

## **DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE CELEBRATES UGANDAN POET OKOT P' BITEK WITH A COLLOQUIUM**

The late Okot p'Bitek died on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1982. He had served as a research professor at the University of Nairobi in Kenya in the seventies and early eighties. He is best remembered as the greatest poet of the post-independence era in East Africa. His magnum opus was published in Kenya in 1966 by Kenya Literature Bureau under the aegis of the then editor, Prof. Emeritus Bethwell Allan Ogot. It is called *SONG OF LAWINO*. The book is a major cultural text and literary masterpiece taught in departments of literature across Africa and the globe, including in Kenyatta University where it is a seminal reader in **ALT 201: East African Poetry and Drama**.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2016, the Literature Department organized and hosted a half a day memorial colloquium in honour of the poet and to celebrate the Jubilee anniversary of ***SONG OF LAWINO (1966)***, which attained **50 years of existence since its publication**. The event brought together postgraduate students and members of the academic staff. The undergraduate class of December IBP session taking ALT 201 under Dr. Macharia Mwangi prepared an oral performance from a Gikuyu rendition of the book. The event was graced by scholars such as Prof. Monica Mweseli of University of Nairobi, Dr. Danson Kahyana of Makerere University and Dr. Fred Mbogo of Moi University. The Associate Dean, Prof. Catherine Ndungo, the Director, Institute of African Studies, Dr. Leonard Chacha, Dr. Richard Wafula, Chairman, Kiswahili Department also attended the event, which was opened by Prof. Vincent Onywera, the Registrar, Research, Innovation and Outreach (RIO).

Prof. Charles Nelson Okumu, the Dean of Faculty of Arts, Gulu University, Uganda delivered a keynote paper. He is currently finalizing a major research that will culminate into an official biography of the late Ugandan poet and academic, Okot p'Bitek. The event was convened by the Seminars Committee of Literature Department, under the aegis of its chairman, Dr. J. K. S. Makokha. Below are some of the memorial photos from the event: