

“ETHIOPIANISM” IN ETHIOPIAN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia is one of the oldest independent nations in the world. The country, which had an inspirational dream of black independence throughout the world especially that of Africa.

In Africa Christians took Ethiopia as a symbol of identity and readily embrace Ethiopianism both as an intellectual and religious movement. The Muslim took Ethiopia as a symbol of freedom from oppression and liberation from repulsion. The Jamaicans professed Ethiopia as the land of justice (Teshome 2017:1828-1832).

Ethiopianism, the movement that acknowledge and took Ethiopia as an emblematic is both religious and political movement which played great role in the liberation struggle of black peoples. However, this is not reflected in Ethiopia's education system for the youth to learn the history that the African forefathers accomplished in the struggle for political and religious freedom.

In history, Ethiopia remains an independent country, unlike other African countries. However, the country's education system is not free from the domination of Western knowledge. The Ethiopian ancient education system is gradually replaced by the Western-centric education system. “The Ethiopian ‘self’ those elements which the Ethiopians experienced in their culture, history, politics and communal life is gradually deteriorating” (Teshome 2017:60-63). The school curriculum is at present wholly dominated with Eurocentric scientific discipline.

To decolonize the Western-centric education indigenization is important in teaching knowledge relevant to the country's history. The role that Ethiopians citizens played in building the country as a nation and their contribution to others in the struggle against colonialism has to be given space in the curriculum as an independent course.

Ethiopianism is the legacy that handed down from the past to a new generation (Ibid). One of the main and Authentic Ethiopianism education should be philosophical studies. In particular, the philosophy of Africa and Ethiopia. Therefore, this thesis discusses the need for incorporating ‘Ethiopianism’ in the philosophical study of Ethiopia in addition to its historical importance.

KEYWORDS: *Ethiopianism, Independence, Education & philosophical Study*

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia as one of the oldest independent country in Africa is the symbol of civilization. Ethiopia has long been a symbol of freedom for black people to govern themselves. In Ethiopia political administration was for centuries in the hands of African. From the ancient time, Ethiopia is the African country having her own organized religious institution performing various religious rituals, songs, and scripture. Ethiopia is a country having a unique written script, numerals

and symbols. Ethiopia is a country for the first time, which digs a grave for the colonial power. It is the country who has no freedom day to celebrate, but celebrating victory day every year, unlike other many countries in the world.

It is the country who served as an epitome for others in seeing as an example of self-rule and self-administration.

Ethiopian history and Ethiopianism is known and promoted by other non-Ethiopian scholars than Ethiopians themselves. Ethiopianism and Ethiopian history are not part of the curriculum in the current Western-centric Ethiopian school system.

Among Ethiopian elites, there is a large scale historical blankness in their country's ancient history. They have fought for Zero sum game ethnic politics to be superior over the other in the last forty years, especially twenty-seven years of the EPRDF ruling party lead by Tigrian Liberation Front. The current Ethiopian politicians are trying to build and preserve their own politics by vetoing the past and hammering previous heroes. Above all, in Ethiopia currently, the way in which students learn the content of the curriculum ignored Ethiopian people historical, social and cultural values. No doubt this is done in a planned way to minimize the culture of Ethiopianism from passing down to the new generation. This article, therefore, is discussing the need for incorporating Ethiopianism philosophy in the curriculum either in African philosophy or Ethiopian Philosophy as a chapter.

Statement of the Problem

Education in Ethiopia is colonized and it is deliberately taking the European approach. The philosophical studies in Ethiopia main focus are Western and Eastern philosophy with minor consideration of African and Ethiopian philosophy. This approach marginalized the various knowledge related to the ideological and religious movement in Africa that has to be hand on to the present generation. This situation leads to creating youth that aspires for foreign values than indigenous values. This study, therefore, investigates the role of teaching student the philosophy of Ethiopianism that enables to defend their country and solve ethnic rival which at the present inexcusable for the sovereignty of Ethiopia.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology involved in this study is Philosophical and Historical. It is Philosophical in the sense that it depends on the inquiry of arguments. It involved the use of in-depth critical analysis of the concept of Ethiopianism in its view from the religious and political perspective. It is Historical because it is based on the critique of the scholar on the historical period of the Ethiopianism movement.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this article is to recommend the incorporation of "Ethiopianism" as one philosophical, historical and ideological study in the Ethiopian philosophy curriculum.

Philosophical Studies in Ethiopia

Ethiopianism, Ethiopiawinet, and Ethiopianes is used interchangeably. However, Ethiopianism is mainly the philosophy, ideology, and movement in the world, taking Ethiopia as a symbol. Ethiopiawenet (Ethiopianess) refers to being Ethiopian it is the feeling we have for Ethiopia as an Ethiopian and the character we have and the way we behave. Ethiopian means those who born as an Ethiopian. No matter what, it is possible to use the word interchangeably as the writer prefers to use the term. In many works of literature the term Ethiopianism for the first time used by an-ex-Wesleyan

minister ManganaMokone when he founded the Ethiopian church. By whom the term is used for the first time is not an issue in all movement the term is used to set the goal of liberty.

Ethiopianism is not extensively taught in schools, both at the primary and secondary levels to Ethiopian children. Eurocentric perspectives have marginalized Ethiopian history. In no subject, Ethiopianism is acknowledged and taught with differing points of view to impress upon the spirit in the young generation. Ethiopianism is an enlightened perspective and representation of histories that African gain through severe struggle. The struggle is not limited to the breakdown of colonial power as it is seen in (Adewa) Ethiopia in 1896 and against fascism in 1935 by the same people, but also the struggle for religious liberation, and political independence in various parts of the black populations' movement.

After the victory over Italy in 1896, Ethiopia acquired a special importance in the eyes of Africans as the only surviving African State. After Adowa, Ethiopia became emblematic of African valor and resistance, the bastion of prestige and hope to thousands of Africans who were experiencing the full shock of European conquest and were beginning to search for an answer to the myth of African inferiority. Asante (1991).

The heroism, character of Ethiopians in different battles against colonial power and the effort they made to liberate other Africans is emblematic in the struggle for freedom and domination which present African youth should get the lesson from. Ethiopia traditionally symbolized for African Americans a mythical space, an idealized place of singular black power and a special promise. From slavery times to the modern era, the black American community saw Ethiopia as a site of special significance, a sacred land, the center of ancient black power and the prestige second perhaps in dynastic Egypt. Favorable scriptural and historical mention of the ancient African state had made the nation, however, defined geographically, an icon of black capability, potency, and sovereignty for generations of racially, persecuted black Americans (Shepperson 1953:9–18).

This symbolic country is at present in the state-sponsored ethnic rivalry. Ethiopia still existed and not collapsed like other countries, Somalia, Syria, and Libya not because the country has strong military power, but because of the persistence of the people and unity. Above all, what saves Ethiopia to be a collapsed state like other countries in the existing Ethiopian enemies sponsored ethnic rivalry is because of the remnants of the legacy of the past generation that handed down to the new generation orally.

For the purpose of divide and rule the boundaries drawn among administrative regions of the EPRDF the ruling (Ethiopian people Democratic Front) overlooks historic ties between regions that transcend ethnic line and language (Paulos and Getachew 2005: 33). The situation gradually intensifies ethnic conflict in the people.

Why Ethiopianism as content in Ethiopian education is critical? It is because teaching Ethiopianism as a philosophy is to create a form of culture, social and political movement that focuses on the nation as an integrated whole that the people of Ethiopia constitute the nation. Ethiopianism in today's Ethiopia is a political movement which struggles for the breakdown of ethnic extremism rather than dividing the people of the nation as Amhara, Oromo, Tigree, Sidama etc. to view and transform them to Ethiopian. This doesn't mean the different, unique culture among different communities are summed up into one, but it is to mean the differences should exist as an entity aspiring for the largest democratic nation where all are equal in the spirit of Ethiopians.

For the last twenty-seven years, ethnic extremism was privileged and Ethiopianess was silenced as if it is not important. Ethiopians or Ethiopiawienet was silenced and ethnic politics are privileged to serve the newly created political elite for their political dominance. The new elites who came to power after the military regime in Ethiopia history are the first elite groups who divided the country on the ethnic line for the purpose of divide and rule.

Why Ethiopianism in the curriculum? Ethiopianism in the Ethiopia schoolis one of the indigenous content marginalized or totally lost from the school curriculum. The liberation fighter and freedom activist use the concept to fight domination, colonialism and initiate their citizen to struggle for their freedom by teaching Ethiopianism using Ethiopia as a symbol of both political and religious freedoms. It is the content in which heroism is displayed to the young generation. Hence, promoting Indigenous Ethiopian knowledge and integrating in the curriculum is a key to success for the implementation of the principles of Ethiopianism (Teshome 2017).

Proponents of Ethiopianism argued that the African nation was one of the oldest continuous civilizations in the world and claim that some of the first examples of organized religious festivals, solemn assemblies and other forms of worship evolved in Ethiopia. By the 19th century, when Ethiopia was one of the few nation-states under African control, many people of African ancestry embraced it as evidence of the black capacity for self-rule.

Hence, the principles embodied in Ethiopianism should be transferred to the new generation. The legacy of the past generation can be passed on to the new generation when students are learning in the school.

The approaches in which the contents of the curriculum have been designed and the emphasis the curriculum is given to the indigenous perspectives determine the social, political and cultural reality of the society in shaping the youth. Hence, the spirit of Ethiopianism is among all other important values which comprise the social, cultural and religious self-sufficiency that has to be transmitted to the new generation of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is an inspiring symbol; we may honourably appreciate the real contribution of Ethiopian against colonialism. The spirit has to be part of the spirit of today's Ethiopian. It is because it is by itself an expression and goal of political, economic, social, and cultural freedom having holistic dimensions.

Ethiopianism represented black peoples' corporate liberation aspirations and their efforts to improve their religious, educational, political, economic and social status in society. The black people's approach to life was holistic, which explains why they saw no dichotomy in the challenge to their association with politics and religion. Hence, it is difficult to analyse Ethiopianism in separate and distinct dimensions (Duncan 2015).

Ethiopianism revealed itself in several parts of the world in different practices (Price 2003; 31–64). Such forms are as anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, against discrimination on the basis of colour and so on (Ibid). At present Ethiopians context Ethiopianism has to manifest itself as an anti-ethnic conflict to bring holism, sense of belongings among the different cultural group in the country, as it was during the various anti-colonial wars that made the country victories.

There is vital evidence that Africa had its own philosophy, even in ancient times, which disprove some Western scholars' view that Africans are intellectually inferior. Ethiopia; as a country which is in Africa as a continent is a cradle of mankind (Teshome 2016: 431–439), and the beginner of Civilization.

Philosophical studies in Ethiopia must be founded in Ethiopianism as education in China was founded on the Confucianism philosophy on Education and the Japanese and the Western are influenced by Buddhism and Greek

philosophy respectively (Elvis 2018;43–5). In my study of Indian philosophy also I observed it is largely influenced by Hinduism and various sects in India. In Ethiopia, there is one course in Ethiopian philosophy. This course is limited to the philosophy of Zara Yacob and Wolde Hiwot only, as if in Ethiopia philosophical works are limited to the works of Zara Yacob and Woldehiwot. Ethiopia is an ancient civilized nation and the origin of human being. Above all, the ancient education curriculum included philosophical studies. In the religious institution of Ethiopia, plenty of philosophical works are found. What is neglected in Ethiopia today is giving priority to indigenous knowledge. The Ethiopians currently give more emphasis on an outward knowledge of the European. At present curriculum, Ethiopian philosophy as a course is given only in the department of philosophy at Addis Ababa University. The problem is this course is limited to Zara Yacob and Woldehiwot which the original work is translated into English by Professor Sumner. Ethiopianism its root cause, the principle involved and as freedom movement is not included in the course. Ethiopianism As Duncan (2015) said is black people's *communal* aspirations for liberty. It is the struggles for this people to advance and free their religious, educational, political, economic and social life from the colonial domination. This movement symbolizes Ethiopia the country which has an independent religious and political institution for centuries when the other black people are under colony.

Philosophy and history department in Ethiopian universities has no impression to develop and teach Ethiopianism to students. The philosophy, the curriculum is dominated by western theoretical work. In no single place, the concept of Ethiopianism is found. It is important for the youth to know about how the country we live in came into existence. What was the place of the country in world history, manage their difference and became the symbol of other nations. Now Ethiopians are following a very different lifestyle of ethnic rival and many of the practices, values, and principles that have been followed in the ancient time and made the country never colonized are long forgotten. The youth have no information or studied in a distorted form by those who are struggling to be conspicuous for their personal benefit ignoring history and the society at large. It is obvious that what is happening in the past help to shape the present. Studying about the past in a philosophical way help to produce those students who are critical, creative and collaborative thinkers. Producing critical thinkers, not simply mean producing those students who know the right thing to do, but also producing those students that know how to do the right thing. Hence, teaching the philosophy of Ethiopianism help to equip the youth ideologically to fight against ethnicity.

In search of a sense of Ethiopian among the whole Ethiopian, Ethiopianism modelled and serve as an ideological instrument to promote Ethiopia for all Ethiopians equality. It also is philosophical that produce youth who think humanity than bound in minor tribalism or ethnicity.

It is obvious that the term Ethiopianism resulting from its occurrence in the Bible, which Ethiopia is referred to in Psalm 68:31 "let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to God". Ethiopia is mainly conceived as an ideal "African Zion" because of having an independent Christianity that served by the citizens themselves and free from colonization. The use of Ethiopianism as a concept was boosted after the victory of Ethiopia the country in Africa over Italian imperial power in the battle of Adwa in 1896. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ethiopianism>. The battle is considered the most important event in Ethiopia and African history. The main reason is that it is in this battle that colonial power is crushed even though not the only one for Ethiopia. Ethiopia therefore, is the country became emblematic for other black nations in the world.

One of the earliest evolution of the term Ethiopianism stems from a Judeo-Christian perspective. In the biblical passage of Psalm 68: 31, it is written: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God". Christians have interpreted

this Bible verse to mean a time when Africa, (symbolized by the word Ethiopia, because of the belief that Ethiopia was the first African nation that received Christianity through the contact of the Ethiopian Eunuch with the gospel in Samaria with reference to Acts 8:26–38), would beckon to God for deliverance from the oppression and suppression of the Europeans. The word, therefore, represented Africa's dignity and place in the divine dispensation and provided a charter for free African Churches and nations of the future (NwadiolorandNweke2014:16–27).

Beyond this religious interpretation the practical inference that Ethiopia experienced in history is more discovered as symbolic to the Black people over the world.

Ethiopianism stands against all discrimination, racial, religious, political and moral. It delivers background for realizing and re-proving history, the social world, mainly racial and economic discriminations (Price2003; 31–64). Hence, teaching Ethiopianism philosophy provides a political framework to stand against ethnic extremism. Especially, giving the course to philosophy students as part of Ethiopian philosophy help to analysis the present closely and critically. It also helps to question thoroughly why ethnic extremism is lingering in the country. It enables students to think rigorously to help them to find a solution and preaching the idea of Ethiopianism and the principles embodied in it.

In Ethiopia, ancient education given by religious institutions philosophized on the metaphysical question of reality indigenously which today's Ethiopian philosophy does not address. Those religious issues raised in different sects should be studied. It is because it helps to create understanding among the different groups in the country. Philosophical studies must address the cultural, political and social reality of the people from which it originated. If we look at Indian philosophy the Veda occupies a central place. The origin of Indian philosophy is the Veda, which is classified as the section of knowledge and that of ritual which formed Indian philosophy'. Hence, Indian philosophy, like that of the Chinese' and European philosophy rooted in Indian culture. It is very close to the Indians life. However, in an Ethiopian context, we completely diverted from the reality. The philosophical issues which the ancient Ethiopian education addressed are not part of the Ethiopian philosophy of today. A philosophical study in Ethiopia resides in Western thinking and theory. Though, the West themselves are looted many of the knowledge from Africa. The political and religious movement which symbolizes Ethiopia is not part of the general curriculum of the country and particularly that of Ethiopian philosophy. Ethiopian philosophy should be inward looking and aims to help Ethiopians deal with ups and downs of life with the goal of ones. First, it is only when the new generation knows themselves as Ethiopian citizen that start interacting with people from various cultures in the world with confidence.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethiopianism is anti-colonial, anti-racism, anti-Apartheid and anti-other discrimination both religious and political. Ethiopia is the centre of all this movement that attained an exceptional reputation in the eyes of black people, especially African. After the victory of Adewa against Italian colonial power in 1896. Ethiopia served as an emblem of other black nation under colony in fighting for their independence. However, the country which is an emblem of other black nation today is in the crossroad due to ethnic conflict. The Country which defeated the colonial power at the different battle is currently in a state of confusion and unable to transcend ethnic conflict brought from those created in her womb.

By introducing Ethiopianism into the Curriculum, the new generation should be made aware of the legacy of the forefathers. Ethiopia, which has lived as a model for other black people, today should not have to be abused.

Particularly, Ethiopia's philosophy of education needs to be taught Ethiopianism philosophy appropriately, because in the philosophy of learning the first thing is to understand what is in the country. And even more so, because the philosophy students are predestined, to teach and critically understand the reality on the ground.

Ethiopia's ancient narratives are spoken and spoken in the other world as an emblem of African liberation, and it is inappropriate to distract this narrative in Ethiopia by an extremist who is created from her womb. While our African and other black nation's brothers, including the whites, are proudly admiring Ethiopian history and appreciate the symbolic significance of *Adwa* for the black liberation struggle, Pan-Africanism movement, and religious freedom movement. However, today Ethiopians are in ethnic rival like the time before Adowa of *Zemene Mesafinit* (The "Age of Princes") this period was from 1769–1855 in Ethiopian history, when the country was divided within itself into several regions, belongs to different lords with no real central authority in the country. The two opposing views today in the country is Ethnicity and Ethiopian nationality. Favouring the second is possible through teaching history and the philosophy of Ethiopianism.

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