

Migrants and struggles for livelihood opportunities in the Usangu plains, 1940-2000

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This study examines migrants and struggles for livelihood opportunities in the Usangu Plains from 1940 to 2000. It has three objectives; to analyze the influx of migrants in the Usangu Plains; to examine the responses of indigenous communities to the immigrants; and to examine struggles for access and control of livelihood opportunities. Analysis of oral interviews, archival records and secondary sources, has led to three main findings. First, it was noted that migrants were pushed from their homelands to the Usangu Plains by factors such as land scarcity and over population of both livestock and people. Immigrants included the Baluch, Maasai, Sukuma, Nyakyusa, and Ndali to mention a few. Second, the indigenous communities' responses to immigrants varied depending on the nature of immigrants. For instance, they responded negatively to pastoral and agro-pastoral migrants, such as the Maasai and Sukuma respectively while the response to agricultural migrants varied depending on their origin and time of arrival to the Usangu Plains. Response to the Baluch and late Nyakyusa who arrived from the 1950s was positive while it was negative to the Nyakyusa who arrived earlier. Third, the study noted that migration to the Usangu Plains led to over population of animals and people. Increase in both animals and people outnumbered resources of the area, resulting into struggles for accession of scarce resources for human and animal survival. Major resources which were highly demanded by both immigrants and indigenous community included water for both irrigation and animal swill as well as land for agriculture and animal pastures.