

HISTORY AND MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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INGOIKITHI

Iningizimu Afrika iyilizwe lezinhlanga eziningi ezahlukene. Ukuze ikungabibikho indlela eyodwa ebuka izinto ngombono wase Ntshonalanga kwezomlando, umlando wezwe laseNingizimu Afrika kudingeka uveze izimvo zonke zezinhlango zezwe kwezomlando. Kwabomdabu balelizwe umlando kudingeka ubuke izinto ngeso noma ngokubona nokuhumusha kwabomdabu.

Lokhu kusho ukuthi isizinda sokudabuka saseNingizimu noma ichwebakazi laseNyaza (Victoria), kufanele kusukelwe kuso ukuhumusha umlando. Uma abamnyama bezobamba iqhaza elibalulekile kun yaka wamashumi amabili nanye ekhulwini, osuqoshwe njengonyaka wabomdabu baseAfrika, imfundo exhumeke olimini lwabomdabu kuphoqelekile ukuba isetshenziswe kuwo wonke amazanga emfundo egcina ebangeni lesihlanu ngaphandle kwalokho abomdabu ngeke baze bathuthuke kwezomnotho.

Into ebaluleke kakhulu ukwenza lokhu njengoba umbhali owaziwayo uChinweizu esikhumbuza, ukuqikelela ukuthi indawo evundile yokubhaliweyo kunoma yiluphi ulimi ingenziwa kuphela ngenqubo kaHulumeni emfundweni ebophezela abantu ukuba bafunde ulimi, kanye nasezinqubeni zikaHulumeni ezisemthethweni kwezokuxhumana, ezikhuthaza abantu ukusebenzisa lolimi.

Okusemqoka ngezilimi zabomdabu baseNingizimu Afrika ngukuthi zonke zidabuka emsukeni owodwa. Ngakhoke umzamo omkhulu kudingeka kube ukukuthaza lezozilimi ezindaweni lapho zingakhulunywa khona, zifundiswe kulezozidawo.

Isibonelo: Ukufundwa kwesiVenda ezikoleni zakwaZulu, isiXhosa kwezaBetswana nesiZulu kwezaBesuthu njalonjalo. Enye indlela mhlawumbe engenza kube nolimi olulodwa lwabomdabu olusemthethweni kungaba ukuthuthukisa izinga lesifanakalo ukuze kungathathwa ngokuthi kukhona ulimi olwenziwa ungqoshishilizi phezu kwazo zonke lezizilimi eziyisishiyagalolunye ezikhulunywa ngabomdabu.

INTRODUCTION

This topic will be analysed from an Afrocentric perspective. An attempt will be made to give a clear definition of history from this perspective. The principal reason of linking the history of the native African majority to that of the Nile Valley Civilisation will also be explained in detail. It will be argued that native Africans of South Africa and those of the whole African continent are solely responsible for the creation of the Nile Valley Civilisation. Regarding the issue for mother-tongue education in South Africa, I will look at the mother-tongue education in the 1950's in this country as well as some attempts on the African continent to introduce mother-tongue education. Lastly, the role of native African intelligentsia and politicians in promoting mother-tongue education in South Africa and the desirability of having one native African language as official language in the country.

THE PORTRAYAL DILEMMA IN HISTORY

South Africa is a multi-cultural country because of the different cultural histories. White supremacy and oppression of cultural groups, the hegemonic European centred school history textbooks, for example, have always been foisted upon the throats of the native African majority. Dr R. E. Chernis, for example, tells us that the Xhosa people were presented as "kafir" marauders and warlike "kafirs", being the cloud of prosperity of the colony. The Zulu people were also depicted as savages who had always settled quarrels among themselves by a kind of savage tournament. Chernis states that King Shaka was described as a merciless savage who destroyed his enemies, especially women and children, with the most atrocious cruelty, while King Dingane was Shaka's equal in cruelty and excelled him in cunning and treachery.¹

The change in the interpretation of history in school textbooks seems to be as elusive as ever. Dr Chernis puts the problem as follows: "The conventional and indeed sterile approach of... school history text books still in use simply does not meet the demands of present day South Africa."² Chernis concludes by reminding us

R. E. Chernis: "The representation of the history of the South African interior in the first half of the nineteenth century in South African school history textbooks," pp. 7-8. Paper delivered at History School Textbooks Writing Conference held at Rustenburg, 3 November 1993.

Chernis: "School history textbooks", p. 30.

that South African history never did belong to the British, it did not, he further notes belong to the Afrikaners, nor should it in a future South Africa belong to the native African majority. According to him South African history belongs to all who call South Africa home.³

AN AFROCENTRIC DEFINITION OF HISTORY

How can we make South African history belong to all who regard South Africa as their home? How can we eliminate what Prof. C. Tsehloane Keto calls “hegemonic Eurocentric history”. The appropriate definition of history has been given by Keto, one of the outstanding Temple University group of Afrocentric historians. He writes:

Information about events and actions that affected people in the past and the subsequent consequences of those events and actions, is what later generations call history. This information is first and foremost centred on what people actually did and what happened to them directly or indirectly. This “people centred” information is transmitted by one generation to another generation through the matrix of communication and across the sea of time in two ways. First, it is transmitted through oratory by elders within families and by senior members of a community. Second, the information is “taught” in a formal setting by professionally trained instructors such as teachers and professors operating in temporary and permanent social institutions created by a community for specific purpose of advancing the learning of the youth. We call these institutions rites of passage, schools, colleges, institutes, academies, technikons and universities.⁴

The history of South Africa has therefore to be rewritten to be acceptable to all its multi-cultural peoples; it must be multicentric. We need Afrocentric, Asiatic and Eurocentric perspectives. Keto regards this as one of the greatest academic challenges and strongly suggests that a history of New South Africa must be written to express both the story of human oppression and story of human liberation simultaneously. Keto reiterates that only a multicentric perspective allows an honest dialogue and debate between

Ibid.

C. Tsehloane Keto, *Vision, identity and time: The Afrocentric paradigm and the study of the past*, (1955), p. i.

Afrocentricity and Eurocentricity and the relationship to imperialism.⁵

A COMMON HERITAGE

The sketch map provided in this paper clearly shows that all native Africans (including these in South Africa) originated from the south cradle, namely the Great Lake near Lake Nyanza (renamed Victoria by the British). For example, when asked where they originated, the Zulu people reply as follows: "sadabuka ohlangeni" (We originated from the papyrus marsh). Hence when they saluted their hereditary *amakhosi*, they use the expression: "Wena wohlanga" (you from the papyrus marsh). Furthermore, when asked how they migrated down to South Africa, the Zulu people reply: "sehla ngesilulu" (we came down by the papyrus canoe). Some colonial historians have erroneously interpreted *isilulu* to mean grain basket. That container cannot serve as a means of transport. There is therefore no dispute about the common heritage of all native Africans. The Senegalese historian Cheik Anta Diop, in his book: *The cultural unity of black Africa*, says Africans belong to the Southern Cradle and are all culturally united.⁶ Diop has warned us in another of his books that unless we link the history of the whole African continent to that of Kemet (Egypt), it will remain confused and distorted. He warns:

The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Kemet (Egypt). In particular, the study of languages, institutions, and so forth, cannot be treated properly; in a word, it will be impossible to build African humanities, a body of African sciences so long as that relationship does not appear legitimate. The African historian who evades the problem of Kemet (Egypt) is neither modest nor objective, nor unruffled; he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic. Imagine, if you can, the uncomfortable position of a Western historian who was to write the history of Europe without referring to Greco-Latin Antiquity and try to pass that off as a scientific approach.⁷

Keto, *Vision, identity and time*, p. 43.

C. A. Diop, *The cultural unity of Black Africa: The domain of patriarchy and of matriarchy in Classical Antiquity*, (1990), chapter 2

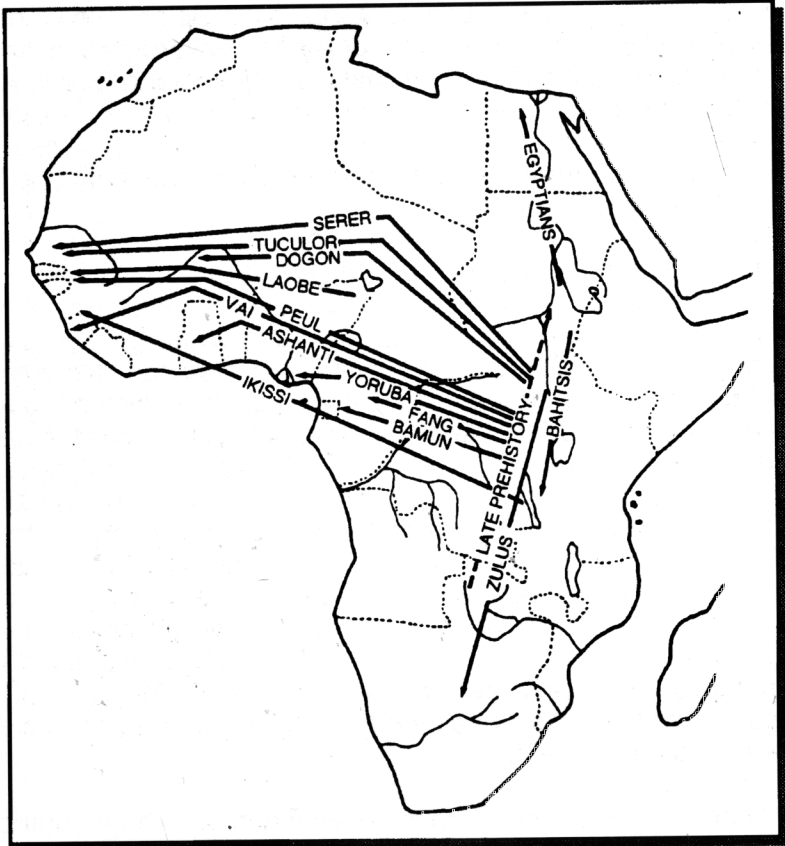
C. A. Diop, *The African origin of civilization: myth or reality?* Edited and translated by Mercer Cook, (1974), p. xiv.

Although there has been, as yet, no sign of heeding Diop's warning in writing South African history, many African-American historians and a few on the African continent have already produced many Afrocentric books.⁸

The population of the Nile Valley was black, homogenous, physically and culturally developed as much as any large group can ever be. These native Africans, according to John Henrike Clarke, Professor Emeritus of African and World History at Hunter College, shared a common material culture in pre-dynastic times. Clarke argues that the country known today as Egypt was called by native Africans *Kemet*, *TaMerry* or *Sais*. The ancient Hebrews called it *Mizrain*. Both the Greeks and Romans referred to the country as the "*Pearl of the Nile*." The Greeks gave it the simple name *Aegyptus*.⁹

Yosef A. A. ben-Jochannan, *Black man of the Nile and his family*. (1989); C. Williams: *The destruction of Black civilization*, (1991); I. van Sertima (ed.) : *Egypt, revisited: Journal of African civilization*, (1982); T. Obenga: *Ancient Egypt and Black Africa: A student's handbook for the study of Ancient Egypt in philosophy, linguistics and gender relation*; and many others.

J. H. Clarke, *African people in world history*. (1993), p. 22.



MAP OF MIGRATIONS OF THE PEOPLES OF BLACK AFRICA.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF KEMET TO CULTURE

The general assumption is that native Africans, including those of South Africa, made no worthwhile contribution in human civilisation. However, Asa G. Hilliard III, the Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education and a historian at Georgia State University, tells us that mankind (hominids) began in Africa near Lake Nyanzaa (Victoria) nearly five million years ago and was dark-skinned. First, Kemet (Egypt) is Africa's oldest recorded classical civilisation. Second, Kemet is the "child of inner Africa." Third, Kemet, like the rest of the African continent, began as a Black civilisation. Fourth, Kemet is the world's second oldest recorded nation. Fifth, native Africans driven from Kemet by various foreign invasions occurring

after the twelfth dynastic period, about 1675 Before the Current Era (B C E), settled in other parts of Africa. Hilliard further notes that there were also many other Nilotic and equatorial native Africans throughout the millennia. Therefore Kemet was a major influence on world civilisation and is the main parent of “Western” civilisation. Furthermore, ancien Kemet is culturally unified to the rest of the African continent.¹⁰

AFROCENTRIC HISTORY AND TEXTBOOKS

From the foregoing it becomes clear that the challenge facing South African historians and history school textbook writers, in particular, is to link South African history of the native Africans to that of Kemet and the Nile Valley civilisation. There are, however, disturbing signals that hegemonic Eurocentric perspective in school history textbooks is here to stay. Even the *Mail & Guardian* of 14 July 1995 poured some cold water on the high expectations among native Africans that Afrocentric perspective would feature in history school textbooks. This newspaper reported that by the time the amended history syllabus had been rubber-stamped by various committees and approved by Education Minister Sibusiso Bengu, hardly any of the proposed changes to rid the South African history of its White supremacist bias, had been made. The newspaper blamed the faceless “Old Guard” for retaining the hegemonic Eurocentric approach in history syllabus.¹¹

It is often suggested the there is no evidence of African contribution in history. There is, not through institutionalized history channels, but through *izithakazelo* (patronymic legends), *izaga* (proverbs), *amahub* (national and war songs) and *izinganekwane* (fairy tales). But most importantly, as Hilliard has observed, sources of evidence for Kemetite education are sacred texts written in *mdw ntru* (renamed hieroglyphics by the Greeks): pyramid texts, papyri, coffin texts, etc. There are monuments: Pyramids, *tekenu* (renamed obelisks by the Greeks), stelae, carvings, paintings, pottery and European “classical writers,” some of whom were eyewitnesses (Greek and Roman). Furthermore, the ancient and contemporary

A. G. Hilliard III, *The Maroon within us: Selected essays on African American community socialization*, (1995), p. 210.

Weekly Mail & Guardian, 14 July 1995, p. 10.

cultural practices of inner-Africa (religion, family practices, symbolic structures, educations, etc.) when compared to those of ancient Kemet are very similar.¹² Thus, the often repeated argument that there are no sources for the contribution of the native Africans to human civilisation is baseless.

A LACK OF BLACK PERSPECTIVE IN EDUCATION

The continuation with the teaching of hegemonic Eurocentric history does not augur well for the prosperity of the country's schools and universities. We should learn from the experiences of the United States universities in the 1960's. Dr Maulana Karenga, an outstanding Afrocentric historian, tells us that most respectable universities in the United States today have African-American studies. As to how this was achieved, Karenga writes:

For a long time until the Sixties in the United States, there was no Black studies. There were no serious studies of African people. This, of course, was an institutional arrangement to justify, verify and perpetuate the contention that Blacks had done nothing in history. The reasoning was that if you haven't done anything, you can't have a course on it. So, what the institution was set up to do was to prove that there was no Black history to teach. This was accomplished by leaving it out. Our response, then, was to take over the university and stop the teaching, and inform the administration that until we have some Black, Brown, Red and Yellow studies, there will be no more White studies. For what we were really learning was White studies.¹³

The delay in introducing multicentred South African history in our schools and universities will, therefore, inevitably lead to explosions and revolutions. Indeed, Prof ESKIA Mphahlele has already warned about this danger. Giving his Graduation address in May 1995 at the University of the Witwatersrand, Mphahlele argued that ever since the beginnings of the Black Consciousness Movement in the early seventies, which also renewed African awareness of the Pan-African ideal, native Africans have been questioning the assumptions of the culture that brought the white man to his status

A. G. Hilliard, *Kemet concepts in education*, in I. van Sertima (ed.), *Egypt, child of Africa*, (1994), pp. 379-380.

M. Karenga, "The meaning and challenge of African history" in A. Addai-Sebo and A. Wong (eds.), *Our story; A handbook of African history and contemporary issues*, (1988), p. 18.

of supremacy.¹⁴ With regard to the previously white university 1995 campus unrest, Mphalele reiterates that these campuses simply have to rewrite the rules, review old procedures, protocols, exercise traditional reflexes which go centuries deep, stretch beyond the frontiers of the intellect and its problem-solving capacity.¹⁵

NO MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION IS CULTURAL ABORTION

The second part of this paper deals with mother-tongue education in South Africa. Mother-tongue education is as important as the pro-colonial history of the country. In addressing this issue we should heed Hilliard's observation that we cannot change the *status quo* of anything having not first begun analysing history of the *status quo*, second, context (empirical data) and lastly, theory. History, according to Hilliard, must inform theory.¹⁶ In our case we should commence analysing mother-tongue education from the pre-colonial time, colonial period, Apartheid era and the present situation. South African native African languages predate all colonial languages. They should therefore be the basis of unity in the country. Regarding the issue of linguistic unity, Cheik Anta Diop has correctly observed in the *Black Africa* that linguistic unity based on a foreign language, however one may look at it, is cultural abortion. Diop has strongly warned Africa as follows:

It would irremediably eventuate in the death of the authentic national culture, the end of our deeper intellectual and spiritual life and reduce us to perpetual copycats, having missed out on our historical mission in this world. Anglo-Saxon cultural, economic, social and even political hegemony would thereby be permanently guaranteed throughout Black Africa. We must remain radically opposed to any attempts at cultural assimilation coming from the outside: none is possible without opening the way to others.¹⁷

It has been established worldwide that teaching primary school children in their mother-tongue rather than in any other language lead to greater result in permanent literacy and numeracy and

E. Mphalele, "The burden of history and the university's role in the re-creating of its community, its environment." Graduation address, University of the Witwatersrand, 18 May 1995, p. 18.

Mphalele, "Burden of history", p. 4.

Hilliard, *The Maroon within us*, pp. 156-157.

C. A. Diop, *Black Africa: The economic and cultural basis for a federated state*, (1987).

makes the child a better integrated and adjusted citizen in his community.¹⁸ It is also now a certainty that a person usually feels most at home in his/her mother-tongue must be a proficient vehicle for conducting modern life. Therefore half alienated product of colonial and Apartheid education needs to have his/her mother-tongue modernised if she/he is to feel at home and function at her/his best in modern industrial culture. Chinweizu, the Nigerian historian, while highlighting the significance of bilingualism, has cautioned against half-baked bilingualism, which he correctly regards as changing "sharp knives for blunt ones."¹⁹

We must not think that mastery of a foreign language at the expense of mother-tongue education can result in children becoming more intelligent. Virtually all IQ tests, according to Hilliard, depend on languages. Yet, there is no indication that any IQ test has been developed that takes into account the variations in vocabulary, syntax, paralinguage, or other aspects of language for which major cultural alternatives or styles exist. Hilliard tells us that the psychometricist's insistence and dependence upon "standardisation" seems to require an assumption that differences in performance can be compared in a "standard" way through "standardised tests." Yet, even a superficial examination, with a limited knowledge of linguistics and socio-linguistics in particular, reveals that it is a gross error to proceed in that. Hilliard concludes by stating that we may not know all that is needed to remedy poor assessment. However, we can clearly see where major problems exist.²⁰

Most uninformed opponents of mother-tongue education in South Africa argue that science is not possible in indigenous African languages. This assumption is incorrect, as Chinweizu has observed, that we must not overlook the fact that applied science is being done, and has always been done in African languages. We may mention *izinyanga* (native African traditional doctors), farmers, ironsmiths and goldsmiths.²¹ The *Izinyanga* Association of South Africa talks shop with one another in African languages. It may also be noted that science was done in African languages from the

-- Chinweizu, "Toward a Black world language policy: the Nigerian case" in *Black Renaissance*, 1, 1, (1994), p. 93.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²⁰ Hilliard, *The Maroon within us*, p.37.

²¹ Chinweizu, "Black world language policy", p. 98.

beginning of science and of civilisation in the Nile Valley. The Kemites and Kushites who invented astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, algebra, agronomy, medicine, metallurgy; whose achievements are embodied in the Nile Valley pyramids, temples and monuments - those ancient native African scientists did not speak or write Afrikaans, English, French or Greek.²²

“TO SPEAK IS TO ASSUME A CULTURE”

To speak, according to Frantz Fanon, means above all to assume a culture.²³ Culture has been defined by Maulana Karenga as the totality of thought and practice by which a people creates itself, celebrates, maintains and develops itself and introduces itself to history and humanity.²⁴ With the demise of Apartheid in South Africa, the Government of National Unity has guaranteed the equality of all eleven languages of the country before the law. These languages are spoken as mother-tongue by various peoples. They are Zulu 21,96%, Xhosa 17,03%, Afrikaans 15,03%, Northern Sotho 9,64%, English 9,01%, Tswana 8,59%, Southern Sotho 6,73%, Tsonga 4,35% Swati 2,57%, Venda 2,22% and Ndebele 1,55%.²⁵

South Africa is by far the most advanced on the African continent in modernising indigenous African languages. The nine indigenous African Languages in South Africa can already convey the exact sciences (mathematics and physics), philosophy etc. They have modern dictionaries. They have also been the languages of homeland governments used in public, political documents and acts, such as parliamentary debate, drawing up of constitution and legal code. Furthermore, experienced radio announcers have also played a prominent roll in modernising these nine languages. Ironically, all this tremendous work of modernising the indigenous languages was launched and speeded up after the introduction of Bantu Education in the 1950's. Indeed, the author was one of those pupils who received their primary education through the medium of mother-tongue.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²³ Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white mask*, (1967), p. 17.

²⁴ M. Karenga, "Struggle and culture: Toward a National Black value system", in Addai-Sebo and Wong (eds.), *Our story*, p. 211.

Department of Education and Training brochure, "The facts: South Africa's new language policy", p. 5.

The achievement of modernising the nine African indigenous languages in South Africa, was however, based on the evil intention of the Apartheid government aimed at oppression and rigidly dividing native Africans. The main aim was the promotion of white supremacy and creating misunderstanding among the native African majority. This aim of the Nationalist government was doomed to failure from the beginning.

THE CHALLENGE: ONE NATIVE AFRICAN LANGUAGE

The fundamental challenge facing the majority of native Africans is therefore, understandable. The question of mother-tongue education raises mixed feelings and cynicism in their minds. But the question remains: where do we go from here? What is the way forward? In a situation where the facts are confused with reality, Marcus Garvey, one of the renowned African Jamaican leaders and father of Modern Africa nationalism, writes as follows:

Let no voice but your own speak to you from the depths.
 Let no influence but your own rouse you in time of peace
 and time of war; hear all, but attend only to that which
concerns you.²⁶ (My underlining).

The solution in our multicultural society is a daunting task. The challenge is to improve the nine indigenous African languages and use them as mother-tongue in education. The main aim should be to use them as uniting factor for all native African people. South Africa, in terms of the constitution, is theoretically a multilingual country. To use these languages as a uniting factor, we may by start using them interchangeably throughout the country to break the walls created by Apartheid government. For example in KwaZulu-Natal, Venda may be used in schools with Zulu. In the Northwest Province, Xhosa may also be used. In the Eastern Cape, Tswana may be used, while in the Northern Province we may introduce Zulu, etc. etc.

These may be the additional languages on top of the existing home languages of those provinces. This may culturally enrich the lives of the native Africans since all these languages, like the Indo-European ones, originate from one common cradle. For example *kgosi* in Tswana is *inkosi* in Zulu. Similarly, the Tswana proverb: *la*

²⁶ T. Martin (ed.), *African Fundamentalism: A literary and cultural anthology of Garvey's Harlem Renaissance*, New Marcus Garvey Library, 5, (1991), p. 5.

nt'swana ledujwa le sele metsi, means *libujwa liseva* in Zulu. These officials are the *kgosi/inkosi's* right hand men in their *izigodi* (wards, villages). Thus, the whole exercise of using native African languages interchangeably may result in having one native African language as the official language in South Africa.

THE MINORITY RULE OF COLONIAL LANGUAGES

Until now native African South Africans have made knowledge of English and Afrikaans a prerequisite for holding any public office. Despite the guarantee given by the present constitution for equality of all the eleven languages before the law, using them as mother-tongue in education is still far from being a reality. Most of our native African members of national and provincial parliaments, adhere to the use of English as the medium of debate in parliaments. Clearly these members are not addressing the native African majority (as I have already shown by percentages the number of those who speak the nine languages as their *home languages*).

The English language is spoken as *home language* by only 9.01% of the South African population. But despite this fact most of our native African politicians still address their political rallies in a foreign language not understood by illiterate and semi-literate adherents. Using foreign languages not understood by the majority of the people, does not augur well for the use of mother-tongue education in South Africa. Cheik Anta Diop has strongly criticised native Africans who suffer from this habit as follows: "Using colonizer's language is a convenient way to avoid facing complaints of the population, who may be illiterate but are not without good sense."²⁷

The persistence by native African intelligentsia and politicians in ignoring and looking down upon indigenous languages of the majority, is the biggest stumbling block in introducing mother-tongue education. The consoling idea is that not all intelligentsia are needed in bringing about a change in any given situation. Maulana Karenga tells us that there must be "the national vanguard",²⁸ of those who are conscious and committed. This group is desperately needed. The main thing in a multicultural nation is to have a cultural base. Leaving such a base is tantamount to committing national suicide

²⁷ Diop, *Black Africa*, p. 10.

²⁸ M. Karenga, *Kawaida theory: An introductory outline*, (1980), p. 111

for the African cultural group. There was a time in the 1960's, when African-Americans abandoned their cultural base. Harold Cruse, in his seminal work: *The crisis of the Negro intellectual*, cautioned them as follows:

The Negro intelligentsia cannot give cultural leadership on these questions because they have sold out their own birthright for an illusion called Racial Integration. Having given up their strict claim to an ethnic identity in politics, economics and culture, they haven't a leg to stand on. They can make no legitimate claim for their group integrity in cultural affairs. They take the illusion of the integrated world of the creative intellectuals as the social reality, and do not know how to function within its cultural apparatus.²⁹

Harold Cruse's warning to African-Americans is still relevant to native Africans in South Africa today.

AN AFRICAN CONTINENTAL ISSUE

The problem of mother-tongue education is also an African continental issue. Some Anglophone countries in Africa have already made attempts to solve mother-tongue problems. They are, among others, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. These attempts are significant since, according to Chinwizu, ever since political independence from Europe was achieved, the African use of non-African languages for official communication has grated against African self-respect.³⁰ When the change of direction came in these Anglophone countries, the need to teach persons who do not know how to read and write by using their mother-tongue before giving them instructions in the official language was highlighted. By so doing it was being recognised that the African indigenous languages are an integral part of the country. Therefore, in Sierra Leone a government White Paper in 1970 stated that the policy of government was to introduce the teaching of Sierra Leone languages in all schools.³¹

The second Anglophone country to tackle mother-tongue education was Ghana, the first African nation to get independence in March 1957. Ghana first introduced English as the official lan-

²⁹ H. Cruse, *The crisis of the Negro intellectuals*, (1984), p. 111

³⁰ Chinweizu, "Black world language policy", p. 87.

³¹ *Namibia Today*, 11 October 1989.

guage. But this saw a decline in the interest to develop and study indigenous languages. The English language held greater prestige and became a sought after commodity. To balance the attitude of Ghanaians to their own languages, the government established the education committee in 1973. This committee recommended that the mother-tongue be included amongst the examination subjects at the end of the primary course. This gave recognition to the mother-tongue as a significant education tool. The additional provision made for training in the indigenous languages in Ghanaian teacher training colleges was another effort to neutralise the prestige value of English and promote the development of indigenous African languages.³²⁹

The third African country to promote mother-tongue education was Nigeria. Professor Babs Fafunwa, the then Federal Minister of Education moved in 1990 to implement the language component of the National Policy on education. A poll to gauge the feeling of the population was conducted by the News Agency of Nigeria. The result of the poll was 53% for the policy and 54,3% against it. The supporters of the mother-tongue education correctly argued that it would enable pupils to understand lessons easily, help promote cultural identity and a sense of belonging. But most importantly, they further noted that mother-tongue education pointed out that school subjects are best taught in English, that the introduction of language policy would waste national resources, slow down the pupils' learning process, and endanger the provision of a foundation for western education in future.³³

We can note from the foregoing that the division in this most populous African nation between those who were for and against the language policy, was almost equal. This almost equal division of opinion has prompted Chinwizu to suggest that a public reconsideration of the language of instruction in schools in Nigeria is advisable. Chiwizu's main reason is that the larger issues raised by both sides of the mother-tongue controversy, should be analysed by Nigeria's language needs and how to satisfy them. That would be appropriate context, he maintains for selecting the languages of instruction in Nigerian schools.³⁴

³² *Namibia Today*, 11 October 1989, p. 7.

³³ Chinwizu, "Black world language policy", p. 91

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Even if we take these three African experiments into consideration, we will still come to the conclusion that native South Africans have better infrastructure for launching mother-tongue education. We should not lose sight of the fact that Bantu Education was in force in South Africa for many decades and that during those decades native Africans became more proficient in their mother-tongues, spoke, read and wrote them fluently. The most negative impact though of that Bantu Education was the antagonistic attitude it created among native Africans. It overstressed the differences for the sake of divide and rule and white domination.

FANAKALO?

Therefore the biggest challenge must also be to adopt and develop one native African language as the national language of communication and culture. This language should replace English and Afrikaans as soon as adequate preparation has ensured that the average citizen is proficient in it. A start may be made by having a re-look at Fanakalo. It has been used widely by various nationalities in South Africa ever since the mineral revolutions in this country. Through using it as a medium of communication, most people from Southern Africa are able to communicate and understand one another. Fanakalo is neutral in that it is a combination of various languages used mainly at work situation. Swahili which is spoken by most nations in East Africa, according to Chinweizu, has like Fanakalo many loan words. Chinweizu tells us that it initially developed as a commercial language. Therefore Fanakalo needs polishing through publications of booklets and books. ³⁵

CONCLUSION

South Africa is a multicultural society. To avoid hegemonic Eurocentric analysis of our history, multi-centric approach in history should be adopted. For the native African majority, this analysis will be Afrocentric. The Southern Cradle, the Great Lakes or the Nile Valley Civilisation, must be the point of departure. If native African people are to play a meaningful role in the twenty-first century, which has been ear-marked as the century of the African, mother-tongue education should be implemented throughout the primary education period, otherwise native Africans in South Africa will not develop economically. The most crucial point in achiev-

ing all this, as Chinweizu has reminded us, is to recognise that the infrastructure for a literature, in any given language, can only be created through public policies in education which oblige people to learn the language, and through public policies on official communication which encourage people to use that language.³⁶

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.