

## **Pass Me the Morsel: The Political Kamukunjis of Eldoret Town, Kenya**

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Eldoret, the capital of the North Rift region of Kenya is evidently a politically robust Town. This is reflected in its resident's pleasure for 'political talk' in gatherings popularly known as Kamukunjis. Political *Kamukunjis*\*(also called *people's parliament* in Kenya) dot particular corners and streets of the town, with the working class neighbourhoods having such gatherings on a regular basis. During times of intense political activity (a run up to an election, a referendum, or party politics) the *Kamukunjis* swell. The most visible in Eldoret is one located on Elijah Cheruiyot Street, perhaps one of the busiest streets in Kenya's fastest growing city.

This study employed an ethnographic approach to exposing the internal dynamics of one of these groups. This is a study undertaken between November 2007 just before the general elections, through January at the height of the electoral violence in the country, and ending March, shortly after a peace deal led by Koffi Annan was brokered that ushered in a coalition government. Using an up-close, personal experience and participation (both passive and later active), I established the extent to which the group is organized (many have dismissed these *Kamukunjis* as a bunch of idlers), thereafter, an attempt to profile the group in terms of social, ethnic, education and gender strata was done, a stratification which reveals covert processes of inclusion and exclusion. Also, by use of a communication worldview, the study analyzed communication (debate?) within the group and the attendant norms of at play. Finally, using the findings gained in the field, the study provides an appraisal of the extent to which the group shapes participants' political opinion.

\**Kamukunji* is a Kiswahili word which means gathering

