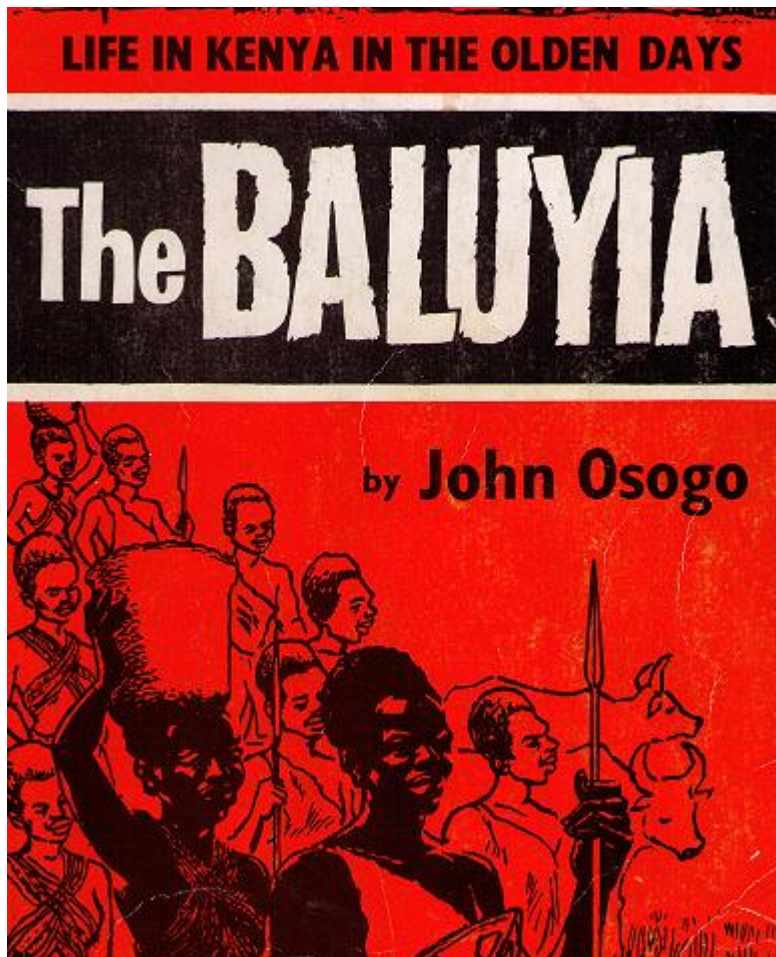


JOHN N. BWIRE OSOGO (1927–1979)



Mr John N. B. Osogo was born on 1 January 1927 at Port Victoria, Bukhani Village, Busia District in western Kenya. He was the eldest son of Teofano and Margaret Osogo. His was a close-knit family. It is reported that he went to great lengths to obtain an education, often walking for miles to get to boarding school. He also completed his primary education in record time, sometimes doing two years' work in one year. Mr Osogo was a teacher in various primary and secondary schools, and worked as a tutor in a teacher training college before moving to the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), a body that was entrusted with teacher education at that time and which section was later brought to the Ministry of Education. His pursuit for education eventually led him into receiving scholarships to attend universities in Kenya, Uganda, the UK and the USA. Little did he know that the high point of his thirst for knowledge - a doctorate degree - would be awarded to him posthumously, one week after his de

Mr John Bwire Osogo died on 9th December 1979. Previous to that, he had worked for many years as Senior Primary Education Officer in the Ministry of Education, rising to the position of the Head of Primary and Special Education, and then Chief Inspector of Schools (Basic Education) at the time of his death. President Daniel arap Moi had appointed him to that post barely 2 weeks earlier.

Mr Osogo was well known for his books on the history of Kenya and eastern Africa. The titles include 'Life in Kenya in the Olden Days', 'Traditional History of Kenya', 'Looking at East Africa in the 19th Century', and 'Eastern African Nations'.

'A History of the Abaluhya' and 'Nabongo Mumia' are titles exclusively on the Abaluhya of western Kenya. The historical evidence recorded in these books has contributed enormously to the knowledge on the Abaluhya, and notably on the governance system of the Mumias tribal grouping.

His publication record also includes history books written for Kenyan primary schools some of which were coauthored with Dr Atieno Odhiambo, but which had to be completed by Dr Odhiambo. He also prepared filmstrips for schools and the University entitled "East African History Filmstrips". It is notable that a recent article in the Kenyan media has urged readers to buy and read his books.

Mr Osogo loved not only history but also the customs and culture of his people, and spent his time collecting articles of cultural value to the Abaluhya as well as promoting the song and dance of his tribal grouping. The folklore of his people in the book entitled 'The Bride Who Wanted a Special Present and Other Stories' comprises tales that were told to children by the older generation in the evenings as a form of entertainment. Each story has a moral lesson to be learned and which helped to mould young minds. That he made a record of some of these for posterity is admirable as such story-telling sessions are almost unheard of due to cultural change and related factors.

A year before his death, Professor Calestous Juma had interviewed him for the *Daily Nation* newspaper and described him as "one of Kenya's most outstanding historians and patriotic educationists", a view that was held by many people. Other accolades have come from the Kenyan government, which has named an estate road in Nairobi in his honor. A local secondary and primary school in his home village also bear his name.

*Record updated: 03 March 2008*