

Chiefs as Agents of Change in Kenya: An Examination of Roles of Pioneer Colonial Chiefs in Gem Location, Siaya County, Kenya (1890-1963)



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ABSTRACT: The positions and responsibilities of District officers (Dos), District Commissioners (DCs), and Provincial Commissioners (PCs) have been widely recognized as integral components of the administrative apparatus aimed at establishing colonial rule in various colonies. However, there has been an expectation for African colonial chiefs to exhibit distinct behavior, deviating from the norm. African Chiefs should have fully endorsed the aspirations of their relatives and community members, particularly in their pursuit of political autonomy and socioeconomic advancement. Due to their failure to adhere to this practice, some chiefs have been stigmatized as vociferous accomplices of the European colonial powers, as well as despots, opportunists, traditionalists, fraudsters, and oppressors of their own populace. However, it is important to note that chiefs had a more extensive role and impact than what has been mentioned thus far. During that period, it is evident that they played significant roles in shaping the political and socio-economic development of their own societies. The focus of this study pertains to the involvement and significance of chiefs within the context of colonial local government administration in Gem locality, Siaya County, Kenya, during the period spanning from 1900 to 1962. Insufficient research has been conducted on the role of local government chiefs in colonial local government administration within the context of Gem history. Consequently, there is a pressing need for rigorous scholarly investigation in this particular area. The Chiefs in the Gem location played a significant role in the establishment and expansion of colonial rule in central Nyanza. However, this study aimed to investigate the process of identifying and recruiting these chiefs, the nature of their responsibilities, the challenges they encountered, and the overall impact of their activities on the Luo community in Gem. The research employed a qualitative methodology for both data gathering and analysis. The research methodology employed a range of instruments, namely library resources, archive materials, and oral interviews. These instruments were selected with careful consideration of factors such as reliability, validity, and ethical considerations. The primary theoretical framework employed in this study was Lugard's theory of indirect rule, as proposed in 1922. The function of chiefs in Gem within the context of colonial local administration has been widely recognized as crucial. These leaders enjoyed considerable privileges and protection, although their authority was greatly limited because to the conflicting and ambiguous positions they held. Moreover, through engaging in collaborative endeavors, chiefs play a pivotal role in driving the systematic progress within central Nyanza and among the clans in Gem. This work holds significance as it adds to the current body of knowledge and expands the understanding of the history of central Nyanza, with a specific focus on the Gem community.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From the 1870s through the 1900s, the African continent saw a period characterized by European imperialist aggressiveness, diplomatic pressures, military invasions, and subsequent subjugation and colonization. By the commencement of the twentieth century, a significant portion of the African continent had undergone colonization by European forces. The European presence in Africa was primarily motivated by three key factors: economic, political, and social considerations (Okoth, 2006). The collapse of the profitable slave trade, along with its abolition and suppression, coincided with the expansion of the European capitalist Industrial Revolution. This period saw the emergence of imperatives related to capitalist industrialization, such as the need for raw materials, access to markets, and profitable investment opportunities. These factors collectively motivated Europeans to engage in the scramble, partition, and eventual conquest of Africa (Crowder, 2023).

After assertions were asserted and boundaries were delineated, European nations were compelled to formulate a strategy for governing their recently acquired territory. The British administration in the Kenyan colony was characterized by four primary modes of governance. The adoption of the indirect rule policy by Britain in several African colonies at different periods is a notable aspect (Joireman, 2001). The system entailed the adaptation of conventional African political structures in order to fulfill the

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administrative objectives of Britain. According to Spear (2003), in Kenya, a system was established whereby chiefs were designated and granted extensive authority that surpassed their pre-colonial capacities. Frequently, this phenomenon led to the conversion of these tribal leaders into paramount monarchs or fully-fledged indigenous authorities, whose authority stemmed from the colonial administration rather than from the established political structures of their respective societies (Boahen, 2020).

The individual responsible for the implementation of this system in Nigeria and subsequently in British East Africa was Lord Lugard, a British colonial administrator (Oyebade, 2002). The system operated under the assumption that the entirety of the African population was structured into distinct social units commonly referred to as "tribes," each led by a chief. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Africa had a wide array of governmental structures, encompassing both highly centralized nations and decentralized civilizations. According to Crowder (2023), during the early time of colonial control, the limited number of educated elites experienced marginalization and became obsolete. Consequently, the implementation of indirect rule led to heightened divisions both between different ethnic groups and within specific ethnic communities.

However, it is important to emphasize that the British decision to adopt indirect rule was influenced by their need to address the economic challenge of a shortage of administrative personnel and logistical obstacles, rather than a genuine preference for African traditional institutions (Lange, 2004). Certain academics have observed that the British colonial program exhibited a gradual approach, with the intention of eventually granting self-rule to its people at a time deemed suitable by the colonial authorities (Hubbard, 2014). According to Acemaglu et al. (2013:2), it is worth noting that indirect rule refers to a colonial governance system in which traditional rulers (chiefs) were utilized by colonial powers at the local level of administration. These rulers were entrusted with responsibilities like as taxation, dispensation of law, and the maintenance of order. Chiefs frequently assumed responsibility for overseeing police units or local guards, as well as managing prisons. Additionally, they were tasked with the provision of public goods like as roads, and the governance of resources and labor required for their construction. According to Mamdani (1996), the introduction of indirect rule in Africa resulted in a notable emphasis on its detrimental impact on the political institutions of the region. This system of governance made the chiefs accountable to the colonial power rather than their own people, thus leading to an increase in their dictatorial tendencies. Regrettably, the state of despotism continued to prevail subsequent to the attainment of independence, exerting its influence over both local and national systems of governance. Furthermore, it had a detrimental impact on democratic governance. Goldstein and Udry (2008) present additional evidence supporting the notion that the continued existence of indirect rule institutions has had detrimental consequences for the current state of development in Africa. This paper examines the role of chiefs in local government administration in Gem location, Siaya County, Kenya during the colonial period from 1900 to 1962.

With respect to socio-political organization, the individuals residing in Gem (Jo-Gem) commonly attribute their ancestry to a shared progenitor named Gem, who is widely thought to be their founding patriarch. However, within the Gem community, there exist two primary lineage groupings referred to as Kojudhi and Kwenda, which consist of several clans. In relation to settlement patterns, it can be observed that the Kojudhi group of clans has predominantly established their settlements in the northern region, while the Kwenda clans have primarily chosen to reside in the southern area of the Gem realm. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there exists a significant population of settlers, commonly referred to as "jodak," residing within the Gem community. However, it is important to highlight that these settlers are predominantly concentrated in the northern region of Gem territory. Within the population of settlers, a notable demographic consists of many clans of Bantu descent, which form a substantial collective. Additionally, there exist other groups known as "jodak" who trace their origins back to the Nilotic people (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989).

It is widely acknowledged that in the context of political groupings in Gem, the Kwenda clans tend to create alliances among themselves, as do the Kojudhi clans. These alliances are typically reinforced by the inclusion of the "jodak" residing inside their respective areas. Nevertheless, the persistent power struggle in Kwenda throughout the years resulted in the fragmentation of southern clans, so enabling the northern clans to assert their dominance and govern, greatly benefiting from this situation. Throughout history, it can be observed that the Kojudhi community has exerted significant influence over the political landscape and leadership in the region of Gem. Nevertheless, during the precolonial era, the Gem community managed to suppress their internal conflicts while confronting external pressures. The conflicts engaged by the Gem community, particularly in their interactions with neighboring Bantu groups, contributed to the advancement of Gem unity. The promotion of solidarity among the Gem people during these battles was facilitated by a well-established system of rulership known as Chieftaincy. This system gave rise to powerful leaders who effectively guided the Gem people in their military endeavors (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989).

In the Gem society, the socio-political structure was centered on a shared progenitor. However, there existed robust and firmly established alliances based on clan affiliations, which also included individuals known as "jodak," primarily of Bantu descent. The institution of chieftaincy played a significant role in the perpetuation of traditional practices, particularly in the manifestation of clanism. Simultaneously, the institution of chieftaincy played a significant role in preserving the unity and cohesion of the Gem community, particularly in light of the considerable cultural blending and transformation experienced by the Gem people. The

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presence of a diverse cultural blend in Gem is indicative of the region's seeming readiness for the impending external transformation that occurred throughout the colonial era (Schiller, 1982).

1.2 The Nature and Role of chiefs in leadership and governance in Gem location in pre-colonial Period

This section elucidates the historical roots of the colonial system and examines the roles and presence of chiefs in the Gem area prior to the arrival of Europeans in Kenya. During the pre-colonial era, a system of chiefdoms existed, wherein the authority of chiefs was derived from cultural and spiritual frameworks. The Gem community was governed by the institution of Ruoth, to which they devoted complete loyalty (Carotenuto & Luongo, 2009). The community was under the leadership of Ruoth chieftaincy until they established their current territory in central Nyanza. In instances where the institution of the Chief was present in traditional societies, such as among the Luo people, Ochieng asserts that these leaders did not possess coercive or authoritarian authority to the same extent as they did during the colonial era. The implementation of this method effectively mitigated the potential for bias in the Chief's decision-making process by subjecting his authority to scrutiny. Unfortunately, the presence of checks and balances was absent in the colonial context (Carotenuto & Luongo, 2009).

This assertion is substantiated by Jagire's (2016) scholarly work on the Jopadhola Luo group, wherein he posits that a profound and intricate interplay between kinship and politics was evident. According to Jagire, the elders effectively governed their internal matters with minimal external oversight. The Gem community, similar to other Luo communities in Kenya, evolved a kinship structure that appeared to have been shaped by the political culture of the regions they traversed throughout their migration. Gem locale was able to develop a shared culture, language, and territory similar to that of other ethnic groups due to this factor. Moreover, it is imperative to consider that individuals were likely shaped by a confluence of environmental, social, and material influences, all of which played a pivotal role in shaping their collective historical experience and ultimately culminated in the establishment of a shared objective.

Based on the aforementioned perspective, it can be inferred that before to the arrival of Europeans in Kenya, the inhabitants of Gem in Siaya County were governed by chiefs known as Ruoth. The ruodhi occupied the highest position within the community; yet, it is important to note that the Luo did not possess a centralized state structure. The individuals were structured into distinct social groups known as clans, characterized by a shared lineage. The clans were structured into bigger entities known as Gwenge, which possessed a system of self-governance. According to Ochieng (2002), the governance of each Gwenge was overseen by a council of Elders. The council was responsible for the administration of justice and functioned as the ultimate court of appeal. The council facilitated the organization and management of religious ceremonies and activities. The society implemented a hierarchical structure wherein a designated individual known as the Ruoth held the position of chief and oversaw the affairs of the community. This role was supported by a Council of Elders, contributing to the administration and decision-making processes. Within the cultural context, there existed individuals who possessed specialized knowledge and skills in various ceremonial practices, including divination, medicine, and healing. A segment of individuals, known as warriors, were present within the community's standing army with the purpose of safeguarding its defense. According to Ochieng (2002), the adherents held a belief in the existence of a singular deity known as Nyasaye.

The kinship and lineage systems held significant significance. The Gem community held a high regard for chieftaincy as a prominent institution of leadership. The chiefs were individuals of high standing who garnered considerable esteem from the community. The majority of individuals in question have considerable wealth, which consequently contributed to their exceptional leadership within the community. The chiefs possessed a clear understanding that the authority and influence of a Chief would be disregarded if they lacked riches. Consequently, the acquisition of wealth held significant importance within the institution of chieftaincy, not only among the Luo in Gem but throughout the entirety of Luo-land, in the pre-colonial era (Nyambedha, 2004). Due to their affluent status, they possessed the capacity to intervene and orchestrate the provision of sustenance for community members experiencing deprivation. The majority of choices made within the community were facilitated by the ruoth, who led a council comprised of elders. The domain of spiritual matters was exclusively under their purview. The functions performed by these individuals were not entirely inconsistent with the system of chiefs that would later be imposed by the colonial authority onto Africans. The norms and customary customs of the Luo community at the Gem site gradually yielded to the legal and administrative structures established by the colonial state. The individuals in question had become accustomed to the established form of government during the period of Ruothship (Nyambedha, 2004).

The community also ascribed leadership ideals to the display of bravery exhibited by men who achieved distinction in warfare. The individuals in question were regarded as possessing high levels of energy, rendering them well-suited for assuming leadership roles in the event of vacancies arising. According to Chweya (2014), the process of ascending to the throne of Chieftaincy, as well as the subsequent succession, were conducted in a harmonious manner, even when faced with differing opinions. The society strictly prohibited acts of violent takeovers. The task at hand merely required persuading the community of one's leadership capabilities through the demonstration of virtuous actions. The legitimacy of the chief at the Gem site was predicated on the consent of the

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governed and was based upon the ruler's fulfillment of specific obligations, so establishing an implicit contractual agreement. According to Mutua and Kiruhi (2021), the permission or contract has the potential to be revoked in the event of nonperformance.

The attribution of failures was mostly directed on the ruler, who functioned as a scapegoat king, rather than towards the ancestors, foreigners, or imperialists. In instances where a poor harvest occurred due to ancestral displeasure, the ruler was held accountable for their inability to carry out the requisite rituals of appropriation. The perception of the ruler as an essential component of the social order engendered a strong yearning for their presence among the populace. However, via the manifestation of an authoritative influence that required extensive scope and unwavering acceptance, he also possessed the potential to be a source of peril (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018). Given its lack of scrutiny, the authority in question was susceptible to misuse, thereby potentially disappointing the individuals who bestowed it. Consequently, a range of measures were developed in order to mitigate the potential misuse of authority. These mechanisms included constitutional checks such as the involvement of Queen-Mothers, counselors, councilors, and assemblies of freemen. Additionally, religious punishments and sporadic peasant revolts were also employed as means of preventing abuse of power. The effectiveness of the subject under discussion was a matter of debate, however its presence was not in question (Osborn, 2012).

Asenath Odaga (1980) asserts that within the Luo community residing in the Gem region, individuals who held significant leadership roles were frequently affluent individuals or practitioners of traditional medicine, believed to possess enigmatic abilities. However, the older members of a household also assumed responsibility for managing the day-to-day social matters. Prior to the commencement of the harvest or sowing season, a senior member of the community conducted certain ceremonial rituals. These rites held significant importance, as individuals were not anticipated to engage in harvesting or sowing activities until their completion. The elderly individuals residing in various homesteads within a region known as Gweng in the Luo community frequently convened for meetings. According to Odaga (1984), individuals convened and engaged in deliberations over problems of broad significance pertaining to the well-being of the populace. Overall, the leadership was characterized by a consensus-based approach, indicating its democratic nature. The group exhibited a strong interdependence between their economic and social institutions, which underwent ongoing development as they relocated. Distinguishing between the two entities proved to be challenging. In the region of Gem, the Luo community resided in homesteads that accommodated multiple families, frequently linked through familial ties. The homestead served as the central religious, social, and economic entity. According to Odaga (1980), the composition of each elementary family typically included the father, his wife or wives, unmarried children, married sons, and occasionally servants known as "wasumbini".

The subsequent stage in the genealogical succession was known as libamba, wherein individuals who shared a common progenitor were included, typically spanning a range of four to seven generations in the past. The aforementioned lineage was characterized by its extensive landholding practices and cooperative efforts among agnates. It was widely regarded as a crucial foundation for the establishment of settlements, the construction of households and families, and the perpetuation of social structures (Pritchard 1965). The members of this group often convened regularly at the key level to engage in discussions pertaining to the allocation of land, problems arising from land ownership, and other matters related to property. The examination of the Luo economic system is most effectively conducted by analyzing the functioning of the libamba units, as these units establish comprehensive frameworks for economic, social, and political competition. As stated by Ochola-Ayayo (1976:121), the Luo people encapsulate within the libamba the various factors of friction and competition that erode the unity of a lineage section and contribute to its subsequent fragmentation. Subsequently, the subsequent tier in the hierarchy was the clan, also known as dhoot.

Following the colonial invasion, the Luo residing in the Gem region would be subjected to the authority of chiefs selected by the colonial authorities. According to Ochieng, it has been stated that while Chiefs served as jonanga, the previous ruothship system exhibited greater levels of compassion due to the absence of tax collecting from the populace. Additionally, they exhibited democratic principles and assumed leadership roles in addressing cultural matters that fostered the advancement of the Luo community. The prioritization of the colonial authority's interests over the welfare of the populace was a prominent feature of the reformed chieftaincy system. The pre-colonial institutions experienced significant disruption as a result of British colonization, as noted by Ochola-Ayayo (1976). During the pre-colonial era, the Luo community was governed by a hierarchical structure led by a chief figure referred to as Ruoth. The Luo community held a deep reverence for chieftaincy as a fundamental institution of leadership. The Chiefs have garnered a significant amount of respect from the local community. The majority of individuals in question have considerable wealth, which consequently contributed to their exceptional leadership within the community. The chiefs possessed a clear understanding that the influence of a chief would be limited if they lacked riches. Consequently, the acquisition of wealth played a crucial role in the establishment of chieftaincy, not only inside the Luo community in Homa Bay, but also across the entire Luo-land. Due to their affluent status, they have the capability to intervene and orchestrate the provision of sustenance for individuals within the society who were experiencing deprivation (Mboya, 1967).

The selection of chiefs in the Gem location before to the formation of colonial government involved a careful assessment of specific attributes deemed necessary for the designation of an individual as a chief. The physical appearance of an individual held significant importance, resulting in those with strong physiques being highly favored for leadership positions. However, the assessment of this

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individual's appearance was not solely based on superficial attributes, but rather it was accompanied by a discerning evaluation of their intellect. The polygamist was seen as a leading candidate due to the fact that his practice of polygamy served as a tangible demonstration of his capacity to govern the community. According to Mboya (1967), individuals who practiced monogamy were not regarded with great respect and were therefore not entrusted with the responsibility of becoming chieftaincy within the tribe.

According to the scholarly work of O.I. Samuel Aloo, it is observed that certain chiefs attained their positions of authority primarily due to their ancestral lineage, which could be traced back to the clans historically linked with leadership within the community. This phenomenon can be attributed to the belief that individuals who have fathers in leadership positions are more likely to possess the qualities and skills necessary to become effective leaders themselves. There existed a belief among certain individuals that contracting a marriage with a member of the chief's family would result in their offspring inheriting the position of chief. This was the situation when Odera Akango assumed the position of chief, following in the footsteps of his father, Oloo Ramuya, who held the same role.

1.3 Transformation in the role of Chiefs in Gem, Central Nyanza.

In 1895, Kenya was established as a protectorate under British East Africa. In the colonial context, the primary mode of governance was predominantly facilitated by the installation of a local chief, who had the responsibility of tax collection on behalf of the metropole. Drawing inspiration from Couma's research, one could contend that the government, much like the IBEACo, was as ill-equipped for the administrative responsibilities at hand. Due to its absence of independent existence. Colonel Colville's decision to dispatch his Valet, Fredrick Spire, as his representative to establish a British government station in Mumias was driven by a compelling factor (Dealing, 1974). Despite holding the position of a Valet, his mere presence marked the initiation of the process of consolidating British control in Western Kenya, with Mumias being established as the designated administrative center. The administration of Spire endured for an only six months, during which time he failed to make significant connections with the Luo community, with the exception of his interaction with Kitoto of Kano in February 1895. Subsequently, Spire was succeeded by C.W. Hopley, who assumed the position until 1903 (Dealing, 1974).

The commencement of British colonial governance in the central Nyanza region was initiated in January 1903, marked by the dispatch of a consignment of Union Jack flags from the Provincial headquarters in Kisumu. These flags were intended to be hoisted across the various villages in the vicinity, serving as a visual representation of the British colonial government's authority over the Nyanza region. This implies that the central Nyanza region and its neighboring tribes were subjected to the governance of the colonial administration. Crowder (2023) posits that the implementation of control was facilitated by employing indirect rule as a means to effectively pacify local people by leveraging established political units. This imperative was further compounded by the British's need to efficiently govern their colonial territories despite limited administrative personnel. Consequently, they were compelled to either assimilate the existing native administrative system into their own framework or establish a system where none had previously existed. Hence, the ideology and organizational framework of African administration gave rise to the implementation of the indirect rule system, wherein chiefs were deemed responsible for upholding social order and ensuring the provision of social services. To enhance the quality of guidance provided to chiefs, the decision was made to employ new councilors. However, it is important to note that the District Commissioner retained the final authority in making decisions pertaining to all topics (Crowder, 2023).

The advent of Hopley in Mumias led to a significant augmentation of the British administrative presence in the region. The imposition of effective colonial control on the Luo of Siaya was inevitable and anticipated. It is important to acknowledge, nonetheless, that the British endeavors in the region of Nyanza before to approximately 1897 were mostly focused on safeguarding communication networks. The labor demands experienced were minimal. The military resources imposed constraints on the extent of the political objectives. However, in 1897, there was a mutiny among Sudanese troops, and there was also a rebellion in Uganda (Ogot, 1963). The initial vulnerability of the British position was subsequently mitigated through significant reinforcement. Additional military personnel and resources were expeditiously deployed to the location, signifying the commencement of a phase characterized by vigorous control over the Nyanza region. The outcome entailed a heightened demand for porters in order to support the expanded military presence in Uganda, which posed a challenge as the local populace shown reluctance to engage in such laborious tasks. Undoubtedly, the September 1898 mission targeting Alego (Siaya) stands as one of the initial endeavors undertaken by Hopley's administration, specifically in response to the labor rejection. During this and future trips, Hopley commenced requesting labor as a means to demonstrate submission. According to Ogot (1963), it is argued that the Luo community residing in Central Kavirondo did not engage in any form of armed resistance against the colonial encroachment.

The initial appointment of chiefs in the Nyanza region occurred in the year 1902. During that period, the primary duty of the individuals in question was the collecting of taxes. By the year 1907, numerous locations within the central Nyanza area had appointed chiefs and headmen to assume their various posts as direct representatives of the government in these locations (KNA/DC/KSM/1/31/62). In the beginning, the chiefs served as direct representatives of their respective communities. However, with the installation of the chief's office in Gem, located in central Nyanza, this responsibility gradually transitioned to the colonial authority (Barker, 1950). This observation indicates the introduction of a novel paradigm of political representation within the

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region. Due to their employment under the state, chiefs in the Gem location, similar to their counterparts in central Nyanza and other regions, assumed the role of patrons for the colonial government. These chiefs acted as intermediaries between the colonial administration and the local population within the colony. However, their authority experienced a gradual decline, resulting in a limited degree of legitimacy. However, the ordinances that were implemented prior to the onset of the First World War facilitated the gradual development of the chiefs' powers and responsibilities over time (Barker, 1950).

As an illustration, a municipal regulation enacted in 1902 conferred upon the chiefs situated in the Gem region a range of significant obligations across three domains: the maintenance of public order, entailing potential monetary sanctions in cases of disturbances within their respective jurisdictions; the responsibility for road clearance within their designated areas; and the jurisdiction to adjudicate upon matters of lesser significance. Based on the 1912 ordinance, chiefs were granted a more conspicuous demeanor, as it was deemed permissible for chiefs to engage the services of additional individuals to assist them in upholding communal order. Moreover, chiefs possessed the authority to promulgate directives that forbade the manufacture of African liquor (kong'o), the organization of drinking gatherings, the cultivation of noxious flora such as marijuana, the possession of weapons, and any conduct that had the potential to provoke a disruption (KNA/DC/KSM/1/31/62).

The authority of chiefs was acknowledged by the native tribunals and local native councils (KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/272), granting them the right to employ customary law. However, it was stipulated that punishments must not be inhumane, and convictions could not be obtained through the use of witchcraft, torture, or other practices deemed "barbarous". Nonetheless, the courts in the Gem location of central Nyanza area encountered difficulties in functioning effectively due to the prevailing dominance of traditional leaders over their colonial counterparts. This may be attributed to the fact that leaders during the pre-colonial era frequently wielded higher authority compared to the colonial agents who were selected by the colonial administration (Hobley, 1965). The lack of efficacy in these courts can also be linked to the selective participation of clans related to the ruling chiefs, resulting in conflicts and a failure to establish efficient ethnic governance. As a result of this, the colonial administration was obligated to reinforce the influence of the traditional elders by establishing a stronger link between the chiefs and the traditional elders within the community. This collaboration between the council of elders and the chiefs facilitated conflict resolution within their respective territories. This practice was conducted prior to the establishment of colonial governance. Nevertheless, the establishment of colonial administration led to the marginalization of elders within the newly formed political structure (Ndege, 2009).

The involvement of clan elders in the day-to-day operations of the colonial government was hindered by their lack of Western education, which was a prerequisite for assuming such responsibilities. The positions were occupied by young individuals who had been exposed to specific elements of European culture and have the ability to offer support to chiefs in the administration of the colonies. The pre-colonial chiefs, who were previously in an independent status, saw notable changes in their position and influence due to their transfer into a subordinate role under the new political system (Ndege, 2009).

Conversely, the council of elders assumed the responsibility of exercising oversight over their own powers. Historically, the positions of chiefs were typically passed down by inheritance. However, the introduction of colonial administration led to a shift in this practice, as chiefs started to be appointed by the colonial state. Consequently, they assumed the role of direct representatives of the colonial government inside their respective regions. Due to the chiefs' subordination to the colonial authority, their level of influence was diminished compared to the pre-colonial age. This implied that individuals in question were susceptible to dismissal from their posts without prior notice, and the colonial administration possessed the ability to incarcerate them in the event of misconduct. Consequently, the implementation of the colonial system led to a deterioration in the prevailing standards of African leadership. The Annual Report of Nyanza for the years 1910-1913 made an observation.

The Jalu, also known as the Luo, chiefs exhibit a belief that the Province establishment of a council would potentially undermine their authority. Consequently, they express a preference for autonomous decision-making in all affairs, occasionally seeking input from their followers. They rely on governmental assistance to back them in case of any opposition encountered. In cases where a competent and dynamic leader is present, dictatorial governance may function adequately; however, regrettably, only a small minority of leaders align with these qualities. The prevailing portion of individuals in question exhibit deficiencies in cognitive abilities and influence, resulting in a lack of productivity or use their positions of power to amass personal wealth, so detrimentally impacting their constituents (KNA/PC/NZA/2/3).

This implies that the individuals selected as chiefs in the Gem location may have engaged in corrupt practices while carrying out their administrative responsibilities, indicating that the colonial authority had to exercise caution when interacting with them. Consequently, the colonial administration engaged in the recruitment and termination of chiefs based on their perceived need. Hence, there exists a possibility that African chiefs, above all colonial authorities, have encountered the greatest degree of misinterpretation. Moreover, it is plausible that African historians, particularly those inclined towards nationalist perspectives, have misconstrued their actions to a significant extent. The positions and responsibilities of District Officers (DOs), District Commissioners (DCs), and Provincial Commissioners (PCs) have been widely recognized as significant components of the administrative structure aimed at establishing colonial rule in various colonies. In contrast, African colonial chiefs were expected to exhibit distinct behavior for reasons that may appear peculiar (KNA/PC/NZA/2/3).

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The attribution of the title "provincial commissioner" to African colonial chiefs was a consequence of historical circumstances. For example, it would have been advantageous for African chiefs to wholeheartedly support the aspirations of their kin in their pursuit of political autonomy and socioeconomic liberation. This action would have been the appropriate course of action. Due to the failure of numerous chiefs to adhere to this principle, they have been characterized as vocal accomplices of European colonial powers, as well as autocrats, opportunists, traditionalists, fraudsters, and oppressors of their own communities. Furthermore, the European colonialists have stigmatized them as vocal collaborators. However, it should be noted that the aforementioned acts and responsibilities may not encompass all of the duties held by the leaders (Ogot & Kieran, 1980).

These individuals likely held significant sway in the political and social spheres of their respective communities throughout the aforementioned era. The establishment of the agency was primarily driven by the expansion and development of colonialism in Africa, rather than a genuine concern for safeguarding the well-being of African populations. The chief played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the colonizers, who were his employers, and his immediate and extended relatives, who were part of the colonized community. Ultimately, the chief assumed the role of representing the government to the general population (Odiyo, 1991).

The individual's primary loyalty, as anticipated, was directed towards the government due to his employment obligations. It would be absurd to expect each colonial chief to possess unwavering loyalty to their people and utilize their position to dismantle the colonial administration (Wamagatta, 2009). The Chiefs ought to have prioritized the welfare of their constituents. It was conceivable that they inflicted harm upon the very hand that had facilitated their positions and provided sustenance. This action could be seen as comparable to a situation where individuals harm the source that provided them with sustenance. In order to get insight into the manner in which he fulfilled his duties, it is important to acquire a comprehensive grasp of the specific obligations assigned to him (Wamagatta, 2009).

It is crucial to consider that the chief faced a dilemma as he grappled with two conflicting sets of expectations. The employer expressed a desire for the chief to advocate for the advancement of colonialism, while the African population had the expectation that the chief would serve as a safeguard against the negative impacts of colonialism. A comprehensive comprehension of the underlying justification behind the creation of the chief position by European colonizers is also necessary. The commendable actions of numerous leaders are evident in their ability to advocate for the interests of their constituents in various domains, such as politics, education, and socio-economic affairs, even when faced with potential job insecurity. Therefore, it is imperative that chiefs maintain a position that remains constant throughout the records of African history (Wamagatta, 2009).

Following the entrance of British colonialists, the administration of their colonies was implemented based on the theory of indirect control. The British exerted authority through the utilization of established political institutions and the leaders of many tribes, conforming to this customary practice. The process of amalgamation involved the consolidation of smaller chiefdoms into bigger territories, resulting in the removal of the natives' authority to depose ineffective chiefs and administer appropriate disciplinary measures. The implementation of indirect rule resulted in significant changes to the institutional structures and responsibilities of tribal chiefs, since they became financially dependent on the British government (Lonsdale & Berman, 1979).

As a consequence, the pre-existing processes within the governance structures of the pre-colonial era saw a collapse. This occurred due to the relaxation of the chief's budgetary limitations and a subsequent decrease in political competitiveness among chiefdoms and chiefs. Consequently, the pre-existing mechanisms within the government structures of the pre-colonial era experienced a state of disintegration. Consequently, the British acquired further customary rights through the implementation of colonial reforms (Branch, 2011). Ultimately, this led to modifications in several local administrative establishments. According to Crowder (2023), the Emir of the Northern Nigerian Kingdom of Kano was provided with a consistent financial allocation by the colonial authority. The aforementioned instance exemplifies the manifestation of indirect authority inside the kingdom. The Emirs received compensation from the British for their efforts, leading to certain outcomes. It was expected that they would fulfill the responsibilities of governance while also executing the directives imposed by the British. According to Lonsdale and Berman (1979), the British authorities imposed a responsibility on the chiefs to maintain social order and enforce tax collection among the inhabitants of the territories under their jurisdiction.

One means in which the chiefs augmented their income was by assuming the role of judges within a court system established by the British colonial administration. According to Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998), it was observed that in the Asante Kingdom of Ghana, during the pre-colonial period, the Asante chief was bestowed with tribute by the individuals under his governance. However, this paradigm shifted with the advent of colonization, when the indigenous population started to receive remuneration from alternative channels, notably the British governing body. According to Patton (1979), it has been observed that the Asante leaders were recipients of tribute from the individuals under their governance. The objective of this endeavor was to create the perception among the chiefs that they had become employees of the British government, as evidenced by the remuneration they received. Following the establishment of British power in Africa, the colonial authorities faced the challenge of a scarcity of administrative professionals available for the efficient governance of their colonies. The British had a hurdle in this regard. Consequently, the British government made the decision to adopt a policy that entailed either assimilating an already existing indigenous administrative system or creating

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a new system in regions where none had previously been established. To offer guidance to the Gem heads, who were operating under the oversight of the District Commissioner, additional personnel were recruited (Magak O.I, 2019). This suggests that the colonizers, such as the British, were obligated to appoint certain indigenous leaders to assist in the administration of the recently acquired territories, under the oversight of the District Commissioner.

Upon receiving directives from the colonial government, the British administration commenced the provision of remuneration to the designated leaders of the colony (Achando O.I, 2022). The confirmation of this statement can be found in the archival source KNA/PC/NZA/2/3: Annual report for the years 1905-1915. The Provincial commissioner's report highlights that the establishment of a Native Treasury aimed primarily at providing a designated fund to cover the wages of Native Administration officials, including chiefs. The aforementioned facts were utilized to substantiate the preceding statement. From the onset of colonialism, it was customary for the colonial authority to provide direct remuneration to the Gem leaders in their role as local colonial administrators. This persisted until the conclusion of the era of colonialism.

According to Okaka O.I (2019), in the past, residents of Gem were obligated to demonstrate respect and deference towards the chiefs as a reciprocal arrangement for the various services they rendered. These duties encompassed acting as adjudicators in the customary courts situated in Yala and extending hospitality to newly established settlements seeking integration within the Gem community. The chiefs were granted the authority to collect revenue independent of the government's provision of services due to the colonial administration's responsibility for their remuneration. Furthermore, this circumstance entailed that within the Gem clan, which was subject to British colonial governance during that period, the chiefs' remuneration was no longer solely based on the services they rendered to their constituents. As a consequence, the chiefs' diminished accountability to their constituents resulted in a decline in the overall efficacy of the services they rendered.

The British devised strategies for recruiting and appointing leaders within their administrative framework at the local level, with the intention of consolidating their colonial authority over the Gem clan. The aforementioned action was executed within the confines of the local jurisdiction (Outa O.I, 2019). As mentioned earlier, this approach bears resemblance to the indirect rule implemented by the British for administrative purposes in certain areas of East Africa, and then extended to other regions of the African continent. This implies that the appointment of the chief held significant importance for the colonial administration, as it was necessary to effectively implement colonial policies inside the regions under colonial power.

During the temporal scope of analysis, a divergence emerged between the administration of the protectorate and the establishment of the Gem chiefdom regarding the appointment of chiefs, with the latter being under the leadership of the Gem chief. In the context of Gem, a region under study, notable divergences emerged among its inhabitants, specifically between individuals who self-identified as Protestant and those who identified as Catholic. Primarily, these differences revolved around appointments that were predicated on religious affiliations, as documented by Odongo O.I in 2019. The technique of recruiting colonial leaders was met with criticism by the residents of Gem, who expressed their discontent with the approach.

In accordance with the findings of Ochanda O.I. (2019), it was seen that the individuals within the Gem community made efforts to exert their influence on the recruitment process with the aim of ensuring a good outcome in their favor. As a consequence, the appointment of chiefs became a political procedure that involved the participation of both the colonial administration and the Gem community. Consequently, notable tensions arose between the two rival factions throughout this period. The implementation of colonial governance in Gem led to the conferral of new privileges onto the chiefs of Gem, distinguishing them from the members of other assimilated Bantu clans within the region. According to oral sources, it has been documented that during the specified historical era, individuals lacked alternative avenues for advancing within the British leadership structure. Consequently, the role of chief held significant appeal for many individuals. According to Odongo O.I (2019), the chiefs assumed the responsibility of making decisions on appointments, so ensuring the consideration of the interests of the residents of Gem locality.

However, the colonial authorities expressed concerns regarding the selection process for chiefs due to the significant influence associated with these positions. This apprehension stemmed from the considerable duties that accompanied such appointments. Furthermore, this measure was implemented to ensure the meticulous selection of competent administrative personnel, hence facilitating the efficient implementation of the colonial policy within the lower echelons of the colony (KNA/PC/NZA/2/3). This suggests that the colonial rulers possessed knowledge regarding the individual who was to be appointed as the leader of the community. This phenomenon can be attributed to the substantial level of authority associated with such a designation.

The secretary to the Administration underlined the importance of soliciting the preferences of the populace prior to making recommendations to the governor for the designation and appointment of chiefs and headmen, as stated in a memorandum dispatched to the Provincial and District Commissioners in 1910. The memorandum underscored the importance for administrative officers to remain cognizant of the fact that when individuals are artificially elevated above their peers or imposed upon the populace they are meant to govern, they typically prove to be unsatisfactory and, over time, may need to be removed from power, thereby completely undermining the native authority. This aspect was underscored as a principle that administrative officials should always remain cognizant of. This assertion finds confirmation in the work of Magak (2019), who posited that the reverence bestowed upon chiefs in the Nyanza region was not solely a result of their imposition onto the populace, but also due to certain chiefs exploiting their

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authority to exploit their subordinates. According to Magak, this factor contributed to the high regard with which chiefs were held. Similarly, a parallel situation was observed in the Gem community, exemplified by the actions of Chief Odera Akango from the Gem site, who unhesitatingly employed his position of power to further his own interests, disregarding the welfare of the Gem populace.

1.4 Chiefs of Gem location and the expansion of colonial hegemony in central Nyanza

1.4.1 Legacy of Odera Ulalo

Around the year 1890, British colonists made their way to Gem from the kingdom of Wanga. It was King Nabongo Mumia of Wanga, who served as a mediator between the British and the Gem people. The rapport that developed between the Wanga community and the Gem community was to the advantage of the British. According to Magak (O.I, 2019), Odera Ulalo's mother came from a clan in Wanga. He went on to say that Odera Ulalo had also married the daughter of Nganyi, who was the head of the Banyore people. As a result, he was able to expand his power and influence over Luanda and Maseno, which are located near the border of Kisumu. In addition, Odera Ulalo was able to comprehend a few phrases in both Kiswahili and Luhya; as a result, the British saw him as an ideal candidate to help them maintain control of the area because the British government required leadership from a highly powerful community that was capable of seizing the initiative to influence other leaders of the Luo located across the area and bringing them into compliance.

Because of this, Odera Ulalo responded favorably to the request by granting the British caravan permission to take a break at the encampment that he maintained in Luanda. In return, the British assisted Odera Ulalo in enhancing the infrastructure of his administrative camp and provided assistance to him in this endeavor. It was suggested that Nubian mercenaries armed with firearms may provide him with some kind of protection. They made use of the natural resources that were readily accessible, which included the abundance of boulders in the area, to create a wall that encircled his camp and had eight entrances for further protection. Because of the nature of the stone perimeter wall, the location was given the name Luanda, which translates to "rock." On the other hand, the Banyore who lived in the area were known as *Jotok-ko Odera*, which means "those who came from Lord Odera's home" (Onyango, O.I, 21/ 1 /2021).

According to Ogot, (2006), Odera Ulalo constructed a sizable walled settlement at Luanda, which had eight gates. This village was situated at the same spot as the modern-day Ebusakami School in Bunyore in Vihiga County. Previously, people referred to it as Luanda-kodera. He was furnished with Elite Marine Soldiers who joined him on the trips that brought him to different sites like as Kisumu, Mumias, Maharani, Uyoma, Asembo, and even Nandi. The Nubian Soldiers were recruited from Uganda to defend the home, while the Elite Marine Soldiers accompanied him on the tours. The caravan that was traveling from Mombasa or Nairobi to Uganda now stopped in his hamlet to swap trade products and rejuvenate in the area. In addition to Mudhune and Odera Akango, two more Gem leaders, Ogada Odera and Mathayo Onduso, were chosen to follow Odera Ulalo on his administrative and military itineraries.

When the colonial authorities arrived in Gem, Odera Ulalo worked in conjunction with Nganyi, the head of the Banyore, in order to exert authority over the Umuri (Luhya sub-clan). Additionally, he worked along with Nabongo Mumia of the Wanga Kingdom to subdue the Iromurumba clan, a Bantu group that lived near the boundary between North Gem and the Wanga Kingdom. Because of the friendly connection that existed between the inhabitants of Gem and the Wanga Kingdom, the British were able to quickly and easily establish a foothold in Gem. (Focused Group Discussion with the South Gem Elders (FGD 4: February 26, 2021).

Mzee Ogweno whose father worked with Odera Ulalo stated that,

Odera Ulalo was the pillar of the interaction and political transformation of Jo-Gem. This was due to the major role he played at the advent of the arrival of the British from Uganda. He succeeded in allying with Nganyi when the Umuri clan rebelled against him, he fought them and put them under his control. He was rewarded by Nganyi who married off his daughter by the name Ayieko who later became the mother of Mathayo Onduso (the third colonial chief of Jo- Gem). After Odera Ulalo had welcomed the British in Central Nyanza through the intervention of Nganyi his father-in-law who had been sent by Nabongo Mumia. The British made him a leader who controlled Gem, Uyoma, Asembo, Sakwa, Alego, Ugenya, Gem, Seme, Kisumu and Kano. This means that he was controlling all central Nyanza leaders (KII, 16 /1/ 2021).

In addition, the British taught Odera Ulalo how to wield a rifle and provided him with horses to boost his mobility. Both of these actions were taken by the British. They helped him construct a safe haven between Maseno and Luanda by providing their assistance (the place currently found in Vihiga County). During the conflict that took place in Seme's Nyatigo hills, he had a great deal of success in aiding the British in subduing the local populace. During the course of the mission, a famous warrior from Seme known as Wadege was arrested and killed at Nyatigo. Prior to his death, Wadege had dispatched one Gem soldier in addition to a Somalian and a Maasai. Jo-Seme capitulated as soon as he passed away.

Odera Ulalo was able to achieve success in all of the missions he commanded thanks to the assistance of the Wanga troops, as well as the company of Somali and Nubian soldiers who had been commissioned to wield weapons. Odera Ulalo was crowned a Paramount Chief to be in command of Luo-Nyanza (KII, 1/3/2021). This came about as a direct result of the patterns that his conquests had established. The British discovered an easy approach to subdue communities in central Nyanza who were resistant to their rule by using

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the power of Odera Ulalo. He recruited his nephew, Ndeda, who eventually succeeded him as leader when he passed away, demonstrating his deftness in selecting future leaders who would follow in his footsteps. Odera Ulalo had influence over the colonial recruitment and appointment of chiefs and headmen in Central Nyanza. In addition, practically all of the early appointed leaders in Gem location were his kin (KII, 12 /1/2021). As a result of the British seeing a great deal of potential in him, he was elevated to the post of paramount chief in command of Central Nyanza. He maintained this position until his death in 1905.

1.4.2 Odera Akango

In 1911, the Colonial Government sent Odera Akang'o, the Ruoth (leader), along with a group of other exceptionally bright young people to Kampala, Uganda, in order for them to acquire fundamental literacy skills. He was taken aback by everything he saw in Uganda, but the agricultural techniques, the way people dressed, the cleanliness, and the formal education system were the things that stood out the most to him. As a result, upon arriving back, he immediately set in motion the execution of these policies. In North Gem, where he served as a headman, he saw to it that his people were given the opportunity to participate in a program that would teach them proper cleanliness, clothing, and education. This was the year that he was advanced to the position of sub-chief, with responsibility for North Gem.

Two years later, in 1912, he was promoted to the position of taking report of the whole Gem, and he submitted his findings to the District Commissioner of Kisumu. Even though he was a subordinate to other chiefs, he was very well-liked to the point that even his superiors feared him. This was due to the fact that his report was trusted due to the fact that he was an articulate speaker and excellent writer (KII, 8/4/2021). Ojuodhi and Kwenda were two of the most influential clans in the Gem community, and between 1911 and 1918, the colonial authority had to deal with two significant leadership disputes between the two clans. It was difficult to determine the precise motivation for the animosity that existed between these two groups of people. The colonial authorities came up with the idea to form North Gem and South Gem by dividing the area along the River Yala. This was intended to be a short-term solution. Mathew Onduso became the leader of South Gem, while Ogada, Odera Sande, and Odera Akango served as the chiefs, sub-chiefs, and headmen of North Gem, respectively. South Gem was ruled by Mathew Onduso.

Odera Akango was more educated than his superiors due to the fact that he had been to Uganda on many occasions. He had a habit of enforcing laws even outside of the region that was under his purview, which led to a struggle for authority between him and Ogada. Odera Akango was later appointed chief by the District Commissioner. In 1915, Odera Akango paid a visit to King Kabaka of Uganda. During his stay, he observed that the people of Uganda were attired in Kanzus, that women and children were well-mannered and clean, and that young people were attending school to learn how to read and write. He traveled there in response to an invitation sent to him by the adorable bishop J.J. Willis to attend the consecration of the Namirembe Cathedral. Upon his return, he issued a decree mandating that all adult males must wear kanzu and that all parents must ensure that their children attend school. Those parents who did not cooperate were taken into custody and caned. The indigenous people of the area referred to this as "*Nanga Odera*," which literally translates to "the civilisation started by Odera." He established a school in his community on the site that is now occupied by St. Mary's Yala (focus group discussion (FGD), 2/3/2021).

The colonial authority was successful in introducing new crops such as simsim, cotton, maize, ground nuts, bananas, and beans under the chieftom of Odera Akango, which lasted from 1918 to 1921. However, Gem was struck by a string of deadly famines as well as human and cattle illnesses that resulted in the horrific famine of Ong'ong'a' in the year 1889 as well as rinderpest, Opamo in the year 1890, and the famine of Odila in the year 1897. These events led to the famines. The Gem society was rendered defenseless against the impending colonial invasion as a result of these disastrous encounters (FDG 2/ 2021). Because of the First World War, colonial efforts were halted between 1914 and 1918. These years are known as the "interrupted years."

Odera Akang'o was notorious for his intolerance of slackness, as stated by the Kenya news agency information for development (KNA, October 24, 2021). Some historians have characterized him as a benign dictator. He is largely recognized for introducing compulsory schooling and promoting environmental protection in Gem. This is one of the reasons why he is referred to as a "benevolent dictator." Along the highways and roads, he planted eucalyptus trees. Yala, Sirembe, and Lundha are some of the places you may visit to observe some of these trees. Chief Odera Akango maintained his own personal security force, the purpose of which was to investigate all of the ongoing projects and assure the cooperation of the local populace. Because he formed a private court for the purpose of resolving all issues, the area was given the name Yala, which derives from the Luo word "Yala," which means "judge me." (FGD 26 /2/ 2021).

Because of this effort, the British rulers decided to transfer him to Teso to govern over the people there. As a result of the Teso community's refusal to accept him, he was subjected to allegations and counter accusations. The Teso elders repeatedly accused Odera Akango of raping their women, stealing their animals, and raising their taxes via the use of delegations that they sent to the district commissioner and the provincial commissioner. At this point in time, the Teso people had come to the conclusion that they would violate the commands provided by Odera Akango. A group of investigators were sent to Teso Land by the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza in order to carry out an exhaustive inquiry into the claims.

Following the conclusion of the inquiry, it was determined that all of the allegations were correct. Therefore, Odera Akango was taken to a colonial court and proved guilty. He was then jailed at Kismayu Island in Somalia, where he became ill while still in jail

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and was transferred to Nairobi prison for treatment. However, just as he was about to be released, an inmate who he had facilitated his arrest and jailing hit him with a blunt object on the head and he died (KII, 29: 8/ 4/2021).

Ogot is thankful that Odera Akango created roads and bridges, schools, dams, and wells, and encouraged agriculture in Gem for the purpose of contributing to the social and economic growth of his people. In addition to this, he fought against some of the most deplorable elements of colonialism, such as the mistreatment of Africans by Europeans, the theft of their land, and the repression of African culture. Odera Akango is acknowledged alongside the significant contributions made by other chiefs, such as Odindo and Ogada of Siaya, Kasina Ndoo of Migwani (Kitui), Koinange Mbiyu of Kambaa, Musa Nyandusi of Nyaribari, Onsongo, Ooga, and Zachariah Angwenyi of Bogetutu (Kitutu).

1.5 Colonialism, chieftaincy and Social Transformation in Gem location

For Gem community, the beginning of colonial rule can be dated as coinciding with the arrival of European personnel in the region, in particular C. S. Hopley (Bwana Obilo) in 1896. An important distinction, however, is that the contact with Europeans and administrative operations started first in Gem in central Nyanza and later reached other areas. It is also significant that Gem chiefs actually facilitated the process of imposition of colonial rule, especially the subjugation of parts of Bondo, notably Uyoma, where there was open resistance. Thus in Gem, the encounter points to a mutual interaction, and hence faster formalization of colonial administration. So there was no record of any expeditions led by the British to confront the people and demand for their allegiance. During the recruitment of labour, chiefs assisted in the identification of the people who were ready to offer labour to the government and in the settler's farms. This occurred very peacefully (Schiller, 1983:270-271; Jalang'o-Ndeda, 1991:84. This process was seen through the appointment and leadership of chief Odera Ulalo, Odera Akango, Mathew Onduso (1915-1919), Ndeda (1925-35), Jairo Owino among others of Gem location in Luoland, western Kenya, who went on to serve very effectively for many years. Many people from Gem community remember them with nostalgia as very firm, forceful, and efficient chiefs (Okello, 2021).

The mark of British colonial administration being imposed on Luoland, and beginning to affect the daily lives of the local people, was when the boundaries which had been fluctuating between subtribes, e.g. Gem, Sakwa, Uyoma, etc., from month to month were frozen. A new name "location" was given to the territorial units inhabited by the subtribes which were known to them as "pinje" and of which there were 12 in Central Nyanza, viz Gem, Sakwa, Asembo, Uyoma, Yimbo, Alego, Ugenya, Seme, Kisumu, Kajulu, Kano, and Nyakach. It should, however, be emphasized that the boundaries of each subtribe had all along been clearly defined, despite continuous sporadic fighting because of earlier hostilities over a fairly wide stretch of land left for hunting which also acted as a buffer zone between one subtribe and another (Cokumu (2001).

In each location the colonial administrators sought to find chiefs who in their view commanded the respect of the people. The chiefs in turn, with the approval of the administration, appointed a member of the dominant clan in sub areas of the location as Headman for his "Gweng his land. At a lower level within Dhoot," ie., / clan areas sub-Headmen were appointed also, following lineage principle. Granted there were cases of irregularities, e.g., nepotism, but generally there was representation in local leadership which approximated the indigenous- system to a large extent. This proved instrumental in maintaining political activities, the importance of the preexisting lineage structure guided by the hereditary principle (Ogot, 1967).

At any rate, in performing their duties the chiefs and their assistants were the agents of the colonizers. Through them, various measures were introduced that resulted in a system essentially of tribute paid to Europeans in exchange for security in their positions and military support in time of crisis. The most celebrated of those measures were taxation and labour conscription. The back bone of the colonial administration was particularly the collection of taxes through the African chiefs. As argued by Cokumu (2001), in 1910, the new Governor, Sir Percy Girouard issued an official memorandum outlining his own directions of policy, based on Lugardian theory of indirect rule. The memorandum, which was sent to all provincial commissioners in Kenya contained the following statement:

The fundamental principal and the only humane policy to be followed in dealing with peoples who have not reached a high standard of civilization is to develop on their own lines and in accordance with their own ideas and customs, purified in so far as necessary.....not only is it my wish, but it is the direct order of the secretary for the colonies, that we should support the authority of the chiefs, council of elders and Headmen in Native Reserves, and the prestige and influence of the chiefs can be held by letting the peasantry see that the Government itself treats them as an integral part of the machinery of administration. By upholding the authority of the chiefs and elders, I do not wish to imply that officers are to sit and enforce blindly all orders issued by these men who, after all, are only savages. The main object of administering the people through their chiefs is to prevent disintegration amongst the tribes, but active interests, supervision and guidance on the part of the officers of the administration are all necessary for the prevention of abuses (KNA/DC/KSI/3/2).

The colonial state was essentially concerned with security, for the maintenance of which, the administration would bank on colonial chiefs whose powers were to subordinate to those of British administrative officers. The intention of 1910 Ordinance was to tax a man in proportion to his wealth which was estimated by the number of wives he had. The argument was that although a man would be less well off after paying cattle for his wives, he was a potential producer of wealth in terms of the number of acreage he was able to put under cultivation and in the number of daughters, who in their turn, would be married off (Carotenuto & Shadle, 2012).

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The judiciary function was also an important part of the work of chiefs and their "Jodong Gweng" (Elders). Those chiefs who cooperated with the new power were used against those who did not. This had direct implications for the entrenchment of colonial administration in that it varied from area to area depending mainly on- the extent of mutual cooperation with the local indigenous leadership and the latter's own local ambitions (Carotenuto & Shadle, 2012).

The cordial relationship Gem had during the initial contact with the Europeans thus thrived and resulted in a strong bond with the colonial administration. The point is that, as it greatly facilitated their work, the colonizers strengthened and maximized the linkages with Gem and similar areas where their basic requirements were being met and their ideas received with enthusiasm (Githige, 1982). Railway and road communication networks that gave rise to major trading centers were located in Gem. This move had far-reaching implications due to the fact that the introduction of additional socio-economic change occurred along communication routes for ease of administration. The new cash crops such as maize, cotton, etc., were introduced following this pattern to facilitate supervision and eventual transportation for marketing. Likewise, the setting up of schools, and to a lesser extent, churches, was influenced by the communication network (Githige, 1982).

It is therefore significant that a branch railway line was constructed passing through Gem and a major road to Kenya-Uganda border also built. To this development is closely linked the popularization of the growing of maize in Gem; a process which was no doubt aided by the fact that Gem people had already started putting emphasis on crop cultivation in their agricultural activities. The building of schools was also undertaken to the advantage of Gem. This is especially true with regard to two high schools, St. Mary's Yala and Maseno, which were for long the only high schools in the whole of Luoland. It was because of the strategy of colonial administration of maximizing results of initially established linkages like Gem that colonialism had greater impact in the location as compared to other areas in central Nyanza (Owak & Odede, 2023).

It is, however, important to note that even within Gem itself, it was the northern portion, which was laid bare for colonial maneuvers due to ease of access, that had a relatively greater impact than the southern portion. Thus, change in outlook and material well-being brought about by education, labour migration, crops grown, health services, etc., have accentuated precolonial differences in social transformation between areas in significant ways that have a bearing on modern politics. A cursory look at the current socio-economic situation in Gem as compared to other areas like Bondo is actually quite revealing. The level of agricultural practices in Gem, including-cash cropping, keeping improved livestock, cooperative organization, marketing channels, etc., points to greater-commercial orientation in contrast to subsistence orientation predominant in other areas like Bondo (Owak & Odede, 2023).

As regards transportation and communication, Gem can boast of two major tarmac roads, supplemented by a number of feeder roads linking up virtually all corners of Gem and, of course, the historic railway line. Gem is better served by postal services and newspapers are locally available to a greater extent, Gem is better served in terms of welfare services including water supply, education and health services. Lastly, the level of rural industrialization is higher in Gem as evidenced by the presence of a white sugar factory, supplemented by three jaggery factories and widespread informal sector activities, e.g., flour mills, tailoring, tinsmith, bicycle repair, shoe repair, carpentry, making charcoal burners, etc (Harries, 2007).

CONCLUSION

This study was on Socio-economic and political transformational roles of colonial chiefs among the Luo of Gem location, Siaya county, Kenya (1890-1963). It was premised on the fact that the institution of the chief in the governance structure in Kenya brought peace, security, tranquillity and harmony among the communities living in the colonial and even post-colonial Kenya. They were not only the engines driving socio-economic transformations but also the enablers of the same. Their roles in communal development such as agriculture, education, labour organization and road infrastructure cannot be ignored. Gem location is a vast area. Therefore, the study mainly highlighted the Socio-Economic transformational roles of chiefs in Gem location generally. Some notable colonial chiefs in this history, were: Odera Ulalo and Odera Akango. The achievement of these chiefs have been discussed in this paper to mark the transformation from pre-colonial indicators to the colonial developments in the region. Indeed, Socio-economic transformations in Gem location during colonial period portrayed chiefs as very important cogs in the wheel of development. Public administration in Gem relied on chiefs as the corner stone in service delivery. The introduction of the office of chief fulfilled the doctrine of indirect rule whose architect was Fredrick Lugard; a onetime governor in Northern Nigeria and Uganda protectorate. Although the chiefs played key role in socio-economic development in Gem location, there were some chiefs whose performances did not meet the expectations of both the people and the colonial administration.

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