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Colonialism of Mind: Deterrent of Social Transformation

——The Experiences of Oromo People in Ethiopia

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An educational system and its curricula are shaped by the culture and epistemology in which it is embedded. It is influenced by the societal knowledge, but it also instrumental in shaping the knowledge of the society. Culture influences learning style. Based on cultural diversities and social needs, different societies have distinct curricula. As such, Oromo students ought to be taught now to interrogate the colonial epistemology and ideology as well schooled in the ways of dismantling the hegemony. However, in many cases, they are simply taught to reproduce the knowledge, culture, power structure, thinking and the worldview of colonizers. This means that education, which is supposed to be about critical inquiry and social transformation has been used to indoctrinate or brainwash some students. Such colonial educational curricula have invalidated the knowledge of indigenous Oromo people and compromised their needs. This type of education system, instead of empowering the students and their society, has incapacitated them. For the Oromo people, such curricula have distorted their history, image, identity, and damaged their social fabric. In this paper I argue that, colonial knowledge and education system is not in a position to bring about social transformation among Oromo people; on the contrary it disrupts their peace (nagaa), health (fayya) and (tasgabii) social order.

Keywords: Colonial education, Colonial Knowledge, Empowering Education, Disempowering Education and Indoctrination

Introduction

Theories and practices are intertwined. Theory guides practice, and in turn, practice informs theory. The connections between theories and practices suggest the colonial knowledge influenced(s) the colonial agenda and practice. This suggests that the colonial education is geared in solving the social, economic, health and environmental problems of the colonizers rather than the need of the colonized peoples. The colonial educational curricula are designed to give pupils skills and attitudes that seem desirable to the colonizers (Altbach, 1995). If the colonial knowledge influences colonial agenda and teaching/learning is facilitating knowledge construction, it is important to ask several key questions. What are the objectives of the Ethiopian education system in Oromia? Is it to empower the Oromo people? Is it to ensure that the Oromo people solve their own social problems? Is it to enhance problem-solving skills of the Oromo people? Is it designed to teach the Oromo students to think intensively and critically? Are the Oromo students trained to solve the social, economic and political problems of the Oromo people or are they indoctrinated to think from the Abyssinian perspectives? If that is so, in what ways do colonial education contribute to the social conditions in which the Oromo people live? Clarifying the intent of colonial education makes it more likely to challenge the colonial education and to redesign empowering education. Education is one of the determinants of health. Hence, the major objective of this paper is to examine the impacts of teaching the colonial theories and practices upon the Oromo people.

According to Webster's English Dictionary (1968), the word "colony" is derived from the Latin word for farmer, cultivator, planter, or settler in a new country. Thus the word colonial has

the sense of 'farm,' 'landed estate,' 'settlement' and was especially the proper term used for the public settlement of Roman citizens in hostile or newly conquered country, while retaining their Roman citizenship, they acquired land, and acted as a garrison, mostly formed of veteran soldiers who had served their time. The term was applied to the place so occupied, or towns that were raised to the same rank and privileges. Following this definition, *decolonizing* might suggest the sending back home of the newly arrived settlers. However, the assumption that colonialism would be over once the colonial masters physically left have not come true in many African countries and colonialism still operates in the daily lives of many Africans. Knowledge is essential in the social transformation, important in maintaining and disrupting the colonial power relations and it is implicated to the socio-economic status of people. Hence, knowledge and education is about power. This makes examining the relationships between knowledge and colonialism a necessity and duty.

In Oromia schools are a direct copy of colonial models. Oromo children are mainly taught in Amharic and English. However, because of the intensification of the Oromo national struggle, the current Ethiopian government has adjusted the policy of using the Oromo language in schools. They are still thought the history, geography, and the values of their colonizers rather than their own. If they are thought any thing about the Oromo people they are instructed to look down their ancestral culture. Many Oromos are realizing that education is part of the Ethiopian colonial system. Education that ought to be about choice, judgment and social transformation actually turns out to be about reproducing the old colonial hierarchical system.

Euro-Ethiopian curricula in Oromian schools totally ignore the past experiences and formal and informal teachings of in-

digenous Oromo people. As a result, students depend on Western information instead of searching out and developing their own (local) knowledge. Knowledge is power (Foucault, 1972) and it can be used to maintain the colonial power relations or to empower the people. It can be used solve the social problems that are relevant to the dominant groups and leave issues that are relevant to the marginalized groups. In my view unless the Oromos are empowered on their affairs and closely look at the techniques of manipulation that are employed against them through the educational system, they can never reassess and re-evaluate the Euro-Ethiopian curricula, business affairs and diplomatic relations. They need to filter colonial educational ideas and identify what is relevant, and what is less relevant and what is totally irrelevant before adopting any of the curricula of colonizers.

In this paper, after a brief introduction, I critically examine the essence of the Euro-Ethiopian educational curricula in Oromia. I argue that taboos against questioning these curricula undermine the very nature of Oromo indigenous knowledge and identity. Finally, I suggest a way out of the one-sided constructions of neo-colonial education. In part two, I will go in details and bring into light specific examples and show the ways the formal and informal Ethiopian school system works to silence the voice of Oromo people. Then, I will highlight the impacts of such schooling.

Who am I to Write about Colonialism of Mind?

I am not coming to the discussion of the colonial nature of education from a disinterested or politically neutral position. The reasons that drive my interest to this topic are my personal experience in the Ethiopian school system. First, I was born in a family of indigenous Oromo religion followers "Waqefaata". While I pursuing education, I was exposed to two antagonistic discourses: the colonial and the anti-colonial. Formal schooling was practiced with colonial discourses. The purpose of such education was to brainwash (indoctrinate) Oromo students in order to disrupt family and community relations, undermine ancestral heritage and knowledge and distort their identities. On the other hand, informal Oromo teaching was founded upon discourses of de-colonialism intended to maintain and, if necessary, to regain the Oromo identity and ways of knowing. These two antagonistic discourses made my ears, heart, mind and of all my soul a battlefield. Because of these conditions for many Oromos the Ethiopian school system is perceived to be a colonial tool used to assimilate Oromo students.

The colonial education attacks the Oromo worldviews and attempts to dismantle it. In the colonial education, I learned that the Oromo theology is superstitious, whereas the Euro-Ethiopian-Arab ones are valid and superior. *Waaqa Guracha* (Black God) that represents holiness and purity in Indigenous Oromo religion was categorized as the subject of paganism and superstitions in the colonial education. In the colonial education I learned that the Oromo language that my people have been using for centuries and functioned as *lingua francia* in the Horn of Africa was categorized "backward". To borrow Fanon's (1963) words the Oromo culture and worldviews are "disfigured".

Secondly, as a young Oromo student I was caught in a struggle between the informal education of the Oromo people and the formal colonial education. I regularly witnessed human rights violations and observed that Oromo children and family were powerless to change their social, economic and health conditions.

Third, in my elementary school years and for half of my junior secondary school, colonial discourses somewhat absorbed me. I started to discord the validity of Oromo knowledge. It is evident to me that education is one of the tools that can be used to conquer, indoctrinate and silence. It is self-evident to me that education can be used as a colonial tool. During the other half of junior high school and for high school, I was a different person. Again, it is equally evident to me that education could be a tool that could empower and liberate children and societies by dignifying and empowering them. I belong to a generation of Oromo students who in the protest against the Ethiopian language policy collected their own foreign language dictionaries and buried them.

Fourth, although I was able to attend school, many children of my age in my village could not do so. Many of the few children who started school dropped out before they finished elementary school due to a lack of financial support and the discriminatory nature of the language of instruction – the official language being Amharic. The school curricula were designed to absorb and assimilate the Oromo students and encourage them to accept the colonial power relation between the Ethiopians and Oromo people as a natural reality. Obviously, if the Oromos were an independent people and empowered in their affairs they would have made the Oromo language the language of instruction and they would have now higher literacy rates.

Fifth, in the course of my studies in knowledge construction in human rights and public health over the past few years, I have learned how human rights are violated at a systemic level; how and why human rights violations are deliberately and/or haphazardly perpetrated; what forms of human rights violations are internalized by colonized peoples and how they get internalized; and who internalizes or, to use Freire's (2002) term, 'house the oppressor'. I have also become convinced of the importance of education in averting and/or perpetuating human rights violations.

Why I Write about Colonialism of Mind?

An anti-colonialist discourse has long provided the theoretical foundations for my work. I am convinced that colonial education is not in a position to fix the social problems that colonialism has created. To borrow Battiste's (2005:121) words, imperialism or colonialism "can't be the global doctor", in stead it is "the colonial disease". This article is part of my current thinking in education and public health. Thus, I write about colonialism of mind for the following reasons. First, knowledge is a social construct (Berger and Luckman, 1966); (Hacking, 2001) and its validity is based on the socio-cultural, environmental conditions and experience of the group (Mercer, 1995). No knowledge is more valid than the other (Dei, 1999). In addition, as Foucault put it knowledge is a power (During, 1992). Validating the dominant knowledge over the other is legitimizing the colonial or oppressive power relations. Thus, validating one knowledge over the others has material consequences and thus, limits choice in life. This changes the role of education from being empowering (Freire, 1973) and promoting social changes to the tool of indoctrination, which Freire called "baking".

Second, validating the dominant knowledge makes the power relations between the colonized and the colonizers natural phenomena. This in turn makes the social conditions such as poverty and disease, which the colonial power relations created an in evitable and even desirable. In addition, validation of once knowledge over the others creates a false consciousness and present as if one group of people is superior to others. This creates social reasoning for racist ideologies or acts as opposing the anti-racist or anti-colonial education.

Third, at subtitle level, validation of colonial knowledge works as indoctrination. This makes the colonized people to understand their social problems in the views of the colonizers and accept their powerless, helpless, poverty and disease as a given and natural reality. This prevents the colonized people from making any effort to change their social realities.

Colonial Education - Brainwashing Tool

Nothing is more damaging to successful social, political and economic development than this brainwashing or indoctrination. Albert Memmi (1957) argues that European colonizers as "disfigured" even "diseased" and caused disease by their role in colonial society. Curtin and colleagues (1978) label this process "imperialism of the mind". "The European imperialists in Africa justified their presence by a self-imposed task, a civilizing mission…to improve the moral, intellectual, and industrial condition of the country or people. To improve means. To remake in the European mold. The imperialism of the mind was no less than political or economic imperialism."

Through indoctrination the colonial education validates the knowledge and worldviews of the colonizers and irrationalized the experience of the indigenous people. As Shor (1980) described it this type of education "conditions people to police themselves by internalizing the ideas of the ruling elites" Colonial education explains the cause for social problem that the colonized people face as either human nature or the will of super natural power. Such teachings frees individuals and groups from taking responsibility for the ill planned social policies; and simply promote blind faith and blind obedience. This is the phenomenon that I call colonialism of mind.

Critical scholars see that colonial education denies intellectual autonomy to students. In their view indoctrination is purposeful inculcation of beliefs, attitudes, values, ideas, and loyalties in student (Siegel, 1988). As such the colonial education suffocates the voice of the indigenous people and prevents individuals from taking initiatives to shape their history and change things for better. It prevents the students from understand rationally how social, natural environment works. This averts students shaping their social and natural environments.

Brainwashing is defined as a deliberate manipulation of people's minds in an attempt to change and control their opinions (Arnold, 1992). Brainwashing and indoctrination are the techniques of stifling creative capacity to think beyond formula. Such schooling influences people to be back away from non-preferred ways of thinking (Schreiber, 2000). In deed, it is a very destructive practice and may potentially cause irreversible damage to mental vitality. In the context of colonialism, in its many forms, brainwashing is concerned with replacing past historical experiences with new and alien concepts. Brainwashing could result in the impairment of critical judgment,

changes in behaviour, personality disintegration and even adoption of a different set of values and beliefs (Kazdin, 2000). There is much writing about how Hitler, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung dealt with their citizens and prisoners of war. Westerners are aware of the extent to which communists in Russia and China attempted mind control. In fact, such beliefs about the communists fed into polarization during the Cold War; the Cold War generation in the West believed that such activities belonged to "them" - our ideological enemies in the cold war – but not to "us."

Western school children are not introduced to literature that documents how European and American colonizers still continue to brainwash the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is not mentioned that the West was and is doing exactly the same thing to indigenous peoples as they said communists were doing. For example, western aid exploits the willingness of local elites to maneuver and control the masses. Through so-called humanitarian assistance, individuals and institutions of former colonies are rewarded when they think as the colonizers think and behave exactly like them. When individuals and institutions reject these alien influences, they are penalized, laughed at for their "folly" or treated as if their behaviour is an outrage to the moral code.

Historically, the rhetoric of religious missionaries was part of the brainwashing of the people, leading them to abandon their cultures, and turn their face to Western (Vatican, Jerusalem) or Eastern holy places (Mecca and Medina). Explaining the case of Ethiopia, Ruda (1993) put it this way: "Religious syncretism occurred mainly through conquest. By overcoming a people by force of arms and with superior military technology, the conquerors championed a Euro-Ethiopian [or Arab] God providing that the God of the victims was incapable of coming to their help, thus breaking the moral resistance to the new religion that represented an aspect of the colonial structure." The indigenous people practised traditional beliefs for centuries, but they were forced by colonizers to adopt foreign gods once they lost their national sovereignty. As a result of colonialism, some of them converted to Christianity and others to Islam. A foreigner who observed the conversion of these people to Christianity and Islam, Marcel Reyescortez (1994), noticed the dissatisfaction of the Oromo people with foreign gods: "The Boorana [Oromo] have lost their Nagaa, their peace. Many of them feel it is because they have strayed away from the path of their God Waaqa."

Artificial geographical boundaries were drawn at the convenience of Europeans and many African societies found themselves divided among several colonial powers and their educational curricula. Somali is divided among three colonial territories: French, Italian and British Somaliland. As if that were not enough, when the British left the Horn of Africa, they let a part of British Somaliland to be incorporated into Ethiopia (Holcomb & Ibsa, 1990). The Azane people were divided among three colonial territories (Belgian, British, and French).

The Oromo people were divided between Ethiopian and British territories (Jalata, 2005), (Bulcha, 2002), (Holcomb and Ibsa, 1990). The people from the Eastern part of the country adopted Islam, while the Western parts were converted to Protestant church groups (Lutherans, Adventists, Presbyterians and Mennonites). The southern region resisted all colonial worldviews and kept their Indigenous beliefs. Ethiopian colonizers

have encouraged, fostered and used these artificial divisions to their advantage in their agenda of divide and rule. According to Zoga (1993), General Taddessee Birru, an Oromo with an Ethiopian name, challenged these artificial divisions imposed on the Oromo.

For example, General Taddessee Birru brought Oromo elders from different regions and faiths together and encouraged them to return to their pre-colonial customs. He also trained many African guerrilla leaders, including Nelson Mandela (1994, 265). Although the Ethiopian government eventually executed him, he became a martyr for the Oromo and other colonized African peoples.

In each of their colonies, Europeans supported that group of people who endorsed their system. For instance, Belgians in Rwanda and Burundi chose to rule through an ethnic group they believed to be elite and almost aristocratic in a European sense - the Tutsi. They were established as the ruling class over the Hutu majority (Mamdani, 2001). Across the border in Uganda, the British selected the Baganda as the preferred ruling group while clearly marginalizing other ethnic groups (Anthony, 1991). In the Sudan, the British showed a high regard for the Moslems of the North as compared with the indigenous believers of black Africans of the south. Therefore, without the consent of the southern Sudanese people, as the British departed, they facilitated control by the Arabs over unrelated adjacent territories. In Chad, the French initially showed a respect for the Moslem north, allowing them run their daily activities using their traditional system of administration. When they were about to leave Chad, they changed their minds, and favoured the south, as they had already converted a significant portion of southern people to their worldviews. This was also the case in Ethiopia, where Europeans favoured the Abyssinian minority over the Oromo majority (Holcolm and Ibssa, 1990) since their worldview was consistent with that of the Europeans. In the Ethiopian case, the West supplied military hardware and advisors so that the Abyssinians got the upper hand over the other nations in the Ethiopian empire.

The colonial discriminatory social policy that is driven by the claims of racial and religious superiority (Jalata, 2005) favoured one group of people caused power struggles between the groups, leading to violence, war, starvation, disease, and social, political and economic instability in these regions. Civil wars and genocide in Rwanda as well as war and famine in Burundi (Mamdani, 2001), Chad, Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia are the result of colonial practices that blindly mimic European forms of domination.

Obliterating, Fragmenting and Colonizing Oromo Identity

Colonizing through Banning Indigenous Songs, Prayers and Language

Ali Mazrui (1978) has pointed out that dances and songs are central in an oral society. In fact, for the Oromo people, song is the pedagogy by which the young are taught the human qualities necessary for the survival of the society, and the skills by which these virtues underlie the need to serve. For example, Oromo songs are used to praise heroes both in the past and the present, so that the younger generation values bravery and heroism. Through songs, the beauties of nature such as rivers, mountains, valleys and forests are appreciated, so that the younger generation will care and love for nature. Through songs, the beauty and qualities of partners, children and parents are admired in order to foster care and love for loved ones. In addition, songs express good wishes for the community and dissatisfaction with injustice.

These songs, considered backward, were prohibited or discouraged by Islamic and Protestant church groups alike. To counter Oromo teachings, church groups quote from the Bible. They teach, for example, that there is no bravery that can be compared with that of Jesus Christ, who saved the world with his blood, so praise him. They suggest that there is no need to appreciate nature, but only to appreciate the one who made it, so praise him. No need to appreciate your mother and father but only the Father of all human beings. No need to express your wishes to the community, but just wait for the will of God and so praise him. Above all, they advise praising God for all the bad and all the good.

The Ethiopians physically dismantled Galma, a place equivalent to the church or mosque where Waaqa is worshipped, confiscated the property and built their own church on the same site. They intended that the younger Oromo generation would forget about their indigenous religion over time (Biyya, 1996).

Menilik II, the founder of the Ethiopian State (Holcomb and Ibsaa 1990) decided to abandon the indigenous name Abyssinia and adopt "Ethiopia." The word Ethiopia is derived from two Greek words "ethios" (burnt) and "ops" (face) (see, Catholic encyclopaedia). Therefore, Ethiopia means "the land of burned face people" (Dugassa, 2006. The very country's name describes the people in derogatory terms at least from the perspective of its oppressors.

As part of colonization, King Haile Selassie of Ethiopia changed the names of cities from indigenous Oromo names to colonial ones: Hadama to Nazareth, Bishoftu to Debrezeit and Waliso to Gion (Zion) and others (Biyya, 1996). Haile Selassie changed not only the names of places but also his own identity. Sandford (1955) has referred to the former king of Ethiopia as "king of kings" and "Lion of Judah." A victim of Western education, after he was crowned Emperor, he took the baptismal name, Haile Selassie, which means "The Power of Trinity." Historical records show that he has Oromo ancestry (Starrett, 1976) although he kept it as a secret.

The Oromos are descended from ancient Nubians and their language, classified in the group of Cush languages along with the languages of ancient Nubia, present-day Somalia, Afar and Sidama (Bulcha, 2002), is the second largest African language, Hawusa from West Africa having more speakers (Gamta, 1999). It was the policy of Haile Selassie's government that no African languages would be taught in school except Amaharic. Students were forced to learn foreign languages such as English, French, German and Arabic in addition to Amaharic (Hameso, 1997). Ethiopian leaders before and after Selassie have so repressed Ethiopia's indigenous languages until recently, no African languages were used in instruction, neither in elementary schools and high schools nor at the college and university level. Even the Oromo language - one of the most popular languages in the Horn of Africa, spoken by over 40 million people as a mother tongue and 10 million people as their second and/or third language (Bitimaa, 1999), was not allowed even to be *spoken* in school.

Suppression of indigenous languages has occurred in several African countries. As Mazrui (1978) points out, citing the work

of Okot P'Bittek, African parliaments have insisted on competence in either English or French before an African could become a member. A candidate could speak 10 African languages and still be ineligible for membership in parliament if he did not speak the imported colonial language. Conversely, a candidate could speak only English or French, and no African language, even those of his or her immediate constituents, and still be eligible for membership in the parliament. This is an astonishing situation. Thus Africans can celebrate Independence Day on the one hand and have no protection for their languages, cultures and worldviews on the other. Those who enforce these self-obliterating rules were exposed to Euro-centric curricula and so they were molded to reproduce the colonial system, rather than create an autonomous state. And students who graduate after studying foreign school curricula are prime agents of colonialism.

Those committed to fostering indigenous languages do so at their peril. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, a Kenyan literary critic, writes about his experience of learning English during colonial times: "The one most humiliating experience was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment...or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I am STUPID or I am a DONKEY" (Thiongo, 1986). This is an everyday occurrence for the Oromo. One of my personal experiences was that a fellow student was caught speaking the Oromo language in class. The student was given corporal punishment and made to say in Amaharic 10 times a day for two weeks, "Almelesim huletenya, honyalehu tifatenya" ("I am guilty and I will never repeat that again") in class. In addition, the student was assigned to write the phrase 10 times a day as homework for the same period of time.

Colonizing Through Education

Colonizers had imposed their languages, cultures and worldviews on colonized peoples in Africa in various ways. According to Bunyi (1997/8), France and Portugal (and I might add Abyssinia) adopted the principle of cultural assimilation, while the British adopted a separatist philosophy in their colonies. The assimilation principle espoused the idea that, ultimately, those colonized people who could achieve a certain level of cultural similarity with the colonizers would be integrated into the culture of the colonizers. The British separatist philosophy espoused the idea that the colonizer and colonized would proceed along different development paths; therefore, there would always be gaps between the two. Indeed, both cases were designed to transform the colonized people into colonizers through an imposed culture and language. When individuals were molded enough and demonstrated affinity with the colonizers, they were recognized as having reached the highest level of being. Language and education are important vehicles through which power is wielded by colonizers and neo-colonizers to hold the soul of prisoner and subjugate the spirit. While the bullet was the colonial means of physical subjugation, to me it is obvious that the objective of neo-colonial education is indoctrination.

According to Harris and Bell (1994), learning can be envisaged through four theories of teaching. The first one is "transfer theory:" knowledge is treated as a commodity to be transferred from one person to another. The second is the "shaping theory" where the learner is assumed to be shaped or molded to a pre-determined pattern (the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's "banking model" has elements of these two). The third, "traveling theory," assumes that the subject is a terrain to be explored; the more difficult hills and mountains help to give a better viewpoint and the teacher is like a traveling companion or guide. The fourth is "growing theory," where the intellectual and emotional developments of the learner are the focus. Friere's vision of emancipatory education has elements of the last two, but is more revolutionary in conception than theories listed by Bell. I am arguing here that Euro-Ethiopian curricula employed "shaping theory" in the suppression of Oromo indigenous languages and in the forcing of Oromo children into pre-determined Euro-Ethiopian molds.

Williams (1992), writing on higher education and society, comments: "Higher education influences and is influenced by the culture in which it is embedded. It is shaped by society and it helps to shape society. It requires resources and it contributes resources - in the form of qualified members of the work force, better citizens, and the discovery of useful and other worthwhile knowledge. It is an important guardian of a nation's cultural tradition and it is among the strongest critics. It must respond to the demands of society and it must stand aloof from the whims of current fashion." Further, William argues, for centuries, higher educational institutions in France and Germany have been, in effect, public corporations, and higher education has existed to serve the state. The students in this version of the university became junior cadres or apprentice servants of the state.

According to Williams (1992) to a very considerable extent, the models of higher education, which have been developed, by the French, the German, the Spanish, and the British were adopted by newly independent African states as consequences of imperial colonial relationships. Thus the newly independent countries retain many of the features of the higher education systems that the colonial powers left behind, unaware that colonial education was the source of many of their economic and political ideas. Forty years later, Europeans are still using the same institution to Europeanize Africa and this neo-colonialism has had a devastating impact on African heritages, cultures, languages and values. University graduates imitate Europeans when indoctrinated by their curricula. Speaking the colonial language and having goods manufactured in Europe are considered symbols of civilization and prestige.

Ali Mazrui (1978) argues that:

The cultural goods sold to a new African clientele did not necessarily bear relevance to the real needs of the African market. Skills were transferred without adequate consideration for their value in Africa; other skills were withheld because they did not conform to world criteria of excellence as defined by the parent body. African universities moved in the direction of creating an institution of higher education based overwhelmingly on colonial state standards and values. During the colonial period the most immediate goal for Western education in Africa was to produce culturally relevant manpower. But at least as important an enterprise was to expand a culturally relevant market for Western consumer goods, ranging from toothpaste to automobiles, from ready made western shirts to canned tuna fish.

Mazrui (1978) suggests that there are three forms of liberation: political, economic and cultural. In Mazrui's view at the present time, Africa is politically but not economically and

culturally liberated, as economic and cultural domination of the West persists. I believe that the foundation for liberation should not be just political, economic or cultural but also epistemological and spiritual. Epistemological and spiritual liberation can successfully foster political, economic, cultural and social liberation from all forms of hegemony. It seems to me that African leaders have been slow to realize that the colonizers left behind their ideologies and epistemologies within the hearts and minds of millions of Africans, including the leaders of liberation movements, and that the colonizers continue to export their colonial agendas in various forms.

Mazrui points out that university graduates in Africa have not been among the major cultural revivalists, nor have they shown respect for indigenous political institutions or sympathy for indigenous political institutions or for indigenous belief systems and modes of entertainment and aesthetic experience. University graduates in Africa, precisely by being the most deeply westernized, have been the most culturally dependent on the West. The same educational institutions that produced nationalists eager to end colonial rule and establish African self-government also have embodied insensitivity to indigenous cultural heritage.

Constructing a Racist History: The Case of Oromo

I argue that the knowledges used by colonizers indoctrinate colonized peoples while claiming to bring "enlightenment." Colonizers reconstruct history so that the present can be understood from their perspective and the future re-ordered and controlled by them (Said, 1994). For example, one contentious event in Oromo history occurred around the fifteenth century. A monk known as Abba Bahrey, visited the Oromo country and observed people celebrating around Lake Rudolf. With curiosity and the mind of a missionary, he approached them to ask why they were gathered around the lake. He understood that they were celebrating a thanksgiving holiday and further that they believed that Mother Creator, whom they call, "Ayyo Uume," created life in water. Lake Walabu is still considered a Holy Place for pilgrims. The monk offered these people his package of faith, as an alternative, advising them to turn their faces to the East to seek help and give thanksgiving. The people rejected the offer. Returning to his home, Abba Bahrey wrote a book on the people with whom he had lived for several years (Beckingham and Huntingford, 1954). He started his book by saying; "I have begun to write the history of the Galla in order to make known … the brutality of their manner." (1954). Because he found that their manner is different from his people, he coined the word "Galla" to refer to the Oromo.

There are several hypotheses to explain why the word Galla was coined as a name for the Oromo people. One group of scholars makes the case that Bahrey derived the word from the Oromo word "Galaana" which used to mean "lake or sea." Others argue that the word "Galla" came from the Arabic word "qaala laa," meaning refusal or to refuse, as the people refused both Christianity and Islam. A third group of scholars argues that the word Galla is derived from the Greek word gala - meaning milk - implying that this was their main food. The third group rejects the notion that the word Galla was given by Bahrey. They point out that the word Galla was derived from a Greek word, as are Egypt, Eritrea and Ethiopia (Dugassa, 2006). Regardless of the reason, as soon as Bahrey's book appeared, the word Galla entered Western vocabulary as the designation for the Oromo people, serving to humiliate them.

Blundell (1900) claims that "the word Galla itself means 'emigrants' and their natural traditions bring them from a great sea toward the tenth century". The natural tradition that Blundell refers to as the Oromo worldview incorrectly concludes that the Oromo people migrated from a great Sea. Possibly it was from such understanding the identity known as "Galla" was framed. But all four cases presented in framing the word "Galla" as a legitimate identity for the Oromo are examples of misrepresentations that many colonised peoples have experienced. Since, as Blundell himself witnessed the people called themselves, as he put it, "Ilmormo" Ilmaan Oromoo or sons and daughters of Oromo or Oromo citizen.

A second missionary, an Abyssinian Coptic/Orthodox Christian priest named Aleqa Taye (1948), and Asme Giyorgis (1987) also painted a dehumanized picture of the Oromo people after they failed to convert them to Christianity. Based on Bahrey's book and their observations, they stated that the "Gallas" came out of the Galana River. In each case, the word "Galla" was used to mean savage, uncivilized and pagan.

Krapf (1968), a European missionary who traveled in the Horn of Africa region in the mid-1800s, predicted that European attention would be directed toward the Oromo, enabling them to play a central role in the region and beyond. He anticipated that the Oromo would naturally take a large and strategic place on the new map of Africa. Krapf went on to predict that the Oromo could well be considered the "Germans of Africa" if they were converted to Christianity. De Silviac (1901), a French missionary, also foresaw that the Oromo could be like "French of Africa, if they would be converted to Christianity." Kraft's (1968) and De Silviac's (1901) view about the Oromo people was typical attitude of many Europeans toward non-chrstians. European empire builders only recognized the bravery and success of Christians.

During in the scramble for Africa that was planned at a Berlin conference in 1884-85 (Harlow and Carter, 2003), European colonizers decided to divide up Oromia (Oromo country) between Abyssinia and the British (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). Later, they incorporated part of Oromo land into Kenya and the rest into the present state of Ethiopia. To implement the agreement, the European colonizers supplied the Abyssinians with military hardware and advisors, which Abyssinians agreed to pay back in the form of slaves (Bulcha, 2002). Abyssinia was one of the suppliers of slaves to the world slave market. Between the years 1800 and 1850, Abyssinia supplied over 1 250 000 slaves to the world market. In 1935, when Italy invaded Ethiopia, the Italians claimed to abolish slavery and reported that 125 000 were freed and placed in the village of Liberty (Prouty and Rosenfeld, 1981).

When Abyssinia engaged in the slave trade, European travelers documented that Oromo offered asylum for refugees who were neighbouring peoples, such as the Dinka and Anuak who thereby escaped enslavement. Describing the situation, Bauman (Ayana, 1999) has testified that the refugees were virtually free and lived in a condition of liberty. Some of the refugees were even recruited into the national infantry. Thus Abyssinia, which had adopted European worldviews, was actively involved in the slave trade while the Oromo people sheltered refugees. Given

that the Oromo people refused to adopt the Euro-Abyssinian and Arab worldviews and possibly for not evolving in slave trade they were penalized.

Abyssinians who are predominantly Coptic/Orthodox Christians and others who were recently converted to Islam and have established contact with the Arab world actively involved in slave trade than the indigenous people. Christians did not enslave Christians as the Moslem did not enslave the Moslem, yet both religious groups enslaved one another (Bulcha, 2002). When it comes to the indigenous people both the Christians and the Moslems targeted the indigenous people. In fact, the Abyssinian/Ethiopian slave traders to identify who was entitled to slavery looked for the sign of cross on the front head for women and cross on the neck of men. In several Oromia regions adjacent to Abyssinia, to protect their children from slave hunters Oromos adopted tattooing their young girls cross on their front head and young men to carry cross on their neck before they were converted to Christianity

The Ethiopian scholars' racist attitude toward the Oromo people and their worldview remain unchanged from the past. For example, in 2005 a professor at the Mekele University in Ethiopia, Sintayehu Kassaye wrote a textbook Hist.102 for freshman students in which he manifested his deep-rooted racist attitude toward the Oromo people and their worldviews. Not only the university allowed such racist research and publication of such literature but also it was to be used as a textbook to teach the Ethiopian and Oromo students for which the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) wrote a protest letter to the University. Let me cite from the OSA newsletter few of the phrases the author used to describe the Oromo people:

Considered uncivilized and inferior, even compared to the plateau's Muslims… Inevitably, the pagan Galla [Oromo] heroes … when they began their great migration to the plateau seemed even more inferior in the eyes of semetized Christian elites than the Somalis and Danakils. Page 145 lines 1-5.

… of the kings mistaken sequence of priorities and distorted perception of the Galla migration and the contempt in which he and Ethiopian society in general held these "uncouth and wild" pastoralists (page 153, par 1, lines 3-7).

(See OSA, Newsletter No. 10, 2006)

The Hidden Curriculum of Colonialism

Purdy argues that "[t]here is a war on over the curriculum in higher education and scholarship that supports it. It is an important war because curricular decisions define in large part what educated people will know and think, and that in turn makes a significant difference in how we all live." (1994:236). Many scholars have argued that the picture of the world presented by much of the traditional euro-centric curriculum, by failing to take into account such categories of analysis as gender, race, and class, is seriously biased. A so-called transformative learning approach recognizes the potential for learning in every individual. However, euro-centric educational curricula do not recognize knowledges of indigenous peoples; specifically I have argued here that euro-centric curricula undermine the very nature of African identity. This in turn can affect the learning aspirations in African children as well as emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive aspects of their development.

Describing the curriculum, Popkewitz has said that "curriculum [i]s particular, historically formed knowledge that inscribes rules and standards by which we reason about the world and our self as a productive member of that world. The rules for telling the truth in curriculum, however, are not only about the construction of objects for our scrutiny and observations. Curriculum is disciplining technology that directs how the individual is to act, feel, talk, and see the world and self. As such, curriculum is a form of social regulation" (1997:131). Dei similarly describes the situated nature of knowledge construction: "I am not coming to the discussion of race and equity in the academy from a disinterested or politically neutral position. (Who does by the way?) The politics that drive my position are anchored in a concern about the denial and erasure of race and difference in the academy to present knowledge as a legitimate search for one prevailing truth" (1999:80).

Both authors are in agreement that curricula involve procedures that construct objects through conceptual lenses. Reason and rationality are central to social efforts to improve the human condition, but no one can assume that reason and rationality are a unified and universal system by which we can talk about what is true and false. According to Popkewitz et al. (2001), knowledge provides the values through which choices are made, social realities are understood, and solutions are considered as acceptable and effective. This means the content of knowledge represents the social interest of a group. Thus, schooling is practically seen as shaping students' views and producing ways of thinking, acting and feeling. For example, courses on World Geography based on euro-centric curricula teach the names of several geographical locations as they appear to ethnocentric Europeans.

The New World refers to North and South America as if Native Americans did not exist before Columbus or, even if they existed, that their existence is not important. The same literature refers to Africa as a Dark Continent, as if the intensity of light is less there than in Europe. Furthermore, the same literature refers to geographical locations as the Middle East and Far East, as if the center of the world was Europe. In fact, the name "New World" suggests that if Europeans do not know the landmass, it is not known. Regarding the use of "dark" to refer to Africa, this also implies that if Europeans do not know the continent, it cannot be known. The terms Far East and Middle East signify land in the middle of European colonial empires or the far east of these empires.

In the thirteenth century, European cartographers believed that the world was flat with the holy city of Jerusalem at its heart and they developed maps accordingly, rendering invisible the presence of civilizations in the rest of the world. In my opinion, the central problem here is that European society has been unwilling to see non-Europeans as people with their own different legitimate interests, including social values and spirituality. Hence, the battle is about the legitimacy of indigenous knowledges. In fact, Popkewitz (1997) points out that curriculum are a form of social regulation is not totally a new one: For example, since at least the Protestant Reformation, it has been accepted that schools have been institutions that relate state, civil and religious authority and moral discipline. The reforms introduced by Martin Luther made education a disciplining mechanism important to the reformation.

The German reformers of the sixteenth century were attempting to educate the masses along humanistic principles. Curriculum inscribed certain rules through which the individual

should reason about the self and discipline the actions. The inscriptions were not done through brute force, but through the principles that ordered the symbolic systems by which one is to interpret, organize and act in the world. According to Pop-kewitz (1997), childhood literacy became institutionalized as a strategy to confront social disorder through honouring religious standards and moral values. The Jesuits of the sixteenth century recognized the disciplining qualities of pedagogy as part of the Counter Reformation, developing classroom practices that re-interpreted the humanist and secular literature of the counter-reformation to assert the value of the Catholic Church. Their strategy was to read texts without historical contexts so as to insert Catholic moral percept into non-Catholic literature.

Reasoning embodied a new epistemological space that view-ed the world as organized structures that have links and func-tions related to one another in an emergence of successions. The changes in the meaning of history are changes in the prin-ciple of classification – which means that reasoning is socially constructed. In Popkewitz' (1997) views, the "linguistic turn" in social science and history can be viewed as a recasting of modernist doctrines associated with the enlightenment project. It decentred the actor and the agency from the center-stage of interpretation. The movement to discourse considers language as systems of ideas and rules of reasoning that organize and direct an individual's participation in the world. The languages of schooling are not just words and sayings. The rules and standards of speech are social practices.

Historical attention must be given to how the categories, dis-tinctions and differentiation of systems of ideas change over time to construct the subjects of our practices. For example, for most European languages, black and blackness are used in a negative sense. Black is symbolized as mourning, sorrow, bad luck and evil. European languages suggest that white represent purity, holiness and peace. That is why we encounter in litera-ture phrases such as blacklist, black market, Black Death, black future and dark day. Contrary to Euro-Abyssinian languages, in the Oromo languages black and blackness are either neutral or positive. According to Gada Melba (1988), for the Oromo, Black represents purity, holiness and future. For example, "bishaan guracha" is translated "pure water" and "Waaqa Gu-racha" is translated "Black God," that is, Holy God.

In informal and formal euro-centered curricula, it is beyond comprehension that black could represent holiness and purity. One should not be surprised about this, since beauty is different in the eyes of different people. Clearly, distinction in the way Oromos value particular colours as compared to Euro-Abys-sinians may be related to different valuations of white and black-related categories. In tropical regions of Africa, the main source of water is rain. During the rainy season, two to three hours before the rainfall, one can observe deep dark clouds in the sky; when rain falls it is truly pure water. Looking from a distance, deep and large lakes or, for that matter, seas and oceans, appear a deep blue dark color. Oromos believe that the God "Waaqa" lives up high in the universe in the dark blue sky.

Our ways of knowing are dependent upon our culture, relig-ion, social class, ethno-nation group, sex, physical ability and age. Stereotypes, or unduly fixed concepts about those who are different from us, may lead us to believe that people with these characteristics are naturally "good" or "bad," "strong" or "weak," "a hard worker" or "lazy," "smart" or "idiotic." Ste-reotypes told about the Black people in euro-centered formal

and informal curricula are examples of such discriminatory ways of thinking. Askew and Carnell (1998), elaborating on the impact of stereotypes on students' learning skills, stated that "girls are told they are good at languages; they believe they are good at languages and so, they became "good at languages." Paulo Freire also described this phenomenon when he pointed out that self-depreciation is another characteristic of the op-pressed, deriving from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. Research documents the failure of many children of African descent in school, but no one at-tempted to determine to what extent "imperialism of mind" or the hidden curriculum of neo-colonialism is responsible.

As Said (1994) illustrates, colonialism and imperialism are interwoven with the practice, theory and attitude of dominating a distant territory; hence, the struggle against it is not only about the soldiers and cannons but is also about ideas, forms, images and imaginings. In other words, the basis of imperial and colonial authority is that the mental attitude of the colo-nized is molded, shaped and reshaped by colonial education. Similarly, Fanon (1963) argues that colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the na-tive's brain of all forms and contents of indigenous knowledge. It turns to the past of the oppressed people to distort and disfig-ure and destroy their history as well as their knowledge. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.

Discussion

Knowledge is a social construct and it reflects the lived ex-periences of people (Berger and Luckman, 1966). In fact, very often the knowledges of different groups of people are incom-patible with one another. The incompatibility of knowledge between dominant and indigenous people prompted the invali-dation of Afro-centric ways of knowing and validated euro-centricity. From the Oromo people's perspective, the Ethiopian education curricula are about the validation of the Euro-Ethio-pian ways of knowing. Validation of such ways of knowing legitimizes the colonial and neo-colonial agenda. This in turn incapacitates the Oromo people and affects their social fabric.

For many Oromo students the Ethiopian educational curric-ula inform them that the Euro-Abyssinia ways of knowing represents the only valid knowledge. Euro-centric knowledge suggests that in order to learn and know one needs to think within the euro-centric gaze. Such curricula invalidate Oromo ways of knowing and destabilize their social norms and sig-nificantly affect the students' epistemological curiosity. Based on the cultural diversity and social needs, different societies clearly ought to have separate educational curricula. Leave alone allowing the Oromo people to control their educational curricula, the very name Oromo had only recently become a standard in the Ethiopian government documents and in con-temporary literature. Until mid 1970's the derogatory name "Galla" was used in reference to the Oromo people (Baxter, 1998). Indeed the emergence of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is to challenge the validity of the Euro-American-Ethiopian racist theories about the Oromo people and their racist social policies in Oromia, and reclaim as well as recon-struct the Oromo centric knowledge (Jalata, 1996).

From the Oromo people's perspective, peace (nagaa) and

health (fayya) are interwoven and the system of reasoning that affect their practice and thinking changes these relationships. For example, an educational curriculum that separates the relationship between peace and health and medicalizes social problems invalidates the Oromo ways of knowing. Such knowledge not only disrupts the Oromo people's peace but also affects their social fabric and causes dysfunction in their community relationships.

Let me end my arguments with a quote from UNESCO constitution, which states, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (See, UNESCO). In same analogy to regain and nourish the nagaa (peace), fayya (health) and (tasgabii) social order that the Oromo people have lost under the colonial rule it is essential for them to reclaim and control their education system and curricula.

Acknowledgements

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