



UNIVERSITY OF KABIANGA

Citation on

BETHWELL ALLAN OGOT

On his conferment of

The Degree

Doctor of Letters, *Honoris Causa*

of

University of Kabianga

On

November 14th, 2014

PROFESSOR BETHWELL ALLAN OGOT, Ph.D., EBS

Preamble:

In conferring this Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) degree to Bethwell Allan Ogot, University of Kabianga is cognizant of the fact that the wisest and noblest of men are not only a product of the curriculum of the University but also the curriculum of life. It is against this background that University of Kabianga admits in its ranks an intellectual of international repute, an educator *per excellence*, a historiographer, an author, a philanthropist, a mentor and a distinguished public servant.

Early Life and Education:

Bethwell Allan Ogot was born in August 3rd 1929 in Gem, Central Nyanza, in present day Siaya County. He was born to a church teacher and chief, Paulo Opiche who was actively involved in the establishment of schools and churches in Gem.

His humble beginnings were at both Luanda and Ambira Primary Schools. He then proceeded to Maseno Secondary School, Makerere University College, St. Andrews University, Scotland and later at the prestigious School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His academic progression is a living testimony to the fact that determination and self-sacrifice enables one to succeed in even the most unlikely of circumstances.

In all these institutions, his excellence in academics was evident. He was the best student in the country in both the Kenya African Primary Examination of 1945 and the Kenya African Secondary School Examination of 1947. While studying at the University of East Africa, Makerere, he won the Arts Research Prize in 1950, the Archer-Sturroch Prize in 1951 and the Madhvani Prize for best performance in the Faculty of Education in 1953. At the St. Andrews University in Scotland he was awarded the much coveted Sir Henry Jones Memorial Prize in Philosophy in the year 1957.

In 1959 he married Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot – a prolific writer and an accomplished politician in her own right. Bethwell and Grace Ogot are blessed with children and grand-children.

Scholarship and Leadership:

The writings, awards and positions of Bethwell Ogot best illustrate the impeccable record of his experience and the strength of his leadership. He has published over thirty books in addition to numerous articles in journals and chapters in books. In 1991, he was consultant for the BBC 24 radio programmes entitled *The Story of Africa*, which covered the period from the dawn of man to the triumph of apartheid, from an African perspective. He was also a member of the Advisory Editorial Board for the three-volume *Encyclopedia of African History*. Additionally, he served as an Editorial Board Member of several international journals such as *Journal of African History*, *Journal of African Studies* and *Transafrican Journal of History*. His academic classical works include *A Place to Feel at Home* with F.B. Welbourn (1966), *History of the Southern Luo* (1967), *Zamani: A Survey of East African History* with J.A. Kieran (1968), to name but a few remain priceless works that continue to stand the test of time. In these works, Bethwell Ogot's contribution in reshaping the history of the African as seen through the African lenses is remarkable. The dignity which the African is accorded in these works cannot be overemphasized.

Bethwell Ogot's presence in the international scene has been, by any means, very remarkable and inspiring. An example is his association with UNESCO which spans over four decades dating back to the first General Conference of UNESCO he attended in Paris in October 1964. In 1987, he was elected to the Executive Board of UNESCO and between 1989-1991, he was Vice-President of the Board. The recognition of his contribution to UNESCO came in 1991 when he was elected President of the General Conference for a period of two years. This is the highest policy-making body in UNESCO, and the presidency represents the highest political post in the Organization. Perhaps most noteworthy among his numerous achievements was his work as President of the International Scientific Committee for the preparation of the UNESCO 8 - volume *General History of Africa* and Editor of the fifth volume. He was also a member of the International Commission for the preparation of a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind which was charged by UNESCO with the responsibility of producing a 7 - volume *History of Humanity*.

Bethwell Allan Ogot's passion for excellence in leadership is outstanding. The numerous pioneer positions he has held are testimony of this - from Alliance High School as a teacher to Makerere as a tutor and lecturer; Professor of History at Kenyatta University to Head of Department of History, University of Nairobi; Founding Director (Institute of Development Studies; Institute of African Studies, Nairobi University; International Louis Leakey Memorial Institute for African Pre-History; National Museums of Kenya; Institute of Post-Graduate Research - Maseno University). He also served as Dean (School of Arts and Social Sciences) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) at the University of Nairobi. It is against this wealth of experience that Maseno University, long after his retirement, holds his company as *Professor Emeritus*.

Bethwell Ogot's strong academic leadership is not cast in the proverbial 'ivory tower' as was once famed of African universities. His vibrant leadership qualities were recognized and saw him appointed for civic duties as a member of the East African Legislative Assembly between 1975 and 1977. He later served as Chairman of the Kenya Post and Telecommunications, the Kenya Railways as well as the National Oil Corporation.

Honours and Awards:

Bethwell Ogot has received many honours and awards both locally and internationally. He was a Rockefeller Research Fellow (1960-64), and the British Academy awarded him the Nuffield Research Fellowship (1962-64). He was appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association of Ghana for his contribution to African History in 1972; Honorary Fellow of the British Institute in Eastern Africa, for his contribution to the study of history and archeology in 1969; included in the International's "Who's Who of Intellectuals" (UK) in recognition of distinguished achievements in 1976; included in the International Scholars Directory (France) in 1973; awarded UNESCO Gold Medal for sterling services to the Organization – the highest award of the Organization – in 1993; awarded UNESCO's Averroes Medal for Intellectual contribution for the study of African history and culture in 1999; received Distinguished Africanist Award from the African Studies Association of USA and Canada in November, 2001.

On March 19th, 2007, the European Business Assembly at Oxford, which brings together European University Rectors and Vice-Chancellors, Business, Industrial, Diplomatic, Civic and Religious Leaders, conferred on Ogot the prestigious International Socrates Award for personal

contribution to the intellectual development of modern society. Consequently, his name was entered in the International Register of the Outstanding Personalities of the Modern World. In 2008, the African Studies Association (ASA) of America inaugurated the **ASA OGOT AWARD** for the best book on East African Studies.

At home, Ogot became a Fellow of the Kenya National Academy of Science in 1983 and was for five years its Editor in Chief (1987-1992). He was made an Elder of the Burning Spear (EBS) in December 1986; awarded Hon. D.Litt. of Kenyatta University in 1995; awarded Distinguished Service Medal for long service in the field of Education, by the Kenya Teacher Service Commission in 2002. In May 2003, Ogot was appointed Chancellor of Moi University and awarded Hon. D.Litt. of the University.

Contribution to University Education:

The dialectics of these leadership qualities in both the academic and public positions have immensely benefitted humanity and more so with Bethwell Ogot's appointment as Chancellor, Moi University in 2003. In a nation that is experiencing a robust thirst for university education, he has been at the forefront in ensuring access, equity and relevance. Thanks to his visionary leadership as the Chancellor of Moi University, Bethwell Ogot literally and figuratively opened up the Western region of the republic as well as other underserved regions in accessing quality university education. His tenure in the years 2003-2013 witnessed the establishment of University Colleges and Campuses in areas that are not so urban and cosmopolitan such as Odera Akang'o Campus, Garissa and Rongo University Colleges. Some of these University Colleges have blossomed into fully fledged universities namely Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Maasai Mara University, University of Eldoret, Karatina University, as well as our very own, University of Kabianga. This gesture best illustrates his unwavering devotion to equal opportunity, the provision of quality education and fairness to all.

Community Service:

Other than being a distinguished academic, scholar and educator, Bethwell Ogot is a philanthropist whose gestures to society are worth emulating. Among his many contributions to society include the establishment and development of Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology (RIAT); the founding of Gor Mahia Football Club as well as chairing and membership in various School Boards. His philanthropic heart is best exemplified by recently donating land and buildings valued at Ksh. 50 million as well as books valued at Ksh. 24 million towards the Odera Akang'o Campus of Moi University. These philanthropic gestures lay bare for us a man who has lived the ideal of giving back to society.

University of Kabianga Citation:

It is for these reasons that upon the recommendation of Senate and the authority of Council, University of Kabianga hereby confers upon

BETHWELL ALLAN OGOT

**The Degree of
DOCTOR OF LETTERS IN LITERATURE
(D. Litt) (HONORIS CAUSA)**