THE BANTU OF NORTH KAVIRONDO

Volume I

Gunter Wagner

AFRICAN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

ROUTLEDGE

AFRICAN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES
OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Volume 71

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Volume I

GÜNTER WAGNER

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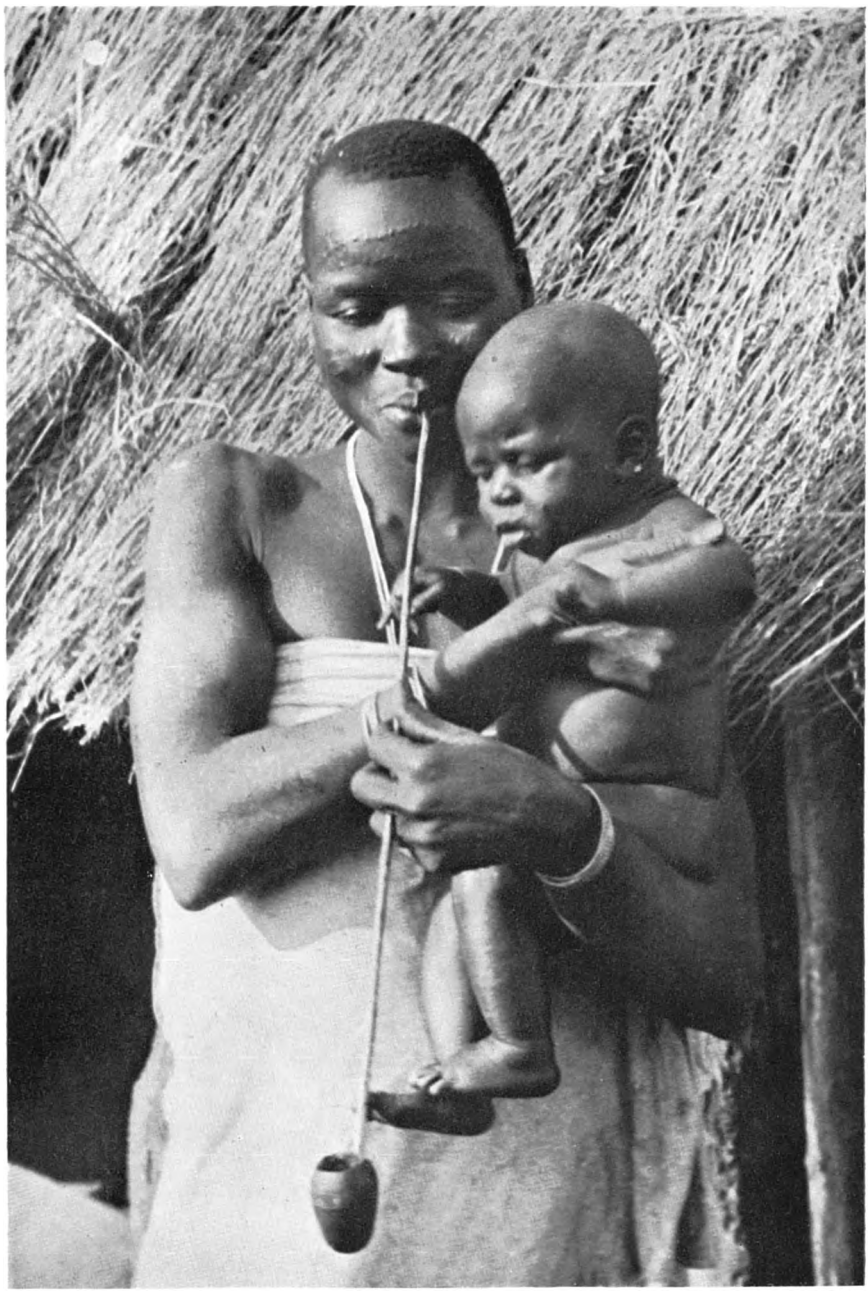

A Vugusu mother

THE BANTU
OF
NORTH KAVIRONDO

VOLUME I

BY

GÜNTER WAGNER

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PREFACE

THE present book is the first volume of a monograph on a number of Bantu tribes living in the North Kavirondo District of the Nyanza Province of Kenya. It contains part of the results of two periods of field-work which the author has carried through under a research appointment by the International African Institute awarded to him on the recommendation of Professor Westermann. The investigations extended from 1934 until 1938, about two and a half years having been devoted to the actual work in the field. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Institute and its directors, and especially to Dr. J. H. Oldham, for having financed the two expeditions to Kenya as well as granting the funds that enabled me to write up my material.

I also make grateful acknowledgement to the Rockefeller Foundation for having extended my original fellowship in the U.S.A. for a second year to be spent on preliminary training for this special task at the London School of Economics under the inspiring tutorship of the late Professor Malinowski. It is to him that I owe the greatest possible tribute. I was privileged to work for many months in close personal contact with this brilliant scientific personality, who also started me off in the field.

My approach to the magico-religious side of native life, to which a substantial part of the present volume is devoted, has been greatly stimulated by Professor Evans-Pritchard's admirable book on Zande witchcraft (*Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford, 1937) which, by a fortunate coincidence, I was asked to review shortly before embarking upon my second expedition to Kenya.

While writing my book I benefited greatly from discussing the various problems with my fellow workers in London (chiefly Professor Raymond Firth, Dr. Meyer Fortes, Dr. Lucy P. Mair, and Dr. Kalervo Oberg) and later, when in Germany, with Professor Westermann and Professor Thurnwald.

In Kenya itself I enjoyed unlimited support for my work both from the Central Government at Nairobi and from the Provincial and District Administrations as well as the various Government Departments. Mr. (now Sir Armigel) de Vince Wade, then Colonial Secretary and later Acting Governor of Kenya, apart from kind hospitality, granted me valuable facilities and made those all-important initial arrangements for me which proved most helpful in establishing close contacts with the local authorities. I would thank also a great many Government officials for taking an interest in my work that went far beyond their routine duties. The study of modern contact conditions and of their repercussions on present-day native life, which forms the central theme of the second volume, could hardly have been accomplished without the assistance and co-operation of the Adminis-

tration and the various departmental services, especially the Agricultural and the Education Departments.

I am further greatly indebted to many missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, for the understanding and helpful attitude which they have shown on every possible occasion. In particular, I wish to express my gratitude to the Church Missionary Society, the Church of God Mission, the Friends' African Mission, and the Roman Catholic Mill Hill Mission, as well as to Mr. James W. C. Dougall, then liaison officer between the Kenya Government and the Kenya Missionary Board.

Besides, my wife and I wish to take this opportunity to express our grateful appreciation of the generous hospitality which we received in all quarters, both official and private.

Last, but not least, I would thank my African friends and informants, both old and young, pagan and Christian. Without their untiring and unselfish co-operation I should not have got very far. Especially four of them, Christopher Mtiva and William Serenge of South Maragoli, James Tsindakha of Bunyore and Javan Nandoli of North Kitosh, have taken such a genuine and keen interest in helping me 'to get at the facts' that their names must be connected with this book.

Hamburg
April 1946.

Since the above foreword was written I have to extend my thanks to Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Professor Daryll Forde, the present Director of the Institute, to both of whom I am deeply indebted for having recommended and arranged for the publication of the manuscript *in extenso*. My particular thanks, finally, are due to Mrs. Beatrice Wyatt, the Secretary of the Institute, for her careful revision of the proofs.

July 1947.

NOTE ON NATIVE TERMS

TO facilitate the use of the material contained in the present book for comparative studies as well as to document certain passages, I have included a number of native terms and quotations in the vernacular, putting them in brackets after their (approximate) equivalents in English. I have endeavoured to render the phonetic transcription as simple as possible. The vowel sounds *e* and *o* always being open in all Bantu Kavirondo dialects, no special symbols have been used to denote their open quality. Futhermore, no distinction has been made between bilabial and labio-dental *v*, a point which, however, will be discussed in connexion with the publication of my linguistic material. *l* and *r* frequently being interchangeable, I cannot vouch for having been entirely consistent in differentiating between these two sounds. *ʃ* (cap *Σ*) denotes a voiceless palato-alveolar fricative, *x* a voiceless velar fricative. All other consonants are pronounced as in English. Stress is usually on the penultimate; in all other cases it has been marked by an accent on the stressed syllable (for instance, *tsimbú*).

For readers not familiar with the Bantu system of class prefixes I refer to the chart on p. 26. I may add that the prefix *ovu-* (*vu-*) always denotes the idea of abstraction. Thus: *omuvila*, the sorcerer (plural: *avavila*), but *ovuvila*, sorcery. The different rendering of native terms in different contexts is explained by dialectic differences: for instance, the term for 'witch' is *omulogi* in Lurogoli (the dialect spoken by the Logoli tribe living in Maragoli) and *omulosi* in Luvugusu (the dialect spoken by the Vugusu living in Kitosh); the term for 'cow' is *eŋombe* (plural: *edziŋombe*) in Lurogoli and *éxafu* (plural: *tjíxafu*) in Luvugusu, &c.

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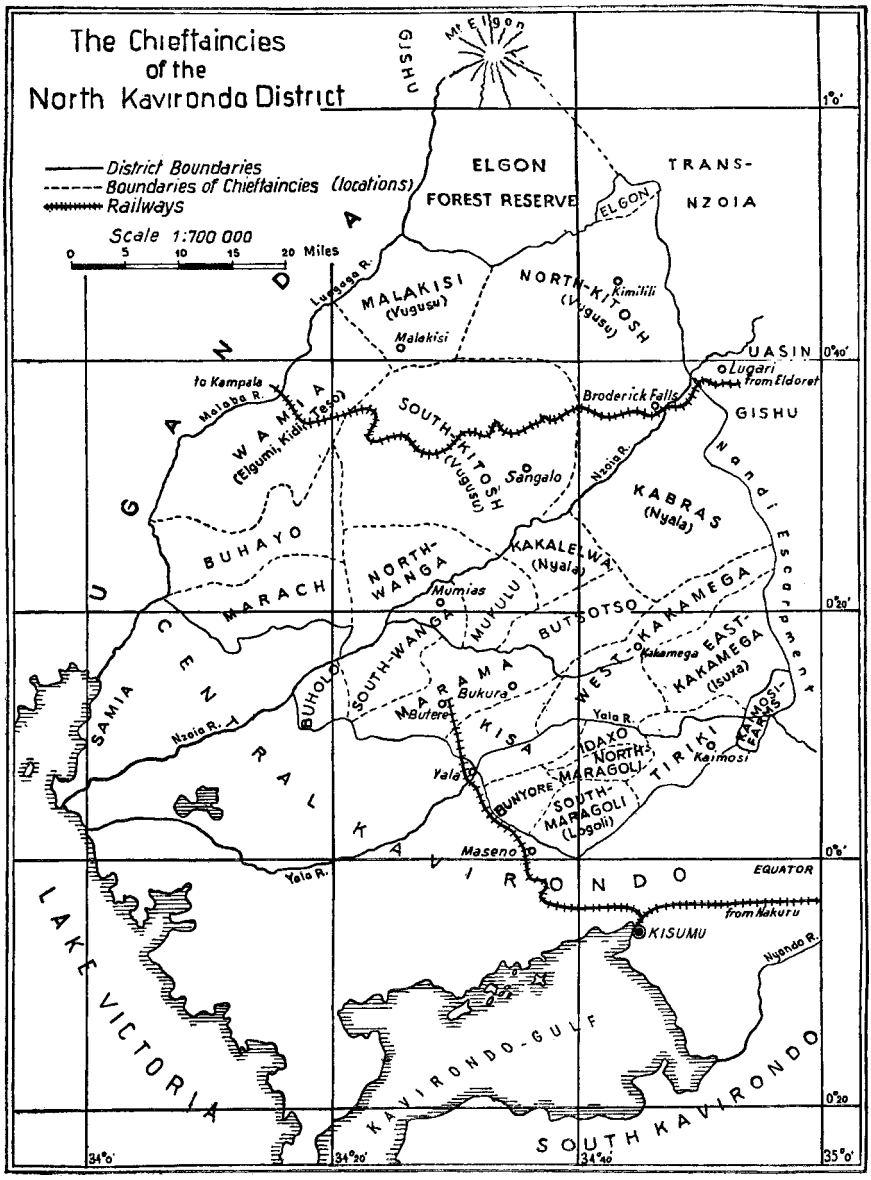

The Chieftaincies of the North Kavirondo District
District Boundaries
Boundaries of Chieftaincies (locations)
Railways
Scale 1:700 000
0 5 10 15 20 Miles
Mt Elgon
GISHU
ELGON FOREST RESERVE
TRANS-NZOIA
ELGON
UGANDA
Lwakhakha R.
MALAKISI (Vugusu)
Malakisi
NORTH-KITOSH (Vugusu)
Kimilili
UASIN GISHU
Lugari
from Eldoret
to Kampala
Malaba R.
WAMIA (Elgumi, Kidaki, Teso)
SOUTH-KITOSH (Vugusu)
Sangalo
Broderick Falls
Nzoia R.
KABRAS (Nyala)
Nandi escarpment
BUHAYO
MARACH
NORTH-WANGA
Mumias
KAKALELWA (Nyala)
MUKULU
BUTSOTSO
KAKAMEGA
Kakamega
KAKAMEGA EAST (Isukha)
SOUTH-WANGA
BUHOLO
SAMIA
CENTRAL KAVIRONDO
Nzoia R.
Bukura
Mbutere
KISA
WEST-KAKAMEGA
Yala R.
IDAXO
NORTH-MARAGOLI
TIRIKI
Kaimosi
KAMOSI-PARKS
Yala
BUNYORE
SOUTH-MARAGOLI (Logoli)
Maseno
EQUATOR
from Nakuru
KISUMU
Nyando R.
LAKE VICTORIA
KAVIRONDO-GULF
KAVIRONDO
SOUTH KAVIRONDO
1°0'
0°40'
0°20'
0°0'
0°20
34°0'
34°20'
34°40'
35°0'

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

A. THE COUNTRY

I

KAVIRONDO is situated to the north-east of Lake Victoria on either side of the Equator. The Kavirondo Gulf and its natural extension towards the east, the Nyando Valley, divide Kavirondo into three geographically distinct areas: (1) the Nyando Valley and the low-lying coastal regions to the north of the gulf (Central Kavirondo); (2) the elevated, undulating plain extending between the Nyando Valley and the slopes of Mount Elgon (North Kavirondo); and (3) the elevated country to the south of the gulf and of the Nyando Valley which gradually passes over into the western Masai steppe (South Kavirondo). Politically, Kavirondo forms part of Kenya Colony and Protectorate (British East Africa).[1] The three administrative districts of North, Central, and South Kavirondo essentially correspond to the geographical divisions. Together with the Districts of Kisumu-Londiani and Kericho they form the Nyanza Province, the westernmost of the six provinces of the colony.[2]

The native population of the three Kavirondo Districts amounted, in 1937, to 1,072,382.[3] It consists of approximately equal parts of Nilotes (Jaluo, Gaya, Nyifwa) and of Bantu, to which must be added a few minor groups speaking Nilo-Hamitic languages (see below, p. 16). The Nilotic tribes, which as regards language and culture are closely related to the Acholi and Alur in Uganda, inhabit Central Kavirondo as well as the low-lying coastal strip of South Kavirondo (Gaya). The Bantu-speaking tribes, on the other hand, are found chiefly in North Kavirondo and in the high-lying regions of South Kavirondo (in the Kisii Highlands). The Bantu tribes of Kavirondo, accordingly, do not show a continuous distribution, but the area inhabited by them is broken by the Nyando Valley with its Nilotic population. The tribes investigated by the author of the present book comprise only the Bantu of North Kavirondo, while he paid only a flying visit to the southern group, the Kisii (or more properly Gusii) and related tribes.

[1] Since 1 April 1902. Before that date Kavirondo formed part of what was then the Eastern Province of Uganda. See Thomas and Scott, *Uganda*, London, 1935, p. 41.

[2] The three Kavirondo Districts, excluding the water area, comprise:

Central Kavirondo	1,762 sq. miles
North Kavirondo	2,684 ,,
South Kavirondo	2,956 ,,
	7,402 sq. miles

[3] *Blue Book*, 1937.

The North Kavirondo District extends from 0° 56′ northern latitude, the northernmost point of the chieftaincy Elgon on the slopes of Mount Elgon, to 0° 0′, the southern boundary of the chieftaincy of South Maragoli, and from 34° 5′ eastern latitude near Busia on the Uganda border to 34° 59′ on the Nandi escarpment. The maximum extension of the district from north to south is 64·6 miles and the maximum distance from east to west 64·0 miles, its total area comprising 2,684 square miles.[1] In the east and the north the boundaries of the district are clearly marked by the Nandi escarpment and the slopes of Mount Elgon. In the west the boundary line follows for many miles the course of the Malaba River, which also marks the Kenya and Uganda border. From the confluence of the Sanga and the Sio Rivers onwards, the south-western and southern boundaries of the district are determined chiefly by the ethnical dividing line between Bantu and Nilotes.

The altitude of the district varies between roughly 3,600 feet in the western part near Busia and 7,500 feet on the slopes of Mount Elgon, by far the greatest part of North Kavirondo lying between 4,500 and 5,000 feet. It forms a well watered undulating plain gradually sloping away towards the west and slightly also towards the north until it rises again to the foot-hills of Mount Elgon. In the southern and south-eastern part of the district the topographical forms created by the numerous rivers and rivulets show a pleasing variety of features. Ridges and valleys, often of but miniature dimensions, constantly alternate, so that the natives must dig their fields largely on steeply sloping ground, a fact which, in view of the absence of terrace-cultivation, aggravates the danger of soil erosion. In the remaining parts of the district the river valleys are wide with flat bottoms and gentle slopes. Here and there isolated elevations, among which Sangalo Hill, crowned by two huge vertical granite slabs, forms a particularly striking landmark, rise up to a thousand feet above the surrounding plain.

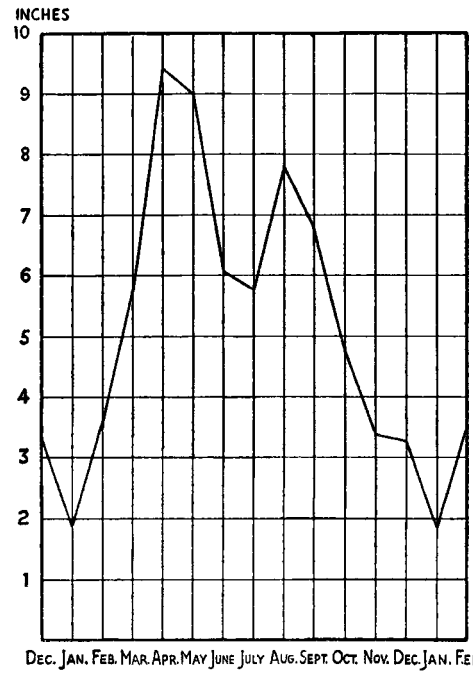
The prevailing type of soil is the extremely fertile 'red earth'. Its depth, however, varies considerably in accordance with the topographical features. In the chieftaincies of Bunyole and Maragoli, and also in Tiriki, the original granite at many points comes to the surface and the homogeneous, deeply red weathered soil is strewn with granite boulders and rocks of all sizes.

The climate of North Kavirondo is agreeable, with the exception of the height of the dry season (from the middle of December until the middle of February) when the dry easterly wind, blowing from the Nandi escarpment, can be rather trying. Owing to the comparatively high altitude the temperatures are not excessive, despite the immediate vicinity of the Equator. While during the noonday hours the heat of the sun is considerable it is never oppressive, as it is down in the Nyando Valley, since there is nearly always a light breeze. The evenings and nights are rather cool, and during the rainy season a nightly fire is often quite welcome.

The annual rainfall—as far as the available records show—varies between

[1] *Blue Book*, 1937.

61·7 inches and 76·3 inches in the different parts of the district. It is heaviest in the east (Lugari) and south-east of the district (Kakamega and Kaimosi), less heavy in the central part (Bukura, Sangalo), and stronger again on the slopes of Mount Elgon and in the western part of the district, for which, however, there exist no records. As will be seen from the diagram below, there are two rainy seasons, a major one in the months



April–May, and a minor one in August–September, the driest month being January, but even that month seldom passes entirely without rain. On the other hand, even during the height of the rainy season it does not by any means rain every day everywhere. Observations extending over six years show for the months of April and May an average of 16 and 15·5 rainless days in the immediate vicinity of the locality at which precipitation was registered. The actual rains are exceedingly heavy. In 1937 the daily rainfall in Maragoli on 13 days was between 1 and 2 inches, while on 7 days it reached more than 2 inches, with a maximum rainfall of 2·75 inches in the course of a single downpour. During the rainy and especially the cooler months precipitation often takes the form of hail-storms, and in those months even fogs occasionally occur. The typical daily cycle of the weather is about as follows: The day begins with blue skies and brilliant sunshine; towards noon heavy clouds gather together in the east over the Nandi escarpment, and in the early afternoon, following a strong windstorm, there

is a short but heavy downpour, usually accompanied by a violent thunderstorm.[1] Soon the sky clears up again, and the evening hours are again calm and pleasant.

Rainfall in North Kavirondo
(by inches)

Months	*Kakamega*	*Kaimosi*	*Lugari*	*Maragoli*	*Bukura*	*Sangalo*	*Monthly average*
January	2·4	3·0	1·1	2·1	1·4	1·7	1·9
February	4·5	3·9	2·6	4·4	2·8	3·6	3·6
March	5·7	6·3	5·6	6·6	5·7	5·3	5·8
April	8·8	10·0	9·8	10·1	8·3	9·2	9·4
May	11·4	9·8	8·0	8·8	8·3	7·6	9·0
June	7·6	6·8	6·0	5·9	5·0	5·2	6·1
July	7·3	5·8	8·1	3·5	5·1	5·0	5·8
August	9·7	7·6	9·2	5·8	8·1	6·2	7·8
September	7·4	7·1	10·3	5·0	6·2	4·9	6·8
October	5·0	5·5	3·7	4·2	4·9	5·3	4·8
November	3·6	4·2	0·9	4·5	3·6	3·5	3·4
December	2·9	2·9	1·0	5·0	3·6	4·2	3·3
TOTAL	76·3	72·9	66·3	65·9	63·0	61·7	67·7

Years to which the observations refer:

Kakamega	1921–35	Maragoli	1932–7
Kaimosi	1914–35	Bukura	1924–35
Lugari	1930–2 and 1935	Sangalo	1933–7

The numerous rivers and streams in Kavirondo carry water throughout the year. Coming from the slopes of Mount Elgon, the Uasin-Gishu Plateau and the Nandi Plateau, they flow mainly in a south-westerly direction and drain into Lake Victoria. The longest and most important of them is the Nzoia River, which flows almost exactly through the centre of the district; next follows the Yala River in the south, and then the Sio and Malaba Rivers in the north-west. All rivers abound with palatable fish, the major rivers like the Nzoia and the Yala also containing crocodiles.

II

The European visitor who approaches Kavirondo by the Uganda Railway, coming from Mombasa or Nairobi, catches the first glimpses of the wide Nyando Valley and of the grey expanse of the distant Kavirondo Gulf as the train in numerous curves and turnings descends the slopes of the Mau Plateau (10,000 feet). As it reaches the bottom of the valley the almost European character of the climate and the scenery changes into a typical

[1] Cf. C. W. Hobley, 1929, p. 90: 'One of the principal drawbacks to the life in Kavirondo is the prevalence of tropical storms of the most violent character. . . . Hail often falls, and on one occasion some of the hailstones were two and three-quarter inches in diameter, lenticular in shape, and about one and a half thick, and the ground was covered with ice for a couple of hours afterwards. The native huts are often struck by lightning and the people killed.'

African savannah of tropical character, with numerous umbrella-shaped acacias, euphorbias, aloes, and wild figs, growing some in clusters, some singly, as well as an occasional grotesque-looking sausage tree. Picturesquely dotted over the landscape are the Jaluo kraals, fenced by thorn-bush or euphorbia hedges. Herds of cattle are grazing on the sparse pasture, broken now and again by barren patches. The scanty banana-groves, maize-, and sorghum-fields visible from the train window do not yet let the visitor anticipate that the greater part of Kavirondo is one of the most fertile and economically farthest advanced regions of the whole colony. Repeatedly the train crosses wide sandy river-beds. Their appearance indicates that the trickles of water which they ordinarily contain swell after a heavy rain to gushing streams which for hours—and during the rainy season for days or for weeks—render the dips impassable for motor-cars.

Kisumu, the terminus of the Uganda Railway on the Kavirondo Gulf—600 miles from the coast—is the provincial headquarters of the Nyanza Province and the administrative centre of the Districts of Central Kavirondo and Kisumu–Londiani. Economically, its position as a port of transhipment for the goods traffic between the coast and Uganda was threatened after the completion of the direct railway line to Uganda (Nakuru–Jinja–Kampala) in the year 1931. However, the development of the trans-continental air-service on the Cairo–Capetown route, on which Kisumu forms one of the chief intermittent landing-stations, the discovery of gold in the North Kavirondo District (Kakamega) in the year 1931, and the steady economic progress of the native reserves in the three Kavirondo Districts have given its development new vigorous impulses. To-day Kisumu is one of the busiest centres in the colony with a population of over a hundred Europeans and several thousand Indians.

Kisumu and the Native Reserve, the scene of the present study, are two different worlds. However, the very contrast which they offer is in itself significant and instructive to the social anthropologist bent on the study of culture contact and social change.

But also within the reserve the scene is varied enough, revealing already at first sight many of the problems the study of which forms the principal concern of the present book. To give a general impression of this scene it will therefore be well to describe what one sees when travelling through the district in a motor-car.

III

Starting out for Kakamega, the administrative headquarters of the district and the centre of gold-mining, situated some thirty miles to the north-east of Kisumu, we drive along a modern all-weather road.[1] After having crossed the bottom of the Nyando Valley, the road, climbing the slope of a short side-valley covered with low thorn-bush vegetation, reaches the top of the first terrace of the Kavirondo plain. Soon the ever-grey

[1] In 1937 the average daily load amounted to 600 tons.

sheet of water of the gulf, the spreading township of Kisumu, and the Nyando Valley, from the brownish-yellow tints of which the green of an Indian sugar-plantation stands out as a bright spot, are lying far below us. Looking back, they melt into a homogeneous whole with the mountain ranges of South Kavirondo as a picturesque background.

The road, however, requires our full attention. On narrow paths which frequently cross the winding highway we meet hundreds of Africans. They are mostly women and children carrying their produce—maize, sorghum, bananas, vegetables—to the Kisumu market or balancing on their heads the heavy boxes or suitcases which their husbands want to take along on their way to a labour contract in the 'European Highlands' or on the coast. They have become so accustomed to motor traffic that they hardly step aside to let the car pass. But the numerous herds of goats and sheep grazing on either side of the road command even more attention than the natives. They have the awkward habit of darting across the road right in front of the car, while the herd-boy either runs away or looks on passively from a safe distance.

As we reach the top of the first terrace the scenery becomes far more friendly than it was down in the valley. Native cultivation becomes more frequent. Euphorbia and acacia disappear and their places are taken by various kinds of leafy trees. A nursery of black wattle and a side-road lined by an avenue of trees point to the presence of a mission station, the extensive buildings of which soon become visible in a pleasant setting a few hundred yards away from the main road. While down in the valley the native settlements to the right and the left of the road consisted of the typical kraals of the Nilotic Jaluo, their places are now taken by individual homesteads and huts. They are dotted at random over the whole country-side and furnish a visible indication that we have left the territory occupied by the Nilotes and are now in the Bantu-inhabited part of Kavirondo.

After a few miles' drive through exceedingly fertile and densely populated country the scenery changes abruptly. Having climbed a ridge, from the highest point of which we obtain a last glimpse of the Kavirondo Gulf and the gracefully curved outlines of Mount Homa rising behind it, a valley with stony slopes spreads out before us. It is almost completely bare of vegetation, and its reddish waste stands in striking contrast to the fertile garden land which we have just passed through. Less than twenty years ago, it is said, the valley and the slopes of the ridges on either side were as fertile as the surrounding lands. As a result of careless methods of cultivation the fertile top-soil has been washed off until the once fertile land eventually turned into a desert. To-day the Government authorities are endeavouring by means of a laborious scheme of soil reclamation to restore the vegetation and so to reclaim the so-called 'red ridge' at least for use as pasture land.

Steadily climbing and following the numerous bends and turnings of a valley literally strewn with rocks and boulders of all sizes, the road reaches

—about 15 miles from Kisumu—the last of the terraces and thereby the top level of the North Kavirondo plain. Before our eyes the pleasant scenery of a fertile garden land unfolds itself. Laid out in an irregular fashion, the gardens (*shambas*) of the Africans shine in a large variety of different hues, giving a kaleidoscopic impression. Maize-, sorghum-, and eleusine-fields, interspersed with ground-nut, simsim, and beans, alternate with one another. Dotted over the landscape are patches of a darker, saturated green, the banana-groves that surround almost every hut or homestead in a semicircle. Only occasionally the native cultivations are broken by a stretch of pasture land or by a swampy valley-bottom lined by trees and bushes. A rather un-African note in this setting is presented by the numerous eucalyptus trees which everywhere grow profusely, as individual specimens, in rows or small clusters, or even in unbroken patches as in a tree nursery. Thanks to their rapid growth increasing quantities of them are planted by the natives so that they threaten to supersede the indigenous trees. The impressive background of this garden scenery and the dominating feature of the whole of North Kavirondo is formed by the squat, pyramid-shaped outline of Mount Elgon (14,000 feet), extending nearly along the entire northern horizon. To the east we discern another imposing landmark, the Nandi escarpment. Running from north to south, it is likewise visible from all points of the North Kavirondo plain which it separates from the Nandi plateau as distinctly as a cliff coast marks off the land from the sea.

Over gentle hills and through flat-bottomed valleys the winding road for the next fifteen miles leads through a garden land of idyllic beauty. With about 590, and in some areas far more, inhabitants per square mile, it belongs to the most densely populated regions not only of Africa but of the whole world. The majority of native huts, with their low, circular mud walls and their peaked straw roofs, still look exactly as Joseph Thomson, the first European who visited the district in the year 1883, has described them. Nevertheless, we meet with numerous symptoms indicating that the country has undergone great changes since that time. The road frequently passes native bush and village schools. The rectangular shape of the school building, the flower garden surrounding it, the neatly laid-out lawns, and the football ground with its goal-posts, all form a striking contrast to the ordinary native homestead. Every now and then our attention is caught by a red brick house with a straw or corrugated-iron roof, the home of an African teacher, trader, or chief. Here and there we see a pasture or a field marked off by a fence, or an attempt in that direction; an obvious sign that its native owner is adopting European notions of property. At the cross-roads native dukas or stores catch the eye. They are mostly primitive huts in which enterprising Africans who have learned from their Indian tutors are selling 'King Stork' cigarettes, soap, matches, sugar, salt, tea, kerosene in bottles, safety-pins, glass beads, thread, and similar commodities of European manufacture that have come to form

part of the present-day native standard of living. Some of them also sell maize porridge or boiled rice to native labourers travelling through the country to or from their place of work in European employment. These native dukas serve at the same time as the favoured meeting-places for the 'do-nothings' of the neighbourhood. For hours they sit about, smoking and gossiping, and hoping to pick up the latest news of the world from the next native-driven bus or lorry that passes by. In the open veranda, the so-called baraza, a young African sits behind a Singer sewing-machine. From cheap khaki or calico he sews clothes for the women or shirts and trousers for the men, for the completion of which his customers can wait on the premises.

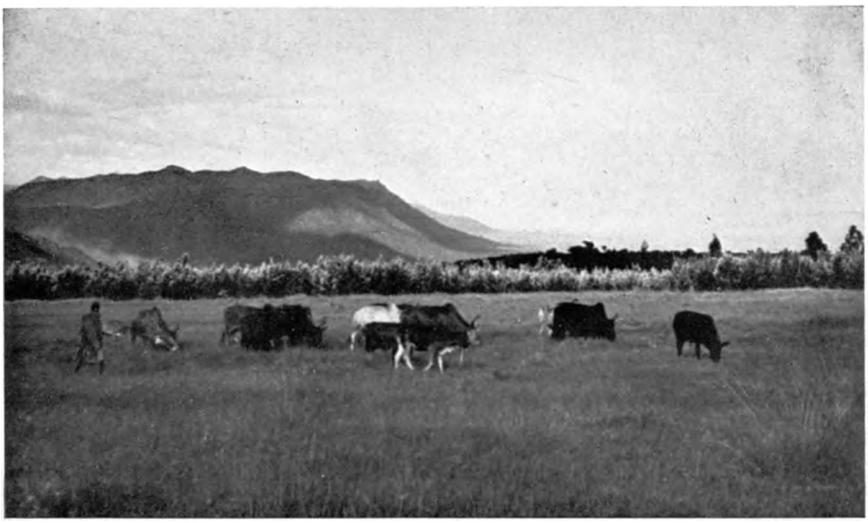
On we drive, crossing numerous clear streams and deeply gorged rivers often fringed by luxuriant tropical forest, passing primitive but adequate water-mills which the Africans have constructed under the guidance and supervision of a missionary and which they now run on a co-operative basis. Strings of women walking along the road and carrying on their heads baskets with grain or fruit or large earthenware pots, of which three or four are often skilfully tied together, indicate a nearby market. Soon we pass a large pasture, situated at the boundary between two chieftaincies, where on market-days thousands of people gather to barter their produce or to sell it for money. Here numbers of native tailors sit behind their sewing-machines. Meat, fish, grain, salt, sugar, glass beads and other ornaments, pots of all sizes and shapes, clay pipes, grindstones, and many other things are offered for sale to native customers.

A few miles before reaching Kakamega we meet with the first visible signs of the gold-mining industry which has developed here in the course of the last few years.[1] While in most parts of the three Kavirondo Districts only alluvial gold is mined, here in the neighbourhood of Kakamega a number of companies are engaged in reef-mining. In the year 1934, 6,360 Africans were directly employed in the gold-mining industry of the North Kavirondo District.[2] But the economic life of a far greater number has been affected by the market which the mining companies and the individual European claim-holders offered for foodstuffs, timber for building and mining purposes, mats, &c. On the other hand, a total of 65,000 acres of native lands has been required for mining purposes—a fact which, especially during the first few years after the discovery of the gold-fields, caused considerable anxiety among the native population.

Kakamega, until the discovery of the gold-fields a quiet district station with a few Indian dukas and a native market, is to-day bustling with life. As the administrative centre of the North Kavirondo District, Kakamega is the seat of the District Office (Boma), of a Government Hospital for natives, a Government African School, the District Court of Appeal, and a Seed-farm of the Agricultural Department.

[1] In the year 1934 the number of European gold-miners varied between 360 and 420 persons (*N.A.D.A.R.*, 1934, p. 13). [2] *N.A.D.A.R.*, 1934, p. 166.

PLATE 1

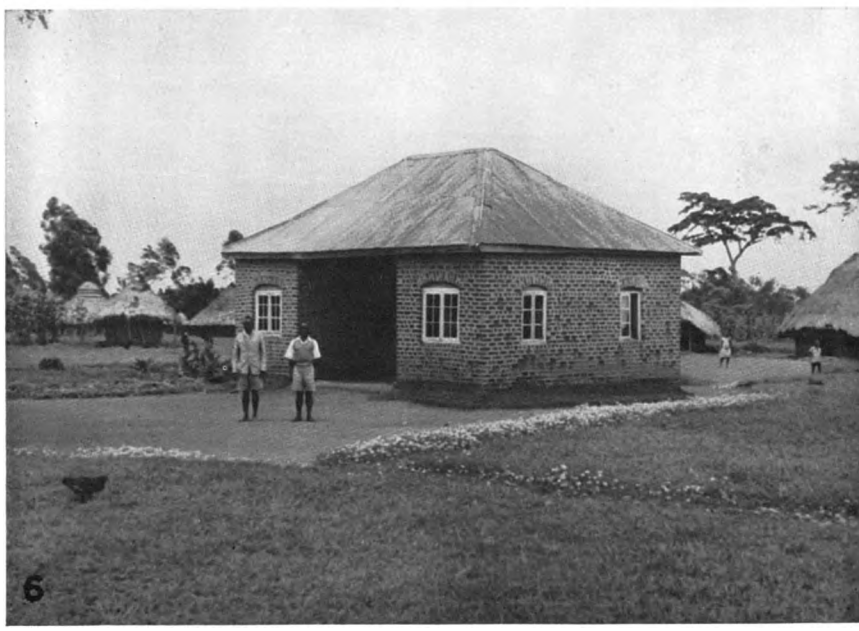


A. *Nandi Range and Nyando Valley*

B. *Descent from Equator Hill, South Maragoli*

PLATE 2

A. *A Maragoli homestead*



B. *A teacher's house: Butsotso*

Immediately to the north of Kakamega the scenery changes again. The country becomes more open and level, the density of the population decreases, and the garden landscape prevailing in the southern part of the district gradually changes into grassland and bush steppe. Along the watercourses and on the slopes and tops of the isolated hills we encounter also here in the north a dense and varied growth of trees. Groups of boulders, consisting mostly of quickly weathering porphyritic granites, form an even more striking feature of the landscape than farther to the south. In places they are so numerous that the road can avoid them only by means of frequent curves and turnings. Fifteen miles to the north-east of Kakamega, having nearly reached the base of the Nandi escarpment, the road leads for a short stretch through a magnificent forest[1] of which larger unbroken areas are still to be found in the south-eastern part of the district (Kaimosi Forest) and on the adjoining Nandi plateau. They probably form the remainder of a large forest area which, prior to the settlement of Kavirondo by its present Bantu inhabitants, extended over the greater part of the district but which largely fell victim to native hoe-cultivation.[2]

Continuing in a northerly direction, the road leads through the chieftaincy of Kabras, passing the former village of the same name. It has gained a certain historical significance, for here the Scotsman Joseph Thomson, in the year 1883, on his expedition through Masai Land to Lake Victoria, entered Kavirondo as the first European to visit that part of the world. With 54 heads per square mile, the native population here reaches its lowest level in the whole district. The neighbourhood of the Nilo-Hamitic Nandi and the lasting influence of the nomadic Kwafi–Masai who formerly inhabited the Uasin-Gishu Plateau to the north-east of Kavirondo are still clearly reflected in the attire of the Nyala, the inhabitants of Kabras. Many of them carry Masai spears and their women wear the full leather garments of the Nandi; in their physical appearance also and in their facial features they show a distinct Nilo-Hamitic admixture.

On a high bridge we soon cross the Nzoia River (cf. above, p. 6). Carrying plenty of water all the year round, it teems with palatable fish and supplies the tribes living along its course with an important part of their diet. A mile farther on we cross the railway line to Uganda (Nakuru–Kampala) constructed in the late twenties. It has essentially contributed towards advancing the agricultural development of the northern part of the district which previously had hardly been touched by European influence.

[1] Sir Harry Johnston, 1902, vol. i, p. 44, writes about this forest: '. . . those forests which follow the western slope of the Nandi Plateau are certainly among the densest and richest of the Protectorate' (i.e. of Uganda).

[2] Cf. Sir Harry Johnston, 1902, vol. ii, p. 738: 'The whole of Kavirondo was once covered with dense forest of a rather West African character, but trees are now scarcely ever seen, except in the river valleys. The people would hew down all the trees they could fell, and burn the branches and trunks, mixing the ashes with the soil as manure. . . . After the land had borne two or three good crops it was abandoned and a fresh piece opened up.'

Within only five years after the completion of the railway line the native maize export from this area increased from a few hundred bags per year to 36,577. In contrast to the small irregular fields characteristic of the densely peopled southern and central parts of the district, we see here in the north large, plough-cultivated maize- and sorghum-fields up to 30 or even 40 acres, almost giving the impression of a European farming district. Enterprising Africans have exploited the traditional rights of every tribesman to cultivate as much unused land as he cares to. With the assistance of native wage labour and European methods of cultivation they have taken up the production of cash crops on a large scale. They have thereby started a development which is bound to entail far-reaching changes in the social and economic structure of native life. Native agricultural enterprise in the northern part of the district has also been greatly stimulated by the European farming areas in the adjoining districts[1] which recruit most of their agricultural labour from these parts.

We now leave the road leading to the European settlements of Kitale and Eldoret and turn off in a westerly direction. Driving along the foot-hills of Mount Elgon—no longer impressive from near by—we are following a great African highway. It is the chief motor-road between Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, and Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Nevertheless, this section of it is only a poor road which after heavy rainfalls often becomes impassable.

For the next 30 or 40 miles we are traversing the territory inhabited by the Vugusu or Kitosh, as they are called by the Masai. Although no mean agriculturists, the chief concern and pride of their men is cattle-keeping, and they have, in fact, been influenced in many ways by the cattle customs of their nomadic neighbours. In the year 1937 201,134 head of cattle and 50,144 sheep and goats were counted[2] in the three Bantu chieftaincies to the north of the Nzoia River. Having a total population of 51,139,[3] this makes 4 head of cattle to every person, an unusually large number for a Bantu tribe with a well-developed hoe-culture.[4] Despite their wealth in cattle, the Vugusu do not lead a nomadic life but are sedentary like the other tribes of the district. Until British rule was established they lived in walled villages which have been described by Thomson, Hobley, and Sir Harry Johnston. The circular mud-walls were about 10 feet high and 1 or 2 feet thick, and they had several entrances which could be tightly closed with heavy logs. Round the wall ran a moat-like ditch 3 or 4 feet deep. These village fortifications are said to have offered an effective protection against the frequent raids by the Uasin-Gishu Masai from

[1] The Trans-Nzoia and Uasin-Gishu Districts of the Rift Valley Province.

[2] Personal information supplied by the Veterinary Officer, Sangalo Veterinary Station.

[3] Census of 1932.

[4] By way of comparison it may be mentioned that the Kenya Masai who, according to the official estimates of the year 1930, own more cattle than any other pastoral tribe in Kenya, possessed 720,000 head of cattle with a tribal population of 48,381 (*Report of the Kenya Land Commission*, September 1933, Cmd. 4556, p. 190).

the east and by the Teso from the west. Their remains, from which may be gauged the size of the villages, the thickness of the walls, and the depth of the ditches, may still be seen at various places in the Vugusu country; but of the huts themselves no traces are left. Nowadays the Vugusu, like the tribes in the southern part of the district, live in individual huts or homesteads scattered all over the country.

An excursion of a few miles to the wooded lower slopes of Mount Elgon takes us to the large and roomy caves, discovered by Joseph Thomson, which extend along a good part of the mountain always at the same level. Until the beginning of the present century many of them were inhabited by the El Kony, a small tribe speaking a language closely akin to that of the Nandi. Leading a timid and retiring life in the shelter of these caves, they defended themselves as best they could against the numerically superior Bantu tribes who, with their herds of cattle and their cultivations, encroached more and more upon their domain. When intertribal wars were stopped, the El Kony began to venture from their mountain retreat and to settle again in the plain. To-day they form the northernmost chieftaincy of the district and live—outwardly at least—in peaceful neighbourhood with the Vugusu.

After a drive of about 25 miles in a westerly direction through a tree- and bush-steppe, well watered by numerous streams flowing in the valleys between the ridges jutting out from the Elgon massif, we reach Malakisi, a typical Indian trading-centre. In addition to a few dozen corrugated-iron dukas, it contains a ginnery, the busy centre of this small settlement. It is the first sign that we have entered the cotton-growing area which extends from here in a westerly and south-westerly direction until it links up with the great cotton country, Uganda. A special feature of Malakisi is a dairy, the only European-operated economic enterprise in the whole reserve, apart from the gold-mining industry in the Kakamega area and the economic activities of the missions. This one dairy suffices to turn the entire surplus of cream, supplied by the 200,000 head of Vugusu cattle, into dairy products for the town populations of Kenya and Uganda.

From Malakisi we turn to the south again, making the return journey to Kisumu via Mumias and the western part of the district. Except for a mission station or two, an occasional bush school, and a few native dispensaries, the part of the reserve through which we are now passing does not yet show any marked change as compared with the old days. The homesteads and cattle enclosures do not yet betray any European influence. Many people still wear their traditional garb, a cow- or goatskin tied together over the shoulder, or a single blanket which they don in the same fashion. Soon after we have crossed the railway line for a second time, we pass Sangalo, the Government Veterinary Station and School. Africans of all tribes, after having finished their general school education, are trained here in European methods of cattle-keeping and breeding. It also serves as an experimental station in the fight against cattle diseases.

Gradually the bush-steppe through which we have been driving gives way to an open, undulating grassy plain, characteristic of the whole central and western part of the district, especially of the area along the central reaches of the Nzoia River.[1] Despite its scarcity of trees, this grassy plain is far from being monotonous: its ample and varied vegetation is in blossom nearly all the year round, so that the rolling plains always present a colourful and cheerful sight. Especially in the months of March and April, at the beginning of the big rains, the steppe is a vast expanse blazing with colour hardly surpassed even by neighbouring Uganda with its luxuriant vegetation.

A peculiar feature which we see in many parts of Kavirondo, but which here in the open plain is particularly striking, are the frequent quail traps of the natives. In the vicinity of many homesteads we see a tall pole (30 to 35 feet long) standing upright in the ground. Attached to it is a long row of cage-like, conically shaped baskets, each of which contains a male quail as a decoy. Radiating in all directions from the base of these poles are narrow paths in the course of which numerous noose-traps are laid for the quails.

On a modern steel suspension-bridge we cross—about 25 miles to the south of Malakisi—the Nzoia River for the second time. Its clear water flows swiftly over numerous rocks and boulders. Half a mile farther on we pass through Mumias, the residence of the Wanga chief Mumia and the former administrative centre of the North Kavirondo District.[2] The clan of the Wanga chiefs is the only one among the various tribes of Bantu Kavirondo which already in pre-European days commanded an authority extending—at least at times—beyond the tribal limits. In acknowledgement of this fact, the present Chief Mumia, who was in office when the British Administration was opened up in the year 1894, was appointed to the rank of a Paramount Chief over all tribes of the North Kavirondo District. His residence—a number of particularly large and neatly built huts grouped in a semicircle round a spacious yard—is located at some distance from the Indian dukas which make up the township proper.

At Butere, about 10 miles to the south of Mumias, we reach the terminus of another railway line, built some years ago as a branch-line from Kisumu to open up the maize-growing area in the south-western part of the district.

[1] Sir Harry Johnston was obviously referring to the central portion of North Kavirondo when he wrote: 'The whole of the Kavirondo country is most grateful to the eye. It consists of rolling downs (though there is a little marsh in the valley of the Nzoia) covered with the greenest of grass, and made additionally beautiful by the blending with the green of fleecy white, shining mauve or pale pink, effects which are caused by the grass being in flower or fluffy seed. . . . Where the land is not actually under cultivation in Kavirondo, the prairies are gorgeous with wild flowers at almost all times of the year. Prominent amongst these are the sunflowers (Coreopsis), which cause certain hill-sides to blaze with yellow.' (*The Uganda Protectorate*, vol. i, pp. 44 and 50–1.)

[2] In the year 1920 the District Office was moved to Kakamega, which has a more healthy climate.

The scenery encountered during the last stage of our trip resembles again the garden land through which we passed between Kisumu and Kakamega. As we approach the south-western corner of the district the density of the population steadily increases. In the chieftaincy of Bunyore it reaches the remarkable figure of 1,137 persons to the square mile. In these parts the native homesteads stand close together; every inch of arable soil is exploited to the utmost, and pasture land is so scarce that not only sheep but also cattle are tethered while grazing or even stable-fed. But even the extraordinary fertility of the soil and the two full crops which it yields every year cannot sustain such a dense population. Clear symptoms of overpopulation begin to show: not only do adults take up labour-contracts in European employment, but to an increasing extent children also, who work chiefly as tea-pickers in the Kericho tea plantations. But whereas some of the people have to look for work outside the reserve to buy foodstuffs out of the money which they earn, others grow maize for export even here in Bunyore.

At Maseno, a central mission station of the Church Missionary Society located right on the Equator, the road leaves the North Kavirondo District and enters the territory of the Nilotic Jaluo. In a steady decline it descends into the plain adjoining the Kavirondo Gulf and soon reaches our starting-point, Kisumu.

Although we have covered scarcely 170 miles, we have gained a great variety of impressions. Within the compass of less than 3,000 square miles we have encountered many different types of scenery, ranging from highly developed garden land to sparsely settled bush-steppe and tropical rain-forest. We have passed through regions settled by tribes who by intensive methods of cultivation feed more than a thousand persons per square mile, and through others inhabited by tribes whose wealth in cattle is not far behind that of the major pastoral tribes of Africa. We have obtained glimpses of the most varying shades and degrees of the process of culture change. From the Kakamega mining district, where in the course of a few years the living conditions of the natives have come to resemble those prevailing in South Africa, to the comparatively untouched chieftaincies in the north-western part of the district, where the great majority of the native population still largely maintains its traditional mode of life. North Kavirondo thus presents itself as a field of study which promises to be fruitful not only for a widening of our knowledge of Bantu life but also for an understanding of the problems with which the African native of our days is confronted.

B. THE PEOPLE

THE area occupied by the Bantu Kavirondo on the whole corresponds to the political boundaries of the North Kavirondo District. An exception is formed by the north-western part of the district which is inhabited

by the Nilo-Hamitic Mia (called Kidi[1] by the Swahili and Elgumi by the Masai), a sub-group of the Teso. According to the 1937 census they number 26,066, and they occupy an area of 208 square miles. Other minor non-Bantu groups living within the district are the El Kony (numbering 3,475 souls) on the slopes of Mount Elgon, and the Lago and Ngoma (Ngomanek) who have been politically absorbed within the tribe of the Vugusu, all three of whom speak a Nandi dialect; furthermore, there are remnants of the Uasin-Gishu Masai living among the Kabras (about 1,200), 11,000 Luo, most of whom have intermarried with Bantu in the south-western part of the district or are working in the Kakamega gold-mines, and finally several hundred Swahili, Ganda, and Nubians who are chiefly to be found at Mumias where, in the early days, they formed part of the British garrison (cf. p. 31). The only major Bantu Kavirondo tribe living outside the district in Central Kavirondo are the Samia, who extend as far as Uganda. They and the Gishu, who adjoin the Vugusu in the extreme north-western corner of the district, are the only Bantu tribes who form a territorial link between the Bantu Kavirondo and the neighbouring Bantu groups of Uganda, the Soga, Gwe, and Nyuli.

All other neighbours of the Bantu Kavirondo are non-Bantu tribes: to the south and south-west the Nilotic Jaluo, to the south-east and east the Nilotic Nandi and Nyangori (a sub-group of the Nandi), and in the north-east (formerly) the Uasin-Gishu Masai.[2] Prior to the establishment of British rule the Bantu Kavirondo lived in a state of more or less permanent warfare with all these neighbouring groups. In their relations with the Masai and the Nandi they were chiefly on the defensive; their contests with the Jaluo seem to have been characterized by an approximate equality of military prowess, while they were obviously clearly superior to the Teso and El Kony whose villages they claim to have frequently raided.

In 1937 the Bantu Kavirondo (with the exception of the Samia) numbered 312,000 souls. As far as can be judged from the available data,[3] the population is moving on the upward grade. The following comparative figures, which, however, comprise only about two-thirds of the chieftaincies of the district, indicate an increase of 9·65 per cent. in 14 years, which is the equivalent of an annual increase of 0·69 per cent.

[1] Probably the same word as the term 'kedi' used in Uganda to designate the Nilotes.

[2] After 1860 the greater part of the Uasin-Gishu Masai (Kwafi) was decimated by wars with the main Masai bands, so that at the time when Joseph Thomson travelled through Masai Land the greater part of the Uasin-Gishu Plateau was already uninhabited (cf. J. Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, 2nd edition, p. 243). In connexion with the transfer of the Masai which the British Administration carried through in the years from 1904 to 1906 the Uasin-Gishu Plateau was cleared of the remaining Masai bands roaming there and it has since been developed as a European farming district. In 1937 (*Blue Book*), 1,997 Europeans were living in the Uasin-Gishu District of the Rift Valley Province.

[3] They are based on hut-counts (undertaken for purposes of taxation) which comprise only the adult part of the population.

	Census of 1918[1]	*Census of 1932*
Buholo . .	6,783	8,687
Bukhayo . .	12,826	16,816
Butsotso . .	5,215	8,457
Kabras . .	9,252	10,829
Kakalelwa . .	5,358	4,859
Kakamega . .	30,264	31,406
Kitosh . . .	47,632	51,139
Marach . .	12,213	14,864
Marama . .	22,287	18,957
Mukulu . .	4,993	6,154
Wanga . .	24,072	26,187
Total	180,895	198,355

Comparative figures for the entire native population of the district are: 340,917 for 1932 and 354,505 for 1937, which means an annual increase of 0·8 per cent. It is, however, impossible to ascertain to what extent this increase is due to the immigration of natives from other districts since the discovery of the Kakamega gold-fields, rather than to a biological increase of the population. The Native Affairs Department Annual Report for 1932 states that the population of the North Kavirondo District shows an annual increase of 1·2 per cent., a figure which, however, in view of the available data appears to be rather on the high side. In the absence of any vital statistics—when I left the district in 1938 births and deaths were not yet registered, but it was proposed to establish marriage registers in the more progressive chieftaincies—it is as yet impossible to do more than guess at the trend of the biological population movement.

As has already been mentioned, the population is rather unevenly distributed over the district. While the average density is 140·84 per square mile, it rises to several hundred in the southern and south-eastern chieftaincies (with a maximum of 1,137), whereas in the north and the north-east it drops to less than 80 per square mile (with a minimum of 54·15).

The sex ratio is characterized by a considerable surplus of male births which—as far as the scanty observations at hand reveal—does not appear to be neutralized by the higher mortality of male infants. Hobley, on the basis of figures compiled by him, gives the following comparative figures showing the ratio of male and female births for the Bantu Kavirondo, Jaluo, and Nandi:[2]

	Male births, per cent.	*Female births, per cent.*
Bantu Kavirondo .	57·5	42·5
Jaluo . . .	42	58
Nandi . . .	48·75	51·25

[1] According to data supplied by N. Stam, 1919, p. 969.
[2] C. W. Hobley, 1903, p. 354.

Figures obtained by myself from the maternity wards of the American Friends Mission Hospital at Kaimosi (chieftaincy Tiriki) and of the Church of God Mission at Kima (chieftaincy Bunyore) show the following ratio:

(1) *Kaimosi*

Year	*Male births*	*Female births*
1929	51	31
1930	77	57
1931	50	52
1932	68	57
1933	136	101
1934	60	72
Total	442	370

Year	*Male births*	*Female births*	*Stillborn*	
			Male	*Female*
1935	76	68	28	23
1936	93	83	28	18
1937	97	84	21	21
1938 (Jan.–Apr.)	23	19	5	6
	289	254	82	68
Less	82	68		
Live births	207	186		
Live births, per cent.	52·6	47·4		

(2) *Kima*[1]

Year	*Male births*	*Female births*	*Sex not registered*
1936	45	34	5
1937	54	35	1
Total	99	69	6

Inquiries concerning the sex ratio which I have undertaken at a number of schools by questioning the pupils as to their living and deceased siblings likewise show a surprising predominance of the male sex, and this not only among the Bantu but, in contrast with Mr. Hobley's observations, also among the Jaluo.

[1] The figures contain 8 stillbirths for the year 1936 and 9 for 1937, the sex not being stated. By way of comparison it may be mentioned that in the Mengo Hospital at Kampala, Uganda, out of a total of 1,097 births 570 were male and 527 female.

I. *Bantu*

School	Living children		Deceased children	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Kima Mission (Bunyore) . . .	165	118	114	97
Friends Mission (Kaimosi) . . .	136	91	78	74
Catholic Mission (Yala) . . .	219	202	..	..
II. *Nilotes* (*Jaluo*)				
Kima Mission (Bunyore) . . .	58	68	27	24
Catholic Mission (Yala) . . .	182	122	..	..

This strong preponderance of the male sex over the female may, to some extent, be due to the fact that the pupils of the schools where I have made my inquiries are recruited from families boasting on the whole a higher percentage of male children than would be the tribal average. Such a tendency might have its explanation in the fact that fathers with more daughters than sons would have less reason to send their sons to a boarding-school than fathers with more sons than daughters. Such a tendency, however, even if it existed, would not entirely explain the preponderance of the male sex.

A careful inventory which I made of all the inhabitants of a Christian village in North Kitosh confirms the results obtained from the inquiries made in native schools. The inventory shows that the 36 Christian families living in the village had a total of 47 living sons and of 31 living daughters, the average age of the male children being 4·03 years and that of the female children 6·7 years.[1] The number of the deceased male children amounted to 15 as against 23 female children. The sex ratio of the total number of children in the Christian village which had been 62 : 54 at birth had—owing to the higher mortality rate of the female children—changed in favour of the male children, instead of the female ones as one would have expected.

From the ethnical, linguistic, and political points of view the Bantu Kavirondo do not form a homogeneous group, even though they are clearly distinct from the surrounding tribes. The term 'Kavirondo', the origin and etymology of which are still obscure, never appears to have been used by the natives themselves. Nor does there seem to exist any word in the various Bantu Kavirondo dialects from which the term 'Kavirondo' could possibly have been derived. According to Sir Harry Johnston's inquiries the term 'Kavirondo' was employed and spread by Swahili and Arab traders.

'The word Kavirondo', writes Sir Harry, 'probably appeared first on the maps drawn by Mr. E. G. Ravenstein at the end of the seventies from information given him by Mombasa missionaries, such as the late Mr. Wakefield.

[1] The year of birth could be ascertained for all children with a high degree of accuracy.

It is certain that the Swahili and Arab caravans who first reached the north-east coast of Lake Victoria Nyanza came back with the impression that the people in that direction were styled "Kavirondo" and communicated these views to Mr. Wakefield.'[1]

Owing to its constant use by Europeans, the term 'Kavirondo' has nowadays been to some extent adopted by the natives, but they use it with reference to the district rather than to themselves. When talking to other natives—even outside the district—they always style themselves by the name of their respective sub-tribe, such as Wanga, Vugusu, Logoli, Nyole, &c. Among politically minded natives who for a number of years have been pleading for a political unification of all Bantu Kavirondo tribes under a paramount chief according to the Buganda pattern, the word *avaluhia*, meaning 'those of the same tribe', is propagated as a common designation for all Bantu Kavirondo. The term 'Kavirondo', on the other hand, is generally rejected in these quarters as being of European origin.

In pre-European days the various sub-tribes of Bantu Kavirondo were, for their greater part, very loosely organized politically, each sub-tribe consisting of a number of more or less sovereign clans. Since British rule was established in the middle of the nineties they have been organized into chieftaincies. Since these sub-tribes did not possess any ruling clans with generally acknowledged clan-heads, suitable and deserving natives were appointed as chiefs by the British authorities. As a rule, such chiefs were chosen from the oldest and largest clan of the tribe. In a few cases, however, a different system, successfully employed in neighbouring Uganda, was resorted to: members of the ruling clan of the Wanga tribe—politically the most highly developed tribe of the district—were instituted as chiefs over other tribes.[2] The chief of the Wanga tribe who from the very beginning adopted a loyal attitude towards the British in which he

[1] Sir Harry Johnston, 1902, vol. ii, p. 722; cf. also N. Stam, 1919, p. 972: 'The early explorers are responsible for it, and they must have got it from the Swahili interpreters they had with them. Whether centuries ago a people lived here, called Kavirondo, we do not know; in any case none of the tribes out here, whether Bantu or Nilotic, know the word and only learnt it from the European official.' And furthermore, C. W. Hobley, 1903, p. 359: 'I have often made enquiries into the origin of the name of Kavirondo, and the Kisumu elders inform me that it is the name which the people of the south side of Kavirondo Gulf apply to the people of the north side; it is, however, a term used when they meet at a dance and smoke bhang and sing about old times. They call the people of the north side Kavirondo, because they were vanquished by the latter and driven across to the south side of the bay; it was thus, originally, more or less an epithet of reproach.' This would mean that the word 'Kavirondo' is of Nilotic origin.

[2] Cf. *N.A.D.A.R.*, 1929, p. 19: 'Briefly, the position is that in the early days the administration found a family of conquerers—the Wanga—in this District, very much superior to the indigenous tribes who were completely sunk in barbarism(!). As it was impossible to appoint chiefs from these indigenous people who could exercise any authority whatever, the practice was adopted of putting Wanga natives in charge of the different locations.'

never wavered was, in the year 1909, given the official title of 'Paramount Chief' over the Bantu Kavirondo. His position, however, was and still is that of a mere figure-head, as he does not exercise any specific governmental or administrative functions beyond the limits of his own tribal area. In the course of time the chieftaincies which had been originally set up were, in a number of cases, subjected to alterations and corrections, a process which, to-day, seems to have been essentially concluded, even though in the various chieftaincies there are still a number of individual clans clamouring for political independence, i.e. for their recognition as separate chieftaincies.[1]

In 1937 the North Kavirondo District comprised the following twenty-two Bantu chieftaincies:

Name of chieftaincy[2]	*Population*[3]	*Area in sq. miles*	*Density of population per sq. mile*
1–2. North Wanga / South Wanga	26,187	161	162·65
3. Mukulu	6,154	41	150·09
4. North Marama / 5. South Marama	18,957	120	157·98
6. Buholo	8,667	34	255·50
7. Marach	14,864	99	150·14
8. Buhayo	16,816	146	115·18
9. South Kitosh	19,438	336	57·85
10. Malakisi	11,587	130	89·13
11. North Kitosh (Kimilili)	20,114	320	73·71
12. Kabras	10,829	200	54·15
13. Kakalelwa	4,859	55	88·35
14. Butsotso	8,457	77	109·83
15. Kisa	14,391	50	287·82
16. Idaxo	6,857	20	342·85
17. West Kakamega[4]	21,636	120	180·30
18. East Kakamega[4]	9,770	101	96·53
19. Tiriki	17,178	65	264·28
20. North Maragoli	25,451	43	591·88
21. South Maragoli	20,349	52	391·33
22. Bunyore	30,706	27	1,137·26
TOTAL	312,787	2,197	..

[1] Cf. *N.A.D.A.R.*, 1935, p. 6 sq.: 'Now . . . each location is under a separate chief. But these chiefs seldom command the loyalty of their whole location; the habit of devolution has spread to the leading sub-clans and families who would scarcely be satisfied until every sub-clan had a puppet chief of its own. His Excellency the Governor reiterated his statement made in the previous year that Government would not consider the further splitting up of locations.' (There follows an enumeration of concrete claims raised by the various clans to be granted a chief of their own.)

[2] The following names are the official ones, laid down by the Administration.

[3] According to the census of 1932.

[4] Tribal territory of the Isuxa.

The territories assigned to these various chieftaincies and their present-day boundaries (cf. map on p. 2) correspond, on the whole, to the areas actually occupied by the various tribal groups when British rule was first established. In several cases where more than one clan raised a claim for political leadership, what would be the tribal units from an ethnical and linguistic point of view were split up into several chieftaincies, e.g. North and South Wanga, North and South Kitosh, East and West Kakamega, North and South Maragoli. The official names given to the various chieftaincies are exclusively names of localities and, in the majority of cases, differ from the actual tribal names. The inhabitants of the three chieftaincies of North Kitosh, South Kitosh, and Malakisi, for example, are all called Vugusu; the people of Kakalelwa[1] and those of Kabras call themselves Nyala; those of East and West Kakamega, Isuxa, and those of Maragoli, Logoli. All the tribal names refer—as far as I was able to ascertain—to the personal name of the real or mythological founder of the respective tribal group. The different clans within each tribal group derive their origin from descendants of the tribal ancestor with the exception of those who, according to their clan traditions, joined the tribal unit to which they nowadays belong after it had been in existence. Among the Wanga, for instance, I compiled a list comprising 30 clans, of which 18 did *not* derive their origin from Omuwanga, the tribal ancestor. Having come from all directions, they have, one by one and at different times, joined the Wanga tribe where, however, they nowadays enjoy the same status as the original Wanga clans (cf. below, p. 66).

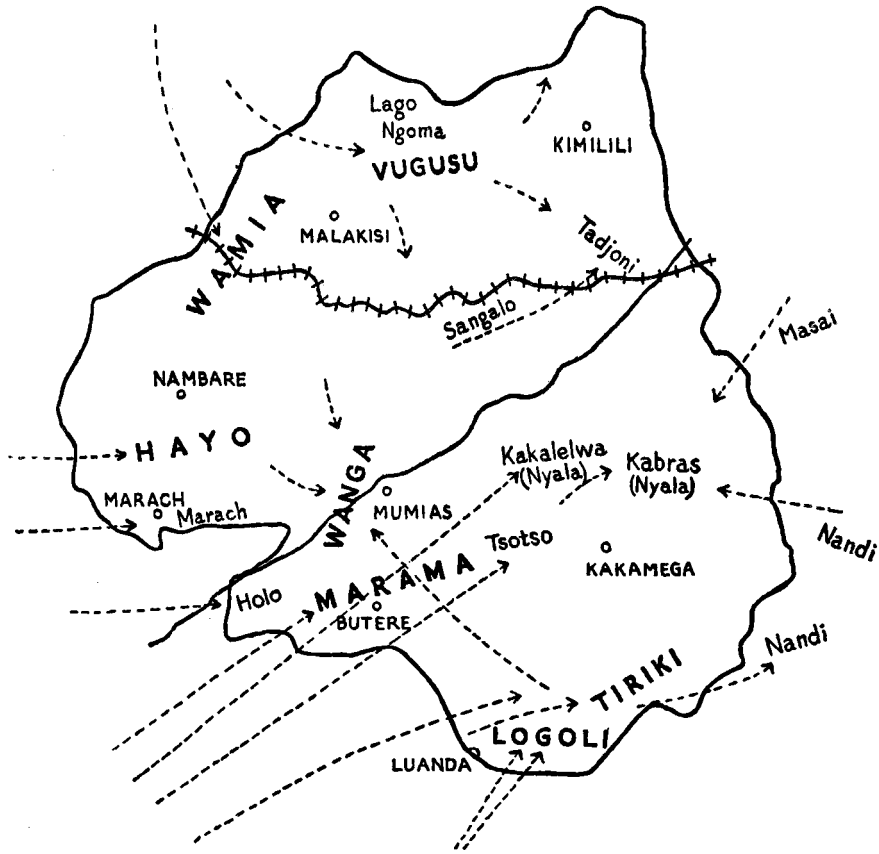
Although the various Bantu Kavirondo sub-tribes are *all* interrelated both ethnically and linguistically, they can be divided into a few major groups, each of which is characterized by common or very closely related dialects as well as by close political, social, and economic interrelations of its component tribal groups.

My notes taken on the origin and the migrations of the various tribes according to their tribal and clan traditions yield the following picture:

1. The *Vugusu*, who occupy the northern part of the district, have migrated to their present abode from the north-west. Muvugusu, the mythical tribal ancestor, is said to have lived at a place called Embai in Karamoja (Kirimodjo). Under the pressure of his enemies, the Tola (from the Teso tribe) and the Nyole (a Bantu tribe speaking a tongue closely resembling Luganda), Muvugusu together with his sons emigrated in a southerly direction, settling down again somewhere to the east of Mbale (between Mbale and Mount Elgon). His descendants again migrated from there towards the south, till they came to a hill to the north-east of Tororo, the so-called 'Vugusu Hill'. From there—again yielding to the pressure exercised by the Teso—they moved on in a south-easterly direction till they reached the country to the south of Mount Elgon, where they are still

[1] They deny, however, that they are related to the Nyala of Kabras.

living to-day. Upon their arrival at Kitosh the Vugusu found that the country was practically uninhabited, with the exception of such minor tribes as the Ngoma, Lago, and El Kony.[1] Only the Masai came occasionally from the east, raiding their villages and stealing their cattle.



In the eastern part of Kitosh, along the upper reaches of the Nzoia River, live the *Tadjoni*, a small tribe which already in pre-European days maintained close marriage relations with the Vugusu and which to-day has been amalgamated into the chieftaincy of North Kitosh (Kimilili). According to the statements made by their old men, the Tadjoni formerly lived in the neighbourhood of Sangalo Hill (about 25 miles to the west of their present abode) until, under the pressure of the Teso and Wanga, they moved farther to the east. They say that their original home was in western Uganda, where they claim to have formed part of the Ziba tribe (nowadays living on the western shores of Lake Victoria to the north of Bukoba).

[1] Called Vakoyondjo by the Vugusu.

2. The *Wanga*, who nowadays inhabit the central part of the district along the middle reaches of the Nzoia River, call themselves after their tribal ancestor Omuwanga. According to the traditions of the ruling clan their history dates back far beyond Omuwanga (cf. vol. ii). They claim that their earliest ancestors lived in West Africa, at a place called Makatas. From there they moved towards the east till they came to Lake Albert, thence through Unyoro and Busoga until they reached the shores of Lake Victoria at the Kavirondo Gulf near Kisumu. There the tribe split up; one part migrated farther towards the south, while another part turned towards the north and north-east, settling down at a place called Elinde (in the present area of the Tiriki). It was here at Elinde that Wanga, the tribal ancestor, was born. After a quarrel with his brother Kaviakala he left Elinde and, after a longish period of roaming about, finally settled at Matungu (about 3 miles to the north-west of the present township of Mumias). The descendants of Omuwanga (the tribal genealogy lists ten generations from Omuwanga down to the present Chief Mumia) remained more or less at the same place. The Mukulu (meaning the upper ones, i.e. those living on the high ground) are part of the Wanga who have only recently split off to form a tribe of their own.

Like the Wanga, the *Marama*, *Tsotso*, and *Tiriki* also claim to have migrated into their present homes in North Kavirondo from the south-west, that is to say, from the neighbourhood of the Kavirondo Gulf and the eastern shores of Lake Victoria. Thus, the Marama say they have come from what is now the Luo chieftaincy of Alego in Central Kavirondo, while the Tsotso name a place called Mu∫iene on Lake Victoria as their original home.

The *Tiriki* say that their distant ancestors had migrated from Uganda to the Kavirondo Gulf whence they moved on to South Kavirondo like one section of the ancestors of the Wanga. Under the leadership of Lulidzi and his wife Aliowa they returned across the gulf and settled near Maseno, where Lulidzi died. His son Kisienya built a village at Hamasiri, a place situated on the border between the present-day chieftaincies of Bunyore and South Maragoli. The Tiriki elders claim that Kisienya and Wanga at first lived together. Later, when they separated, Omuwanga moved towards the north and Kisienya towards the east. Nandunda, Kisienya's son, is said to have begotten a large family, the various branches of which later separated at a place called Muluanyi.

The *Nyala* (*Kakalelwa*) migrated into North Kavirondo only a few generations ago, coming from Mumome and Olundu in Uganda. In the seventies of last century they still lived among the Wanga, under Chief Tomia (cf. vol. ii).

All I was able to learn about the *Kabras* was that they have come from the west. Only a few generations ago they lived in the territory that is now inhabited by the Tsotso. They appear to be closely related to the Tadjoni, with whom they frequently intermarry. A number of their clans claim to be of Nandi origin, the Nilo-Hamitic tribe adjoining them in the east.

3. The *Hayo*, *Marach*, and *Holo* claim to have branched off the Soga in Uganda and to have only recently migrated to their present abodes. The Hayo have since then considerably mixed with their northern neighbours, the Nilotic Mia (Teso).

4. The *Logoli*, finally, say that they have come from the south, from the neighbourhood of Shirati on the eastern shores of Lake Victoria, immediately to the south of the Kenya–Tanganyika boundary.

'Mulogoli (the tribal ancestor)—so the tradition goes—moved with his people from Shirati towards the north and crossed the Kavirondo Gulf in boats. At first he settled near Maseno. Then (under the pressure of the Jaluo) he moved farther towards the east to Migono Hill (nowadays called Equator Hill), where he lies buried. Twice a year an old man who functions as tribal priest goes to Mulogoli's grave to pray there and to make an offering (*muŋoma*). The country to the east of Maseno and of Migono was uninhabited when Mulogoli arrived there; only elephants were grazing there. The Tiriki lived farther to the east (having thus, apparently, settled in their present abodes before the Logoli). The relatives of the Logoli who stayed behind in South Kavirondo call themselves Avasuva; they speak a similar tongue and observe the same customs.'

As these migratory accounts indicate, the greater part of the Bantu Kavirondo tribes has come from the west, with the exception of the Vugusu who claim to have come from the north or north-west, and the Logoli who have come from the south. It is, of course, possible that the Logoli, even if they *did* come from the south, have no connexion with the Bantu tribes living to the south-east of Lake Victoria (Shashi, Kulia, Nyamwezi), but rather belonged to that branch of the Wanga who, from their temporary abodes on the Kavirondo Gulf, moved farther to the south, while the immediate ancestors of the Wanga turned towards the north.

To judge by the genealogies of the ruling clans, most of the Bantu tribes of North Kavirondo have been in the district only for ten or fifteen generations, which would correspond to a period of between 200 and 350 years. Probably they had settled in Central Kavirondo (along the gulf) as well as in the western part of North Kavirondo before the southward migration of the Nilotic Jaluo began. Under the pressure of the Luo migration, which drove a sort of wedge from the north-west (between Lake Kioga and Mount Elgon) to the south-east, the Bantu advanced farther into uninhabited North Kavirondo as well as across the gulf and through the Nyando Valley to South Kavirondo.[1] After the southward migration

[1] According to entries in the district records at Kisii in South Kavirondo, the Avagusii (Kisii) formerly lived in the low-lying regions to the north and the east of the Kavirondo Gulf, viz. the Mugirangu in Uyoma and the Kitoto in Kano (in the Nyando Valley). Their southward migration was caused towards the end of the eighteenth century by the Jaluo coming from the north-west and pushing forward in a south-easterly direction. On the question of the migrations of Bantu and Nilotes in this area cf. also Macdonald, J. R. L., 'Notes on the Ethnology of Tribes

of the Nilotic Jaluo had come to an end, further Bantu possibly migrated from Busoga in an easterly direction towards North Kavirondo (the Hayo, Marach, and Holo). This assumption not only tallies with the traditions of these three tribes, but it also explains why a group of Bantu tribes lives between the Nilotic Jaluo in Central Kavirondo and the Nilotic Jopadhola (to the west of Tororo in the Budama District of the Eastern Province of Uganda).

A comparative survey of the different Bantu Kavirondo dialects is in full agreement with these migratory traditions. From the phonological point of view, the following four groups of dialects can be distinguished:

1. Luhanga (dialect spoken by the Wanga), Lutsotso, Lunyore, Lutiriki, Luisuxa, Luidaxo.
2. Luvugusu.
3. Lunyala (Kakalelwa), Lusamia.
4. Lurogoli.

English	*Hanga*	*Vugusu*	*Logoli*	*Nyala (Kakalelwa)*
(1) *My wife*	omuxasi wandje	ómuxasi wase	omukali wange	omuxasi wange
My wives	avaxasi vandje	váxasi vase	avakali vange	avaxasi vange
(2) *My tree*	omusala gwandje	gumurongoro gwase	omusala gwange	omusala gwange
My trees	emisala djiandje	gimirongoro giase	emisala djange	emisala gyange
(3) *My thing*	eʃindu ʃiandje	sísindu siase	ekindu kyange	esinyu siange
My things	eʃindu ʃiandje	vívindu viase	evindu vyange	evinyu viange
(4) *My sheep*	ligondi liandje	líxese liase	ligondi liange	ekondi liange
My sheep	amagondi gandje	kámaxese kase	amagondi gange	amakondi kange
(5) *My cow*	iŋombe yandje	éxafu yase	eŋombe yange	eŋombe yange
My cows	tsiŋombe tsiandje	tʃíxafu tʃase	edziŋombe dziange	eŋombe tjiange
(6) *My tongue*	olulimi luandje	lúlimi luase	olulimi luange	olulimi luange
My tongues	tsinimi tsiandje	tʃínimi tʃase	edzinimi dziange	enimi tjiange
(7) *My flour*	ovusie vuandje	vúvusi vwase	ovusi vwange	ovusie vuange
(8) *My small hut*	axasimba xandje	xásimba xase	akasimba kange	axasimba xange
My small huts	orusimba ruandje	rúsimba ruase	otusimba twange	otyusimba twange
(9) *My big cow*	ogugombe gwandje	kúxafu kwase	ogugombe gwange	okukombe kwange
My big cows	emigombe djiandje	kímixafu kiase	emigombe djange	emikombe kiange

As the above diagram shows, the plosives in Lurogoli correspond to fricatives or affricatives in Luhanga and Luvugusu. *ng* in Lurogoli is *ndj* (or *ntj*) or *s*; *k* becomes *x*, *s*, or *ʃ*; *t* becomes *r*. Luvugusu, which is practically identical with Lugishu, is furthermore characterized by double prefixes (*gumu-*, *gimi-*, *sisi-*, *vivi-*, &c.). Also from the semantic point of view it stands rather apart from the other Bantu Kavirondo dialects. Lunyala, which is almost identical with Lusamia, phonologically seems to occupy an

met with during Progress of the Juba Expedition of 1897–1909', *J.A.I.* vol. xxix, p. 242. The view expressed there that the 'Negro Nyifa' (Jaluo) lived in Kavirondo already before the Bantu who subsequently came into the country as conquerors seems, however, to contradict all the other evidence, as in the tribal traditions of the Bantu Kavirondo there is no talk of wars of conquest against the Jaluo, but only of a gradual recoiling from their pressure. Cf. Northcote, 1907, p. 58: 'They (the Jaluo) state that they came from the north-west under one big chief and that when they again became too numerous they split up into smaller chieftaincies.' See also Sir H. Johnston, 1902, vol. ii, p. 765; J. Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 276; N. Stam, 1919, p. 968; C. W. Hobley, 1929, pp. 172–3, and 1903, vol. xxxiii, p. 328.

intermediary position between the Logoli and the Hanga dialects. It further differs from the other dialects in that the singular prefix of the fourth noun class (*li-*, *ma-*) is *e-* instead of *li-* and that the plural prefix of the fifth and the sixth classes is likewise *e-* instead of *edzi-* (or *tsi-*). Between the various sub-dialects of the Hanga group there are only minor phonological differences. Thus, Luhanga *d* frequently becomes *t* in Lutiriki; *v* becomes *f*, while Luhanga *i* becomes *yi* in Lunyole.

The political relations between the various tribes were formerly largely determined by the degree of their linguistic, ethnical, and genealogical relationship (cf. vol. ii). Although hostilities even between closely related neighbouring tribes seem to have been frequent enough, a clear distinction was made between tribes regarded as traditional enemies and those with whom one entered only into occasional feuds which then were not settled with sharp weapons but merely by the use of clubs and poles, although the old men insist that these latter weapons too were occasionally used to inflict fatal injuries.[1] Tribes that were on friendly terms with one another maintained regular marriage relations (even though the rule was to marry within the same tribe, cf. p. 393), while in the case of traditional enemy tribes it was customary to marry only women who had been captured as children, and who had then been brought up in accordance with the tribal pattern.

In the sense of this distinction, the Vugusu regarded the Gishu, Tadjoni, Kabras, and Kakalelwa as 'friendly neighbours', while they looked upon the Teso, Wanga, and Masai as their traditional enemies. The Idaxo maintained friendly relations with the Logoli and Tiriki and fought the Tsotso, Isuxa, Nandi, and Masai. The Tsotso again were essentially on good terms with the Marama, Wanga, Kisa, and Tiriki and hostile towards the Vugusu. The Logoli, finally, were friends with the Tiriki, Idaxo, and Nyole, but sworn enemies of the Nilotic Jaluo, Nyangori, and Nandi.

As regards their traditional culture, the general homogeneity prevailing throughout the district in all essential aspects of native custom is broken by certain local differences. These are due partly to indigenous local developments and, for the greater part, to influence issuing from neighbouring non-Bantu tribes. Such regional differences are most pronounced in the sphere of economic life. Whereas all Bantu Kavirondo are both pastoral and agricultural, cattle-keeping is far more important in the northern part of the district (among the Vugusu), while agriculture is more highly developed among the southern tribes, particularly among the Logoli, Nyole, Idaxo, and Tiriki.

As regards the development of their political institutions, the Wanga occupy a special place. The Nilotic influence is most pronounced in the southern and south-western parts of the district. It manifests itself, for instance, in the custom of knocking out the lower incisors, not practised in

[1] This distinction in the use of weapons was made by all my informants among the different tribes (Logoli, Tiriki, Nyole, Marama, Tsotso) so persistently and emphatically that it appears to be significant.

the northern part of the district; furthermore (among the tribes along the western border of North Kavirondo) in the absence or the sporadic or restricted practice of circumcision and initiation rites (cf. p. 336), and probably also in the manner of thatching the roofs of their huts which, among the Logoli and the Nyole, are terraced (as among most Nilotic tribes),[1] while among the remaining Bantu Kavirondo tribes the roofs are evenly thatched. In the eastern and north-eastern parts of the district, the clothing, ornaments, weapons, and style of hairdressing have been largely copied from the Masai and Nandi. Another obvious Nilo-Hamitic feature is the circumcision age-class system among the Vugusu which, in contrast to that prevailing among the other Bantu Kavirondo tribes, is subdivided into several sections and sub-sections for each age-class (cf. below, p. 375).

As regards their physical appearance, the Bantu Kavirondo are mostly tall and well proportioned, especially the men; the women frequently have very broad hips and short limbs. Individual natives attain a height of between 1·85 and 1·90 metres, the average height of the men being somewhere round 1·70 to 1·75; exact anthropological measurements of a major number of individuals, however, have so far not yet been taken.[2] The majority of the natives give the impression of being healthy and robust. With the exception of the aged, and especially of the old women, they are, as a rule, well nourished, even though obesity is a very rare exception which I have never been able to observe among married women and, as regards men, only in the case of a few wealthy chiefs and headmen. The prevailing colour of the skin is a dark chocolate-brown; occasionally, however, one also sees light-skinned individuals.

Head and face are moderately long, the back of the head often pronounced and pleasantly rounded; the nose is straight and only fairly broad and flat, and the lips, although full, are not very thick. The Nilotic Jaluo in their characteristic representatives are clearly distinguished from the prevailing Bantu type by much thicker lips which are seldom quite closed, so that the teeth usually show, furthermore by a squat nose with very broad nostrils and, on the whole, coarser though not uglier features. Occasionally this Nilotic type is also met with among the Bantu, particularly in the south-western part of the district where intermarriage between Bantu and Nilotes occurs more frequently. A second 'non-Bantu type', which I noticed particularly among the Isuxa and the Vugusu, is characterized by eyes lying deep in their sockets, a very flat nose especially at its root, broad nostrils, a protruding mouth and chin, a big mouth, and a long upper lip,

[1] Among the Jaluo, however, roofs are nowadays thatched evenly as among the majority of Bantu tribes. If the terraced roof encountered among the Logoli is actually due to Nilotic influence, this must date back to early times. Cf. also Sir Harry Johnston, 1902, vol. ii, p. 772.

[2] Cf. Sir Harry Johnston, 1902, vol. ii, pp. 496–7. The height of stature given there for 8 Kavirondo men (Bantu and Nilotes) amounts to an average of 175·6 cm., with a minimum of 168·7 and a maximum of 183·9 cm.

often convexly curved. Apart from this strikingly ugly and primitive type, one occasionally encounters natives with an Ethiopian strain which manifests itself in a narrow, longish face, a thin, slightly aquiline nose, and comparatively thin lips.

The general impression which the Bantu Kavirondo give by their physical appearance is summed up by Joseph Thomson[1] in the following words:

'The Wakavirondo are by no means attractive in their appearance and they contrast unfavourably with the Masai. Their heads are of a distinctly lower type, eyes dull and muddy, jaws somewhat prognathous, mouth unpleasantly large, and lips thick, projecting and everted—they are in fact true negroes. Their figures are better, though only among unmarried young women could they be said to be in any sense pleasing to look at. Among the married the abdomen is aggressively protuberant and roughly tattooed without betraying any attempt at ornamentation.'

Sir Harry Johnston arrives at a considerably more favourable judgement when he writes:[2]

'The Kavirondo proper (meaning the Bantu Kavirondo) . . . are, as a rule, a handsome race of negroes, exhibiting sometimes, especially among the men, really beautiful physical proportions and statuesque forms. Here and there, as throughout most of the negro races . . . there are reversions to an ugly and inferior type representing the Pygmy-Prognathous element which formed the first stratum of the human population in nearly all Negro Africa.'

Of these two judgements that of Thomson would appear to be rather unfriendly, but it must be taken into account that in returning his verdict on the physical appearance of the Bantu Kavirondo he was still under the impression of the Masai with whom, of course, they compare unfavourably. In characterizing the facial features of the Bantu Kavirondo, Thomson evidently had in mind the more inferior type which, however, would appear to me to be definitely in the minority.

To make a summary statement on the mental and moral qualities of the Bantu Kavirondo will be relevant only if based on a broad comparative knowledge of a large number of different tribes and not merely on contact with this one group. Hobley, who during a lifetime of administrative practice came to know practically all native tribes of Kenya, thus writes of the Bantu Kavirondo:[3]

'The great point about the Kavirondo (Bantu), however, was that they were men. Once they were beaten they readily made peace and, once they had made peace, it *was* peace, for within a few hours the women were in camp selling food, and one had no anxiety about a subsequent treacherous attack either at night or on the road. Under these circumstances mutual respect gradually supervened and we became great friends.'

[1] J. Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, p. 423.
[2] Sir H. Johnston, 1902, vol. ii, p. 726.
[3] C. W. Hobley, 1929, pp. 87–8.