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KENYA GENERAL ELECTIONS IN BONDO AND GEM:
THE ORIGINS OF LUB ETHNIC FACTOR
IN MODERN POLITICS

By

Patrick O. Alila
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~~THE ORIGIN OF THE ETHNIC FACTOR~~
IN MODERN POLITICS

By

Patrick O. Alila

ABSTRACT

This analysis traces the historical origins of Luo ethnic factor to lay the basis for a discussion in a separate paper of the role it plays in modern politics. The ethnic factor is seen to emerge from social transformation starting from the precolonial period. And this took place differently in the two research areas Bondo and Gen.

Gen evolved as a centralised entity having a common hereditary leadership in which clanism has all along played a determining role. Bondo comprised of Sakwa, Asenbo, Uyoma and Yinbo which evolved as separate entities has had marked heterogeneity without a common clan system. Also in comparison to Bondo, Gen especially during the colonial period experienced a higher level of development particularly in the field of education, communications and crop production which reinforced its prevalent clan system.

The crux of the argument in the overall analysis is that following the introduction of elections there has been a process of selective modernisation whereby both 'modern' and 'traditional' values have combined. The institution of elections is not therefore operating purely under the influence of values elections are associated with in western democracies especially the determining role of parties in electoral politics.

Thus the initial organisation of elections for independence in Kenya backed by a strong commitment to nationalism showed what seemed like a triumph of elements of modernity over tradition in the election process. But this was in reality not the case as evidenced by the ascendancy of traditional forces of ethnicity in the post independence politics. As a matter of fact even strong nationalists like Odinga and Argwings-Kodhek from Bondo and Gen respectively had their ethnically derived power in Luoland it is this power base which they resorted to due to the nature of post independence politics. The events of 1966 which resulted in the birth of the KPU and the dramatic shift to one-party state in 1969 are notable in this connection.

Luoland has consequently been plunged into a crisis of leadership and political participation quite evident in election politics. This has resulted in the Luo ethnic factor becoming a significant, if not a crucial, factor in elections in practically all constituencies in Luoland. The result is on the one hand that there have been similarities in election politics between constituencies as was indeed found to be true in Bondo and Gen. On the other hand these two constituencies show differences mainly due to their contrasts in social transformation.

Introduction

An examination of the relevant literature clearly indicates that attempts to understand socio-economic and political change in Third World countries have been greatly influenced by the term modernization. The resulting consequence is that there have been various conceptions of the term. But it is only to a limited extent that these 'conceptions have been positively viewed. They have been for the most part considered negative and therefore not conducive to the proper understanding of these changes.

In regard specifically to political change a common view of 'modern politics' which has been the subject of major debate, is that it is characterised by the organisation of political institutions such as parties, parliament, elections etc. as these have been known to operate in the western world. Elections, for example, should be freely contested by candidates put up by rival parties who present voters with different platforms. Through secret ballot, one candidate whose platform is preferred by the electorate gets elected and becomes their representative in parliament for a fixed term.

As regards the origins of elections and other institutions, it has been maintained by several analysts that it was the mission of the European colonising powers to establish them using their own as blueprint without concern for existing indigenous institutions and values. This was supposedly to ensure their proper functioning.

It is the objective of this analysis to examine the extent to which the organisation and practices in post independence elections in Kenya, particularly the 1979 and 1983 General Elections in the case of Bondo and Gem constituencies in Siaya District, conform to the foregoing and similar views of modern politics. The idea is to ascertain the extent to which elections as an institution operate strictly in line with the modern values the British colonisers had intended should be part and parcel of the institution.

The concern here emanates from the basic premise, and hence the approach of this analysis, that it is by incorporating both 'modern' and indigenous or so called 'traditional' values into one's analysis that political change or societal development and its various components such as the election process, can be more accurately understood. It is of special interest, therefore, to analyse what role, if any, the indigenous institutions

and values play in the different aspects of the electoral process.

Conceptions of Modernisation: A Critique

To put the analysis into context and provide a basis for the discussion, we should briefly outline certain inadequacies in the initial conceptions of modernisation, especially in reference to traditional society and values. In the first instance, difficulties have been encountered with the notion of traditional society vis-a-vis modern society. The perspective in question is that which views modernity and tradition as essentially asymmetrical concepts. According to this particular perspective which sees no correspondence between these two concepts the modern ideal is set forth, and then everything which is not modern is labeled traditional.¹ Thus the notion of tradition was not formulated upon the basis of observation. Rather, it was a hypothetical antithesis of 'modernity'. This is a fact which is amply verified by a number of empirical limitations that have been identified following a realistic conceptualisation of tradition.

A good case in point is the conventional stereotype that traditional societies are essentially static. This outlook stems from the position that tradition and modernity are contrasts and the attendant view that history begins with transition from traditional to modern society. This transition is generally assumed to have begun in non-Western areas as a result of contact with European societies which implies that societies in these areas remained static prior to that contact. This, viewed at a different level, amounts to an implicit denial of the relevance of the pre-contact experience of these areas to their subsequent development. But more to the point is that, over time, as empirical knowledge of pre contact history has increased providing abundant evidence of development and change, such a static image of traditional societies has proven untenable.

It is now generally accepted that there was change and adaptation in non-Western areas in the pre-contact period and the experience was not completely erased by European contact. As a matter of fact

1. D.C. Tipps, "Modernisation Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 15, No.2, 1973. P.212.

'traditional societies' appeared changeless only because they were defined in a manner that allowed no valid differences between traditions of non-Western societies vis-a-vis European societies. This resulted in failure to recognise significant change in traditional societies save that in the direction of the Western experience.²

Another key point about the tradition-modernity contrast is that there is a focus only upon the presumed similarities of traditional societies. It therefore fails to allow for multiplicity of traditions in a spatial as well as a temporal sense. Thus the diversity of traditional societies at a particular point in time and of any one society over time is not recognised. Instead they are viewed as homogeneous and having one thing in common namely, that they are not modern industrial societies. The issue here is that this view ignores precisely those differences between societies which contribute to the determination of the specific character of their development. A useful pointer to this prospect of a variety of traditional forms based on their diverse experiences is the colonial experience of these societies that produced a hybrid from which is neither 'traditional' nor 'modern' as these terms are usually employed by modernisation theorists. It is in fact the persistence of a host of traditional forms even in the post colonial period that has proved to be a major stumbling-block for the emergence of single national societies.

The notion that tradition and modernity represent two mutually exclusive, functionally interdependent clusters of attributes has also attracted a number of criticisms. Several critics have pointed to the persistence of many 'traditional' values and institutions in supposedly modern industrial societies highlighting their importance in shaping development of these societies. It has also been convincingly argued that in both 'modern' and 'modernising' societies the dynamics of modernisation have consisted not in the substitution of one set of attributes for another, i.e. of 'modernity' for 'tradition', but rather, in their mutual interpenetration and transformation.³

The implication of recognition of these possibilities is that

2. D.C. Tipps, op. cit. p. 213.

3. P.O. Alila, The Role of Public Bureaucracy in Agricultural Development in Kisumu District - Western Kenya, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1978. pp 296-7.

modernisation can no longer be equated simply with the destruction of tradition. While on the one hand in many instances 'traditional' institutions and values may facilitate rather than impede the social changes usually associated with modernisation, on the other hand, the destruction of 'tradition' as, for example, by colonial domination and exploitation may lead in directions other than 'modernity'. Thus colonialism itself may be conducive to modernisation in some contexts but in others may constitute a barrier. This logically leads us to the conclusion that modernity and tradition are not mutually exclusive and that each does not constitute a closed, functionally interdependent system of attributes.

The significant point arising from the above critique is that attributes of modernity and likewise of tradition do not necessarily appear as a 'package'. Rather, the attributes may be 'unbundled' and absorbed selectively. It is therefore more fitting, in analysing the introduction of modern values as in our case of elections, to talk of selective modernisation which may actually strengthen traditional institutions and values and rapid social change in certain spheres but not in others.

Ethnicity in a Modern Political Context

The exposition of the nature of tradition and modernity, their dynamics and interrelationships in the change process of the so called traditional societies leads us to a consideration of the usefulness of ethnicity as a key factor in explaining modern politics particularly in post independence Africa.⁴

Ethnicity can be simply viewed as the social solidarity resulting from an ideology of unity based on actual or fictitious cultural, geographical or political characteristics. . . As a conceptual tool ethnicity is thus not burdened by the assumption of monolithic social groups necessarily beholden to atavistic customs such as tribe or tribalism. It should also be noted that there are often conflicts within what are popularly regarded as tribes and that some or all the groups engaged in these struggles may also unite on the basis of ethnic criteria.⁵

4. N. Kasfir, The Shrinking Political Arena: Participation and Ethnicity in African Politics, University of California Press, 1976. p 29.

5. W.R. Ochieng', "Tribalism and National Unity: The Kenya Case" in A. Ojuka and W. Ochieng', eds., Politics and Leadership in Africa, EALB, Nairobi, 1975. pp 256 - 258.

As a variable affecting political behaviour ethnicity can be characterised as fluid, intermittent and experiential. In ethnically-based political action, individuals and groups may act on the basis of individual preference at one point in time, at another they make choices based on clan-based considerations; or might even decide to act in a given manner based upon their perception of class interests at stake. Ethnicity does not, therefore, inevitably lead to politicised "groups" like the American interest groups pictured as coherent units constantly involved in politics in order to protect and promote the interests of their members. As to the scope and intensity of political competition centering around ethnicity, this is most often determined by how ethnic elites define political situations.⁶

At the level of the individual, for purposes of determining the scope of the individual's ethnic reference group at a given point in time, two important indicators would seem to be (i) the nature of stakes involved and (ii) the nature of the existing political climate. Hence the dynamic nature of ethnic allegiance and groupings which political mobilisation responsive to certain kinds of situations and not to others as underlined already. Ethnicity is therefore a salient explanatory variable of African political situations which for the most part are characterised by fluidity due to changing political climate that constantly alters stakes.

Therefore to discover whether ethnic forces are operative in a particular African political situation is an empirical question. In this analysis of the organisation and nature of elections as an institution an attempt will be made to identify those social forces that have been at play whether organised around ethnic or other interests. The ultimate aim is to ascertain the emergent patterns of behaviour and the attendant values that may have evolved following the introduction of elections into an African traditional setting.

6. E.J. Keller, "Revolution, Class and the National Question: The Case of Ethiopia", Paper prepared for National Conference of Black Political Scientists 1980 Meeting. Atlanta, Georgia, March 6, 1980. p 4.

RESEARCH LOCATIONSocial Transformation in Lucland

The study on which this analysis is based was conducted in two rural constituencies, Bondo and Gem, located in Siaya district, Nyanza province. The choice of these two constituencies is particularly appropriate for our analysis. In the first place they are both located in Lucland in which the peasant has for long been stereotyped as an arch-conservative. It has been suggested, for example, that economic progress has been slow because the Luo cling to indigenous economic and value systems, and because their wants are limited to cattle and wives. This reasoning has of course been found to be false and the not so spectacular economic progress convincingly justified on grounds of limited attractive opportunities for profitable cash cropping, and animal husbandry as compared to better endowed areas such as Kisii district next door.⁷ However our main interest here is the persistence of tradition which facilitates our observations on the effects of ethnic factor on modern politics.

Secondly, Siaya district was until 1968* part, and actually formed the central core, of the old Central Nyanza district that has always been at the forefront, of Luo politics.** This can be traced to as far back as the 1920's with the origins of organisations for nationalist struggle that took place simultaneously in Central Province as well. The first such nationalist movement came to be known as Piny Owacho which name was simply a designation of "the unanimous and united voice of the Luo" against the injustices of colonialism.⁸ The movement drew its

7. P.O. Alila op cit. pp 15-17.

* Siaya and Kisumu districts were created following a motion passed in parliament in June 1966 in the absence of KPU members.

** The rivalry in Kisumu Town Council politics has in recent years revolved around the dominant position of people from Siaya especially as Council staff. It has been the aim of people in the council who come from Kisumu district (Wangchieng) to exclude these from Siaya (Pcdho chieng).

8. Oginga Odinga, Not Yet Uhuru, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1967. pp 25-29.

leadership and had its base in Central Nyanza.

Central Nyanza similarly played a key role in other Luo political organisation that emerged later such as Young Kavirondo Association, Kavirondo Taxpayer's Welfare Association, Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation, Luo Union (East Africa) etc. Also during the 1950's in the politically inspired opposition to the development measures of the colonial government, such as land consolidation, Central Nyanza was at the forefront. Even outside Luoland the majority of prominent Luo leaders in various fields and organisations have over the years mostly come from Central Nyanza.

This leading role of Central Nyanza is mainly due to socio-economic change set in motion by colonialism which has had the effect over time of gradually changing its population more and more out of pre-capitalist, subsistence economy into a capitalist market economy. The main source of origins and driving force behind this process was the building of a communications system that opened up the area and put Central Nyanza in an advantaged position as compared to the rest of Luoland. Its favoured position was due to the aim of the British colonisers of opening communication lines between Kenya and Uganda as well as Tanganyika with a view to establishing one colonial economic unit. The main Mombasa-Kisumu railway line was supplemented by a branch line to Butere while a major road towards Busi was constructed all passing through Central Nyanza; not to forget the possibility of travel across the waters of Lake Victoria.

Kisumu, the headquarters of Central Nyanza, and indeed all of western Kenya, was therefore quite accessible and became the centre of practically all Luo socio-economic activity. There were small centres springing up along these communication routes like Yala, Luanda, Maseno etc. which were mainly for purposes of small scale retail trade and were dominated by Asian traders. But again Central Nyanza had a disproportionately larger share of these.

Moreover, the introduction of economic change by the colonial administrators in terms of new cash crops such as cotton, maize etc. first occurred along the communication routes for the ease of administration or rather supervision and eventual transportation for marketing.

* During the 1966 Little General Election Campaign a Government statement said of Odinga and C. Nyanza: "The district which he claims to control is well known for the use of strong-arm methods, intimidation, and even violence in dealing with political opponents".

This obviously meant that Central Nyanza generally and more specifically those who lived in these areas had an early start in economic advancement. An important aspect of the new economic trend was that the produce had to be marketed in Kisumu for onward transport to Mombasa port by rail. Therefore, those living in proximity to these routes, apart from beginning to produce for the market and not just subsistence, acted as porters of produce to Kisumu. In addition to picking a few rudiments of the new type of trade and exchange, on their return journey they carried the various consumer goods that were becoming increasingly available in Kisumu shops.

The introduction of formal education which was brought by the missionaries as a package with christianity and hospitals was another major force in this social transformation process. In particular the building of more schools in the district, notably two high schools, St. Mary's Yala and Maseno, for long the only high schools in Luoland, gave Central Nyanza a head start in the conversion to the new socio-economic system of the colonisers. Initially, the colonialists had to use force to extract labour from C. Nyanza as in other parts of western Kenya which was the colony's labour reservoir. However, with the adoption of new values, mainly as a result of education, a new trend which became much more significant was voluntary urban migration to as far afield as Nairobi, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Kampala to locate salaried employment. In fact at a later stage the colonial government was faced with the task of controlling this unexpected rate of population movement and had to devise measures such as the "kipande" (ID) system to stall the high rate of migration. But it is to be expected all the same that areas like C. Nyanza which had been exposed for a longer time to the new social forces especially education had to have relatively higher levels of migration.

At any rate it is important to note that the migrants as individuals and in groups saw their security to lie in their homeland where their families and kinsmen remained tilling the land, and to which, therefore, they regularly returned carrying with them back to towns foodstuffs produced on their own farms to supplement their meagre earnings. And when it came to the end of the whole working period in town the migrants went back to settle permanently on their own land where they were buried upon death.

One major consequence of this stay outside the homeland was that because of the new values and goods they brought back home, the migrants started emerging as a distinctive group of "men of ideas" that automatically assumed leadership within the community. Furthermore given the stake

they had on the land, they took a keen interest in all developments in their homeland, organising themselves on the basis of kinship, clans, locations etc., to further and protect their interest. We should also group with them, due to their apparent common interest as men of ideas, those employed locally in the rural areas in government service such as chiefs, agricultural staff, teachers, councillors, etc.

In a somewhat different milieu those who went to boarding high schools started organising themselves into various associations on the basis of a single location e.g. Gem, Alego, Ugenya or clusters of locations in close proximity e.g. Sakwa, Uyoma, Asembo, Imbe and Seme or Kisumu, Kano and Nyakach, depending on the numbers of students from these areas. Granted such associations oriented the student to the various locational and other organisations they later joined especially in the urban areas where they swelled the numbers of the migrants. But it should be noted that these future men of ideas were also set apart as a separate clique in the community especially because of their stay of several weeks away from home and the tea parties they organised exclusively for themselves during the holidays.

It could not therefore be expected due to these experiences that they would remain completely bound to traditional norms and one can see the loosening of bonds that kept their community closely knit. Another smaller clique emerged formed by those who attended at first Makerere alone and later the 3 universities of East Africa, for whom it was no longer feasible to organise on the basis of locations, given their smaller numbers, but who were all the same enjoined by the coveted achievement of having reached the highest institution of learning. These were the intellectuals who constituted the core group among the men of ideas. The exclusive nature of this clique was even more telling by their insistence in the late sixties that those who went to universities abroad, America, India etc., could not be members of their association, the Luo Students League (UEA). They had their annual dinner/dance (Reunion formerly Makerere dance) which in the 50s and 60s was a great happening for all Luoland and for which practically all highly educated and prominent Luo men and women converged in Kisumu at the end of every year conscious of the high regard in which the clique was held in the community. This particular group became more aloof from the community and less bound by traditional norms.

The foregoing descriptive analysis of social transformation shows clearly that social transformation does not take place uniformly even in areas where supposedly there is persistence of tradition like Luoland. This is simply because change takes place unevenly in the rural areas as already pointed out. Thus even within the old C. Nyanza, or present Siaya

district, one is bound to find variations in social transformation.

It is therefore, understandable that Bondo and Gem should be at different levels of social transformation as their description below will reveal. As a matter of fact the two constituencies represent extremes in social transformation, not only in Siaya district but, in the whole of Luoland. This is an advantage for our analysis in that ethnic factors, which are bound to operate differently in the two situations, due to differences in the interaction between modernity and tradition can be more easily captured.

Bondo and Gem: Contrasts in Social Transformation

It is a key contention of this analysis that there was change taking place, albeit differently, in African societies before the imposition of colonial rule. Also that the outcome of this change had an effect on and made contributions to subsequent stages of development thereby helping determine the nature of societies that evolved. However, it must be admitted that, historically, it is colonialism, with its mission of drawing the African population out of subsistence into a capitalist economy, that has had the greatest impact on social transformation in African areas such as Bondo and Gem.

Precolonial Period:

However, before we go into the changes introduced by the colonisers it should be emphasised that differences in social transformation had already started emerging in Bondo and Gem in the precolonial period mainly due to their differences in natural resource endowment and their use. Economic history of the Luo reveals that there was a rinderpest epidemic from about 1890 to 1900, which wiped out vast numbers of their cattle, and forced them to adopt a sedentary way of life after the pattern of the Bantu neighbours. This resulted in a greater reliance upon fishing and agriculture for subsistence.⁹ Bondo with its proximity to the lake is where people could engage in fishing also and even become solely dependent on it, but not Gem. Also, Bondo's unfavourable climate conditions led to livestock keeping gaining relative importance over other agricultural enterprises.

9. M. Whisson, Change and Challenge, Christian Council of Kenya, Nairobi, 1964. p 43.

Gem people being the next door neighbours of the Bantus and having some in their midst took more to crop cultivation. Thus Gem took the lead in the establishment of sedentary cultivation, with greater dependence upon crops than upon cattle, which received its final stamp when the British delimited the locations permanently. This points to how at this early stage land started being crucial to the economy of Gem.

It should also be noted regarding their socio-political organisation that unlike the people of Bondo, comprised of Jo-Uyoma, Jo-Sakwa, Jo-Asembo, and Yimbo,¹⁰ the majority of the people in Gem trace their lineage to a common ancestor, Gem, believed to be the founder-father of Gem people. Gem is said to have had three sons, only two of whom became prominent, namely, Ojuodhi, also referred to as Tipo, and Kwenda. Hence the two major lineage groupings known as Kojuodhi and Kwenda.

The lineage of one of the sons of Ojuodhi called Adhanya became powerful and dominant over clans descended from Ojuodhi's other sons. It is said that from Adhanya's marriage to two wives, called Agola and Akwany, arose two clans, named Kagola and Kakwany, that have over the years dominated politics and leadership in Gem.

In the case of Kwenda, he had several sons, namely Nyikwaya, Thomo, Were, Wiri, Uwoga, Gilo and Rariw from whom issued descendants that constituted well known clans named Kanyikwaya, Kathomo, Kanyimur, Wiri, Uwoga, Kagilo and Karariw. Kwenda people, in terms of settlement, have generally settled to the south and Kojuodhi people to the north of Gem territory.

In addition there are many "jodak" (settlers) in Gem. There are several clans of people of Bantu origin such as Umani, Uhoware, Umoya, Unamare, Umswe etc. These are descendants of Bantu individuals who through mutual understanding remained behind as their brothers were pushed northwards into the present western province. If we take Unamare clan as an example, we find that these are descendants of a person called Unamare who was of Bantu origin but was accepted as a "jodak" by Riw of Kwenda line. The interesting point to note, which underlines the completeness of the level of acceptance by both the host and his community, is that over the years the Unamare clan grew bigger in terms of population and became more

10. B.A. Ogot, A History of the Southern Luo, EALB, Nairobi, 1967. p. 185.

influential than the Karariw. clan of the initial host.¹¹ There are also other "jodak" of Nilotic origin including including Kapuonja clan from Kisumu, Usula and Kamlago clans from Alego.*

It is believed that in cases of groupings the Kwenda clans generally form one alliance and so do Kojuodhi vis a vis one another. One notable exception is Wiri clan that allies with Kakwany in the Kojuodhi line. However, a constant leadership struggle in Kwenda, particularly between Kathomo and Kanyikwaya, has kept clans to the south divided and facilitated their domination and rule to the great advantage of the northern clans. This helps explain for example, why chieftaincy that has been a long tradition among Gem people became a monopoly of Kojuodhi, in particular the Kagola clan of the Kojuodhi line.¹²

The situation in Bondo, in contrast, is one of marked heterogeneity setting Sakwa, Asembo, Uyoma and Yimbo as separate entities at the same level as the whole of Gem. The heterogeneity becomes of negative importance for the identity of these larger entities and the all embracing unit, Bondo. Moreover, if one looks at the origins and clan composition for each of the larger entities and Bondo as a whole these reveals greater diversity than in the case of Gem.

Bondo peoples also engaged in fierce internecine wars amongst themselves during the period in question.¹³

11. S.G. Ayany, Kar Chakruck Mar Luo, Nyanza Printing Works Ltd. Kisumu, 1951. p 31. S. Malo, Dhudi Moko Mag Luo, Oluoch Publishing House, Kisumu, 1951. pp 114-115.

* These are cases in which a non-Luo settler who is virtually a slave is later accepted and finds a wife to marry among the Luo.

12. S. Malo, op.cit. p 116.

13. S.G. Ayany, op. cit. p26. S. Malo, op. cit. p 16.

These wars in which Sakwa seems to have been the main aggressor against Asembo, Uyoma and Yimbo can only be likened to those between Gem people and Bantus, Sakwa, Alego and Kisumo peoples, in other words external forces. Thus, while the organisation for these wars worked towards Gem solidarity, in Bondo the logical trend was the emergence of separate identities. This trend of Gem solidarity was aided by the fact that, unlike Bondo locations, Gem had a well established chieftaincy which produced strong chiefs who led Gem people in these wars. These were the likes of Racin, Omolo, Odera Rangira, Odera Ulalo and later Odera Akongo who became a household name in all Luoland.

Also in these wars in Bondo, there seemed to be a somewhat consistent alliance despite occasional shifts, between Asembo and Uyoma while Yimbo remained markedly aloof.¹⁴ This peculiar position of Yimbo may have something to do with the fact that Asembo and Uyoma, through the intermarriage of their two major clans, Kale and Kovila respectively, have a geneological affinity which may tend to be exclusive.¹⁵ Also, Yimbo has a larger component of people of Bantu origin compared to the rest of Bondo and is remote geographically.

The point we are driving at is that in Bondo there seemed to be no overriding unity principle between Sakwa, Asembo, Uyoma and Yimbo apart from intermarriage. This is also in contrast to Gem in which, apart from intermarriage with neighbouring peoples e.g. Asembo, Alego, Seme, Ugenya, Bantus etc., as indeed happens in all Luoland, patrilineage remained the dominant principle of unity. This is quite significant if we take into account the fact that the ideal structure of the clan group is that it should be a single patrilineage although in reality this is not always the case.¹⁶ At any rate the conformity to this norm in Gem would seem to indicate stronger bonds of unity.

14. S. Male, op.cit. p90.

15. M. Whisson, op.cit. pp 25-26.

16. Ibid.

To summarise, Gem took the lead in the establishment of a sedentary way of life with a clear emphasis on crop farming which resulted in land becoming increasingly crucial in their economy. In Bondo, in contrast, crop farming lagged behind fishing and livestock keeping. The socio-political organisation in Gem revolved around one common ancestor but there were strong alliances into which were also incorporated "jodak" of mainly Bantu origin. Thus Gem witnessed a relatively high level of culture mix and change while at the same time maintaining solidarity due to organisation around a well established chieftaincy over time. At the same time this chieftaincy was largely instrumental in the persistence of tradition in the form of clanism although this was only one aspect of their overall change-oriented experience.

In contrast, the experience in Bondo was more inward looking, funnelled by internal strife arising from a high level of heterogeneity which, as one would expect, resulted in lack of solidarity. In a word, what all this points to is that, while Gem seemed relatively well prepared for the oncoming external change, as at the close of the precolonial period Bondo showed signs of wide-ranging persistence of tradition. This position is borne out especially by their socio-economic experiences during the colonial period and thereafter to which we now turn.

Colonial Period

There were focal points of action by colonisers, elements of which set a new, faster pace for change and at the same time constituted a force that has hitherto engineered that change. These included first, setting up communications that went hand in hand with instituting administration which was euphemistically referred to as establishment of law and order. In reality, it was the imposition of a colonial state and laying the foundations for trade and exchange between African and capitalistic societies. Secondly, there was expropriation of land and/or imposition of limits on land use and settlement coupled with measures designed to ensure labour supply. These meant that Africans were either deprived the use, for their own benefit, of the two major factors of production they possessed i.e. land and labour, or they, even if not so deprived, could now be more easily exploited by their colonisers. Thirdly, certain services such as education, religion, health, and the introduction of cash and food crops, which were considered crucial to the functioning of the colonial economy were provided albeit sparingly. These latter ones were actually the main vehicles for inculcating capitalistic norms.

It cannot be said that there was no policy in all these areas in the strict meaning of the term. Rather, action was taken whenever there was a crisis in a particular time. This is referred to as crisis policy making.¹⁷ A major consequence of this policy strategy was that action was, for the most part, taken in a haphazard manner and led to uneven change. This contributed very much to greater differences in social transformation between areas during and areas during and after colonial rule. Therefore an examination of action taken or changes introduced and development trend to date in an area facilitates our understanding of the stage in social transformation reached. This is the task we now turn to with specific reference to Bondo and Gem bearing in mind our earlier discussion of social transformation in the whole of Luoland, the differences in natural resource endowment between the two places and the resulting differential social transformation found to be clearly evident in the pre-colonial period. The idea is to show the basis for the relatively more advanced stage of social transformation Gem reached as compared to Bondo.

17. P.O. Alila, op.cit. p 109.

The beginning of colonial rule in Bondo and Gem can be dated as coinciding with the arrival of European administration personnel, in particular C.W. Hobley, (Bwana Obile) in 1896. This followed the declaration of British Protectorate in 1895 that saw the demarcation of all Luoland as an eastern portion of Uganda. The boundary remained so until Kenya became a colony in 1920 and the present Kenya-Uganda boundary drawn. But to the local people, the mark of British administration being imposed on Luoland was when the boundaries, which had been fluctuating between subtribes from month to month to month, were frozen and a new name "location" given to different "pinje" inhabited by the sub-tribes.¹⁸ These in Central Nyanza were 12, viz Nyakach, Kanc, Kisumu, Kajulu, Seme, Asembo, Sakwa, Uycma, Yimbo, Gem, Alego and Ugenya. Boundaries were drawn along lines agreed by the neighbouring chiefs - usually quite freely as there was generally little pressure on land, and there was nearly always a fairly wide stretch of land left for hunting and which also acted as a buffer zone between one location and another. Here, anyone who built a home would be in permanent risk of attack. Thus the boundaries of each subtribe was clearly defined but sporadic fighting continued because of earlier hostilities.

In conformity to "Indirect Rule" principles, which influenced the thinking of the administration, it was decided that the Luo, although having a single language and intermarrying, were not a single social unit under one ruler like the Baganda for example. Therefore, two super-chiefs were chosen for the whole of Central Nyanza - one taking responsibility for the Western (Podhochieng) half, the other for the Eastern (Wangchieng) half. These men were regarded as those likely to be chiefs of the whole of Central Nyanza and had the major qualification of being able to converse with government officials in Swahili.

The administrators then sought to find the chiefs in each location who in their view commanded the respect of the people.¹⁹ The chiefs in turn with the approval of the administration, appointed a member of the dominant clan in the area as Headmen for his "Gweng mar Dhoot", i.e. his clan land. Within the clan areas sub-Headmen were appointed on the basis of clan dominance or a dominant lineage segment. Granted there were cases of irregularities, e.g. nepotism, but the representation approximated

18. B.A. Ogot, op.cit. pp 237-238.

19. M. Whisson, op.cit. pp 111-112.

the indigenous system to a large extent and proved instrumental in maintaining importance of the pre-existing lineage structure, guided by the hereditary principle, in political activities.²⁰

The chiefs and their assistants were the agents of the colonisers. 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 times of crisis. Tax was levied, compulsory labour demanded, and men were recruited for government work or to work on the developing farms and railways, by the chiefs and their assistants. The judiciary function was also an important part of the work of chiefs and their "Jokong gweng".²¹ The chiefs who cooperated with the new power were used against those who did not, and some, through their ability to manipulate that power, managed to wipe out old scores with their opponents. Thus the entrenchment of colonial administration varied from area to area depending mainly on the extent of cooperation of the local indigenous leadership with the colonisers.

To focus more on Bondo and Gem, it should be noted to begin with, that the contact with Europeans and administrative operations started first in Gem and later reached Bondo. This is epitomised by the fact that Gem is the one that produced one of the two C. Nyanza superchiefs, Odera Ulalo, although this particular system of superchiefs was discontinued after only a short period of operation. It was to Odera Ulalo that Mumia sent word, after receiving instructions from Bwana Obilo, to tell peoples of Seme, Sakwa, Asembo, Yimbo and Uyoma to grind flour for the labourers working on the railway which by this time had reached Lumbwa in Rift Valley Province. Uyoma people in particular refused to obey the order questioning how a man could expect a fellowman to grind for him flour like a woman ("To dichwo waduni bende iregone kaka dhako"). This resulted in a punitive mission of askaris being sent to Uyoma. The askaris killed several people and confiscated many heads of cattle, although some were recaptured through the determined efforts of Uyoma warriors. The remaining cattle the askaris managed to get away with, they took to be kept at the

20. G.M. Wilson, Luo Customary Law and Marriage Law Customs, Government Printer, Nairobi, 1968. p.1.

21. Ibid. p.3.

home of Odera Ulalo after Seme people fought the askaris and blocked their direct route to Kisumu.²² This points to open resistance to the imposition of colonial rule in parts of Bondo at least.²³ In contrast, in Gem there was apparent collaboration with the Europeans as evidenced by the alliance with Mumia who was a known collaborator. Thus in Gem the encounter points to a mutual interaction and hence faster formalisation of colonial administration than Bondo.

It however, needs to be pointed out that this instantaneous subjugation of Gem people, was mainly because of the established chieftaincy, and in particular, the enterprising and ambitious individuals who were chiefs at the time colonial rule backed by greater force was being established. A notable example is Odera Akango who as early as 1915 went to Uganda and on return started organising some kind of formal education with emphasis on christian religion and personal hygiene. Young men for instance were assembled to be taught by former askaris and houseservants. They had to be provided with body washing soap by their parents and had to wear shorts and shirts. On Mondays the young men and the elders attended Odera Akango's public meetings so that the youth could learn about such meetings.

He was a good farmer and marketed his always abundant maize crop in Kisumu using his subjects both as labourers and porters. He built roads and planted trees on the roadside using compulsory labour and could not tolerate people who loitered and were idle.²⁴ All these doings of Odera Akango were, to say the least, not just a fulfilment of the requirements of colonialism, but an expression of a more or less complete conversion to the whims and desires of the colonisers. As it greatly facilitated their work and the achievement of their goals, the colonisers increasingly instituted and maximised on the linkages with Gem and similar areas where their basic requirements were being met and their ideas received with enthusiasm.

In the institution of these linkages the major turning point was the building of Uganda Railway and its reaching Kisumu in 1901. This brought about the initial major crisis of the colonisers as they were suddenly presented with the problem of making the colony pay. If the colony

22. S. Malo, op.cit. pp 91-92

23. S.G. Ayany, op.cit. p 25

24. S. Malo, op. cit. pp 80-82

paid then loan funds obtained from the British Treasury for building the railway could be repaid. But more importantly, the annual grants-in-aid paid by the Treasury to meet the cost of administering British East Africa had to be terminated.

The prescribed solution for the problem revolved around white settlement and it is the measures taken for its institution and entrenchment which shaped the linkages with and at the same time spelled doom for the African areas. In other words, the political system envisaged by those measures was one in which authority was monopolised by a European elite, an economic system which confined African participation to a limited range of subordinate tasks, and a social system stratified by race which assumed the inherent superiority of the imported culture over all indigenous forms.²⁵

In the initial stages, when faced with the Uganda Railway crisis, moves taken were geared towards meeting the prerequisites for all other subsequent measures especially to facilitate white settlement and domination. This was the rationale for establishing an effective administration as a matter of urgency. Thus, following the appointment of chiefs and their aides in each location as we have seen, the next logical step was opening up communication routes and building centres for administration and trade mostly along these routes.

In the design of the communication routes, the major underlying principle was, to solidify favourable contacts already made by the colonisers or their predecessors, the traders and missionaries. The ultimate goal was to enhance access to the different local populations and ensure that they played the roles they may be assigned, and if the need arose, to be able to mete out punishment for failure to comply.

In reference to our area of study, we find that a road to Busia, on the Kenya-Uganda Border, was constructed passing through Gem. A branch railway line to Butere, in Western Province, was also constructed passing through Gem. The major centres on both routes, Masenc, Luanda and Yala are located in Gem or its environs. The emergent communications network which excluded Bondo can be understood in terms of contacts made with Mumia and in Uganda plus the favourable attitude found in Gem. The efforts of Odera Akang'o of building roads in Gem and marketing maize have been noted. But even before him, Odera Ulalo had in 1901 completed building Luanda that

25. E.A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in E. Africa, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1973. p 43.

Thus Gem, especially its northern portion, was laid bare for colonial manoeuvres be they positive or negative due to ease of access. And it was because the colonisers tried to maximise results of initially established linkages like Gem that colonial administration had greater impact and became varied vis a vis other areas like Bondo.

Taxation was another measure given rise to by the Uganda Railway crisis which had immediate and far reaching implications for the African population. The reason behind imposing tax on the African population in particular was to furnish the settlers with their requirements of labour and capital and to find revenue to finance settler related needs especially building the necessary infrastructure in their areas.

Hut tax and Poll tax were introduced and import duties imposed on many of the limited range of consumer goods purchased by Africans. At any rate the form which the taxation took is not at issue here, as this was not different to a significant degree between areas. What is at issue is the fact that in order to meet their tax obligations Africans were increasingly forced to participate in the cash economy. This necessitated either growing crops for the market and getting the tax money or earning cash through the sale of one's labour mainly to white settlers.

Surplus foodstuffs and cattle could also be sold to secure money to pay tax. In addition there was conscription to fulfil the wartime requirements of men, not to forget virtual plunder of grain and cattle to fulfil wartime foodstuff requirements, plus compulsory labour performed in public works. These practices too in one way or another contributed to African participation in the cash economy and their effects differed from one area to another, adding another dimension to differences between these areas. It is especially in connection with these practices that force, which pervaded all actions taken by the colonisers more so in the early stages of colonial rule, was used. And it is this which was the key determining factor of the resulting effects and their variations.

However, in the long run, it was the intention of the colonisers, that force should be used less and less and that colonialism should have a momentum of its own by way of voluntary African participation in the cash economy. It is to that end that new crops to be grown mainly for cash were introduced. In Nyanza, by about 1920s, crops introduced included white maize, cotton, rice, simsim, cassava, groundnuts, sugarcane and various kinds of vegetables. Maize and cotton were the main crops the colonisers emphasised in Gem and Bondo respectively. It is also to that end, of playing mainly their

economic role, that African areas witnessed the introduction of education which went hand in hand with religion and health services, as the missionaries were the ones who were the pioneers for colonialism on this front. As early as 1914 the first generation of students had completed four years of education and returned and re-established themselves in the reserve in Central Nyanza.²⁶

This involvement in the cash economy because it was not voluntary to begin with, and was uneven depending on colonial interests at a particular point in time, as we have tried to show, is precisely what led to differential impact of colonialism and subsequent differences in socio-economic developments between areas such as Gem and Bondo. This in part depended on the response of the local population in a particular area based mainly on their material condition. Thus in looking at the positive response in Gem, it is of great import, for example, to consider that Gem people had taken to crop farming when the Europeans arrived, and that they were required to grow maize which is both a food and cash crop and was therefore readily adopted, eventually becoming a staple food of Africans. This was at a time when cotton in Bondo was bedeviled with problems of adoption, as well as marketing, being solely a cash crop.

Even more importantly, differential impact of colonialism and its consequences depended on the extent to which colonial administration backed its interests with concrete action especially by building the necessary infrastructure e.g. roads, railway, markets, schools, hospitals etc. Gem was clearly favoured in these in complete contrast to Bondo. As a matter of fact some of the key developments that resulted in greater social transformation in Central Nyanza, discussed above such as communications, schools migration etc, it is clearly evident were greatly biased towards Gem.

26. M. Whissen, op.cit. p 112.

Current Development Situation in Bondo and Gem

It would have been quite interesting to trace chronologically for Gem and Bondo the main indicators of the impact of colonialism such as numbers of forced and voluntary migrants, amount of tax collected, crop yields and returns, schools and health centres built etc. This is however not possible due to lack of data giving a breakdown for the two areas. In fact it would be very difficult to come by data for Central Nyanza leave alone Siaya district. It is therefore useful in the circumstances to give an overview of the present state of affairs regarding socio-economic development in Gem and Bondo which shows the cumulative effects of colonial forces and serves as a useful pointer to their operations.

It is an appropriate stance since it is generally agreed that at independence Kenya inherited policies from the colonial period intact and the current development situation is therefore a culmination of the colonial administration initiative.²⁷ Thus change in outlook and material wellbeing brought about by education, migration, crops grown and health services in the colonial period for the most part, is portrayed by the present state of socio-economic development in a particular area.

A useful starting point in giving the highlights of development situation in the farming sphere in our areas of study is that, based on climate and soil characteristics, Gem belongs to the upper agro-economic zone and Bondo belongs to the lower zone. Principal crops grown in the upper zone are sugarcane, coffee, maize, sunflower, beans, wimbi and to a less extent sorghum. In the lower zone are grown cotton, sorghum, maize, greengrams, cowpeas and to a less extent wimbi (finger millet). It is evident that most of the crops grown are for subsistence but beyond that one can also see clearly that Gem grows more crops geared towards cash and not subsistence economy.

Similarly although livestock kept in both areas are mainly for the subsistence economy, unlike Bondo, there are some grade cattle kept in Gem and the AI service is in operation there. Also there is poultry keeping on a commercial basis in Gem while Bondo has a monopoly of fishing in the whole of Siaya.* But Gem can also boast a leading position in the whole of

27. P.O. Alila, op.cit. p 92.

* Limited fishing is done by Gem people on River Yala.

Siaya when it comes to the development of horticulture.

As one would expect for rural Kenya cooperative societies have been formed based on the farming situation. The societies in Gem include North Gem Coffee Growers C.S. (coffee), Seme/S.Gem F.C.S. (cotton), Gem Farmers Produce and Uranga Ardey (marketing). In Bondo there are Uyoma/Asembo F.C.S., Sakwa/Yimbo F.C.S. (cotton), Uyoma Fishermen C.S. Ltd., Yimbo Fishermen C.S. Ltd., Sakwa Fishermen C.S. and Asembo Fishermen C.S. Ltd. (fisheries). The interesting point here is the greater extent of diversification in Gem with a clear bias towards the market. Granted the fact that cotton societies have been the backbone of the cooperative movement in the district, it is a well known fact that these societies have been faced with many problems especially with regard to marketing to the disadvantage of individual farmers. It can therefore be argued that income levels of members of these societies and hence purchasing power has improved to a very limited degree. The heavy reliance of areas like Bondo on cotton production for their agricultural development would thus seem to point to limited improvement in comparison to Gem that has relied on maize, sugarcane, grade cattle and coffee.

The major constraint to agricultural development in Gem is that land is increasingly becoming a scarce factor due to high density population especially in the northern portion. There are in fact reports already that landlessness is imminent in Gem.²⁸ In Bondo key constraints worth mentioning are soil erosion and poor quality soil which preclude possibility of high yields from cattle and crops. Furthermore tsetse fly infestation of Yimbo and parts of Sakwa limit livestock improvement. Fishing is faced with the problems of lack of refrigeration when transporting the fish to the beaches and also to the consumers, as well as poor means of transport itself.

In the sphere of communications Gem has witnessed a much higher level of development than Bondo. We should mention again the railway line which passes through Gem and it is important to note that Yala railway station from which the district is served is the divisional headquarters of Gem.

28. Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Siaya District Development Plan 1979-83, Government Printer, 1980. p 16.

However, the major form of transport in the district is by roads and for a rural area one can say Gem is very well served. Two major tarmac roads pass through Gem namely, Kisumu-Busia road and Luanda-Kilo-Siaya road. While the former which is known for its great volume of traffic has served the area from the colonial period, the latter which came into operation after independence, cuts across Gem almost in a central position thereby opening up formerly interior remote parts. There are feeder roads as well, the most important ones being Akala-Ramula-Luanda and Akala-Wagai roads which link up South Gem and the rest of Gem, and the Kodiaga-Wagai road which links northern Gem to the Luanda-Siaya route.

In Bondo in contrast it is only Kisumu-Kisumu-Bondo-Usenge road which is tarmac and came into operation only in 1981. The main feeder roads are Ndori-Uyoma and Bondo-Uyoma roads. Bondo, bordering on the lake, also has access to water transport but then the few piers at the lake parts within Siaya district are worn out and cannot be used.

It can be said, regarding the transport situation in Gem and Bondo, that Gem has cheap rail transport that makes it possible to reach Kisumu and beyond. This is adequately supplemented by the quick road transport facilitating travel to the district headquarters in Siaya or to Kisumu and beyond. In Bondo, apart from areas near the new Bondo tarmac road, travel remains problematic especially during the rainy season. Generally traffic is Kisumu bound in the morning and Bondo bound in the afternoon. The main problem has to do with the rough topography and black cotton soils which have also made road construction difficult. The poor transport situation in Bondo has made access to the outside world and even the district headquarters very difficult. There is, for instance, no easy direct link between Bondo the divisional headquarters, and the district headquarters, Siaya.

A number of centres have sprung up along these routes which in Gem include Yala, Nyangweso, Akala Malanga, Murumba, Sirembe, Nyagondo, Kambare, Ramula, Muhanda, Kodiaga etc. in Bondo there is Bondo, Asembo Bay Ndori, Usenge, Aram, Ndigwa, Manyanda, Madiany, Wagusu, etc. There are almost the same number of centres in both Gem and Bondo but if we consider the area served and ease of movement between centres then Bondo with a much larger area is poorly served. In addition it is Gem that has an urban centre, Yala, but not Bondo. The outstanding phenomenon in Bondo is the relatively larger number of market centres which points to the predominance of subsistence oriented marketing of foodstuffs and small consumer items such as salt, paraffin, clothes, soap and foods.

It is in these centres that apart from people meeting and exchanging ideas newspapers are distributed. In this regard Gem is in an advantaged position as newspapers are in most cases available on the major roads e.g. Yala, Akala, Nyangweso and even in a place like Murumba in the eastern end of North Gem. In the case of Bondo it is in Bondo and Ndori that one can rely on getting a newspaper although small quantities are transported to centres in Uyoma much later in the day. The demand for these newspapers is higher in Gem where most middle aged men are educated to some extent and are therefore able to read and write. Such people are also likely to supplement the information they receive from the papers by listening to the radio. Furthermore they can engage in correspondence by post which brings to mind the fact that postal services are much more adequate in Gem than Bondo.

The development situation in commerce and industry shows that non-citizen businesses which have since been Africanised were located in Yala, Gem and Asembo Bay, Bondo. The interesting point here is that these businesses which are an indicator of the level of commercial development, in Bondo are not located at the divisional headquarters as in Gem, or anywhere near for that matter. This points to the fact that although Bondo may be centrally located for ease of administration of the division, it still remains essentially a rural marketing centre. A visit to Bondo on one of these market days will leave one in no doubt about this conclusion.

As regards manufacturing industry Gem is more advanced than Bondo. A clear indication of this is that there is the Ulumbi Mini White sugar factory in Yala township which became operative in mid 1978 and has a capacity of producing about 100 bags of sugar per day. In addition there are three jaggery factories viz Nyangweso Jaggery, Yala Jaggery and Rera Jaggery. These jaggeries manufacture molasses from sugarcane and have been instrumental in the growing of sugarcane by farmers in Gem.

In both Gem and Bondo one finds in most trading centres maize or posho mills which grind maize, millet, etc. produced locally for subsistence. There are other informal sector activities locally important for creating self-employment and offering important services such as plumbing, tinsmith, carpentry etc. These activities include tailoring and shoe-repair, bicycle repair, making and repairing hoes, making charcoal burners (jikos) etc. If we take into account higher population density, ease of transport and the greater distribution of trading centres in Gem as compared to Bondo it is understandable that there is a higher concentration of these informal sector activities in Gem than in Bondo as was actually observed in the field.

There are also mainly welfare services which show further the higher level of socio-economic development in Gem as compared to Bondo. While in Gem land registration is complete, in Bondo some locations have had their land registered but others have not. Likewise, in Bondo is where there is an acute water problem and people have to walk up to five or more kilometres to get water for domestic use and for livestock.

Regarding schools it should be pointed out that in Gem in 1978 the proportion of teachers in primary schools to pupils was 1:30, while in Bondo it was 1:38. The difference was greater in terms of the proportion of primary schools to teachers. In Gem there was an average of 12 teachers per primary school while Bondo had an average of 6 showing the favoured position of Gem.

As regards secondary schools Bondo has many more government maintained secondary schools than Gem which according to the local populace may have something to do with the influence of both Oginga Odinga and Odongo Oramo especially Nyamira, Nyangoma, Maranda, and Chianda. But Gem has more harambee secondary schools than Bondo which points to the crave for education in Gem and the higher level of economic well being to be able to finance the building of more schools. As a matter of fact in Kenya as a whole it is those areas which are economically better off that tend to initiate more harambee projects. In addition one cannot rule out the influx of Gem pupils into Bondo schools.

This point of advantaged position of Gem would seem to hold true when it comes to distribution of health service points of which Gem has fifteen while Bondo has ten only. A significant fact to remember in connection with these health services and even schools is that the total population served is crucial in determining their adequacy. Thus Gem people are apparently better off than those in Bondo given their smaller population of 76,664 persons compared to Bondo's 114,387 persons, which is almost double that of Gem.

KENYA'S ELECTION TRADITION*Origins

A useful starting point of a discussion on the election tradition in Kenya is mid-1955 when the emergency ban on all African political organisations was relaxed. The colonial government set forth the framework for African political development then, by confining the formation of political associations to a district basis. The idea was that by way of these district associations eventually forming a connection with the member of Legislative colonial representing the area, "a simple and orderly development of political life" and the growth of responsible opinion would be encouraged. It was envisaged that later, after constituency conventions had matured and learned to solve some of their own local problems, a colony wide convention of these associations would be permitted.

The rationale for this strategy was that the government should control the pace of African political development by ensuring that, in place of the militancy of KAU, "sensible and stable" men emerged at the local level and worked their way up gradually assuming greater responsibility in the affairs of the country.²⁹ This obsession with control was clearly evidenced by the decision to retain the prohibition on political organisation in Central Province. Instead a nominated Advisory Council for the Province was eventually established for the discussion of government policy by loyalists to the exclusion of freedom fighters.

In any case leaders outside Central Province went ahead with the formation of associations in line with colonial government provisions. Argwings-Kodhek took the initial bold step in this new political evolutionary course and defiantly sought registration, as early as December 1955, for Kenya African National Congress arguing that tribalism would be encouraged if political activities were confined to district level. The colonial government as one would expect objected to the aim of the association becoming colony wide and only granted registration in April 1956 after modification of name and focus as the Nairobi District African Congress. It was

* There were "elections" controlled by the colonial government which do not fall in this category. See Enghelm "Africa Elections".

29. C. Gertzel, et.al., Government and Politics in Kenya, E.A. Publishing House, Nairobi, 1969. p 106.

through a split engineered by Mbeya in this association headed by Argwings-Kodhek that he was able to form his Nairobi Peoples' Convention Party shortly before the 1957 elections. Mbeya's group gained ascendancy amid bitter rivalry against the Congress but the Congress lasted until the formation of KANU in 1960.³⁰

In Central Nyanza, African District Association was formed. It was essentially an outgrowth of E.A. Othman's Central Nyanza District Association converted to the needs of those fighting for the African course. D.O. Makasembu from Uyoma, Bondo, became the Chairman of the Central Nyanza association. Other district associations formed were the Mombasa African Democratic Union, the Kisii Highlands Abagusii Association, South Nyanza District African Political Association, the Taita African Democratic Union and the Nakuru African Progressive Party.

The formation of these associations was a landmark in political development in that they assumed the posture of actual political parties that could accommodate different ethnic groups on the basis of one's political views and not just tribal groupings of one single tribe. In addition it meant that depending on the diversity of districts of residence, members of one ethnic group could belong to several of these associations. At the same time the same danger remained that the pace of political development between districts would continue to be uneven and that parochialism rooted in tribal loyalties would be encouraged at the expense of African unity.

As regards the leadership, the situation where one or two people monopolised the leadership was changed due to the widening of leadership composition and there were already signs of rivalry, and possible alliances between leaders fighting for support or simply because of personal ambition. Leaders from the same ethnic group as in the case of Argwings-Kodhek and Mbeya were consequently presenting members of their ethnic group in particular with a difficult choice. In view of these changes affecting the rank and file population and the leadership it is quite significant for our considerations that like in the case of Luo Union (EA) the Central Nyanza association was again headed by a person from Bondo while Argwings-Kodhek's Congress was based in Nairobi away from rural Luoland.

30. David Goldsworthy, Tom Mbeya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1982. p.77.

The implication is that the dominance of Bendo in Luo politics was enhanced further by assuming the leadership of the new form of political organisation in Central Nyanza.

After the 1957 Elections political parties, mainly because they were a necessity for the elected African members of the Legislative Council, gathered momentum. They increasingly became a marked feature of Kenyan politics and a significant element of elections. In particular the two major parties KANU and KADU were a dominant feature of the 1961 and 1963 Elections which ushered in independence. The manifestos, candidates, patterns of alliances, and the outcome of these elections point to the fact that this was the peak of the influence, or one might say the triumph, of elements of modernity over tradition in the election process. In brief it was a time when ethnic considerations become secondary to matters of national unity and independence.

Post-independence By-elections: Bondo and Gem Contrast Persists

The first real test for the emergent Kenyan election norms which also set precedents for subsequent elections was the 1966 elections. Bondo participated in the 1966 elections and was subjected to these norms while Gem did not participate in these elections. But Gem had a by-election later in 1969 and was similarly subjected to these norms. As a matter of fact the two elections though held in different years had a lot in common showing that they were really part of the same evolutionary process of Kenyan elections. However their different timing in Bondo and Gem is a reflection of the contrast between the two constituencies. It is an indication that these elections and later ones were part of the overall social transformation process which should therefore form the basis for explaining the nature and outcome of elections henceforth.

Gem not being a party to the 1966 Elections was no mere historical accident. It had a lot to do with the level of social transformation which we saw earlier was at an advanced stage compared to the rest of Luoland. This meant that Gem was in a socio-economic leading position and resulted in Gem assuming an independent posture politically such that taking its own political line was within Gem's capacity.

In deciding to take the bold step of not going along with the political stand taken by practically all of Central Nyanza in 1966 and for Gem to uphold this contrary stance, political leadership that could match the feat was required. The leadership was there and at its helm was Arwings-Kodhek who engineered the move to take an independent political line. He was a nationalist in his own right as we saw earlier and had overwhelming support of Gem people in town and in the rural area as clearly evidenced by the large vote given to him in Gem during the 1961 and 1963 Elections*. He could therefore hold his own even against rival nationalists more so after his stormy experience in leading the Nairobi District African Congress. However as to why he would not go along with Odinga who was his long term political ally it would seem is due in part to the fact that unlike his contemporaries e.g. Odinga, Mboya etc. he had experienced a major

*It will be recalled that Arwings-Kodhek made a pioneering move in forming a political party having a national orientation to transcend tribal loyalties. He also arranged for a substantial number of Gem voters in Nairobi to vote him back in Gem in the 1961 Election. See G. Bennett, Kenya's 'Little General Election' The World Today, August 1966. pp 58-59.

drawback in his political career in failing to get elected to the legislature until later in 1961.* Therefore in comparison to the others he had no doubt not enjoyed the benefits of representation to the same extent, hence his out of line course of action.

But at the base of this political jockeying was the fact that Argwings-Kodhek was greatly conscious of being learned and therefore symbolising the high standard of literacy in Gem. Arising from this outlook was the belief that Gem did not therefore have to go along blindly with others in politics and in other fields. Rather, Gem was to lead the way and consequently had sometimes to go it alone as indeed had been the case prior and during the establishment of colonial administration.**

Argwings-Kodhek himself humourously summed the situation with a coinage "Gem Kendgi" (GK), meaning Gem people only, which became a household phrase in all Luoland. The abbreviated form of the phrase GK was literally interpreted by many people as meaning that Gem constituency alone remained in the government since GK is abbreviation for Government of Kenya. However, those who knew the hidden meaning of Gem going it alone and shinning saw the humour of the use of the abbreviation GK. To these people the implication was that Gem people were backing up the wrong tree.

In comparison to Bondo, Gem had taken an independent political stand but a conformist one while Bondo opposed the establishment. This is very much in line with the role of Gem during the colonial period and in the case of Bondo the frontline position that it took in fighting the colonial administration is revealed.

Thus Bondo people going to the polls because its MP took a different political line was yet another manifestation of the contrast between Bondo and Gem. It should however be noted that the contrast had now assumed a national character and was not confined to Luo ethnic context. This is due to the fact that factors which precipitated the 1966 Elections in particular the position of Odinga in national politics had their origins at the national level. Therefore the political stand of Bondo had support from both within and outside Luoland. Likewise the political stand of Gem had support but mainly outside Luoland.

* Argwings-Kodhek actually stood for the 1961 Elections and got nomination as KANU candidate through Odinga's manoeuvres and was elected. The main contest was actually between Argwings and Odege who lost. See G. Bennett and C.G. Roseberg, The Kenyatta Election: Kenya 1960-1961, Oxford University Press, London, 1961. p 159.

** It was therefore a let down not only for Argwings-Kodhek alone but for Gem as a whole that between 1957 and 1961 when the African nationalists were gaining ascendancy no one from Gem had been voted into Leg Co.

The 1969 Gem By-Election

Gem found itself suddenly plunged into a by-election following the tragic death of Arwings-Kodhek on the road at night within Nairobi in January 1969. It can be said even in the case of this by-election Gem was continuing its traditionally unique position in Luoland. It was in Gem, and it would turn out the only constituency in Luoland, where a by-election was held when KPU was still in existence, after its 1966 election triumph in Luoland. What this meant for the election process in the constituency was that it was the testing ground for the KPU electioneering machine which came into being in the 1966 elections.

Thus in many respects the 1969 Gem by-election and the 1966 Bondo by-election were similar.* The organisation structure remained virtually the same, still relying heavily on Luo clan relations. Likewise the use of Luo idiom and symbolism continued and it can be said was much more intense at campaign meetings as the KPU candidate in the by-election was well versed in the usage of Luo idioms and symbolism.

KANU again encountered problems in selecting the candidate and emphasised large meetings while the KPU candidate was a straightforward choice and his party's emphasis on small meetings remained the order of the day. As a matter of fact KPU was allowed to hold only three licensed public rallies, one in each of the three locations comprising Gem constituency. In addition only the party candidate was allowed to address the rallies.

The issues were also practically the same ones debated in 1966 with emphasis on government rural development policy which KPU argued showed government neglect of matters such as education, health services, and agricultural credit. But the hot issue remained the resulting effects of Kikuyu domination of the civil service and trade and Odinga's position. The stand taken by the KANU candidate which was no different from the 1966 KANU stand was that his was the Government party which was for progress and this could come about because the Government was powerful.³¹

* The account given of Gem by-election is virtually identical with the account of the Little General Election in C. Nyanza (Bondo). See J. Okumu "The By-Election in Gem: An Assessment," E.A. Journal, Vol. VI, No. 6, June 1969 and C. Gertzel, The Politics of Independent Kenya, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1970. Chapter 4.

31. J. Okumu, *op.cit.* pp 15-16.

The problem which still persisted was how to demonstrate this in an impoverished rural constituency even if one concedes that Gem was relatively well off compared to the rest of Luoland.

It is however useful to note some distinctive features of the Gem by-election which show that it was an important landmark in Luo ethnic solidarity and organisation during elections. To begin with Rading Omolo who won the KANU nomination did so partly as a result of his own personal organisation ability and contacts made when he worked very closely with Odinga and Makasembo in the early stages of building KANU machinery in Central Nyanza. He was the director of KANU youth in the early 1960s and therefore had grassroots support. And for his daring exploits at that time he earned the nickname "mach ki so a ofukn" (Five is not put in the pocket). He was therefore able to gain full control of the KANU organisation in Gem without the support of Siaya district KANU chairman, Walter Oede.³²

Rading secured easy victory at the Nyawara nominating conference against two formidable candidates, Isaac Okwiry and Isaac Omolo Okero who got 27 and 18 votes respectively, much below Rading's 128 votes.

The important observation here is that all the three main contenders were Kojuchhi people just like Argwings-Kodhek himself but Rading Omolo was closer to Argwings being his close relative as opposed to Okwiry and Okero from different factions of Kojuchhi. Thus one can talk of sympathy vote for a close kin given the circumstances of Argwings' death plus his outstanding record. Furthermore, since Kojuchhi as a clan had a long history of ruling in Gem it was not easy for outsiders to arbitrate in their choice of leaders. Thus KANU intraparty choice of candidate was basically an internal Gem affair. This was further dramatised at the inter party level as the KPU candidate Wasonge Sijeyo, comes from Ndagaria also in Kojuchhi line but resident on Kojuchhi-Kwenda boundary. Thus Gem internal clan politics was very much at the root of the choice of the candidates.

However, at the same time Gem was drawn more than ever before into the main stream of Luo solidarity issue. The circumstances of the death of Argwings were such that foul play was suspected in part due to the customary awesomeness of death to Luos. Gem people therefore easily found common cause with other Luos especially from Central Nyanza in the belief that he was gotten rid of by an "enemy" of the tribe. It was consequently easy to link his misfortune with that of Odinga and of the tribe as a whole.

32. Ibid. p.13.

This gave Odinga an opportunity to make greater inroads into Gem local politics hitherto dominated by Argwings. It is therefore of significance that the KPU candidate was one of Odinga's staunch followers and that he was nominated without controversy.

Odinga factor as an embodiment of Luo solidarity was therefore a major element in the Gem election campaign. This time Mboya possibly because of the long standing political rivalry with Argwings who was a political ally of Odinga did not make an appearance in Gem. It may be also because Mboya had been identified with the harassment of the opposition and could therefore prove a liability. It is also said that he would have preferred Omclo Okero and once he was out of the race Mboya decided to stay away.

At any rate Mboya's non appearance meant that no major divisive force from within the Luo community was brought into play. On the contrary the appearance of Dr. Njoroge Mungai heightened the Luo sense of unity and rivalry with the Kikuyu which it can be understood could easily lead to Gem electorate delivering a protest vote against Kikuyu domination, and against Raoding himself for being a party to it.³³

Even though Odinga could not make formal speeches at public meetings it is reported that the news of his presence in Gem spread like wildfire. He had continued to develop after 1966 elections and could now use effectively the campaign strategy of informal meetings and talking with the people in the face of Government restrictions. It is worth mentioning specifically in this connection his appearances at funerals which for the Luos are traditionally sacred and emotionally charged. He was therefore striking the right chords of community feelings which naturally resulted in his endearment.

Thus a vote cast for the KPU candidate was in effect viewed by the community as a vote cast for Odinga. A clear manifestation of this is that KPU won the Gem by-elections with 14,193 votes to KANU's 1,526, a majority of 12,667. Furthermore that through his intervention a person identified with Kwenda was able to triumph over a Kojuchhi man shows that he was such a powerful force that he could even affect historically established local power relations. A conclusion reached by an observer of this particular Gem election in the same vein is that "Odinga has become a major social force

33. Ibid

in Luoland such that without major social and economic changes in Luo Society it will be extremely difficult to dislodge him.*

* See J. Okumu, "The By-Election in Gem: An Assessment", East African Journal, Vol. VI, No. 6. 1969. p 17.

The Dramatic Shift to One-Party State

The 1969 Gem by-election marked the end of the intermittent era of multi-party electoral politics. It had only a brief spell lasting between 1960 and 1964 as well as from 1966 to 1969. The KPU itself the only other party in the latter period, which opposed KANU in the Gem by-election, had an even shorter period of existence. Having been formed in 1967 and banned towards the end of 1969, it had a life span of approximately three years and one-half only. Thus Kenya very quickly reverted back to a de facto one-party state instituted in 1964 after experimenting only once with an opposition party during the independence period.

The dramatic shift back to a one-party state was mainly due to the fact that, despite several restrictions and attacks unknown to the opposition especially in western democracies, the KPU was rapidly gaining momentum. The main reason for this unexpected development was that after Odinga and his supporters quit KANU, power struggles in the party and in government were increasingly taking ethnic forms. The explanation for this resurrection of ethnic political grouping, not much unlike the days of politics of independence, was the growing resentment within KANU of Kikuyu hold on governmental political power and fear of the prospect of perpetuating that hold.

This type of political organisation automatically worked to the advantage of KPU with its strong Luo ethnic base. It meant that the credibility of the party within the political system was not that much in question, at least not as much as when it was originally formed. In addition, in terms of attacks, there could be a breathing space to varying degrees depending on the frequency and intensity of confrontations within KANU. But it would seem that the biggest asset that KPU had was its leadership since Odinga was well versed in this style of politics which he had successfully practised during his whole political career, as evidenced by his accession to the high position of vice president in the party and in government. This was coupled by the fact that there were certain political happenings which worked in his favour.

The first major happening was the Gem by-election resulting from the death of Argwings-Kodhek's death which has been discussed. What needs emphasis is the fact that the circumstances in which the election was held led to enhanced Luo solidarity and the eventual triumph of KPU. But it was the assassination of Tom Mboya, which was the second major happening, that made the situation in the whole of Luoland and elsewhere in the country politically charged and brought Luo solidarity to the highest peak ever in the post independence period.

The nature of the happening and the timing were both significant in unleashing rage against the political system : virtually the whole of Luoland. The event was brought about by death which for the Luos particularly is customarily surrounded with deep emotions as already pointed out. But even more serious was the fact that the death came hardly six months after that of Argwings-Kodhek which was therefore still fresh in peoples minds. Thus it gave credence to the belief that there had also been foul play even in that preceding case.

It was all seen as a calculated move to completely exclude Luos from the government as these were the two prominent Luo ministers who had remained behind, much against Luo popular sentiment, after Odinga quit the government. It now seemed true that Odinga had been forced to resign and he had after all made a wise move. This endeared him to the community as a leader who had foresight and conviction and this could be why he had escaped horrible death. Furthermore he had chosen not to cling to the luxury of office when the conditions were unfavourable which made him also acquire the image of a reliable and trustworthy leader who could be counted on to remain with the people especially his community even in times of trouble.

The exalted position of Odinga and Luo solidarity behind him were clearly manifested in the funerals of both Luo leaders. He appeared in full traditional dress and received emotional acclaim. He as usual conveyed his message in Luo idioms and the mourning crowd marked every word he said.

This rallying behind Odinga was most conspicuous in the case of Mboya's funeral simply because Mboya had led the major faction of Luos, mainly from South Nyanza, that had been opposed to Odinga's leadership. The majority of them were alienated by the assassination and joined Odinga's supporters. The support that he at this point in time enjoyed in Luoland can therefore be likened only to his popularity in the heydays of Luo Union. (E.A). However, the consequences of Mboya's assassination were nationwide and not confined just to Luoland. One thing that is of relevance for this discussion is the violent ethnic clash between the Luo and the Kikuyu. The violence was mainly in Nairobi and in Luo areas where Kikuyu shops were stoned and Kikuyus taken into protective custody in Homa Bay in particular.

When going for the requiem mass at Holy Family Cathedral Kenyatta's car was beaten with stones, sticks and shoes and people shouted 'dume' (bull) - the KPU slogan. The big crowd which was mainly Luo was fought

back by the police and as they dispersed they smashed windows of the Law Courts and the Office of the President.³¹ And in view of these open hostilities no Kikuyu except J.M. Kariuki stepped on Mboya's graveyard.

Another relevant consequence was within the national leadership where Mboya had led a major faction in the power struggle within KANU and the government. There had been widespread rumours that the murderer was a Kikuyu and yet when providing an official statement on the assassination in parliament the then Vice President tried to implicate China and the KPU. The move not only failed miserably but also resulted in non-Luo KANU back-benchers joining in the general anger.

As a matter of fact in relation to KPU, Achieng Oneko, the party's publicity secretary had, on arrival at the Nairobi Hospital, candidly said in tears that, "this is not a political assassination. There is no question of parties here. He belonged to us all"³² This revelation is clearly borne out by the important positive role the KPU leadership played in linking Mboya's funeral, which was essentially a Luo traditional affair, to the requirements of a modern state. The KPU leadership tactfully used their traditional links to restrain the angered Luos from dismantling state apparatus.

The ethnic reactions to Mboya's assassination were counteracted by the Kikuyu also on ethnic terms. They interpreted the Luo solidarity and links opening up with non-Luo leaders in common cause as an indication of their isolation. They therefore resorted to oath-taking to whip up their unity and be prepared to defend their hold on political power. There is no doubt the situation was desperate as the Luos had all along been their natural allies especially in the crucial days of the politics of independence.

Kenyatta himself recognised the possible combined onslaught of other ethnic groups on the Kikuyu and tried to stave it off mainly by not letting the evolving Luo solidarity take its natural course. He therefore made moves to win some over or at least divide them. Thus the new Minister for Economic Planning and Development appointed to succeed Mboya was a Luo. This was in keeping with the ethnic arithmetic of power sharing at the conspicuous cabinet level. In addition Kenyatta summoned elders from the various ethnic groups, including the Luo, to discuss the situation with him at Gatundu.

31. D. Goldsworthy, op.cit. p 282.

32. Ibid. p 281.

But the historic move that Kenyatta made supposedly to placate the Luo was the decision in October 1969 to open the Russian-built hospital in Kisumu. As it turned out, however, this was meant to be a demonstration that Kenyatta was back in control and was still more powerful compared to Odinga. The choice of the occasion and even the timing points to this conclusion. The hospital, it was locally believed was built through the sole efforts of Odinga. Although it had been completed and functioned for two years it was only being opened so late afterwards at that particular time apparently because of Odinga's disagreement with the government. In the circumstances a clash with Odinga's supporters was therefore inevitable.

KPU supporters shouting "dume" jeered at Kenyatta and held up placards reading 'where is Tom?' Kenyatta reacted by attacking KPU and declaring to crush the opposition and also threatening Odinga who was sitting on the platform with him with detention. These virulent attacks resulted in a commotion in the crowd that led to a pandemonium. It is reported that as Kenyatta rapidly left police opened fire on an apparently threatening section of the crowd, killing seven people and injuring more than seventy.³³ The ultimate result was that two days later Odinga and all other KPU leaders and MPs arrested in a pre-drawn rounding were thrown into detention. To crown all on 30th October 1969 the KPU was banned and Kenya once again became a de facto one-party state.

33. *Ibdi.* p 286.

The Beginnings of Single-Party Elections in Luoland: Crisis of Leadership and Participation

The 1969 Elections marked the abrupt beginning of the new era of single-party elections in which the subsequent 1974, 1979 and 1983 Elections were held. In Luoland, these elections are of significance for political analysis. They show that in situations where the only recognised political party has organisation crisis and therefore is weak, and especially if there is also a leadership crisis, political actions become amorphous in nature. A situation of amorphous political action can be characterised simply as one in which primary small group interests dominate politics but are rarely articulated, and are often not aggregated. This is naturally due to the weakness in party organisation, coupled with the lack of broad-based leadership.

The resulting effect of this kind of diffuse political organisation of particular relevance for our analysis is that there are usually too many competing interests in the political arena that are not easily reconciled. Furthermore, as regards the emergent leadership, there are mostly individuals who represent the diverse interests as opposed to a cohesive leadership with stable alliances. Also these individual leaders harbour conflicting political ambitions due to lack of a unifying political factor such as a political party platform or a dominant political party boss.

A clear manifestation of this state of political affairs is at election time when parochial emotional appeals to the small groups which constitute these leaders' political power base becomes a common feature of politics. The consequence for the electorate is that people often end up voting for candidates mainly on the basis of personality, appeal to the diverse groupings or even impulse rather than issues or other objective considerations.³⁴

It can be said that, in broad terms, this was the situation precipitated on the election scene in Luoland from 1969 onwards. It came about due to leadership crisis brought about through the detention of Odinga and other KPU leaders, the barring of Odinga from contesting parliamentary election and the political party organisation crisis following the banning of the KPU.

34. G. Hyden and C. Leys, "Elections and Politics in Single-Party Systems: The Case of Kenya", British Journal of Political Science. Vol 12, No.1 1972. p 22.

The actual beginnings of political organisation crisis was marked by the vain attempts initiated soon after the ban on KPU to superimpose KANU leadership on KPU organisational machinery. The crux of the problem was that hitherto popular political party leadership in Luoland and hence leadership in national politics had remained essentially identical with Luo community leadership. Therefore, by merely ostricising KPU leaders it could not be expected that their following and party machinery could automatically come under the control of the rival leadership in Luoland that had remained in KANU. This was all the more unlikely in view of a commonly held strong belief that the members of this rival group were responsible for the sad fate of the KPU and its leadership due to an ambition to capture Luo leadership.

In terms of grassroots political organisation, since the KPU machinery was based on Luo community organisation, an important consequence of these moves was the rejuvenation of Luo traditional political organisation instead of building a strong effectively organised political party. This meant in effect that small interest groups mostly at the clan level re-emerged as the crucial political groupings guiding political action.³⁵ This situation is somewhat similar to the period prior to the formation of KANU when there were no popularly accepted unifying links above the clan level.

Luo community leadership thus became a central question in parliamentary electoral politics in Luoland. It was hoped that parliamentary elections would yield a new crop of leaders having mass support. But, although a solution to the leadership problem was being sought in modern parliamentary elections, in view of the circumstances of political organisation at the clan level, the issue lent itself to interpretation in traditional normative terms. This is the trend which started in 1969, was evident in the 1974 Election and continued in the 1979 Election.*

35. Ibid

* See WP 408 for an analysis of 1979 and 1983 Elections.