

Coloniality in the Scramble for African Knowledge: A Decolonial Political Perspective



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ABSTRACT

The scramble to describe Africa, and to name the African condition in the global information and knowledge economy is a colossal enterprise whose stampede is as suffocating as the Berlin Conference of 1884 that saw Africa being sliced up into convenient pieces of colonies, to be shared among the self-appointed masters of the universe. A bold assumption of this paper is that all powers, be they dominating or liberating, are accompanied by complementing knowledges. The resistance to Eurocentric knowledge of Africa by scholars and intellectuals in the African academy is as sweaty and as bloody as the nationalist and pan-Africanist battles that dethroned judicial colonialism in Africa and liquidated administrative apartheid in South Africa. Colonialism was accompanied by colonial knowledge of Africa, consequently Afrocentric activists and scholars are generating decolonial African knowledge in resistance and negation to coloniality, which is a power that is the oxygen of colonialism and which lives after colonialism has died. Combative Afrocentric schools of thought such as Afrikology, Afrocentricism, negritude, boleka criticism and decolonial thought have been generated by thinkers and philosophers in the global South to contest the Eurocentric domineering epistemologies on Africa. Decolonial thought and its view on 'unthinking' Eurocentric epistemologies on Africa is used to unpack the hidden elements of coloniality in the scramble for African knowledge.

Keywords: coloniality, Africanity, Euro-American Empire, pan-Africanism, Afrikology, Afrocentrism

1. INTRODUCTION

Quite simply it is the desire –one might indeed say the need- in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil of Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest...the image of Africa as the other world, the anti-thesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality (Chinua Achebe 1977: 12).

The cultural task at hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustations of colonial and slave mentality, to clear bushes and stake out foundations for a liberated African modernity. This is a process that must take place in all spheres of African life—In government, industry, family and social life, education, city planning, architecture, arts, entertainment, etc (Chinweizu 1985: 13).

Before the conquering powers of Europe sat in Berlin to carve Africa up into convenient pieces of space for colonisation, they had to convince themselves and their victims, the Africans, that Africa was a ‘heart of darkness’ whose people were lacking in humanity and therefore needed to be civilised and humanised by Europe. An image of Africa as bereft of humanity and wanting of civilisation and salvation had to be constructed. In observation of this imperial design to distort African history and alter the image of the continent to suit colonial agendas of the West, Ahluwalia and Nursery-Bay (1997: 2) states that:

The history of Africa is, of course, one of cultural oppression on a major scale. Nowhere else was the oppression so comprehensive, so savage. African history was denied or appropriated, African culture belittled, the status and standing of Africans as human beings was called into question.

The history of Africa was disputed and the humanity of Africans denied. Accompanying the disputation of history and the denial of humanity were the physical violence and forced labour that were inflicted on Africans while their minerals, wildlife and lands were forcibly appropriated by the colonists. Capturing the violent colonial encounter vividly, Cesaire (1995: 55) notes that:

I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out ... I am talking of millions of (women and) men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life- from life, from the dance, from wisdom. I am talking about millions of (women and) men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkies.

I am talking about natural economies that have been destroyed- harmonious and viable economies- adapted to indigenous population- about food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries, about the looting of products, the looting of raw materials.

From Cesaire’s vivid explication, the colonial experience was a total experience that dominated the entire life and existence of the colonised like a prohibitive curse. It was an all-consuming injury that covered all spheres and facets of the life of the colonised subject. This paper concerns itself with how coloniality, the accompanying power, successor force and survivor condition of the colonial experience, continues to infect and pollute African imagination, knowledge and political communication today. Defining coloniality, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) says:

Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead refers to long standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and

knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe Coloniality all the time and every day.

This paper seeks to discuss how coloniality as a toxic power that is embedded in the African imagination and knowledge production that go with the knowledge climate of western modernity, continues to influence views on African knowledge and disrupt even what on the outside might appear to be liberated and liberating African discourses. The entanglement of African imaginary and knowledge production in colonial matrices of power and the imbrications of coloniality in African knowledge is a subject of inquiry in this paper.

The paper will explore colonial ‘knowledge’ of Africa as generated by the colonists and decolonial knowledges of Africa as discharged in resistance and negation to coloniality by Afrocentric knowledge producers in Africa. This paper also discusses how some combative African scholars have resisted and negated coloniality to unleash Afrocentric discourses that constitute a decolonial epistemic rebellion and a decolonial turn that is part of a response by the global South to global coloniality and imperial designs.

2. COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICA

To insulate itself from the guilt of the violence, the plunder and the pillage, that goes with the project of colonialism and its programme of conquest, imperialism has to essentially confabulate an image of the colonised that justifies the violence and seeks to atone for the plunder and the pillage. The imperialist essentially wants to commit the crime of colonialism, reap the bounty of benefits, and still escape the name of a criminal and earn the title of saviour and benefactor. This imperial paradox is captured clearly in Rudyard Kipling’s poem, *Take Up the White Man’s Burden*, which seeks to portray the colonist as a saviour, he says:

Send forth the best ye breed—
Go send your sons to exile
To serve your captives’ need
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child
Take up the White Man’s burden
(Kipling 1929)

To clear the name and the conscience of the colonist and exonerate him of the crime of colonialism, the colonial victim is altered from a human being and ‘thingified’ to an object that is ‘half devil and half child’. The marauding colonialists that invaded the territories of the colonised are yet the ‘best’ of the ‘breed’ of Europe and not the criminals that they are. For the crime of colonialism to be carried out with a clear conscience, the humanity of the colonised must be diminished while that of the coloniser must be elevated to that of dispenser of salvation whose heavy ‘burden’ is

to 'serve your captives need'. Not only the truth but knowledge itself has to be distorted and falsified to suit the colonial conscience and the vampiric imperial ego. Chinua Achebe confronts the racism of Joseph Conrad whose narrator in *The Heart of Darkness*, while aboard a steam engine invading the Congo for colonial purposes, describes Africans thus:

We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil...the steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of the black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? (Joseph Conrad quoted in Achebe 1977: 5).

Though fictional, Conrad's narrator bears a view of Africa and a 'knowledge' of Africans that is symptomatic of colonial regard of Africa and her people. The continent is seen as 'prehistoric' and her people as primitive pagans who are in deficit of humanity. The 'cursing' of the Africans, their 'praying to' the coloniser and their 'welcome' to his religion and culture represent the three different reactions to colonialism that Africa gave. The colonial regard of Africa as an existential entity 'to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil' is typical colonial imagination of Africa as the 'burden' of the white man to civilise and save from darkness and the trappings of prehistory.

While colonial 'knowledge' of Africa conveniently scatters comforting myths of Africa as a vacant prehistoric wilderness to be benevolently colonised by the white man in his saintly 'burden' to save the pagan from darkness, it is 'knowledge' that is bereft of truth but pregnant with racism in its Eurocentric spin to dispute the humanity of Africans to justify the crime of colonialism. Recording the European enduring appetite to distort the history of Africa and dispute the humanity of Africans to justify colonialism, Thomas Pakenham (1991: 103) notes that:

Ever since Roman times, Europe had nibbling at the mysterious continent to the South. By mid-1870s much was still mysterious. It was known that Africa straddled the equator with uncanny precision. But no explorer had penetrated far along the dangerous latitude of zero towards the interior. No one knew what Africa's greatest river was or where it led. Europeans pictured most of the continent as vacant: legally *res nullus*, a no-man's land. If there were states and rulers they were Africans. If there were treasures, they were buried in African soil.

The scramble for Africa, which saw the convening of the Berlin Conference of 1884, was equipped with the colonial 'knowledge' of Africa and that of Africans as a wilderness populated by wild beings that had no share to the laws and rights of man as known and understood at the time. Eurocentric 'knowledge' of Africa was thus a distortion and a refusal of the humanity and history of Africans. Expounding on the toxic effect of Eurocentric 'knowledge' on the mind and being of the colonised, Anibal Quijano (2000: 556) observes that:

The Eurocentric perspective of knowledge operates as a mirror that distorts what it reflects, as we can see in Latin American historical experience Consequently, when we look in our Eurocentric mirror, the image that we see is not just composite, but also necessarily partial and distorted. Here the tragedy is that we have all been led, knowingly or not, wanting it or not, to see and accept that image as our own and as belonging to us alone. In this way, we continue being what we are

not. And as a result we can never identify our true problems, much less resolve them, except in a partial and distorted way.

While Quijano writes from the Latin American colonial experience and historical locus of enunciation, his enlightening observations accurately mirror the African colonial experience, where African knowledges were distorted and the self-understanding and self-knowledge of Africans were disfigured, and displaced as European colonists sought to replace Africanity as a knowledge system with a Eurocentric sense and sensibility in what would be understood as epistemicides. Philosophising on this slaughter of Africanity in the interests of colonial Eurocentric interests, Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (2007: 45) says:

Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking. It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible being the foundations of the visible ones. The invisible are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of this side of the line and the realm of the other side of the line. The division is such that the other side of the line vanishes as a reality, becomes non-existent, and is indeed produced as non-existent. Non-existent means not existing in any relevant or comprehensive way of being. Whatever is produced as non-existent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other. What most fundamentally characterises abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line.

The design in the insanity of Western and Eurocentric thought, imagination and ‘knowledge’ of Africa and the total global South, is to erase the colonised from mainstream existence and place them as things and objects in the realm of inconsequence and otherness. For that reason, the injustices of territorial invasion, dispossession of lands and siphoning of resources that are meted out on the colonised do not; to the European and Western colonial psyche carry such moral guilt as it is injustices that are considered done to lesser beings and non-beings altogether.

On the refusal of the complete humanity and being of the colonised by the coloniser and the ‘mythical’ portrait of the colonised, Albert Memmi enriches our debate in this paper by saying:

Just as the bourgeoisie proposes an image of the proletariat, the existence of the coloniser requires that an image of the colonised be suggested. These images become excuses without which the presence and conduct of a coloniser, and that of the bourgeoisie, would seem shocking. But the favoured image becomes a myth precisely because it suits them too well. Let us imagine for the sake of portrait, the often cited trait of laziness (of the colonised). It seems to receive unanimous approval of colonisers from Liberia to Laos, via Maghreb. It occupies an important place in dialectics exalting the coloniser and humbling the colonised. Further it is economically fruitful (Memmi 2003: 123).

The coloniser does not only distort the history of the colonised, slaughter their knowledge systems and empty their heads of self-confidence and their hearts of the emotional stamina to live without colonial domination. But he goes ahead to manufacture accusations and labels against the colonised, among many of the accusations are – laziness, drunkenness, backwardness, propensity to violence, dirtiness, stupidity, ignorance, bad luck and spiritual damnation – all of which require the coloniser to intervene and save the colonised from the abyss of many ‘lacks’

and ‘deficits’ that bedevil him and his lot. It polishes the ego of the coloniser to reduce the colonised to a being of shortages and inabilities while the coloniser is lifted to the status of benevolent saviour and benefactor whose intentions must be beyond question. The colonised is, in a strange twist and bizarre stretch of paradox, expected to be grateful for colonialism, which is oftentimes perfumed and presented as civilisation, modernisation, development and sometimes democratisation.

The coloniser does not end by levelling damning accusations at the colonised to satisfy his definition of the victim of colonialism as an inadequate being who deserves to be developed, democratised or civilised by the coloniser. The coloniser goes on to lift from the colonised’s knowledge bank what is rich and that which is usable for his purposes. So ably, Anibal Quijano (2000:13) describes this cunning theft of the colonised’s wealth of historical and intellectual property by the coloniser:

In the beginning colonialism was a product of a systematic repression, not only of the specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols or knowledge that were not useful to global colonial domination, while at the same time the colonisers were expropriating from the colonised their knowledge, especially of mining, Agriculture, engineering, as well as their products and works. The repression fell above all, over the forms of knowing, of production of knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns and instruments of formalised and objectivised expression, intellectual or visual. The colonisers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning.

Clearly, while the coloniser manufactures mythical meanings of Africa and Africans as entities of inadequacy, inabilities and shortages, on the other hand the coloniser forges mystical illusions of their own superiority, adequacy, advancement and grandeur. More explosive is how the coloniser participates in the appropriation of knowledges and intellectual inventions of the colonised.

In the fashion of epistemic plagiarism and tradition of intellectual theft, the knowledge goods of the colonised are summarily stolen and rebranded and then discharged as the coloniser’s own. At the end of the day, the much vaunted inventive superiority and knowledge wealth of the West is traceable to the deep traditions, historical oral reservoirs and memory banks of colonised peasants and other African custodians of knowledge. Africa and the larger global South have contributed so much slave labour and knowledge power to the development and advancement of the imperial empire.

Colonial ‘knowledge of Africa’ is composed of criminal denials of Africa’s history, fraudulent disputations of the humanity of the Africans and distortions of their knowledge that are accompanied by disfiguring their image as a people. All these tinkering and tamperings with African history, the humanity of the Africans and their image are discharged through epistemic assaults on Africa that were meant to fertilise the ground for colonialism, and not only that, but seek to establish colonialism as good for its victims. This section also supplies evidence that African knowledges are stolen by appropriation by the colonists and that the coloniser is a trader in comforting myths and a bargainer in false accusations and labels that seek to perfume the crime of colonialism and install it as the ‘white man’s burden’ to save and civilise the African.

The tragedy of it all is that, long after administrative colonialism was dethroned, there remains in the African mind-set and imaginary, including in the knowledge goods from the African academy, coloniality of thought or coloniality of knowledge. Coloniality still has the many handed grip of the octopus on the African knowledge processes and landscape. The following section of this paper aims to take a helicopter look at how some African intellectuals have combatively written back to empire by discharging intellectual discourses of refusal and rebellion to coloniality in its manifestation of toxic colonial 'knowledge' of Africa and the Africans. It will be seen also that even in the African academy and the larger global South knowledge landscape, there is no chorus but some discords and vigorous debates on African knowledge and knowledge production.

3. AFRICA WRITES BACK TO EMPIRE: DECOLONIALITY IN THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE

Eurocentric and racist naming and descriptions of Africa in its colonial mode have not been having a monologue on Africa. Just as the scramble for Africa's lands and resources was met with fierce nationalist, Marxist and pan-Africanist resistance, Eurocentric scrambles for African knowledge and its distortions have been challenged and are still being challenged. From the Negritude movement to the larger pan-Africanist and nationalist movements, African intellectuals and political activists have been contesting Eurocentric cultural, political and social domination including the distortions of African history and the peripheralisation of African knowledge systems. Leading among many of these combative Afrocentric scholars have been historians, novelists, political scientists and linguists who have proposed different and sometimes debatable strategies of refusal to the cultural technologies of domination by the Eurocentric Empire.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009: 92) has emphatically argued that African thinkers and intellectuals should desist from centring European languages as modes of their intellectual production and expression. In European languages, Ngugi sees a vehicle of coloniality and cultural domination that African knowledge producers should shun and prefers indigenous African Languages that carry the history, the memory and sensibilities of Africa. Only then, when African Languages are prioritised as media of communication, does Ngugi see an Africa renaissance. He argues that:

Is an African Renaissance possible when we the keepers of memory have to work outside our own linguistic memory? And within the prison house of European linguistic memory? Often drawing from our own experiences and history to enrich the already rich European Memory? If we think of the intelligentsia as generals in the intellectual army of Africa including foot soldiers, can we expect this army to conquer when its generals are held prisoner? And it's worse when they revel in their fate as captives (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009: 12).

Ngugi sees European languages as imprisoning and colonising to African imagination and knowledge production. For him, African history, experiences and imagination cannot be expressed in the language of the coloniser and still be liberating. To describe the African condition and express the African experience in English or in French does not only exalt the cultures of the colonisers but also bears the paradox of enriching colonial languages by loading them with African idioms, proverbs and sensibilities that are appropriated by the colonial languages.

Ngugi's argument has provoked fierce debate and contestations. Chief among the critics of Ngugi has been Chinua Achebe (1964: 47) who argues that:

Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given a language and I intend to use it . . . I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit new African surroundings.

As opposed to Ngugi, Achebe believes that European languages can be used to express African experiences and sensibilities and even be used to confront Eurocentric sensibilities as long as they are domesticated and appropriated like the military technologies that Africans inherited from Europe and used to fight European colonialists. What makes Achebe convincing is the painful truism that without European languages, Africans from different countries would not be able to communicate among themselves as there are no African languages that have achieved continental understanding. Pan-Africanism itself, for now, can only be experienced through the agency of colonial languages.

On the other hand, decolonialists such as Chinweizu argue that African knowledges and sensibilities should be judged on their own terms as African knowledge goods are independent from European models and templates. To that effect, Chinweizu has volcanically argued against literary critics and intellectuals who use European standards and values to judge African history and literature. Chinweizu (1985: 3) says it is an injustice to look at:

African Literature through European eyes. If at all they know that African culture is under domination, they seem to think that it must remain so. Most of them would be ashamed to admit it, but the fact of the matter is that these African critics view African literature as overseas department of European literatures, as a literature with no traditions of its own to build upon, no models of its own to imitate, no audience or constituency separate and apart from the European, and above all, no norms of its own.

Chinweizu believes African knowledge systems and modes of self-understanding like history and literature should be allowed to locate on the geography of Africa and not be uprooted for comparison with European modes. Chinweizu is in direct confrontation with European epistemic universalism and narrow intellectual internationalism that seeks to see Africa as an aspirant to Europe and a blind follower of European standards.

Okot P'Bitek also combatively pours scorn on European scholars and researchers in African history, literature and anthropology, who, together with their Eurocentric African intellectuals, have given themselves titles of expertise and offices of judges to African culture and knowledge. P'Bitek insists that only Africans themselves can describe and judge the African condition and express the African experience in their languages and sensibilities. P'Bitek (1986: 37) insists that:

The professor of literature, who having done his so called research on oral literature teaches and examines students who sit on their buttocks on benches and take notes. Let the so-called African

critic wax rich selling his penned wares in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish or Kiswahili, to outsiders. He does not qualify. For who can this fellow address, in what language and on what standard among the Africans of tradition? The tribe called anthropologists perished towards the end of the colonial era. The remnant, who called themselves Africanist, never had a chance. The Christian missionary brothers and the black Bishops and clergy can now only lie openly that “there is something godly in African art.” But liars make bad critics. The so-called judges at drama and music festivals who dish out rusty tins, miscalled trophies, can wait: They shall wait in vain. It is only the participants in a culture who can pass judgement on it. It is only they who can evaluate how effective the song or dance is, how the decoration, the architecture, the plan of the village has contributed to the feast of life, how these have made life meaningful!

The experts and expatriates together with African insiders who believe that they can understand African culture using western scientific researches and methodologies are, to Okot P’Bitek, wasting time. The missionaries and other crusaders who have given themselves the office of educators and some of them judges of African history, literature, art and anthropology, are also ‘liars’ who do not know what they are talking about. Only Africans ‘of tradition’ can know Africa and express its condition, because only they are the Participants in African knowledge and history.

Concluding his condemnation of Joseph Conrad’s racism as displayed in *The Heart of Darkness*, a novel that depicts Africa as the devil’s headquarters and the residence of darkness, where Africans in their lack of humanity and dire want of civilisation are found, Chinua Achebe (1977: 19–20) who was at the time resident in Europe, argues that Europeans must look at Africa as a continent and Africans as human beings, with their own foibles and also gifts. He says:

I would suggest from my privileged position in African and Western cultures some advantages the West might derive from Africa once it rid its mind of old prejudices and began to look at Africa not through a haze of distortions and cheap mystifications, but quite simply as a continent of people- not angels, but not rudimentary souls either- just people, often highly gifted and often strikingly successful in their enterprise with life and society. But as I thought more about the stereotype image, about its grip and pervasiveness, about the wilful tenacity with which the West holds it to its heart, when I thought of the West’s television and cinema and newspapers, about books read in schools and out of school, of churches preaching to empty pews about the need to send help to heathen Africa, I realised that no easy optimism was possible. And there was in any case something totally wrong in offering bribes to the West in return for their good opinion (Achebe 1977: 6).

For Chinua Achebe, there are no apologies to the West for what Africa is. They have to see Africa as it is, a continent with a people who have their failures and their hopes and who are equal citizens of world society. Western stereotypes of Africa as a continent of wants, deficits and defects, must be dismissed for what they are: racism that is designed to justify colonialism and imperialism. The thingification and objectification of Africans is a ploy to portray them as deserving of the violence of colonialism and its attendant technologies of domination. Chinua Achebe belongs to that breed of African intellectuals and scholars such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and others who have combatively confronted Western distortions of the image of Africa and the projection of Africans as lesser beings, if not things and objects that are deserving of the violence

of colonialism and the punishment of exploitation in hard cheap labour in the mines, farms and other sites.

There is no chorus, however, in the African academy on how intellectuals have variously reacted to colonial distortions of African knowledge and insulted the African being. While scholars in the Negritude, pan-Africanist, nationalist and Afrocentric schools of thought have generally agreed in defence of African history and the humanity of Africans, others differ. One among many of those who have differed is Achille Mbembe (2002: 630) who has described both African nationalism and Marxism as 'fake' philosophies. Mbembe says that nationalism and Marxism are:

On the other hand, both consist(ing) of superstitions that function to persuade us that nothing is happening in Africa because history (the slave trade, colonisation, and apartheid) has already happened, and anything more would be nothing but repetition of these original events. Further, the African subject cannot express him or herself in the world other than as a wounded and traumatized subject I demonstrate that these two narratives falsify the event (whether slavery, colonisation, or apartheid) in the very act in which they claim to name and decode its significations ... such superstitions continue to beleaguer the African discourses of the self turning them into discourses that are both possessed and haunted (Mbembe 2002: 630).

While Marxism and African nationalism as narratives of African resistance to colonialism have their own pathologies that are emanating from their entanglement and imbrications in western modernity and its toxic accompaniment of coloniality in the first place, Mbembe's dismissal of their utility in Africa borders on Afro-pessimism and self-hatred of an African. The insistence by Mbembe that Africans should not be haunted by the colonial experience and its wound smacks of denialism of colonialism and its enduring effects on the African condition. The myth perpetuated by Mbembe that colonialism long ended and narrations by Africans of colonial wounds should end is exploded by Ramon Grosfoguel (2007:219), who charges that:

One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a "postcolonial" world. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in over 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same colonial power matrix. With juridical political decolonisation we moved from a period of global colonialism to the current period of global coloniality.

The scars of slavery and the wounds of colonialism are still being felt within the African political, economic, social and indeed spiritual condition. To argue otherwise, as Mbembe and others have done, is to trade in dangerous myths of colonial denialism and self-hatred where Africans seek to titillate the egos of colonists by being the first to deny the continuing effects of colonialism and ongoing coloniality in Africa. Archie Mafeje (2011: 31–32) argues that:

We would not talk of freedom, if there was no prior condition in which this was denied, we would not talk anti-racism if we had not been its victims, we would not proclaim Africanity, if it had not been denied or degraded; and we would not insist on Afrocentricism if it had not been for Eurocentric negations Of necessity, under the determinant global conditions an African

Renaissance must entail a rebellion, a conscious rejection of past transgressions, and a determined negation of negations.

Mafeje sees continuing African choruses of complaint and narratives of woundedness as only a continuing reaction and fitting natural response to colonialism and coloniality. It is only Africans who continue to suffer the economic, political and spiritual squeeze that comes with the legacies of colonialism and the continuing vagaries of coloniality. Mueni wa Muiu and Martin (2009: 56) argue that:

Decolonization was just a façade barely disguising the continuation of colonisation by other means and leading to the mere “flag” (or juridical) independence of utterly impotent and powerless quasi-states lacking the substance of sovereignty.

Clearly, Afrocentric intellectuals dispute the Mbembe’s postulations that seek to lend credit to suspicious argumentations about colonialism being a distant ‘event’ whose wound Africans should better forget about or be accused of historical ‘superstition’ and blind ‘Afro-radicalism’ bordering on nativism and xenophobia. Without cushioning African nationalism and Marxism from due criticism, this paper seeks to gesture that Mbembe’s collapsing of historical African tragedies of slavery, colonialism and apartheid to a mere ‘event’ that happened and passed must not escape censure for its denialism of coloniality and its attendant symptoms that manifest in African polities and in the African academy itself.

4. COLONIALITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND POWER IN AFRICA

Coloniality as a power that is emphatically present in the African condition and experience accompanies itself with knowledges of Africa that conserve it and its enduring design to dominate the African sensibility. The presence of African intellectuals and thinkers who, like Mbembe, are sold on producing intelligent excuses for colonialism and who confabulate lofty denials of the continuing colonial ‘wound’, only witness half the tragedy that coloniality presents in Africa and its academy. Issa G. Shivji (2003: 11) decries that:

The metamorphosis of the African intellectual from a revolutionary to an activist, from a critical political economist to a post-modernist, from a social analyst to a constitutionalist liberal, from an anti-imperialist to a cultural atavist, from a radical economics professor to a neo-liberal World Bank spokesperson, from an intellectual to a consultant is blatant, unrepentant and mercenary.

Shivji witnesses that there has been degeneration and a loss of agenda among some intellectuals in the African knowledge economy and landscape. The collapse to a culture of consultancy and fall of the African intellectual from a philosopher to a sophist who is a hireling of forces of imperialism and institutions of coloniality that sponsor him to produce ‘favourable knowledge’ is a real challenge. Most of what is consumed as African knowledge produced by African thinkers with Eurocentric sensibilities is sponsored discourses that are flavoured with coloniality as a power that remains after colonialism and seeks to perpetuate global imperial designs of dominating Africa and siphoning her natural resources by the Euro-American Empire.

Africa is currently under the yoke of Eurocentric 'Coloniality of knowledge', which, accompanied by the financial muscle of the West and the military might of the entire Euro-American Empire as represented by NATO, has made Europe the centre of global power. Domineering Eurocentric 'knowledge' of Africa spewed through the global media, education systems, and churches together with control of the world's finances through IMF and the World Bank, supported by the control of nuclear weapons of large-scale destruction by America and her allies in Europe, has made the West seemingly all powerful. Speaking to this relationship of power that combines knowledge, money and violence, Okot P'Bitek (1986:39) says that:

I am insisting that in any society, anywhere, in any age, there are two types of rulers: namely the artist who provides and sustains the fundamental ideas, the foundation of society, and the political chieftain, who comes to power with the aid of his soldier and rich business brethren, who merely puts these ideas into practice in ruling or misruling society.

While the artist represents the intellectual who produces ideas that form the knowledge by which a society lives, the soldier stands for the stick of military might that coerces everyone into the will of the powerful, and the 'rich brethren' are those that control the carrot of money that bribes and entices everyone to discipline. It is with this three legged creature of knowledge, money and violence that the Euro-American Empire runs the world and dominates the global South today. This controlling power, which at once pays and also punishes, is coloniality, and it survives even after administrative colonialism and judicial apartheid have long collapsed. By way of its conclusion, this chapter will elect to gesture towards an African decolonial turn of knowledge as a remedy to the visibly powerful spectre of global coloniality that presses down Africa and the entire global South. This decolonial turn must complete the unfinished tasks of the now well-known combative schools of African thought and resistances to global imperial designs.

5. CONCLUSION: AN AFRICAN DECOLONIAL TURN

This paper has demonstrated how Eurocentric naming and description of Africa and expression of the African historical and political condition are infected with coloniality. This epistemic infection manifests itself in distortions, disfigurements and condemnations of Africa and the African. The dehumanisation and thingification of the African appears to be part of the imperial project of justifying colonialism and coloniality by presenting the African as a condemned object that deserves the violence and exploitation by the imperial coloniser as part of the Salvationist, civilising and modernising mission. While throughout the ages, Africans have responded and resisted colonial knowledge of Africa with provinces of combative thought and knowledge in the shape of negritude, pan-Africanism, nationalism, Marxism, Afrikology and Afrocentricism including black consciousness, this paper proposes an African decolonial turn. A decolonial turn that entails an 'insurrection of previously subjugated' African knowledge of the self that is delinked from Eurocentric episteme.

Decoloniality as a project of the African decolonial turn that this paper proposes 'involves a double gesture: first, the re-embodiment and relocation of thought in order to unmask the limited situation of modern knowledges and their link to Coloniality, and second, another thinking that calls for plurality and intercultural dialogue, especially within the global South' Pheng Cheah

(2006: 14). This points to the fact that African knowledge of Africa must be grounded in Africa and its genealogy must be rooted in African modes of thought, history and experiences. As African polities and states struggle for economic freedom and seek to complete the unfinished project of decolonisation, decoloniality is the ideological and epistemic weapon of choice that will liberate the African imagination from the octopus grip of coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of power that this paper has described.

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