

ABSTRACT

The study of chiefs in the history of Kenya is neglected yet the position has been a cause of contention over its relevance to proper governance of the country in the post-colonial era. Kenya's history has been silent on the life of Chief Njagi Kavungura, his leadership qualities and those other chiefs. Njagi had a productive life in public administration in both the colonial and post-colonial eras of Kenya's history. There was danger; therefore, of data concerning his leadership attributes being lost with time and possible informants dying. In a bid to document his tenure as a provincial administrator, the study attempted to explore his personal attributes. This was done because there was need for information concerning Kenyan chiefs and other administrators. Towards that end, the framework of the Great Man theory informed the study. It argues that history is the work of great men (heroes) because they have progressive aims and beliefs and they lead ordinary people in making them real. So on that premise, in a bid to write history, it would help a lot to write biographies of great men. Njagi was assumed to have done a lot to transform the lives of his people. In the efforts to get information to portray his attributes, the method of study involved collection of data through perusal of primary and secondary sources in archives and libraries. There were also interview schedules. Potential respondents were people who knew him. These included the residents of the location that Njagi administered, those whom had served with him in the Provincial Administration, local government, co-operative movement, management of educational institutions and church. Respondents gave information and told of other prospective respondents. Collection of information was started at Njoro Campus of Egerton University then in Nairobi and finally in Embu and Kirinyaga counties. The study established that Njagi was appointed as a colonial chief because provincial administrators, Christian missionaries and the public saw him as having good leadership qualities. Njagi remained a chief at the time of Kenya's independence as he had proved to be a good leader. He cared for the welfare of his people in both colonial and post-colonial eras of Kenya's history by contributing in the development of the society in areas such as: avoidance of high-handedness, liberation struggle, fighting corruption, modern education, reduction of tax burden, exemption of women from communal work, rehabilitating 'ex-Mau Mau' detainees, coffee farming, developing co-operative societies and implementation of the Swynnerton Plan (land reforms). He achieved that because he had values such as integrity, patriotism, diligence and conscientiousness. This study was made because there was much need for information concerning attributes of Kenyan chiefs and other administrators. The information that was realised has helped to fill the academic gap that was extant. Moreover, the study will be an inspiration to other scholars to write biographies of other chiefs and prominent personalities in Kenya before their attributes are lost. It was found out that the bad reputation of the office of chief was due to the duties of chiefs and their character.