The chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section is general and historical information, while the second section is presentation of results, interpretation and discussions of findings.

Interaction between communities is important and cannot be avoided. The fact that a community lives amongst other neighbouring communities, there is bound to be interaction in one form or another. The form and type of interaction determines how peaceful such communities can live together and benefit each other. According to social network theory, no community can live in isolation. A strand in the social network theory proposes that the many forms of interaction are linked together.¹¹⁹ This is why it's important to look at how the Abagusii and Nubians interacted when they arrived in Kisii town. Pertinent question at the moment was how did the Abagusii influence the Nubians during their interactions in Kisii Township Location, 1979-2002? In addition, this chapter addresses interactions of the Nubians and the Kisii in the stated period and challenges from the interaction.

Although Ethnic Stratification Theory (EST) and Ethnic Identity Theory (EIT) have been used in this study's theoretical framework, the results of this chapter show that Social Network Theory is a necessary extra theoretical lens, offers crucial analytical tools for comprehending the interaction patterns recorded over this time.

¹¹⁹ Wenlin Liu et al., "Social Network Theory," in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, ed. Patrick Rössler, Cynthia A. Hoffner, and Liesbet van Zoonen (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 1–12.

Sociologists and anthropologists such as Georg Simmel¹²⁰, John Barnes¹²¹, Elizabeth Bott¹²², and Mark Granovetter¹²³ contributed to the development of Social Network Theory (SNT). According to the idea, social relationships can be viewed as networks of nodes individuals, groups, or organizations connected by ties relationships, interactions, and exchanges.¹²⁴ The movement of resources, information, and influence both within and between communities is shaped by the structure and quality of these connections, including their strength, frequency, reciprocity, and content.

The fundamental ideas of social network theory that are pertinent to our investigation are: no community exists in total seclusion. Human societies are relational by nature, according to Simmel, and different kinds of connection, communication, and exchange constantly cross group borders. second, many kinds of relationships define social networks. Granovetter made a distinction between "weak ties" (more distant, infrequent interactions such as acquaintances or trading partners) and "strong ties" (near, frequent, emotionally intense relationships like family and intimate friendship). Weak links are frequently more crucial for gaining access to new possibilities, resources, and information outside of one's immediate community, but strong ties offer deep solidarity and emotional support.

The social networks are part of broader structural frameworks that include historical contingency, inequality, and power. The ethnic stratification and identity dynamics that EST

¹²⁰ Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950).

¹²¹ John Arundel Barnes, "Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish," *Human Relations* 7, no. 1 (1954): 39–58.

¹²² Savage, Mike. "Elizabeth Bott and the formation of modern British sociology." *The Sociological Review* 56, no. 4 (2008): 579-605.

¹²³ Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1360–1380.

¹²⁴ Charles Kadushin, *Introduction to Social Network Theory* (unpublished manuscript, Boston, MA, 2004).

and EIT examine both influence and are influenced by the structure and content of network links.

For a number of reasons, social network theory is especially pertinent to comprehending Abagusii-Nubian relations between 1979 and 2002. First, as a type of network bridging, the idea explains how intermarriage came to be. "Affinal ties" are formed between previously distinct kinship networks by intermarriage. Intermarriage between Abagusii and Nubians increased throughout this time, as this chapter's data shows, opening up new avenues for resource sharing, social support, and cultural exchange. Due to these marriages, the two societies became interwoven networks rather than separate social groupings.

SNT sheds light on the function of "weak ties" in trade. Weak linkages that let the marginalized Nubian community survive economically are represented by the trade relationships described in this chapter, such as Nubian women selling food, both communities engaging in the *changaa* economy, and Abagusii hiring Nubians as business assistants. These connections gave people vital access to markets, money, and requirements even while they did not result in profound social cohesion. The theory clarifies influence and adaptation patterns. Influence spread along the network ties that united Nubians and Abagusii. Through network ties, cultural practices proliferate, including food, language, dress regulations (*kanzu* and *dera*), and even religious conversion. According to SNT, people or groups with more network connections the Abagusii, as the numerical majority will have a bigger impact on people with less connections the Nubians, as a tiny minority.

Furthermore, SNT highlights network integration's shortcomings. The Nubians continued to face structural disadvantages notwithstanding an increase in economic interaction and intermarriage. Rather than "strong ties" of political affiliation or strong social solidarity, their network ties to the Abagusii were mostly "weak ties" of trade and sporadic social contact.

Additionally, even as interpersonal relationships developed, the Nubians' network linkages to state institutions (for identification cards, land registration, and political representation) remained poor or nonexistent, sustaining their marginalization.

3.2. Social organization of the Abagusii and Nubians 1979-2002

3.2.1 Religion

There were two dominant religions in Kisii. Christianity and Islam. Most of the Abagusii living in Kisii Township are Christian. There are various denominations of Christianity but the most dominant among them is Seventh Day Adventists (SDA). This was evidenced by nearly empty roads and closed shops on Saturdays and Sundays when many of the residents were in churches for worship. Others include catholic and Protestants. The key informants who were interviewed stated that they belonged to their various religion since birth.¹²⁵ For Nubians and Abagusii, the religion dictated various cultures and customs and even their general socialization. For instance, marriage, burials, circumcision and education were conducted based on the religion. This were supported by a village elder who stated that:

“Kila kitu inategemea dini,kama wewe ni muisilamu utafanya kulingana na ueslilamu na wakristo walifanya kulingana na Biblia meaning that the religion dictated their way of life, if one was a Muslim ,he/she prescribed to Muslim teachings while Christians followed the dictated of the bible”¹²⁶

The era of 1979-2002 was characterized with the “Nyayo” philosophy who put a lot of emphasis on *Harambee* meaning coming together to build the nation. Nubians stated to open their doors to other communities. In this case Abagusii were the majority.

¹²⁵ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹²⁶ O.I., with Abid Morra, at Kisii Township, on 1/6/2021.

3.2.2 Intermarriages among the Abagusii and Nubians.

Both the Nubians and Abagusii participate in marriage in their separate communities. As a result of interaction, intermarriages started to occur. Abagusii girls could get married to the Nubians while Nubians girls could also get married to Abagusii men. The evidence available suggest that it is the Nubian men who could easily marry Abagusii girls. A Nubian clan elder stated that:

“You cannot see easily a Nubian change to Christianity. The dressing of a Nubian girl and religion remains unchanged.”¹²⁷

A clan elder added that the impossibility of changing a Nubian to a Christian is embedded in the religion. He stated that:

“Muslim is a bond. A strong bond that one cannot break. If he/she does by joining Christianity, he/she is not visited by his or her family whether alive, sick or dead.”¹²⁸

The fact that one was cut off completely from their families and societies for embracing Christianity made it impossible for Nubians to change to Christianity to be married.

Nubian marriages were purely Islamic, the bride or groom were to convert to Islam for such marriages to occur. As stated by key informant:

“Nubia na Abagusii wanaweza kupendana, lakini lazima Abagusii wakubali kuslimiswa ndio amuo” Nubia meaning that the Abagusii and Nubian were free to love each other but the Abagusii man or woman must convert to Islam if they have to get married.”(Omar, OI, 1/6/2021)

As a clan leader in Abagusii Township was interviewed, it was discovered that a substantial number of Abagusii Christians have converted to Islam due to marriage. In the Islamic religion, the Qur'an 2:221 and Al-Ma'ida verse 5 forbid marriage between a Muslim woman and a Christian, but marriage between a Muslim man and Jewish girl was permitted. Samatha (2014)

¹²⁷ O.I., with Shek Shakir Karim, at Masjid Al Mur, mosque, Kisii, on 5/06/2021.

¹²⁸ O.I., with Yusuf Abbakar, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

echoes these sentiments, noting that the holy Quran permitted Muslim males to marry women from the Jewish or non-Muslim communities as long as they were chaste.¹²⁹ A Muslim woman should never have married among Christians because Christians follow a different set of prophets than Muslims do. By the foregoing, the possible marriages were the ones amongst the religion. For inter marriages, Abagusii girls were married to Nubian men and the Nubian girls getting married to Abagusii men.

In Christian marriages, Christian teachings forbid the Christians from marrying non-believers. As such, marriages between Christians and non-Muslims were not encouraged. According to 2Corinthian 6:14-18, Muslims are non-believers who reject Jesus Christ as their lord and Savior.¹³⁰ While the Bible does not specifically mention Muslim-Christian weddings, some Christian scholars argue that the Bible does forbid Christians from matrimonially uniting with non-Christians since they hold differing views on their prophets. Christianity holds that Muslims have already been damned because they have refused to believe and profess that Jesus is Lord as commanded by the Apostle Paul.¹³¹ These arguments have been persistent in the society during this era but did not stop intermarriages.

Dowry payment was a challenge during the intermarriages. Christian demanded for cows as mode of dowry payment which was not the case for the Muslims. This made it impossible for marriages to take place.

¹²⁹ Samantha, B. Citizens minus: Rights, recognition, and the Nubians of Kenya. Monash: Monash University PhD Thesis. (2014).

¹³⁰ Simon J. Joseph, A Social History of Christian Origins: The Rejected Jesus (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2023).

¹³¹ Joshua, P. *Nubians, Dongolo in Sudan*. (2010). Retrieved from www.joshuaproject.net/people-group/11607/su

3.2.3 Cultural exchange

The Abagusii and Nubian interaction led to exchange of culture amongst communities. Language, dress codes hospitality was exchanged. Abagusii invited the Nubian in various functions such as marriage ceremonies and funerals. As key informants noted

“If we invite Nubia to a wedding ceremony they come, sometimes we have them as our caterers since they know how to cook food very well”.¹³²

The invitation and the honouring of the invite was best on warm relationship that existed amongst the communities. This is in agreement with Kubai¹³³, who argues that in Abagusii, educated people had no difficulties engaging with Nubians owing to religious issues because religion is a personal issue between an individual and God.¹³⁴ Respondent 1 stated that:

“Abagusii maintained good relationship with the Nubians since they were brothers and sisters.”¹³⁵

Various cultural characteristics, including as food, dress, and music, were heavily influenced by the interactions between these groups. According to an unconfirmed report from Abagusii Township, such appropriation explains why traditional Nubian dancing is evolving so drastically. She also remarked that the Abagusii adopted the Nubian dress code (such as the kanzu for males and dera for women), food, and style of speaking as a result of their contact with the culture.¹³⁶

¹³² O.I., with Yusuf Abbakar, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹³³ Anne Nkirote Kubai, *The Muslim Presence and Representations of Islam among the Meru of Kenya* (PhD diss., University of London, 1995).

¹³⁴ Kubai (1995). The 'Nubians' of East Africa: Muslim club or African 'tribe'? The view from within. *Journal of Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 6(2). 420-448

¹³⁵ O.I., with Singori Matonye, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹³⁶ O.I., with Erick Nyakundi, at Kisii Township, on 2/06/202.

3.2.4 Access to Education

During independence the Kenya government embarked on eradicating three evils of the society: poverty, diseases and ignorance. The many schools that were built were meant to ensure that children were taken to school and get educated. A key informant noted that:

“We take our children to school just like our Abagusii neighbours do. We have here Getembe primary school, Getembe secondary school where our children go for schooling.”¹³⁷

3.3. Economic activities

Nubians and Abagusii traded amongst each other. Due to lack of land, most of the Nubians did not participate a lot in farming but depended to buy food from Abagusii who had large pieces of land and cultivated crops and reared animals as well as kept poultry. Most of the Nubian land were grabbed. They lived in town in small plots hence could not produce enough food for themselves¹³⁸ Lack of identification cards deprived most Nubians an opportunity to seek gainful employment. This agrees with Smedt¹³⁹, who notes that the Nubian did not secure jobs or receive government services without National identification cards. As Nubian activists stated:

“Nubian lacked equal rights like their Abagusii Brothers and sisters. For Nubian to get an Identification Card, he must go through vetting which does not guarantee one being successful. If successful, it took more than a year to acquire the Identification card.”¹⁴⁰

Since the Nubia had to get some form of livelihood, trade was the most available option. Small scale trading like running a retail shop, hotels, selling wears in the market were trading activities engaged by both the Abagusii and the Nubians. The Abagusii employed the Nubian as assistants in their businesses. On the other hand, the Nubian ladies engaged in food selling

¹³⁷ O.I., with Abdallah Said, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹³⁸ O.I., with Mohamed Mohamed, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹³⁹ Johan de Smedt, *The Nubis of Kibera: A Social History of the Nubians and Kibera Slums* (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2011), 45.

¹⁴⁰ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

business. Food that they sold included snacks such as *vitumbua*, *viazi karai*, *Andazi*, *Bhajia*, *groceries* among others.¹⁴¹

The changaa business brought the two communities together. Abagusii as well as the Nubians were partakers of the African gin, *wete*. The Nubian women had special skills in distilling the brew. Bakari explained:

“*Changaa ya Nubia hapa zamani ilitumika hata kuwasha gari*. Meaning that the distilled *changaa* by Nubians had the ability to be used as fuel in running a vehicle”.¹⁴²

Although the gin selling business had put money in many pockets of the Nubian, the abolishing it sell by the government dealt a blow to the business. As one of the key informants stated:

“The production, distribution and sell of the gin was declared illegal. Our women who were the brewers were to abandon the business due fear of being arrested by the police”.¹⁴³

In 1979, President Moi said publicly that he was against gin manufacture, and he even asked for a ban on the informal production and sale of beer and distilled alcoholic beverages that the federal government did not sanction. In response, many Nubian women stopped producing Nubian gin because the chang'aa industry had become illegal in Kenya.

The infiltration of *Chang'aa* business by the Abagusii who could use chemicals instead of the food ingredients to make *chang'aa* made it dangerous and the government had to move in to save its citizens.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ O.I., with Shakib Bakari, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁴⁴ O.I., with Erick Naykundi, at Kisii Township, on 2/06/2021.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the Abagusii influence on the Nubian community during their interactions in Kisii Township Location from 1979 to 2002. Several conclusions emerge from the analysis.

The period 1979-2002 was characterized by major changes in Abagusii-Nubian relations as compared to the previous period (1963-1978). Between 1963 and 1978 the Nubian-Kenyan relationship was marked by social distance, minimal interaction and mutual suspicion, but the Harambee philosophy of the Moi era and the economic necessity of the Nubians led to increased interaction, cultural exchange and intermarriage.

The Social Network Theory provides important analytical tools to understand these changes. The theory explains how intermarriage led to strong kinship ties bridging the two communities, how weak ties of trade enabled the marginalized Nubian community to survive economically and how network integration was asymmetrical with the Abagusii enjoying structural advantages despite increased interaction. Intermarriage was the most important form of network bridging in this period. Even with religious obstacles like Islam's prohibition on Muslim women marrying non-Muslims and Christianity's disapproval of interfaith marriage, Abagusii and Nubians intermarried. These unions almost always required conversion to Islam by the Abagusii spouse, reflecting both the Nubians' strong religious boundaries and the asymmetry of religious influence.

Moreover, cultural exchange was reciprocal, but not equal. The Abagusii adopted Nubian dress codes (kanzus, deras), food and even elements of Nubian speech and dance. The striking thing is that dominant groups take up cultural elements from subordinate groups, and this implies that cultural influence is not solely a function of power relations. But the Nubians kept their fundamental religious identity and practices with little Christian influence.

The economic interaction between the Nubians and Abagusii grew, but was limited by structural marginalization. The ID card crisis continued to keep Nubians out of formal employment, forcing them into informal trade and the *changaa* economy. The ban on changaa production (1979) closed the main source of income for Nubian women. The intrusion of Abagusii producers, who used dangerous chemicals, further weakened the economic standing of Nubians. The period was characterized by asymmetrical integration. The Nubians and Abagusii became more closely involved in social, cultural and economic dimensions but integration was not equality. The Abagusii held political dominance, were numerically superior, controlled land and had access to state services. People's relations improved but the Nubians remained structurally marginalized.

Finally, the period 1979-2002 set the stage for later developments. The heightened interaction, intermarriage and cultural exchange of this period created networks and relationships that would continue to develop past 2002. The ability of the Nubian community to negotiate an Islamic identity in a time of more intense interaction with the Christian Abagusii majority revealed the strategic flexibility that would ensure their continued presence in Kisii Township. However, structural inequalities persisted with regard to land insecurity, identity card barriers and political exclusion, and were to be addressed by constitutional reforms in the following period (2003-2013).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE NUBIANS AND THE ABAGUSII COMMUNITIES IN KISII TOWNSHIP

LOCATION: 2003-2013.

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the nature of socio-economic interactions between the Abagusii and Nubians during the period 1979 to 2002. This chapter explores the impacts of these interactions in Kisii Township from 2003 to 2013 a period marking the post-KANU era, characterized by the establishment of multiparty democracy and the election of a president from a coalition other than KANU. The relationship between the Abagusii and Nubians during this time had both beneficial and adverse effects on each community. The discussion will focus on the social and economic consequences of their interactions, while also considering political implications where relevant.

4.2 The influence of social interactions among the Abagusii and the Nubian 2003-2013

4.2.1 The Religious influence

There were two dominant religions in the region, the Islam among the Nubians and Christianity among the Abagusii.¹⁴⁵ According to Faraj, the religion adopted by the residents was the religion they were born in as stated:

“I was born a Muslim and I have been a Muslim for my whole life changing to other religion is against our Muslim faith, though other Nubian have joined Christianity but in a very small number maybe one or two who decided to go against us.”¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Nyakwara explained:

¹⁴⁵ O.I., with Navie Faraj, at Kisii Township, on 1/06/2021.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

“Mimi nilizaliwa SDA na bado mimi ni SDA atakama kuna mtoto wangu mwenye aliamua kujiunga na uislamu wa Kinubi mimi bado nitaendelea kuwa Mkristo wa Kisabato. Meaning he was born in the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and a still a faithful of SDA even though one of his child decided to join the Nubian Muslim, he will still be a Christian”¹⁴⁷

Both the Abagusii and Nubians engaged in matrimonial unions. They either married inside their communities or intermarried with their neighbors. Muslims practiced polygamous marriage, whilst Christians adhered to monogamous unions. Nevertheless, some Muslims were wed to a single bride. During the interview, some Muslims admitted to having married only one wife, despite their faith permitting the marriage of up to four wives.¹⁴⁸

Intermarriages resulting from encounters have been observed. In many instances, similar to the Moi era, 1978-2002. The communities engaged in intermarriage. The Muslim faith was predominant during the institution of marriage. Either the bride or husband was required to convert to Islam.

4.2.2 Religious discrimination

According to their religious beliefs, the Nubians experienced discrimination. A number of different forms of discrimination were present. In subjects pertaining to the development of schools, the Nubians had the impression that the government that was in place did not take them into consideration. For instance, a key informant noted:

*“Were Nubians stay, there exist no Muslim school. Gitembe primary and secondary was started by the Nubian. They contributed for their establishment yet the schools were named after the Muslim faith. Lack of a Muslim school, even Muslim nursery is discriminatory”.*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ O.I., with Kireki Nyakwara, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

The Abagusii provided Nubians the opportunities to participate in a variety of cultural activities, including burials. Their equivalents in Abagusii, on the other hand, did not appear to reciprocate either. The burial of a Muslim was not attended by the Abagusii after the Muslim passes away. Ali explained:

*“Sisi tunaenda kwa matanga ya wakristo lakini yetu hao hawakuji! Meaning that they attended Christians burial ceremonies despite the religious differences but the Christians did not attend muslim burials”.*¹⁵⁰

4.2.3 Culture and customs.

A significant portion of the Nubian people's Islamic culture was preserved, including the practices of dressing, marriage, burial, and male circumcision. According to Smedt 2011, the Kenyatta regime did nothing in terms of advocating the citizens concerning the effects of female circumcision. However, the Moi and Kibaki regimes played a crucial role with the assistance of non-governmental organizations, which led to the cessation of female circumcision. This was due to the pressure that was exerted by the government.

*“Sisi kuvalia ni ki islam, wanaume kuvalia kanzu na kilemba.lazima mwanamke avae nguo ndefu na afunike kichwa chake.Hii ni lazima hata anapoenda msikitini kwa ibada.Asipofanya hivyo hawezi ruhusiwa kwa eneo ya ibad.anaweza laaniwa. Meaning For us, we must dress according to Islamic culture, Men must be dresses in Kanzu. Women must be dressed in clothes that cover their whole body also cover their head. For women, this dressing is demanded always. In places of worship, women cannot be allowed in without this dressing otherwise they can be cursed.”*¹⁵¹

Christians, on the other hand, took part of the dressing from the Nubians and used it in their own dishes. Dera, which are long gowns, and kanga, which are pieces of cloth that are used to hide the body, particularly the waist, while performing home tasks, were borrowed by the

¹⁵⁰ O.I., with Zena Ali, at Kisii Township, on 14/04/2021.

¹⁵¹ O.I., with Shakib Bakari, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

ladies. There are some Abagusii men who cover their heads with the Nubian *kilemba* for protection. Those who attend the Abagusii may choose to dress in a manner that is considered to be Nubian when there is a Nubian ceremony, such as a marriage or a burial. Nevertheless, there were some Abagusii elders who held the belief that the Abagusii culture was still in its original form and that the things that were taken from the Nubians might not be as essential. It was mentioned by him that “The Abagusii have not copied the dressing, cultures and way of life of the Nubians, what has been happening is that the Abagusii as well as the Nubians appreciate each other and coexist. The assimilation only happens in cases where their exist intermarriages otherwise, the Abagusii stick to their cultures and so are the Nubians.”¹⁵²

Abagusii interactions with the Nubians led to borrowing a lot from each other, for instant, the Abagusii learned from the Nubians how to prepare some food such as mongorobo (type of mandazi), pilau, vitumbua and other Swahili foods. A key informant noted when Abagusii had ceremonies, they invited the Nubians to cook for their guests. The interviewee also states that the Nubians had benefited from the Abagusii, as they learnt how to prepare *ugali* and eat from them.¹⁵³

The peaceful coexistence of the Nubian and Abagusii has taken decades to take shape. The two communities treated each other with a lot of suspicion. But in the Kibaki era, they seemed to have embraced each other. This was corroborated by a Gusii elder who noted that:

“Long ago when I was say 15 years, were did not have a good relationship with Nubians. Nubians were very violent. Children’s from Abagusii community were not allowed to mingle freely with their Nubian counterparts. If a Abagusii child could be seen plucking mapera, it could result in violent confrontation from adult Nubians with Abagusii children and even their parents. You could not touch anything that belonged to the Nubians. Currently, the relationship has greatly changed and they two communities

¹⁵² O.I., with Erick Nyakundi, at Kisii Township, on 2/06/2021.

¹⁵³ O.I., with Kireki Nyakwara, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

interact peacefully with children from both sides being able to play as well as adults interact peacefully.¹⁵⁴

On Education. The Nubians embraced education. It is during this period that the government introduce free primary Education.

The "post-KANU era" (2003–2013) is characterized by the "establishment of multiparty democracy and the election of a president from a coalition other than KANU" (referring to President Kibaki's administration). The shift in national leadership (from Moi to Kibaki) and its local repercussions are the primary political impact discussed. In contrast to the more suspicious and violent interactions of the Moi era, the two communities "seemed to have embraced each other" during the Kibaki era for instance a Nubian elder stating that long ago, Abagusii children could not mingle freely with Nubians, but that the relationship "has greatly changed."¹⁵⁵ The study's conclusions are more concerned with the effects of political marginalization than party politics.

It asserts that political discrimination was experienced by the Nubians, who were compelled to "rely on political scraps to survive" and were never granted nomination slots or elected to any political position. They were marginalized because their demands were not taken into account when decisions were made about the distribution of resources (roads, street lights).

4.2.4 The influence of economic interaction of the Abagusii and Nubian, 2003-2014

Both farming and trading were activities that Nubian participated in. Agriculture was the primary occupation of the Abagusii population. Both the Abagusii and the Nubians have been responsible for the production of several food crops, including bananas, sugarcane, and other crops. As a result of the limited availability of land on the Nubian side, the Abagusii are primarily responsible for engaging in crop farming and animal keeping. The entrance of the

¹⁵⁴ O.I., with Geoffrey Ogote, at Kisii Township, on 4/06/2021.

¹⁵⁵ O.I., with Shakib Bakari, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

Nubians is thought to have been a blow to the cultivation of bananas and sugarcane in Abagusii. This is a belief that has been passed down from generation to generation. The primary source who was interrogated disclosed that the types of sugarcane and bananas that were planted were borrowed from them. The crops that they brought with them from Uganda arrived. This particular species of crops was borrowed by the Abagusii, and the Abagusii lands have been seeing a great deal of success with the crops. In addition to providing the community with food, the bananas that were planted in Abagusii were also sold for money, which resulted in an improvement in the community's standard of living.

Due to the fact that the majority of Nubians reside in towns and are required to engage in economic activities in order to make a living, the bulk of them participated in trade. The Abagusii were not the only people who owned and operated hotels, rental houses, and other enterprises; Nubians did the same thing. The Nubians were employed in the companies owned by the Abagusii, and the Abagusii were furthermore employed by the Nubians. Due to the fact that the majority of the land in Abagusii is held by Abagusii, the Nubian had the ability to supply a big market for the food that was grown in Abagusii. The Nubians had a prosperous trading relationship with their Abagusii neighbors.¹⁵⁶

Nubian women and youth engaged too in business activities but on small scale. As a Nubian clan elder notes:

“Our ladies and youth did some trading activities. This included selling of *mandazi*, *tomatoes* and other glossaries in the market while our youths depended on Juakali. Some of our youth were involved in car washing business, some work in hotels”.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ O.I., with Erick Nyakundi, at Kisii Township, on 2/06/2021.

¹⁵⁷ O.I., with Shakib Bakari, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

4.2.5 Economic challenges faced by Nubian through Discrimination

There is a possibility that assimilation and cultural interchange occurred as a result of encounters between the Abagusii and the Nubian. Several instances of prejudice against the Nubian people by the Abagusii had been documented. The discrimination manifested itself in a variety of forms, including economic, political, and registration of individuals. This had an impact on their participation in economic activities, similar to those of their neighbors in Abagusii.

4.2.5.1 Economic discrimination

A significant number of Nubians are economically disadvantaged. As a result of the majority of them not attending school, they were unable to take advantage of the white-colored occupations that were accessible in Kisii County between the years 2003 and 2014. Only two primary school instructors have been employed in the community; there are no teachers at secondary schools or colleges. One of the teachers is employed at Nyaura primary, while the other is employed at Getembe therefore, the Nubians had been unable to take advantage of the employment opportunities that were available in Kisii County. According to a narration made by a key informant:

“The province government did not provide any opportunities for Nubians to serve in prominent positions, such as provincial commissioners, district commissioners, or divisional officers. No Nubian was ever given the opportunity to work in the provincial administration. It was only a small number of Nubians that were given the opportunity to work in the police force as constables. There is not a single Nubian resident in Kisii who is either a physician, a nurse, or a specialist in the field of medicine that I am aware of or have learned about between the years 2003 and 2014.”¹⁵⁸

As a result, members of the Nubian community have been active in the private sector, both as businessmen and as businesswomen. The majority of their economic activity consisted of

¹⁵⁸ O.I., with Zena Ali, at Kisii Township, on 14/04/2021.

small-scale business activities for those who lived in the town, while those who lived in the countryside engaged in subsistence farming.

“Among the few Nubians who had their own companies, Abdalla Khariim, Muhammad Fatah, and Nassir Abdul were among the successful businesspeople. Other Nubians owned and operated hotels, domestic shops, and supermarkets of varying sizes. They also owned and operated supermarkets. In the privately owned enterprises that are owned by the Nubians, the bulk of the employees are also members of the Nubian community”.¹⁵⁹

The entrepreneurial talents that are cultivated by businessmen and women are the primary factor that determines the level of success that a business endeavor achieves. On the other hand, the vast majority of Nubians did not go to school. In the event that they did, they only completed their primary education, as indicated by Abisi¹⁶⁰ who found that the majority of Nubian micro entrepreneurs in the country had completed their primary school. The findings of the study indicated that Nubian micro entrepreneurs did not have access to sufficient and high-quality education and training. The Nubian micro entrepreneurs' inability to obtain a proper education had an impact on the way they handled their micro companies, which in turn led to the expansion of their businesses. Abdi explained:

“Compared to the Nubians, the Abagusii enjoy greater economic success. This is mostly due to the fact that the majority of Abagusii had obtained an education and were able to obtain loans to start enterprises. Furthermore, they possess and possess IDs in addition to the jobs that enables them to maintain their economic stability. On the other hand, the majority of Nubians are unable to have work or obtain bank loans, which is why they are poor. Further, the road network leading to the residences of the Nubians was in bad condition. Furthermore, ever since we moved here, the Kisii have had a greater number of work opportunities than the Nubians. Additionally, the Nubians were seen as outcasts or intruders in this area.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Janet Abisi Simion, *Factors Affecting the Growth of Women-Owned Micro Enterprises in Kenya: A Case of the Nubian Women in Nyanchwa, Kisii County, Kenya* (Master's research project, Kenyatta University, 2018)

¹⁶¹ O.I., with Halima Abdi, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

The sentiments expressed by the key informants were validated by the fact that the dirt roads and muddy dwellings that led into the informal settlements in Nubia were in terrible condition. Studies by Mohamed¹⁶² and Simion¹⁶³ establishes that the economic position of the Nubians in Kenya remained abysmal in many parts of the country, were in agreement with the findings of this study. The findings of this study were further substantiated by the researcher's field observations, See Plate3.0.

In comparison to the majority of the other groups in Kisii, the Nubian community suffers from a considerably lower level of development on average. This underdevelopment is reflected in the lower levels of wealth per capita, the lower levels of education, the lower standards of housing in which they reside, and the lack of access to health care, sanitation, and other social amenities that are available to them. The Nubians who live in Kisii town can be divided into two distinct groups: the urban Nubians and the rural Nubians. The urban Nubian people make their living through a variety of means, including wage employment, small-scale retail commercial enterprises, and, to a certain extent, the construction of mud houses that they rent out to those who fall into the group of city dwellers with the lowest incomes. The income that is created from these economic activities is so low that it is hard to provide for basic necessities, such as housing, a proper education for the younger generation, and other social amenities.

In contrast to the Nubians who live in urban areas, virtually all members of the other communities, including the Abagusii, who are residents in Kisii town have rural residences where they produce land that provides for their families. Whatever incomes individuals of such communities receive in metropolitan areas are supplementary to the primary income earned from the land. This is the case throughout the entire community. As a result of this one

¹⁶² Fatuma Ahmed Mohamed, *Migration Identity and Land Rights: A Case Study of the Nubians in Kibra, Nairobi, Kenya* (PhD diss., University of Ghana, 2019).

¹⁶³ Simion, *Factors Affecting the Growth of Women-Owned Micro Enterprises in Kenya*, page number.

factor alone, these other people who live in metropolitan areas are in a better position than the Nubians to provide their families with significantly better educational opportunities, better housing, and other social amenities.¹⁶⁴

On the other hand, the rural Nubians who live in the fringes of Kisii town, who would have been better off than their urban counterparts in the sense that they have some land to produce, do not have a title to the property on which they live. This is a very regrettable situation. Additionally, the acreage of land on which they originally lived has been drastically reduced in their rural settlements. This is due to the fact that members of other communities have acquired the land, which has resulted in the land being acquired by different communities. These communities are better equipped with the resources necessary to purchase, register, and develop the land for their own private and commercial purposes. The Nubians were unable to repose land that had been sold because the new owners were unwilling to sell their land to the Nubians. This made it hard for the Nubians to own land that had been sold. Mukras writes:

The Nubians' economy has been negatively impacted as a result of their inability to gain access to land, which is an issue on the production side of things. According to key informants, the following was stated by them: "The majority of people in this community do not have title deeds, and the majority of the land that they own is just below 40 by 70 feet. This is because the majority of the land has been taken away by the Abagusii." Due to the fact that the majority of lands have been taken, it is sometimes necessary to seek the assistance of the court. This is because some individuals even possess phony title documents, which makes it extremely challenging to deal with them. Additionally, the identification is another significant obstacle that makes it tough to obtain the title deed. They (the Nubians) began imitating the Abagusii by constructing rental properties due to the fact that the land is too tiny. The other economic activity is known as subsistence farming, which includes the cultivation of crops such as vegetables, sugarcane, and bananas."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Mukras M. The Nubian Muslim community in Kenya: an economic appraisal. *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal 3* (2), 206-221, 1981(2020).

¹⁶⁵ Farah A (Nubian elder, Kisii Township), interviewed by author, Kisii, April 7, 2021

The postcolonial conflicts in Africa that include communal land rights are a "wicked" problem; they are not morally reprehensible, but they are difficult to resolve. Because the colonial authority considered the Nubians to be British protected persons rather than citizens, the Kenyan government did not issue citizenship to the Nubians when the country gained its independence. The Kenyan government stated that the Nubians could not lay claim to land in Kenya because of this classification.¹⁶⁶

A class action lawsuit was brought by members of the Nubian community in the High Court of Kenya in the year 2003. The lawsuit was launched in order to seek a declaration of their citizenship status and to allege that other rights, including the right to obtain property, had been violated. The case was delayed by the government for a period of three years due to numerous procedural impediments, including as the requirement that the Nubians furnish the identities of all individuals who were represented in the class action lawsuit. A complaint was sent to the African Commission on behalf of the community in the year 2006 by the Open Justice Society and the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA). The Kenyan government raised an objection, stating that the community had not used up all of the available local remedies. These also requested additional adjournments in order to address the issues, but these were never granted.

Nubians, in this study were found to be the minority group and experienced a lot of inequalities and discrimination that have led to poverty and political marginalization. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, defines minorities as a vulnerable group, marginalised group or community.¹⁶⁷ They must be disadvantaged under the Constitution; feel discriminated against

¹⁶⁶ Samantha Balaton-Chrimes, "Indigeneity and Kenyan Nubians: Seeking Equality in Difference or Sameness" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 331, 338. (2013)

¹⁶⁷ Ghai J, Sing'Oei K, and Wanyoike W, Taking diversity seriously: minorities and political participation in Kenya <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/528496974.pdf> on 20 August 2019

because of their inferiority in number; they must lack access to vital resources; and they can be nomadic or experience very little social and political integration in their region of residence.¹⁶⁸ With reference to Article¹⁶⁹, it is provided that the governing authority should set up specific measures and corroborative actions to ensure that the marginalised groups are indeed able to participate in all spheres of their life including governance.¹⁷⁰

Historical injustices, had denied the group access to property rights to land and legal structures. The Nubians have also faced various threats from actors. These threats have taken the following forms: Threats from the Government; Threats from major ethnic communities who deny them recognition; Threats of denial of their citizenship and threats of losing their ancestral land of Kisii. The failure of the Kenyan Government to address their concerns and grievances has posed a threat to eruption of conflict as Nubians can be triggered into violent actions. Based on Galtung's findings on structural violence, when there is a trigger effect on the group, this can easily erupt into violent and destructive actions by the group.¹⁷¹

4.2.5.2 The response of the Nubians to the land grabbing

According to the study's findings, land alienation and a lack of legal title are the main causes of land grabbing. The following are the Nubians' reactions to this land challenge: Legal action (class action lawsuit, 2003): Nubian community members filed a class action case in Kenya's High Court, claiming that their right to acquire property had been infringed and requesting a declaration of their citizenship status.¹⁷² Appeals to international bodies (2006): The

¹⁶⁸ Ghai J, Sing'Oei K, and Wanyoike W, Taking diversity seriously: minorities and political participation in Kenya <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/528496974.pdf> on 20 August 2019

¹⁶⁹ Shue, H, The rational of human rights, New York, 1996, 61.

¹⁷⁰ Article 56, Constitution of Kenya (2010).

¹⁷¹ Galtung J, 'Culture of Violence', 27 Journal of Peace Research, 3, 1990, 102

¹⁷² Andrew Songa, "Addressing Statelessness in Kenya through a Confluence of Litigation, Transitional Justice, and Community Activism: Reflecting on the Cases of the

community filed a complaint with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights through the Open Justice Society and the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) after the government used procedural obstacles to postpone the case for three years.

Due to the unwillingness of new owners (from other communities) to sell back, the Nubians were unable to "repose land that had been sold." As a result, some Nubians turned to subsistence farming and "building rental properties" on their remaining small plots, which were frequently smaller than 40 by 70 feet, in an attempt to emulate the Abagusii. Due to land shortages, Nubians adjusted their economic activities by migrating from agriculture to small-scale trading, the Juakali (informal sector), and renting out mud dwellings to low-income urban residents. The main issue was that they were unable to claim land title without citizenship recognition (they were regarded as "British protected persons" at independence rather than Kenyan citizens).

4.2.5.3 Political discrimination

Politically, the Nubians did not get elected to any political office within the county. As noted by one elder:

“The Nubian do not get elected to represent Nubian interest either locally or nationally. In one of the elections before, sometimes back, a Nubian contested for an elective position, the only votes he got were the Nubian votes. Since we knew our numbers, when the results were announce, our candidate had only garnered the votes of Nubian.” ¹⁷³

After being asked if they feel that in the future, a Nubian might be elected to represent both the Nubian and the Abagusii locally and nationally, the majority of those who responded were

Nubian, Makonde and Shona Communities,” African Human Rights Yearbook 5 (2021): 319–347.

¹⁷³ O.I., with Juma Karim, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

adamant that the Abagusii cannot vote for a Nubian. Despite the fact that the Nubian are a minority population, they have never been given the opportunity to represent the Nubian community either locally or at the national level: they have never been provided with nomination slots. This was pointed by Ali who explained:

“If nominated seat became available, Abagusii Muslim were nominated. Since Nubian are Muslims, they believe that their interest were handled by the Abagusii Muslims.” ¹⁷⁴

As a result of the absence of Nubian in the Abagusii political system, they were forced to rely on political scraps to survive. During the process of development, decisions were taken that marginalized the Nubian people. However, when it came to the distribution of resources among local governments, the Nubians were not included in the decision-making process. Roads were not constructed in Nubian communities, and there were no street lights since their requirements were not taken into consideration. See plate 3.0.

4.2.5.4 Discrimination in the Registration of persons

One of the most essential documents that may be used to identify a Kenyan is the national identity card. When applying for jobs, applying for government contracts, traveling, applying for loans, or conducting any other type of financial transaction in Kenya, you are required to have a Kenyan national identification card. Among the various types of transactions that may take place, the acquisition and sale of assets, involvement in the trading of shares, and investments are only some of the possibilities. A significant number of Nubians were unable to take part in significant economic operations because they lacked the national identification. A key informant noted:

“..our youths engage in juakali or casual labourous since they cannot get gainful employment in Abagusii.” ¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ O.I., with Zena Ali, at Kisii Township, on 14/04/2021.

¹⁷⁵ O.I., with Yusuf Abbakar, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

The process of obtaining an Identification for Nubian youth was long, tedious, expensive, torturous and without guarantee for success. As one of the activists stated

“There will be a difference in the outcomes if a Nubian child who was born on the same day as an Abagusii child in the same hospital and who was all provided with birth notification and, as a result, birth certificates applies for National Identity cards when they are 18 years old. After filling out the form at the chief's office, the Abagusii child was required to wait for a length of time, no more than one month, before the national identification card could be provided to the youth. The only documentation required for the national identification card was a copy of the child's birth certificate or baptism card, as well as a copy of the identification cards of both parents. There was no review of the documents that were presented. On the other hand, the Nubian age mate and youth will be required to provide a large amount of documentation that has been vetted and authenticated. This documentation includes the national identification for both parents and their birth certificates, as well as the birth certificates of his or her grandparents, or their death certificates if they have passed away. Additionally, they were had to have a sworn affidavit, which might cost more than Ksh.1000. This was not enough to satisfy the requirements. The documents that were provided were going to be reviewed, and if one is fortunate, they will be able to obtain their national identification card after a period of time that is at least one year”.¹⁷⁶

In accordance with the majority of the culture of Islam, the majority of children who are orphans have the potential to be adopted by members of society who are financially secure. When compared to the Nubian adolescents who were accompanied by their parents, the process of obtaining a national identity card was more difficult for youngsters. Because of this, the majority of Nubians were forced to wait for a considerable amount of time without obtaining a national identification card.¹⁷⁷ Individuals who lacked these essential documents were prevented from participating in economic activities that had the potential to raise their standard of living.

¹⁷⁶ O.I., with Abdallah Said, at Kisii Township, on 30/05/2021.

¹⁷⁷ O.I., with Amon Fidel, at Kisii Township, on 1/06/2021.

Furthermore, the bulk of the Nubian youth did not complete their education beyond the fourth form, and they did not have national identification cards, which contributed to the fact that they did not have more permanent employment opportunities. It is mentioned by one of the interviewers that:

“Our youth were faced with many challenges. Most of them did not go to college hence ineligible to secure the white color jobs. Lack of National Identifications to some youths also hindered them from looking for more gainful employment”.¹⁷⁸

The Nubian youngsters had a difficult time finishing their education since the government did not provide them with adequate bursaries. It was as a consequence of this that the majority of them did not possess the qualifications necessary to compete with their Abagusii counterparts. Therefore, only a small number of Nubians were hired by county governments.

Politics is defined by the support base that a competitor is able to rally behind him or her, particularly in a society that is based on ethnic divisions, such as Kenya, with Kisii serving as a subset of that society. Due to the fact that the Nubians are a minority population in Kisii County, they have not been successful in gaining the support of a large number of people for their political cause. It should therefore not come as a surprise that no Nubians have ever been elected to any political office in Kisii; nonetheless, the issue lies in the fact that the majority of Kisii prefer to elect representatives who are also Christians. A further obstacle that prevents Nubians from voting is the absence of identification documents. Because of this, the Abagusii have been and continue to be the focal point of the political competition in Kisii. The only way for us, as Nubians, to show our support for them was to guarantee that we would be nominated, which was an extremely unlikely occurrence. Isamael Ali, Bashil Abdalah, and Amina

¹⁷⁸ O.I., with Amon Fidel, at Kisii Township, on 1/06/2021.

Abdallah are the only Nubians who have ever held positions of responsibility in the local government located in Kisii.

According to one interpretation, the connection between the Abagusii and the Nubians can be characterized as both a built community and an inferior and superior community. The relationship between the Abagusii and the Nubians is structured as a result of the mutual hatred and compatibility that exists between the two communities. According to Zena Ali, their children (Nubians and Abagusii) played together, and it was inevitable that they would make mistakes and even harm each other while they were playing. However, when a kid of the Nubians made mistakes, the parents of the Nubians were unable to tolerate them, and the same was true for the Abagusii, which can quickly lead to a fight.

The connection between the Nubians and the Abagusii is one of inferior and superior communities. The majority of the Nubians are considered to be an inferior community in the Kisii township site, and the majority of the Abagusii do not respect them since they are considered to be a community that has no future. One possible explanation for this is that the Abagusii, which is considered to be the superior society, is in charge of Kisii's political affairs. Due to the fact that they did not possess national identity cards, the Nubians were reduced to the status of ordinary servants, while the Kisii were their masters. It is impossible for Nubians to own property, seek financial assistance from financial institutions, engage in any kind of financial transaction, or even feel secure in their financial situation. All of these are the result of a lack of identification, which makes them stateless.

4.3 Conclusion

Religious persecution continued even though Christians and Muslims intermarried (requiring conversion to Islam) and shared certain rituals (Abagusii attended Christian graves, Nubians attended Christian burials). Nubians felt discriminated against in school, claiming the absence

of a government-approved Muslim school, and Abagusii did not attend Muslim funerals. Abagusii women adopted the *dera* and *kanga*; Abagusii men covered their heads with the Nubian *kilembe*; Abagusii learned to produce Swahili dishes like *pilau* and *vitumbua*, while Nubians learned to make ugali. Elders on both sides, however, insisted that fundamental cultural identities persisted, with the exception of intermarriage. The era witnessed a significant positive shift from the violent, suspicious interactions of the Moi era to peaceful coexistence where children from both communities could play together.

Nubians were unsuccessful economically due to lack of access to education, formal employment, bank loans, and national identity cards. Subsistence farming, car washing, Juakali, and small-scale trade were the main occupations of Nubians. They experienced severe discrimination in the registration process (getting national ID cards required sworn affidavits and grandparent documentation, unlike for Abagusii), political discrimination (no elected representatives, no nomination slots), and economic discrimination (few formal jobs, no doctors or nurses from the community). Nubians were in a precarious situation due to the absence of title deeds and the historical denial of citizenship, which was addressed in principle by the 2010 Constitution, which acknowledges minorities as a marginalized community. Their land had been significantly diminished, and they were unable to get property rights or bank loans.

"A lot of inequalities and discrimination that have led to poverty and political marginalization" were faced by the Nubian population in Kisii Township. Lower wealth per capita, subpar housing, poor sanitation, and inadequate road networks were all signs of its underdevelopment. Galtung's research on structural violence is specifically cited in the text, which warns that if the government ignores these complaints, violent confrontation may result.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study examined the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities in Kisii Township Location, Kisii County, Kenya, between 1963 and 2013. It was conducted among the Nubian and Abagusii communities residing within Kisii Township, with particular attention to the historical processes that shaped their social and economic relations in the post-independence period. The study was informed by the need to address the limited historical scholarship on the interactions between the Nubian minority community and the predominantly Abagusii host community. It sought to establish how social organisation, economic activities, cultural exchange and government policies influenced the nature of inter-community relations and their implications for integration, identity and socio-economic development.

Chapter One provides the conceptual and methodological foundation of the study. It introduces the background to the research by situating the study within the broader discourse on inter-ethnic relations and minority communities in Kenya. The chapter outlines the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, justification, significance, assumptions, scope and limitations of the study. It further reviews the relevant literature on Nubian history, ethnic interaction, socio-economic integration and minority experiences in Kenya and beyond to identify the gaps that necessitated the present investigation. The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework, drawing on Ethnic Stratification Theory and Ethnic Identity Theory to explain the socio-economic position of the Nubian community within Kisii Township. Finally, it presents the research methodology, including the study area, research design, sampling

procedures, methods of data collection, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations that guided the research process.

Chapter Two examines the socio-economic characteristics of the Nubian community in Kisii Township between 1963 and 1978. The chapter demonstrates that, following Kenya's independence, the Nubians retained a distinct social organisation founded upon Islamic religious beliefs, kinship ties and communal solidarity while simultaneously interacting with the Abagusii community. It analyses the organisation of the Nubian family, religious institutions and community leadership and illustrates how these structures contributed to the preservation of their identity. The chapter further explores the principal economic activities pursued by the Nubians, including small-scale trade, wage employment and entrepreneurship, and assesses how these activities facilitated interaction with the Abagusii. It establishes that these early social and economic engagements created opportunities for cooperation, coexistence and mutual dependence, thereby laying the foundation for subsequent socio-economic relations between the two communities.

Chapter Three analyses the influence of the Abagusii on the Nubian community during the period between 1979 and 2002. The chapter demonstrates that prolonged interaction between the two communities resulted in significant cultural and social transformations. It examines the role of religion, intermarriage, education and cultural exchange in fostering closer relations between the Nubians and the Abagusii. The chapter further illustrates how increased participation in shared educational institutions, commercial activities and public spaces encouraged cultural adaptation while strengthening social cohesion. It also explores the economic interactions that emerged through trade, employment and business enterprises, demonstrating that these engagements enhanced cooperation whilst simultaneously exposing the Nubian community to the dominant socio-cultural environment of the Abagusii. The

chapter concludes that sustained interaction during this period promoted integration without entirely eroding the distinct cultural identity of the Nubian community.

Chapter Four explores the socio-economic effects of interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities between 2003 and 2013. The chapter establishes that continued interaction further strengthened social integration through increased cultural exchange, religious coexistence and participation in common economic activities. It analyses the influence of these interactions on cultural practices, customs and social relations while demonstrating that expanding commercial opportunities encouraged greater cooperation between members of the two communities. The chapter also examines the challenges that continued to confront the Nubian community, including discrimination, marginalisation, limited access to land and unequal socio-economic opportunities. It argues that although the constitutional and political changes experienced during this period created greater prospects for inclusion, structural inequalities continued to constrain the socio-economic advancement of the Nubian community. Consequently, the chapter concludes that the interactions between the Nubians and the Abagusii generated both opportunities for integration and persistent challenges associated with minority status, thereby shaping the contemporary socio-economic landscape of Kisii Township.

5.2 Conclusion

The study established that the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities in Kisii Township Location between 1963 and 2013 were characterised by both cooperation and inequality, shaping the social, cultural and economic development of the two communities. Following Kenya's independence, the Nubians retained a distinct communal identity founded upon Islam, kinship ties and their historical experiences as descendants of former soldiers. However, their settlement within a predominantly Abagusii environment

necessitated continuous interaction with the host community. These interactions were manifested through trade, wage employment, social exchanges and the sharing of public amenities, thereby creating opportunities for peaceful coexistence and mutual dependence. Although the Nubians remained a minority community, they gradually became integrated into the social and economic life of Kisii Township whilst maintaining important elements of their cultural heritage. This demonstrates that sustained interaction between minority and host communities can foster social integration without necessarily eliminating cultural diversity.

The study further demonstrated that prolonged interaction between the Nubians and the Abagusii encouraged significant social and cultural transformation. Shared educational institutions, places of work, commercial enterprises and neighbourhoods provided opportunities for regular interaction, which promoted cultural exchange and strengthened social cohesion. Intermarriage, religious coexistence, multilingualism and everyday social relations facilitated the gradual adoption of certain cultural practices by both communities, while simultaneously encouraging mutual respect and accommodation. Economic cooperation through commerce, small-scale business, skilled labour and wage employment further reinforced these relationships by creating shared economic interests. Nevertheless, despite this growing integration, the Nubians continued to preserve fundamental aspects of their identity, including Islamic religious practices, communal solidarity and elements of their linguistic and cultural heritage. The study therefore demonstrates that socio-economic interaction is not solely a process of assimilation but also one of negotiation, adaptation and cultural resilience within a pluralistic society.

The study also established that the socio-economic position of the Nubian community continued to be shaped by historical and structural inequalities that extended beyond local community relations. Although interaction with the Abagusii created opportunities for social inclusion and economic participation, the Nubians remained disadvantaged by limited access

to land ownership, political representation, secure employment and other socio-economic resources. Their minority status exposed them to discrimination, stereotyping and marginalisation, which constrained their ability to participate fully in local and national development. While constitutional reforms and changing government policies during the period under study created greater prospects for inclusion and recognition, these measures did not entirely eliminate the structural barriers that had historically affected the community. Consequently, many Nubians continued to depend upon informal economic activities and social networks to sustain their livelihoods.

Overall, the study concludes that the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian and Abagusii communities produced both positive and negative outcomes. On the one hand, they promoted peaceful coexistence, social integration, cultural exchange and economic cooperation, thereby strengthening inter-community relations within Kisii Township. On the other hand, they exposed the persistent socio-economic inequalities experienced by minority communities in Kenya, particularly with regard to land rights, political participation, access to development opportunities and social recognition. The findings therefore underscore the importance of promoting inclusive development policies, equitable access to socio-economic resources and greater recognition of minority communities in order to strengthen national cohesion whilst preserving Kenya's cultural diversity.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends the following measures to strengthen socio-economic integration between the Nubian and Abagusii communities while safeguarding the rights and identity of minority communities:

- a. The national and county governments should formulate and implement policies that promote social inclusion, equality and peaceful coexistence among ethnic communities.

Such policies should strengthen community dialogue, cultural exchange programmes and public awareness initiatives that encourage mutual respect and appreciation of cultural diversity. Educational institutions should also incorporate content on minority communities and intercultural relations into the curriculum to foster tolerance, reduce prejudice and promote national cohesion from an early age.

- b. The Government of Kenya should develop and strengthen policies that address the socio-economic challenges facing minority communities, particularly the Nubians. These policies should guarantee equitable access to land, education, employment opportunities, public services and political representation without discrimination. Additionally, government institutions should enhance the implementation of constitutional provisions relating to minority rights to ensure that all communities participate equally in national and local development irrespective of their population size or ethnic background.
- c. County and national governments should promote inclusive economic development programmes that encourage joint participation by the Nubian and Abagusii communities in trade, entrepreneurship, vocational training and employment creation. Such initiatives should be supported through improved access to financial services, infrastructure, markets and business development opportunities. Strengthening economic cooperation between the two communities will not only improve livelihoods but also enhance social cohesion, reduce socio-economic inequalities and foster sustainable inter-community relations within Kisii Township and other multicultural urban centres.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Research

The findings of this study provide a basis for further scholarly inquiry into the socio-economic history of minority communities in Kenya. The following areas are recommended for future research:

- a. Future studies should examine the socio-economic interactions between the Nubian community and other ethnic communities in Kenya, such as the Luo, Kikuyu or Kalenjin, to establish similarities and differences in patterns of integration, cultural exchange and socio-economic development across different geographical and historical contexts.
- b. A comparative study should be undertaken on the experiences of recognised minority communities in Kenya, including the Nubians, Ogiek, Endorois and Sengwer, to evaluate the effectiveness of government policies, constitutional reforms and legal frameworks in promoting socio-economic inclusion, cultural preservation and equitable access to development opportunities.
- c. Further research should investigate the role of urbanisation and demographic change in shaping inter-ethnic relations among minority communities in Kenya. Such a study would provide a deeper understanding of how urban growth, migration and economic transformation influence cultural identity, social integration and community cohesion in multicultural urban centres.
- d. Future studies should assess the socio-economic status of the Nubian community following the implementation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), with particular emphasis on citizenship rights, access to education, employment, land ownership, political participation and socio-economic development. Such research would establish the extent to which constitutional and policy reforms have improved the livelihoods and social inclusion of the Nubian community in contemporary Kenya.

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A letter dated 12/11/1945 to the Kisii African District Council.

b) List of Informants

Name	Age	Place	Date
Mohamed Mohamed	56	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Yusuf Abbakar	71	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Ogote Geoffrey	65	Kisii Township	4/6/2021
Halima Abdi	60	Getembe,Kisii	30/5/2021
Sakina Faridah	55	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Yakub Khasim	70	Kisii Township	5/6/2021
Osman Amir	64	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Morra	45	Kisii Township	1/6/2021
Juma Karim	66	Kisii Township	1/6/2021
Mary	71	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Matonye Singori	39	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Nyakundi Erick	47	Kisii Township	2/6/2021
Said Abdallah	43	Kisii Township	30/5/2021
Fidel	54	Kisii Township	1/6/2021
Kireki nyakwara	29	Kisii Township	1/6/2021
Faraj Navie	67	Kisii Township	5/6/2021
Shek Shakir Karim	69	Masjid Al Mur, mosque, Kisii	4/6/2021
Zena Ali	80	Kisii Township	14/4/2021

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. What is Your Name?
2. When were you born?
3. Which Sub-Location is this?
4. For how long have you been a resident here?
5. Do you have a phone and what is the number?
6. Are you married?
7. Polygamous or monogamous?

SECTION B: Objective One

Socio-economic and political situation of the Nubian in Abagusii Township in the post-independence, 1963-1978

Which is the most predominant religion in this area?

8. Which is your religion?
9. For how long have you been in this religion?
10. Do the Nubians have equal opportunity of employment with the Gusii community?
11. Explain the procedures you have to follow in order for your adult youth in obtaining National Identification Card.
12. Explain the current economic condition of the Nubian community.

13. Have you experienced any discrimination since you became a member of the said religion?
14. Does your community have representation in the parliament since independence?
15. Do you currently have any political representation in the National Assembly or in the Senate?
16. How has the Nubian community surviving in politics since independence?

SECTION C: Objective Two

Socio-economic and political influence of the Abagusii on the Nubians, 1979-2002

17. How has the interaction between the Nubian and the Abagusii influenced the Nubians?
18. How often has the Abagusii leaders been incorporating Nubian people in political leadership?
19. If at all there is any incorporation, then in which ways?
20. How have economic activities of the Abagusii influenced the Nubians?
21. Which economic activities of the Abagusii have particularly influenced the Nubians?
22. in which ways has ways of life of the Abagusii have influenced the Nubians?
23. Kindly mention some cultures which the Nubian has borrowed from the Abagusii.
24. Which challenges can you identify in social influence of the Abagusii on the Nubians?
25. During electioneering campaigns for elective posts, are Nubians coerced to vote for the Abagusii leaders or they do it voluntarily?
26. Do the Abagusii people vote in the Nubian aspirants in elective posts in case they vie?

SECTION D: Objective Three

Socio-economic change from the interactions of the Nubians and the Abagusii, 2003-2013

27. Has there been social and economic change from the interaction between the Nubian and the Abagusii?
28. What kind of changes can you mention?
29. Are the Nubians economically stable as a result of the interaction with the Abagusii?
28. In case the Nubians are not stable economically, what could be the cause for this?
29. In gauging the interaction between the Nubian and the Abagusii, which group do you think has benefited most from each other?
30. Has the relationship between the Nubian and the Abagusii been all along cordial?
31. In case yes or no, what are the reasons for your response?

Thank You

Appendix II: Research Authorization

a. Research License


REPUBLIC OF KENYA


NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 953293 Date of Issue: 18/May/2021

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COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SGA
KISII COUNTY
P.O. Box 4499 - 40200, KCH.
Date: 28/2/22
Sign: [Signature]



Authorized
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KISII COUNTY
28/2/2022

This is to Certify that Mr. Hesbon . John of Kisii University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kisii on the topic: socio-economic interactions between the Nubians and Abagusii communities in Kisii township Location, Kisii County, Kenya 1963 to 2013 for the period ending : 18/May/2022.

License No: NACOSTI/P/21/10581

953293
Applicant Identification Number

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b. Clearance by Assistant County Commissioner



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When replying please quote

Ref. ICTL/ADM/036

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF
KISII TOWNSHIP LOCATION
P.O BOX 590 -40200
KISII

Date: 19th MAY 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: HESBON JOHN - ADM NO HASII/DD003/19

This is to confirm that the above student schooling at Kisii University pursuing a ~~degree~~ ^{Master's} course in Master of Arts in history has been allowed by my office to conduct a research at Nubia Village which is within my area of jurisdiction in Socio-Economic Interactions between the Nubians and Abagusii.

Assistance accorded to him will be much appreciated.

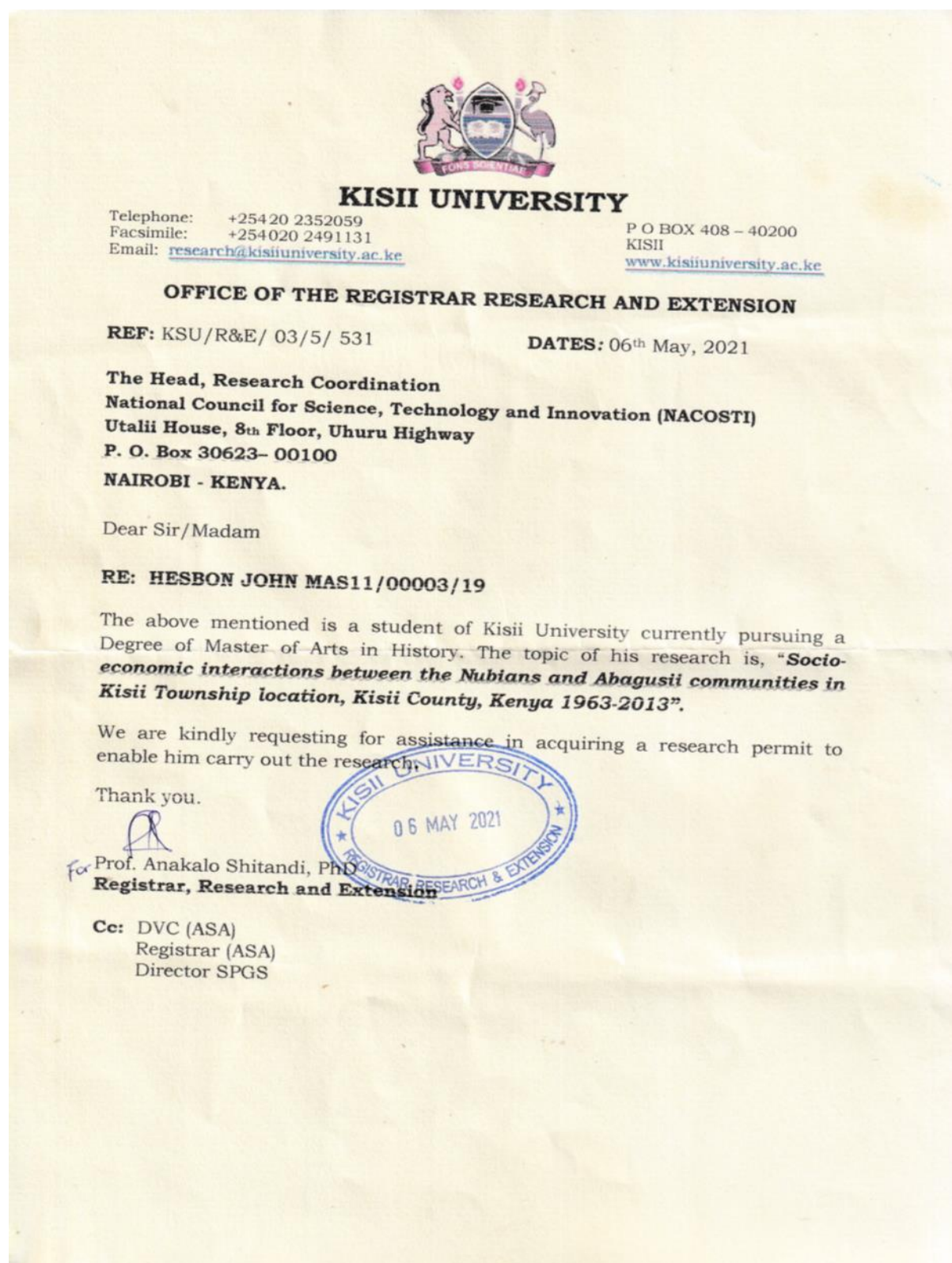
Thanks in advance.


Richard
THE CHIEF
KISII TOWNSHIP - LCC
P.O. Box 590 - 40200
Date: 19th May 2021

C.C.

- Village Elders - Nubia
- Ass. Chief - Kisii Township.

c. Introduction letter



Appendix III: List of Plates

Plate 1.0: Mosque in Nubian Village, Kisii Township



Source: Photo by Hesbon John

Plate 2.0: Getembe DEB primary School in Kisii Township



Source: Photo by Hesbon John

Plate 3.0: Road connecting the Nubian villages, Kisii Township



Source: Photo by Hesbon John

Plate 4.0: Nubian houses in Kisii Township



Source: Photo by Hesbon John

APPENDIX IV: PLAGIARISM REPORT



Page 1 of 131 - Cover Page

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- SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE NUBIANS AND ABAGUSII COMMUNITIES IN KISII TOWNSHIP LOCATION, KISII COUNTY...
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155,106 Characters



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