

CHAPTER 9
PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETIES IN EAST AFRICA
PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETIES IN UGANDA
THE ITESO SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE ITESO

1. The Iteso migrated from Karamoja to the region of Salisbury, particularly Kumi and Soroti in Usuku.
2. Iteso belonged to the Plain Nilotes group.
3. It is believed that they came from Ethiopia.
4. They first settled in Karamoja, where they lived with the Karamoja, but due to overpopulation and other related factors, they migrated further inland into Uganda.
5. They finally settled in Kumi and Soroti areas from where they got the name “Iteso”.
6. Currently, they are found in Kumi, Mbale, Amuria, Kaberamaido, Katakwi and other parts of Kenya.
7. **Politically** they were established society but they had no centralised administration. It was therefore a segmentary society.
8. Had clans as their important political units. They called them “Ateker”.
9. Their clans were made up of many extended families.
10. Several clans combined in an administrative council called “Eitela”
11. The Iteso had no standing army but it could be organised in need.
12. Military commanders like Ogutu, Oruwon Emilu, and Maliry were important.
13. Chiefs called Emurimor were always very important and they performed political as well as social obligations like rain making.
14. Clan meetings were often called to discuss important issues that is to say “Etem” social organisation of the Iteso.
15. **Socially** among the Iteso, Age set called “Aturi” that consisted of people of same age were important.
16. Members of the same origin, backgrounds and ancestral origin treated themselves as brothers and sisters hence a high sense of unity was created.

17. Children were not allowed to eat before elders, that is to say elders were highly respected by the young ones.
18. The Emuron acted as not only a spiritual but also as a religious leader in society, as such, he offered sacrifice on behalf of his subjects.
19. Marriage and birth ceremonies were always organised among the Iteso and these greatly led to unity within the society.
20. Iteso had a lot of socialisation and togetherness exemplified by doing things like fishing, hunting and so on together.
21. Emurons (divine leaders) could foretell danger like famine, drought, etc.
22. Penalty for theft was death.
23. Hardworking members in society were rewarded
24. Men could marry more than one wife. The Iteso therefore practised polygamy.
25. They believed in a super-natural being but this super-natural being was worshiped through mediators like “Apa” the god of peace, “Edeke” the god for calamities and so on.
26. **Economically** fishing was carried out among the Iteso.
27. Crafts for domestic and trade purposes were also important.
28. Hunting too was important and supplemented food.
29. Cattle were used for food, bride price and horns for music instrument.
30. They Iteso traded across other tribes like Acholi.
31. They carried out subsistence agriculture where millet, sorghum, ground nuts and simsim among others were grown.
32. Pottery and woodwork too were important.
33. Sowing and planting were done by women whereas men cleared the lands hence specialization.
34. Pastoralism was carried out where cattle, goats, and other animals were kept.

THE KARAMOJONG SOCIETY

THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF THE KARAMOJONG SOCIETY

1. Politically the Karamojong belonged to plain Nilotes group.
2. It is believed that the Karamojong came from Ethiopia during the 15th century.

3. They were closely related to the Iteso, Turkana, Masai and Kumam.
4. Their tradition indicates that during the migration of the Plain Nilotes from Ethiopia, they reached the mount Moroto areas and the old people, “Mojong” who could not move any more decided to stay here hence the word “Kara”. They became known as “Kara Mojong” meaning the “old people stayed”.
5. They Karamojong were also on the move and therefore they did not have any form of political organisation.
6. Their political issues were handled by the elders within the society.
7. Political issues were handled by only men.
8. War among the Karamojong was highly valued. Success in battles improved one’s status.
9. The Karamojong carried out mock fights to ensure mastery of war.
10. During the initiation of the youth into adulthood, they taught them how to use spears, arrows and shields.
11. Sometimes a youth was confirmed a man after killing a lion. He was considered very brave.
12. To increase on the number of animals, the Karamojong carried out raids.
13. They fought their neighbours like the Turkana and Iteso.
14. The Karamojong had no standing army. Warriors were organised any time incase of any external invasion.
15. The basic political unit was the clan.
16. **Economically** the main activity of the Karamojong was cattle keeping.
17. Raids were always carried out with their neighbours for cattle. The Karamojong believed that all the cattle in the world were theirs.
18. They grew crops seldomly, for example cassava and sorghum were planted.
19. They also occasionally carried out trade with their neighbours like the Iteso.
20. They made shoes and clothes out of the animal skins.
21. The Karamojong lived on their animal meat, milk, hides and blood which they extracted from their animals.
22. Women among the Karamojong milked cows.
23. They constructed heavy thorn enclosures to protect their animals from external attacks like raids and Lions.

24. They carried out craft works where stools, ropes and wooden utensils were made for domestic use and for sale.
25. The poor Karamojong offered themselves as domestic servants to the Iteso and Langi.
26. Of late the Karamojong are involved in local gold mining and selling.
27. **Socially** the Karamojong highly believed in ancestral spirits.
28. Before going for war, the Karamojong offered sacrifices and prayed to their spirits.
29. The youth underwent military training before during initiation.
30. It was social obligation for the youth to carry out raids for animals, especially cattle. This was done after mastery of the skills of how to fight using spears, arrows and shield.
31. The Karamojong believed in a god the creator. They referred to him as “Akuj Papa”.
32. The major food of the Karamojong was meat, milk, blood, cassava and sorghum.
33. Marriage was carried out but one was to part with hundred herds of cattle to the family of the girl.
34. Beer parties were organised as a social function. They made their beer from sorghum.
35. The Karamojong highly believed in witchcrafts and they practiced it, for example they smeared their spears with poison so that a slight touch on it was enough to kill someone.
36. Much of the domestic work among the Karamojong was carried out by women.
37. Wealthy homes were enclosed by thorny bushes to protect animals from wild animals and external invaders.
38. They had temporary homes because they were mobile. These were built from branches and grass.

Revision questions

Describe the social, political and economic organisation of the Iteso.

How were the Karamojong society organised politically, socially and economically?

THE ACHOLI SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE ACHOLI SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Acholi were part of the Luo speaking people who moved from Bahr el Ghazel in Southern Sudan.
2. The Acholi emerged as a result of intermarriage between the Luo group that moved away from Pubungu and went Eastwards under the leadership of Labongo and settled among the

Sudanic Madi in the present day Acholi land and intermarried with them producing the Acholi.

3. The Acholi had chieftaincies with leaders or chiefs called “Rwot” who ruled them.
4. Each of the chieftaincies was independent but had the same system of leadership.
5. The chiefs were assisted by village chiefs called “Jago” whom they appointed by themselves and fire at will.
6. The “Jago” had the responsibilities of collecting taxes.
7. They also maintained security within their areas of jurisdiction.
8. Among the Acholi political divisions, a family was the smallest and basic political unit.
9. Each of the chiefs was assisted by a council of elders who offered pieces of advice of how to handle the chieftaincy.
10. Elders also assisted in maintaining law, order and peace in the society.
11. The Acholi did not have a readily available army but incase of any attack, young energetic men would be mobilized to defend the clan.
12. **Economically** the Acholi kept animals especially cattle, goats, sheep and poultry.
13. Land among the Acholi was communally owned. It belonged to the clan who distributed to the members.
14. They grew crops like millet, sorghum, cassava, peas, groundnuts, simsim and bananas.
15. Women among the Acholi cultivated while men went out hunting and cleared new land for cultivation.
16. The Acholi also carried out hunting as part of their economic activities.
17. Fishing was also carried out to supplement their diet.
18. They traded with their neighbours like the Langi and Sudanese tribes in Sudan.
19. Taxes and tributes were collected from the subjects by the “Jago” for the “Rwot”.
20. Local crafts like mats, hats, drums, pots, stools, bowls and many others were made among the Acholi for sale and domestic use.
21. **Socially** different clans belonging to different ancestries.
22. Among the Acholi the family was the smallest and basic unit.
23. The head of each family was charged with the responsibility of disciplining the members incase of wrong doing.
24. The Acholi believed in one supreme God called “Lubaanga”.

25. They feared evil spirits called “Jogi” or “Jo- achen” whom they accused of bringing disorder like sicknesses, mental instability among others.
26. “Rwot” played a big role as spiritual leader among the Acholi community.
27. Sacrifices were offered to appease the spirits of departed dear ones.
28. The youth were organised into age groups to have them ready for various political and social functions.
29. Marriage took place at puberty. All grown up youth were encouraged to marry and bride price was a must to the girl’s family.
30. The Acholi totally discouraged sexual immorality.
31. The Acholi respected animals because they believed that it was the ancestors who had returned.

Revision question

How were the Acholi organised during the 18th and 19th century?

THE LANGI SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE LANGI SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Langi were not part of the main River-lake Nilotes or the Luo migrants who settled into East Africa.
2. They emerged out of intermarriage and influence from the Luo migrants and the Ateker speaking who were part of the Karamojong and the Iteso who separated from the areas of Mount Moroto in the present day Moroto District.
3. The Ateker moved as far as Mount Otuke where they were met by the Luo migrants who influenced them and others intermarried with them to give rise to the Langi.
4. The Langi were organised into small political units based on clans called “Ateker” made up of members of the same descent.
5. A clan could cover as wide as two or more villages. The biggest clan would dominate the small ones.

6. Each clan had its own leader called “Jago Atekere”.
7. The most powerful and dominant clan provided the Paramount chief called “ Won Nyaci” who exercised a lot of influence over the rest of the clans and villages.
8. The Langi were warriors who raided and caused constantly conflicts against their neighbours.
9. The Langi did not have a standing army but in case of external attacks, all the clans could raise young energetic men to form warriors and face the enemies.
10. **Economically** the Langi were a pastoral society who kept animals such as cows, goats, sheep and poultry.
11. They were also good at farming. They grew crops like millet and sorghum for both food and brewing beer called “Kongo ting”.
12. The Langi carried out hunting where wild animals were killed for their meat. Animals like elephant were hunted for ivory for sale in addition to providing meat.
13. They also traded with their neighbours like the Acholi and Banyoro.
14. Raids were also carried out to provide more wealth. They raided neighbours like the Madi in west Nile and Banyoro from whom they obtained slaves, cattle, goats and sheep.
15. The Langi carried out taxation especially among the traders who passed through their land like the Arabs. This was done as a source for more wealth.
16. The Langi were also iron workers from which they made iron tools and implements like spears, arrows, hoes, axes among others.
17. Land among the Luo was communally owned although each members knew what belonged to them. The responsibility of how to shared land lay on the clan leaders and the elders.
18. Communal work was also emphasized especially during the periods of planting and harvesting of crops
19. **Socially** the Langi were organised into small political units based on clans called “Atekere” made up of members of the same ancestry.
20. The Langi lived in communities or settlements comprising of 50 – 100 people for security reasons.
21. At fire places in the evening, elders guided the young ones on social behaviors of the society for peaceful existence.
22. Communal works were common among the Langi for faster and effective working.
23. The Langi also believed in the supreme God called “Obanga”.

24. There also existed diviners who healed the sick, made rain, interpreted death, and also could make barren women conceive.
25. Their emblem was a rhinoceros called “Amuka”.
26. Music and dance festivals were frequently organised for social celebration and entertainments. This was majorly during dry seasons when work had subsided.

Revision question

Describe the political, social and economic organization of the Langi

PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETIES IN TANGANYIKA

NYAMWEZI SOCIETY

ORIGIN OF THE NYAMWEZI SOCIETY

1. The word “Nyamwezi” means the “people of the moon”.
2. The name was given to them by the coastal Arabs because they, the Nyamwezi approached East Africa from the direction where the new moon appears.
3. The Nyamwezi occupied the central Tanzania plateau.
4. They were part of Western and central Tanzania Bantu.
5. They were initially cultivators, cattle keepers and fishermen.
6. In the 19th century, they became long distance traders as middle men.
7. They provide a good example of the segmentary society.

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE NYAMWEZI SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Nyamwezi lived in small independent and much chiefdom. They had no central authority.
2. Different chiefdoms were independent from one another.
3. Chiefdoms were ruled over by “Ntemi” chiefs.
4. Each chiefdom had around 1000 people under a given “Ntemi” chief.
5. The position of the “Ntemi” chief was hereditary, so, he was succeeded by his close relative like a son.
6. The chiefs (Ntemi) were assisted by a group of elders called Wanyampala.

7. The chief elder who helped the “Ntemi” was called”Mgawe” and the army leader was called “Watwale”.
8. Below those officials still were other officials namely: Revenue officer “Minile” and information officer - “Kikoma”
9. It’s interesting to observe that the different chiefdoms had different army commanders appointed by Ntemi.
10. It must also be observed that though historically the Nyamwezi were not centralized, when powerful leaders like Mirambo assumed leadership, they formed a centralized political unit.
11. **Socially** Ntemi’s health affected society that is to say if he fell sick, society was affected.
12. Regular sacrifices were offered to appease ancestors.
13. The Ntemi was the spiritual as well as religious leader among the Nyamwezi.
14. Spirits of ancestors were highly respected.
15. Ntemi could marry many women.
16. It was believed that “Ntemi” had the power to avert calamity.
17. Ceremonies like marriage and initiation were highly celebrated among Nyamwezi.
18. Their dressing pattern was highly affected by the Arabic culture, that is to say men put on Kanzus.
19. Marriage among close relatives was highly prohibited.
20. Elders had to be respected in society especially by the youth.
21. **Economically** at first they were farmers, grew millet, sorghum and so on.
22. The Nyamwezi also kept animals like goats, cattle and so on.
23. They also carried out fishing
24. Ntemi kept large herds of cattle.
25. Trading was a very important economic activity carried out by Nyamwezi.
26. By 1800, the Nyamwezi abandoned agriculture and greatly involved in long distance trade as middlemen.
27. Nyamwezi had great control over the central trade route of long distance trade. They taxed all goods that passed through their state from where they got much wealth.
28. They practiced iron smelting, that is to say they made knives, pangas and so on.
29. The Nyamwezi were good at craft making where mats and baskets were made.
30. Fishing was also carried out among the Nyamwezi.

31. Pottery making was also done.
32. Hunting of elephants was another activity; elephants were hunted to provide ivory which had much demand in long distance trade.

MIRAMBO OF THE NYAMWEZI EMPIRE

RISE OF NYAMWEZI EMPIRE UNDER MIRAMBO'S EMPIRE

1. Mirambo was born in about 1830s.
2. He was tall, muscular, soft spoken and courageous.
3. He grew up to become a charismatic personality.
4. Mirambo spent his early years as a captive of the Tuta-Ngoni in Bugomba in 1840's.
5. While there, he learnt Ngoni military tactics which he later used to build his empire.
6. Mirambo escaped from military captivity and built a strong army which he called Ruga Ruga, which he later used to expand his father's territory he had acquired.
7. In his effort to create a powerful Nyamwezi empire, Mirambo inherited the chiefdoms of Uyowa (Ugowe) of his father and annexed it to Uliankuru from his mother's side.
8. In 1870s, Mirambo extended his dominions by wars with neighbouring people and established his capital at Urambo, named after him.
9. Mirambo later went on expanding his kingdom by conquering the Ha, Irumba, Vinza, Nyatura, Sukuma, Rwanda and Burundi.
10. Mirambo expanded his capital Northwards up to Lake Victoria, westward to Ujiji on lake Tanganyika, eastwards to the Eastern rift Valley, and southwards to lake Rukwa.
11. By 1880s, Mirambo had created a very powerful Nyamwezi empire which was only rivaled by Unyanyembe.

REASONS FOR MIRAMBO'S SUCCESS OR FACTORS THAT LED TO MIRAMBO'S RISE TO POWER

1. Mirambo was born in about 1830s.
2. He spent his early years as a captive of the Tuta-Ngoni in Bugomba in 1840's.
3. While there, he learnt Ngoni military tactics which he later used to build his empire.
4. Mirambo was so lucky to survive death and also being sold into slavery by the Ngoni when he was in captivity.

5. Mirambo escaped from military captivity and built a strong army which he called Ruga Ruga, which he later used to expand his father's territory he had acquired.
6. He later captured the chiefdom of Ugowe of his father, Kasande.
7. Later; Mirambo acquired the chiefdom of Uliankuru from his mother's side and annexed it to that of his father of Ugowe.
8. During the same period Nyatura, Vinza, Burundi, Rwanda and many others were also captured.
9. Mirambo's character and personality as a soldier made him succeed.
10. The empire rose because of Mirambo's strong army called Ruga - Ruga.
11. The Ruga-Ruga had acquired the Ngoni war tactics, cow-horn and also a short stabbing spear called assegai.
12. The Ruga-Ruga included about 500 well trained, well paid and well armed soldiers and 7000 other soldiers.
13. Mirambo personally led his army to battle.
14. Mirambo equipped his army further with guns acquired from the Arab and Swahili traders.
15. Mirambo was rivaled in power by only Unyanyembe.
16. He controlled major trade routes in his country by imposing taxes on traders passing through his area.
17. Conquered people were absorbed into Nyamwezi and recruited into his army.
18. Mirambo's neighbours were also very weak and disunited. This was a great advantage to Mirambo to expand his kingdom.
19. Conquered girls were married to his soldiers and the districts conquer were placed under his officials.
20. Neighbouring chiefdoms were forced to pay allegiance to Nyamwezi.
21. Mirambo sought respect from those using his territory for example; he closed routes to Arab traders when they refused to pay him taxes.
22. Mirambo was a man of vision who sought friendship of Mutesa I, Msiri and Tipu- Tipu.
23. Mirambo ensured that the empire always had good relations with the Europeans and the Arabs. In fact to this effect, Mirambo allowed the London missionary society to open missions in Nyamwezi.
24. Mirambo ensured good relation too with the Sultan of Zanzibar.

25. The Nyamwezi were friendly and hospitable people and that's why they even worked as middlemen in long distance trade.
26. Good location that enabled it to even participate in trade.
27. The prevailing peace in central Tanganyika also assisted Mirambo to establish his Kingdom.
28. At the empire was small, and therefore easy to mobilize into a powerful kingdom.
29. It is also argued that the death of his father, the leader of Ugowe, gave him chance to take over leadership of this small chiefdom.
30. Be as it may, Mirambo was a man of unlimited courage and power. He was very determined to establish a powerful empire.

REASONS FOR THE COLLAPSE OF THE NYAMWEZI EMPIRE AFTER 1884

1. The empire had no solid foundation. It was much more of a one man's empire that when he died in 1884, it had to collapse.
2. The empire had very much different and conflicting chiefdoms with different cultures, and organisations hence lacked unity.
3. Mirambo conflicted later with the Arabs over trade.
4. His army, the Ruga Ruga, had become less dependable by 1884. They would even hire their services to other thugs.
5. Mirambo's administration became dictatorial at a later stage and this caused hatred leading to its collapse.
6. The empire had become too big for effective administration.
7. Mirambo had grown too old and weak and therefore unable to manage his empire successfully.
8. The empire collapsed due to Mirambo's death in 1880's, he was behind its success and when he died, that also marked the end of his empire.
9. The advent of colonialism in the area led to collapse of the empire. The Europeans imperialists were determined to bring East Africa under their control and miramb's empire was not exceptional.
10. Mirambo had personalised the leadership of the Kingdom.

11. Due to Mirambo's involvement in slave trade, the missionaries had to intervene in his empire leadership which later caused its collapse.
12. Weak successors especially his half brother Mpande Shallo who ruled from 1884-1885 and could not maintained the empire the way Mirambo had done.
13. Local chiefs were given too much power and authority which later enabled them to break off.
14. The empire had civil wars especially when the conquered chiefdoms tried to set themselves free.
15. Mirambo's neighbours had great jealousy, especially about Nyamwezi's development; they therefore worked for its collapse.
16. The decline of the long distance trade also contributed greatly to the Nyamwezi empire because there was no more income to be used to motivate the army.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MIRAMBO IN THE RE-ORGANIZATION OF NYAMWEZI KINGDOM

1. Mirambo's contributions are similar to his achievements.
2. His contributions were social, political and economic in nature.
3. They were also both positive and negative in nature.
4. Mirambo first of all built a small kingdom of Ugowe of his father and later acquired Uliankuru from his mother's side.
5. He built a powerful army which he called Ruga Ruga for the Nyamwezi kingdom.
6. Mirambo built his capital at Urambo which he named after himself. He then developed it into a powerful city.
7. He promoted raids on the neighbours using his army and got income to develop Nyamwezi Empire.
8. Mirambo absorbed many conquered youth into his army that made it strong.
9. Mirambo expanded the Nyamwezi empire from Ugowe and Uliankuru to the Ha, Irumba, Vinza, Nyatura, Sukuma and other areas.
10. He obtained tributes from his conquered states and used the income to develop his empire.
11. Mirambo encouraged the Nyamwezi people to participate in the Long distance trade from where he got a lot of wealth which he used to expand and develop his empire.
12. He acquired guns and gun powder from the coastal Arabs to defend his kingdom.

13. Mirambo forced all the strangers passing through his territory to recognize him and respect him as a ruler.
14. He promoted agriculture and obtained a lot of food for trade and for home use.
15. Mirambo created peace and unity among the Nyamwezi and this led to development.
16. He also developed friendly relations with the Europeans and his fellow Africans.
17. Mirambo invited the Christian missionaries to his Kingdom and they later assisted him to develop his society.

Revision questions

- i. What factors led to the rise of Mirambo's empire?
- ii. Describe the origin of the Nyamwezi society.
- iii. Describe the political, social and economic organisation of the Nyamwezi.
- iv. How was Mirambo able to create his empire?
- v. Why is Mirambo remembered in the history of the Nyamwezi?
- vi. What factors led for the collapse of Mirambo's empire?

NYUNGU YAMAWE OF UNYANYEMBE

WHO NYUNGU YA MAWE WAS AND HOW HE MANAGED TO ESTABLISHED A POWERFUL EMPIRE.

1. The name NyunguYa mawe was a praise name meaning "pot of stones"
2. NyunguYa mawe was a prince of the Unyanyembe ruling family, but fled in 1865 after the Arabs had beheaded the chief Mnwa sele.
3. NyunguYamawe was highly ruthless, a brilliant general and a clever administrator and it is no wonder that he was among the best leaders of his time.
4. In 1874, he broke away from his own people and created his centre at Kiwele between 1870 and 80.
5. From his centre at Kiwele, Nyungu organised expeditions over most of the Kiambu County east and south of Tabora.
6. Nyungu Yamawe also ensured that the trade route to the coast and other routes which joined Tabora to Ufipa and Lake Tanganyika also came under his control.
7. Nyungu Yamawe unlike Mirambo formed a strong and centralised administration.
8. He placed his own rulers Vatwale over conquered chiefdoms and they were directly responsible to him. He gave no political or ritual power to the conquered state.

9. Nyungu Yamawe as a ruler took over the collection of ivory and valuable trading commodity from the conquered chiefs.
10. His nephew Nzwala Mino ga Vanhu was the most important of his Watwale.
11. He divided his kingdom into six to seven administrative units each under a Mutwale.
12. These units or divisions cut across the borders of the thirty old chiefdoms and this strengthened his centralised administration.
13. Nyungu Yamawe's soldiers (mercenaries) were very disciplined because they were given physical and psychological training.
14. The soldiers were brave professionals and ruthless in battle.
15. Nyungu Yamawe himself was fearless and did not hesitate to risk his own life.
16. By 1871, Nyungu Yamawe was raiding south of Unyanyembe.
17. In 1875, he captured the Nanzi chiefdoms of Kirurumo and Kiwele chiefdom in central Ukiambu.
18. When his famous one eyed warrior died in December 1884, he had conquered south east Ukonongo.
19. Nyungu Yamawe's empire survived longer than Mirambo's, although Mirambo's was better known.
20. Nyungu Yamawe's daughter ruled when he died and when she died in 1893 her daughter ruled equally successfully.
21. It was not until the Germans came to Kiwele in 1895 that the great empire created by Nyungu Yamawe began to collapse.

Revision questions

- i. Who was Nyungu Yamawe?
- ii. How was Nyungu Yamawe able to construct his empire?

THE CHAGGA SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAGGA SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Chagga belonged to the coastal and highland or Eastern Bantu who settled on the slopes of Mountain Kilimanjaro in present day Tanzania.
2. The Chagga had a decentralized society. They were organised into several chiefdoms led by chiefs called Ntemi.
3. Chiefdoms were independent and they handled their own political affairs.

4. Ntemi was the highest position of leadership among the Chagga people.
5. The Ntemi were assisted by senior chiefs who formed council of advisors and supervisors.
6. The Chagga had a chief justice whose responsibility was to solve civil and criminal offences.
7. Some Chagga chiefdoms had well equipped stronghold for defense, for example there was one at Kibosho under Chief Sina.
8. The clan members gave tributes and gifts to the chiefs as appreciation for work well done.
9. The Chagga had well organised army for defense.
10. Chiefs among the Chagga carried out political, religious and social functions.
11. **Economically** the Chagga were farmers who grew crops like millet and bananas for their domestic use.
12. They also kept animals like cattle for food and exchange during trade.
13. They practiced Zero grazing of animals.
14. They participated in the long distance trade and exchanged ivory, slaves, foodstuffs among others with guns and beads from among the Arabs.
15. Trading centres like Kilima and Machame existed as collection centres for the traders of the long distance trade.
16. They practiced crop rotation on their farms.
17. They carried out irrigation on their farms during the period of drought.
18. They made shoes and cloth from the skin of their animals.
19. The Chagga were iron workers who manufactured spears, arrows, pangas, axes and hoes among others.
20. The chiefs lived a high level life because they got tributes from their subjects, traders and farmers.
21. Land was owned individually and this made their farms fragmented.
22. They carried out pottery where pots and domestic utensils were made.
23. Socially the Chagga believed in their god called “Ruwa” whose powers included protection of the Chagga.
24. The Chagga chiefs served as both political and religious leaders.
25. They Chagga highly believed in their ancestral spirits because they discovered that blessings came from them.

26. The chief got a wife from each clan and the son would provide the mother's clan with a leader.
27. The Chagga valued marriage but this would be accompanied by bride price to the girl's parent as gift for appreciation.
28. Initiation of the youth into warriors would be done during the harvest time when there was plenty of food for celebration.
29. It was mandatory among the youth to respect elders for their wisdom. Elders played the role of guiding the youth and advising them.

Revision question

Describe the social, economic and political organisation of the Chagga society during the 19th century.

Why are the Chagga remembered in the History of East Africa?

THE MASAI SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE MASAI SOCIETY

1. **Politically** it is probable that the Masai shared a common ancestry with the Kalenjin to the north of Lake Turkana. They moved southwards to the Uasin Gishu Plateau.
2. The Masai moved from the area west of Lake Turkana in about the 17th century.
3. The clan was the basis of political power.
4. Each clan had its own name and cattle brand.
5. Leadership was exercised through the age set system.
6. The most active age set was the **Moran** or the junior warrior group.
7. The junior warrior group was led by a captain called Olaiguani.
8. The Elders administered the clan or a group of clans.
9. Elders also maintained law and order.
10. From the mid 19th century, the Laibon became the centre of political power.
11. The society was totally decentralised.
12. Once elected, the Olaigvani (captain) was presented with a ceremonial club "Oriaikha" to symbolise his status.
13. **Socially** a young man became mature after circumcision which was done at 18 years.

14. Successful raiding was a sign of social success and prestige.
15. The Masai believed in a supreme being (Enkai).
16. Supreme Being was the source of life and punished bad people.
17. Senior elders helped to organise society especially during difficult periods.
18. The “Laibon” prayed to the” Enkai” on behalf of the people.
19. Women and children were the lowest members of the society.
20. The warrior class “Moran” defended the home land.
21. **Economically** warriors conducted raids and surveyed areas for grazing.
22. The “Purko” Masai were pastoralists.
23. The Masai kept cattle, sheep, goats and so on.
24. The “Iloikop” Masai were cultivators.
25. They grew crops like Sorghum, finger millet and so on.
26. Masai traded, for example in hides and skins, pots, honey and so on.
27. They were iron workers, smelted iron and made items like spears, ornaments, and so on.
28. The Masai carried out some fishing.
29. The Masai made honey wine.
30. Men herded cattle and women milked them
31. Women did the marketing of goods.

Revision question

Describe the social, economic and political organisation of the Masai society.

PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETIES IN KENYA

THE KENYAN LUO SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE KENYAN LUO SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Kenyan Luo were part of the River-Lake Nilotes or “Jo Nam” who migrated from Bahr-el-Ghazel in Southern Sudan.
2. When they arrived in Kenya they mostly settled in the Nyanza province.
3. The Kenyan Luo did not have any centralized administration. Their leadership rotated around “Rwot”, the paramount chief.
4. The position of “Rwot” was taken by the best fighter or someone with the best military power.

5. The Luo were divided into a number of smaller clans forming political units called Oganda each under the leadership of smaller chiefs called Rwoth.
6. Below the overall chief, “Rwot” was a council of elders from all the major clans among the Luo called “Lodito” who played advisory role to the Chief.
7. Council of elders among the Luo also settled disputes and followed up criminal cases.
8. Within each clan there were also clan councils who iron out cases within their respective clans.
9. The basic social unit among the Kenyan Luo was the family which was headed by the Father.
10. **Economically** the Kenyan Luo kept animals like cattle, goats, sheep and poultry.
11. The animals were kept for payment of bride price, meat, milk, hides and skin for making cloth, and others were kept for prestige.
12. It was men and children who milked cows.
13. Raids were conducted on the neighbours where animals and women were taken.
14. The Kenyan Luo practiced agriculture. The growing of crops like millet, sorghum, maize, groundnuts, simsim, sweet potatoes, tobacco and bananas among others was carried out.
15. Among the Luo of Kenya, pottery was practiced. Beautiful pots and other utensils were made out of clay.
16. Crafts were also carried out where beautiful baskets, mats and hats were made.
17. The Kenyan Luo hunted wild animals to get meat to supplement their diet. Hunting was also carried out to get ivory, hides and skins for sale.
18. Fishing was also done especially by those who lived near water bodies.
19. Iron smelting was yet another important economic activity among the Kenyan Luo. Implements like hoes, spears, arrow heads, and pangas among others were manufactured majorly for farming and defense.
20. The Kenyan Luo traded with neighbours. They would exchange their iron products for foodstuffs
21. **Socially** the Kenyan Luo practiced traditional religion. They believed in a supreme being called “Nyasaye” to whom the elders offered prayer.
22. They also believed in ancestral spirits. They organised sacrifices to appease them.
23. The Kenyan Luo had spirits called “Jougi” who were responsible for people’s well being and disaster, for example they could cause bumper harvests or bring illnesses.

24. Intervention of the spirits or “Jougi” was called for among the Kenyan Luo at the grave of the suspected departed member who was believed to be causing evil in the community.
25. “Joacen” was a trouble causer spirit who was always very angry. It was believed to have been left behind by the descendants because the one who could have caused murder for example was not punished.
26. Among the Kenyan Luo witchcraft was not tolerated at all. Those who practiced it were trounced to death using clubs.
27. The Kenyan Luo had rain makers who were always consulted for intervention either during the time of drought or floods.
28. Animals were highly respected as it was believed that it was the ancestors who had returned on earth in a different form.
29. The Kenyan Luo had traditional doctors who used herbs to cure ailments.
30. There were secret places where sacrifices were made to appease the ancestors. At these sites huge celebrations were organised to show the ancestors that they still play a major role in society’s existence.

Revision question

Describe the social, economic and political organisation of the Kenyan Luo society during the 19th century.

Why are the Kenyan Luo remembered in the History of East Africa?

THE KIKUYU SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE KIKUYU SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the early history of the Kikuyu is still unknown however; the ancestors of the Kikuyu had probably migrated from Meru, particularly from areas occupied by the Tharaka and Ingembe.
2. Some Kikuyu lineages (Mbari) claim to have originated from Ithanga in Ukambani.
3. The Kikuyu were organised into nine clans corresponding to the nine daughters of Gikuyu, their legendary founder.
4. The Society was decentralised.
5. It was based on clanship system of politics
6. The family was the lowest political unit.

7. The family was headed by a family head.
8. The soldiers were organised under a leader who also acted as a spokesman for them before a council of elders.
9. The families within each clan belonged to the local territorial unit called the “Mbari”.
10. The “Mbari” was led by a council of elders headed by a “Muramat”
11. The office of the Muramat was not hereditary but was given to an experienced elder.
12. The Muramati performed judicial functions.
13. In case of any aggression, the youth would be mobilised to defend the country.
14. **Socially** the society was based on classlessness.
15. Laws were passed and justice was administered by those in authority.
16. Circumcision was important for both boys and girls.
17. Circumcised boys became junior elders.
18. Another important person was the “Muthamaki” who was the leader of a territorial unit called “Riika”.
19. All land belonged to the society.
20. The family and age-set were important features in society.
21. The age set system “Mariika” was such that each set consisted of members who had been circumcised together.
22. The “Riika” was important in creating a sense of brotherhood and unity. They believed in a supreme being called “Ngai”
23. Witches and evil spirits were seen as causes of epidemics.
24. Evil spirits were driven in a ceremony of beating drums and horn blowing.
25. Senior warriors would marry, and after circumcision of their first child, they became senior elders.
26. Initiation into an egg set coincided with circumcision which took place when the young men were 18yrs.
27. Spiritual leaders and ancestors were highly respected.
28. **Economically** junior warriors did duties like clearing land.
29. Agriculture was an important economic activity.
30. They grew crops like beans, millet and sorghum among others.
31. They were pastoralists who kept cattle and goats among others.

32. They traded with Masai and Kamba among others.
33. Blacksmith was also practiced.
34. Handcraft like basket making, pottery etc.
35. Fishing was also important.
36. Hunting of wild animals and fruit gathering were also important.
37. Bee- keeping was also important.
38. Their local markets included Kiambu, Karatina and others.
39. Milk and butter were used as bride wealth.

Revision question

Describe the political, social and economic organisation of the Kikuyu society.

THE KAMBA SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE KAMBA SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Kamba were organised into clans often named according to the main occupation of the members.
2. The Kamba never had a political system with a King or a central council. However they had a political structure which started with a village council and worked through three more levels to a countrywide council.
3. The councils judged disputes and set standards of social behaviour among the Kamba people.
4. The Kamba did not have a permanent army but younger men were well trained as soldiers and could be called on to fight when necessary
5. **Socially** the most highly respected elders (awe) were religious men.
6. Within the clans, the men were divided into age grades of which they were nine, starting from birth and ending with the most important elders.
7. Once the young men had entered into the fourth grade (Imwana) they were then considered adults.
8. The Kamba believed in one supreme god (Mulungu) who had two supporting gods, the creator and the sprinter.
9. Like many other African peoples they believed in the power of the ancestral spirits and that other spirits existed such as those that lived in trees and on mountains.

10. They were also such ceremonies like at birth, during adolescence and at death.
11. The fifth grade (Anake) brought family and social responsibilities such as guarding the father's property and fighting enemies. This grade was occupied by men until their mid 40s.
12. **Economically** the Kamba were mixed Farmers, they grew grain (millet, sorghum and maize, as well as peas and beans.
13. The Kamba also herded cattle, goats and sheep and they also carried out serious hunting.
14. They did not carry out fishing because there were social rules concerning the consumption of fish.
15. Some of the clans specialised in certain occupations, for example there was a clan of black smiths
16. They also made baskets and pottery.
17. However, it was for trading that Kamba are most famous and trading formed the basis of Kamba economy.
18. They were the only one Kenyan community to dominate all three processes of trading between the interior and the coast, that is to say collecting, transporting and exporting.
19. The Kamba had division of labour, that is to say where women cultivated the soils, made baskets while the men cleared land, herded cattle, built fences and traded.

Revision question

Describe the political, social and economic organization of the Kamba society.

THE GALLA SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE GALLA SOCIETY

1. Politically the Galla were of Cushitic origins who are believed to have descended from Ethiopia.
2. The Galla now live in the North Eastern part of present day Kenya.
3. Their society was decentralized and the leadership was based on age set system.
4. The Galla were very violent and highly held at esteem over a wide area in Kenya.
5. Each age group had a leader called "Abba-Boku" who presided over meetings and prepared laws.

6. “Abba-Boku” was assisted by three other elders who were chosen from renowned families and had to be men of higher age.
7. The Galla did not like the present of foreigners in their area.
8. Boys started training as warriors from the age of ten. They would carry equipments like spears and shield to the battlefields.
9. Promotions were carried out among the Galla. This was done after every ten years.
10. **Economically** the Galla were a pastoral society who kept cattle, sheep, goats, camels and donkeys among others.
11. They therefore moved constantly with their animals to look for pasture and water.
12. Farming was carried out among the Galla and crops like peas, beans, pepper, vegetables and cereals among others.
13. To supplement their diet from the crops grown, the Galla hunted wild animals for meat, hides and skins.
14. The Galla also carried out fishing on a small scale.
15. They carried out barter trade with their neighbours like the Somali, Ethiopian and later Swahili people at the coast.
16. **Socially** the Galla believed in a supreme being called Wanga.
17. He was very powerful, protected the Galla and controlled their future.
18. The Galla were highly united people.
19. Marriage among the Galla was compulsory and it was accompanied by bride price to the girl’s family as a sign of appreciation.
20. The Galla believed in both good and bad spirits which were believed to live in big trees, rivers, lakes and on mountains.
21. They tested manhood through hunting. Whoever killed a wild beast was regarded to be a man.
22. The Galla had social functions and celebrations were actively participated in.

Revision question

Describe the political, social and economic organization of the Galla society.

THE NANDI SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE NANDI SOCIETY

1. Politically the Nandi lived in the western region of Kenya.
2. They are believed to come from the eastern part of Mountain Elgon.
3. The clan formed the smallest political unit among the Nandi.
4. The Nandi did not have centralized system of leadership. Their state was ruled basing on clans as political units.
5. Each of these political units was administered by a council called “Kok” and they ruled political units called “Pororiet”.
6. The “Pororiet”, the political units were semi independent.
7. The clan councils existed. They acted as the highest court of appeal for solving civil matters.
8. One would make an elder basing on wisdom, military experience and skills.
9. There were three main types of age groups namely the senior age set, junior age set and elderly age set.
10. The junior age group among the Nandi were warriors who formed an army and defended the clans.
11. A group of lawyers existed and they advised the council of elders.
12. The elderly group members advised and guided the junior age sets and senior age groups in case of quarrels and disputes.
13. The Nandi were generally warriors. They loved wars very much and they were always raiding neighbours.
14. They were very unfriendly to foreigners. It is not a surprise that they resisted the European from the on set. They called the white men devils.
15. **Economically** the Nandi practiced farming. They grew yams and vegetables.
16. They also kept animals like cattle, goats, sheep, hunting dogs among others.
17. There was division of labour among the Nandi, that is to say women cultivated crops while men looked after animals and hunted.
18. The major foods were meat, milk and blood.
19. They hunted and gathered wild fruits, roots, leaves and insects to supplement their diets.
20. Being hunters, farmers and warriors the Nandi practiced iron working whereby they made spears and arrows for hunting, defense and domestic use.

21. The Nandi traded with their neighbours like the Kikuyu and Masai with whom they exchanged animal products.
22. The Nandi practiced local craft making, for example they made baskets, mats and wooden stools among others.
23. **Socially** the Nandi were organised in age sets of the young, the senior and the elders.
24. After every five years the youth who would undergo initiation ceremonies, for example the youth would become senior members of the society; the senior members would be the elders in the society and so on.
25. The Nandi spoke one language and this kept them together and strongly united.
26. They believed in the spirit of the ancestors as their gods.
27. Marriage among the Hehe was polygamous and in respect for the offer from the parents of the girl, the Nandi gave bride price.
28. For the big role played by the elders in the Nandi society, they were highly respected by the youth.
29. The Nandi had a prophet called Orkoyoit who served as a religious leader. Consultation would be made to him for military and social issues.
30. The Nandi elders settled social conflicts among the clan members for harmonial living of the members.

Revision question

Describe the political, social and economic organization of the Nandi society.

THE WANGA SOCIETY

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE WANGA SOCIETY

1. **Politically** the Wanga society was found in the western Kenya Highlands in the Nyanza Province.
2. It is believed to have been founded by a man called Wanga who named the Kingdom after himself.
3. Wanga had a centralized kingdom with the King as the topmost administrative figure. It was the only centralized society in Kenya.
4. Wanga had hereditary leadership.

5. In line with hereditary leadership the Wanga fought many wars of succession because the most powerful tribe provided the king.
6. The Wanga were always ready for attacks from neighbours.
7. They had a standing army to defend their society from external attacks and also to expand their kingdom.
8. Sometime they hired Masai mercenary to help them against internal invaders like the Iteso.
9. The king of the Wanga was assisted by a prime minister (Omwekeziyor Omwikhasiya), army commander (Omusesia) together with provincial and district chiefs called Abami.
10. Each of the clan of the Wanga had a paramount chief.
11. A council of elders existed among the Wanga to assist the king in running the affairs of the Kingdom.
12. **Economically** the Wanga kept animals like cattle and goats among others as a source of food and income generating project.
13. They also grew crops like maize, yams and millet.
14. To supplement the crops grown, they carried out small scale fishing.
15. The Wanga also hunted for wild animals for food, skins and hides. Ivory was also got from elephants for sale.
16. Women concentrated on cultivation together with young girls as men went out hunting. Division of labour was therefore emphasized.
17. The Wanga traded with their neighbours like the Iteso, Masai and Kikuyu among others.
18. Local crafts like mats, pots, baskets were made for sale and domestic purpose.
19. From animal skins, the Wanga made cloth. Sometime they made cloth from banana leaves.
20. **Socially** they were organised highly on clan basis. Each clan had a totem (emblem) for easy identification.
21. They put on cloth made of goat skin and banana fibre.
22. They practiced marriage but intermarriage was not accepted among the Wanga.
23. The Wanga organised themselves into age groups for defensive purposes.
24. Ceremonies to mark entry into age group was organised especially at the beginning of the seasons.
25. There was initiation where circumcision was carried out. Removal of teeth from the lower jaw bone was also carried out.

26. The Wanga emphasized unity for harmonious living among the members of the community.
27. They spoke different languages but it was easy for them to understand one another.
28. The smallest and most important unit among the Wanga was a family.
29. Their home property consisted of calabashes, grinding stones for grains, pots and stools.
30. Music and dancing festivals were frequently organised for social celebration and entertainments.

Revision questions

- i. Describe the political, social and economic organization of the Wanga society.
- ii. Why are the Wanga remembered in the history of East Africa?