

Transmutation of Politics in Gem Constituency, Siaya County (Kenya)

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ABSTRACT

Post-Colonial Kenya's political composition and structure welcomed diversified philosophies and policies. It was a trial and error because Kenya was not mature enough to govern itself politically. It is clear that between 1920 when Kenya became one of the British Colonies and 1963 when Kenya became a Republic barely forty-three years. The political morphology was based on regions where the active political actors hailed from. This formation was affected by the boundary structures that had been mapped by the colonialists. It is obvious that due rush for independence Kenyans was compelled to adopt them as they were. The second challenge that emerged immediately after independence was the merging of communities together either at the province, district, constituency, or location. The other elephant in the room was the emergence of tribalism which affected mostly the metropolitan regions.

The most affected were towns, settlement schemes, and constituencies occupied by more than one ethnic community. This trend affected the political alignment and realignment of Nyanza politicians. The jeopardy emanated from national politics and was triggered down to the constituency level. In this gesture, Gem as a constituency in Kenya emerged as a replica of national politics. In some instances, the orchestra took political hunting and assassination allegations. In most junctures, the formation of regional political parties became the order of the day. These writings are based on Gem constituency politics, however, in some instances some literature cut across the indicated boundaries to make information clearer. Information has been gathered from primary and secondary sources. Additionally, the writings are triggered toward positive alignment and realignment of political structures in the nation for a positive dimension.

Keywords: Post-colonial Kenya, political composition, regional politics, tribalism, colonial boundaries, political realignment, Gem constituency, national politics, ethnic communities, governance, political parties, independence transition, and political assassination.

INTRODUCTION

When Kenya gained independence, there was a new political wave geared toward ethnic inclination, regional identity and a political witch hunt. The emergence of the ethnic component was traced back to the beginning of the social transition from colonial policy to independent Kenyan policy. Over the years since independence, there has been emergence of the political philosophy such as; *Harambee* which was the brainchild of the first president of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta from 1963 to 1978, *Nyayo* which was a Philosophy of Moi from 1978 to 2002, *Rainbow Coalition* government of 2003 to 2007, Post-violence Coalition government of 2007 to 2013, and lastly the New Constitution *Devolution* government. All these philosophies were geared towards politics of regional political inclination and ethnic perpetuation. The focus of this journal will be on the rise of Gem as a Parliamentary region since 1963 to 2017, with a particular emphasis on the political inclination as a way of hoodwinking voters.

The Role of Ethnicity and Political Influence in Post-Independence Kenyan Elections

The regional political inclination and ethnic perpetuation scourges rendered the institution of elections voiceless and mistrusted by the voters since they functioned only under the influence of ideals situation which

prevailed under the influence of the presidency. Theoretically, these elections are democratic free, and fair, but in the real sense, these elections were the perception of Western democracies, particularly the decisive role that parties play in electoral politics. Even though the initial organization of elections for independence in Kenya, which was supported by a strong commitment to nationalism, demonstrated what appeared to be a triumph of traditional elements over modernity in the election process. This was evidenced by the ascendancy of traditional forces of ethnicity or clannism in the politics that followed independence. Even some powerful nationalists such as Argwings-Kodhek who had gained their political influence from struggle for independence and being Mau-Mau advocate had to cling back to their ethnic background in Luo land for them to emerge in national politics. Due to the nature of politics in the post-independence period, they had no choice but to rely on this "atmosphere politics".

Ethnic Politics and Leadership Dynamics in Kenya on the Eve of Independence

During the 1960s, politicians acted as fewer spokesmen for well-defined ethnic communities than as propagators of division. This suggested that all politicians of that time made the same general types of claims and demands as they demanded the release of detainees and asked for independence. In fact, in Kenya, there were significant differences in the character of ethnic claims at the local and national levels and at the grassroots, both between constituencies and within a single constituency over time.

It was also found that the history of the multiparty system of government on the eve of independence was just based on regional demand. It can be traced back to 1963 at independence, when the Kenya African National Union (KANU) formed the Kenyan government with a republican constitution, accusations of tribalism gained root. It was agitated more and more frequently mainly in parliament. At first, it was mainly about salaried jobs but gradually it extended to all jobs in general. They discovered that tribal recruitment patterns which had been engineered by colonial rule were only meant to entice large areas of their interest. It was believed that patronage-whole departments and firms were in effect reserved for the patrons of particular tribes. Other existing parties that is, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) and the African Peoples Party (APP), which were in the opposition, later joined KANU, to form the first independent government. Kenyatta became the President, with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga as the Vice President and Tom Mboya as the Secretary General of the ruling party, KANU (Carrey, 1998). Additionally, in Gem constituency, when electing a parliamentary representative, Banie Apollo Ohanga who had enjoyed nomination to the legislative council from the British Colonial Administration found it difficult to contest for Gem constituency member of parliament. This was because of fear of antagonism with Argwings Kodhek who had become famous with native Kenyans by defending the Mau Mau veterans as a lawyer. He was also aware of clan tussle in Gem leadership which he knew would create a negative perception on his side. Therefore, he opted to quit politics and joined civil service (Ogot, 1995). For this reason, Argwings Kodhek from Malanga of Ojuodhi clan was preferred and elected in 1961 since he was a learned brilliant lawyer, he became the MP of Gem.

Ethnic Tensions and Boundary Disputes in Post-Independence Kenya

One of the manifestations of acrimonious interaction between the Luo of Gem and Banyore was in the delimitation of administrative boundaries in the post-independent period. On 24th February 1963 at 1.30 am, unknown people set the home of Argwings Kodhek in Malanga sub-location on fire. The preliminary investigation indicated that the culprits were alleged to be local Luhya who lived in the sub-location. The attack was said to have been instigated by Argwings Kodhek's frequent boast that it was because of him that Malanga and Maliera sub-locations of North Gem had remained in Central Nyanza. The arson may have been mainly influenced by the dissatisfaction of the Luhya who were cut off by the boundary from the majority of their Kilns in Western Province (KNA, ADM / 18A-G 23/101 1969 Boundary Disputes).

Another source of conflict was the Mill Hill Mission. There were wrangles and dissatisfaction from the Banyore community on being over-dominated by the Luo counterparts from the Maseno Diocese. This negative reaction started immediately as Kenya gained independence. For instance, the Banyore-Kisumu, Banyore-Gem, and Banyore-Seme boundary disputes reached their climax in the early years of 1960. KNA / 1 A / 187, 1964:5). Consequently, the police arrested a total of 21 suspects in the Luanda and *Miekhe* areas. The majority of those arrested were the Banyore from the interior regions of Western Province and not the local

Luhya who lived around the area. There was another allegation that they were transported from Maragoli in Western Province. There were other speculations that some strong politicians from western Kenya fuelled the rapid spread of negativity in the region. One of those linked with this incident was Martin Shikuku who held a meeting on 29th May 1965 at Muhanda where he was reported to have threatened the Luo community of Ruwe in Butere of forced circumcision and eviction from the area. Because border issues were considered explosive at that time. Shikuku statements were considered very dangerous to inter-ethnic harmony (KNA / ADM/ 1 A / 29/ 5/ 1965, REF/ C. 6 /7). Similarly, in Maseno, the Member of Parliament for Emuhaya Erick Khasakhala was also accused of having incited the ethnic conflict between the Luhya and Luo around Maseno by financing the transportation of people from Western Province to conduct the exercise of burning Luo houses. On 4th February 1963 at Koyonza he is alleged to have incited the Luhya in Maseno to fight for the democratization of a new boundary between Luo and Luhya, (KNA / AD/ 28 / 4/ 12, 1963).

Political Shifts and the Impact of the 1969 Elections in Nyanza

Things changed in 1969 following the event that affected the country and his Luo community. The death of Cabinet Ministers Kodhek in February and Mboya in July led Nyanza people to support Odinga's KPU. After Kodhek, the first African lawyer to practice in Kenya, Gem constituents were categorical that only another lawyer could replace the MP. Okero and Wycliffe Rading Omolo contested for the KANU party ticket, which was worn by Rading Omolo. However, Wasonga Sijeyo was elected as Gem MP with a KPU ticket, he was also from the Ojuodhi clan; Wasonga Sijeyo was from Siriwo Sub-location. Even though he won the election he was detained together with Oginga Odinga and other KPU MPs, hence did not complete his term. The list of Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) MPs and the constituencies they represented in 1969 general election: Okuto Bala (Nyando), Ondiek Chilo (Nyakach), Joseph Mwasia Nthula (Iveti South), Bildad Kaggia (Kandara), Achieng Oneko (Nakuru), Luke Rarieya Obok (Aleog), George Fredrick Oduya (Elgon West), John Odero-Sar (Ugenya), Oginga Odinga (Bondo), Tom Okello-Odong (Kisumu Rural Wasonga Sijeyo (Ogot, 2009). The following were elected with KANU ticket to replace the detained MPs: Odongo Omamo (Bondo), Mathew Ogutu (Ugenya), Peter Okudo (Aleog Usonga), Grace Onyango (Kisumu), Denis Akumu (Nyakach), Okiki Amayo (Karachuonyo), Lawrence Oguda (Migori).

The Formation of the Kenya People's Union (KPU).

On 14 April 1966, Odinga finally resigned as vice-president, and one by one, he and his allies resigned from KANU. His resignation statement explained that he refused to be part of a government ruled by 'underground masters' serving foreign interests, and accused the Limuru conference of being rigged.¹⁵ On 25 April, Luo Information and Broadcasting Minister Ramogi Achieng-Oneko also resigned, the only minister to join Odinga. He too attacked Kenyatta's government as no longer non-aligned, but capitalist and linked militarily with Britain, and rejected Kenyatta's policies on land, foreign affairs, federation, and agriculture. On 26 April, Odinga announced that his group had joined the KPU. The goal of the KPU leadership was to create a more left-wing party, to oppose the growing conservatism and Western orientation of the KANU leadership, and to restructure politics along class and socio-economic grounds. Odinga was forced into this position by the ideological (Ogot, 2009).

The Struggle of the Kenya People's Union (KPU)

The three short years of multi-party activities were marred by more serious abuses conducted against a political party at any time before or since in Kenya's history. His Western patrons were compelled to tacitly endorse Kenyatta's tactics for survival. One-fifth of the parliamentary party – 31 MPs – declared their loyalties to the KPU. Ten of them, including Kaggia, Achieng-Oneko, Oduya Oprong', J. D. Kali, Zephaniah Anyiene, and Assistant Minister Tom Okello-Odong, were true 'radicals'. Six more were allies and clients of Odinga from Central Nyanza, supporters since the days of Luo Thrift and Trading. More surprising, half the defectors were senators and MPs from pastoralist areas such as Baringo, who appeared to be backing Odinga more as a protest against government neglect than ideological sympathy. (Carrey, 1998). Okello Odongo suggested he had the names of 62 MPs (more than a third of Parliament) who had agreed to cross the floor, but the government's harsh reaction soon whittled this number down. The initial plan was to force a general election by bringing down the government, but several allies such as Kamba assistant minister Gideon Mutiso changed

their minds. Muliro and Martin Shikuku, too, were closet supporters but decided not to join Odinga. Ngei was a more overt ally. He refused to attend KANU parliamentary group meetings in this period, and several of his allies defected, but he did not take the jump himself, probably because he had been promised his ministerial post back. Assistant Minister Munyua Waiyaki (from Kiambu, but representing Mathare in Nairobi) resigned from the government but renounced his defection to the KPU at the last minute. The new party was even stronger in the trade union movement, although COTU itself remained under Mboya's control. Odinga's resignation from KANU was followed by that of 13 senior trade unionists, including COTU Deputy Secretary General Denis Akumu and Ochola Mak'Anyengo of the Petroleum and Oil Workers' Union. COTU suspended and then sacked them all. The Dock Workers' Union and others duly walked out of COTU. Kenyatta did not intend to permit fair and open competition between KANU and the KPU (Carrey, 1998).

The 1966 General Election and the Struggle for Political Ideology

The Little General Election took place between 11 and 26 June 1966. Polls were held in 10 Senate and 19 House seats. Voting was based on the 1962 register of voters, updated in 1965, using the unusual 'one ballot box per candidate' system that had been used in 1961. The KPU nominated all the MPs who had defected to contest their seats. Their KANU opponents were generally local notables with good party connections. The KPU, though weakened by the impact of recent government actions, still had the support of a wide sector of the country. There were KPU MPs in almost every district, although the party was strongest amongst the Luo of Central Nyanza. As well as its bedrock in the Luo, the views of Odinga, Kaggia, and Achieng-Oneko had many supporters, while others were simply unhappy with Kenya's Western tilt. The government was particularly concerned by the KPU's potential support amongst former Mau Mau supporters in the Kikuyu peasantry. In line with the views of the radicals since 1960–1, the KPU's manifesto promised to nationalize foreign-owned industries and to 'break the foreigners' grip on the economy'. In the KPU's view, KANU's African socialism was 'neither African nor socialism. It is a cloak of the practice of total capitalism. The KPU criticized Kenyatta's land policy, neo-colonial influences, and how KADU leaders had taken places in the KANU hierarchy. They called for the reallocation of resources to assist the poor and landless, and more cooperative settlement schemes, with land seized without compensation or at the cost of the British. They accepted the irreversibility of land consolidation but demanded a ceiling on land holdings. Their manifesto had to be published abroad and smuggled into Kenya, as no local printer would touch it for fear of the consequences. In response, KANU defended its policies and achievements since independence. Its spokesmen pointed out that nationalization would only drain the country's coffers, defended individual property rights, and criticized the KPU's proposals as economically disastrous. The association, which it had worked hard to establish, of radicalism with communism was well-mined. Indeed, both parties accused each other of being in the pay of foreign powers. With only 29 seats contested, there was no chance, even if the KPU won every seat, for it to form the next government (KNA, ADM/ 18A-G 23/101 1969 Boundary Disputes).

The Kisumu Massacre

In June 1969, Kenyatta announced that elections would be held within the year. Voter registration was finished by 30 September, with 3.7 million voters having completed the (voluntary) process. The KANU Governing Council nominated Kenyatta as its presidential candidate in August, while the KPU Delegates' Conference nominated Odinga in September. The Assembly approved the election regulations in early October, and the stage was set for the showdown. Observers believed that the KPU would win only 20–30 seats, mainly in Nyanza, the Coast, and Western, notwithstanding recent disasters for the government. There was little chance of a fair election even in Nyanza, with all meetings of 10 or more people in Kisumu banned in September and the ban extended to the whole province in the run-up to the polls. Despite this, the government decided that it did not wish to take this chance.

President Kenyatta visited Kisumu city four months after Tom Mboya's assassination to inaugurate the now newly built Nyanza Provincial General hospital currently called Russia hospital. As Kenyatta stepped to the dais and began to speak, people began chanting, "Dume!" fight broke out. Tear gas was used, and the Presidential Escort fired on the crowd. Calm was restored, but a furious Kenyatta returned to the microphone and continued to speak. He violently abused Odinga and the KPU, threatening that he would have them 'crushed like a powder', while Odinga traded taunts with the president. Journalists reported that Odinga then

attempted to grab the microphone from Kenyatta and a full-scale riot began. The Presidential Escort and the GSU surrounded the president, shot their way through the 'threatening' crowd, and continued shooting for some miles outside the town. Many dozens were killed, including two police officers who shot by the president's security. Virtually all film of the incident was seized and destroyed. Although the official death toll was reported as 11, the new hospital was overflowing with corpses. Kenyatta never set foot in Kisumu again. President Escort Commander Bernard Njiiu later claimed that he narrowly prevented one of his men from killing Odinga. Within 24 hours, Odinga, the KPU MPs, and all the remaining national party officials, 22 men in total, had been arrested and detained without trial. Voice of Kenya announced that, "The cabinet is satisfied beyond any doubt that these men (referring to the KPU MPs and officials) were the people behind the unruly demonstrations at Kisumu." The state's position was that the trouble was the result of the 'wanton hot-headedness' of people who 'played with fire'. On 28 October, Moi called for the banning of the KPU as a subversive organization and alleged there were plans to assassinate Kenyatta. On 30 October, only five weeks before the election, the registrar duly banned the party as 'dangerous to the good government of the Republic of Kenya'. A curfew was imposed in Central Nyanza and Siaya and hundreds were arrested. There was no significant violence, however, and no recorded deaths. Facing an uncompromising opponent, the Luo proved unwilling to take on the state directly (Carrey, 1998).

Argwings-Kodhek's Return to Kenya and Political Activism

When Argwings-Kodhek applied to the colonial government to be allowed to study law, the request was turned down. But determined Argwings-Kodhek enrolled for a law degree alongside his sanctioned Bachelor of Arts and obtained the former in 1949 and another in social science. In 1951, he became a member of the bar at Lincoln's Inn, London- one of the four prestigious professional bodies in England and Wales (Barista). His graduation with a law degree coincided with a time when Jomo Kenyatta had started a whirlwind tour and popularized the Kenya African Union (KAU) with demands for independence and universal suffrage within three years. Ultimatums had been issued and in 1951, especially its radical wing had asked Peter Mbiru Koinange and Achieng Ouko to carry a last appeal to Britain for constitutional change. Without these, the radicals had warned, there would be no compromise, but war. Nairobi had just been elevated to city by King George VI and the settlers were demanding sterner action against the militants. More so, the government had expanded its intelligence and security services Governor Sir Phillip Mitchell saw no need for a ban on KAU activities. Instead, he had started a crackdown on supporters of Kenya Land and Freedom Army (also known as Mau Mau) just before June 1952. Argwings-Kodhek would have stayed in London as a well-paid lawyer but he surprised his colleagues when he opted to return to a country on the verge of political expansion (Ochieng et al 2012).

He protested and left the Attorney-General's chamber to start his firm at the church House and was the only African in Kenya with a law firm. Argwings-Kodhek was one of the radical reorganizing national politics alongside Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. The formation of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) was an effort by Jaramogi to stop Mboya whose party was getting stronger. It was here he would earn accolades from defending Mau Mau cases-saving many, including Waruru Kanja, from the hangman's noose (Roth 1979) and (Ogot, 2023).

As the sole African criminal lawyer, he made his duty to defend the Mau Mau, and he did it with gusto traversing Nairobi and Central Kenya courts to the chagrin of colonial settlers and the establishment. Western media hated him too and dubbed him the "Mau-Mau lawyer"-which was supposed to be demeaning. Shortly after the 1953 Lari Massacre, in which 150 loyalists, including Chief Luka Kahangara, were Killed, Argwings-Kodhek helped 48 of those charged to successfully appeal on a legal technicality. It was in politics that he would emerge as a radical voice taking on Tom Mboya, an emerging trade unionist who had the support of the West, for the control of Nairobi politics. With most of the senior politicians who were the bedrock of KAU behind bars, Argwings-Kodhek was one of the radical national politicians alongside Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Between 1953 and 1956 there was a ban on African political organizations, but when the Lyttelton Constitution allowed for an increased African representation, the government allowed the formation of District-based political parties except in the Mt. Kenya region. This saw Argwings Kodhek forming the Kenya African National Congress (KANAC), but the government refused to register the name until he changed it to Nairobi District African Congress (Courtesy of Nation Media Group, Saturday, January 26th, 2019).

Between 1953 and 1956 there was a ban on African political organization, but when the Lyttelton Constitution allowed for the formation of District-based political parties- except in the Mt. Kenya region. He would say that he formed the party to stop Mboya and his "American allies" "The "Americans are not Mboya's friends, are his masters," he often said. For the Nairobi seat, Argwings-Kodhek had to fight it out with Mboya who had formed the People's Convention Party (PCP). In his campaigns, Mboya would describe European women as "Africans public enemy number one" about Argwings-Kodhek's Irish wife. Mboya had the upper hand, thanks to his trade –union connections, and since most Kikuyu were not allowed to vote, he beat Argwings-Kodhek by a paltry 395 votes (Roth,1979).

On one occasion as Mboya was returning from Liberia, he met a huge crowd of Argwings –Kodhek's supporters waving placards on his face. As Mboya stepped out of the airport towards a waiting taxi, six banners were unraveled. "We don't want your speeches or underground lies, even Americans Know what you are". The formation of Kenya African National Union (Kanu) was an effort by Jaramogi to stop Mboya whose party was getting stronger, It was at the house of Julius Gikonyo Kiano in Riruta, Nairobi, that a meeting was called for all elected leaders in 1960 to launch one national party. The meeting, called by Jaramogi had agreed that they would register the Uhuru party. The name was later changed to KANU. The reason for the May 1960 meeting held in Limuru was that the rivalry between Mboya's PCP and Argwings-Kodhek's party would turn bloody' When the Hola massacre occurred it was Argwings-Kodhek who used his British friends to raise the matter in international papers, a largely forgotten significant move. It was his wit, intelligence, and eloquence in Parliament that won him admirers. In 1963, President Kenyatta appointed Argwings–Kodhek assistant minister for Defense.

Argwings-Kodhek's Legacy and Contributions to Gem Constituency

In 1966, he joined the Cabinet as the Minister of Natural Resources and eventually in 1967 as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. In the midst of these, Argwings-Kodhek divorced his Irish wife and married Joan Omondo. On January 29th, 1969 he died in a mysterious road accident along today's Argwings-Kodhek Road in Nairobi. Argwings-Kodhek was a national figure who was seriously committed to national politics, more so independence politics. He participated actively in defending the Mau Mau fighters as a lawyer. However, within his tenure as an area MP of Gem, he opened new Dispensaries like; Malanga dispensary, Mareny Ramula, Nyawara, and Rera dispensary. It was during his leadership that Yala police station was opened. Although he served for nearly one term he improved the standard of education in Gem by introducing Sawagongo Secondary School and some new Harambee schools like: Maliera Junior Secondary School, and Kambare Harambee Secondary School. In the 1969 election, Omolo Okero as the MP of Gem for two terms after the untimely death of Argwings-Kodhek created a new image of the Gem constituency. He was from Kagola Sub-location. The non-Ojuodhi clan from the Ulumbi sub-location. The non-Ojuodhi clans were not comfortable with him in the 1979 election. In a very hot contested campaign between Isaak Omolo Okero and Agree Otieno Ambala. He opened a white sugar factory in the Ulumbi area (Yala white sugar), and jagaries at Nyangweso and Kadebu next to Panyako. To improve agriculture and sugarcane production.

The 1979 and 1984 Political Contest in Gem Constituency

The contest was between Otieno Ambala "Jadak" non-gems from Alego, whose father Ambala had migrated to Nguge Sub location in Kathomo which was Kwenda clan, Rading Omolo from Malanga (Ojuodhi clan), and Isaac Omolo Okero (Ojuodhi clan). Otieno Ambala was helped by his chief campaigner Horace Ongili Owiti from the Kanyikwaya clan of Kwenda. This gave Otieno Ambala a walk-over and he emerged a winner in the 1979 election. Like Omolo Okero Otieno, Ambala became arrogant to the people who did not recognize him as one of their own. Ambala became a victim of clannish alienation. In 1984 elections Gem people regrouped as clan members again. Isaac Omolo Okero contested and he was supported by the Ojuodhi clan who had another candidate by the name of Reading Omolo from Malanga (Ojuodhi). All the Kwenda clan supported Horace Ongili Owiti who was from Kanyikwaya. Even though the government wanted the reelection of Otieno Ambala, he was defeated by H. Ongili who was earlier his chief campaigner. There emerged bitter rivalry in Gem because Otieno Ambala was the candidate endorsed by the then Vice President Mwai Kibaki. In that period, President Moi in his tour to Aluor Girls Secondary School and Nyawara Girls' secondary School praised Horace Ongili in his speech. He remarked that Gem people are very brilliant since they had given him

the best MP to work with, hence he promised the Gem people better position than just the ministry position. The speech made by President Moi on that day made Ongili's political opponents very bitter, some people speculated that he was to be the next Vice president of Moi. Due to the political rivalry, there was tension between him and his opponents which led to his assassination on 27th May 1985. Kwenda clan mourned their kin; they remarked bitterly: Since the colonial time, they have never tasted Constituency leadership. A very old man chanted; *"Nene wamwonyo mana olawo ka Joko-juodhi chiemo, to koro ka Nyasaye omiyowa bor mondo wabilie to jowasigu oyudho mana e dhowa! Tho! Awuoro sigu mar anyuola"*. Ambala died at Kodiaga prison on the burial date of Horace Ongili.

Violence, Conspiracy, and Clan Rivalry in 1980s

In a country where the deaths of several prominent personalities are believed to have been masterminded by their political opponents, the passing away is foul play. Waweru Mugo took a look at some of the deaths that sparked controversy and how they were handled. For example, on May 27, 1985, an armed gang struck at the home of Gem MP Horace Ongili Owiti in Siaya. They attacked him with machetes and batons, stabbed him with knives, and carried his lifeless body into a nearby maize plantation. They did not steal anything. His car, parked outside the house, was intact. The killing had the hallmarks of a cold-blooded murder, as theft was immediately struck off as a possible motive who killed him, and why? The murder preceded a bakery he owned in Siaya Town, as well as several attacks on his political agents. One of them had been murdered the year before, soon after a local by-election which Owiti had won.

An investigation revealed a chilling plan to eliminate a political opponent and pointed at the immediate former area MP Otieno Ambala who became a top suspect. The State said that he had withdrawn large amounts of money in the days before the death, and had also met key suspect. As the horrible saga unfolded, Ambala was arrested and charged with the murder, along with six other suspects. But after a few months in jail, he collapsed and died of a heart attack. Some people claimed he too was assassinated to shield the real killers. State Counsel Momanyi Mbomwonga told presiding judge Hussein Abdulla that the murder was political. "The primary mission was to murder." He said. The trial would also see suspects try to use charms and other paraphernalia, ostensibly to help them overcome the charges.

As the trial progressed, Nereah Auma, a sister of suspect Jeckonia Wangulu Okumu, caused a sensation when she tried to pass charms to him during the trial. Auma, who was at the age of 19 years packed the items together with some plant roots in a bag. She was detained, and charged with trafficking charms and illegal communication with a suspect, but the charges were later dropped. Another suspect was also found with items used in witchcraft. Okumu and another suspect Michael Ouma Adongo, were sentenced to death. However, following an appeal, Justices JO Nyarangi, Evance Gicheru, and Richard Kwach criticized the judgment as 'hopeless' and very bad".

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In the 1985 by-election, Grace Ogot, the wife to Professor Ogot from Kagola, Ojuodhi clan used gender slogans to win the election. During that time, she was serving as a nominated MP. She was reelected in 1987 with a 70%-win percentage in accordance with the *mlolongo* policy system of election. At that time, she won with a landslide since she did not have a strong contender, Focus group discussion, (FGD, 23/2/2020).

1992 General Election

In the,1992 multiparty election, Grace Ogot from the Ojuodhi clan and Okii Ooko Ombaka also from the Ojuodhi clan faced each other in a contest to win the votes of the Ojuodhi clan. All were struggling to defeat the new candidate Anyango Obiero. Realizing that he would win, the Ojuodhi people backed Okii Ombaka who was the candidate of Oginga Odinga's party (Ford Kenya), Okii became blind towards completion of his term (FGD,23/2/2020).

1997 General Election

In the 1997 general elections, the candidates were Grace Ogot from Ojuodhi who vied with a KANU ticket against Joe Donde who contested using a Ford Kenya party ticket; he was from Kwenda clan, Anyango Obiero from Kanyikwaya also contested for the seat. Grace Ogot had a hard time winning the seat because Gem people were skeptical of KANU, a party that had ruled since independence. Donde also stood a risk of not getting votes because Raila Amolo Odinga had ditched Ford Kenya and formed L.D.P. Anyang Obiero (on an L.D.P ticket) from Kwenda still had the upper hand and stood a higher chance of winning the election. Just a week before the elections, he had financial challenges and was promised a ministerial position in the government of President Moi he could consider stepping down and supporting Grace Ogot, which he accepted wholeheartedly. The opposition group had no option but to support Joe Donde and his party Ford Kenya, this gave an early victory over Grace Ogot. Kwenda clan became very bitter and always looked for reasons to pin down Joe Donde, even though his home was closer to the Ojuodhi clan in comparison to Kanyikwaya, they never liked him, focus group discussion (F.G.D, 23/02/2020).

2002 General Election

In the 2002 general election Grace Ogot made a comeback even though she was from Ojuodhi, other candidates emerged, these were; Agina (Ojuodhi), Ambrose Rachier from Kanyango Ojuodhi, and Jakoyo Midiwo from Kathomo but living among Kanyikwaya (Kwenda) among other candidates. Because Jakoyo had Odinga's support since the mother of Raila Odinga was his aunt he was given the ODM party ticket, this helped him secure the Gem parliamentary seat leaving his opponents from other clans and parties very disappointed, Focus group discussion (FGD, 23/2/2020).

2007 General Election

In the 2007 general elections Jakoyo Midiwo from the Kwenda clan had an easy time retaining his Gem MP seat on an ODM party ticket which was the Region favorite, defeating his opponents Ambrose Rachier from Kanyango Ojuodhi and Elisha Odhiambo from Malanga Umani who were forced to concede after being defeated by a wide margin.

2013 General Election

In the 2013 general elections opponents were left in disbelief after Jakoyo Midiwo secured the mouth-watering Gem parliamentary seat for yet a third time on an ODM ticket with the closest contender being Elisha Odhiambo from Malanga who had been working hard to secure the seat.

2017 General Election

In the 2017 general elections, the conquest for the Gem parliamentary seat was considered a two-horse race since the other contesters were weak, the race was between Elisha Odhiambo from Malanga Umani (Jadak) who was an immigrant who contested on an ODM ticket against the sitting MP Jakoyo Midiwo from Kwenda Kanyikwaya this time as an independent candidate, This was contrary to the usual Ojuodhi and Kwenda tussles, even though Gem had three sons who formed the three gem clans, the most active were Ojuodhi and Kwenda. However, the Anyanga clan (Nyakota) identified themselves with Ojuodhi whom the oral tradition says was welcomed by Anyanga. Politically Anyanga has never supported Kwenda at the same time it has never stood a line on her strong identity as the Anyanga clan.

CONCLUSION

The post-colonial Kenya's political landscape was shaped by inherited colonial boundaries, regional affiliations, and ethnic compositions, which influenced governance and political structures. The country had not quite been ready for independent, as this particular transition went so fast and it experienced challenges such as tribalism, political realignment and regional factionalism. In particular, such issues were most visible in constituencies such as Gem where local issues got entangled with national political forces. Such political struggles were complicated by allegations of political assassinations, and the formation of regional parties in a way that paralleled national struggles. Yet these were challenges that also offered opportunities for political and structural evolution. Learning from past experiences, Kenya can address the issue of a more unified and stable political framework by creating an inclusive governance. Gem serves as a small-scale version of Kenya's political journey in general and as such, requires enlightened and politically realigning leadership that emphasizes national unity and democratic governance.

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Focused Group Discussion 17/ 2/2020, 11/3/2020, 10/4/ 2020,

South Gem Council of Elders

Attendance

James Ojwang Menje

David Ogada Okelo

Joseph Okelo Olweny

Richard Ombogo

Tobias Ajinja

Mary Adhiambo

William Okuche

Jane Adhiambo

Akinyi Odundo

Individual Oral Interview

Retired Chief John Owak Ojodo: Oral Interview 15/3/2020

Richard Omoro Nyawanda:	Oral interview 23/3/2020
Oudi Migele:	Oral interview 25/3/ 2020
Fred Ochieng Orinda:	Oral interview 20/3/2020
Rawer Alem:	Oral interview 23/4/2020
Pius Opiyo:	Oral interview 21/4/2020
Michael Agwedo:	Oral interview 30/4/2020
Solomon Omwonya:	Oral interview 1/3/2020
Timothy Amanya:	Oral interview 30/3/2020
David Ochuo	Oral interview 19/3/2020

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