

# **THE THIRD WAY IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

**Essays in Honour of Kwasi Wiredu**

*Edited by*  
**Olusegun Oladipo**

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**TOWARDS A POSTCOLONIAL SYNTHESIS IN AFRICAN  
PHILOSOPHY – CONCEPTUAL LIBERATION AND RECONSTRUCTIVE  
SELF-EVALUATION IN THE WORK OF OKOT P’BITEK**

*Kai Kresse*

You scholar seeking after truth  
I see the top  
Of your bald head  
Between mountains of books  
Gleaming with sweat,  
Can you explain  
The African philosophy  
On which we are reconstructing  
Our new societies?  
(Okot p’Bitek 1984: 150)

This short essay will have to remain rather fragmentary in sketching out a perspective to re-investigate and explore the work of Okot p’Bitek from a philosophical side, using as a guideline goals and criteria formulated recently by Kwasi Wiredu. Some of his fundamental programmatic desiderata for current, postcolonial African philosophy (Wiredu 1995, 1996) – worked out finely by Olusegun Oladipo (1996) – will be linked to the works and ideas of this East African thinker, whose potential for African philosophy has, as far as I know, not yet been sufficiently highlighted or seriously treated. Okot p’Bitek needs to be taken seriously, as a formidable and versatile intellectual, creative in literature, anthropology, social and cultural criticism, and active in a variety of positions within these fields. Surely, a philosophical focus on Okot is in the interest of Wiredu himself, as he knew the Ugandan poet and anthropologist in person (at least from a philosophy conference in Nairobi

in 1981).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Wiredu used Okot's scholarly work to illustrate humourously problems in conceptual translation between Western and African languages, quoting Okot's exemplary documentation of how missionaries had quite unelegantly distorted the first sentence of the St. John's gospel, when translating it into the Luo language. Retranslated into English, their translation reads: "From long long ago there was News, News was with Hunchback Spirit, News was the Hunchback Spirit" (Wiredu 1996: 81-82; cf. p'Bitek 1970: 85). It seems that this enigmatic statement was at the starting-point of Christian missionary success in the region.

Let me briefly explain the key terms of my title. *Conceptual liberation* refers to what Wiredu names the *positive* aspect of his call for "conceptual decolonization in African philosophy", i.e. "exploiting as much as is judicious the resources of our own conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations" (Wiredu 1995: 22; 1996: 136; cf. Oladipo 1996: 19). A critical "*reconstructive self-evaluation*", on the other hand, is the process through which Wiredu finds it fruitful to address the issue of "Africa's problem of identity in the contemporary world" (Wiredu 1992; cf. Oladipo 1996: 33). Both of these elements together are crucial pillars or hallmarks for the project of postcolonial African philosophy, from Wiredu's perspective. In general, my claim here is that the works of Okot p'Bitek provide much important material and food for thought in regard to both of these aspects. By looking back at p'Bitek and the early phase of postcolonial African scholarship and writing that he was part of, much can still be learned and gained. I want to sketch out and discuss some of these elements in p'Bitek's work, seeking to invoke the versatile range of his intellectual production in different academic and artistic fields.

In pursuing this, the perspective for a new project emerges, namely the serious and full-scale evaluation of p'Bitek's work, an assessment of its relevance for African philosophy in a stricter *and* a wider sense. This could later be extended to a contextual portrayal of this East African intellectual, in regard to the way he lived and worked as a creative thinker in his social environment (which he highlighted so much), shedding light

on biographical periods in connection to the systematic objectives he was working on. As it is, issues of language, performance, and documentation will be at the forefront of inquiry here, dealing with p'Bitek while using Wiredu's criteria as a guideline.

Focusing on Okot p'Bitek in a discussion of African philosophy can hardly be surprising, as his work as poet and critic is well-known, and partly ranks among the most prominent of the continent. This applies particularly to Okot's *Song of Lawino* (1966), and his scathing critique of *African Religions in Western scholarship* (1970). Both these texts are largely concerned with what Wiredu calls the "negative" aspects of the project of "conceptual decolonization", namely "avoiding or reversing (...) the unexamined assimilation" of Western conceptual frameworks in "African life and thought" (Wiredu 1995: 22). And both have been read and understood mostly as critiques and outright rejections of Eurocentrism, in different textual genres, and on different discursive levels. In the initial postcolonial period directly after Independence, Okot euphorically stood for the establishment of African perspectives and values as the new relevant political and social paradigms in the public sphere and in academia. His scholarly pamphlet criticised and rejected the way in which African religions had been researched by Western missionaries, characterised as pre-Christian monotheistic systems that needed to be uncovered and "brought home"; p'Bitek accused some of the early African scholars (Mbiti, Kenyatta, Abrahams et al.) of participating in such a distorting characterisation.

Interestingly, he rejected the implementation of anthropology as a discipline at African universities (1970: 6), while he himself had trained as a social anthropologist (under E. Evans-Pritchard, G. Lienhardt, and J. Beattie), gaining critical knowledge and experience that enabled him to formulate professional criticisms of scholarly work on African culture and thought, most notably Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* (cf. p'Bitek 1963). On the side of popular culture, *Song of Lawino* (1966), his own translation of his Acholi original *Wer pa Lawino* (first published in 1969),<sup>2</sup> a celebration of African values from the perspective of a rural woman who

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is critical of her husband's misguided submission to Western forms and standards of behaviour, outrightly rejects any self-imposition of these ex-colonial features by Africans on their own lives.

Less well remembered but perhaps equally important about p'Bitek is his outspoken and condemning attack on the ways that African political leaders, misusing their newly gained powers, conducted themselves as supreme rulers (or even "Supreme Beings", cf. Oruka 1997) and started creating the African postcolony (cf. Mbembe 1992; 2001). This can be found in his poetry as well as in his essay, and I will provide some examples below. Okot p'Bitek was part of an internal critical discourse amongst Africans, in Africa, just as much as he participated in an external criticism of Western influence on African life. He criticised the intellectual proponents of African socialism and negritude, Nyerere and Senghor, as rigorously as he spoke out against European colonialists, missionaries, and African autocrats. I will present selected passages by p'Bitek's from the different categories mentioned, and contextualise them within current issues in African philosophy, emphasizing how Okot's work is one exemplary and illuminating instance of an internal (social, cultural, and political) critique within postcolonial African discourse. His voice, in the "internal pluralism" (Hountondji 1983, 1996) that marks the field of philosophical debate in Africa, can be seen as invaluable contribution to a variety of issues that philosophical reflection in Africa has yet to come to grips with.

#### **African Language for African Thought: Conceptual Liberation**

Okot p'Bitek was one of the very first modern African writers who wrote in an African language. He published poetry and prose in his Acholi mother tongue, long before the debate on African language literatures had found foot in the academic scene. In fact, as a senior friend and colleague of Ngugi at the University of Nairobi, he might have influenced the latter's decision to turn to African languages as the medium for his writing. Okot's novel, *Lak Tar*, was published in 1953 (posthumously published in English, translated by Okot himself, as *White Teeth*, 1989),

and *Wer'pa Lawino*, the Acholi original of *Song of Lawino*, finished between 1949 and 1956, was published in 1969, three years after its translation (Taban lo Liyong 2001: xiv). In both cases p'Bitek raised an internal critique of Ugandan society, from an Acholi framework, in ways that may stand prototypically for other parts of Africa. The story of *Lak Tar* sheds critical light on the practice of demanding exorbitant bride-wealth from suitors. The novel's hero, desperate to accumulate enough money to marry his beloved, is forced to try his luck in faraway Kampala, but in the end has to count himself lucky when returning to his home in Acholiland healthy and in one piece, though hungry and penniless, "taking home more misery to pile on to the misery already there" (1989: 103).

For *Song of Lawino*, the stinging criticism of a self-imposition of Western values and behaviour, and the euphoric celebration of African values in contrast, has often been commented upon and need not be extended here (cf. e.g. Taban lo Liyong 1969, Heron 1976, Okumu 1999). But it is worthwhile to note how Taban lo Liyong has recently emphasized the "philosophical" qualities of the original Acholi version of this poem, which he also qualifies as the superior piece of literature to Okot's much praised English translation. This conviction resulted in the fact that Taban himself worked for two decades on an adequate, almost literal translation, which has just been published (Taban lo Liyong 2001). According to Taban, the original "*Wer pa Lawino* is deep philosophy. Unfortunately, the depth of thought, the body of the poem, thinned in the translation into Okot's *Song of Lawino*" (ibid.: xv). He states that due to the particular, English-speaking audience with its inferior cultural knowledge of Acholi, "word by word, line by line, even chapter by chapter, *Song of Lawino* is a watered down, lighter, elaborated, extended version of *Wer pa Lawino*" (xi). We know that Okot himself basically agreed with this criticism (cf. Okumu 1999: 155), but the critical success and the amount of discussion that *Song of Lawino* generated, is nevertheless an achievement in its own right. Not only could the English text be portrayed as an East African example of literary celebration of African cultural values with a Pan-African direction, Okot also widened the spectrum of the English language

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by “Africanising” it most successfully, as Heron states (Okot 1984: 9). This sense is achieved through the positive use of Acholi idioms and literal translations which, for themselves, make little sense in English, while in the context of this poem they create a distinctly sensuous and realistic presence of the Acholi scene which they evoked. In this context, of literal re-translations from the Acholi (back) into English, we encounter Okot’s poetical usage of the missionaries’ comical mistranslation of the bible into Acholi/Luo that we know from above. In her critical depictions of Christian practice in Acholiland, of apparent Protestant incitement to cannibalism and Catholic ritual “insults” shouted in an incomprehensible language, Lawino tells us how the “good word”, the “clean book” (ibid.: 73), the “clean ghost” (74), and the “Hunchback” (75) are central elements of the foreign religious practice that many Acholi have, to Lawino’s lament, succumbed to. Instead of the previous order of the Acholi life-world, nowadays “the messengers of the Hunchback” (93) have to be prayed to and obeyed. In such passages, one can observe playful, ironical ways of practising what Wiredu would call “conceptual decolonization”. Okot, both in Acholi and in English, here combines wordplay and humor with conceptual and political criticism, in the specific idiomatic expressions of a particular African context.

This leads us to Okot’s conviction that literature, in all its different forms and shapes, always has to do with “social comment”, a prominent leitmotif in his collections of writings called *Africa’s Cultural Revolution* (1973). This term links up two essential characteristics of literature, namely its (permanent) contextuality which is crucial to its meaning, and the obligation of creators and composers of literature to provide illustrations and statements on what is going on around them. The first aspect leads us to the relationship between literature and culture and society, pointing at the fact that literature is necessarily intertwined with both, as an integral part of social and cultural dynamics. Okot followed this angle in terms of an interdisciplinary documentation of Acholi genres of folk-literature, drawing much from his anthropological training, in which a focus on social context was crucial, in terms of the performance of literature and



its context-dependent generation (and direction) of meaning. The second aspect points at the composers social and moral responsibility to thematize and draw to public attention issues which deserved or called for consideration, discussion, action. Here, we have to do with the conscientious role of the poet in society, an aspect which seems to include the responsibility to political statements or criticism.

Before dealing further with these two issues, it should be noted that Okot, despite his emphasis on the relevance of African languages as media for artistic and socio-critical discourse, did not wholly dismiss or reject the former colonial languages as useless or essentially evil. On the contrary, he saw the pragmatic necessity of using them for the creation of national unity in the emerging postcolonial states. In this sense, he asserts the inevitability of working with a two-track scheme, differentiating between languages with political and administrative purposes, and languages with cultural purposes, thus essentially arguing for a multilingual format in which African countries can match their diverse tasks:

there is one common challenge facing all African countries. Whatever is chosen as the official language cannot be the only language of culture. You cannot dance Akamba or Ganda dances while singing in English or Kiswahili. I would therefore encourage the development of these official languages as tools, and also encourage the use of the vernacular languages for cultural purposes (Okot p'Bitek 1973: 46).<sup>3</sup>

### **Reconstructive Self-evaluation I : Literature in Social and Cultural Dynamics**

Okot p'Bitek, who gained a degree in social anthropology at Oxford University when studying under E. Evans-Pritchard, J. Mbiti, and G. Lienhardt in the 1960s, worked on the documentation of various genres of Acholi literature which had crucially influenced his own writing in the first place. In the 1970s and 1980s, collections of Acholi songs, folktales, and proverbs, selected and commented on by Okot, were published (Okot p'Bitek 1974, 1978, 1985). As a cultural insider *and* trained anthropologist,

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Okot had highlighted the social contexts of the texts presented in the collections; as poet, he had a great sense for the qualities of textual reference and wordplay involved.

His collection of songs, *Horn of My Love* (1974), was dedicated to the “revolution” of African literature, started by Ngugi, Taban lo Liyong, and Owour Anyumba at the University of Nairobi, when they successfully pressed for the transformation of the English Department into the Department of Literature, with a “central core” of African literature (ibid.: x). He characterises children’s games (and the songs involved) as valuable indigenous form of education, stimulating creativity in a number of socially relevant fields. In regard to the Acholi “love dance” (*orak*), Okot corrects Evans-Pritchard’s suggestion that words shouted out to the accompaniment of the dance would not matter; they do, as they are addressed to a social group which has the insider knowledge to understand them:

The poet is the agent of his society. He has the talent, which other members of his social group may not possess, of distilling the thoughts, joy, fear, anger and sorrow, not only of the individual but of the group, and presenting these in melodic poems, composed with the rhythm of the *orak* dance at the back of the poet’s mind (ibid.: 9).

Also in regard to Acholi dirges, he corrects European misinterpretations of the burial customs which had not brought in the necessary contextual knowledge (ibid.: 144-145). Okot draws particular attention to the way that songs (in combination with dances) act as “mnemonics that the Acholi employ as they dance their history” (172). He agrees with D.E. Ongo who “has rightly described the songs of the Acoli people as ‘*buk pa kwaariwa*’, ‘The books of our ancestors’” (156). Songs are explained and presented that give accounts of battles, migrations, droughts, etc. in Acoli history, including exact dates of many occasions; they are ordered according to various sub-groups and their particular histories (156ff).

In *Acholi Proverbs* (1985, posthumously), a small booklet of thirty-eight pages, p’Bitek presents a selection of proverbs which is organised

into three thematic categories: “authority”, “cooperation”, and “personal qualities, advice, and words of wisdom”. After quoting the proverbs (listed alphabetically) and providing their (literal) English translation, Okot provides short explanatory commentaries, and sometimes also comparisons, particularly from other East African peoples, but also from Europe, and from texts of the bible. However, there is no general introduction sketching out an overall framework for the contextual interpretation of Acholi proverbs, as would have been desirable.

Finally, his collection of Acholi folktales, *Hare and Hornbill* (1978), begins with a very brief introduction, called the “Sources of African stories”, which highlights the problematic way in which African folktales have so far been collected and documented by European missionaries and scholars. As their knowledge of language was very bad or non-existent, they had no immediate access to the recognised story-tellers, they were reliant on school boys and servants, often with very bad English, and they could not catch any grasp of how the stories were integral parts of social life. This led to a number of distortions in the (altogether worthwhile) project of documentation. For instance, the collection of standard, unalterable texts of narratives which these European collectors pursued, paid no attention at all to the contextual instances of spontaneous reference and composition, and the frequent changes in each performance of folktales in the unique composition of their narrative elements. Okot also provides evidence that some of the stories in European collections of “African tales” had actually found their way into these through the local school books provided by the British colonial administration, as the informants, themselves often schoolboys, had internalised these stories as their own.

What this conscious interdisciplinary concern of Okot p’Bitek for literature in the social and cultural dynamics of everyday life shows, in my eyes, is that our awareness as researchers of critical reflection and intellectual practice necessarily needs to follow the complex interrelations of various sub-aspects (such as language, religion, dance, philosophy, and poetry) that create such social and cultural experiences in the region that we study. We need to combine disciplinary outlooks and methods in

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order to make sense of what we observe; a mono-disciplinary approach to such phenomena would render our attempts more or less meaningless. Our mode of understanding needs to adapt to what we find. In terms of research on philosophical practice in African cultures, then, we need to adapt an anthropological outlook. This is by no means meant in an ethnophilosophical sense, but rather in terms of an emphasis on fieldwork, i.e. the empirical observation of how specific critical individuals in certain African societies actually compose and express their thought, in which medium, which genre, and to what audience. The study of history, language, literature, and the culturally specific types of performance have to be brought in as well, as they provide indispensable information for a whole picture on intellectual practice to be put together. Thus a holistic approach to the study of philosophising in African contexts (as well as elsewhere) has to be grounded in empirical observation and textual study, informed about language and other culturally specific forms of performative expression, and based, of course, on a sound philosophical framework. It might have been something like this that Okot, the trained anthropologist, had in mind, when in his critical review of Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* he wrote:

The role of the student of traditional African philosophy, it seems to me, is, as it were, to photograph as much of and in as great detail as possible, the traditional way of life, and then to make comments: pointing out the connexions and relevances of the different parts. In this way, the belief of a people whether in one God or in a hierarchy of forces or in a number of spirits or in magic and witchcraft will emerge. (Okot p'Bitek 1963: 16)

We might want to add, with soft emphasis, after the vicious debate on "ethnophilosophy" and its simplistic generalisations about "collective" philosophies of African peoples, that the integration of sage philosophy methodology, i.e. philosophy-oriented fieldwork on individual thinkers in their social contexts (cf. Oruka 1990/1991), could and should be an important complementary element. In fact, something of an imagined

combination between Okot's brilliant anthropological study *Religion of the Central Luo* (1971), which thoroughly criticizes and disproves the errors of previous (European) scholarship and sets up the adequate conceptual framework for the understanding of the respective culture from within, and H. Odera Oruka's *Sage Philosophy* (1990/1991) might do the trick in sketching out a viable path for the study of African philosophical practice in social context. Such an approach, I take it, would still be able to consider and integrate the major concerns raised with Wiredu at the beginning.

## **Reconstructive Self-evaluation II – Literature and the Task of Criticism**

But we should not forget that for p'Bitek descriptive documentation was never the *only* agenda, no matter how insistent he was about thorough work and the use of feasible methods in such projects. While collecting and documenting the cultural wealth and various literary imageries of the Acholi, as an active and creative poet, Okot also had the obligation, as mentioned above, to provide input into public social discourse, in terms of social comment on whatever was happening. Taking this seriously implied the formation of a well-reasoned personal judgment which could then be presented in society, and discussed, for matters of orientation. This leads us to the connection between literature and politics, on a local, regional and wider level, nationally and beyond. It can be seen that Okot did not make things easy for himself, as he kept on standing up for high moral standards even while around him such standards were disintegrating, as Uganda headed into its decades of civil war. In many ways the dream of Uhuru evaporated, as arbitrary military rulership and personality-cults became the new trade-marks of the emerging African "postcolony" (cf. Mbembe 1992; 2001). As we will see, Okot not only registered what was going on, but also stated it in his poetry and his essays, and spoke out against it (e.g. Okot p'Bitek 1971b, 1986).

In a lecture called "Indigenous Social Ills" (first given in Zambia in 1967), he dismissed the popular assumption that most social ills

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encountered in the newly established postcolonial states were rooted in and caused by colonialism:

I believe that most of our social ills are indigenous, that the primary sources of our problems are native. They are rooted in the social set-up, and the most effective solutions cannot be imported, but must be the result of deliberate re-organisation of the resources available for tackling specific issues (1973: 7).

Then he went on to cast a spotlight on the autocratic character of postcolonial rulership, their misuse of power, and their oppression of the masses. This was probably the least diplomatic and most blunt political statement Okot made – shockingly blunt, even, or especially from today’s perspective:

The most striking and frightening characteristic of independent African governments is this: that, without exception, all of them are dictatorships and practice ruthless discrimination such as makes South African apartheid look tame.

This he followed immediately with a witty and critical reformulation of African socialism: “African socialism may be defined as government of the people by the educated for the educated” (ibid.).<sup>4</sup>

This might wrongly give the impression of a total rejection of all postcolonial African political decision-making by Okot, but this was not so. In fact, he strongly and actively advocated the implementation of African cultural values as dominant to others in everyday politics, within his own working sphere at the Uganda National Theatre as well as elsewhere. But this could be reasoned for and explained. What Okot seemed to –almost allergically – protest against, were arbitrary exertions of power, subjecting normal citizens to unreasonable fear and suffering, to the personal benefit of only a few perpetrators. The despair resulting from such kind of experience is adequately depicted in Okot’s emblematic *Song of Prisoner*, dedicated to Patrice Lumumba, to whose story many passages make indirect reference; but this poem also captures the

*Kai Kresse*

hopelessness of the good and simple citizen who is imprisoned, punished, and threatened with death for no sensible reason. He sings, in despair:

I plead fear,  
I plead helplessness,  
I plead hopelessness.  
I am an insect  
Trapped between the toes  
Of a bull elephant,  
I am an earthworm  
I grovel in the mud,  
I am the wet dung  
Of a chicken  
On the floor!  
(1971b: 33/34)

I plead sickness  
I am an orphan  
I am diseased with  
All the giant  
Diseases of society,  
Crippled by the cancer  
Of Uhuru  
Far worse than  
The yaws of  
Colonialism.  
The walls of hopelessness  
Surround me completely,  
There are no windows  
To let in the air  
Of hope!  
(ibid.: 50)

In this atmosphere of utter hopelessness, later on the prisoner cries out

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that “the sharks of Uhuru/ devour their own children” (62) in their bloody family battles for power. And in the final passages of the song, a final vision of the Acholi love-dance, Okot’s leitmotif of rhythm, sexual energy, and love of life, resurfaces as memory and future goal at the same time, as the prisoner imagines to transcend the walls of his prison through the powerful force of the dance. But as this turns out to be impossible, the prisoner’s song comes to an end, characterizing his own existence as just another branch that was broken, by *Uhuru*, i.e. Independence - the Swahili word for freedom:

Open the door,  
Man,  
I want to dance  
All the dances of the world,  
I want to sleep with  
all the young dancers.  
I want to dance  
And forget my smallness,  
Let me dance and forget  
For a small while  
That I am a wretch,  
The reject of my Country,  
A broken branch of a tree  
Torn down by the whirlwind  
Of Uhuru.  
(end; *ibid.*: 117/118)

While conveying a sense of the emotive power of Okot’s writing to us, and underline, with a literary example, Okot’s claim that “feeling, not knowledge, is the central aim of any expressive activity” (1973: 22-3; cf. also Heron 1976: 1), these passages also show us vividly that poetry can very well be part of a critical social discourse which reflects upon the basis of society. This is important, especially from a philosophical side



interested in the documentation of philosophical discourse. And philosophy, after all, consists of and is produced by our critical reflection on the basics of our thinking, knowing, and doing. Thus, to make this very clear: poetry and poetical discourse, for once, should be looked at and taken seriously by academic philosophers working on the documentation of histories and cultural traditions of philosophical thought in Africa. Whether modern, postcolonial writings borrowing from Western styles and using European languages, or historical indigenous African genres of oral poetry in African languages, their critical statements and social reflections should be integrated into any survey of African philosophical discourse. If we really seek an overview over a) the ways the world is thought and reflected upon in various African regions by a multiplicity of thinkers in different genres, and b) specific philosophical texts, the multiplicity of interdisciplinary factors mentioned above, has to be taken into recognition.

Okot, for once, has shown that he is adept on all the levels touched so far. Though he is not a trained academic philosopher himself, he must be reckoned with as an extremely versatile and original thinker, who, amongst other creative qualities, is of philosophical relevance. This applies to him in a double sense, namely, as the producer of original ideas and reflections on life in the contemporary world, but also in a methodological sense, as a critical assistant for the project of documenting philosophical discourse, and as a collector who has made a range of worthwhile material accessible to us as an English-reading public. While he can, and should be investigated further, as a philosopher of the East African region, we should also follow his admonition to develop consciously a contextualised understanding of what we hear or read as texts, and of what we see as cultural performances – so as to continue working on an ever growing, ever widening picture of the world and its meanings.

Okot p'Bitek, as much as any African thinker, seems to stand for what Wiredu has characterised as an urgent project of synthesis for current, postcolonial philosophy, the “project of synthesizing insights from our own traditional culture with insights from the modern world” (cf. Kresse

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1997: 38). This again is part of the positive, reconstructive task within the wider goal of conceptual decolonisation. Okot's personal features and theoretical insights as philosophical thinker could not be thematised much here. But we should note that shortly before his death, Okot himself had engaged more explicitly with philosophical ideas and topics. This is visible in his last collection of essays, which he finalised before his untimely death (Okot p'Bitek 1986), and has also been attested by his former colleagues at the University of Nairobi. "It is a pity that Okot passed away in 1982 when he was moving into personal and original philosophizing", said Taban lo Liyong (2001: xii), and H. Odera Oruka expressed the same regret to me once, in Nairobi. While this regret can only be shared, so can the thoughts that Okot p'Bitek left for us, as they still seem to make sense for the kind of synthesis that Kwasi Wiredu has aspired for African philosophy today.

### **Notes and References**

- 1 Both attended the 2nd Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference on "Philosophy and Cultures", from 30th October to 3rd November 1981 in Nairobi, organized and hosted by the Philosophical Association of Kenya and the Department of Philosophy of the University of Nairobi. The proceedings were edited and published by H. Odera Oruka and D.A. Masolo (1983).
- 2 Cf. Taban lo Liyong (2001: xiv).
- 3 For a similar two-track option for a multilingual perspective in African philosophy, see Kresse (1999).
- 4 This cannot be the place to delve further into Okot's criticisms of African socialism, but these may merit some further investigation.

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