

## FROM CLASH TO COEXISTENCE: A READING OF OKOT P'BITEK'S SONG OF LAWINO AND SONG OF OCOL

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A culture renders the manifestation of traditionally ideated and embedded heritage, customs, mores, linguistic practices and social behavior within a discrete symbiotic arrangement. Culture can also be defined as “learned patterns of perceptions, values, and behaviors, shared by a group of people, that are dynamic and heterogeneous. Culture also involves our emotions and feelings” (Martin and Nakayama 33). “A culture is a total way of life” (Rodney 53). The cultural proclivity towards the effectuation and accomplishment of peace and development of the indigenous, along with the other multifarious disparate civilizations can be harnessed through the entrenchment of a liberally enlightened perspective. This perspective needs to be devoid of the meddling imposition by another culture, through an externally located expatriating entity, especially situated in a presumably more modernized and refined yet prejudiced spatiotemporal milieu. The disposition of a beautiful and a transcendent stature, associated with a specific culture, can be attained, retained and enhanced through the approach of mutual acceptability and appreciation among variegated cultural domains.

Perseverance of a shared reverence, freedom and dignity, while being vigilantly bereft of the domineering and detestable volitional endowment of traditional legacy by an extrinsically settled nationalistic domain, over a connately contented, plentiful, and sufficed ethnic sphere is crucial. The gratuitous fiddling with the cultural freedom and privileges of a particular civilization by another community must be relinquished. This proposition can also be observed in Albert Camus' opinion, “Without culture and the relative freedom it implies, society even when perfect, is but a jungle” (126). The Ugandan poet, Okot p'Bitek, articulates the assimilation of the ritualistic East African Acholi lore in his poetry, to yield this spirit of cultural emancipation. P'Bitek indulges with the traditional oral history of Africa, for the attainment of the scheme of his objective, to perpetuate the essence of congenial coexistence of cultures.

The aim of the paper is to identify the unfaltering espousal of a harmonious acknowledgement, of the polarizing yet aesthetically cogent magnificence, held by the independently differential existence of cultures, persisting between the traditional African culture and Western civilization, through Okot p'Bitek's two eminent oeuvres of poetry,

“Song of Lawino” and “Song of Ocol”. This perspicacious reasoning is keenly conveyed by Okot p’Bitek, through the inferred argumentation, that, neither of the cultures is superiorly adept than the other.

“Song of Lawino” (p’Bitek, Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol 34) and “Song of Ocol” (p’Bitek, Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol 121), originally composed in 1966 and 1967 by Okot p’Bitek, delineate the portrayal of a wife and a husband, identified as Lawino and Ocol, who are subjected to an extremely disquieted marital union. Their marriage is initially divulged to be immensely perturbed due to the presence of an obstructive force in the countenance of a woman, recognized as Clementine, also addressed as Tina. Tina personates Ocol’s love interest and materializes the foisting of a Western ascendancy and a hypocritically contrived pretense. This disharmonious unease enunciates and amplifies itself subsequently in the embodiment of a cultural conflict and antagonism wherein Lawino ratifies, defends and emboldens the East African, explicitly the traditional Ugandan Acholi culture. Whereas, Ocol, after the procurement of Western education and the position of a post independent African political leader, in disowning his wife, and abandoning and reprobating his own customary Acholi practices, becomes the symbolic representation of the Western cultural enforcement. Ocol also analogizes the discordant and disruptive political unrest, emanating in a postcolonial African domain which ushered an escalated disorder in the societal and familial harmony. The assumed Western surmise about African indigeneity, inexhaustibly engendered an erroneous deduction of the African civilization to be primitive and to possess an eccentricity of engaging with savagery.

This led the Europeans to exert a coercively embedded progress within an independently equipped and a culturally copious community. The Western hegemonic hindrance and imposition fostered a self-inflicted hatred, as a consequential ramification and remnant of colonialism and capitalism. This postulation is agreeably pertained by Walter Rodney too, who reflects, “Because of the impact of colonialism and cultural imperialism, Europeans and Africans themselves in the colonial period lacked due regard for the unique features of African culture. Those features have a value of their own that cannot be eclipsed by European culture either in the comparable period before 1500 or in the subsequent centuries. They cannot be eclipsed because they are not really comparable phenomena. Who in this world is competent to judge whether an Austrian waltz is better than a Makonde Ngoma?” (53)

It is scrupulously reckoned that, in the “Song of Lawino”, Okot p’Bitek did not propel the disposition of an overweening dominance being exercised by the African civilization but he tenaciously allocated and rendered a vivid prospect of the African culture, especially, through the horizon of East African rural landscape. In the “Song of Lawino”, while manifesting her exasperation and resentment, Lawino derides the Western orientation of values and the ineradicable implantation of neocolonialism within an already established ritualistic arrangement, by extending a satirizing exposition of abundant metaphorical imageries, bound by

the invigorated constituents of Africa's oral literature. Though, she does not entail an inclination towards a complete ostracism of the plausibility, stimulated by the European culture through any devised gambit. Lawino, unequivocally and inexorably propounds the contention, of each culture occupying a coherent prepossessing credibility towards its ingrained chronicled conditioning and its community. However, she asserts her vexation towards the absolute exclusion and a consciously woven expulsion of the distinctive indigenous Acholi mannerisms by her husband, Ocol. This stance was also ascribed by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Lawino is not rejecting the validity of Western culture, to her every culture is valid to the community and the condition that created it. What gnaws at her is that self hatred that makes the Ocols totally reject and even consciously repudiate their roots in the African peasant World: they even go further and uncritically accept the half digested mannerisms of European bourgeois" (74). The African ethnic and societal structure, stationing the inhabiting of myriad diversified cultures and ceremonially celebratory conducts, predicates through Okot p'Bitek's tacit ingenuity. He weaves a trajectory within which, the idiosyncratic incongruous divergences should not be appraised as ignominious while being demeaned but this enthralling heterogeneity should be acknowledged, enriched, heightened and commemorated. The "Song of Ocol" transpires a provoked and an exacerbated retaliation towards the guileless and veraciously expounded insight provided by the "Song of Lawino".

Though, the "Song of Ocol" stands entirely futile and disjointed in its excessively condescending and hubristic vociferation, in Ocol renouncing his own ethnicity, without the subsistence of the "Song of Lawino" or figuratively, his traditional Acholi values. This ambit of thought, thus, instills a congenial verisimilitude of a harmonious coexistence of diverse communities and beliefs. It builds a dimension wherein the communal dissimilitude and incongruity should not be menacingly rebuked but, nonetheless, these diversifications should be parallelly harboured and cherished in their authentically unfeigned forms. This scheme of purpose in the "Song of Lawino" can be discerned as a consequence of Okot p'Bitek's confrontation with an adventitious hostility which he infers as, I first met a number of Western scholars at Oxford University in 1960. During the very first lecture in the institute of social anthropology, the teacher kept referring to Africans or non-Western peoples as barbarians, savages, primitives, tribes, etc. I protested; but to no avail. All the professors and lecturers in the institute, and those who came from outside to read papers, spoke the same insulting language. (Girling and p'Bitek 521)

Thereby, Okot p'Bitek's fundamentally primal purpose revolved around the axis of encouraging the African scholars who received Western education to redefine and unveil their native cultural opulence while dismantling the mirages of the hypothesized supremacy, induced, obtruded, and prolonged by the Western stanchions of scholarship. This stipulated effort, thus, would have strived for the extrapolation of the Africanized concerns, conventions, and institutions, in their primordially authentic forms, in the deficiency of the falsities fastened with

them. With the criterion, vaunted under the African poetic flair and the East African oral tradition, Okot p'Bitek perpetrated, retained and preserved the oral literary heritage, which pursues a magnified affinity with maximal number of African individuals and communities.

P'Bitek did not parallelize or collate the African poetry with the European canon of poems but accelerated the collocation of his poems with the African traditional songs, while availing the integrants of those ancient oral traditions. Although, his poems do not underpin an inflexible and confining circuit which capacitate them to be read only with a reception of the African identity by an African individual. They also resonate the evocation of an inkling of a pleasant vigour and a holistically resilient spirit of the thorough humankind to conserve its culture to be read by all the human beings. This vantage point imbibed the concern for the bolstering of differential characteristics to be enshrouded within the African eccentricity, by the Africans, not only through the vista of p'Bitek's subject but also, through his form and manner of recitation. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o concurred, "“Song of Lawino” is the one poem that has mapped out new areas and new directions in East African poetry. It belongs to the soil. It is authentically East African in its tone and its appeal” (75). One colligating strand in p'Bitek's renowned poems, “Song of Lawino”, “Song of Ocol”, “Song of Prisoner”, and “Song of Malaya”, is the defying of European influence within the African conventional premise.

“Song of Lawino”, catapults a tremendously lucid and rhetorical social commentary and elucidation in bemoaning the derangement, subsuming the modern urbanization. It steers a dramatic monologue, veritable symbolism, ironic and mocking invectives, and the employment of a witty contrast. “Song of Lawino” engages with thirteen segments, titled, “My Husband's Tongue is Bitter” (34), “The Woman With Whom I Share My Husband” (36), “I Do Not Know the Dances of White People” (42), “My Name Blew Like a Horn Among the Payira” (47), “The Graceful Giraffe Cannot Become a Monkey” (50), “The Mother Stone Has a Hollow Stomach” (56), “There is No Fixed Time for Breast Feeding” (63), “I Am Ignorant of the Good Word in the Clean Book” (73), “From the Mouth of Which River?” (84), “The Last Safari to Pagak” (91), “The Buffalos of Poverty Knock the People Down” (103), “My Husband's House is a Dark Forest of Books” (113), and “Let Them Prepare the Malakwang Dish” (117). Through these segmentations, the protagonist, Lawino scrutinizes the implementation of a pertinently positioned categorization of various thematic issues and arguments which succour her in addressing the fundamentally intrinsic concerns disquieting her. This deliberate yet punctilious classification and juxtaposing of profuse themes has been channeled and stationed under the cardinally requisite appellations of, dance and music, divergent and belittling standards of beauty, food, fabricated pattern of time, conception of religion and education, model of marriage, relevance of Acholi names, archetypal inculcation of political disarray, medicinal repository, and the nuanced discernment and enlightenment regarding death.

In the chapter “I Do Not Know the Dances of White People”, Lawino extols the ebullience and effervescence she fetches while indulging herself in the aesthetic traditional Acholi dance when she professes,

I do not know the dances of White People. I will not deceive you,

I cannot dance the samba!

You once saw me at the orak dance The dance for youths

The dance of our People.

When the drums are throbbing And the black youths

Have raised much dust

You dance with vigour and health You dance naughtily with pride You dance with spirit,

You compete, you insult, you provoke You challenge all!

And the eyes of the young men become red!

The son of a man

And the daughter of a man Shine forth in the arena.

Slave boys and girls

Dance differently from true-borns.

You dance with confidence And you sing

Provocative songs, Insulting and abusive songs Songs of praise

Sad songs of broken loves

Songs about shortage of cattle. (42)

Vivacity, enthusiasm, confidence, contentment, pride, and a spirit of lively and mirthful competitiveness in the Acholi dance—unlike the dance of the “true-borns”, which indicates the dance of the Europeans—are felicitously ventured on the foreground by Lawino. The Acholi songs perpetuate distinguishing expressions of encouragement, annoyance, agitation, contempt, admiration, glorification, veneration, and loss. Lawino mentions, “Ocol says/ He does not love me anymore/ Because I cannot play the guitar” (49) and she affirms, “And I do not follow the steps of foreign songs” (49). Ocol identifies her to be a “primitive” (35) for not bearing the inclination and sensibility to play a Westerly based instrument, a guitar. Ocol abominates Lawino for not ascertaining the delight in the Western abstraction of musicality and dance.

Lawino stresses on the proclamation, If someone tries

To force me to dance this dance I feel like hanging myself

Feet first!

I wish I could become A meteorite

And I would know Where to fall! (47)

Here, Lawino enounces very unambiguously that she does not find Western dance to be conducive, comforting, and tranquil. On the contrary, she would fervently consider hauling the

life out of her feet which would turn perennially impotent to perform the foreign dance. She is utterly bewildered and yearns of transmuting herself into an apathetically lifeless meteorite which would aid her in locating an avenue, entailing her sense of belongingness.

The bemusing and deceptive standards, administered and allocated by the Western ideals of beauty, which denigrate the African beauty are mocked and satirized by Okot p'Bitek, by vocalizing Lawino. Lawino describes and admonishes Clementine's endeavour of succumbing to the foreign principles of utopian beauty, by stating,

I do not like dusting myself with powder:

The thing is good on pink skin Because it is already pale,

But when a black woman has used it She looks as if she has dysentery; Tina looks sickly (37)

The deciphered explication of Clementine being ensnared between two mystified and ambivalent identities, which lack consonance and symmetry, actuates Lawino to commiserate with Clementine and she asseverates,

Forgive me, brother,

Do not think I am insulting

The woman with whom I share my husband! Do not think my tongue

Is being sharpened by jealousy. It is the sight of Tina

That provokes sympathy from my heart. (39)

..... My husband tells me

I have no ideas

Of modern beauty.

He says

I have stuck

To old fashioned hair styles. He says

I am stupid and very backward, That my hair style

Makes him sick Because I am dirty. (50)

Lawino tenably refrains herself from Ocol's obscure impression of Acholi beauty and hair styles.

Albeit, she substantiates her revulsion towards the purportedly liberating yet derogatory and deceitful standards of beauty by underscoring and reaffirming,

Listen,

Ostrich plumes differ

From chicken feathers, A monkey's tail

Is different from that of the giraffe, The crocodile's skin

Is not like the guinea fowl's,

And the hippo is naked, and hairless.

The hair of the Acoli

Is different from that of the Arabs; The Indians' hair

Resembles the tail of the horse; It is like sisal strings

And needs to be cut With scissors.

It is black,

And is different from that of white women.

A white woman's hair Is soft like silk;

It is light

And brownish like

That of the brown monkey,

And is very different from mine. A black woman's hair

Is thick and curly; (51)

..... I am proud of the hair

With which I was born And as no white woman Wishes to do her hair Like mine,

Because she is proud

Of the hair with which she was born, I have no wish

To look like a white woman. (56)

The segment, "The Mother Stone Has a Hollow Stomach" invokes Lawino's defence of the staple East African Acholi food and crops, quintessentially, flour, peas, fish, dried cucumber, groundnuts, simsim, beans, sorghum, and millets (Shillington 197). Lawino chides the food that Ocol overbearingly urges her to eat, comprising chicken, raw eggs, lobster, frogs, shells, tortoise, and snakes. Lawino apprises,

My husband says He rejects me

Because I do not appreciate White men's foods,

And that I do not know How to hold

The spoon and the fork.

He is angry with me Because I do not know How to cook

As white women do (56)

Lawino, furthermore, construes the intricate yet integral differentiating peculiarities between the Acholi and Western practices of preparing food, in an extensively comely tone. She also despises the European facet, concerning the conduct of consuming food while bequeathing an astoundingly sagacious and comprehensible rationale of radical and holistic freedom. She pleads with Ocol, to realize a cordial covenant, reposing behind these elementally peculiar intricacies, whilst conveying,

You use the saucepan And the frying pan

And other flat-bottomed things, Because the stoves are flat Like the face of the drum.

The earthen vegetable pot Cannot sit on it,

There are no stones On which to place

The pot for making millet bread. (59)

..... He insists  
I must eat raw eggs Smelly, slimy yellow stuff. He says  
It is good for me! He says  
There is something in eggs Which is good for the bones But my bones are strong,  
I can dance all night long (62)

..... Can it not be found  
In other foods? My husband,  
I do not complain That you eat  
White men's foods. If you enjoy them Go ahead!  
Shall we just agree To have freedom  
To eat what one likes? (63)

Thereafter, predominantly in the chapter “There is No Fixed Time for Breast Feeding”, Lawino dismisses the Western paradigm of time. The rupturing, splitting, and cataloguing of

time, emulate the emblematic segregation and the authoritatively imposed rigidity of practices and comportment within several inveterate and integrated communities, as entrusted by the European culture. Ocol's slavish adherence and obedience to the orderly and capitalist dictate of time is castigated by Lawino when she sardonically confers, “He tells me/ Time is money.” (67) and “Time has become/ My husband's master/ It is my husband's husband.” (68) Lawino dilates on the approbation of the unpretentious and uncomplicated demeanour of the regulation of time which had sustained before the inception of a rigid code of temporality and Western colonization. She also expatiates on the concocted Western pattern of time being analogous to the Acholi seasons. Thereby, she discerns the schematically irrepressible and downright perusal of time pursued by the people of her village, in accordance with the seasons, appropriating the cyclic spiraling structure of hard work and successive celebratory affairs.

If my husband insists What exact time  
He should have morning tea And breakfast,  
When exactly to have coffee And the exact time  
For taking the family photograph--- Lunch-time, tea time,  
And supper time---  
I must first look at the sun, The cock must crow  
To remind me. (64)

..... The Acoli know  
The Wet Season And the Dry Season. Wet Season means  
Hard work in the fields, Sowing, weeding, harvesting.  
It means waking up before dawn, It means mud



And thick dew. Herdboys dislike it. Lazy people hate it.  
Dry Season means pleasures, It means dancing,  
It means hunting  
In freshly burnt plains. (71)

Ocol disparages and vilifies Lawino for being unable in apprehending the number of days tenanting a year, the number of weeks in four moons, or the number of moons in nine weeks. Lawino unremittingly keeps reiterating her incapability, and lack of intrigue, amusement and curiosity in understanding and developing an externally deployed orchestration of time, "I cannot keep time"; "I cannot answer."; "I cannot say!"; "I cannot read"; (63) and "I cannot understand all this/ I do not understand it at all!" (73)

Ocol beholds Acholi religious beliefs to be inordinately uncouth and superstitious, oppugning to the doctrine advocated by Western religion and erudition. He exhorts that Acholi language is a "primitive language" (87), incapacitated and dismally unequipped of endowing answers to certain issues which require a lofty sense of sagacious wisdom and intellect. He avers, "It is not like the white man's language/ Which is rich and very beautiful/ A language fitted for discussing deep thoughts." (88) Lawino instantiates on the embroiling issue of Ocol favouring the charade carried by an avowed superiorly placed culture by stating,

My husband wears A small crucifix On his neck,  
And all his daughters Wear rosaries.  
But he prohibits me  
From wearing the elephant tail necklace, He once beat me  
For wearing the toe of the edible rat And the horn of the rhinoceros  
And the jaw-bone of the alligator. (93)

Howbeit, Ocol does not abhor and disclaim the mythical fallacies of Christianity but paradoxically, reprimands, belittles, and disavows the superstitiously rooted Acholi dogmas. Lawino proposes that Ocol's obtainment of Western education administered his betrayal and renunciation of his own traditional customary practices, communal estrangement, detrimental credo, and an intensified strain on his relationship and marriage with Lawino by upholding the conviction,

When my husband was still wooing me

His eyes were still alive,

His ears were still unblocked, Ocol had not yet become a fool My friend was a man then! (113)  
In "I Am Ignorant of the Good Word in the Clean Book", Lawino detests the hollowness and futility of the endurance of Christian names within the African context and Acholi cultural scope.

She opines of her husband's Christian name to be considerably strenuous to pronounce, while being insignificant to African semantic structure and states,  
It sounds something like Medikijedeki Gilirigoloyo.  
It sounds to me like

'Give the people more vegetables, Foxes make holes in the pathway' (82)

Names which endure and reinforce the prominence of a characteristic attribute of an individual, prototypically, relating to the Bull names of warriors; names of twins; names of children who grew extra fingers or toes; names incorporating seasons; names of sorrow; names of the first, second, third and the last born child in the household, are apposite to the Acholi culture more accurately and acceptably than Western names. The religious indoctrination of education, imparted by the Nun and Padre of Anglican missionaries (Whitmire 9), in contradiction with her own creed of religious faith, befuddled Lawino, primarily regarding the birth of Jesus Christ. Thus, Lawino enunciates her perplexity,  
You consider the birth of Christ:

They say

His mother did not know a man. They also say,  
The bridewealth had already been paid,

Among our People When a girl has  
Accepted a man's proposal She gives a token,  
And then she visits him In his bachelor's hut  
To try his manhood.

..... And when they teach  
That the Mother of Christ Did not know a man  
I cannot understand it. (90)

Lawino rebukes the sanctimonious and hypocritical deportment of these advocates and proponents of religion who leave her queries unanswered. This European equivocation metaphorically echoes the atrocious, hopeless, inefficacious, dubious and unresolved design of both, colonialism and neocolonialism, and the reverberation of cultural as well as psychological colonization in the post-independent Africa,

But the teachers of religion Hate questions;  
A young tree that is bending They do not like to straighten. Whether they do it purposely,  
Whether they themselves Have no answers  
I do not know, But I know

They hate questions. (90)

Lawino reflects, in "The Last Safari to Pagak", that Ocol evinces a deprecating repugnancy towards Acholi herbalists, Acholi medicines, and the diviner-priests whereas Lawino deftly locates the strengths and frailties of both, the African as well as Western medicines, she proclaims,

It is true

White man's medicines are strong, But Acoli medicines  
Are also strong. (101)

Then, she speaks in a splendidly retentive and resolute tone about the redundancy and catastrophic failure of both, Acholi medicines, the toes of edible rats, and the horn of the rhinoceros as well as the Westerly medicated remedies, crucifixes, and rosaries, at the epoch of the arrival of death in an individual's life,

White diviner priests,

Acoli herbalists,

All medicine men and medicine women Are  
good, are brilliant

When the day has not yet dawned

For the great journey

The last safari To

Pagak. (103)

The chapter "Let Them Prepare the Malakwang Dish" emanates the arousal of Lawino's attempt to eliminate and obliterate her helpless predicament, approximating and resembling the vulnerable dilemma of Africa, after the acquisition of independence, which was subjected to a blatant and an unabashed trickery. This treachery was consequently, a fabrication, designed by the expatriates who belonged to Africa, but adopted a Western canon of education and governance to be imbued within the cultural, societal, and political spectrum of Africa. Lawino supplicates Ocol to shatter the shackles of the recreant restraint which is recasting, permuting, and maneuvering his indigenous conditioning, while transmuting his supposition regarding the African civilization into a solely and implacably obstinate presumption. Lawino accosts,

The abuses you learnt

From your white masters

And the stupid stubbornness

Spit them down with the water. (119)

Lawino, with a very deferential and reconciliatory tenor implores Ocol to eradicate the deterring impediment, blighted by the presence of Clementine, and symbolically, the residence of an intrusive and an obtruding comparison and disagreement between the implicated superiority of the Western culture and the traditional African heritage,

I have only one request, And all I ask is

That you remove the road block From my path. (120)

In her conclusive appeal to Ocol, Lawino fortifies and reiterates that he must yield pride and dignity within his own African ethnicity, which is impregnated with discretely and inimitably bountiful, prolific, and prosperous cultural vigour,

Let me dance before you, My love,

Let me show you

The wealth in your house, Ocol my husband,

Son of the Bull,

Let no one uproot the Pumpkin. (120)

Ocol, in retorting Lawino, in the “Song of Ocol”—segregated into nine untitled sections—barrages Lawino and her plea to recognize and acknowledge the magnanimous and bounteous quintessence of his Acholi culture. Contrary to Lawino’s assertion, Ocol domineeringly derides, loathes, and reproaches Acholi art, education, ancestry, traditions, and the chronicled antecedent legacy as crude and primitive. Although, in chastising his community and his wife, Lawino, Ocol, inadvertently berates himself too, predominantly while emphatically enjoining Lawino in the commencement of the “Song of Ocol”,

Woman, Shut up!

Pack your things Go!

Take all the clothes I bought you

The beads, necklaces And the remains

Of the utensils,

I need no second-hand things. (121)

This rebuttal of African identity escalates when Ocol constitutes, Mother, mother,  
Why,

Why was I born Black? (126)

Ocol upbraids those Africans too, who possess a celebratory gratification, honour, and pride in their national identity,

Africa, Idle giant

Basking in the sun, Sleeping, snoring,

Twitching in dreams;

Diseased with a chronic illness, Choking with black ignorance, Chained to the rock  
Of poverty,

And yet laughing,

Always laughing and dancing (125)

Though, Ocol is deluded and misapprehended by the idealized space, crafted by the  
Western colonial and capitalist utopia yet he reviles the established and prosperous  
African clans and chiefdoms by advancing,

Believing you were The richest of the earth, Drunk with the illusion Of real power  
You continued to jump Up and down (136)

Ocol avouches his despicable desire to enkindle the abodes, extirpate the granaries and  
smash the scullery utensils. Through Ocol's scathingly tempestuous sentient here, Okot p'Bitek's  
preclusive forewarning mockery can be perceived to be directing towards the British  
implementing the private land tenure system in Uganda, in 1900, under which the formerly  
ruling King of Buganda turned into a mere representative of the British administration  
(Shillington 338). This system was abolished in 1953 since it posed a majorly considerable  
constraint in the economic development of Britain's East African colonies. Though, it was re-  
enacted after independence, initially as Public Land Act 1969 (Mugambwa 43), and then, as  
Land Reform Decree 1975 (Mugambwa 44), by the dictatorial President Idi Amin, under which,  
the entire land was confiscated and converted into government subject for further development.  
Moreover, Ocol disdains the African ornaments of embellishment and Acholi ideals of beauty  
and adornment. Therefore, he appears intensely obdurate in dismantling the Acholi  
ornamentations, utilized for the intent of beautification, and promulgates,

We will rip off

The smelly goatskin skirts From the women  
And burn them,

Cut all the giraffe hair necklaces And elephant hair bangles, Break the ivory amulets  
Cutting deep in the flesh Of the upper arms, Remove all the chains, Ear rings, nose rings,  
Lip-stops ... (137)

He lays his behest for his African comrade to applaud the beauty of the roses and other  
flowers in the palatial garden of his residency. However, he does not hanker of espousing an

equivalent acclamation and commending of the significance of the East African agricultural and cultivating landscape of “maize shamba” (139). Ocol incessantly abets the Western civilization, while continually being negligent towards the enchanting and enriching vision of his own household and neighbourhood. He emphasizes that the African streets should be entitled and identified after the names of European colonial explorers of Africa, namely, David Livingstone, Henry Stanley, Johan Hanning Speke, and Karl Peters but not after the emperor of the ancient Mali kingdom, Mansa Suleyman Keita, who, according to Ocol, was as pitifully insubstantial as the Greek goddess Artemis. Also, while impelling, “When the naked Luo/ Through trickery,/ Established their rule” (146), Ocol indignantly propagates the treacherous seizure of his Acholi land by the Luo chiefdom, which was largely categorized under the linguistic group of the Western Nilotic Luo, whose antecedents were discovered in the latter half of the fourteenth century A.D., and whose complementing linguistic groups, Central Sudanic and Eastern Nilotic were traced back in 1000 B.C (Atkinson 21). However, Ocol does not show any aversion towards the occupation of his continent by the Europeans. Lawino compels Ocol to venerate his ancestors and revere the profundity of his ancestral customs and rituals whereas Ocol is vexatious towards them and disastrously covets of impounding them in totality. Ocol preconizes, “We will arrest/ All the elders”; and, “The council of elders/ Will be abolished;” (137) and contrastingly, Lawino in the “Song of Lawino” exclaims,

The ways of your ancestors Are good,  
 Their customs are solid And not hollow  
 They are not thin, not easily breakable

..... I do not understand  
 The ways of foreigners

But I do not despise their customs. Why should you despise yours? (41)

Ocol also aims of incarcerating and detaining the vitality, fervor, and soul of African artistry and craft, “Spearmakers and blacksmiths/ Will be jailed;” (137). Ama Ata Aidoo, in her poems, “For My Mother in Her Mid-90s” (After the Ceremonies: New and Selected Poems 5) and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks), reciprocates the extolling of the precisely concordant remits of African culture which are approbated and gloriously lauded by Lawino but condemned by Ocol. In “For My Mother in Her Mid-90s”, Aidoo is grateful to her mother, figurative of the African ancestry. She proposes that, under the enlightening guidance of elders, the indigene progenies are capable of acclimatizing to their own culture and cognately accept the role of other cultures within their relevantly corresponding environment with civility. Although, the protagonist’s daughter in the poem prefers and corroborates the European rudiments of commercialism, capitalism, and consumerism, kindred to Ocol, and says “Mummy, touch plastic,/ it lasts longer!” (After the Ceremonies: New and Selected Poems 5) “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” aggrandizes the

sacrosanct veracity of the artistic virtuosity, and craftsmanship, expositing the creation and proficiently elaborated designing of the beads in Ghana. She claims of forsaking the impressed tenet that, if beads had not subsisted as a part of her culture, she and her community would have indispensably necessitated the prerequisite of “something else” (Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks) to amply replenish the vibrancy and variation in the eloquent artistic creativity, the self-sufficient, self-reliant and uniform system of barter and trade, and the scientifically enabled purview. She exclaims, homologous to Lawino’s riposte, “Something what? Something where?/ Please keep it there, even if it’s rare.” (Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks) The Western system of education has engulfed Ocol’s intellect to an extent where he disregards and ridicules the African pillars and pioneers of history, erudition, and reasoned development of the African society, in their entirety,

To the gallows

With all the Professors Of Anthropology

And teachers of African History, A bonfire

We'll make of their works, We'll destroy all the anthologies Of African literature

And close down All the schools

Of African Studies.

Where is Aimé Césaire? Where Léopold Senghor? Arrest Janheinz Jahn

And Father Placide Temples, Put in detention

All the preachers Of Negritude; (129)

Furthermore, Ocol imperiously appeals the contemporary African foundation to be addressed through the application and exercising of the two radically colonial languages, English or French. Okot p'Bitek accentuates on this discriminatory role of education, which is, out of all the factors, the most formidable in its approach, in repressively subduing and hampering the growth of a self-sustaining entity,

The most striking and frightening characteristic of all African governments is this, that without an exception all of them are dictatorships, and practice such ruthless discriminations as make the South African apartheid look tame. African socialism may be defined as the government of the people by the educated, for the educated. You cannot become a member of their parliament unless you can speak English or French or Kiswahili. You may be the greatest oral historian but they will never allow you anywhere near their university.

This is not discrimination by white settlers against Africans, but discrimination of Africans by Africans, discrimination by the ‘black-suit’ town tribesmen, discrimination by the educated men in power against their fellow men—their brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, against their own folk left in the village. (p'Bitek, Indigenous Ills 41)

Ocol bridles Lawino with only two possibilities, of either adopting the rudimentary residues of colonialism, imperative of urbanization and modernization, or, of obliterating her sheer existence, which is allegorical of deracinating the African landscape and milieu outright, You have only two alternatives My sister,  
Either you come in Through the City Gate, Or take the rope  
And hang yourself! (149)

The stifling swathe of such disorderliness and the ennobling and apotheosizing of Western advancements to an extremity of being arbitrarily and absolutely repulsive towards one's own nativity and society surfaces out of the possession of Western education by the African natives. This attainment of Western education forged a bridging distance between the African regimen and the form of government introduced and instituted by the Westerly educated African political leaders. The African scholars and political leaders in the post independent African continent restored the positions of colonial governors and instigated the distortion and perfidy of the hope of freedom in the postcolonial Africa, for the fulfilment of their own capitalist aspirations. This premise is instantiated by Lawino,  
I do not understand Why all the bitterness And the cruelty  
And the cowardice, The fear,  
The deadly fear that Eats the hearts  
Of the political leaders! Is it the money?  
Is it the competition for position? (107)

The resultant eventuality of this post independent African governance did not only stem a societal, communal, and cultural disintegration but also ruptured the familial harmony. Okot p'Bitek illustrates the bolstering of a mockery on such African political leaders in the "Song of Lawino", through the characterization of Ocol, who belonged to the Democratic Party, which ascribed to the Catholic interests and his brother, who was affiliated with the Congress. Ken Leslie Goodwin endorsed, "Okot poured many of his interests into his poems. Traditional dancing and singing, rites and ceremonies, education, religion, and other matters of cultural and anthropological interest, the role of the Christian church; and the two-party system of politics that operated in early Uganda's independence are all incorporated" (Understanding African Poetry: A Study of Ten Poets). P'Bitek also espoused derision on Milton Obote, and his political party, Uganda People's Congress. Milton Obote led Uganda to independence in October 1962 with the political coalition of the Buganda royalist party, Kabaka Yekka, which denoted "King Alone" (Shillington 387). The strengthening of Milton Obote's regime drove him to declare a constitution, adhering to which, he ushered as the executive President of Uganda in 1966.

P'Bitek's "Song of Prisoner", written in 1971, presumably dealt with the extension of a commensurable satire on an imminently intended tyrannical vanquishing of the regime of the Field-Marshal 'President for Life', Idi Amin, who aroused a torturous dictatorial presidency,



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from 1971 to 1979 (Shillington 417). During Idi Amin's dominion, the Acholi population was despotically victimized and executed due to its former association with the colonial militancy and its support lent to Milton Obote, who was ousted by Idi Amin in a military coup in 1971. Moreover, Milton Obote's vandalistic mangling of the Kingdom of Buganda, with the assistance of Idi Amin in the year 1966, defaced all the cultural institutions, factions and traditionally conventional phenomena of Uganda. Thus, political primacy was expansively conjoined with the domestic and foreign infelicitous collapse of the ethnic individualities. According to James Ojera Latigo, "Since independence in 1962, Uganda has been plagued by ethnically driven, politically manipulated violence referred to by some as a history of 'cycles of revenge and mistrust'. Deep-rooted divisions and polarization remain between different ethnic groups, and these have been greatly exacerbated by the way in which the country's leadership has developed since independence" (Huysse and Satter 85). In 1968, Okot p'Bitek was expelled from the status of the Director of the National Cultural Centre of Uganda due to the rendering of a heightened political criticism in the "Song of Lawino".

The Western scholars, allusively Ocol in the "Song of Ocol", who emerged as the modern and reinvigorated personages of political leadership in an independent framework of Africa, abstracted and illustrated the delineation and division of two unreservedly demarcated provinces. According to these political leaders, one territory outlined the stature of being civilized, culturally refined, colossally enlightened, principally glorious, progressive, and developed; and the other arena traced the unrefined, brutish, undeveloped, unsophisticated, and unadorned lot of individuals. They necessitated the erection of a society, which would elevate their stratum while resuming to be allied to the European interests, affairs, and influence even after the achievement of independence from the British rule. Even Léopold Senghor observed, "We have denounced the imperialism of the great powers only to secrete a miniature imperialism toward our neighbors. We have demanded disarmament from the greater powers only to transform our countries into arsenals. We proclaim our neutralism, but we do not always base it upon a policy of neutralism. I have the impression that the Great Powers, the developed countries, believe that it is up to them—the whites—to solve problems and not to the blacks" (Falola and Sanchez 114).

Ama Ata Aidoo, through her poem "After a Commonwealth Conference" (Poetry: After a Commonwealth Conference), permeates a kindred ideology wherein she intelligibly interrogates the course of betrayal that her continent was once again regulated towards, by the native inhabitants, who after gaining Western education, metamorphosed into the echelons of the colonial expatriates. These ministerial moderators skewed a condescendingly complacent consciousness, lacking the philanthropic and the humanitarian strands of empathy, togetherness, and communal integration. They also involved a dearth of aspiration to actualize a thorough emancipation from the Western intimidation while approving and sustaining the productive cultural resources, already accessible in their aboriginal surroundings. The stupefied demarcation

eventuated discordance between the past and present, individualism and community, socialism and capitalism, and modern burgeoning and self-reliance. This collision is accosted aesthetically by Lawino, through the engagement of Western and African identity with the juncture of entire humanity. Lawino, in a willfully innocuous timbre, dispenses a complexly woven appraisal and disquisition. The Ugandan novelist, Okello Oculi implies, "There's really no work that has succeeded in touching the African nerve as "Song of Lawino"" (Killam 129). Okot p'Bitek, through Lawino, undertook a committed allegiance towards the apprising of the downright humankind, for his community, which is bounded by ethical protocols, empathy, communal ardour, requited endearment, enmity, mutual ambitions, moralistic principles, and hope, akin to all other communities. The orbit of his concerning argument mutates from the locale of an African household, emplacing a mere dispute between a husband and a wife to the locus of the Acholi populace, the Ugandans, the Africans, and the sheer humanity.

Though, in the "Song of Lawino", Lawino is shown to be girdled with the bafflement of the embedding of a foreign prototype of civilization into her endemic sphere but in actuality, Ocol, who is the intermediary of the African scholars and political leaders, is ceaselessly muddled about his cultural identity, with reference to his nationality, community, and education. Ocol is most benighted about his citizenship and therefore, he is pitiably alienated from his own ethnic traditions and roots. This alienation is a corollary of chancing an attempt to approximate and mirror the mere semblance of the Western societal encompassment and consequentially, prompts a cacophonous disharmony between a venerated facade of expectations and the undeniably axiomatic and salient reality. Ocol cognized and designed a patronizing angle to liberate the indigenous masses by isolating them from their culture.

This ideologue can be seen to be anticipating the simulation of the Brazilian philosopher, Paulo Freire's endorsement of the vantage point, The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account. (48)

It is prominently beheld that Okot p'Bitek does not garner a skeptical dissension towards the European or other distinct world heritages and ennobles his own traditional bequest but he edifies an unprejudiced functioning of these deviating heritages within their own cultural backgrounds. Okot p'Bitek's poems do not, pedantically deem to negate the advantageous

magnitude of academic pursuits and the pertinence of bureaucratic obligations or laboriously dutiful responsibilities, carried out separately, either in a Westerly urban province or a traditionally agrarian settlement. His poetry cautiously informs and alerts about the potentiality underpinned by a prestigious and an estimable vocation of forbidding and enslaving an individual's or a nation's range of conscious which might impugn the viability and fidelity of their heuristic extant.

To exemplify her outlook on such dubieties, Lawino, rather than protesting, laments with a celebratory and resonating vein about the reassertion and revival of the verity of her and her community's identity. This perspicacity of Lawino, is pulsated chiefly by the theorization of Négritude, which was initially hypothesized and championed by Léopold Senghor. Senghor inferred, "I wear European clothing and the Americans dance to jazz which derives from our African rhythms: civilization in the twentieth century is universal. No people can get along without others" (Parr and Parr). Though, accounting the tumultuous disruption, which was arisen by the onslaught as well as the departure of colonialism, entrusted and left behind the burdening oddment of neocolonialism. This coiled a course leading towards the attainment of an ardently peaceful and simultaneous existence, hitherto undertaking, and still enterprising through numerous devastating debacles as well as triumphantly humanitarian and harmonious victories.

Essentially, it can be cumulated that Okot p'Bitek emanated as an influential exponent in disseminating the leitmotif of unconstrained cultural freedom and identity. The poetry rendered by p'Bitek, promulgated about the percipience of aesthetic stability and vigour which is orchestrated, circulated, and preoccupied by a sole community. Whence, the differentiating customary mannerisms and conduct must not be inflicted and foisted on another exogenous civilization, situated in a distanced exterior, or acculturated to dissociated rituals. The indigenous individuals and populace, while congenially adapting to their own ethnicity, must accept and regard the mantle of extrinsically dissimilar cultures too. The prevailing pattern of a culture in a societal space, functions in that particular expanse due to its social, cultural, and historical conditioning. Mahatma Gandhi also asserted a parallel vision when he said, "A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people" (Eischet). Okot p'Bitek, through his poetry, grapples with the dynamic and democratic existence of distinct religions, languages, communities, and societies, either inside or outside their cultural and nationalistic boundaries.

To conclude, "Song of Lawino" and "Song of Ocol" can be deduced as the evidently illustrious poetic canons, versified by Okot p'Bitek, which acquaint with the unvarnished and forthright supposition of acknowledging, integrating, and revering the enrapturing splendour of a dichotomous yet a sublime independent existence of two divergent cultural milieus. Lawino vindicates the authenticity of Acholi customary practices by adulating and ratifying the vivacious Acholi music and dance, fulfilling and enriching ideals of beauty, domestically grown food and food preparing methodical techniques, traditional pattern of time, endemically adapted religious

practices, and Acholi medicines. The conspicuous voice of Lawino, emphasizes, appreciates, and glorifies the gravity and rarity of the unique and unparalleled East African Acholi cultural preserve. Although, she fervidly precipitates the appropriation of the approval, acclamation, and respect, for another exteriorly settled heritage too.

Thus, Lawino does not deem the European culture to be deplorably inadequate and abysmal, but peddles an appeal, addressing Ocol, of fetching immense gratification and pride in the aboriginal African cultural legacy. Whereas Ocol, owing to his Westerly facilitated education and tyrannizing political orientation, sneeringly condemns and devalues the celebratory conventional mores of his society and loathes his African identity. He seeks the destructive pursuit of demolishing the Acholi households, and disassembling the embellishing Acholi ornamentations. He essays to tamper with his own African native identity through a Westerly ethnocentric imposition and encumbrance, while also enouncing the scornful derision of venerable African personages of education and revolutionary crusades. Ocol, an African scholar and a political leader, is academically and ethnically bewitched by the European conventional praxis. Therefore, he concretizes and typifies the exacerbated and superfluous lingering protraction of European colonization, in potently inflicting the prevalent Western customs on the African autochthonous civilization.

Resultantly, he is ensnared by the alienating quandary, due to, falling incapable in accurately affiliating with either of the cultures, while engineering the collapsible and dismaying imitation of a conjectured and an assumingly more splendiferous heritage. Therefore, it can be reckoned and evinced, that, Okot p'Bitek, through the exemplary portrayal of the characters, Lawino and Ocol, bespeaks and accentuates the significant intensity of a synchronous existence by two palpably discrete civilizations. It is advocated by him, that, the rational differences and disagreements between disparately determined habitations, should not be collated, compared and discriminated for the contemplating assessment of the gesticulation of inferiority and superiority. On the contrary, these demarcating divergences and polarities must be espied, recognized, lauded, and celebrated in their own acknowledged, appurtenant and befitting indigenous locales. The exertion of their cultural freedom and liberty must be unfettered, while being orientated either in an extraneously distanced and foreign territory or an interiorly ethnic and native mandate.

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