

EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL CONFLICT IN OKOT p'BITEK'S SONG OF LAWINO AND SONG OF OCOL.

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ABSTRACT

Okot p'Bitek is a poet known for his traditional appreciation and approach to issues of life, and this has informed his poetry. It is believed that before his emergence into the arena as a poet, poetry was not widely used as a public medium of reaching out to the people by way of informing and enlightening them about the culture. By his presentation of *Song of Lawino* (1972) and later *Song of Ocol* (1972) to the African scene, the long quest and hunger to revolutionize African poetry began to yield fruit. The poems satirize the penchant among Africans to embrace western culture and values, politics, education, religion while disdaining indigenous values. This passion for Western values is the aftermath of colonialism. The poet uses the husband and wife situation to symbolize the conflict between Africa and her children who have been brain-washed by Western education. The poems are characterized by the use of myths and folktales dominated by proverbs. This paper examines to what extent p'Bitek has used his *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* to explore the conflict between western and African cultures and to satirize and condemn educated Africans who ape the western lifestyle to the detriment of their rich African culture.

INTRODUCTION

Okot p' Bitek was born in 1931 in Gulu, Northern Uganda, having been brought up in a typical traditional environment where he grew up to appreciate various aspects of traditional life. It can then be correctly said that Bitek's work traces back to the Luo in origin. He also influenced and inspired other Eastern African writers to adopt the traditional forms through his use of Acoli verse. *Song of Lawino* was first written in Luo language, under the title of *Wer pa Lawino*. The success that followed its translation into English Language made it a chosen model for a school of writing in Kenya. Joseph Buruga's *The Abandoned Hut* is in the same form; and p'Bitek himself has followed the text with *Song of Ocol*, *Song of Naalaya*, and *Song of Prisoner*.

P' Bitek in his *Religion of the Central Luo* states:

The people who live in the present administrative district of East and West Acoli are descendants of some of the groups who were involved in the large scale of Luo migrations a few centuries ago. These major movements of people were probably complete before the end of the 18th century (88 – 89).

It is believed that these people who lived in this part are linked in language and culture with other Luo groups in other parts. P' Bitek also aver that as time went on, these Luo groups absorbed some non-Luos whom they found on their arrival in their present area; as a result there was a racial mix up. These Luos were later called, in the words of J.K.Girling, "Acolis, a corruption of the word "shuli" first used by Arabs in the 19th century and later adopted by other invaders. The people previously called themselves Luo as did their neighbours. The Alur in the West and Jo-pa-Luo and Gibanda in the South" (13) Going by this, obviously the Acolis about whom *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* are written were originally known collectively as the Luos. p'Bitek argues that the Acoli had no sense of ethnic solidarity as a group distinct from their Luo neighbours until the 'myth' of 'tribe' used as a basis of administration by the colonial government. When the Luo became unified, they held on to the myth of tribe and have remained so ever since.

The artiste does not exist in a vacuum, therefore p'Bitek's work is based on the culture and history of his people, the Acoli. In *Horn of My Love*, p'Bitek provides his interpretation of the poetry of the Acoli of Northern Uganda, the people who inspired *Song of Lawino*. P' Bitek consolidates this inspiration when he says of the Acoli tradition of the Gulu festival: "I found that the poetry was rich / the oral literature was full-blooded / the dance wonderful, the music inspiring and I just couldn't stop... (*Horn of...*,51). P' Bitek borrowed a great deal from traditional Acoli songs in his writing. He admits having learnt many of the songs as he grew up from his mother, Lacwaa, who was a one-time leader of the girl's in Palamo chiefdom. 2).

EXPLORATION OF CULTURE CONFLICT IN SONG OF LAWINO

Song of Lawino primarily represents the experience of Acoli land. The poem embodies mainly the theme of cultural conflict. P' Bitek examines the East African society particularly the Acoli group to which he belongs. He does so by creating two protagonists who are projectors of two different cultures, and brings them together as husband and wife in the domestic sphere. Both *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* can be said to represent a polemic of culture in one person's mind – the poet. The songs could also represent an issue of national significance as regards the question of preserving the cultural identity of a race. This conflict is set in the domestic clash of interests between Lawino and Ocol. P' Bitek uses the small household as a microcosm of Acoli society by depicting the decadence in the larger society. The clash examines the preference of the traditional mode of politics, education, dances, religion vis-à-vis the true modern forms with Lawino as the champion for traditional values. Based on the social problem which is very common in rural East Africa, many wives have seen their husbands move out of the range of their education and experience through travel. Many of these men return home with nothing but contempt for the ways of their parents and their wives. Lawino laments this predicament. P' Bitek satirizes the true life situation in Uganda which is blamed on colonialism. It is through Lawino that he makes his comments in *Song of Lawino*. "Ocol rejects the old type/He says that blacks are primitive" (36). Lawino is infuriated because Ocol ignores her for Clementine and she (Lawino) criticizes the woman's efforts at projecting herself as more European than African. Lawino insultingly describes

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Clementine thus: Her lips look like bleeding/Her hair is long/Her head is huge like that of the owl/She looks like a witch (39).

Lawino criticizes the use of the European make-up by the African woman and how very unflattering it looks on her. She goes on to highlight African beauty and its sensuousness in contrast and, most of all, projects the pride of this beauty (49). She likens African beauty to a flower emphasizing its naturalness and freshness. She recalls the first time, "the man crawled on the floor/the son of the bull wept for me with tears/like a hungry child whose mother has stayed in the simsim field" (48). Lawino's beauty earned her the admiration of many people and the title "chief of girls" (43). She represents the African way of life without apology. On the Acoli style of dancing naked, she staunchly defends "when the drums are throbbing/And the black youths have raised much dust/You dance with vigour and health/You dance with spirit/You compete/You insult/You provide/You challenge all" (42). Then in contrast to the vigour and attraction of African dance, the Europeans "...dance inside a house/And there is no light/shamelessly they hold each other/Tightly, so tightly they cannot breathe" (44).

Lawino criticizes what she sees as immorality of the Western dances where people embrace anyone even close relatives all in the name of dancing. Ngugi wa Thiong'o comments thus on *Song of Lawino* "It is a satirical assault on the African middle class elite that has so much unabashedly embraced Western bourgeois values and mode of life" (*Homecoming*, 46).

Lawino laments that Ocol is so engrossed in his foreign ways that he particularly apes the European in everything he does: "You kiss her on the cheek /As white people do /You suck the saliva from each other's mouth/As white people do..." (44). This repetition of "as white people do" is suggestive of the idea of slavish imitation, which Lawino finds rather ridiculous. The whole idea of the poem is tied together by a similar refrain "the pumpkin in the old homestead" (41). The phrase is taken from an Acoli proverb. Literally speaking, the pumpkin is a luxury food in Acoliland. It grows wildly all over and to uproot it even when one is moving to a new homestead is wanton destruction since it will definitely wither or die off after a short while. Lawino therefore likens the African tradition to a pumpkin. She is not in any case asking Ocol to cling to everything in his past but rather not to destroy for the sake of destruction with which it seems Ocol is obsessed.

P' Bitek, through Lawino, condemns the politicians. He shows the hypocrisy of these people who preach togetherness. Incidentally Ocol and his brother do not see "eye to eye" because they belong to two different political parties. The enmity between them is so severe that the only thing they share is "water from the public well". Lawino blames this development on the outcome of the parties which came with the so called quest for westernization. Before the political parties, Ocol and his brother used to be as close as "eye and nose". Lawino therefore questions the wisdom of this rivalry between people who are supposed to be working towards a common goal with the use of simple images - "eye and nose". She is utterly confused because she supports communal existence and the idea of strong family ties. She blames the near disintegration of these systems on the wrong conception of modernization by the elites. As a result of this, Lawino does not know with which party to pitch her tent. Ocol's party promises to fight hunger and disease and his brother's promises uhuru and peace. Lawino now questions: "where is the peace and Uhuru?/where is the unity of independence?/Must it not begin at home?" (187). "So if your chest is small and bony and weak/they push you off..." (107).

Describing the scramble for material things, Lawino does not spare the politicians who, on getting into influential positions, forget those who voted them in bringing into play "old clan sentiments". She criticizes the self-centeredness of these politicians. They are no longer useful to the people who elected them into office, instead they are more concerned with acquiring "villas" and other modern facilities for themselves

while being unconcerned with the squalor in which the people live. Lawino agrees that Ocol obtained education from the missionaries but laments their use of religion as a means to subtly enslave the Africans making them submissive to their whims and caprices. She says that Ocol behaves like a dog to the white man and lacks dignity. She wonders what he has gained from his education. Lawino wonders if this "progressive and civilized" man deserves any respect. He surely ought to be more patient and tolerant. Above all, he ought to treat his wife, his parents, in-laws and his home community with some respect. Ocol no longer believes in the ancestors but in the "beautiful men flying with wings" through the air; he now refers to the herbalists as "liars" and people who consult them as "fools." He does everything in order to be accepted by the whites - but he does not quite succeed and has become a misfit because he is neither completely African nor European. Religious institutions come under attack too as Lawino says they are all agents of colonization. She raises the question of morality. She comments on Catholic priests and nuns, and questions the long existing tradition of priestly celibacy. She finds the idea simply incomprehensible. There is also the question of priestly hypocrisy - "and all teachers/Are alike/They have sharp eyes for girls' fool breast" (81).

In as much as Lawino is critical of western ways and the Africans who ape them, she does not aim at converting the Western behaviours to African ways. She recognizes that they are two parallel ways of life but sticks adamantly to the opinion that both cultures should not interfere with each other. She plays down her harshness here when she admits: "I do not understand the way of the foreigners/but/do not despise their customs" (41). She reiterates: "the pumpkin in the old homestead must not be uprooted." She then advocates: "shall we just agree to have freedom to eat what one likes" (63).

The good news however, is that Ocol's case is not past redemption. She seeks re-education of Ocol, through ridding him of all the impediments in learning that he imbibed from the missionaries - the "gum", "dust" and "chaff" that make him deaf and the dark glasses and scales that blind him. Then he should: "beg forgiveness from them (i.e. the ancestors) /Ask them to give you/A new spear..." (119) and, of course, Ocol will undergo cleansing according to the Acoli tradition which he has defiled. It is only after this that Ocol would be re-accepted into the family and communal fold. This is based on the Luo worldview.

In *Song of Lawino* Ocol's failure to hold his family together is a violation of the sanctity with which the Acoli people hold the family and communal systems. The concept of family is central to all social organizations. The family unity is shaken as Ocol disregards all in pursuit of westernization. He is in great enmity with his brother and does not welcome other visiting members of the extended family. Ocol turned himself into a self-acclaimed snub dismissing his visitors with "what can I do for you?" (68). For a community where communal existence has become part of their lives, that is certainly unacceptable. Even in the distant past, the most important unit of social obligation was a clan. Although they were closely protected from invasion from external forces, they still found time together. An instance is during the "orak" dance where all the clans come together to celebrate as one people.

The Luo also believe in the efficacy of their interaction with their ancestors - that they guide and protect them through the diviner priests and traditional healers. Little wonder then that Lawino does not take lightly Ocol's impetuosity when he refers to them as liars. In his disregard for the spiritual existence of his people, he "took the axe/And threatened to cut the "Okango" that grows in the ancestral shrine" (119 - 20). Again Heron views this gesture as a "threat which implies that Ocol wants to destroy his tradition as well as his religion - shrine" (73). Lawino says that in doing this, he is threatening to: "Cut himself loose/to be tossed by the wind/this way and that way" (92). It is Ocol's reply which also soars above domestic conflict treating economic, historical and political issues affecting the entire continent. The "Okango" just like pumpkin is a strong symbol of the way of life of the people. It is

not to be toyed with, but to be respected as that which not only unifies the people but also symbolizes their continuity. In *Song of Lawino* p' Bitek is concerned with the decolonization of Africans who have been chained and maimed by colonialism, and projects that the African culture which is obtained and sustained in the African environment must inform the lifestyle of Africans rather than being imposed upon by the western culture.

EXPLORATION OF CULTURE CONFLICT IN *SONG OF OCOL*

Song of Ocol may be read as a reply to *Song of Lawino*. It was written as an after thought when p'Bitek probably realized that Lawino would make an unsuitable spokesperson for some of his comments on the East African scene (*Song of Ocol*, 35). Ocol in this poem confirms Lawino's impression of him. He treats his culture with neglect and lack of respect. Ali A. Mazuri describes Ocol as a "hyperbolic deserter from his own culture lacking full credibility" (quoted in Heron). He dismisses Lawino's admonitions and says: "... it is the confused noise/made by the ram/after the butcher's knife has sunk past/its windpipe" (199). Ocol not only condemns the blackness of Africa but decries his own blackness too. "He looks at his hands/At the black fingernails/... He weeps asking himself/But why! Why!" (202). One can imagine the anguish in his voice. He wishes more than anything that he was not born black. He abhors the 'primitiveness' of the world into which he was born.

To Ocol, everything old is African and anti-progress and must therefore be rejected. Ocol is so infuriated about his blackness that he "... seeks to destroy the mirror that reflects his blackness" (215). He does not stop at that, he outlines the measures to be taken to destroy all images of "the blackness of the past" (215) and claims there is no progress in blackness. He insists that the village anthem is "backwards ever, forward never" (214). Ocol does not see anything worthy of recognition in the personality of the African: "The balloon/of the African personality/Exploded long ago/Dubois is dead/We will erect no memorial for him" (215). Dubois is one of the proponents of the "black is beautiful" movement and a champion for the black cause. Ocol mocks the traditional treatment of African women, the hopeless squalor of pastoral communities and the murmuring of political dissent from the poor. To him the dutiful African wife is nothing but a domestic slave, "woman of Africa/sweeper/washer of dishes/ planting weeding/harvester, storekeeper/Runner of errands/Woman of Africa/What are you not?" (222).

Ocol enjoins the Acoli woman to throw away her water pot, the symbol of her enslavement (219), and suggests that "... a little technology could make her work easier, it would enable her to keep her beauty longer and have more time to dance for her husband" (211), and invites the African man and woman to the city and to civilization. Ocol is like Lakunle in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* in this respect.

P' Bitek's most serious challenge is to scholars when he asks through Ocol: "Can you explain /the African philosophy/on which we are reconstructing/our new societies" (*Song of Ocol*, 252). He makes mockery of Ocol who indirectly condemns himself because no matter how educated he may claim to be, he cannot become English and he still needs his people. P' Bitek states thus on his expectations of the educated East African man:

I think the people who are interested in culture, who have been to school and universities, should become extremely humble and look to the people in the villages for inspiration. I think they have a lot to teach us (*Song of Ocol*, 149).

Ocol however has a different conception. To him Africa's utmost goal should be towards westernization. In fact, in his opinion, Africa without colonization would still have been: "... Blackness/Deep, fathomless/Darkness" (200). Of course he does not realize the negative effects of this system, but is rather engrossed in trying to perfect his apeing of European

behaviour. Ocol feels the people are asking for too much by expecting Uhuru to bring them wealth. It appears he is in favour of the yawning gap between the rich and the poor. He wonders: "have lions/begun to eat grass/to lie down with the lambs/and play games with antelopes?" (239). There is no communication between the different strata of the society and this situation does not make it conducive for development. Although Ocol is completely African, when he is ill, he is prepared to take the white-man's medicine to help him recover. He is anxious that Africa should have the benefit of technology. In any case some aspects of African culture leave much to be desired. Ocol comments on traditional medicine. However foolish he might sound in condemning all traditional remedies, it is difficult not to share some of his horror at the scene he describes:

...that child crying on the earth numb bomb exploding in the head, blood boiling heavy with malarial parasites raging through his veins, the mad woman spits on palms ... to cool him on his chest a gift of death (212).

Although traditional remedies should have some place in Africa, they cannot solve all her medical problems.

P'Bitek through his spokesman, Ocol, indirectly makes a comment on the problem of development. Firstly the system of education and governance are foreign. The white man's education has shaken and undermined traditional confidence, and the sense of common purpose and solidarity, which informed the spirit of traditionalism in the Luo worldview. Education can be worked out in such a way that the African can appreciate and at least approach western culture with an unbiased mind. For education to have meaning for the African, it must address class problems and give a sense of direction to the people who are at the crossroads of both alien and home cultures.

In spite of Uhuru, real independence seems to be always elusive to the common man. This is because those elected never get around to doing anything except those based on their selfish interest. This of course hinders the growth and development of the society. People like Ocol are ashamed of their tradition and therefore cling desperately to European ideals. This inferiority complex makes the populace very vulnerable to external cultural manipulation and exploitation by both internal and external forces. This surely hinders development. Ocol's taste for European values for instance can be seen in these lines when he states:

I have a nice house/ In the town/ My garden Explodes with jacarandas and roses/I have lillies, bouganvilleas, cana.../Do you appreciate the beauty of my roses, or would you rather turn my flower garden/into a maize shamba? (235).

Ocol and his likes are aware that land for growing food is scarce. In this contest therefore, it would be callous of Ocol to insist on growing flowers on the land that could be used to grow crops. His excessive zeal for flower growing projects him as selfish and working against African communalism. Ocol's main problem stems from his way of life which does not seem to be rooted in his cultural environment. Ocol prefers things from outside Africa. This leads to excessive economic exploitation since it demands goods and services of other nations which must be paid for with the limited resources of the consuming nation, and thus derails development. This is seen in Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* where the importation of arms by Alan Grey is not free of charge but is paid for with the oil wealth of the nation.

Ocol's progressive Africa is modeled after the west. The old homestead, symbolizing traditional Africa, is demolished and in its stead: "we shall build a new store city on the hill/overlooking the lake/concrete steel..." (253). Ocol continues: "you have only two alternatives/My sister either you come with us or you take a rope and hang yourself" (250). He

goes on to insult Lawino... "weep long/ for the village world that you know swept away by the fierce fire of civilization" (247). Ocol's new Africa is one where the concept of family is destroyed: "deliver your farewell speech/...let them bid farewell to each other...for tomorrow morning they will never meet again" (248). Ocol sounds as if he is more interested in destroying than building up. Such an attitude certainly does not help development; it rather hinders efforts at unity, growth and development.

When in an interview with Nichols Lee of the Voice of America, p'Bitek as a champion and defender of tradition, was asked if he felt that Ocol successfully defends his so called modern ways of life in the poem, he states:

But of course not! He couldn't! and in some ways it is meant to make Ocol even more stupid. You know he never answers anything, but in some parts he begins to question himself ... so towards the end of the book I think Ocol is not so sure of the position he takes (37).

Going by p' Bitek's statement, it appears Ocol is made to look ridiculous and portrays himself as an unserious character who really has nothing to offer. He says Ocol is destructive. It appears he is suffering from an inferiority complex of everything black. To him everything white is better than everything black. It then appears as if Ocol's creativity is geared towards destruction of what is already in existence. He does not believe in making the new out of the old. He wants to copy effortlessly from the West.

USE OF LANGUAGE

It is often feared that African writers who choose to use English, French or other foreign languages may encounter some difficulty in their writing. This is because they have chosen a non-African medium to express African ideas. It is possible therefore that in the process of doing this, they might borrow other foreign things.

Every language has, according to p'Bitek in *Song of Lawino*, "its own stock of common images expressing a certain people's way of looking at things. It embodies its own set of literary forms, which limit a writer's manner of expression" (6). P'Bitek in his own case has succeeded in avoiding this problem by using what may be referred to as "Africanised English" just like renowned author, Chinua Achebe. He carefully creates an Acoli version of English for the dialogue of his characters. He uses many features borrowed from Acoli traditional songs in the writing of *Song of Lawino*. Noteworthy is the fact that at the time p'Bitek wrote his song, it did not fit into any western model for a long poem nor did it fit into the traditional poem which is a repetition of one or two verses with musical accompaniment. P'Bitek's songs however are not songs in the literal sense. You cannot sing them. They are not a written version of Acoli songs. Acoli songs do not grow to book length and are not written down under the authorship of one person.

Song of Lawino runs into thirteen movements. P'Bitek uses considerably long and consistent lines. P'Bitek's major organising principle is that of the Acoli unsung version. *Song of Lawino* has an irregular rhyming pattern and no consistent stress pattern in verse. The line division leads to a strong emphasis mainly on the last syllable of the line. "A loaf in a half gourd /Retains its beat/And does not become wet/In the bottom/ And the earthen dash/Keep the gravy hot/And meat steaming (85).

In *Song of Ocol*, very few lines produce faster moving verse; very few lines have about four or six syllables. These shorter lines also break the verse up and change its pace, producing a rhythm that is jerky or bouncy ... In the city garden/Hold my hand/My woman/Here is a rose bud/Guard it/Don't loose it ..." (114). The internal structure of the poems however is that of a dialogue or a debate. The debate is between two sets of values, which are conflicting. The western

is represented by Ocol and the African by Lawino. P' Bitek's use of dialogue is not different from Achebe's in *Arrow of God* or *Things Fall Apart* or Oyono's in *Houseboy*. However, while the above named authors use the novel form, p' Bitek uses poetry. Again Achebe uses the tragic mood while Oyono like p' Bitek uses the comic mood to satirize the White man's culture. He uses many features borrowed from traditional songs in *Song of Lawino*.

P'Bitek uses a rhetorical device taken straight from Acoli literature. The words "Ocol", 'jal in the Acoli and Ocol, my husband/ My friend' in the translation are examples of the rhetorical device of apostrophe. According to Heron, "apostrophe is used in Okot's poem to introduce the dramatic confrontations which cause each singer's outbursts...Okot's extensive use of this device reflects its use in Acoli oral songs, where it performs many of the same functions" (12). Lawino addresses herself to someone, for instance "husband" (36), "my clansmen" (37) "Brother" (199). The rhetorics suggest that the speaker has an audience.

He makes use of repeated phrases as a refrain for emphasis. In translating "Wa Pa Lawino" some details which are in the Acoli original had to be dropped in the English version. There is no doubt that as Taban Lo Liyong has said "the meaning of deep Acoli proverbs, are made very light by their rendition into English, word for word, rather than sense for sense or proverb for proverb" (10).

The effect of translation reduces the strong effect of repetition. In the Acoli language, it flows smoothly without sounding monotonous. There are occasions p'Bitek deliberately adds strangeness in translation, which is not in the original. Instead of using the biblical term "God", "Holy Ghost", "gospel" Ocol translates literally in "Acoli English". So we have "clean Ghost", "cleanword", "hunchback". It carries the strangeness of these words to Lawino. This translation adds humour to the situation. The refrain once more is used to emphasize an important idea the writer is trying to communicate in the whole poem. P'Bitek with his knowledge of Acoli images has been able to avoid the stock of common images in English literature. Such images convey Lawino's feelings more fully than her own words. On p.17 Lawino describes a prayer said by those who worship the alien way: "pray for us/who spoil things/full of gracia". This expresses Lawino's confusion at this foreign language in the reader's mind. Also, it is intentionally satiric of the Catholic ritual of worship.

She describes the teacher in the evening class thus: "the comb never touched his hair/His hairs resembled the elephant grass tall and wiry/The teacher looked like a witch." This describes the strange appearance of the teacher.

P'Bitek makes use of colloquialisms transferred from the oral tradition into written poetry. He makes his characters converse in the informal Acoli traditional way. Lawino says of Ocol as if to an audience: "He says he can no longer live with a thing like me/who cannot distinguish between good and bad/He says I am the old type" (113).

The two poems *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* are written in prose form and a direct translation from the Acoli version (Wer Pa Lawino) into English.

P'Bitek makes use of apostrophe and this contributes to an imprecise way to our understanding and contributes to the dramatic force of the poem. The people who are addressed may be observers of or participants in the events behind the song. Where the second person "you" is used together with apostrophe the people addressed usually have a role in the situation from which the song arises; where the song is a third person throughout, they are likely to represent a supposed audience being asked to share in the attitudes or emotions of a singer. Lawino uses apostrophe in the ironic context of her "bereavement" at the "death" of Ocol. She begins with an appeal to the clansmen to share her grief, when she attests: "listen my clansmen/I cry over my husband/whose head is lost" (199). This refers to the loss of her husband to an alien culture.

In *Song of Ocol* confrontations between the singer and a number of different individuals are shown to the reader through

the use of apostrophe. The single word "woman" that begins *Song of Ocol* is intended to remind the reader of Lawino's "song" which is the subject matter of section I. Ocol reports the words of those he addresses to provide him with an opportunity to express his own ideas. In this way he picks up the supposed whispering of: "My friends and comrades. Do I hear you whisper/Who is that man?/What is his name?/Do you not know me/And my brothers-in-power?" (232).

The language in both poems is plain and the speech is unvariegated. For *Song of Lawino* the language is almost rustic portraying the status of Lawino the speaker. In contrast, the language in *Song of Ocol* is bombastic, and rather unconvincing. It lacks the simplicity and lyricism that characterizes the language in *Song of Lawino*. The language is verbose and one would easily detect Ocol's pomposity because he is educated.

CONCLUSION

P'Bitek successfully satirizes the attitude of the elite class in the East African society in *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*. He defends the African tradition using Lawino as a spokesperson. His sympathy does not lie completely with Lawino as he makes her denounce the aspect of African culture which still leaves a lot to be desired. This could mean that P'Bitek would love to be part of a society where traditional ways and values are regarded highly and jealously protected but which is not rigid and is accessible for change. P'Bitek wishes for a situation where the African and Western cultures will not regard each other with suspicion.

Lawino perceives culture as static and old. These old traditions symbolized by the "pumpkin in the old homestead" (48) must not be uprooted. In her conclusion therefore, everything old is African and everything new is unAfrican or white and must therefore be rejected. Lawino celebrates the authenticity of African culture and heritage. On the other hand, Ocol thinks of culture in much the same way except that to him everything old is African and backwards and must therefore be rejected, while everything white stands for progress and must be accepted without questioning its validity and usefulness. In conclusion therefore, society's priorities should be appropriately identified and recognized; only that can bring hope for development in which the two diverse cultures - African and European - will contribute positively. P'Bitek's use of imagery drawn from Acoli landscape adds beauty to the poem and authenticates African culture. His use of forms gives clarity to African culture and his mode of communication reflects African aesthetics in which meaning is conveyed through images, metaphors, irony etc.

Finally, *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* are a satiric assault on the African middle - class elite - that has so unabashedly embraced western bourgeoisie values and modes of life. The satire is invective and forthright but humorous.

This form is usually direct and aims at making a sudden harsh revelation of a damaging truth in a funny way. It is this tone that P'Bitek's mouthpiece, Lawino, adopts in a scathing commentary on Africans who ape western values. Ocol discards his Acoli wife for an westernized African lady, called Clementine. He now regards Lawino as primitive and below his standard. The Ocols that Lawino attacks and condemns are those Africans who, having acquired western education and imbibed western culture, turn to disdain African values and way of life.

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