

The reconstruction of african history



This context will analyze the contribution of historian B. A Ogot in the reconstruction of the African History. It will explore Kenya as one of the African nations and/ or countries where the work of B. A Ogot has contributed a lot in historical reconstruction. His significance in history can be accredited to the fact that his life was surrounded by the major events with specific reference to the independence period among other events that has built the history of this nation. In order to understand his contributions to the study topic, both his past and current dispositions will be analyzed by reviewing his literature that he has produced over the years. Following this, this study will also highlight various historical processes from the pre-colonial time to colonial administration in Kenya based on the Mau Mau organization, composition and its impacts.

His reconstruction of Africans History

The work of B. A Ogot presents various aspects of both pre-colonial history and colonial era in Africa. According to the researches conducted based on his contribution into the African history with reference to Atieno (2002) in *The challenges of History and leadership in Africa*, his main role was to offer defense for humanity, durability, historicity, complexity and wealth of African societies together with their culture. He offered criticism on studies based on African institutions and customary practices that were said to have failed in offering any defense to African history through adherence to African ideas of the universe, destiny and its existence. He examines the main aspects of Nilotic societies and cultures based on the concept of Jok[1]. This term is found in different forms of Nilotic languages whose meaning is God, spirit, Ghost among others.

Ogot had immense interest in the institutional practices and the history of African thought for instance religion which was captured in his three essays he wrote. “ On making of a sanctuary” is the essay that examines padhola religion that has been said to be contented in Jok concept and cannot be understood beside Nilotic culture. Ogot trace changes imposed in Padhola religion by the migration of Nilotes to the south, establishment of Bura shrine as a worshipping place, other denominational rivals and the infiltration of strangers among padhola in nineteenth century. Ogot embarked on effects of European religiosity on the lives of the Luo people, which led to religious contradictions in Nyanza. According to Ogot, there exists a complex process of converting first African Christians based on their motivations, training, sacrifices and evangelical activities among others. He presented how the first African Christians faced troubles from the European missionaries, African chiefs and the colonial government.

The religious struggle led to the establishment of Anglican Church in which Mango broke and founded his own church “ the holy ghost church”. Both religious contradictions and conflicts resulted to the murder of Mango in 1934 during an attack that sprouted on the village he belongs. The essay “ A community of their own” Ogot looked at both the rise and effects of the Maria legion of African church that resulted from a reformation of Roman Catholic Church in Nyanza. Ogot is argued to have been normalizing African initiatives, cultural systems, choices, activities and adaptations through analyzing religious based on their terms. He also showed how religion resisted toward the colonial rule in Africa. The emergence of the Nomiya Luo church and Church of Christian Africans offer a better indicator of resistance

to colonial rule and/ or power. In his essay on “ Kingship and statelessness Among the Nilotes,” he challenged the racist hypothesis that holds that, there exists a correlation between degree of political evolution and the people’s hamitic blood. Based on this hypothesis, he suggested that the establishment of both Shilluk and Bunyoro kingdoms was based on factors such as political, economic and military. In his work, Ogot identified segmentary states that were observed to be less advanced as compared to the Bunyoro Kingdom.

Examples of these segmentary states include the Ruothships that belongs to Luo and Acholi and the stateless societies of the Dinka and Nuer. The work of Ogot showed that the process of state formation comprises different groups of people and other historical contexts. Ogot produced many essays that enable one to trace his contribution to the reconstruction of the African history from Kenyans independence to date[2]. There was only one essay that concentrated on the colonial state alone while others lay emphasis on the anti-colonial resistance: For instance, the Mau Mau movement that was Kenya’s liberation movement during the colonial period or era. Ogot highlighted the colonial rule and its contradiction nature in Kenya and Africa as a whole. His work presented the view that the colonial state and/ or the conquest were observed to be both authoritarian and weak as it lacked legitimacy. Another contribution of Ogot is that through his work, he describes how illiterate and incompetent officials in Africa struggled to cope with colonial version of administration, the missionary’s roles, impacts of both the first and Second World War, religious movements and the reformist political associations that resulted from the educated elite.

Through the work of Ogot, it is clear that a connection exists between local and national manifestations of what was referred to as nationalism. Ogot explains why the nationalist party KAU failed to establish itself in Nyanza. He argued that Kikuyu leadership in KAU was the major cause of its failure in Nyanza since they only focused on land grievances in Kikuyu, which had little connection with Nyanza. According to Ogot, Mau Mau movement had historical significance since it was based on Kenya's decolonization. The goals of this movement were to make Kenya a nation in other words, to nationalize Kenya but we cannot call this movement a national movement since it was confined to one part of Kenya that is the Central Kenya. In addition, B. A. Ogot focuses on both the ideology and social composition of Mau Mau and its origin in the context of African imagination and colonial era. [3] His writing focused on the people especially those who supported the movement and who opposed it among the Kikuyu community. He indicated that the class and ideological divisions among Kikuyu people mainly implicated the variations between the loyalist and fighters. These variations were based on access to land, affinities to Christianity and traditional culture, attitudes based on constitutionalism among others. He further showed that the differentiation of memories, age, political ecologies in terms of location and dreams about the future accounts for variations. It has been argued that, songs played a major role in people's culture because people use songs to express their visions, problems, social values and appropriate possibilities. It was therefore through songs that the Mau Mau movement came into practice in Kenya as people expressed their demand for decolonization after a long period of suffering from the colonial states.

Through songs, people were able to mobilize each other therefore reinforcing their strength and spirits of other supporters. According to him, the use of songs implicated that the Mau Mau movement was anti-colonial movement fighting for the decolonization of Kenya. These songs were sang in kikuyu language, symbols, history and legends and this explains why they were said to limit their accessibility and their national appeal. Another contribution of B. A Ogot in the reconstruction of African history is showed on his analyses of “ The birth of national language’. During colonial era most of Africans in Kenya lacked national language since the European language used by the elite lacked nationality in it The researches conducted by B. A Ogot on national language showed that kikuyu was first made a national language because the origin of Mau Mau movement took its roots in Central Kenya[4]. The elites borrowed their language from the European and/ or colonial state but were few to make the language a national one. Mau Mau left behind legacy in Kenya based on the inherent biases and propaganda that it’s still in practiced in Kenya of today. He analyses how different and important figures of Mau Mau movement were arrested and detained with unintended outcomes.

Ogot has addressed several critical issues that faced African societies from the colonial period to independence. He examined Africa in terms of politics, leadership, culture, development, identities, and functions of universities and impacts of globalisation on Africa. Through his work, Ogot urge writers to investigate more into the social realities that resulted to the current forms of leaders and treat Africans as evil.[5]The corruption presented by the modern African elite began during the colonial period with writers’ such as Elspeth

Huxley who was said to have had distrusted the over educated African elite. It was argued that most of African nationalist used political slogans of the western during their struggle against the colonial states. In conclusion, the African history is a complex process of historical events that occurred from colonial era to date. The study highlights that the struggle for African history began with the view of Ogot's generations and continues to the current generation meaning that as we come up with new topics, theories and methodologies we must adhere to the mission that Inspired Ogot't generation.