

Population Movements and The Consolidation of Authority in The Inter-Lacustrine Region of Western Kenya: A Political Transformation of Gem Community in Pre-Colonial Times.

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Abstract

During the time before European colonisation, the gem people of Kenya did not have any kind of state organisation or formal chiefdoms. The breadth of this paper is limited by the primary focus of this investigation. Beginning with the formation of the gem people around the year 1800 and continuing up until the eve of the Second World War, we trace the progression of political authority within the gem community. The clan, which was a small and highly localized social category in gem during the 19th century, was the preeminent social category. Above this level, regional leadership established the foundation for inter-clan harmony at home and effective warfare elsewhere. But at the beginning of the 1890s, colonial intervention in the interlacustrine region destroyed the authority of the regional leaders. This occurred as a result of a combination of factors. After that, local combinations of clans that were led by a dominant clan leader were able to provide security and redress for wrongs in the immediate vicinity, but apart from that, there were no restrictions placed on the warfare that occurred between clans. At the turn of the century, when the British arrived, the scope of political authority in gem was consequently constrained to a greater extent than it had ever been before. Clan leaders were able to delay the full assertion of colonial control and then manipulate the newly established administrative structure for the benefit of traditional interests. Despite this, full colonial control was eventually established. The common population lost the ability to participate in political decision-making that they had in pre-colonial times, and they discovered that there were few avenues open to them for seeking redress against abuse of power. However, up until 1939, the majority of decision-making power in native administration was held by men who held some degree of traditional status.

Keywords: Gem, population movements, consolidation of authority, inter-lacustrine region, western Kenya, political hegemony, precolonial times

Introduction

The contemporary residents of western Kenya and Nyanza, both of which are located to the east of Lake Victoria, have migrated from a wide range of origins. This category encompasses the Bantu and Nilotic language families. Whilst these groups originated in different places, they still communicated and shared ideas. The abaluyia subgroups who migrated to western Kenya from eastern Uganda may have been the earliest inhabitants of the lake region. They originally hailed from Uganda. Ochieng (1974: 9) suggests that the abaluyia and Gusii people are the vanguard of the region's migratory stream. The fact that Ochieng makes reference to both of these communities supports this claim. The Luo, an ethnic group with its origins in Sudan, also had significant contact with the Bantu whilst passing through Uganda. Throughout the rest of their journey to their final destinations in Nyanza and western Kenya, they maintained constant communication with one another. They were in constant touch with one another in what is now the western region of modern Kenya. Still, it's important to give a thorough background on each ethnic group because they all communicated with one another on smaller scales, such as clans and neighborhoods. This fact

necessitates an intensive investigation into each ethnic group's background. Multiple clans would sometimes join forces to take on the Bantu or other neighboring groups, as evidenced by Ochieng 1986 study. The Luo had settled much of the central and southern Nyanza plain by the middle of the nineteenth century. In the south, the Kipsigis people of the Nyabondo plateau had been defeated by the Luo clans that had moved in. the Nandi and Kipsigis people who once inhabited the plains have been eradicated, driven away, or assimilated. As Ochieng' (1974b: 15) notes, other Bantu clans in central Nyanza were also pushed or assimilated by invading Luo groups. This study delves into the origins of the gem people in western Kenya. The Massawa region in Luo territory is the most prolific gem-producing area in the country (central). They have never had a disagreement with Ugenya, with whom they share a border. To the contrary, they often worked together in raids against neighboring tribes and clans. But gem is spoken by a small but significant number of people in a number of eastern African countries, and particularly in the Nyanza province. Gem, located on the eastern banks of Lake Victoria, eventually became a unified whole ruled by a single hereditary dynasty in which clan loyalty played a crucial role. But other parts of the region, including as Sakwa, Asembo, Uyoma, and Yimbo, evolved into diverse and autonomous societies that share no common clan structure.

The peopling of western Kenya.

Main linguistic and cultural groups in Africa have been living in their own regions since before 1800, and each claimed sovereignty over a specific region. In fact, by the sixteenth century, the process was complete across most of Africa, and by the nineteenth century, varied degrees of consolidation had taken place and stability had been established. Even in the areas where major migrations into relatively underpopulated areas continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the horn of Africa, east Africa (outside the central highlands of the great lakes region), and Madagascar—stability in the sense of mastery over the land space had been achieved by the beginning of the nineteenth century (Ochieng' & Maxon 1992).

In another sense, people continued to be nomadic in order to make a living, whether as transhumance-practicing pastoralists, cultivator-harvesters, or fallow farmers; as hunters-gatherers scouring set areas for match, honey, or palm fruits; as fishermen following the migration of fish; or as blacksmiths; or any number of other specialized professions (Ayot, 1977). However, these migrations should be understood as regular flows of population that did not typically include the permanent abandoning of areas or the displacement of people and the relocation of a sizable number over great distances or for extended periods of time. But population pressure relative to the pattern of land use, perhaps arising from normal growth during a full stop of relative prosperity, or immigration due to war and the collapse of existing state systems, or to prolonged drought, pestilence, or other ecological disaster in a neighboring area, could set off a process of expansion by drift (Barker, 1975).

Several such events occurred in the nineteenth century. Some were set off by movements that started before 1800, whilst others grew out of shifts in trading opportunities and patterns in the nineteenth century. However, the most spectacular movements were linked to the autumn or rise of state systems, and occurred either on a local level or on a subcontinental scale, such as after the Mfecane among the northern Nguni of Natal in southern Africa. Occupation and cultivation of what had previously been considered comparatively inferior land was often necessary during such migrations, as was the creation of methods and crops well-suited to these new conditions (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989).

The history of the people who settled on the eastern edge of the Lake Victoria basin is an intriguing topic in its own right. A history of the Luo people and their journey from the southern Sudan to Uganda and their eventual settlement on the eastern beaches of Lake Victoria is detailed in Ogot's new book. It was like "shunting trucks," as Evans Pritchard put it, to relocate the entire population. One community uprooted, then another, and finally an entire community invaded to the south, passing through lands ruled by Bantu and Hamitic communities. Thus, a large portion of Uganda, including its savannahs and wetlands, has witnessed migration over the course of the last five centuries.

This migration was a parting of a larger population shift in western Kenya prior to colonial times (Ndeda, 2019). Enclaves of people who share similar customs and languages between the Albert Nile and Mount Elgon in Uganda provide evidence for the Luo migration. Ogot has done extensive research into the Luo language, mythology, and culture to piece together a general timeline of migration based on the Luo people’s own generational markers. The temperature and ecology of the areas traversed by the migrants, as well as the attitudes of local Bantu and Hamitic peoples whose territory fell in the path of the Luos, appear to have had some influence on the actual lines of travel.

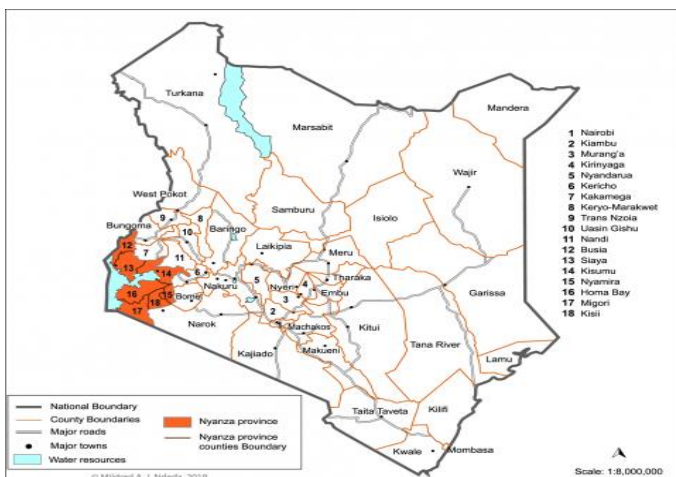
It’s likely that the Luos and the other peoples they encountered on their way south engaged in extensive intellectual exchange (schoenbrun, 2018). The Luo migrated from the highlands to the lake’s dry northeast corner in the seventeenth century. Settlement of Yimbo and got Ramogi followed, with people from the west and south ‘pincering’ in on each other to establish themselves there. The arrival of the Luo was an invasive migration. studies of neighboring peoples show that the Luo’s new areas were populated to some degree before the migrants arrived, and tales of bloody wars between Luo tribes and other bantu societies are likely based on some degree of truth. as time went on, fighting and raiding spread within the Luo as well, not just between different subtribes and clans. This was typically motivated by competition over territory and cattle, the latter being a common measure of prosperity among the Luo ((Schoenbrun, 2018).

Stories of wars fought to displace smaller clans by more powerful ones tin also be found in clan lore. There tin be no doubt that the entire Luo people were in a full stop of transition and regrouping under the occupation. In addition, as land grew scarcer in the face of growing population pressure, each clan asserted its claim to area, which was then altered through local fighting and finally codified as locations and sub-locations in the colonial era. as a result, the names and boundaries of modern-day counties in western Kenya all reflect the tribal valuation of the land at the time the protectorate was established in the 1890s (Campbell, 2006).

According to their oral history, the Luo people of Kenya and Tanzania are descended from pre-colonial fishing, farming, and herding populations in western Kenya. Their language also has deep historical origins in the inter-lacustrine region. Additionally, the Bantu vocabulary they’ve adopted have set their language apart from the several Luo varieties spoken in Uganda. The native tongue spoken by the Luo people is called *dholuo*. Minor variations of the Luo language exist inside Kenya, most notably between the Trans Yala dialect spoken in the Alego/Ugenya/gem region and the regular *dholuo* dialect spoken by the majority of the Luo people in Kenya and the neighboring Tanzania (Campbell, 2006).

Nilotic and Bantu people have merged to form the powerful Luo people group. And the Luo people have always been one people even though they come from many different places. The Luo people of Kenya have managed to keep their distinct culture, language, and political unity intact whilst also preventing any further fragmentation of the country (Ayot, 1973).

Map 1. Nyanza province counties in Kenyan context



The genesis of gem community in central Nyanza

It is believed that the establishment of clans as well as the consolidation of authority emerged as a result of social transformation beginning in the pre-colonial full stop. The gem community developed along the eastern banks of Lake Victoria into a centralized entity with a shared hereditary leadership in which clannism had a significant role in shaping the community's structure. one of the largest and more powerful communities in Siaya county, Kenya, the gem people have grown to a population of approximately 500,000 in recent years (Alila, 2011).

They occupy a vital position both ethnographically and geographically on the frontier between the Bantu people of western Kenya and the river lake Nilotes people of Siaya and Kisumu counties in Kenya. They are a subgroup of the Luo people who moved into their current land from got Ramogi under the direction of a number of different commanders. They travelled from Uganda as parting of the Joka Omolo group that eventually made it to Kenya. The members of the Omolo gang, including Joka Jok and Joka Owiny, were Ramogi Ajwang's sons. Ramogi Ajwang was the fabled Luo father of Kenya.

On their route to Ramogi Hills, where they eventually made their home about the year 1550 A.D, they passed through Samia (Alila, 2011). Ogotu (1975) states that the jo-gem cluster is descended from the Jo-Komolo cluster. The Joka Omolo were the third sub-group of the Luo people to settle in Kenya, and they arrived there at the beginning of the 17th century. There are two significant formations that make up Joka-Omolo. The first of these is what makes up the Ragenya clan cluster: Kager (based in Ukwala and Uranga): Boro (inhabiting Boro and Ugunja): Kakan (dominant in Karemo, Siaya locality): Kanyada (Kothidha, Kalanya, Katuma/Koduogo, Kanyabala, Kotieno, Kanyadier and Kanyango): Ugenya (a broad clan of Ragenya cluster; and include Kapuny/Masiro; Kanyamuot; Deje/Kateg; Kanywa/Nyagor; Kageng'; and Kanyiner): Kanyimach (based in Rongo south and in Kamagak Oyugis).

The kakwenda clan cluster is the second formation, and it is comprised of the following clans: gem (Kanyiwuor/Kawere, Kathomo and Kagilo); Kochia (Kaura, Kanam, Kamenya, Kowili and Korayo); Gem-Kowiti (Kachieng', Genga and Kopole); Agoro (based in Katito and parts of Oyugis); Sare (based around Simbi) oral tradition states that Omolo was the biological father of Ochielo, who then went on to become the mother of Ragem (gem). Ragem was a good father, and he was blessed with two sons: Ojuodhi Tipo and Kuenda Ramiero. Ojuodhi gave birth to seven children: six sons and a daughter. The sons were; Lanyo, Opiya, Ginga, Nyambok, Ogwang', Oyoo and his daughter called Anyango.

Equally, Kuenda had six boys and one daughter, and their names were Nyikwaya (Olwa), Rariu (Onyango), Nyiwuor, Wiri, Nyidet, and Thomo, as well as their sole sister Gilo (Nyagilo). However, some informants suggest that Anyanga was one of Ragem's biological sons, whilst Ojuodhi was adopted and co-opted into the community. It is said that Ojuodhi belonged to the Wadama clan, which is a Bantu group in Uganda, and that he was a nephew of Oremo, who was Ragem's wife (Gem). Whilst sojourning in got Ramogi in Yimbo, Anyanga clan in the got Ramogi area was outnumbered by Ojuodhi's big group of Bantu colleagues when Ojuodhi arrived with them.

It is said that the fact that the Anyanga clan allowed Ojuodhi to stay with them was the cause of the clan's misfortune because, as the generations passed, the Anyanga clan gradually lost their identity to Ojuodhi, and these Bantu clans were eventually integrated into the community (fgd 9: 4 /3/2021). oral information further indicate that due to the significance presence of assimilated bantu groups in Gem social fabric, different Gem clans have claimed their original identity by distorting the history, thus the contradictions as to whether Anyanga or Ojuodhi were biological sons of Ragem (father of Gem community (fgd 9: 4 /3/2021).

Gem also includes immigrants pejoratively referred to as Ojwando (mixed identity). These people came to live Ragem and either worked for him or were enslaved by him. They are neither transient guests nor travelers since Ragem, the legendary patriarch of the Gem society, or one of his sons provided them with property in exchange for marriage or protection, with the intention of settling there permanently. Those from Luoland are; Ndagaria from Nyakach, Mur from Alego, Ojola from Kisumu, Udha from Sakwa and Ojuok from Alego. Those from Luyha land are; Ebusagami from Bunyore, Umuri from Maragoli and Umani, Uwoware, Ulgano and Umuswa all from Kisa. From Kalenjin there is Nyibuop who are descendants of arap Buop, a herd's boy who was given a Luo girl as wife. In short, today, Ojuodhi and Kuenda are clans with sub clans which are names of women married either by the two patriarchs or any of their sons (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1987).

Three well known Ojuodhi sub-clans are; Akwany, Agola and Adhaya. Agola is the most successful of all the sub-clans, it was from this house that Chief Odera Akango sprouted. The same house has produced four Gem MPs beginning with Argwings Kodhek, Omolo Okero, Grace Ogot and Oki Ombaka. Even Siaya women rep comes from Gem Kagola in Ulumbi. Three well known Kuenda sub-clans are; Aluoch, Adhasi and Achar. Former Gem MP Jakoyo Midiwo comes from Achar sub-clan of the bigger Thomo clan staying in Kanyikwaya next to Ndori schools in South Gem. Ojwando have produced a total of two MPs, namely, Otieno Ambala of Mur clan resident in Gem next to Komuok primary school and Wasonga Sijeyo of Ndagari (Mboya, 1967).

Because of their earlier interactions with outsiders, members of the Gem clans received an early education, particularly in the areas surrounding the citadel of higher learning at Yala St. Mary's. This helped to solidify the Gem clan's preexisting clan system and was the source of the Gem clan's reputation as a learned family among the Luo of Kenya. There are three categories of these settlers: those from other regions of Luo-land, those from Kalenjin, and those from Luyha land. Each category is distinguished by the region from whence they originated (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989).

Dispersal and consolidation of authority in Central Nyanza

According an informant, around 1700 A.D, the three Gem clans, Kwenda, Ojuodhi and Anyanga migrated to Barding led by Rading Omolo, thus the place gained its name from Rading Omolo (*Bar Ka Rading-Radings* place) who led the group from got Ramogi. Jo-Gem dispersed from Bar Ding in two expeditions, the Got Seje, Alego settlement and the lower River Yalafollowing an attack and looting of their livestock from Jo-Alego and Sakwa both from Joka- Owiny cluster. One group led by Orome Ayuo of the Kwenda clan moved to Kathomo while the other group led by Rading Omolo passed through Rangala to Ndere to Nyamminia where they attacked and dispersed the Kisa people and settled at Nyamminia" (O. I, OM 1: 11 /03/ 2021). They left several ancient ruins at Abuom, Bungu Ochilo, Rakuom K'omonge, Ochok, Bar Ka Rading' (Bar-ding') the descendants of Ragem (Gem). They came to neighbour Alego clan from Nyandiwa, Obambo, Mahinga, Bungu- Oburu. They also bordered Ugenya at Ugingo home of warlike Ger, Boro home of Anam the Rock, Gangu home of Kateg and Mwer the ruins of Puny. They also bordered Jo Kisumo clan in present day Kogelo (President Obama home area) and Jokisumo clan of Kaudha bordered Seme clan of Gombe.

According (KII, 23/1/2021), the group led by Orome Ayuo from Kwenda sub-clan were the custodians of symbols of authority, the spear and fly whisk. These items were handed over by their ancestral father-Kwenda to future leaders of the community. As the people of Gem moved into different directions according to their clans, they met resistance and, in many occasions, war erupted leading to retreat or surrender. For example, in their conflict with Sakwa people, Jo- Gem were dispersed by Jo-Sakwa from Nyabenge to Yath Olalo in Kaudha. According to Ogot (2006) Jo-Alego later joined forces with Jo-Sakwa and pushed Jo-Gem into their present homeland between 1810 and 1830 where they found a well-watered fertile area that was already occupied by Bantu clans- Jo-Umswa (Abamswa) and Jo-Kisa (Abakisa). They

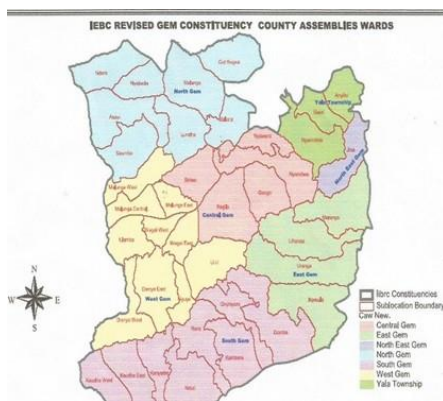
spent much of the nineteenth Century fighting to expand their settlement in the region. According to an informant, Rading Omolo was anointed to be the community spokesman and political leader of entire Gem but Ayieko was obligated by tradition as an elder and the custodian of the spear, fly whisk and shield which were symbols of authority (KII, EL5: 24/1/2021).

Map 2. Nyanza Province Counties in Kenyan Context



Location map of Siaya County in Kenya and its sub-counties Source: Siaya County

Spatial Plan (2018)



Social organization of Gem people in the pre-colonial period

The Gem clans each lived in their own fortified homesteads within their own separate communities that they occupied. The Gunda-bur settlement was a fortified homestead that included a large number of huts and families. It was expected that all members of Gunda Bur would belong to the same subclan, which was denoted by the presence of a hole dug all the way around the house, which was followed by the construction of a euphorbia (ojuok) fence and the covering of the hole with thorns. During the night, the entrance (rangach) was blocked off using logs (okol) and thrones (kuthe). (Information obtained from the Gem council of elders’ focus group discussion held in Onding’s village in East Gem on February 19, 2021.)

Mr. Menje made the observation in the context of leadership and authority that medicine men (jobilo) in Gem formed a powerful class of leaders who could manipulate decisions made by Gem people using the faith in unseen forces. This was mentioned in the line of Leadership and Authority. On the other hand, the Gem leaders never introduced themselves as Jobilo, and the people they led never referred to them in that manner. However, in reality, they were thought to possess supernatural powers, and as a result, they were given a privileged position within the clan. They had the ability to rid homes of bad omens brought on by unanticipated disasters such as epidemics and protected households from outside assaults. The powerful magic of the Gems gave their warriors the confidence to face their enemies in battle, as they believed their magicians had the ability to temporarily blind their adversaries. They were consulted by elders of the clan as

well as other leaders regarding the protection of the clan from natural calamities, and clan members sought their advice regarding when to strike adversaries. They had the ability to influence the course of the conflict to their advantage. Therefore, Jobilo carried out the functions of seers and prophets (KII, EL 6: 25/1 /2021).

In support of the information that has already been gathered, Ogot (2009) made the observation that Jobilo (singular), was an important person. This was due to the fact that it was believed that he could use his talents in bilo (medicine) and prophecy to protect his community from enemy attack and ensure the success of its warriors' raids. Furthermore, because it was believed that their powers came from God (Nyasaye or Were) Himself as well as the spirit that "Possessed" them, these men also often had the "perceived" power and prestige required to arbitrate disagreements successfully and, when necessary, impose their decision. This was because it was believed that their powers came from both God (Nyasaye or Were) Himself as well as the spirit that "Possessed" them. As a consequence of this, the more capable Jobilo had the potential to become men of tremendous authority and producers of rain. Consequently, by the time that they moved into Gem. Beginning in the year 1820 and continuing onwards, Jo-Gem followed a strategy that involved planting out relatively small lineage-based colonies. These colonies, with the ritual support of the Ojuodhi jobilo and the coordinated military support of their kinsmen, went on to conquer the area around them. As a direct consequence of this, the earliest occupants were ultimately forced to relocate further to the east (Ogot, 2006).

In addition to the magicians of the Gem clan, known as jobilo, who possessed exceptional talents and could use magic to defend, heal, and foresee the future, the clan also had medicine men known as jonawi who used their magic to kill others. In Gem, jobilo were revered out of amazement, but jonawi (malevolent magicians), jojuogi (night runners), and jo-sihoho (women with terrible eyes) were dreaded for their ability to cause one's stomach to bulge before the victim passed away. Jobilo were respected because of this fear. The magicians possessed exceptional skills and were able to protect and heal people via the use of magic; nevertheless, Jonawi exploited the magicians' magic to kill people and to cause damage to the houses of other people. Jobilo was available for consultation by both leaders and household heads in order to safeguard their homes from man-made or natural calamities. Clan members were also able to consult Jobilo on matters of public importance, such as determining the appropriate time to attack an adversary. They had the ability to influence the result of battles in their favor and also served as seers and prophets (KII, EL9: 9/2/2021).

There were some linguistic evidence of Bantu interaction with Gem people, according to (FGD4, Uriri North West Gem 26/2/2021). For instance, the Banyore dialect that the Gem people spoke before they were displaced and inhabited their country was the source of names like Marenyo and Jina, which were adopted by the Gem people. In Luhya, the term for "Mareny" is "hurenya," which means "being fatigued." Jina is referred to as "Lichina" (stones). The Luhya engaged in battle with the Gem people but eventually capitulated and surrendered at Mareny after they became exhausted due to the presence of numerous boulders and stones. When questioned, they gave the following response: hurenya hulwa lichina (we are tired because of stones). However, the people of Gem believed that the location was known as both Marenyo and Lichina. Even in the modern day, there are still some Gem natives who use Luhya names, such as Okinda, which is pronounced as Ochinda (meaning lice). All of these things point to the fact that the Gem language and rituals contain some Luhya influence. In spite of the fact that they live in harmony with others who are not of the Luo culture, the original Gem inhabitants continue to practice their traditional practices. The granaries served as warehouses for the storage of grains and various other types of food crops. "The more the number of granaries a dwelling had, the more it represented food security in a homestead among the Gem people" (KII, EL 27: 7 /4/2021).

Mr. Onjak added that euphorbia, which was also considered to be a sacred live fence, was used to enclose Gem properties and serve as a boundary. When questioned whether the Banyore had affected the way in which they created this residence in any way, they stated that it had not. They reacted by saying that they

believed in their way and that it safeguarded it, and that they could not let any new customs and traditions from elsewhere to permeate. The Banyore are said to have originated in Bunyore, which is a community located in the Vihiga district of Kenya's once western province. This region is mostly inhabited by Nilotic-Luhya people who speak the Olunyole dialect of Nilo-Sahara Luhya, which is considered to be a Bantu language of Western Kenya. The native tongue of the area is known as Ebunyole, and the people who live there are referred to as the Abanyore (KII, ExC1: 11/1/2021).

On either side of the entrance gate of the farmhouse stood a row of cottages designed specifically for the use of the family's offspring. The home of the first wife was constructed in the middle of the property, with the front door pointing in the direction of the entrance gate. The homes of the second and third wives were constructed on the left and right sides, respectively, of the home of the first wife. The first wife's home faced the front gate. There was a *duol* or *abila* in front of the *od mikayi* (first wife's house) in virtually every homestead, despite the fact that some homesteads practiced polygamy and others did not. It was in this room that the head of the homestead greeted and entertained his guests, friends, and also shared meals with his sons while providing them with guidance and education outside of the official classroom setting. In most cases, it was constructed in close proximity to the cow shed known as *kund-dhok*, which had to be positioned on the left side of *od-mikayi*. Son's dwellings, son's cottages, and shelters for small animals like goats, lambs, and calves were all included in the Gem homestead's collection of junior homes. The homes of the sons were also rotated in a pattern similar to that of the homes of the wives; however, there was one key distinction between the two patterns: all of the first-born children from all of the houses in Gem built their cottages on the left side of the gate, and all of the second-born sons built theirs on the right side of the homestead (KII, EL 18: 23/2/ 2021).

The Gem people built grain storage structures known as *dero*. These *dero* were used to store millet, sorghum, maize, and nuts. Depending on her capabilities and efforts, every woman had her own granary or multiple granaries known as *deche*. The head of the homestead also maintained a granary known as *mondo*, which he stocked with grains harvested from his own garden. This *mondo* was typically kept locked up and guarded, and it was only opened when a person in need came to the farm seeking aid. If a wife had depleted her food supplies, the grain from the *mondo* was doled out sparingly because it was intended to be a food security mechanism for the family. It was only to be utilized as a last resort, based on the particular demands and cooperation of individual women (KII, EL19: 18 /2/2021).

As early as the 1890s, the Gem people established trading linkages both inside their own community and with her neighbors as well as with communities that were located beyond their territorial bounds. These communities included the Jo-Sakwa, Jo-Asembo, and Jo Uyoma (people from the Uyoma tribe). The Gem people were able to provide for themselves in many respects; yet, there were times when the local resources were unable to meet the demand in their area; alternatively, if the supply of local produce surpassed their need, they were forced to engage in commerce with their neighbors. Gem inhabitants were known to keep cattle, goats, sheep, and chickens, in addition to engaging in fishing, which provided the majority of the essential local raw resources. Cattle, goats, and sheep skins were used for making drums and traditional blankets, shoes, strengthening handles of knives and other cutting instruments, as well as weapons such as spears, and *kuot* among others (KII, EL20: 24 3/ 2021). The animals supported skin-based industries while hunting wild animals provided some of the socially valuable objects for making shields and *okumba*.

In agreement with the previous respondent, another elder stated that by the late 1890s, there were still an abundant number of wild animals available in the area, and since Gem men were skilled shooters, animal skins could be obtained in sufficient quantities to meet the requirements of the local market at the time. The amount of pasture area that was available and the number of wild animals both decreased significantly as a result of many reasons such as an increase in population, land registration, and property consolidation. The apparent changes in meteorological conditions around the Lake Victoria region, which may have been caused by the careless cutting of vegetation, led to a dramatic decrease in the number of animals, which in

turn led to a reduction in the supply of animal skins as commodities of trade. Because of this, an organized commerce with the people that were nearby was required in order to collect the skins that were essential to the continuation of the local enterprises. On occasion, Gem hunting parties ventured into Sakwa territory as part of their hunts, which resulted in clashes between members of different clans (KII, EL21: 24/3/2021).

Another wise person stated that in the 1890s, the area that is now the Siaya District had an abundance of wild animals such as elephants, leopards, and even cheetahs. As a result, the trade items that were needed, such as ivory, buffalo skins, and leopard skins, which were required for the production of ornaments such as shields, were obtained through trade interactions with neighboring clans. Other animal products that the Gem people obtained through trade included ostrich eggs that were used as decorations in rituals and ceremonies. Additionally, feathers of various types of birds were used to decorate hats, and whisks from animals such as donkeys and cattle were used (KII, EL 22: 26 / 3/2021).

However, the FGD stressed that the majority of the clay used for smearing the walls and floors of buildings was imported from Sakwa, which is located in the Got Kachieng area. This was due to the fact that the soil in Gem consisted primarily of black-cotton clay soil that broke readily. Clay mined in the Chamagaha district of Sakwa was put to use in the production of a wide variety of terra cotta vessels, including smoking pipes. Iron was imported from Samia in the Busia District and Got Regea in the Siaya District in order to make iron tools such as axes, knives, adzes, and traditional panga. These were all hand tools that were utilized for activities on a smaller scale. Other implements were also manufactured using iron. The production of all iron-based products of industrial and domestic value, such as tools, ornaments, and weapons, required the use of iron as the primary material. Iron was also used to create arrowheads, knives, iron harpoons, bells for cows and goats, hoes, swords, pangas, and fish hooks, among other tools and implements. Copper, silver, and gold-based metals were difficult to come by, but in the instances where they were available, trade focus group discussion (FGD5: 27 /2/2021) revealed that the metals may have been imported.

Another FGD discussed the significance of the Indano falls, which are located in the River Yala and are responsible for dividing Gem into what is known as the “North” and “South” of the Yala River. A dense thicket consisting of many kinds of aquatic vegetation and teeming with animals and plants could be found close to the waterfall. It was widely believed that the red cock dwelt there and possessed the ability to inflict painful burns on people in the form of thunder and lightning. Luri elder in Gem said that this location was connected to mystical powers that were related with metaphysical power, and that it was a place that healers, diviners, and sorcerers traveled to in order to gather power (FGD3: 25/2/2021) It was believed that before the establishment of the colonial authorities, there were sites in this area that had been designated for the performance of rituals including the scarification of human sacrifices to gods.

In addition, participants in a focus group discussion (FGD3: 25/2/2021) reported that the locations in question were held in high regard and accorded an especially high level of respect in terms of a cultural and religious perspective. One further thing that set these societies apart from others was the way that they conserved those hills, making it so that wild animals could use them as a safer habitat. There were several medicinal plants and traditional remedies that could only be found in those hills; hence, those hills came to be regarded as holy places and were given special protection (FGD 1: 23/1/2021).

The fact that the Gem people believed that a mighty being that was thought to wield some powers above human beings called God resided in the holy sites is evidence of how strongly they held this belief (Hembko). Rawalo hills, Onyanje hill, Nguge his, Luri hill, Omino hill, Regea hill, Dudi hill, and Indano falls in River Yala are some examples of places in Hembko that people from Gem could go to offer sacrifices to God. Other examples include Rawalo hills. The Indano fall was revered by the Gem people as the abode of the spirit of thunder, who they thought lived there. It was the location where witchdoctors went to seek advice from the spirit of hailstones, thunder, and lightning. The heavenly force that reigned over the

spirit that sprang from the river conveyed its will to the people by way of their ancestors, the dead, and the living-dead. River Yala was the location of both the deity that was meant to provide the answer as well as the location where the answer was provided.

This god of the river possessed metaphysical power, and the only way for traditional medicine men to recognize him was by the natural occurrences that they saw (KII, EL23: 26/3/2021). At the same time, the informant (KII EL 24) concurred with what previous informants had said and underlined the following: “Gem was not widely renowned in medicinal skill nonetheless, the few well known medicine men were; Orek wuon Orama, Ogada, Oliech wuon Agina and Alara wuon Kaumba.” It’s possible that these guys got their knowledge from Alego. For instance, Oliech wuon Agina got his knowledge of how to make it rain from the Nganyi tribe in Bunyore, which is where his grandmother was from. Oliech, whose grandfather moved from Regea to Ndiru in South Gem in the year 1880, was famous for his ability to send hailstones, storm thunder, and lightning. As a result of his gift, Oliech enjoyed adoration from customers who consulted him during dry spells. He said that the Indano fall on the River Yala was the sole place with metaphysical power that people may visit after a sick patient got well after having treatment at the shrine. He argued that this was because the fall was located on the River Yala. The Gem people held a high regard for the Indano area because of its economic potential for harvesting rare aquatic plants. These plants were essential for the treatment of persons who had been struck by lightning as well as for the prevention of storms, hail, and drought. According to KII EL24: 27/4/2021), the name Indano originates from the Luhya dialect and means “a fall.”

One of the members underlined that the old man was anticipated to have a separate space where they could congregate as old men and have their serious talk. The elderly man had the option of unwinding in the hut in the event that he did not wish to visit any of the women’s homes. Every single house was required to have a cock, which served as a representation of the family’s power and dominance in the community. When asked about the position of girls in relation to the building of houses, the response suggested that females were not regarded as worthy of having a space in their parents’ home because they were expected to grow up and join other groups in the future. When asked if they would assist people who married their daughters by providing a site for them to build their homes, they responded that it would be possible for them to do so. All of the actions that were mentioned above were approved by the focus group discussion that was held in the Luo of Gem sub-county (FGD 25/1/, 2021).

In accordance with (FGD 1: 23 /1/2021), there were weddings that took place between members of the Gem and Luhya families. Ayieko, the daughter of Nganyi, the rainmaker from Banyore, married, for instance, and the two of them had a child (Luhya). The young woman tied the knot with Odera Ulalo, who later became the Ruoth of the Gem people. During the period when the Umuri clan of the Luhya attacked his people by setting fire to Banyore homes and killing many Banyore, the leader of the Banyore people, whose name was Nganyi, made good use of this marriage by ensuring that his people had children. He addressed Odera Ulalo and made a plea for him to assist in the disciplinary measures taken against the Umuri people. The Gem people gave their response through Odera Ulalo, who encouraged his people to engage in combat with the Umuri. They were able to be pushed by Odera all the way past Luanda (which is present-day Luanda market). There, Odera Ulalo constructed a house for his family. His residence was guarded by a fortified fence constructed of large stones (Iwendni). Because of this, the Gem people and other people from the Seme, Uyoma, Asembo, Alego, and Sakwa refer to the Banyore as Joto-Kodera, which literally translates to “those who originates from the backyard of Odera’s homestead.” (FGD 5: 27/2/ 2021).

Around the 18th century, clan limitations were imposed on marriages. These restrictions were difficult to observe, and as a result, people were only allowed to marry within their own clan or another clan entirely, but not within their own subclan. For instance, a male who belonged to the Ojuodhi clan was only permitted to marry a lady whose clan was either the Kwenda or the Anyanga clan. However, because of the growing population of Gem people, this requirement was eventually lifted. At this time, members of the Ojuodhi,

Anyanga, and Kwenda sub-clans are free to marry members of any other sub-clan within their own group. However, marriages between members of different sub-clans are not permitted under any circumstances. For example, a member of the Nyikwaya clan who is male is not allowed to marry a member of the same clan who is female. In a similar vein, there was no room for intermarriage between members of the same family (O.I, EU 1: 11 /1/2021).

Mixed Identity of Jo-Gem

According to the accounts of a few of our informants, Jo-Gem people in the area are also spoken by other Luo speakers who call themselves Jomwa or Bantu. This could be explained by the discovery in Gem of a large number of groups with linkages to Bantu-speaking peoples, as these peoples speak Bantu. As an illustration, “Uсуha were immigrants from Sakwa Kamayuje, but they were integrated in Gem during the conflict that was fought between Gem and Kisa.” The Bantu people of Uсуha were made to feel at home by Olwande, one of the elders, and they managed to keep their culture even after moving to Gem. At the same time, Gem was assisted by Umani in their mission to drive the Banyore eastwards toward Emusire among the Abasotso. However, some of the Banyore capitulated and assumed Gem’s identity, while others continued to fight (O.I, EKRR26: 26 /1 /2021).

Uhaware, another group that was assimilated in Gem, was a conglomerate of several different Bantu clans, including Ulawa, Umlago, Umaluwe, Irumbi, Umalando, and Usiye. Uhaware was another group that was integrated in Gem. These people traveled from the island of Uware in Lake Victoria into Gem territory, but they were driven back by the Kisa people. However, when the Gem people arrived, these people fled and submitted so that they may become a part of the Gem people. There are also relics of other Luo clans in Gem, such as those of the Kisumu, Nyakach, Kano, Ugenya, Alego, Sakwa, Asembo, and Yimbo families. The vast majority of them can be discovered in South Gem (O.I, EKRR26: 26 /1 /2021).

Other Bantu clans, such as the Kisa, the Ulugalo, the Usindha, the Ukusira, the Ugungu, the Urumbi, and the Umani Uhoware, had already occupied the region north of the River Yala between the years 1780 and 1890 when the people settled in their current location. Throughout history, several clans and families have been responsible for driving certain groups into exile. As an illustration, the Ojuodhi clan engaged in conflict with the Ulugalo, Kisa, Usiandha, and Umani. At the same time, Jo-Kochola and Kanyikwaya of Kwenda were pressing Ukusira, Ugungu, and Urumbi, who eventually capitulated at Omindo hill near the bank of the River Yala. People from Kisumu and Seme were driven from their homes by the Joka-Ogola. Those who did surrender, however, remained in Gem and acquired Gem identity, while they kept their own customs and names (KII, EL7: 26/1/ 2021).

The competition for scarce resources like land and water appears to have been the root cause of the tensions that have arisen between the Gem people and the communities that are located nearby. During their interrogations, the members of the south Gem council of elders reportedly stated that it was not true that things merely transpired on their own without any prior planning or preparation. They confirmed that the Gem community has an oral tradition that asserts this, and it states that before the people arrived in their current home there were approximately seven significant wars that were waged. The following is a list of some of these wars: The conflict that erupted between Gem and Umswa, the conflict that erupted between Gem and Kisumu, the conflict that erupted between Gem and Kisa, the conflict that erupted between Gem and Seme, the conflict that erupted between Gem and Sakwa, and the conflict that erupted between Gem and Umuri (Banyore). According to the oral traditions, these wars were fought between the years 1700 and around 1904, according to the South-Gem Council of Elders (FGD3: 25 /2/2021).

To top off all of the information that was provided by the other respondents regarding how the Gem people met other communities that they discovered in Gem, retired Chief Johanes Ojodo revealed that when the Kisumu people had been pushed from Pap Nyadiel, they crossed the River Yala at Wath Kudho. The location in question quite literally lacked a name. However, when the residents of Kisumu realized that it

was the only shallow area of the River Yala where people could cross on foot, they gathered thorns and blocked the entry from both sides of the river. This was the only place along the river where people could cross on foot. The thorns prevented the Gem people from attacking the Kisumu people when they came to assault them. As a result, the Gem people were unable to attack the Kisumu people. After three years, the Nyikwaya clan under the leadership of Oyomba cleared the thorns and bridged the river, at which point they renamed the area Kudho (Kudho Market). Jo- Kisumu were eventually scattered over Lela territory in Kisumu County. (gunda Marera) was the name given to the location where the Kisumu people made their home (KII, EL8: 26 /1/2021).

Consolidation of Authority of Jo-Gem before colonial rule

A variety of African groups had already developed their own systems of private and public order before to the arrival of European colonizers in Africa. These systems included political institutions and mechanisms. There were a variety of institutions of contract and property rights in existence, such as systems and associations that provided insurance and credit, in addition to facilitating trade across different types of communities (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013). This is backed by demonstrations that effective self-governance in pre-colonial Africa enabled different clans and villages to develop institutions for trade, conflict settlement, and the enforcement of contracts. Ingiriis (2018) provides evidence that demonstrates this. This indicates that during the time of the late pre-colonial period, chiefdoms were constitutionally restrained, and as a result, they responded effectively to the requirements of their subjects. The situation was very similar in Kenya, as seen in the archival documents, which demonstrate how traditional forms of administration had limited the powers of clan leaders before to colonization. The situation was quite similar in Kenya.

As a result of interviews that were carried out in Gem, it was determined that the pre-colonial political organization among the Gem clans originated at the lineage level. Each Gem lineage selected a king or queen to govern over them, and when multiple lineages came together to form a village, the villagers elected a chief to serve as the clan's leader. After then, the leaders of each of the different lineages that make up this clan would take their places on the chief's council of elders. Further investigation reveals that the chief was also seen as a religious leader and the living representative of the ancestral spirits in addition to his role as the government leader responsible for maintaining order and acting as the decisive authority in matters affecting the Gem clan's welfare. In addition, the chief was seen as the government leader responsible for maintaining order and acting as the authoritative figure in matters affecting the Gem clan (Mboya, 1967).

This indicates that the Gem people were aware of their political systems and that lineages played an essential role in the selection of their leaders from the time before the British invasion until the time after the invasion. Additionally, because they were monitored by the council of elders, the chiefs were unable to abuse the power that was granted to them. In addition, the chief of the Gem clan was aided in the management of the clan's affairs by the inner council. This council was made up of significant members of the community as well as relatives and close associates of the chiefs (Kenny, 1977).

The members of the council did not have the power to overrule the decisions made by the chief; nevertheless, they did have the responsibility of advising and informing the chief. The village of the commoners, which comprised of village meetings with the councillors, advisers, and members of the community, provided the chief with information that he used to inform his decision making. The people of the community and the leaders of the community considered the proposed remedy, and then the majority of the community made a decision. It was also conceivable for the chief to act counter to the decision of the majority, but this was not an option because doing so would have caused strife within the clan, which would have ultimately resulted in the chief being removed from his position (Ayot, 1973).

This demonstrates quite clearly that the leaders needed to have a group of people who would assist in governing. In the village courts, justice and the rule of law were both ensured since the village chief was

required to give careful consideration to his decisions before passing judgment. According to Mboya (1967), the actions of the ruler of the Gem were controlled, and if the chief displayed any signs of rebellion to make himself independent of the council, he was either deserted by the elders or deposed. Ongere states that this occurred whenever the chief attempted to make himself independent of the council. This was comparable to the observations made by Palagashvili (2018) among the Asante, who believed that the individuals who appointed the chief also had the authority to remove him from office if he failed to carry out the responsibilities of his position in an adequate manner. As a result, the chief was forced to confront the consequences of his poor governance decisions within himself. In addition, the chief derived a significant portion of his income directly from the members of his clan, and the latter's potential to remove him from power dictated the chief's behavior.

Prior to the establishment of British control in the area, the Gem people had traditionally adhered to a patriarchal clan structure in their social organization. The British colonialists discovered when the Gem community landed in their current territory following a history of conflict, conquests, and the eventual assimilation of non-Luo populations. This occurred after the Gem community had already assimilated other communities (Luhyia). This resulted in the formation of a governmental system, the primary objective of which was to incorporate all assimilated clans into the new *piny* (society). Clans and lineages became widely dispersed, and over time, both kinship and chiefship ideas began to be applied to the organizational structure of political systems. The establishment of a ruothship, also known as a chieftaincy, in Gem gave rise to a figure representing royalty who held the position of jural political authority over the *piny*. Because he held the position of a prophet, the person who held this office was shown the utmost reverence by all around him. The majority of these leaders were Jabilo, who are also known as magicians (Ogot, 2009).

According to Ogot (2009), the traditional chiefs of the area placed each portion under the authority of a sub-chief in order to partition their holdings. The majority of anthropologists are in agreement that some Luo sub-tribes had acquired embryonic forms of centralized chiefship, while others continued to live in classically decentralized and loosely organized political groupings. Some of them held the position of chief, which they had held for ten generations or more; each chief was succeeded by his son or by an individual who was very close to him and was afterwards thought to be his son. People in other Luo subtribes maintained their cohesiveness in spite of their shared hostility against neighboring subgroups and their connection to a lineage that included the majority of them. There was no such thing as a routinized lead in those other Luo subtribes. The most effective leaders of these subgroups were also the most successful fighters, and these leaders went on to become highly feared prophets (Ogot, 2009).

Because the immediate family of the chiefdom was formed by the chief and his blood kinsmen, which included people with whom the chief did not have family relations, the pre-colonial Gem chiefdom had more political entities than any other. This was the case because the immediate family of the chiefdom was formed by the chief. The Gem chiefdom appeared to be completely autonomous and was not in any apparent relation of overlordship or subordination to any other chiefdoms. This meant that different levels of autonomy existed within the Gem clan in Siaya County at various points in time. The results of the oral interviews that were carried out demonstrate that the natives of Gem had the mandate to launch an exit option, and that the chief of Gem felt the pressure to provide better services and be attentive to the people who are a part of the Gem clan. It was in court where the authority of the Gem chief was most frequently observed, and the constraints on his capacity to judge reflected the limited political power of a pre-colonial chief. Gem chiefs had limited political power before colonial rule (Ndeda, 2019).

Because of this, in the past, no Gem ruler was able to impose his own will on subjects who were unwilling to comply. The Gem chiefs were active participants in political contests against one another. According to Ndeda (2019), it was the responsibility of the chief to provide for the needs of their residents and to increase his following by inviting other communities and clans to coexist with them rather than encouraging desertion to a neighboring chief. This was because the chief did not want to lose his people to a rival chief.

This was confirmed by a research that was conducted by Ashton (1947), which showed that chiefs who fulfilled their tasks were certain of maintaining both their post and their followers. The chiefs who did not do this saw a decrease in the number of their followers, and/or they ran the risk of having their post usurped by a more popular challenger. Because of this freedom, chiefs were forced to become accountable to the people they ruled in order to earn the trust of those people.

It is also important to mention, in terms of their socio-political organization, that the majority of people in Gem trace their lineage back to a common ancestor known as Gem. Gem is thought to have been the founding father of the Gem people. It is reported that Gem had three sons, but only Ojuodhi, who was also known as Tipo, and Kwenda attained significant levels of success in their respective fields. Because of this, there are two major lineage groupings that are referred to as Kojuodhi and Kwenda. Clans descended from Ojuodhi's other sons struggled to compete with the Adhaya lineage, which was descended from one of Ojuodhi's sons named Adhaya and grew extremely strong. It is stated that through Adhaya's marriage to two wives named Agola and Akwany, there emerged two clans named Kagola and Kakwany, which over the years have controlled politics and leadership in Gem. The names of these clans are Kagola and Kakwany (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1987).

The above explanation lends credence to the hypothesis that the political establishment in Africa prior to the arrival of colonial powers consisted of members of the same extended family. During the time before European colonization, different chiefdoms formed alliances with one another or chose to maintain their independence. Because there were organizations like the council of elders that controlled the administration of the chiefs, the chiefs were also concerned with the needs of the people that they led. This was the case despite the fact that the chiefs were the ones in charge. The pre-colonial political institutions of the Gem people were likewise composed of individuals from the same bloodline. Additionally, the chiefs of the Gem people had a council that aided them in leading the people. When it came to ensuring that justice and the rule of law were adhered to, the chief and his council played an important role. The migration of the other clans, on the other hand, served as a means of exerting authority over the Gem chiefs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study observes that until an individual's identity is accepted by a community, he is seen as a stranger, an alien, or even an enemy. This is especially true in western Kenya, and in the culture of the Luo people of central Nyanza. Strangers are often the ones who have to answer the all-important question "who are you?" that can reveal a lot about a person and their social connections. This network must be confirmed by the interrogators in order to authenticate the claims and identity recognition of the group or the individual. In the twenty first century, however, there have been some changes to this identity parade. For example, the State of Kenya has made an effort to assign citizens a sub-locational identity through the use of the Kenyan identity card. The Kenyan ID card stores personal information about its holders in terms of sub-locations, which are treated as presumed maximal ancestries. The state has also intervened to create identities through sub-locations in areas with a high degree of social identity heterogeneity. As a result of these changes, some Gem clans have felt the need to retreat from their positions of power by rewriting their history. As a result, clan histories in Gem have had to be rewritten in order to facilitate peaceful coexistence because the rewritten history not only downplays the importance of clan superiority, but it also tends to erase the accounts of these pre-existing claims to ownership of the land upon which they settled.

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Interviews

Name and date of interview	Place of Interview
KII EL 24) Elder- Ammon Ayuo	Ulumbi
KII, 23/1/2021 Elder-Paulus Olwal	Wagai
FGD 1: 23/1/2021). Pitalis Nyamudho	Malanga
KII, EL5: 24/1/2021). William Odila	Yala
KII, EL 6: 25/1 /2021). John Ogaga	Uriri
O.I, EKRR26: 26 /1 /2021). Jeckonia Obilo	Olengo
O.I, EKRR26: 26 /1 /2021). David Opalo	Muhanda
KII, EL7: 26/1/ 2021). Solomon Sumba	Sinaga
KII, EL8: 26 /1/2021). Joseph Ojwang Omindo	Sinaga
KII, EL 18: 23/2/ 2021). Tobias Odindo	Asayi
FGD3: 25/2/2021) Jams Oguta	Regea
(FGD3: 25/2/2021) Thaddeus Rawer	Uranga
FGD3: 25 /2/2021). Carilus Onyuka	Abir
(FGD5: 27 /2/2021 Cosmas Opundo	Kagilo
FGD 5: 27/2/ 2021). Isaiah Ojod	Gombe
KII, EL21: 24/3/2021). Cleophus Ojwang'	Gongo
KII, EL 22: 26 / 3/2021) Ojwang Owino	Ramula
KII, EL23: 26/3/2021). Ogaga Otiende	Kaudha
FGD 9: 4 /3/2021. Opiata Oyoo	Rabuor
FGD 9: 4 /3/2021. Ochieng Sumba	Ndiru
KII EL24: 27/4/2021), Peter Obilo	Nyamkiria
KII, EL 27: 7 /4/2021). Maurice Ojodo	Karariw
KII, EL9: 9/2/2021). Peter Ojalo	Rera
KII, ExC1: 11/1/2021). John Okeyo	Kojuok
O.I, EU 1: 11 /1/2021). John Ojodo	Wagai