

Tracing the life and intellectual formation of Bethwell Allan Ogot up to 1964

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the life and formation of the thinker Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot during the ten years 1929-1964, when he was instrumental in shaping his future activities in education and African historiography in Kenya and the wider world. It fills a major gap in the History of education and African intellectual History by offering a methodical, historically based examination of the early life, education, and intellectual influences of Ogot, a factor that is usually given little attention in the analysis of Ogot as a figure in the History of his career. The article follows the life of Ogot, his upbringing, mission education, and university training, but puts these events within the larger perspective of colonial and late colonial education in East Africa. The research is based on the paradigm of interpretive research and applies historical research methods to data collection, analysis, and presentation. Primary sources encompass oral interviews, the Kenya national archives, and institutional records of mission schools and universities, which Ogot went to. Secondary sources and materials include scholarly books, journal articles, readings, and histories of colonial and early post-colonial education. Internal and external criticism was applied to the data to guarantee the authenticity and credibility. The conceptual framework involves the combination of critical policy historiography and the theory of development. Critical policy historiography enables the analysis of Ogot's intellectual formation within the ideological and policy structures of colonial education, while development theory provides insight into how his early experiences shaped a long-term view of education as a tool for national and cultural development. The findings show that Ogot's mission schooling, university education at Makerere, St Andrews, and SOAS, and early exposure to African nationalist and historiographical debates were central in shaping his African-centred intellectual orientation. These formative experiences produced a scholar deeply critical of Eurocentric knowledge production and committed to recovering African historical agency. The paper concludes that Ogot's later work in education and historiography cannot be fully understood without close attention to the intellectual foundations established during his early life.

Keywords: African Intellectuals; African-Centred Thought; Bethwell Allan Ogot; Colonial Education; Colonial Kenya; Educational Historiography; History of Education; Intellectual Formation; Mission Education; Makerere University

I. INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to develop education and intellectual life in post-colonial Africa without exploring the experiences of African scholars that influenced the production of knowledge, policy, and institutions afterward. Education in colonial and late colonial Kenya served as a form of social control as well as a site of struggle where African agency, identity, and resistance slowly began to form (Bogonko, 1992; Sifuna & Otiende, 2006). Although there has been significant research on missionary and colonial education, little has been done on the intellectualization of African scholars who went on to become the focus of post-independence educational and historiographical change. This gap is dealt with in this article by considering the early life and intellectual formation of Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot through the year 1964.

Bethwell Allan Ogot is reputed to be one of the most influential historians and public thinkers in Kenya. His subsequent works on African historiography, higher education management, curriculum, and education policy are well reported (Ochieng', 1989; Spear, 2004). Nevertheless, the current literature has focused on his adult achievements as a scholar and an administrator of institutions, but has not presented his early years as a critical analytical examination. However, as biographical and intellectual history show, childhood engagements with education are at the focus of explaining the development of scholarly direction, ideological dedication, and lifelong intellectual paths (Sifuna, 1990; Ochieng', 2005). The early years of Ogot were characterized by a colonial system of education with great contradictions that established his future criticism of the production of Eurocentric knowledge.

Ogot was born in 1929, and he was raised in an era where colonial education in Kenya was specifically intended to serve imperial needs by instilling European History, values, and epistemologies and deemphasising African History and their indigenous knowledge systems (Rodney, 1972; Amutabi, 2003). Missionary schools increased literacy and formal education but were also encouraging cultural assimilation and discouraging critical attention to African pasts (Anderson, 1970; Sifuna & Otiende, 1994). Meanwhile, the African societies were growing more critical of the ideology of colonial education, based on independent schooling, newly formed religious movements, and new nationalistic

consciousness (Natsoulas, 1998; Lonsdale & Berman, 1979). These strains were the social and intellectual context within which Ogot grew up and formed his worldview in his early schooling.

The schooling of Ogot in mission schools, Alliance High School, and finally in Makerere University put him at the heart of late-colonial African intellectual ferment. East African intelligentsia, more specifically, Makerere University served as a centre of nationalism, identity, and a place of History in post-colonial states because it was a main venue where debate on such issues occurred (Mazrui, 1978; Mamdani, 1996). Further research at the University of St Andrews and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) further introduced him to orthodox Western forms of historiography and refined his criticism of colonial versions of African History. These experiences were critical in defining his devotion towards African-centred scholarship and his dismissal of the representation of Africa as ahistorical or passive in world history (Diop, 1974; Ki-Zerbo, 1981).

This paper is informed by the fact that it seeks to follow the life of intellectual development of Bethwell Allan Ogot until 1964, when he became a student and transformed into an emerging scholar as Kenya was on the verge of gaining independence. The research paradigm is the interpretive research paradigm, and the research method used in the study is the historical research method, which has utilized the archival records, oral interviews, school and church records, as well as published scholarly work. Critical policy historiography (because it places intellectual formation within a wider ideological and educational policy framework; Gale, 2001), and development theory (because it theorizes education as an instrument of cultural and national development in the post-colonial societies) inform the analysis (Sifuna, 1990).

Through her attention to the early years of Ogot, this article establishes that his subsequent contributions to the education system and the African historiography drew their foundation on her initial encounters with colonial education, resistance to intellectualism, and the African nationalist and historiographical discourse. Knowledge about this initiation stage will also be crucial to the appreciation of the intellectual position of one of the most influential Kenyan scholars and to the deepening of general discourses on intellectual agency in the African education context.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although it is widely acknowledged that Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot is one of the most influential historians and prominent intellectuals in Kenya, the early period of his intellectual career has not been studied systematically in the context of the History of education and African intellectual History. The current literature has given considerable attention to his later academic output, institutional leadership, and contribution of post-independence History and higher education, but little has been done to discuss his early life and intellectualisation as a sustained historical analysis (Ochieng', 1989; Spear, 2004). This exclusion restricts a comprehensive understanding of how the subsequent scholastic orientation and ideological commitments of Ogot came to be as they did. More generally, the historiography of Kenyan education has been disposed toward analysing the missionary and colonial education systems or post-independence policy reforms, and has not paid enough attention to how African scholars came to find their intellectual path within these systems or challenge them (Bogonko, 1992; Sifuna & Otiende, 2006). Consequently, the contribution of individual agency to the formation of the African-centred educational and historiographical thought is not extensively investigated. However, it has been shown by biographical and intellectual historiography that initial educational experiences play key roles in developing scholarly views, methodological preferences, and future academic interactions of knowledge production (Ochieng', 2005; Sifuna, 1990).

The early life of Ogot was in a colonial school setting that was marked by ideological contradictions. The spread of missionary and colonial schools increased the accessibility of formal education and, at the same time, undermined African histories, languages, and epistemologies (Anderson, 1970; Rodney, 1972). Simultaneously, African resistance to colonial education via independent schools, religious movements, and new nationalist thought was the source of an alternate intellectual space that shaped a generation of African scholars (Natsoulas, 1998; Lonsdale & Berman, 1979). Nonetheless, the literature has been found wanting in terms of analyzing the role played by Ogot in negotiating these spaces in shaping his future critique of Eurocentric historiography and his adherence to the production of African-centred knowledge.

The lack of a detailed historical discussion of the intellectual formation of Ogot until 1964 provides a conceptual void in the explanation of the roots of his scholarly worldview. The interpretations of his later work cannot be given without studying this formative period, which would make them seem unrelated to the colonial and late-colonial educational environments that gave birth to him. This failure is also indicative of a general weakness in African educational historiography, in which the intellectual life stories of African scholars are seldom incorporated into the study of educational change. The article deals with this issue by offering a chronological historical analysis of the life of Bethwell Allan Ogot in the years leading up to 1964 in terms of his early life and intellectual formations. Placing his early life experiences into the contexts and contradictions of colonial education, the work is beneficial in the comprehension of African intellectual agency, and it strengthens the History of education in Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

- i. To achieve its purpose, the study was guided by the following objective:
- ii. To trace the life and intellectual formation of Bethwell Allan Ogot up to the year 1964.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

To understand the development of African intelligences, we will need an intellectual theoretical approach that will be capable of explaining how individual thinkers develop within a given historical, ideological, and educational condition. Two theoretical domains have informed this article, namely critical policy historiography and development theory. These paradigms offer analytical resources to explain how the policy of colonial education, institutional frameworks, and ideological forces influenced the early intellectual growth of Bethwell Allan Ogot before 1964.

2.1.1 Critical Policy Historiography.

Critical policy historiography focuses on the connection between power, knowledge production, and policy, and according to this school of thought, historical accounts are structured by political and ideological interests (Gale, 2001). Colonial education policies could turn into the tools of control in the context of an African background, which spread the Eurocentric epistemologies and sidelined the African histories and intellectual cultures (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992; Rodney, 1972). This model comes in handy, especially in the analysis of the formative years of Ogot, since his early years of schooling were experienced in institutions that were influenced by colonial policy goals.

Through the use of critical policy historiography, this paper has placed the intellectual formation of Ogot within the overall colonial education system that contextualized the contents of the curriculum, use of language, and access to higher education. Even mission schools, elite colonial institutions like Alliance High School, and universities like Makerere did not exist as neutral spaces of ideological expression; they were all spaces of reflection of colonial interests, and at the same time became places of intellectual struggle (Anderson, 1970; Bogonko, 1992). Viewed through this prism, it is possible to interpret the exposure of Ogot to the colonial historiography in the early years and the critique of Eurocentric historical narratives as reactions to the ideological restrictions that the colonial education policy imposed.

The study is also able to pre-empt African intellectual agency by use of this approach. Instead of depicting Ogot as an active consumer of colonialized education, the critical policy historiography indicates the way that African scholars contested, challenged, and reformulated dominant knowledge systems. His later adherence to African-centred historiography thus can be dated to the early experiences with the historical account of colonialism and institutional dictates that were instrumental in defining his intellectual consciousness as a child.

2.1.2 Development Theory

The development theory views development as involving the use of education as a prime catalyst of social, cultural, and national development, especially in colonially born societies (Yesufu, 1973; Sifuna, 1990). The education system in the African context was more and more considered by the African elites as a way of self-determination, cultural reclaim, and nationalism. Such a point of view applies to the current research since the intellectual formation of Ogot took place at a time when education was strictly associated with newly emerging nationalistic intentions.

The development theory offers a perspective within which the initial years of educational background of Ogot explain why he has a long-term vision of education as a means of African development. Studies at Makerere University and subsequently in Britain put Ogot in a generation of African intellectuals who considered knowledge production to be an element of the national development and self-definition by culture (Mazrui, 1978; Mkandawire, 2005). His early life was under a period of increased arguments about the importance of African History in developing national consciousness and opposing the colonial images of Africa. This study uses the development theory as a means of interpreting the intellectual formation of Ogot not only as a personal academic experience but as an African experience of reclaiming History and education as a means of development. His initial academic inclination is thus the basis of his subsequent attempts to match historical studies to its demands on African society.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Education, Colonialism, and the African Intellectual Context

According to the literary materials on historical education in Kenya, colonial education was influenced by the missionary and imperial interests, and was mainly geared towards the production of a small African elite that could be employed in subordinate positions in the colonial system (Anderson, 1970; Bogonko, 1992). Missionary education concentrated on literacy, religious education, and job skills, and discouraged critical study of African History and culture (Sifuna & Otiende, 1994; Altbach & Kelly, 1978). According to Rodney (1972), this nature of education systems was meant to enhance the colonial rule and not to nurture intellectual autonomy.

In spite of these limitations, colonial education also provided for arenas where African students were able to acquire critical views. The rise of the African independent schools and early nationalism movements in the 1930s and 1920s was a response of the Africans to the cultural and epistemological domination (Natsoulas, 1998; Lelei & Weidman, 2012). These events are important in discerning the intellectual climate under which Ogot was getting his early education. His education in mission schools and even the best colonial schools like Alliance High School put him in a regime that was at once repressive and productive of critical thinking.

Universities, especially Makerere University, were very instrumental in building African intellectuals in the late colonial era. Makerere is also cited by studies as a significant intellectual centre which stimulated discussions of nationalism and identity and the place of History in post-colonial Africa (Mazrui, 1978; Mamdani, 1996). The influence of these debates on a generation of scholars later refuted Eurocentric attempts to understand African History. The education of Ogot at Makerere and his studies in the foreign world put him into this greater intellectual milieu.

2.2.2 African Intellectuals, Biography, and Educational Historiography

African education scholars are increasingly attributing the significance of biographical and intellectual methodologies in explaining educational change. Biographical historiography concentrates on the interaction between individuals and their experiences in the wider political and institutional systems in shaping intellectual paths (Sifuna, 1990; Ochieng', 2005). This is especially applicable to African contexts, where intellectuals tended to come out due to their manoeuvring through colonial limitations and nationalism.

The examination of African leaders like Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Diop reveals that their political and cultural philosophy revolved around education (Nkrumah, 1964; Nyerere, 1967; Diop, 1974). Such academics regarded education and historical knowledge as decolonisation and cultural recovery methods. Although this literature is interesting in the background, it often does not participate in the examination of the developmental phases of the intellectual progress of individual scholars.

As far as Bethwell Allan Ogot is concerned, the current body of literature is mostly devoted to his works on the History of Africans at their mature stage and on education during the independent era (Ochieng', 1989; Spear, 2004). Biographical writings, such as the autobiography of Ogot (Ogot, 2011) and bibliographical works (Liyai, 1998), provide significant descriptive information but fail to provide a systematic examination of the role of his early life and education on his intellectual orientation. Consequently, little work on the historical theory of education has been done on the formative years of Ogot.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design applied in this study was qualitative historical research grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which is appropriate for analysing intellectual formation within specific historical and educational contexts. The use of historical research enabled the reconstruction and interpretation of the early life and intellectual development of Bethwell Allan Ogot up to 1964, the period preceding his consolidation as a professional historian and public intellectual at the threshold of Kenya's independence.

This design allowed a contextual analysis of the way in which the intellectual orientation of Ogot was developed due to the influence of the colonial education system, missionary schooling, and early exposure to universities. As it is customary with any historical inquiry, the study has used external criticism to determine the authenticity of the archived material and internal criticism to determine their credibility, meaning, and ideological stances (Gottschalk, 1969). Evidence was thus not viewed as an impartial fact, but was construed within the overall social, political, and ideological context of late-colonial Kenya.

The paradigm used to analyse the information was the interpretive paradigm, which focuses on meaning, context, and historical agency, and the critical policy historiography gave a paradigm through which the policies of colonial education organised knowledge production and intellectual possibilities. This approach was supplemented by development theory, which placed education as a tool of intellectual, social, and national transformation.

3.2 Area of the Study and Data Sources

The research was carried out in Kenya and was based on the main source of archival and documentary materials stored in the archives of the Kenya National Archives (Nairobi), as well as schools, churches, and early universities. These sources were mission records, district administrative records, school registers, correspondence, and scholarship records, which recorded the early education and social background of Ogot.

There were other institutional documents that were retrieved at Alliance High School and Makerere University, which were instrumental in the intellectual development of Ogot in the late colonial era. The primary data was also enhanced by the use of oral history interviews of the chosen informants who had direct or contextual knowledge of

Ogot's early life, education, and intellectual setting. These informants were sampled out of their home society and formative school experiences and were used to put the evidence in context and clarify it, as well as add to archival evidence, and not to supersede it.

3.3 Oral Informant Selection and Management of Oral Evidence

Oral informants were selected through purposive sampling, where oral informants with known information about the early life, family, and education, and intellectual influences on Ogot were chosen. Other informants were discovered using snowball sampling where necessary. As it is common in any oral historical study, the focus was on relevance, proximity to events, and credibility instead of numerical representation. Oral testimonies were viewed as historical accounts, and not unmediated factual accounts. In situations where conflicting accounts were realized between informants, their accounts were compared with archival documents, contemporary documents, and stand-alone oral testimonies. The divergent recollections were not necessarily rejected, but rather they were used to interpret them with a view to understanding the memory, perspective, and social position of the informants. Interviews were tailored to verifiable events, institutional settings, and shared experiences as opposed to exact dates and personal interpretation as part of minimising memory bias. To create historical accountability, all the oral interviews were given dates on the date of citation. These processes are in line with the traditional practice in the oral historiography in Africa (Vansina, 1985).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Archival research, document analysis, and oral history interviews were used to collect data. Archival investigation comprised an orderly analysis of education reports, mission correspondence, district administrative documents, and initial university documents referring to the education and intellectual exposure of Ogot at school. Document analysis involved published autobiographical material and the early academic writing of Ogot, which gave a clue to his intellectual direction and methodology interests. A semi-structured guide was used to conduct oral interviews, allowing the informants to reminisce and record experiences and observations that were pertinent to the young life of Ogot and his education without losing analytical focus. Informed consent forms were applied in all the interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed word-for-word. In this manner, the integration of interview data with documentary and archival data took place by triangulation, so that oral evidence could play an explanatory and contextual role in the re-creation of the whole History.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis of data will be based on an interpretive approach to History involving chronological reconstruction and thematic organisation. The archival documents and the transcripts of the interviews were critically read and coded to determine the repetitive themes in the information according to colonial education, missionary influence, early introduction to historical study, and the awakening of African intellectual consciousness. The issues of policy historiography were critical, as educators followed the logic of analyzing the impact of the colonial education policies on establishing epistemological limits and intellectual opportunities, whereas the development theory interpreted education as a tool of intellectual formation and national development. This two-level analysis allowed the study to comprehend the intellectual formation of Ogot as a personal process and an outcome of larger historical processes.

3.6 Ethical Considerations and Researcher Positionality

Ethical guidelines of qualitative and historical research were followed in the study. Ethical concerns were addressed, and informed consent was signed before data collection, and all the participants were advised about the goals, procedures, and their rights. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained unless participants indicated that they wanted to be identified. The permissions to access archival materials were acquired in a proper state of authorisation, and the principles of external and internal criticism were used to check the authenticity and credibility. The rights to intellectual property were observed by referencing all the primary and secondary sources correctly. The researcher recognizes positionality as an intellectual who was conducting a retrospective study on a socially important intellectual figure nationally. The knowledge of this stand helped to exercise caution when interpreting oral testimonies and also to draw on corroboration between multiple sources. The research process was informed by transparency, accuracy, and respect for the participants and historical documents.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Bethwell Allan Ogot, 1929–1964: Overview of Early Intellectual Formation

The years 1929-1964 are the groundbreaking years in the life of Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot and the intellectual and ideological basis of his further work in the field of education and African historiography. Having been born at the time the consolidation of the colonial rule and the growth of the missionary education in western Kenya took

place, Ogot has had his first days in the world in the structures of African social organisation, Christian moral education, and colonial administration. These experiences in the formation helped drive his career path, as well as his lifelong interest in African epistemology, Eurocentric criticism of historical accounts, and a lifelong interest in institutions.

In a critical policy historiographical perspective, one would interpret Ogot as having undergone an initial experience of historically determined structures of power, which influenced the production, regulation, and transmission of knowledge during the colonial period. Another area that development theory sheds light on is how education played out during his childhood as an individual tool as well as a social tool in creating social mobility, moral discipline, and even national progress. These structures, in combination, give an interpretive rationale of how community events during his early years created the intellectual predispositions that subsequently influenced his academic and institutional leadership in post-independence Kenya.

4.2 Early Life and Upbringing, 1929-1938

Bethwell Allan Ogot was born on 3 August 1929 in Luanda Doho, which is now part of Yala in Siaya County, at a time when Luo society and the rest of western Kenya society were experiencing a rapid social, economic, political, and religious change (KNA/DC/KSM/1/31/63; Ogot, 2011). He was brought up in a dynamic environment in which Christianity, colonial rule, and the Luo local culture related to each other in multilayered ways, creating new sources of power, restructuring of social relationships, and reformulations of local desires (Strayer, 1978; Anderson, 1970). This is a critical context upon which the development and the finalization of the intellectual, educational, and administrative ideals that Ogot developed later can be understood (Ochieng', 1995; Liyai, 1998).

The Native Authority system was consolidated in the late 1920s and early 1930s, which heightened the missionary work and brought new taxation regimes to Nyanza. These changes brought about opportunities both in the form of access to literacy, wage labour, and new social identities, and deep contradictions that included land dispossession, cultural dislocation, and reorganisation of indigenous authority (Bogonko, 1992; White, 1983). Children brought up in mission-affected families like the Opiche family were thus introduced to competing moral and epistemological worlds, the collective logic of the Luo society, and the values of Western modernity.

The father of Ogot was Chief Paulo Opiche, who was one of the representatives of the first generation of Luo leaders who had to balance between tradition and the requirements of colonial modernity. Opiche was initially trained by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) as a teacher, but later became a muruka chief in the Native Authority system, which made him both an intermediary of the colonial administration and a local protector of the interests of Africans (KNA/CMS/2/4/17; Ward & Stanley, 2000). According to oral testimonies, he was disciplined, morally oriented, and very adamant about education as a means of African progress (O.I. Agina, 1/11/2024; O.I. Opiche, 31/10/2024). In this regard, he was the model of African intermediary elite as described by Ochieng' (1995) and Berman (1992).

Being raised in this family, Ogot early got acquainted with the intricacies of African leadership during the colonial era. As the Governor negotiated with the community on one hand and the colonial government on the other, observing his father provided him with an insight into the notion of mediation, stewardship, ethical governance, and tendencies, which would subsequently guide his governance concepts in academic life and national education reform (O.I. Wanyande, 28/10/2024; O.I. Mukhwana, 3/11/2024).

Families were further influenced in Luanda Doho as economic disruptions of the Great Depression influenced family life. The falling agricultural price, the hut taxes, and labour demands increased the perceived value of education as a tool of social mobility and stability (Anderson, 2005; Maxon, 2009). To Chief Opiche, it was not only a moral duty but a civic obligation to educate his kids, a belief that had a great impact on Ogot's early intellectual orientation (Sifuna & Otiende, 1994).

Missionary Christianity was the key ingredient in this shaping setting. CMS work in Maseno was based on evangelism and elementary education, music, and agricultural training (KNA/CMS/YL/19/20; Ogot, 2011). The Luanda Anglican Church served not only as a spiritual but also an educational centre to enhance discipline, order, and regulation of morals in the home (O.I. Opiche, 31/10/2024). Critical policy historiography viewpoint of the area has shown that mission schooling was an early place of ideological formation as opposed to neutral learning and that Christian moral codes were imprinted on colonial governments (Berman, 1992; White, 1983).

Meanwhile, the missionary education was full of contradictions. On the one hand, although it opened up intellectual space, it justified European cultural or cultural excellence, and it dismissed critical questioning of colonial authority (Rodney, 1972; Kelly & Altbach, 1978). This contradiction was what led Ogot to the initial fascination with literacy and the dawning phrase of the ideological restraint of Western education that would subsequently guide his efforts in curriculum Africanisation and decolonised historical knowledge (Ogot, 1999; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986).

In combination with the mission schooling, Luo oral traditions continued to play the most important role in the life of the family and community. The historical memory and social values were passed on through storytelling, clan histories, proverbs, and riddles, introducing Ogot to the non-written historical knowledge (Vansina, 1965; Ochieng',

1974). These initial encounters with oral narrative were the basis of his experiential approach to oral historiography at a later stage in his career.

4.3 Early Education and Mission Influence, 1938–1949

His formal education started in 1938 with Luanda Anglican Church Primary School, which was a CMS school aimed at the integration of evangelism, basic literacy, and moral education (KNA/ED/3/112; KNA/CMS/YL/19/20). According to Strayer (1978) and Anderson (1970), CMS schools in western Kenya had conflated education and evangelisation to the extent that they instilled discipline, obedience, and religious piety and low-level academic competence (Sifuna, 1990).

Interwar colonial educational policy was based on the Phelps-Stokes Commission and intentionally restricted the educational progress of Africans by focusing on moral conformity and manual labour instead of intellectual growth. The education system that Ogot was introduced to was thus premeditated and intentionally structured to have low student academic expectations of African learners, despite the African families growing more and more interested in schooling as an entryway to social mobility and political popularity. Luanda A.C. was, therefore, a place of empowerment and alienation. Literacy helped Ogot become an archivist and scholar in later life, but there was a systematic relegation of the African historical experience into the curriculum. According to oral testimony, Ogot showed a premature intellectual interest and could at times challenge contradictions between the teachings of Christianity and social life in Africa (O.I. Agina, 1/11/2024; O.I. Opiche, 31/10/2024). Such questioning was usually frowned upon, though it pre-empted his rebellion against inherited narratives in the future.

It was a big change in his academic life when he moved to Ambira Intermediate School in 1943. Ambira was a more stringent curriculum, and his experiences with African teachers, coupled with informal culture in debate, fostered confidence in analytical abilities and politics (KNA/ED/4/213; Ochieng', 1985). The experience of war, the new nationalist thought dominating among educators and learners, worked even further to sensitise him to the political aspects of instruction. Enrolment into Maseno School in 1946 put Ogot in one of the most prestigious colonial schools that integrated academic rigour and embedded and ingrained racial hierarchies (Bogonko, 1992). His fascination and critical unease were the result of exposure to Eurocentric historical writings that refused to acknowledge agency on the part of Africans and increased his sense of the distortion of African History (KNA/ED/3/124; Ogot, 2009). When he finished his education at Maseno in 1949, Ogot already had an internalised intellectual discipline, moral foundation, and political awareness.

4.4 Higher Education and Formation of the Intellect, 1950-1964.

In 1950, Ogot got an opportunity to join Makerere College, the best institution of higher learning in East Africa, at a time when nationalist and intellectual frustrations were on the upswing (Ajayi et al., 1996; Lulat, 2005). Curriculum in Makerere was based on British academic traditions of study and ensured privileges to European History and marginalization to African historical scholarship, solidifying colonial epistemological hierarchies (Kelly & Altbach, 1978). Though this environment was methodologically rigorous, it circumscribed Ogot at the same time to the ideological limitation of colonial knowledge production. He learned to do archival research and study history, skills which later made him confront Eurocentric historiography on its own methodologies (Ingham, 1990; Gottschalk, 1969).

After Makerere, Ogot spent a short time in Alliance High School teaching mathematics, where he could see with his own eyes how college education and testing reproduced racial inequalities and undervalued African intellectual potential (KNA/BD/XK/3/7/55). This student-to-teacher conversion strengthened his belief that the reform of education needed to be relevant to African life in the curriculum, which would go on to shape his later publishing and policy intervention (Ogot, 1999). The University of St Andrews and scholarship at SOAS heightened the awareness of race and racial marginalisation in the Western academic field by Ogot (Mazrui, 1978; Mkandawire, 2005). This sense of isolation and alienation from the culture enhanced his determination to build an African-centred systematic voice on both methodological rigour and indigenous knowledge systems.

When Ogot returned to Makerere as a lecturer in 1959, he was one of the pioneers in advancing oral historiography and indigenous sources as an acceptable basis of African historical reconstruction in opposition to the prevailing anthropological and missionary History (Ogot, 1963; Vansina, 1965). His career during this time is similar to those of others in the same era, including Ali Mazrui, Walter Rodney, and Terence Ranger, but it is also unique in its continued focus on institutional change and educational publication. By 1964, Ogot was already a theoretically stringent, politically aware, and socially activist intellectual. His early life, mission discipline, elite colonial schooling, Makerere debates, and Western marginalization of his works all contributed to making him a scholar dedicated to the decolonization of knowledge and to reconfiguring education to African realities. These early years were the intellectual and ideological background to which he based his later contribution to education policy, curriculum reform, and writing about African History.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This paper has followed the life and intellectual evolution of Bethwell Allan Ogot up to 1964, which became the foundation of his subsequent works on the study of African History and education. The findings indicate that the interaction of Luo indigenous culture, Christian missionaries, and colonial administrative institutions in western Kenya conditioned the intellectual development of Ogot. Having been raised in a chiefly Christian family, he was in a vantage position of authority, morality, and mediation, and he was exposed early in his life to the contradictions of the colonial rule and the African agency. This marginalisation of African historical knowledge and epistemologies, coupled with the early literacy, discipline, and exposure to formal scholarship that Ogot gained through his early education in mission institutions, is evident. The presence of both missionary schooling and oral traditions in his home environment fostered two intellectual orientations, which were the mastery of Western academic instruments and a strong respect for indigenous knowledge systems. This conflictualism was later to shape his adherence to oral historiography and African-centred historical reconstruction. His intellectual development was further strengthened by university education at Makerere College and postgraduate training in Britain. Although they provided the rigorous training of methodology, these institutions also recreated the Eurocentric presuppositions that challenged the validity of African History as an academic discipline. Instead of generating intellectual conformity, these experiences enhanced the critical mindfulness of Ogot and strengthened his determination to resist the colonial historiography with the help of disciplined research and argumentation based on facts. By 1964, Ogot was a historically based, methodological, and socially aware intellectual. The experiences he underwent as a young man resulted in a scholar who is adequately prepared to challenge colonial knowledge regimes, recover African historical agency, and make scholarship socially responsible. This background phase is therefore very crucial to realise his influence later on African historiography and the reforming of education in post-industrial Kenya.

5.2 Recommendations

The study findings have led to the following recommendations: First, further studies should be conducted, similar to biographical and intellectual research on other African scholars whose early years of development took place in colonial education systems. Comparative studies would enhance the insight into the relationships between individual agency and colonial institutions to influence the development of post-colonial intellectual traditions in Africa. Second, the History of education scholars ought to emphasize more on formative periods instead of dwelling on the mature careers and institutional accomplishments. Based on such an approach, a more subtle picture can be made of the role of early educational experiences in shaping subsequent scholarly orientations, methodological orientations, and policy stands. Third, policymakers and curriculum developers in education must use the influential experiences of Ogot to learn that early education has a long-term effect on intellectual growth. Historically based and culturally responsive scholarship can be developed by incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and oral traditions and African-centred perspectives throughout the education system. Lastly, the universities and research institutions are advised to patronize the archives preservation and oral history project in which the educational and intellectual histories of African scholars are recorded. Such sources are critical towards building intellectual lineages as well as in the process of ensuring that the role of Africans in the world's knowledge production is sufficiently historicised and theorised.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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