



The Harmful Effects of the Suppression of Oromoo Indigenous Knowledge System on Oromoo Identity: The Role of Oromoo Intellectuals

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Abstract

Africans have not been consumers of European knowledge at all times. They have their own indigenous knowledge systems like all human societies elsewhere. In their attempt to dominate the minds of Africans and thus subjugate them in perpetuity, European colonialists imposed their own knowledge, belief systems and culture on the people they colonized. Post-colonial African governments ignored their indigenous knowledge and institutions and became mere consumers of European knowledge. Under Ethiopian Empire State, before coming under the influence of modern European education, the different people had to go through Amhara ruling elites' coercive assimilation and the consequent weakening of their own indigenous knowledge and identity. The Oromoo had been one of the main victims of the aggressive assimilation policy as a result of which their knowledge system and identity have been significantly undermined. Oromoo belief systems, knowledge and cultural values have been deliberately despised and portrayed as backward with a view to dismantle Oromoo self-respect and identity. Having lost their individual self-respect and self-perception, many western educated Oromoo lost their intellectual self-confidence and identity which constitute key components of Oromoo identity. This article looks at the existing practices among the Booranaa Oromoo that are indicative of the harms resulting from the weakening of Gadaa institutions and indigenous knowledge system. The article mainly aims at drawing the attention of Oromoo scholars towards ending the threat being posed against Oromoo identity as a consequence of the weakening of Oromoo indigenous knowledge system. The article proposes that there is a need to reclaim and revitalize Oromoo indigenous knowledge which is the foundation of Oromoo identity and wellbeing. As a people, we cannot create a robust, materially and morally virtuous society without Oromoo indigenous knowledge which is the basis for Oromoo identity.

Keywords - Oromoo, indigenous knowledge, identity, Booranaa

Axereeraa

Uummanni ardii Afrikaa akkuma uummattoota biroo ogumaa fi beekumsa ofii qabu. Bara bittaa kolonii, uummata kana gabroomfachuf jecha koloneeffattoonni ardii Awurooppaa irraa dhufan ogumaafi beekumsa ganamaa kana dagachiisuuf beekumsa, amantaa, duudhaafi aadaa ambaa irratti fe'an. Mootonni Afrikaa sirna kolonii kanaan booda dhufanis beekumsaafi dhaabbilee ganamaa qaban dagachuun beekumsa dhihaa (Awurooppaa) kanarratti ofgatan. Dhufaati barnoota ammayyaan dura saboonni empaayera Itoophiyaa keessa turan sirna gosagaloommii bulchitoota Amaaraa jalatti beekumsaafi enyummaa isaanii ganamaa akka dagatan taasifamaa turan. Uummanni Oromoo sirna kana keessatti uummattoota eenyummaa isaanii ganamaa akka dagatu taasifaman keessaa tokko. Aadaa, duudhaa, beekumsaafi amantaan uummata kanaa akka jibbamuufi akka waan qarooma hinqabneetti waan ilaalamaa tureef ofitti amanamummaafi

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eenymmaan Oromoo diigamaa ture. Kabaja dhabuun Oromummaa beektota Oromoo barnoota ammayyaa keessa darbanii kabajaafi ofitti amanamummaa dhabsiiseera. Kunneen ammoo dhimmoota murteessoo Oromumman irratti hundaa'udha. Barruun kun haala Oromoo Booranaa keessa jiru irratti hundaa'uun rakkooleen laafuun dhaabbilee Gadaafi beekumsa Oromoo ganamaa fidaa jiran xiinxala Kaayyoon isaas dagatamaa dhufuun beekusa Oromoo ganamaa rakkoo jabduu inni Oromummaa irratti fidaa jiru gara xiyyeeffannoo beektota Oromootti fiduudha. Barreeffamich beekumsa ganamaa kana bakkatti deebisuufi haaromsuun bu'uura Oromummaa ammaa taasisuun eenyummaa fi fayyaallessummaa Oromoo dagaagsuun akka danda'amu akeeka. Akka uummataatti beekumsa Oromoo ganamaa bu'uura Oromummaa ta'an osoo bakkatti hindeebisiin uummata fayyaallessaafi diinagdeef xinsammuun mo'ataa ta'e ijaaruun hindanda'amu.

Jechoota Ijoo – Oromoo; beekumsa ganamaa, eenyummaa, Booranaa

1. Introduction

All human beings are naturally endowed with the faculty of learning from their interactions with the environment and their own interactions. These interactions and experiences are the foundations of human knowledge. Knowledge is a human construction, production, reproduction and transfer of life experiences formally or informally. In a society with diverse knowledge systems, the status of a certain knowledge system has strong correlation with the existing power relation in the society. If there is an inequitable power relation in society, the dominant group will make use of its power and impose its belief system, knowledge and cultural values on the dominated groups in many ways and under the guise of education. In a society with diverse knowledge systems, validating one form of knowledge as superior would undermine the survival of others and establish the supremacy of one form of knowledge. This will make the education system and the knowledge produced hegemonic in its nature (Dugassa, 2014; Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1985; Gemetchu, 1993).

Although Ethiopia has undoubtedly been and remained a society with diverse indigenous knowledge systems, these knowledge systems have not been given recognition. Ethiopian academic institutions including universities have been teaching Eurocentric knowledge all along, turning these institutions into mere outposts for Eurocentric knowledge system. Owing to its inherently exclusivist and hegemonic nature, until the last quarter of a century, the Ethiopian educational system has remained unwelcoming to Oromoo indigenous knowledge (OIK) system (Asafa, 1996).

Before their forcible incorporation into the Empire State of Ethiopia, the Oromoo people had a distinctive and robust body of indigenous knowledge system that has survived for centuries. With their incorporation into the Empire, the Oromoo have lost not only their land but they have also been stripped of their worldview, belief system, knowledge, cultural values, language and collective identity until very recently. The Oromoo have largely been coerced to give up their own and accept the belief system, knowledge and cultural values of the rulers (Asafa, 1996).

The main purpose of the article is to look at the harmful effects the marginalization of OIK system is causing to the Oromoo people. This of course is without discounting some of the achievements that has been made by way of regaining Oromoo consciousness. The article focuses particularly on the state of Oromoo indigenous knowledge system within the mainstream Ethiopian education system. Qualitative research method has been employed for the study. As I have done my dissertation among the Booranaa which was on indigenous

justice system from 2012- 2014, I had the opportunity to interview Booranaa elders which has given me adequate understanding about the state of Oromoo indigenous knowledge. I have also drawn on my personal experiences in Ethiopian school system as a student and teacher and looked at the pertinent literature. The article has examined the merits of OIK and the justifications for giving it legitimate space within the formal Ethiopian education system. The article is critical of the Euro-Ethiopian exclusivist approach to education which has regarded OIK valueless without any evaluation of its merits and demerits. In the author's view, the uncritical welcoming of hegemonic Euro-Ethiopian education system by Oromoo scholars and students has to be brought to an end.

The author proposes that Oromoo scholars have to confront the current Ethiopian education system which is not fully accommodative of OIK and tends to consider it as archaic and irrelevant. Instead of the 'one size fits all' approach, the author argues for an alternative middle -ground approach that makes room for integration of OIK with the formal education system. In some post-independence African countries, scholars have maintained that Africa should have pluriversity instead of university which is essentially Eurocentric in its approach to knowledge. Pluriversity referred to an academic setting and "a process of knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity" (Mbembe, 2016). This article also argues for a university which would be open to diversity and possibly allows the Oromoo to take advantages of the strengths of both systems and avoid their weaknesses.

2. Conceptual Framework and Review of Literature

The concept knowledge in general is defined as an "awareness or familiarity gained by experience (of a person, fact, or thing), a person's range of information; a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject, language, etc. as a sum of what is known" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1998: 753). This broader conception of knowledge is used in this particular study. As one form of knowledge which comes under knowledge in general, indigenous knowledge refers to "a body of knowledge, or bodies of knowledge of indigenous people of a particular geographical area/s that have survived for a very long time" (Mapara, 2009:140). It is a unique body of knowledge in a particular culture and society which is "embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals" (World Bank, 1998: 8).

Indigenous knowledge is essentially "experiential knowledge based on a worldview and a culture that is basically relational" (Owusu-Ansah, & Mji, 2013:1). Its characteristic feature is its being rooted in belief system with symbiotic relationship of all beings both animate and inanimate. OIK shares most of the characteristics common to indigenous knowledge. In order to understand the indigenous knowledge of a community, one needs to be familiar with that community's belief system or worldview. By worldview here, we mean the "cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps that people continuously use to make sense of the social landscape and to find their ways to whatever goals they seek" (Hart, 2010:2).

Indigenous worldviews are products of a particular people's interaction and relationship with the environment and among themselves. The belief systems, assumptions, decision-making and ways of problem-solving of a community are influenced by its worldview. In a similar manner, the educational system in a given community is also "shaped by culture and epistemology in which it is embedded" (Dugassa, 2011:55). This means the educational system in a given society is influenced by the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. Generally, what are produced and transferred by way of knowledge through a certain

education system is the belief system and values reflecting the dominant group's viewpoint incorporated into curriculum (Vindevoghel, 2016).

According to Ngugi, education is essentially a means of knowing ourselves. "After we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us" (1986:94). In the context of a society with diverse knowledge systems, for the students coming from the dominated groups, an education system which imposes the belief, cultural values and knowledge system of a dominant group cannot be a means of knowing themselves. It will be a means of legitimizing and perpetuating oppressive power relation between the existing knowledge systems and the people (Dugassa, 2011; Vindevoghel, 2016).

Human knowledge is a social construct and as such is a reflection of the social, economic and historical context in which it is constructed. The production and consumption of knowledge has to be looked at within the context of the human interactions with one another and with the environment. In a pluralist knowledge systems setting, there is no value-free standard with which to judge one knowledge system more legitimate than others. The validity of knowledge has to be determined having regard to the historical, socio-cultural, environmental conditions and experiences of a given people. Every knowledge system has to be viewed as an integral part of human heritage. No indigenous knowledge should be labeled obsolete and made irrelevant before its merits and demerits are critically evaluated (Nyanchoga, 2014; Vindevoghel, 2016).

2.1. Knowledge and Power-Correlation

Human history has shown that depending on the nature of power relation in a given society, a group may have control over knowledge production and dissemination thus being able to turn others into mere knowledge consuming objects. Education is a means through which behaviors of those being educated are shaped and controlled. In a society with diverse knowledge systems, a group that controls the education system will have monopoly over the production and dissemination of knowledge which would enable it to manipulate behaviors of consumers of the knowledge. A dominant group will produce and disseminate its own values and knowledge system under the guise of education thus turning education system into a weapon of domination through which it keeps others under its perpetual domination. In that sense, both education and power mutually reinforce each other (Dugassa, 2014; Foucault, 1980; Ngugi, 1986).

Before being brought under European colonial rule, Africans had their own indigenous knowledge systems the production and transference of which was under their complete control. Africans had their own ways of schooling, knowing and preserving their heritage; their own indigenous ways of adapting to their physical environment. They had ways of maintaining their indigenous values, institutions, language and heritage from the past (Nyanchoga, 2014). Africa had "a very rich heritage of what their past generations thought, did, experienced and passed on to their children" (Mbiti, 1991:3). Having colonized Africa, the colonial powers did not want to be limited to controlling the lands of Africa. So as to perpetuate their colonial rule, they wanted to control the minds of Africans as well. They wanted to achieve that ambition through imposing their own belief and knowledge system on Africans under the guise of religion and education. Hence, "the physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom" (Ngugi, 1986:9).

Consequently, African indigenous values and knowledge systems have been totally marginalized by colonial powers. In their role as educators and missionaries, Europeans taught and preached their beliefs so that Africans may change their indigenous patterns of behaviors. They wanted Africans to view themselves in the way colonial powers desired (Ngugi, 1986; Fanon, 1968). Colonial education by its nature is characterized by annihilating “people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (Ngugi, 1986:3). Rather than recognizing and accommodating African knowledge systems, the Eurocentric education sought to inculcate European worldview onto the minds of the colonized people of Africa (Asante, 2012). As a result of European colonial education, educated Africans became mentally disconnected from their indigenous worldviews, belief systems, knowledge systems, cultural values, language and African identity (Nyachonga, 2014). “Very few educated Africans are even aware that they are also in cultural bondage. All educated Africans [...] are still cultural captives of the West” (Mazuri, 1978:13).

Colonial education has made the colonized people see their past as a “wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves” (Ngugi, 1986). In Ali Mazrui’s view (1978), European colonial education has made an educated African “a misfit in his own village” (p.16). The educated Africans who have become misfit in their villages and communities are acting as agents of colonial powers and causing harms to Africans in African educational institutions and universities. They have become at the forefront of disseminating colonial education in total disregard of indigenous African knowledge systems thus turning African universities into colonial outpost.

2.2. Oromo Indigenous Knowledge System and its Merits

Oromoo *Gadaa* system is “one of those remarkable creations of the human mind that evolved into a full-fledged system of government, as a result of five centuries of evolution and deliberate, rational, legislative transformation” (Asmarom, 2000:195). The *Gadaa* system and institutions are the embodiment of OIK which is “framed in an Oromo paradigm of thinking” well-suited to address the problems of Oromo people (Dugassa, 2014: 23). Despite all odds and long years of attempt to wipe it out, Borana Oromoo have kept Oromo indigenous knowledge system along with *Gadaa* system.

Before the conquest and the introduction of the Euro-Ethiopian education system which is unwelcoming to indigenous knowledge, among the Booranaa, the mode of transferring indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next generation was through *hayyuu*/elders/. Among the Booranaa, indigenous knowledge system has always been stored and transferred orally within family, clan and pan-Booranaa institutional settings like *Gumii Gaayyo* which is the supreme Booranaa decision and law-making body. The Oromoo in general had their indigenous knowledge system which is not only their intangible heritage but also a bond which links them to their ancestral fathers and mothers. Oromoo indigenous knowledge is found embedded in Oromoo worldview, belief system and cultural values embracing the spiritual, economic, social and political aspects of the society. With the help of their indigenous worldview, the Booranaa Oromoo understand and explain themselves, others and their interactions with the world. According to Booranaa indigenous worldview, the maintenance of the cosmic order and harmony as set by *Waaqa* (God) is the foundation of their *Nagaa Boorana*, (peace of Booranaa). The philosophy among the Booranaa is that the survival of human beings and other natural world are reciprocated and mutually dependent. Disrupting the cosmic order that has been set by *Waaqa* would ultimately put

human peace and survival in danger. Guided by their indigenous worldview and knowledge system, the Booranaa have managed to survive the harsh climatic conditions and succeeded in maintaining sustainable harmony among *Waaqa*, society and nature for thousands of years (Asmarom, 2000, Bassi, 2005).

Booranaa indigenous knowledge has been derived from, shaped and developed by the direct interaction of the people among themselves and with their particular natural setting. The complexity of the indigenous knowledge, belief, social, cultural and political systems of the Booranaa are noticeable from the institutional set up and functioning of the *Gadaa* system. The Booranaa have a proven knowledge of their environment that has enabled them to devise resource specific indigenous laws *seera marra bisaani*, (laws of water and grass) which they have used successfully for the management and use of scarce natural resources.

For the Oromoo in general, their indigenous knowledge system is a sole means of producing, preserving and transferring knowledge, cultural values, history and identity. The indigenous knowledge is the repertoire of Oromoo intangible heritage which is also an integral part of global heritage. Oromoo *Gadaa* system has already been recognized as one of the remarkable creations of the human mind and has been accepted as part of global heritage. But this indigenous knowledge including their art of governance has not as yet been given space in Ethiopian educational system (Asmarom, 1973; Bassi, 2005).

After being incorporated into Ethiopian Empire, the Booranaa have been coerced to abandon their indigenous worldview, belief and knowledge systems. By using their coercive state power, the successive Ethiopian rulers have imposed their own belief and knowledge systems on the Booranaa. But they could not as yet succeed in turning the Booranaa into mere consumers of knowledge produced by Ethiopian ruling elites. As a result of this, there are two main knowledge systems among the Booranaa with the indigenous Booranaa indigenous knowledge system having marginal status and the other being dominant. The alien Euro-Ethiopian knowledge system has been made dominant because of the oppressive power relation between the rulers of Ethiopia and the Oromoo including the Booranaa (Asafa, 1991). The invasive Euro-Ethiopian knowledge system is inconsiderately dislodging the effective Booranaa indigenous *Gadaa* and knowledge systems including their environmental friendly knowledge */seera marra bisaani/* which has been in use for thousands of years (Bassi, 2005). Since there is no mechanism that accommodates this Booranaa indigenous knowledge into the mainstream education system, there is a looming danger of its being displaced.

3. The Harmful Effects of the Weakening of OIK System

The annihilation of Oromoo knowledge system has begun during the war of conquest made by Abyssinian rulers to incorporate the Oromoo into their Empire State. After incorporating them into the Empire, the successive rulers of the Empire prevented the expansion of Oromoo indigenous belief and knowledge systems by displacing their indigenous institutions. They imposed and expanded their own belief and knowledge systems with the help of the coercive state machinery. Since then, the production and dissemination of Oromoo indigenous worldview, belief and knowledge system has been hindered.

Through their denigrating strategy of labeling Oromoo belief and knowledge system obsolete and by making OIK irrelevant, Ethiopian rulers have deprived the Oromoo the right to sustain, produce and disseminate their indigenous knowledge. In that way, the Oromoo people have become passive consumers of alien knowledge produced and disseminated by

Ethiopian rulers who assumed the monopoly of both the state power and educational system (Dugassa, 2014). Through all means available to them, Ethiopian rulers have labeled and disseminated that Oromoo belief and knowledge systems are obsolete and superstitious (Dugassa 2014; Asafa, 1996). Although there is a significant increase in Oromoo collective identity consciousness, so long as the hegemonic educational system remains impervious, OIK would remain marginalized. There will still be the breaking down of indigenous Oromoo family and community bonds all of which are anchored on Oromoo indigenous belief system, indigenous knowledge and the intangible ancestral heritage.

From what I have gathered from Booranaa elders during my field work in the area, the elders are not feeling comfortable about the mainstream educational system which in their view is posing danger to the future of their indigenous knowledge and Gadaa system. Kanu Jilo was one of the elders I have interviewed in 2013. When he told me their Gadaa system is being weakened, I asked him how and by whom it is being weakened. His answer was, “*sirni Gadaa akka laaffataa deemu kan gochaa jiru ebelu jechuun nu dhiba, barumsa fakkaate karuma ijoollee keenya nutti dhufaa.*” This literally translated means; it is not easy to name the body responsible for the weakening of Gadaa system, it comes by way of education given to our children. Borbor Bulee was another Booranaa elder I have interviewed in 2013. According to Borbor Bulee, “*laaffachu sirna Gadaatiif sababni guddaan tokko babal’ina amantii haaraa adda addaa kan amantii keenyya Waaqeffanna seexana waaqessuudha jechuudhaan jibbiinssa irratti boba’aniidha.*” When translated, this means, one major cause for the weakening of Gadaa system is the expansion of new religions that discredit our indigenous Waaqeffanna religion by labeling it a devil worship.

As shown by the experiences of the Booranaa, development interventions made in disregard of the proven indigenous knowledge hasn’t been successful. The top-down development interventions have not only made Booranaa indigenous knowledge irrelevant, the ecosystem more vulnerable, but it has also destabilized the previously well-functioning and user-friendly indigenous institutions. In its top-down governance structure that goes down to *kebele* level, which is the lowest level of governance, has made the indigenous governance institutions and structures irrelevant. The non-indigenous Peasant Associations have played and still playing instrumental role in the weakening and undermining of the authority of the indigenous governance structures and institutions (Watson, 2001).

Under the current essentially Euro-Ethiopian education system, Oromoo students are taught to “reproduce the knowledge, culture, power structure, thinking and the worldview of colonizers” (Dugassa, 2011: 55). The Euro-Ethiopian education system still remains inherently hegemonic with little room for the production and dissemination of OIK and its intangible heritage. In the particular context of this article, the fact that the mainstream Ethiopian education system hasn’t still satisfactorily incorporated OIK into its curriculum has to be taken seriously by Oromoo intellectuals.

As a result of the content of education and European thought incorporated into the curriculum, the system would still have negative impacts on the minds of significant number of educated Oromoo. Such intellectuals tend to believe, even teach and preach the mainstream Euro- Ethiopian knowledge as an accepted standard. During their long years of hegemonic rule, Ethiopian rulers have succeeded in making the marginalization of OIK and this has helped them to perpetuate their hegemony. Unless the flawed and structurally embedded knowledge dominance is properly understood and confronted face-to-face by educated Oromoo scholars, this hegemonic Euro-Ethiopian education system will keep on hampering any effort made to promote OIK system.

On the whole, in its long history of existence, the Ethiopian education system has inconsiderately remained hostile to Oromoo indigenous knowledge and discouraged efforts made to maintain it. The system has consistently been resolute in its drive to displace Oromoo indigenous belief system, knowledge, cultural values and history. It has undermined Oromoo indigenous ways of schooling and its ways of preserving its history and cultural values. This has curtailed the development of Oromoo history, language and literature terribly. Thus, the subjugation of Oromoo people which started with disconnecting the Oromoo from their land has been made complete by the Euro-Ethiopian education system which has disconnected educated Oromoo from their history, knowledge and collective identity.

4. Conclusion

In a society with plural knowledge systems, a pluralistic approach to knowledge systems is imperative. In such society, the approach to be followed regarding knowledge should not be “reduced to the standards and epistemology of western perspective of knowledge base” (Owour, 2007: 34). A pluralistic approach would require that all stakeholders of education respect the diverse knowledge systems, embrace their logic, and epistemological foundations. This would entail acknowledging the value, reciprocal relations, and contributions of all forms of knowledge to the global body of ways of knowing. In a society with diverse knowledge systems, declaring one of these as supreme will establish inequitable power relations between the existing knowledge systems (Foucault, 1980; Olsen et al., 1992).

Although Ethiopia has undoubtedly been a society with diverse knowledge systems, this has never been formally acknowledged. Starting from the very time of conquest, the victors designed hegemonic education policy which was made in such a way as to assimilate and make Oromoo students accept the belief, values and knowledge system of the rulers. The ruling elites have preached/ taught/ and discredited Oromoo indigenous belief system, knowledge, cultural values, language and history as obsolete. The imposed education system has in the long run “conditioned the Oromoo people to adopt the Euro-centric discourses and its top-down organizational structure” (Dugassa, 2014: 23).

Educational systems “are shaped by the culture and epistemology in which it is embedded” (Dugassa, 2011: 55). Likewise, Ethiopian education system which is embedded in hegemonic political culture was shaped by this culture and was meant to shape the subjugated people fit to be ruled in the way the rulers desired. It was designed to disconnect learners from their fathers’ and mothers’ local knowledge, experiences and problems. As being witnessed presently in Ethiopia, with the exclusivist Euro-Ethiopian education and the knowledge and skills derived from the system, educated Oromoo students are incapable of solving local problems.

Educated Oromoo have become unfit and detached from their fathers and mothers in their thinking and way of life. In so doing, the hegemonic education system is playing a crucial role in disrupting Oromoo social fabric and their *nagaa* in its holistic sense. These educated Oromoo who have lost their identity have to be engaged in the processes of self-discovery and self-definition. They have to take part in the recovery and restoring of the best elements of Oromoo indigenous knowledge. In his book, *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi wa Thiongo has affirmed that education is essentially a means of knowing ourselves. According to Ngugi, it is only after we have examined and known ourselves that we reach out and learn about other people and things around us (1986).

One fundamental question that all Oromoo scholars need to ask ourselves is the extent to which the current hegemonic Ethiopian education system is allowing us to see ourselves in relationship to one another and to other selves. Oromoo scholars have to be able to interrogate the existing hegemonic Ethiopian education system in terms of its relevance to Oromoo situation and its contribution towards understanding ourselves. They have to interrogate the effects of Eurocentric epistemology and ideology on Oromoo indigenous epistemology. The fact that Oromoo indigenous epistemology arises from Oromoo worldview or the interconnections between the human world, the spirit and inanimate entities has to be properly comprehended.

There is indisputably a need to fully reverse the existing humiliating situation through decolonization of the deformed mind-set of educated Oromoo. Decolonization of the mind is a process of self-ownership, it is a fight made by the colonized to repossess by way of taking back or reinstating which belongs to them (Mbembe, 2016). As a process of taking back or reinstating oneself and the collective, decolonizing the mind of educated Oromoo will not be an easy task. It will be a long time and difficult undertaking which would entail decolonizing our Eurocentric mind-set, our way of life, our educational institutions and the nature of knowledge to be imparted to Oromoo students. Having gained self-ownership, Oromoo scholars have to be aware of the need to make Oromoo students and all Oromoo conscious of the effects of displacement of OIK which has made Oromoo needs and values, history and culture irrelevant and disfigured Oromoo social fabric.

Decolonizing of educated Oromoo mind-set mainly focuses on reclaiming Oromoo knowledge system and avoiding practices and beliefs that undermine Oromoo identity. In this author's view, even if a person has Oromoo name but has lost all Oromoo identity markers, there is nothing that makes this person an Oromoo in its real sense. An Oromoo totally disconnected from Oromoo land, way of life, belief system, knowledge system, cultural values and history is not an Oromoo. Every Oromoo scholar should realize that it is only Oromoo indigenous worldview and knowledge system which would enable the Oromoo to see themselves, their relationship with others and the universe.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) recognizes the validity of indigenous knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The Convention acknowledges the contributions of indigenous knowledge as a suitable approach for environmental protection. As it is a proven environmental-friendly knowledge system, giving recognition to Oromoo indigenous knowledge would contribute towards the efforts being made globally by human kind for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Besides, UNESCO (1999) also calls for respect, sustenance and enhancement of indigenous knowledge. It recommends that indigenous knowledge be recognized as a legitimate knowledge system. When seen in light of this, the struggle being made by the Oromoo to regain control over their indigenous knowledge and restore the neglected knowledge and teachings of their *hayyu*/elders/ is legitimate.

Finally, in order to transform Ethiopian universities from colonial outposts to Oromoo – friendly educational centers where Oromoo indigenous knowledge systems are produced and disseminated, Ethiopian educational institutions and universities have to be decolonized by way of making them pluralistic and accommodative of Oromoo indigenous knowledge. Oromoo scholars should be able to confront the hegemony of Euro-Ethiopian knowledge system that is still dominating Ethiopian educational institutions including universities. In our fight to reinstate Oromoo indigenous knowledge, our educational institutions including

universities need to undergo a process of decolonization of knowledge where the universities invest on academic research that focuses on the promotion of indigenous knowledge.

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