The History of Social Movements in Somalia through the Eyes of Our Elders within a Diasporic Context

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice

Education Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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Abstract:

This work brings an anticolonial Indigenous reading to the history of social movements in Somalia to highlight the different moments in which Somali peoples have mobilized around key issues to seek social-political transformation. The liberation movements inspired generations of Somalis by bringing to the forefront key Indigenous ideals that constitute what it means to be Somali during the fight for independence and mobilize the masses against colonial rule. They also ignited the social consciousness of the peoples and captured their imagination, enabling generations of Somalis to lay claim to their humanity. The idea of looking at such a history is to create spaces to re-think some of the values within the contemporary moment. Sixteen Somali Elders were interviewed to draw on their experiential lived cultural capital and to engage them in processes of knowledge production as they narrated histories of the past and articulated their visions for the future. The objective of this study is to address the following questions: 1) What can we learn from the history of social movements in Somalia, both at home and in the Diaspora?; 2) How do Elders conceptualize the history of social movements in Somalia in and through Somali dhagaan (ancestral way of life) worldviews?; 3) What does the articulation of Somali history from an African trajectory offer in terms of our anticolonial struggle?; and 4)
What are the implications of broaching these stories in Diaspora communities? The Elders’ narratives signified the centrality of Somali *dhaqan* philosophies as a cultural system for Somali peoples in making sense of the current political moment. This work is devoted to explaining the ways in which Somali *dhaqan* could be operationalized as a cultural index to make sense of our past and present while keeping a gaze on the future.
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Chapter One

Introduction:

Over the last two decades mass media reporting on Somalia by various outlets such as Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and Al-Jazeera, to name a few, continue to highlight the many challenges the country faces. In contrast to such reports, there is very little media examination of stories of hope, resilience, and community rebuilding in Somalia. Moreover, very little of the work being carried out by Somali peoples to end human suffering is mentioned; rather, any media discussion about Somalia peoples usually centres on some sort of humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes, or that is waiting to happen. In contrast, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993), in his book, Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom, pointed out that the West, especially the United States, controls all the media outlets and consequently all reports and images that the so-called Third World see of themselves. This structure of representation explains why I, as a Somali, cannot recall the last time I heard anything positive being mentioned about Somalia by any mass media outlet, particularly Western media. In fact, beyond Somalia, throughout Africa, media outlets seem to be focusing on the negative and highlighting the failures. But even in relation to Africa, the lack of a functioning state government in Somalia places it in an even more precarious place.

Since the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, Somalia has been experiencing political turmoil. This unrest has claimed millions of lives and displaced millions of Somalis across the globe. Subsequently, to the world Somalia has become synonymous with civil war, famine, chaos, terrorism, and piracy. While the ways in which Somalia has been represented is important, my primary concern is to consider the root causes of the prolonged conflict in
Somalia. In part, I wish to examine how colonialism continues to play a role in the current state of affairs. I contend that the present unrest in various African nations, in particular Somalia, stems from colonial and neo-colonial relations. Mahmood Mamdani (1996), in Citizen and Subject, provides an exceptional synopsis of the nature and the complexities within colonial rule over native populations and emphasizes the idea that “the colonial state was in every instance ahistorical” (p. 16). Thus we must not ignore the histories that gave birth to all post-colonial states, and the resistance movements that opposed such rule, because there is an outright denial of the histories of our struggles by colonizers. Therefore, we must not only remember our history, we must also operationalize our history to continue the struggle against colonialism.

Almost every time you turn on the television, where there is a political crisis in a nation anywhere in the developing world, particularly in Africa, Somalia is used as an example of what ought not to be allowed to happen. There are many examples I can cite, all stressing how the very existence of our identity exemplifies an inherently dysfunctional state. I will never forget watching the images of Abdiwali Abdiqadir Muse, the alleged Somali ‘pirate’ who was arrested at sea, being escorted by what looked like a hundred FBI agents, shackled as he smiled at the cameras. Watching this on television felt like a scene out of a Lawrence Hill’s The Book of Negroes (2010). To me it spoke to the histories of the millions of Africans who found themselves in a stranger’s land. As such, I remember thinking, why do they need so many agents to escort him? What message are they trying to send and to whom? If Somalia is a space configured by the colonial powers that have dominated it and continue to dominate it, is it not time that we view Somalia differently as a means of thinking our way out of the current miserable conditions and working towards a precise victory over our circumstances? The present day predicament in Somalia calls for a reengagement with Somali *dhaqan* cultural foundations
as a means of articulating questions of self-determination and sovereignty. We cannot go back in history to erase colonialism and its aftermath, but it is our collective duty to collect the pieces of our past and to march forward and find new ways out of the brutal colonial realities of today.

This leaves me with a few questions. How then can we as a people reclaim our histories to contest and shape our futures? How can I, as a Somali living in the Diaspora, pick up some of the pieces of the fragments and begin putting them together to make sense of my past? What lessons can I learn from our past? How have our Ancestors resisted and continued to struggle against colonialism? We are our past and our past is within us, and we are also our future. More importantly, how do we as Somalis re-think our Indigenous cultural foundations to transition through these difficult times? As I try to answer the above questions, I have chosen to look at the history of social movements in Somalia as an entry point to the conversation. From the onset of European colonization, the colonized in Africa, Asia, and the Americas have tried to make sense of the violent nature of colonialism. Our Ancestors have not only tried coping with the initial impact, they have also articulated visions of how they wanted to live in their communities, and have kept our collective struggles alive through mass mobilization and organizing of social movements. Without their courage, visions, and selfless sacrifice I do not think we would be still calling ourselves Somalis. I contend that there are lessons that we the colonized must learn from with respect to the anticolonial struggles of previous generations and the social movements that have emerged from them. We continue to strengthen our anticolonial resistance politics and evoke the courageous spirits of our Ancestors as we try to make sense of our daily realities.

My research examines the history of social movements in Somalia to highlight the different moments in which Somali peoples have mobilized around key issues to seek social-political transformation. As I stated earlier, over the last two decades Somalia has been in the
grips of a civil conflict, and most of the literature on Somalia has subsequently paid little
attention to the effects of the conflict and the role that cultural foundations can and have played
to resolve this prolonged civil war. I believe research is needed to provide a historical
understanding of how social movements of the past engaged in social action to influence
political change. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) articulates this process of struggle as he states:

In the particular case of Africa, people struggled against the slave trade and slavery; against the colonial invasions and occupations by forces armed with the latest technologies; and today they continue that titanic struggle against neo-colonial encirclement. Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, African people fought wars to preserve their independence against the various invasions from Europe. Under the colonial phase they fought wars for national independence. Today Africa is still engaged in wars to complete the national democratic revolutions as the very first and necessary step towards social change. And in all these phases, the struggle to bring about people’s power, social change, a new society is still continuing with even greater intensity as imperialism and its internal allies in Africa put up barrier after barrier. (p. 54)

Here wa Thiong’o gives a well conceptualized, historically grounded point of departure to
engage in conversation about the geniuses of the anticolonial struggle in Africa. His ideas are
useful for my present work for two reasons. First, they allow me to situate my discussion in the
history of the counter-insurgency and to map out the resistance movements in Somalia. Second,
they allow me to delineate some the values of the peoples and the Indigenous principles that
were operationalized to push for social change. In looking at the history of social movements,
my aim is to create a space to think through the key lessons of those movements as a way of
addressing some of the contemporary challenges facing Somali societies. By interviewing
Somali Elders who are knowledgeable in Somali history and have participated in, or have
witnessed, some of the historical struggles of various social movements, I hope to document the
stories of struggle, selfless sacrifice, and triumph as a means of enabling them to conceptualize
and historicize some of their lived experiences for future generations.
In this work I conceptualize the history of social movements broadly to engage in discussions about these movements that have been central to decolonizing struggles in Somalia’s pre-independence phase. The liberation movements inspired generations of Somalis by bringing to the forefront key Indigenous ideals that constitute what it means to be Somali during the fight for independence and mobilize the masses against colonial rule. They also ignited the social consciousness of the peoples and captured their imagination, enabling generations of Somalis to lay claim to their humanity. In their efforts to decolonize, these movements gave way to Somali nationalism to orchestrate some of the heroic challenges to colonial rule. Social movements are powerful engines that push for social, political, and institutional change in any given society with a wide array of intentions. In Somalia, the organizing of social movements around key issues exemplifies an organic expression of social and political life that speaks to a mode of cohesion that has historically permeated Somali society.

This thesis is, in many ways, devoted to raising discussions about social moments in Somali as an entry point to engage in conversations about being Somali in our times. The idea here is that central to any decolonization struggle are key identity claims championed by the colonized as they assert their voices in the struggle. I firmly believe that those identity claims not only signify the ways in which Somali peoples stood in opposition to the colonizers’ ways, but also offer us a radical mode of thought equipped with social-political cultural capital to exercise self-determination. This historical cultural capital is best preserved by the Elders and the stories they keep for the community. As shown throughout this dissertation, the Elders’ accounts of Somali history offer us unique perspectives that have not been recorded in textbooks and/or committed to in public memory. The most profound aspect of this thesis as highlighted by all the Elders’ narratives is the fact that most of the interviewed Elders kept reverting to
Somali *dhaqan* worldviews and notions of *Somalinimo* as a social political identity. Therefore, it is essential for us to examine the Elders’ ideas of this Somali identity during the height of the armed struggle, which can provide us guidance in a time of political unrest. It is particularly important to discern from the Elders’ narratives what that Somali identity can mean to Somali youth living in Diaspora communities.

As a collective, social movements speak to the ways in which various elements of civil society have come together to resolve pertinent issues. Therefore, it is essential to think through the ways in which those historical processes can be operationalized to address the current conflict and transform our societies. The process I am alluding to here is decolonization. Frantz Fanon (1963) reminded us long ago in his seminal work, *Black Skin White Mask*, that a true decolonization can only be understood as a historical process that ultimately culminates in changing the social order. It is an initial violent encounter of two forces “opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies” (p. 36). Fanon adds that decolonization is a calling into question of the whole colonial situation and its aftermath. There are political, practical, and pedagogical prisms for understanding how previous generations of Somalis have organized for social action. As such, studying this history provides an avenue for transforming both the present and the future through operationalizing some of the fundamental ideals of social movements of the past.

Ania Loomba (1998), in her book, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, pointed out that “Colonialism had exercised its sway over 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe. This fact alone reminds us that it is impossible for European colonialism to have a monolithic operation. Right from its earliest years it deployed diverse strategies and methods to control representation” (p. 19). Therefore, we must interrogate how the colonized have been represented to ensure the
supremacy of the colonial order, and the implications of colonial strategies on the colonized populations. In my opinion, Somalia is not only in the grips of colonialism but the colonizers are also constructing and misappropriating various fragments of our histories within mainstream society. As such, for the last two decades we have gone from being a famine-stricken nation to one in the midst of a brutal civil war, to a failed state, to international piracy, and more recently we are back to being a famine-stricken people.

Sadly we Somalis have blamed ourselves for the current unrest in Somalia and we also draw on Eurocentric discourses to explain what is going on in our homeland, to our detriment. Edward Said (1978) long ago pointed out “the authority of academics, institutions, and governments…. Most important, such can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce tradition… whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it” (p. 94). Said, with his brilliant articulation of colonial discourse produced by academia, captures the pivotal role that such discourse plays in colonization. Ironically though, most Somalis have a very informed conceptual understanding of the colonial dynamics that drastically influence events unfolding in Somalia, and most of us allude to authoritative knowledges during our discussions about Somalia, mainly towards the end of our conversations as we get to the crux of a debate, and with some understatement. Many suggest that if the West ever decided to stop meddling with our affairs the situation would improve overnight. From the looks of it, achieving this task would take nothing less than a miracle. Nevertheless, our collective duty is to search for internal solutions no matter how enormous a task that might be.

This critical dialogue in the community and our prevailing sentiments are very powerful despite the contradictory stance. The colonial order is implicated in the political unrest in
Somalia, so there is an epistemological cultural capital from which various narratives are being articulated. Such discourse is profound because it could be utilized to mobilize the peoples in their struggle for freedom against colonialism. Moreover, it highlights a sense of awareness that Somalis have as well as our ability to see the power dynamics and unequal power relations within a portrait of the colonizer and colonized. Kwame Nkrumah (1970), with his theory on consciencism, argued long ago that a social revolution brings a philosophical consciencism in the struggles of the African as a means of dispositioning Western thought. This category of philosophy is an African philosophy rooted within African worldviews. In essence it is about a way of seeing the world through a particular lens anchored in an Indigenous culture. Within the Somali cultural context this category of thought would be encapsulated in dhaqan (ancestral ways of life) worldviews as a social order operationalized by all those who trace their ancestry to Somalia. At the heart of Somali dhaqan are culture and identity. The term dhaqan in Somali means a way of being. Dhaqan is an interlinkage of Somali worldviews and cultural systems in which Somalis function in everyday life. Somali dhaqan worldviews are founded on dhaqan cultural philosophies, which are expressed through beliefs and actions and largely transmitted orally from one generation to another. Dhaqan philosophies are contained in: Somali language, folktales, proverbs, songs, ceremonies, cultural artifacts, perfuming arts, myths, and xeer [customary law]. They are operationalized to harmonize Somali social-political and cultural institutions.

From the outset, highlighting Somali voices in my work is crucial because not capturing some of the key voices from the community would imply that the critical body of knowledge does not exist within the Somali community. The reality is quite the contrary; this knowledge is within the community and I must engage with it to highlight the salient features of neo-
colonialism and the subsequent Somali *dhaqan* knowledges that have been generated in response. Therefore, it is essential for me to work with Somali worldviews as I concurrently work with these knowledges. Such a stance will allow me to move away from the dominant notions that only the voices of the colonizer can objectively articulate the political crisis in Somalia. In this line of thinking, what makes matters worse in Somalia’s case is we are often left without allies to point out the colonial injustices and the subsequent articulation of the issues from a Eurocentric perspective.

In his writings, Ayi Kweu Armah (2010), *Remembering the Dismembered Continent*, attests:

We the people of Africa… as our home; that regimes imposed by invaders, from Europe…have attempted to configure African space and time in ways beneficial to themselves…formalized in Berlin in 1885, the residual fragment was further subdivided into separate plantation-style colonies. (p. 9)

As argued by Armah, we are indeed living in an age of profound imposition. Somalia was colonized and carved up by the Italians and the British colonial powers, with the South set up as an Italian colony named Italian Somaliland, and the North a protectorate called British Somaliland. Today these regions are tied to the colonial metropolis. The colonial masters’ domination is quite evident in the ways in which all traditional Somali values are devalued. Fanon (1967b), in *The Wretched of the Earth*, long ago captured this colonial imposition when he stated:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely by hiding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes a dialectical significance today. When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effects consciously sought by colonialism was to
drive into the natives’ head the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality. (p. 170)

Fanon’s critical analysis provides an understanding of the context in which the colonial mindset operates to position a people against their own histories, as well as an understanding of how the colonial logic systematically presents itself as the only way forward. The latter part of the quote is especially significant because it gives context to the notions of Somalia being a failed state, as a result of the country not having a functioning central government since the fall of the Mohamed Siad Barre Regime in 1991 after the breakout of the civil war. The lack of a central government also functions to set Somalia as the precedent for what life could look like without the modern state structures brought on by colonialism. Therefore, it is essential to think about and conceptualize Somalia with a decolonizing politics so we can create new spaces to ask novel questions about what is happening in Somalia and why. For me the centrality of this research is to capture Somali voices as they theorize and articulate some of their thoughts about what is going on in Somalia.

Somali dhaqan philosophies are Indigenous African philosophies that encapsulate multiple bodies of comprehensive knowledges. These philosophies are the founding pillars of Somali societies in as much as they are overarching principles governing Somali peoples. Cosmologically, dhaqan philosophies are the common threads which connect Somali peoples to their ancestral homelands in Somalia, their Creation stories, and their communal ancestral African way of life. Somali dhaqan philosophies are the holistic teaching passed down to us from our forefathers. They are the standing pillars which govern Somali societies both in Somalia and throughout the world in the Diaspora. These philosophies signify the very Soyyal or socherante (the existence) of Somali peoples, and these teachings are to be understood within the African cosmos. Gyekeye (1987) explains African philosophical thought as being “expressed
both in the oral literature and in the thoughts and actions of the people. Thus, a great deal of the philosophical material embedded in the proverbs, myths and the folktales, folk songs, rituals, belies, customs, and traditions of the people, in their art symbols and their socio-political institutions and practices” (p. 13). African philosophies are methods of socializing and advancing various modes of African social achievements within any given community prior to the colonial conquest, when Africa was divided up amongst European nations (see Diop, 1974, 1990; Jackson, 1970; Van Sertima, 1991). For Somali peoples those teachings are contained within dhaqan philosophies as the encompassing conceptual frameworks of the anthological, axiological, and epistemological traditions of the peoples who trace their ancestral homelands to Somalia. Dhaqan philosophies are part and parcel of Somali ways of knowing. As such, dhaqan bears an anticolonial cultural capital born out of the colonial experience. Today Somalia faces many extraordinary challenges stemming from colonialism and its aftermath. While the peoples of Somalia have shown courage and resiliency as a collective, I believe that we have not yet collectively tried to unravel the colonial grip by evoking our local knowledges.

On the question of philosophy, there is a classical debate contesting African philosophy within the continental tradition. The origins of the debate stem from Western discourses on African philosophies, on Africa itself, and on the African philosophical response to it (Masolo, 1994). The essence of the contestation revolves around the authenticity of African philosophies: What would constitute an African philosophical tradition? The question of power is at the center of the debate because it is within a colonial narrative that African philosophies have been essentialized and devalued based on a racial hierarchy (Kebede, 2004). Based on this racializing logic, a distinction has been made between the civilized Europeans, with Greek thought as their ontological beginning, and the uncivilized African. In response to this position Obenga (2004)
writes, “It is a mere prejudice to believe that the philosophical epoch of humanity begins among
the Greek in the fifth century BC. This prejudice implies that other ancient people did not
engage in speculative thought” (p. 31). The author here raises a very interesting point in light of
this intellectual disposition; many scholars have devoted much rigorous work to theorizing the
African philosophical traditions outside of the Eurocentric logic (see Gyekye, 1987; Masolo,

With epistemological traditions in Africa pointing to social life and knowledge, the
rationale for looking at the history of social movements through the eyes of Somali Elders is to
engage them in processes of knowledge production, even in the Diaspora, and to draw on their
cultural capital as they articulate their vision for the future. The objective is to investigate how to
create a space for dialogue that is founded on Somali dhaaqan philosophies, under the direction of
the Elders, and to envision reconciliation as well as document the voices of some of our Elders
for future generations. In this dissertation I am working with the notion that our Elders are not
inactive beings, but rather social agents who have transformed with their times and come to
terms with some of difficulties facing our peoples.

The Guiding Questions Driving this Research:

This Indigenous research journey addresses the following question: What can we learn
from the history of social movements in Somalia, both at home and in the Diaspora? In
attempting to address this question I had to ask my community Elders the following questions:
What comes to mind when you think of the history of the anticolonial struggle in Somalia? How
did you come to know about this history? What is the role of Somali cultural knowledges in
producing these historical narratives? What learning opportunities does reflectively thinking
about this history through Somali *dhaqan* provide in trying to resolve the current political crisis in Somalia? How important is this history to Somali youth? More importantly, how does Somali *dhaqan* speak to Diaspora communities outside of Somali geographical boundaries as a value system that is not static and/or hegemonic? Finding answers to the above questions was my way of reflectively thinking about some of the lessons I learned from my Elders. After each interview I kept asking myself how I could share some of the knowledges I had just gained. Moreover, I kept thinking about the data collection process and how I was being mentored throughout it. In many ways, undertaking this academic journey has distanced me from my Indigenous ways of thinking in circles. Therefore, I often found myself being re-oriented in relation to an Indigenous knowledges system, and this journey was quite moving.

**Significance of the Study:**

There are two important aspects that make this study significant, one being the context in which this study took place and the other being that this study was conducted through an Indigenous Somali *dhaqan* method. This research took place in Canada, and Elders from the Somali Diaspora living in Toronto were interviewed. Many Somalis came to Canada to flee the unrest in our homeland, so the notion of displacement is part and parcel of being in Canada. Yet from my perspective we must maintain our connections, spiritually and politically, to our ancestral knowings as a means of thinking beyond displacement and/or the current circumstances.

The findings in this thesis highlight the importance of Somali historical memory and ideas of *Somalinimo* conceptualized through an Indigenous African lens. I have categorized the finds into major findings and minor findings. Major findings constitute the central themes articulated by most of the Elders in this study and I have taken them up in chapters seven and
eight. The major finding of this study is Somali *dhaqan* worldviews and I have devoted chapter seven and eight to examining Somali *dhaqan* worldviews as a cultural index through which Somali peoples can interpret their world. Minor findings constitute themes highlighted by a few of the Elders in this study. I have devoted chapter six to draw them in conversation with my chosen theories and literature review. The minor findings are as follows: the colonial encounter, the nature of the struggle, unity in the struggle, colonial knowledge and the national struggle, an Indigenous *dhaqan* social awareness, and Indigenous anticolonial histories.

**A personal Narrative and Journey:**

Our family decided to leave *Xamer* (Mogadishu) over twenty years ago because my parents believed that the uprisings in the North of the country would eventually reach the capital, and they had a sense of how bad things were getting. Therefore, they decided to leave the country temporarily until things settled. As a child I was well aware of the tensions in the country, but it never really hit me until I heard gun shots in *Xamer*, rounds exchanged between government forces and small groups of armed men in the streets. The government forces eventually overpowered the rebellious groups and took control of the city. This incident is called *Habady waadada*, literally meaning ‘the firefight of the religious groups.’ The struggle between the government and the religious groups took about two days. Little did I know that this event would change my life forever. In fact, our family spent only one more night in Somalia before departing to Canada after that violent incident. I always knew that life would never be the same once we left home. I remember the day we were leaving; I walked around the garden of our family home. I was searching for ways to get grounded, so I began eating fruits from the trees and touching the trees which did not have fruits. I recall stopping by my favourite Jawava tree last and eating its fruit. I remember looking at the ground and promising myself that
I would never forget my homeland, and that I would one day return. That is a memorable moment in my life. To this day, Jawava juice and fruit take me back to my parents’ home in Xamer.

One might ask why I am narrating the above story or what its relevance is to this research study. Well, that day left me with a remarkable sense of Somalinimo (being Somali), of African communalism, and of a sense of social responsibility towards a holistic way of life that is embedded in the African traditions of my Ancestors: to never forget my roots or the traditional teachings of my peoples. More importantly, that day left me with a profound question that would burn in my soul for much of my childhood and youth. That question is, what is going on in Somalia? I have been puzzled with the many challenges facing Somalia since I first left my homeland more than twenty years ago. Although I was not able to articulate and make sense of what was taking place in my homeland until I began my graduate studies and started reading anticolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Amiral Cabral, and Mahatma Gandhi, I always understood that there were both internal and external factors at play.

Njoki Wane (2005), in her essay, “Is decolonizing possible?”, provides students with the tools to make such connections with a very powerful exercise on the devastating impact of colonialism that she conducts in her classes, where she asks her students to write about themselves on a piece of paper. She then instructs the students to tear the piece of paper into small pieces and to throw the pieces of paper all over the floor of the classroom. The tearing of the pieces of paper is intended to highlight the ways in which colonialism has tried to fragment people’s identities all over the world. After that she asks each student to try and find what they have written about themselves. What I take away from this exercise is the difficulty of putting together the fragments of one’s identity and past after a violent colonial encounter. This is a
very unique exercise, summing up the very brutal nature of colonialism and the havoc it manifests in this world. As a Somali I feel that this very simple but powerful exercise encapsulates what is going on in my homeland. Thinking about it gives me room to ask new questions about what is taking place in Somalia. It also allows me to bring forth an Indigenous anticolonial reading to events unfolding on the ground. In essence, undertaking this research project is part of my continuous journey to find my way back home and to speak beyond displacement and exile.

It is through the writing and research that I have found my own voice as I connected with other community voices and reflected on some of my Elders’ teachings. The theories taken up in this research better enable me to link the voices of community to my work in the academy because they are both oppositional and foundational to questions of Indigeneity and identity. The sense of awareness instilled in me during my moment of departure from Somalia guides my academic journey. In addition, it governs my research in the community, and how I function as part of a collective identity that continues to experience colonialism. It motivates my pursuit to think of what I deem to be the sacred Somali *dhaqan* as an analytical tool to conceptualize and envision a brighter future, strengthened my connection to our Indigenous ways of knowing. It also enables me to draw on social interactions to make sense of the complex social relations within the community and to get some resolve for my own questions of identity. As such, as a member of the Diaspora in Canada, I often express my *Somalinimo* (being Somali) through interacting with members of the Somali community. There is a Somali proverb that encapsulates this relationship that we in the community often refer to: *Ninna tolkissa kama jannatago* (“no man enters heaven without his community”). This proverb hints at the strong bounds between the individual and the greater collective.
Thus I approach my research first and foremost as a member of a community as I try to uphold the traditional values of the community through an Indigenous epistemology anchored in a collective colonial experience (Dei, 2000). Without any reservation I say my Somalinimo profoundly influenced the kinds of questions I asked and how I asked them. This research is part of a greater body of work that I hope to undertake for the sake of future generations. More importantly, as a point of departure this study was conceptualized through anticolonial thought and Indigenous knowledges, discursive frameworks that make sense of how colonialism shaped Somalia, and how Somalis organized to assert their voices in their struggle.

I must also take a moment to acknowledge the incredible privilege that has been extended to me by African/racialized scholars within the Eurocentric academy to engage with such a personal topic. It is through their close mentorship and continuous support that I was able to do this work. The Eurocentric academy is a very spiritually wounding space for an African learner as noted by Abdi (2001a, 2001b), Asante (1991), Dei (1996), Fanon (1963), Wane (2008), wa Thion’o (1993), and Woodson (2006). Thus it is thanks to their great contributions that I came to ask critical questions, some of which I had been asking in my private domain, and to work with my embodied Indigenous knowledges and bring forth an anticolonial reading of Somali history and social transformation.

It is time that we Somalis, as a people, go back to learn from our Elders and to evoke our embodied Somali Ancestor visions in search of answers. It is time that we looked back at our histories within the contemporary geo-political landscape. We have to begin asking ourselves some critical questions not only about what is going on in Somalia and how we got there in the first place, but also about how we, as a people, can begin thinking of ways to move forward and to claim victory over circumstances. I contend that there are important lessons in our histories
that we must all learn from. However, before we can see the relevance of our history in the modern era, we must first see our past in relation to our present and future, as history is a connected living entity (see Marable, 2005). Thus the histories of conquest, colonization, and struggle for freedom are all part of what is taking place in Africa, in particular Somalia, and the footprint of colonialism is quite evident throughout the continent. Nonetheless, during the various colonial encounters in Africa, the peoples were resourceful, courageous, and often found themselves contemplating the faith of their communities. Yet they kept a gaze on the future with the aim of preserving their Indigenous African ways of life, and have blessed us with the many legacies as a result of the struggles that they put up. Therefore, it is our duty to engage with our Indigenous African philosophies and embodied histories, and to carry on with the struggle. In Somalia our Ancestors fought for our freedom with their courageous leadership solely for the aim of liberating their land from foreign rule, like their brothers and sisters throughout Africa.

In my eyes, the greatest tragedy of our times is that we have treated, and continue to treat, our anticolonial legacies as things of the past and do not see the significance of that history for the modern era. We do so without giving any thought to how the colonizers are still working with their colonial troops to maintain their control over our minds, bodies, and souls, or how so much of the political turmoil that goes on in Africa, especially Somalia, is tied to the social, political, and economic interests of the colonizers. So what is our responsibility as a people? I strongly believe that we must plant our seeds of struggle in our histories, turn back to our Elders, and learn from them how previous generations mobilized around key issues to seek social-political transformation. Social movements are powerful instruments of social, political, and institutional transformation, organized to push for change in any given society with a wide array of intentions. We must hear such stories of struggle, selfless sacrifice, and hope as we
conceptualize and historicize some of their experiences. We must approach our Elders so they can share some of their knowledges and visions with us. We must ask for their guidance and evoke their wisdom to navigate the current social-political terrain both at home and within the Diaspora.

With that in mind, I constantly keep one question in mind, which is, what is my communal obligation with respect to this research? As I try to stay true to the teachings of my Ancestors, my intention throughout this study is to explicitly tell a different story. Furthermore, my aim is to center the experiences of Somali Elders in my research and to capture the Somali dhaqan values they hold dear. Engaging in this project has been a journey, one that initiates cultural processes together with deep reflection on the scholarly contributions of some anticolonial thinkers. For me, writing this thesis is part of a sacred spiritual and political journey that amplifies the voices of our Elders, their stories, lived experiences, ideas, struggles, and pain.

George Dei and Alireza Asgharzadeh (2001), in their work, *The Power of Social Theory*, explain, “The anticolonial thought helps to revive and revitalize the revolutionary aspects of Indigenous knowledges by bringing into focus the emancipatory potential of Indigenousness vis-à-vis imposed norms and values” (p. 319). Thus as I travel this lengthy journey I engage in self-cultivating learning in which I seek the guidance of some of the community Elders in Toronto and the greater Somali community collective. In its totality, this study is geared towards addressing an instrumental gap and contributing to anticolonial debates through an Indigenous orientation to the histories of resistance in Somalia. wa Thiong’o (1993) articulates change through social movement as a necessary process being undertaken by two contesting forces. On one side the imperial regimes are working tirelessly to preserve their dominance over nations and races, and on the other the colonized are fighting for power through social revolution.
Somalis have always resisted colonialism, and studying social movements highlights the role of civil society in working for change. This is a mammoth task, admittedly one with a heavy burden. Nevertheless, working with this knowledge with an emancipatory agenda is the responsibility of all those of age who have been raised by the community. In Somali tradition, when evaluating a family or a community, of primary importance is the type of individual the community has raised. As a member of the community who has been trained in Somali *dhaqan* from early childhood, and who is aware of the multiple ways of knowing (Dei, 1999), I commence this task with a collective sense of responsibility. As such, I tapped into the Somali cultural knowledges and philosophical paradigms to contextualize and anchor community voices within the rich African traditions of my Somali Ancestors.

This research as a whole is undertaken to lay claim to an Indigenous African ancestral home land in Africa, a collective Somali identity, and comprehensive African worldviews. This is the central challenge facing my generation of Somalis living in Toronto because we must not only hold on to our *dhaqan* but also evoke it as we navigate through a strangers’ land. We also must ensure that our traditional and spiritual practices are bequeathed to future generations of Somali youth (Ilmi, 2011). In conceptualizing *dhaqan* knowledges within our communities, certain issues must be broached. We must stand firm in practicing our African ways of knowing despite the Eurocentric devaluation of our culture within Western society. We ought to also challenge and subvert the linear Western notions of who we are as peoples, and the Eurocentric discourses about our way of life. We also must evoke and practice our communal ways of thinking in circles where our Elders preside over community issues.

One of the limitations of this study is that it only captures the voices of Somali Elders and doesn’t make room for other members of the Somali community in the Diaspora to show
how they process, work with, and reproduce their histories. Therefore, from a study sample standpoint, the findings cannot be interpreted as representing Somali societies as a whole. Yet there are some major knowledge claims and historical accounts advanced by the Elders in and through their Somali *dhaqan* perspectives that members of the Somali Diaspora can engage, learn from, and/or contest in articulating questions of identity, history, and community. The Elders in the study demonstrated an unquestionable commitment to dealing with some of the challenges facing our community and I maintain that the stories that came out of the dialogue with the Elders offer enormous possibilities for us as a community to journey to a place where we can collectively exercise self-determination.

**Outline of the Dissertation:**

This thesis is structured into nine chapters. The first chapter provides the readers an introduction of the study, a personal location, and a study context. The second chapter gives a historical and geographical context of Somalia. The third chapter examines four major works to convey a historiography of Somalia and to highlight how Somali history has been analyzed. The fourth chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks on which this study was conceptualized and the rationale for engaging with these particular theories. The fifth chapter provides the research methodology. The sixth chapter highlights all the major findings of the study. The seventh and eighth chapters are devoted to analyzing the relevant themes that emerged from interviewing the Elders. Chapter nine looks at the wider implications of the history of social movements on schooling, summarizes the study, and provides a few concluding remarks.
Chapter Two

Historical Background & Conceptualizing the Anticolonial Struggle:

Introduction:

This chapter provides a social-political and geographical snapshot of Somalia. This is a complex task due to the power of the post-colonial rhetoric that creates a false belief immersion that former colonies are free, and that they have been inherited by colonized peoples. Indeed, it is this obscurantism that enables colonized peoples to celebrate their independence from colonial rule while their post-colonial states are still situated in a colonial milieu. Therefore I chose to begin this chapter by re-telling the Somali origin story in an attempt to move away from the conventional method of speaking about our people’s history. With that in mind I begin mapping the Somali geographical landscape and narrating the histories of some of the anticolonial struggles. Although there were many social movements that resisted colonialism throughout the country such as the Barsane Revolt, the Banadir Resistance, the Somali Youth League (SYL), and various Somali women’s organizations, among others, as an entry point to the discussion I will focus on the Sayyids’ Dravish movement because it was cited by the Elders I interviewed for this research as one the defining moments in Somalia’s anticolonial history.

The Origin Folklore of Somali People:

Through our oral traditions we Somalis trace our genealogies to our great Ancestor named Somaal. It is a widely held belief that all Somalis stem from this particular Ancestor. According to Somali folklore, the story of our existence is rooted in a name given by non-Somali visiting parties from an unknown location. The story goes that as these visitors approached our great Ancestor he welcomed them into his home, and instructed one of his children to Soomaal...
Canaha, literally meaning “milk the domestic animal.” As a result of the culture of milking the animals for visitors and drinking milk with them, this Ancestor became known as Sommal, and his offspring were subsequently called Somalis.

This folklore, although mythical in nature, signifies an important specific social and historical context encompassing social practices, local cultural capital, and a way of life. In addition, the name Soomaal is rooted in the name that Somali peoples carry to this day, and the name that was given to our State after independence. Now the premise of naming a State in East Africa after an Ancestor as a result of an act of hospitality is very significant in articulating a common Somali origin as well as the cultural tradition that unifies the people. I would now like to provide a detailed description of the geographic landscape of what is now called Somalia. My intention is not to restrict the scope of my discussion to the particular location that was carved out by the colonial powers after the Berlin conference of 1885; rather, I want to situate my anticolonial analysis of the Dervish movement that arose from resistance to colonial domination in the northern part of the country.

**The geographic landscape and the historical origins of Somalia:**

Somalia is located in what is known as ‘the Horn of Africa,’ bounded to the east and southeast by the Indian Ocean, to the north and the northeast by the Gulf of Aden. It shares borders with The Republic of Djibouti to the south, Kenya to the southwest, and with Ethiopia to the west. Somalia has a coastline of 32,000 kilometres, extending from Loyadde on the Gulf of Aden to Ras Kiyambone on the Indian Ocean. The land mass of the Republic is 626,541 square kilometers (Mukhtar & Castagno, 2003, p. 1). Somalia is one of the world’s earliest inhabited lands dating back to the Palaeolithic period, around 9000 BC (Gutherz, Cros, & Lesur, 2003). In
fact North Somalia contains some of the oldest known artistic expressions in cave paintings in Africa, the most famous being the Laas Geel complex (where the camels enter). The Lass Geel cave paintings depict images of cows, local inhabitants dressed in what appear to be ceremonial robes, and a few dogs in what also appear to be ceremonial robes. The humans have their hands in the air in what is considered a worshiping posture. The cave walls are also covered in old hieroglyphics scripture (Gutherz, Cros, & Lesur, 2003). Somalis have known of the existence of the caves for centuries and have regarded them as historical sites, hence, the Somali name for the caves. Yet the Western world only found out about these sites in 2003 when a French team of archaeologists were searching the caves in the area (Gutherz, Cros, & Lesur, 2003).

Another historical record of the existence of ancient civilizations in Somalia dates back to Pharaoh Sahure of the Fifth Dynasty of Egypt (25th century BC). According to a Somali linguistics writer, Mohamed Diriiye Abdullahi (2001), in his work, Culture and Customs of Somalia, parts of what is now called Somalia was known as the Land of Punt during the Fourth Egyptian Dynasty of King Khufu. At times Punt is referred to as Ta netjer Punt. Gold from Punt was exported to ancient Egypt and the earliest records of the Land of Punt indicate that it was a trading destination. According to the most well documented record dating back to the 15th century, Queen Hatshepsut sent traders to the region to get supplies of “the precious myrrh and frankincense, so indispensable to their religion…After the return of the expedition, the queen had engraved the account of the event on murals at Deir el-Bahri near Luxor in the Valley of the Kings” (Abdulahi, 2001, p. 14).

Wall depictions on Hatshepsut’s Temple, located beneath the Deir el Bagari near the Valley of Kings in Egypt show Puntite settlements, comprising conical reed-built huts set on poles above the ground and entered via ladders. Among the surrounding plant life are palms and
myrrh trees, some of the latter already in the process of being hacked apart in order to extract the myrrh. The scenes also show trees being loaded onto the ships heading to Egypt to be used for aromatic products (and it has been argued that this in itself may be an argument for the combined Nile-overland route from Punt to Egypt, given the fact that such plants might well have died during the more difficult voyage northwards along the Red Sea coast). These myrrh trees might even have been replanted in the temple of Hatshepsut, judging from the surviving traces of tree pits there. The mural of Queen’s Hatsheput’s ships, as seen on her Temple walls, accurately illustrates ships going to Punt. The figure shows two docked ships and three more arriving. The image also shows a lake or seashore rather than a river, which indicates that Punt was a coastal environment. The picture also indicates that the shore is shallow so the ships could not have unloaded down gangplanks; thus as the ships closest to the shore are being unloaded (Wicker, 1997).

Moreover, in his works Abdullahi (2001) traces Somalia’s linguistic genealogies to ancient Egypt as he states:

An example of these words is the word neter for diverse divinities in Egyptian religion; the Somali equivalent is nider, the righter of wrongs. Somalis say: Nibe baa ku heli (the Niadar will find and punish you). The ancient Egyptian word for spirit (ba) has the Somali equivalent of bah (soul, courage). Somalis say: bahadii baa laga saaray (His essence and soul have been taken out from him; he has no more courage). There is also an equivalent for the Egyptian moon deity ayah in the Somali ayah (moon). Additionally, the Huur bird (the marabou, a large black stroke), the herald of death in Somali mythology, is akin to the Egyptian bird, Horus, depicted as the divinity of death. (p. 15)

What lessons can we learn from the historical records found in Laas Gaal, the depictions of the ships in Der-el-Bahri, and the evidence indicating that Somalis have held on to their ancient language through millennia? Well, for one, the two records indicate the rich histories of African civilizations beyond notions of Nation states and/or ethnic affiliations. Although outside the
scope of this research, examining such cultural artefacts could lead to an in-depth understanding of African peoples’ common orientation to the world.

Somalia was a trade hub where various trading communities travelled to sell their goods. The earliest record of a modern civilization can be traced back to the Zanj Empire. This Empire rose during the late 19th century, with a large costal territory and land. Its lands were very fertile and contained large supplies of gold. The Zanji peoples traded in Ivory with India and China (Walker, 2006). They also had a large army and were skilful in metal work. Their ships sailed the Indian Ocean to trade iron with Arabs and Persians. The Zanj Empire was controlled by a king given the title, “the Son of the Great God, or Master” (Walker, 2006, p. 471). The king of Zanj was the head of the government structure and his political order was instituted to ensure stability throughout his territories.

**The Early Accounts of Muslim Visitors to the Coastal Cities in Somalia:**

For the purposes of this study I would like to pay particular attention to the city of Mogadishu, known as Xamer to Somalis, a city that the Western powers often refer to as the most chaotic city in the world. Moreover, the colonial powers have attributed the so-called failure of the Somali State to much of the civil unrest that has been going on in the city of Mogadishu. In drawing on the accounts and voices of visitors from other parts of the world, I hope to uncover what Xamer was like prior to colonial domination in the 15th century. As such, it is vital for me to look back at what Somalia was before I can begin uncovering the colonial descriptions ascribed to Somalia. Walker (2006) highlights the sophistication and the development of Somali society in Mogadishu, along with other coastal towns in Somali such as Barva by saying, “Chinese records of the fifteenth century mention the Somali city of Barva and
note that Mogadishu had houses of four or five storeys high” (p. 475). She also cites the well-documented accounts of a Portuguese writer from the 16th century who says of Mogadishu:

The city is large and is of good buildings of stone and mortar with terraces, and the houses have much woodwork. The city comes down to the shore, and is entirely surrounded by a wall and towers, within which there may be 12,000 inhabitants…The streets of the city are very narrow, as the houses are very high, of three and four storeys, and one can run along the tops of them upon the terraces, as the houses are very close together. (cited in Walker, 2006, p. 476)

The above description of the architecture in the city of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in the 16th century, highlights how well established Somali society was at the time. There are many travellers and merchants who had the chance to travel to the Horn of Africa who have documented their journey by expressing their admiration for the Somali cities they visited. One such visitor who expressed gratitude towards Somali generosity is Ibn Battuta in his book, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, as he attests:

One of the customs of the people of this city is that when a ship arrives at the anchorage, the *sunbugs* (these are small boats) come out to it. In every *sunbug* is a group of young people of the town, and every one of them brings a covered dish with food in it. He offers it to one of the merchants and says ‘This is my guest.’ Each one of them does similarly. When the merchant disembarks from the ship he goes nowhere but to the house of the host from among these young people. But a man who has frequented the place a good deal and obtained knowledge of its people may lodge where he wishes. (cited in Walker, 2006, p. 474)

This account not only encapsulates the hospitable nature of Somali peoples, it also supports the Somali creation story, because the practice of welcoming guests shows who how our ancestors’ tradition has continued on. Another significant account by Ibn Battuta in his traveller’s notes he explains:

The *qadi* took my hand and we came to that house which is near the shaikh’s house. And it was bedded out and set up with what is necessary. Then he came with food from the shaikh’s house. With him was one of his *wazirs* who was in charge of guests. He said, “Maulana gives you al-salamu ‘alaikum” [i.e., peace be unto you] and he says to you, “you are most welcome.” Then he put down the
food and we ate. Their food is rice cooked with ghee placed on a large wooden dish. They put on top dishes of Kusham—this is the relish, of chicken and meat and fish and vegetables. They cook banana before it is ripe in fresh milk and they put it on a dish, and they put sour milk in a dish with pickled lemon on it and bunches of pickled chillies, vinegar and salted and green ginger and mangoes. These are like apples and they have a stone, and when they ripen they are very sweet and are eaten like fruit. But before they ripen they are bitter like lemons and they pickle them in vinegar. When they eat a ball of rice, they eat after it with something from this sauce salted and gnashed in vinegar. Now one of the people in Mogadishu habitually eats as much as a group of us would. They are extremely large and fat of body. (cited in Walker, 2006, p. 475)

This very detailed descriptive account portrays a different image of the Somali people than the one that is often depicted by the Western media, first during the early 1990s at the height of our civil conflict, and more recently with images of a Somali teen posing as Al Shabab militia, and/or Somali pirates at sea. As with most parts of Africa, the Western media have been notorious for showing images of severely malnourished peoples, in particular children, to propagate the idea of a food shortage crisis without any mention of the colonial factors that cause famines in Africa. In How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Walter Rodney (1982) eloquently captures the predicament in which many States in Africa, and in particular Somalia, often find themselves slipping, as he notes:

> Attention must be drawn to one of the most important consequences of colonialism on African development, and that is the stunting effects on Africans as a physical species. Colonialism created conditions which led not just to periodic famine but chronic undernourishment, malnutrition, and deterioration in the physique of the African people…A black child with a transparent rib cage, huge head, bloated stomach, protruding eyes, and twigs as arms and legs was the favourite poster of the large British charitable operation known as Oxfam…Oxfam never called upon the people of Europe to save starving African and Asian children from Kwashiorkor and such ills. Oxfam never bothered their consciences by telling them capitalism and colonialism created the starvation, suffering, and misery of the child in the first place. (p. 236)

In agreement with Walter Rodney’s assertion, when read and understood in relation to Ibn Battuta’s early accounts, the descriptive notes provide us with two accurate snapshots of what
the physical attributes of the peoples in Mogadishu were like prior to Western colonization and how those physical attributes have been altered. The later images circulated by most of the Western media offer a portrait of the devastating effects colonialism has had on Somalia, and how such images are exploited by the colonizers to present themselves as the last line of defence for all of humanity. In his book, *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon (1965) powerfully articulates the ways in which Indigenous populations often find themselves in a very difficult predicament with what he calls the ‘one meaning’: “This is what we have done for the people of this country; this country owes us everything; were it not for us, there would be no country.” Then he goes on to state that “there is a real mental reservation on the part of the native; it is difficult for him to be objective, to separate the wheat from the chaff” (p. 122). In this extract Fanon persuasively captures the particular quandary that many Somalis in the Diaspora were in at the height of the Somali crisis in the early 1990s. In fact, many of us were looking towards the West for salvation because of the ways in which colonialism had masqueraded itself. Some twenty years later the help has yet to arrive. We were expecting the West to end the civil war and initiate peace and stability in the country. Instead what we got was more arms, and no peace was in sight. The whole scenario is summed up with the Somali proverb “Qowda magashii waxna ha’u qaban” (make them hear the noise but don’t help them out). I would like to now to discuss the histories of the colonial encounter in Somalia to provide a better understanding of how colonialism came to shape Somalia socially, politically, and economically.

**The Colonial Encounters:**

Although many Somalis date the start of the anticolonial struggle to the 16th century rivalry between the Zheiliha Muslim civilization and the Ethiopian Coptic civilizations during 1528 (see Touval, 1963), I would argue that this moment in Somali history signified expansion
and territorialism, not colonialism. The story goes: after many expeditions led by Ethiopian armies, Ahmed Guray organized an army to push back against them. Ahmed Guray and his army succeeded in capturing the Ethiopian highlands in 1541. Somalis believe Ahmed Guray is one of the earliest Nationalists. However, to undertake a historical anticolonial analysis I would like to stay away from engaging in a discussion about State rivalries in the Horn of Africa because I believe that any such argument would only serve to absolve colonial powers from the devastation they have caused to the continent of Africa, in particular Somalia. Moreover, I firmly believe that Ethiopians and Somalis are connected by land and will forever continue living on that land as long as their civilizations continue to thrive. In addition, it is vital for me as an African to keep my gaze on colonialism because Western imperialism has only been interested in the total annihilation and exploitation of the colonized world. I am not trying to illustrate that Africa did not have State rivalries. However, my stance is that colonialism dismantled Africa, carved it into pieces to serve Western interests, and has employed divisive policies to ensure that Africans are never united. In addition, with Somalia being a predominantly Muslim society and Ethiopia seen as a Christian nation, the colonial powers have been able to pit the two nations against each other. I will elaborate on this point in later sections.

The definition of an anticolonial struggle is a heavily contested terrain due to the complex colonial politics that are often utilized by the colonizers to maintain their grip. Gandhi (1972) offers the following words to describe nationalism:

I want freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my freedom...just as the cult of patriotism teaches us to-day that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love, therefore, of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my
country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die. (p. 93)

In short, the above quote captures Ghandi’s understanding of nationalism and the struggle for self-determination in India. Although Ghandi championed a spiritual cultural struggle of *ahimsa* (non-violence) as a means of asserting an Indian national identity, his notion of *ahimsa* must be understood as an anticolonial insurgency. Much like the Dervish movement that started in 1897, it ascribes to notions of violence as a means of achieving a political end. Therefore it is important to think through an anticolonial lens to understand counter-insurgency violence as a social, political, and cultural prism to any historical moment in which peoples stood up against their oppressors. Elsewhere, Gandhi (1996) wrote, “The political non-violence of the non-co-operator [in the civil disobedience campaign of 1920-22] does not stand this test in the vast majority of cases. Hence the prolongation of the struggle. Let no one blame the unending English nature. The hardest “fibre” must melt in the fire of love” (p. 41). In short, Gandhi’s non-violence is indeed a forum of violence countering the brutality of colonialism. To borrow Loomb’s (1998) words, “Colonialism, we have seen, reshapes, often violently, physical territories, social terrines as well as human identities” (p. 185). Thus violent revolt and resistance must be understood within histories of oppression.

The colonial encounter in Somalia began with the Portuguese in the 16th century. When the Portuguese found their way to the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, they immediately began to try and assert their domination on the Somali populations living in the coastal cities of *Xamer, Barva*, and *Zeilah*. Unable to take the cities by force, the Portuguese started bombing the cities from the sea, given their more advanced naval power. Vasco Da Gama bombarded the city of Mogadishu in 1507, and soon the coastal cities were devastated. Moreover, the Portuguese colonialists also began diverting ships heading to the Somali’s coastline to disrupt trade
activities (Abdullahi, 2001). By the turn of the 20th century Somalia was partitioned amongst
Britain, France, and Italy. This partition triggered the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, due to
Somalia’s strategic location (Touval, 1963). After the Berlin Conference of 1884, the Somali
peoples were colonized by three European colonial powers: the British, Italian, and the French.
Somali peoples were not passive during these colonial encounters, as I will highlight in the
following section where I focus on an anticolonial movement that was significant in our history.

**The Rise of the Dervish movement and Sayyid Mahammed Abdille Hussan:**

Under the leadership of Sayyid Mahammed Abdille Hussan, the Dervish movement was
one of the most defining moments in Somalia’s anticolonial struggle as it was an organized
movement with one overarching goal: to expel the colonial invaders. What is most profound
about this movement is that Sayyid Mahammed Abdille Hussan was the visionary architect for
Somalia’s nationalist struggle for self-determination. Sayyid, as he is popularly known to all
Somalis, means master. He is the only one to have ever held that title because of the legacy he
has left the people. This movement left a unique historical heritage that needs to be revisited in
order for us Somalis to understand our past in relation to the contemporary colonial challenges.

Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hussan led the armed resistance against British rule for
twenty years in the British protectorate (Afdub & Kapteijns, 1999). The British colonizers
called Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hussan the Mad Mullah and saw him as a nuisance because
he was fighting for his people’s rights. The Dervish movement began when its charismatic
arrived at the port of Berbera, in what was then called British Somaliland in 1895, from Mecca
where he was studying. He was astonished by the ways in which the British were controlling the
peoples. Upon his arrival the Sayyid was advised by a Somalis translator at the port to pay tax to
the colonial administration. Consequently he protested and told the translator to inquire of the British agent to whom he paid taxes when he settled in this land. The Somali translator did not translate the exchange to the British agent, and instead told the officer this was a crazy Sheik. That is how he got the name Mad Mullah.

This instance in which the translator does not accurately translate what the Sayyid said opens up a question raised by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) in his book, Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature, and that is the question of the African language as an Indigenous tool of resistance. Although it is not clear as to why the translation was not done accurately, an anticolonial reading leaves me thinking that the Somali translator must have known the consequences of informing the British agent of what the Sayyid uttered. This moment triggered a national struggle and was the beginning of one of the most significant anticolonial armed resistances in Somalia because it was the Sayyid’s belief that the British had no right to control the country which drove him to organize a movement. This brief dialogue offers a very unique perspective that, through an anticolonial historical reading, leads me to think about the common origin of Somali peoples and that of Somalinimo (being Somali), and a collective sense of identity. Why else would the Somali translator not tell the colonizer the full story? Why did he give a different explanation as to why the Sayyid was not going to pay taxes? Rodney (1982) describes the notion of African tribalism:

One of the most important manifestations of historical arrest and stagnation in colonial Africa is that which commonly goes under the title of tribalism. The term, in its common journalistic setting, is understood to mean that Africans have a basic loyalty to tribe rather than nation and each tribe still retains a fundamental hostility towards its neighbouring tribes. The examples favoured by the capitalist press and bourgeois scholarship are those of Congo and Nigeria. Their accounts suggest that Europeans tried to make a nation out of the Congolese and Nigerian people, but they failed, because the various tribes have their age-long hatreds; and, as soon as the colonial power went, the natives return to killing each other.
To this phenomenon, Europeans often attach the work “atavism,” to carry the notion that Africans were returning to their primitive savagery. Even a cursory survey of the African past shows that such assertions are the exact opposite. (p. 227)

Drawing on Rodney’s articulation of how tribalism is misrepresented in Africa, an anticolonial analysis leads me to believe that there was a common bond between all Somalis and a sense of communalism that prevented the translator from translating the Sayyid’s Nationalistic sentiments to the colonizer.

The Sayyid began preaching his message with very little success convincing the locals to resist colonial rule. As a result, he retreated to his place of birth in the North Region of Somalia, where the British had not yet established their colonial rule. The Sayyid made a deal with Garad (Chief) Ali Farah, one of local chiefs, in which the chief pledged his support to the armed struggle (Samatar, 1982). Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hussan quickly established a Dervish State in the region, and named Illig the capital of his State. The Sayyid then began to gather support for the Dervish movement and took up arms to expel the British. The locals were good horsemen and warriors. Consequently, by August of 1899 the Dervish movement had over 5000 combatants and took over the city of Burao in the British protectorate (Hess, 1964). On September 1899, the British Consul-General for the coast received a letter from Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hussan warning the British that if they wanted war, they would be met with war and if they wanted peace, the Dervish would pay a fine for taking over Burao. The British Consul-General replied by accusing the Sayyid of being a rebel and subsequently asked the British government for support to crush the movement (Lewis, 1980). From the onset the British colonizers believed they would crush the Sayyid and his movement with very little effort, but that was hardly the case. In essence it was quite the contrary, and the takeover of Burao was the beginning of a long armed struggle between the colonizers and the colonized that lasted
twenty-one years. The histories of colonialism and imperialism have taught us that the colonizers have come to oppress and enslave the Indigenous African on her/his own land. The letter by the Sayyid was a declaration of a code of arms to resist the colonizer. The spirit of the Sayyid’s declaration is encapsulated in the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress where African political leaders stressed in resolution IV, titled, *Declaration to the Colonial*:

> The delegates believe in peace. How could it be otherwise, when for centuries the African peoples have been the victims of violence and slavery? Yet if the Western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then the African, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom, even if the force destroys them and the world. (Asante & Abarry, 1996, p. 520)

Unfortunately, the anticolonial violence carried out by the Dervish movement was presented by the Europeans as a holy war against the colonizing infidels. As such, that is how the movement has been categorized and taken up by the colonizers. But history shows us that no peoples have willingly accepted colonialism. An unfavourable result of the branding of the Somali armed struggle as an Islamic movement was that it raised regional tensions with Somalia’s neighbour, Ethiopia, which is a predominantly Christian Nation. Once the resistance was presented as an Islamic struggle against Christianity, it was easy for the British to pit the Somalis and the Ethiopians against each other.

These tensions led the Dervish movement to make a surprise attack on an Ethiopian encampment at *Jijiga* on March 4, 1900, only forty miles east of Hara. The British Vice-Consul at Harar reported the incident in the following manner: “The Abyssinians, it seems, fear the Somalis very much. I have never seen men so (sic) afraid as they are now; they have given rifles to the children to show they have troops here” (Hess, 1964, p. 420). What was interesting in this report is the fact that it came from the British Vice-Consul, who also noted that the Sayyid was trying to assert his authority in the area and had raided *Qadariyah* Somali tribes for camels,
provisions, and rifles (Hess, 1964). In essence, the nature of the attack and the raid suggested that it was an attempt of the Dervish to assert their authority in their national struggle. Albert Memmi (1991), in his book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, pointed out the mindset and the attitude of the colonizer towards the colonized:

> Since the colonized is presumed a thief, he must in fact be guarded (being suspect by definition, why should he not be guilty?) Some laundry was stolen… [So] they go to his house and take him to the police station…”Some injustice!” retorts the colonizer. “One time out of two, we hit it right.” And, in any case, the thief is the colonizer; if we don’t find him the first hunt, he’ll be in the second one. (p. 90)

Thus the British Vice-Consul at Harar misrepresented the nature of the attack as being one of looting instead of one of a national struggle of a people for their right to shape their own destiny. In addition, Somalis and Ethiopians had been living side by side, not without conflict, but the mere fact that the British painted the armed resistance as an Islamic movement out to spread religious ideology in that part of Africa, where there was a neighbouring Christian populace, created unnecessary anxiety amongst Indigenous communities. In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1967b) eloquently describes this colonial tactic when he states, “Colonialism will attempt to rally the African peoples by uncovering the existence of ‘spiritual rivalries’” (p. 107).

The British went on to secure an alliance with the Ethiopian government and together they subsequently launched a series of unsuccessful attacks against the Sayyid and his movement, most notably in 1901 when a joint British-Ethiopian force numbering 17,000 soldiers attacked the Dervish. This offensive failed to do any substantial damage to weaken the movement (Hess, 1964).

This frustrated the British, who were forced to retreat a number of times after unsuccessful military campaigns. Eventually, the British reached an agreement with the Italians, who had established a colony south of the British controlled territories, and the Ethiopians, in an
attempt to crush the Dervish movement once and for all. From the outset the Italians were more hesitant than the British about going to war with Sayyid and his Dervish. The Italians’ caution is highlighted by the notes made by a ship commander in Obbia off the coast of Somalia stating, “O wish that I were mistaken, but I fear that the expedition will end in a fiasco: the Mad Mullah will become a myth for the British, who will never come across him, and a serious worry for the Bebadir and our sphere of influence” (Hess, 1964, p. 421).

Between 1901-1903, the allied forces carried out three major expeditions, all with unconvincing military results or suffering disastrously against the guerrilla strategies of the Dervish. At the height of this military campaign, nearly 10,000 British army troops were deployed to crush the resistance. The Dervish numbered roughly 8,000 cavalry and were relatively successful in inflicting damage to the colonizers due to their counter-insurgency strategies (Samatar, 2009). Fanon (1967a), in his book, *Toward the African Revolution*, highlights the armed resistance of the FLN in Algeria in a section he called a demand not a prayer by stating, “To begin with, at no moment has FLN appealed to the magnanimity, to the good-nature of the colonizer. In dizzying swift mutation, the colonized acquires a new quality, which developed in and through combat. The language used by the FLN, from the first days of the Revolution, is a language of authority” (p. 100). Fanon’s work speaks to the history of the Dervish movement as they engaged in an armed struggle. As such, he articulates that the colonized have to respond with authority through arms, precisely the method the Dervish employed in their efforts. Thus, the relevance of this armed struggle is that it speaks to a need for Somalis to invoke this embodied blood memory, as Wane (2006) would say, to face the contemporary challenges. Amilcar Cabral (1979), another Revolutionary anticolonial thinker, in
his work, *Unity and Struggle*, also expressed a similar sentiment towards the armed struggle between his peoples and the Portuguese colonizers. He writes:

> The moment of truth has come, the time has come for you to have the real proof of all that our Party has announced to you with the humane intention of helping you to protect your lives against the criminal lies and orders of your colonialist bosses…Our peoples who will fight until victory for the independence of our land are not the enemy of the Portuguese people. You are the sons of the Portuguese peoples. But you are being used by the colonists as tools to kill our people. We want peace, freedom and co-operation between men and between all peoples. But for this very reason and cause, we must put an end to Portuguese colonialism in our land; we must remove all obstacles to our national independence. (p. 163)

This history is instrumental in terms of an anticolonial political culture to resist colonial domination both on the continent and within the Diaspora. But this history has to be understood within the modern era in the everyday struggles of the peoples and to shed some light on how colonialism continues to manifest itself in and through a portrait of the colonizer and the colonized. More importantly, knowing this history helps to keep a gaze on the intergenerational struggle that our Ancestors have waged for our sake. Engaging in the histories of the armed struggles exemplifies an Indigenous anticolonial culture that all Somalis embody. Elsewhere, Cabral (1974) asserts:

> That value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation, on the ideological or idealistic level, of the material and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people’s history and [a] determinant of history. (p. 141)

In concert with Cabral’s ideas, there are elements of Somali *dhaqaan* which are rooted in our collective past that need to be not only theorized but also operationalized as they bear fruits on our future. Moreover, in trying to make sense of the past it is essential to conceptualize it through an anticolonial lens. Wane (2008) reminds us in *Mapping the Field of Indigenous knowledges in Anticolonial Discourse* that there is fluidity between the past and the present, as
she recognizes that the former cannot be detached from the latter. She articulates that Indigenous knowledges encompass crucial practices that are essential for anticolonial resistance. Moreover, these knowledges are informed by Ancestral voices. We must be in tune with our ancestral voices and be aware of the legacies that encapsulate our existence.

In 1904 the Dervish movement, under the revered leadership of the Sayyid, suffered its first military defeat during the fourth British expedition. The reason behind this defeat is that the Dervish had grown in confidence, had abandoned their successful guerrilla strategies, and sought a face-to-face battle with the British. On the 9th of January of the same year, the Sayyid and his troops attacked British posts at Jidbaale. Before the day was over, some 7,000 Dervish troops were killed (Samatar, 2009). This devastating military defeat proved to leave a permanent scar on the Sayyid and his movement; many historians believe this led the Sayyid to eventually secure an agreement with the colonizers. In fact, on March 5th of 1905 the Sayyid negotiated what came to known as the Illig peace agreement that was brokered by the Italians with the British and the Ethiopians. The Italians who were hostile towards the Ethiopians were also eager to reach an agreement with the Dervish to protect their interests in the region. As such, the Italians were the first Europeans to meet the Sayyid face-to-face.

The Illig peace treaty outlined four treaty rights including (a) granting the Dervish a defined territory between Nugaal and Hoobyo and Majeerteen Sultanate to the south, (b) recognizing the Sayyid as a governing authority, (c) allowing religious liberty, and (d) respecting freedom of trade excluding in arms and/or slaves (Samatar, 1982,p. 128). To this day the communities that live in the Nugaal, nowadays the name of a district in North Eastern Somalia, are associated with the historical battles that took place between the British and the Dervish freedom fighters. The Nugaal communities lay claim to the land of Nugaal, as the land awarded
to them as part of a treaty for their blood. After the signing of the treaty the Sayyid began to use
the time of peace with the colonizers to strengthen his movement throughout the region. The
Dervish began coordinating covert looting operations in the area and sabotaging the colonial
administration. They also organized strategic attacks against communities that were loyal to the
British and the Italians all while pretending to be at peace with them. Moreover, the Dervish
began to secure loyalties from the local communities to join them in the armed struggle against
the colonizers. The Dervish’s political manoeuvres speak to what Kwame Nkrumah (2001), in
his seminal work, *Revolutionary Path*, indicates as a necessary element of a people’s
anticolonial struggle:

> Colonial existence under imperialist conditions necessitates a fierce and constant
> struggle for emancipation from the yoke of colonialism and exploitation…The
> basis of the solution of the problem is political. Hence political independence is
> an indispensable step towards securing economic emancipation. This point of
> view irrevocably calls for an alliance of all the colonial territories and
> dependencies. All provincial and tribal differences should be broken down
> completely. By operating on tribal difference and colonial provincialism, the
> colonial powers’ age long policy of divide and rule has been enhanced.…The
> efforts of colonial peoples to end colonial exploitation demands the eager and
> earnest collaboration of all of them. (p. 16)

Although Nkrumah’s articulation is steeped in a Marxist economic analysis, he nevertheless
highlights a key component needed for any peoples in their anticolonial struggle for freedom—
that is, unity amongst the colonized in the face of divide and rule colonial politics.

One of the most significant aspects of the Sayyid’s anticolonial campaign strategies after
the Illig peace treaty was that he started operationalizing Somali oratory to awaken the political
consciousness of Somali peoples as the ultimate anticolonial weapon. In fact it was through the
*Gabyee* oratory that the Sayyid and some of his Dervish in command, most notably Ali Nuuah
and Ali Mire, began to not only articulate their sense of Somali nationalism, but also to personify
the Dervish movement and disseminate knowledges of their anticolonial Indigenous Somali struggle. According to Samatar (1982):

Through the power of his poetic oration, the Sayyid….was thought to ‘inflict wounds’ on his enemies, and indeed those who were attacked by his literary barbs often responded as if they had received physical wounds…The Sayyid, moreover, took pains to ascribe the power of his verse to the ‘strengthening’ hand of ‘Divine Truth’ and to a sense of mission…to rid his country of [colonial] rule. (p. 1)

In short, the Sayyid encapsulated an anticolonial discourse that has profoundly changed the very nature of our struggle with his oratory. From their central capital of Illig the Dervish exhibited their mode of governance and, under the leadership of the Sayyid, called upon other Somalis to join their armed struggle by using gabyee. Gabyee is Somali oral literature which is usually composed and narrated through speech; Somalis, as an oral society, have utilized gabyee as a means of expressing sentiments and engaging anticolonial discourse. One of the most profound aspects of gabyee is that it has to be performed publicly. The Sayyid often exemplified his political ideologies through gabyee and broadcasted the challenges his movement was facing with firm conviction that the Dervish would inevitably be victorious (Afdub & Kapteijns, 1999). Samatar (1982) explains Somali gabyee as a living craft that touches every aspect of Somali life, and as a medium of mass communication that plays a central role in broadcasting messages. Thus this medium of broaching an anticolonial agenda was instrumental in raising a Somali political consciousness as it is steeped in Somali Indigenous oral traditions. As a result, the movement grew in influence because many Somalis began to see the face of a Somali struggle in the Sayyid and his movement via this new method of conducting political counter-insurgency. In essence, the movement exemplified a Somali cultural character in the face of colonial domination and rule. At that particular moment in history the movement became a social-political instrument to uplift the peoples from the grips of colonialism into self-actualization. In
essence, as a result of the gabyee recitation along with the newly employed covert military campaigns, many Somalis were able to imagine their existence free from colonial dehumanization. Steve Biko (1996) in *I write what I like*, eloquently captures this state of mind within the South African context during the Apartheid Regime. He calls this progression an inward looking process in which it is necessary for the African to see the truth as the only way of changing the status quo. The first step for the African is to come back to him/herself and to pump life back into his/her soul. Drawing on Biko’s work, the Sayyid’s unitization of a Somali political sentiment in anticolonial oratory touched the very fabric of Somali society and awakened the spirits of the peoples. It was through *gabyee* that the Sayyid forced the general public to rethink what it means to be Somali.

One of the most moving aspects of the Sayyids’ *gabyee* is that they are often recited not only as a way of commemorating the past struggles, but also as a vehicle for addressing contemporary challenges in society. Therefore, the Dervish philosophies are still with us as a way of thinking about our collective national character. In *Africa on the Move*, Ahmed Sekou Toure (1979) argued that in reflecting on a collective personality, “We find a collective consciousness forming, collective faculties which, we must point out, are not the same as the consciousness and faculties of the individuals involved, but a synthesis of their will and transcendental aspiration”(p. 23). The Dervish oratory encapsulates a holistic way of life with an understanding of how Somali *dhaqan* was operationalized amidst the extraordinary challenges. Moreover, it signifies the pillars that governed and still govern our society and provides a social and moral rubric for Somali societies.

In 1910, however, the Dervish movement began to decline as a result of a secret meeting that some 600 Dervish fighters held gathered under a tree which was later called the *Anjeek tala*
waa [The Tree of Bad Counsel]. The dissidence in the Dervish ranks grew from frustration due to the Sayyid’s heavy-handedness. However, the dissenting members could not agree on a resolution. Therefore, they started to leave the movement slowly and to solicit the support of their clans. The Sayyid was soon informed of the council meeting that took place to get rid of his rule, by a loyal Shire Umbaal, who initially attended part of the meeting but subsequently lost heart. Fighting broke out soon after the Sayyid found out about the plot to take over the movement (Samatar, 1982). The effects of the internal fighting devastated the movement and the Dervish were never the same again spiritually or morally. Regardless, the Sayyid was able to crush the revolt and restore his rule. The Sayyid subsequently composed his most famous oratory, which is named after the *Anjeek tala waa*, with his Dervish faithful Huseen Diqle as they stated:

O, Hyena, the flocks belong to God
To God and the Master,
The flocks belong to armed warriors.
Before a hidden club strikes you,
Flee for your life.
The hyena, in the mouth of Sayyid, replied:
A word with you, O man of little knowledge,
Earlier you said, ‘The flocks are ours?’
Would you speak with two mouths?
Are you like God? Or would you claim to be stronger than he is?
Can you prevent, O, you lowly son of Adam, my livelihood?
Did not the Lord give the breath of life to both of us?
Or would you think the great Lord (responder of no persons) to be partial to you?
Why would you whine and whimper if I should find one day a morsel of bread to break my fast?
In the above composition the Sayyid is expressing the very predicament in which he found himself as a result of the secret meeting. He is articulating the bitter sense of betrayal by his comrades, referring to them as hyenas, an animal that for Somalis symbolizes a vicious predator, metaphorically alluding to the danger his own life was in. This short oratory speaks to hypocrisy and what humans will often resort to in their quest for power. Moreover, it is very suggestive of the Sayyid’s destiny to live another day to continue his armed struggle.

This poem has been interpreted many times and continues to be the subject of debate within Somali communities both at home and in the Diaspora due to its political nature and the crucial historical moment in which it was composed. But for the Sayyid and his loyal Dervish, the Anjeek tala waa council meeting signified a breaking point in the Somali national struggle when political disagreements fractured a powerful movement. When members of the movement made the decision to come together with the intent of getting out from under the Sayyid’s control, that was not perfect, but it was a quest for freedom. Although there are no official records implicating the British in supporting this meeting, it would not be naive to think that the British had something to do with it by employing their divide and rule politics, or by influencing the Dervish indirectly through external pressures. More important, however, is the question of what Anjeek tala waa says as a historical event, in light of the Sayyid’s best known work, about the Somali psyche? What have we learned from Anjeek tala waa?

Personally Anjeek tala waa makes me think of the armed groups that rose up against Somali President Mohamed Said Barrer’s Regime and eventually ousted him from power in 1991. I am not suggesting that Barrer’s Regime was perfect and I do not condone any of the gross human rights violations or atrocities committed by the regime. However, in terms of where
we are today as a peoples would our sons and daughters have been displaced throughout the
world if we had not resorted to an armed struggle with the aim of getting rid of Mohamed
Barrer’s Regime?

During the last chapter of the Dervish movement the Sayyid moved his capital from Illig
to Taleex in the heart of Nugaal where he had constructed fortresses for the movement in 1910.
Moreover, the Sayyid tried to bury the ills of Anjeek tala waa with very little success.
Therefore, the Dervish remained divided and weak. Yet by 1913, the Sayyid and his movement
had been re-established throughout the region. In the following year the Dervish movement
conducted a military operation with the support of one of the neighbouring communities, against
communities that were pro-British rule, looting camel and other livestock. Encouraged by the
success of the operation the Dervish moved into Berbera, devastating the city (Hess, 1964).

The British, pre-occupied with the events of WWI, were unwilling to engage in combat
with the Sayyid. Therefore, the Dervish movement kept gaining influence and prestige in the
country. The Dervish continued their military campaign until 1920, when Winston Churchill
decided to conduct a devastating air campaign against the Dervish. This was the first time in
history when air strikes were used to crush an anticolonial movement in Africa. The blow was
so devastating that the Dervish could not reorganize and continue the struggle. To make matters
worse there was a smallpox outbreak in the Dervish communities that killed 40 to 60 percent of
the soldiers who survived the air attacks. The British enlisted the help of some of the Sayyid’s
enemies from the localities that the Dervish had devastated, to kill the Sayyid and crush his
movement once and for all. The Sayyid fled to the south of Somalia shortly after, and in
December of the same year, succumbed to influenza and died, marking the end of a twenty-year
Dervish anticolonial struggle.
Conclusion:

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of Somalia’s armed resistance. I first began by narrating the origin story of Somali peoples as a way of speaking about how Somalis conceive themselves. Of course, not everyone believes in or adheres to it, but it is a way of locating the subject from a collective sense of knowing. This knowing of a Somali identity through notions of lineage is a powerful mechanism for constructing what it means to be Somali. I then went on to map out the geographical landscape of Somalia to link a common Ancestry to a homeland. Next I delineated the colonial encounter to show how colonialism attempted to dominate the peoples of Somalia. After that I articulated how Somalis resisted colonialism as a means of preserving a way of life and subverting the colonial order. The relevance of historicising the anticolonial struggle in Somalia, by looking at the Dervish movement, is that it creates spaces for an Indigenous explanation of the events that took place in Somalia, one that is rooted in the conceptual realities of the colonized. The power of such analysis is that it counters the dominant Western ways of knowing. It also encompasses a resistant Indigenous cultural knowing that allows Somali peoples to locate themselves in their histories as they ponder the current political crisis in Somalia. Chapter three looks at some of the key texts written about Somalia and raises some new questions about the problematic nature of how Somali history has been presented.
Chapter Three
Select Literature on Somali History:

Introduction:

Today Somalia is written about in a number of academic disciplines including but not limited to political science, sociology, history, anthropology, and gender studies. Unfortunately, very little work has been conducted that explores colonial and neo-colonial relations, and how Somalia as a geographical, social, political, and economic space has been configured and exploited. Although some of the works written about Somalia raise critical questions, they fall short due to the lack of historical analysis focusing on colonial experiences and how colonial relations continue to be inscribed in the contemporary moment.

In this chapter I will examine a few key texts written about Somalia, chiefly the works of I.M. Lewis’s (1980) *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, Said S. Samatar’s (2009) *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hassan*, Robert L. Hess’s (1966) *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, and Saadia Touval’s (1963) *Somali Nationalism*. These books each look at the histories of social movements in Somalia with their own unique approach and analytical framework, and are reputable works in the field of Somali studies. Yet they signify the absence of a critical engagement with the topic from a Pan-African anticolonial/Indigenous perspective. Although some of these books have been written many decades ago, with the exception of Samatar’s book, a closer interrogation from an anticolonial perspective shows how prevailing Eurocentric contrivances are utilized to interpret what is taking place in Somalia. The texts examined in this chapter are early works in their areas of study, which makes the interrogation of the arguments presented in them essential to understanding the one-sidedness of most of these arguments, and the systematic omission of
particular aspects of Somali history. For that purpose, as I stated earlier, I have chosen to engage with the works through an anticolonial/Indigenous frame of reference to show how the histories of social movements have been written within the Eurocentric canon. Moreover, all four books are key to this work because together they enable me to highlight some of the inconsistencies in the dominant discourses about Somalia. I will highlight theoretical gaps in these works to expose the problematic ways in which Somalia’s history has been taken up.

I contend that there are two sides to the colonial portrait, one for the colonized and one for the colonizers. Thinking through different anticolonial voices in this chapter as a vehicle for pushing the debates on Somali history from the colonizers’ perspective is my way of enhancing the understanding of how colonialism is implicated in the contemporary state of affairs in Somalia. Moreover, an anticolonial analysis would enable me to connect the voices of some of our Elders whom I have interviewed to carry out this research project. Although numerous scholarly articles and books have been written about Somalia in an attempt to explain the social, political, and humanitarian crisis in the nation, particularly within the last two decades, most fall short of getting at the heart of the issues because their ideas about Somalia are centered on the European perspectives and visions in the literature (see wa Thion’o, 1986, 1993). More specifically, the debates articulated in various literatures about Somalia are from a developmental focus. But they seldom question how today’s troubles in Somalia began in the first place because they are only concerned with notions of development. Yet in so many accounts we know how detrimental aid is for recipient nations in Africa (see Fanon, 1967b; Moyo, 2008; Nkrumah, 2001; Rodney, 1982), and the problems inherent in the Western development model.
The examined literature attempts to provide a historical analysis on Somalia. Moreover, it all draws on the work of I. M. Lewis, a British anthropologist who was one of the earliest colonial writers on Somalia. In fact, it is widely accepted by both Somalis and non-Somalis that I. M. Lewis is the father of Somali studies. To a large extent the other authors, whose work I will be examining, all write from the same trajectory and draw on Lewis’s perspective and analysis. This makes all these works inherently problematic and historically misleading. While some of the writers are well intentioned, Lewis’s ideas send them down the path of reproducing the popular myths about Somalia that Lewis is largely responsible for constructing. This chapter reviews the existing literature to answer the following questions: What does the literature say about the history of social movements in Somalia? What are the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps within the literature? How do we best address these theoretical shortcomings? How do we find a new space for the voices missing from the analysis? How does a Somali dhaqan help us critically interrogate the ways in which Somali history has been depicted in literature?

**A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa:**

I. M. Lewis’s (1980) *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* is one of the foundational texts within the Eurocentric canon taking up Somalia’s history. It provides the most comprehensive conceptualization of Somali peoples and their histories from a Western perspective. In it Lewis undertakes a study of Somali peoples as a nation state in the postcolonial era. This work is widely cited and it stands out analytically as a seminal work in Somali studies. More importantly, it provides an instrumental window to examine how colonial knowledges about Africa have been constructed, articulated, and validated. Through ‘scientific’ research methods I. M. Lewis embarked on a research project in the Northern part of Somalia known as Somaliland, which resulted in him writing his book. Lewis, now a professor emeritus
in the London School of Economics, has written extensively about Somalia as a former colony of the British imperial power. I. M. Lewis seemingly undertakes this work to document the transition of Somalia from a traditional African society to a modern nation state after independence in 1960. He alludes to Somalia being a single nation state made up of a homogenous African group of people located within the Horn of Africa, and existing in a sociopolitical milieu of competing interests between those of traditional communal societies, which the author calls tribes, and those of international obligations. From the onset the author highlights the colonial imprint on this new Somali nation state and indicates that, like many new nations in Africa, Somalia’s national borders are not drawn in accordance with ethnic boundaries respecting communal traditional territories. He suggests that new nations come to exist as a result of colonial experiences that are followed by national independence. Lewis also articulates a brand of Somali nationalism that is based on the cultural aspirations of Somali peoples.

In the first section of the book the author begins mapping out Somalia and outlines the Somali landscape. At times he references the works of European explorers to strengthen his position. He states that ethnically Somalis are hermitic peoples living in pastoral societies. He then indicates the names of the major tribes in Somalia rather than looking at the communal social structure of Somali peoples. The author does not attempt to explain how the major tribes came to be, how they interact, and what their commonalities are. His is a linear approach of studying peoples. The first mention of a thriving civilization in Somalia in his work is about the Zanj civilization, a trade peoples, which I have mentioned in chapter two. But he locates this civilization in the South of Somalia. This stance contradicts the evidence presented by Walker (2006), which I drew on in chapter two as well. I. M. Lewis goes on to state that Somali peoples have been heavily influenced both culturally and linguistically by Arab merchants who, through
centuries of trading and intermarriages, brought Arabic culture to Somalia; as the author puts it, this explains the “Arabic loan words” in the Somali language. Moreover, Lewis is very provocative in stating that Somali peoples are not native to the land of Somalia, and that Somalis expanded their civilization throughout the region by pushing the ethnic Oromos eastward. In a paradoxical manner he explicitly states that Somalis had a dysfunctional democracy governed by symbolic sultans prior to colonialism. Lewis fast-forwards his historical analysis by looking at the contemporary elements of the Zeila Islamic civilization, which is relatively modern in comparison to the histories of Somali peoples.

The ideas advanced by Lewis here are short sighted because they present a very shallow depiction of Somali peoples. This analysis brushes over long periods of Somali history to support a hypothesis grounded in observations from European explorers that suggest that Somalis are not Indigenous to Somalia. This is a very disconnected theory that enables Lewis to be the knower of Somali societies and peoples. Loomba (1998) has argued that:

Colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge…. A crucial aspect of this process was the gathering and ordering of information about lands and peoples visited by, and later subject to, the colonial powers. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European ventures to Asia, America, and Africa were not the first encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans but writings of this period do mark a new way in thinking about, indeed producing, these two categories of peoples as binary opposites. (p. 57)

In support of Loomba’s articulation Lewis’s referencing of colonial texts and his successive amplification of the idea that Somalis are somehow settlers in their own lands is problematic because it provides a misreading of history and self-serving conception of the term settler. More importantly, his frame of thinking covertly limits an understanding of colonial experiences and the true intentions of the colonial order. Lewis’s arguments that Somalis don’t have a cohesive social structure, dismissing the instrumental roles Somalis Elders have played in society, is
equally dehumanizing because it suggests Somalis were an ideal host for colonization due to their lack of governance, and therefore should benefit from the new modern state born out of Western colonialism.

In the second section of his book the author talks about the partitioning of Somalia. What is most interesting about the author’s historical account is that he clearly argues in favour of British colonization. For example, the author states that Great Britain carved out the Northern part of Somalia to secure its national interests in Aden, a colony existing there at the turn of the 18th century. According to Lewis there were also a few skirmishes between Somalis and the British in coast areas but he does not explain what the British were doing on an African coast.

The author explains that Somali Elders entered into agreements with the British in 1886 to maintain their independence. “[T]hey merely pledged themselves ‘never to cede, sell, mortgage, or otherwise give to occupation’” (p. 47). Throughout his study, the author has left out the aggressive colonial agenda that the British had, and the ways in which Somali Elders tried to subvert such an agenda. The fact that Lewis alludes to negotiating speaks volumes to the one-sidedness of his analysis. He indicates that the British colonial forces had prepared a small force of about forty police officers in Aden to set the stage for British occupation, and then, by 1884, three vice-consuls were appointed on the Somali coast. The author’s chronological accounts of how British colonialism landed on Somali soil is misleading because he is speaking about an occupation two years prior to the ratification of treaties with Somali Elders. Through a detailed analysis using his colonial logic, Lewis masks the true intentions of colonial rule and its aftermath in the shadows of the 1884 Berlin Conference and thus re-inscribes colonial relations.

With respect to the Sayyid’s era, which was discussed in the previous chapter, the author referred to this moment in history as the reason the British did not develop the territories under
their control given the enormous resources they allocated to fighting the Dervish movement. From the moment of the partition of Africa, in Somalia’s case, the author explains that Somalis found themselves under occupation by the British, the French, and the Ethiopians, who were all eager to consolidate Somali territories for themselves. The irony is that the author paints a picture of the Sayyid as a religious fanatic who was not supported by Somali communities. When one examines the nature of the treaties that Somali Elders ratified together with the ways in which the Sayyid gathered his troops to push the colonial armies by force, what emerges is a Somali consciousness of the colonial circumstances that they were facing. Yet the author explains that the Sayyid’s movement was very aggressive and uncalled for. He goes as far as exploring tensions within communities by citing tribalism as the main cause of those frictions without any mention of how the British are implicated in fuelling these ethnic tensions. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) calls this sort of story a “misleading stock of interpretations of the African realities” (p. 1) that is aimed at deflecting the inner workings of colonialism and blaming African peoples for all the turmoil in the continent. In this section of his book Lewis names many communities that were not favourable to the Sayyid. However, he clearly avoids the fact that Somalis rejected British colonial rule. Steeped in this colonial logic, the author depicts the Sayyid as an irrational character incapable of leading Somali peoples, referring to him by the name given to him by the English, the “Mad Mullah.” In addition, he claims that the Sayyid was as brutal to Somali peoples as he was to the British. He even calls the acts of resistance “savage” acts. All in all, Lewis does not highlight anything positive about the Dervish movement under the Sayyid’s leadership that took place over the course of twenty years.

As stated earlier, one of the most ill-treated aspects of the Sayyid’s legacy is his vision of a united Somali nation. The Sayyid is widely credited as being the forefather of Somali
nationalism by most Somalis, and the fact that his body of oratory encapsulates a Somali political/social consciousness inspiring generations has been overlooked. In fact, no Somali leader has ever emerged who has not tried to emulate the political character of the Sayyid, contrary to what Lewis concludes in his writing. He calls this orator’s religious poetry a preoccupation with military campaigns as opposed to nation building. He dismisses the heroic role that the Sayyid and his troops played in resisting colonialism, and underplays how this courageous leader operationalized African oratory as a medium of warfare and a means of getting his messages out to rally support for the anticolonial struggle. Moreover, the writer states that the Sayyid was never interested in leaving behind a governing body to rule after him. He goes as far as to say that “[w]hat is remarkable is not that [the movement] collapsed with his death, but that he ever succeeded in establishing it at all” (p. 81). In fact, the Sayyid did establish a Dervish State with the building of Taleex, after a terrible military defeat by English bombing. Lewis takes pains to ignore the Sayyid’s vision for a state and the means by which he has organized his movement to achieve his goals.

Lewis’s chapter entitled “Somali Unification” is a third section that is relevant to my research. In this chapter, the author argues that Italian colonizers tried to do good work by creating plantations and forcing populations in the South of Somalia to work on those plantations. This position is quite problematic because it assumes that the land was unused and no one owned it. It is also masks the histories of colonial settlements in Somalia and the violence that was inflicted on the Somali peoples displaced from their lands. Moreover, Lewis does not account for the long-term effects of colonial exploitation and of mono-crop agriculture on Africa (Rodney, 1982). In his works, Lewis constructs an image that is eloquently captured by Albert Memmi (1991) in his opening remarks of The Colonizer and the Colonized, when he
states: “We sometimes enjoy picturing the colonizer as a tall man, bronzed by the sun, wearing Wellington boots, proudly leaning on a shovel—as he reverts his gaze far away on the horizon of his land” (p. 3). Memmi’s powerful image highlights the dominant notions of the settler ideology as a heroic positioning of the settler on conquered lands. It signifies the brutal sense of entitlement of the colonizer. This theme runs through this chapter of Lewis’s work.

One of the stories that I was accustomed to hearing as a child with regards to the true nature of colonialism was retold to me during the field work. Italian colonizers, after forcibly taking over the land from the Somalis, used to force Somalis to form human bridges across canals during heavy rains so the colonizers (husband and wife) would cross. The occurrence of this brutality was known as Asela. There were many sons and husbands who never returned home from the fields because of this colonial practice. Many wives had miscarriages after hearing of the passing of their loved ones in the processes of creating human bridges. The tragedies were so frequent that Somalis had a phrase for it. Interjecting this narrative is instrumental in telling one of the many stories depicting what our Ancestors endured at the hands of colonizers, because it is far removed from the image that Lewis paints in his work.

Further in this section the author highlights what he calls the expansion of social services in the Southern part of Somalia under Italian rule. Here the author begins to mention all the educational services the Italian colonizers were providing for Somalis in friendly tones that seem quite disturbing. He clearly embraces the works being carried out by the Italian Catholic mission in the South. What is contradictory is that he raises issues selectively, such as in an instance where Somali children studied in the same schools with Italian children, stating that one high colonial official objected to such a practice as “incomputable with the proper relations between the masters and ‘subjects’” (p. 97). It is clear from the details offered by the author that
he is working with colonial tropes while positioning himself as politically neutral and objective. Such reference to this opposition speaks volumes to the colonial mindset and philosophy in which the Other is seen in a binary relationship to the colonial ideology (see McClintock, 1992). In addition, it highlights the sense of entitlement that the colonizers have, and how this privilege is instilled in them from childhood.

The last chapter that I would like to discuss at this juncture is the section in which Lewis looks at the Somali Youth League (SYL) as a political organization. Lewis’s discussion of the period from the 1940s to the 1950s, during which the SYL was successful in mobilizing the masses to push the State towards political independence, is limited in scope. Although the writer attempts to highlight the essence of Somali nationalism and the aspirations of the peoples to unite Somali territories under one country, as he put it, he manages to mar this sentiment with observations about tribalism and the pitfalls it seemed to cause in the absence of a Somali vision. In the beginning he does so by specifying how the SYL as a political movement came into existence. Lewis introduces the organization, which is credited with securing independence from colonial rule, as being masterminded by Abdulqadir Sekhawe Din, a well-respected religious figure from Mogadishu, and Yasin Shirmarke of the Majerteyn clan of the Northern communities in Somalia. He then explains that the organization was led by thirteen founding youth on May of 1943. The author expresses that this organization had members from each clan division, including a healthy mix of religious leaders, educated folks, and ordinary nationalists. Moreover, he shows how the organization transitioned from being a Somali youth club into the SYL—with an estimated 2,500 members, according to British sources in 1946—and into a political machine that spread throughout many regions of the nation. He also discusses their mandate, most notably unifying Somali peoples. Yet the author quickly diverts his audience by
noting that other organizations started propping up different tribalist agendas to offset the process of gaining independence. Examining the formation of the SYL, as prescribed by Lewis, note that one of the key ideological figures of the movement was from the South of the country, the other from the North, and that the founding members were made up of youth from different communities. Moreover, though initially the author asserts that these groups lacked a vision, what would lead to the formation of such a political organization if there was no vision in the country? And if tribalism was truly a major impediment to Somali nationalism then what drove these courageous people to come together from different corners of Somalia to engage in a political fight for independence?

At the turn of the 19th century all colonized nations were demanding their political sovereignty from the imperial nations, which never wanted to give up their colonies. Thus they did everything in their powers to put an end to the heroic efforts of all national leaders, and the case of Somalia was no exception. In fact, the author gives a detailed historical account of one such incident, in which he names the Italians as the perpetrators of acts of violence. This account provides a historical synopsis of the extent to which the colonizers had gone to further solidify their colonial grip. According to Lewis, the British Commission granted the SYL and their supporters the right to hold a large public rally on January 11, 1948, in Mogadishu. On that same day, in the morning, the Italian colonizers and their supporters held an unauthorized public rally. The Italians threw grenades at the peaceful SYL supporters and attacked them with spears and arrows, killing many Somalis. According to the Somali Elders whom I interviewed, there was a group of Somalis who were called Pro-Italian, and this group was comprised of Somalis whom the Italians paid to obstruct all efforts being spearheaded by the nationalists. Such events have been commemorated by monuments, most notably Hawo Tako and Dajax Toor, to serve as a
burning reminder of the sacrifices that Somali nationalists have made to realize a Somali Nation. With respect to the SYL and the particular incident mentioned by Lewis, if the Somalis were not unified, then why did the Italians use tyranny to stop a peaceful rally? More importantly if such rallies were allowed to take place in Somalia, what sort of momentum might such a peaceful assembly have garnered up in the country? And how quickly would this impetus have transformed the existing circumstances?

Of course this line of questioning is idealistic, because the very nature of colonialism denies such possibilities. Nevertheless, shedding light on the theoretical premises that the author utilizes to deliver his arguments is important. Lewis eventually indicates that a national government was born in Mogadishu, with Aden Abdullah Osman Daar, one of the founding youth of the SYL, becoming the first President of Somalia in 1960, a clear contradiction to his earlier claim that Somalis had no national vision.

**Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad**

**Abdille Hasan:**

The work of Said S. Samatar (2009), first published in 1982, by far offers the fairest historical accounts of the legacy of the Sayyid and his movement. Samatar was an educator at the national teaching college in Somalia in 1970. In 1973, he was awarded a scholarship to study in the United States at Goshen College, where he obtained a degree in history and literature. Samatar continued with his studies at the graduate level, completing his doctoral studies in African history in 1979 from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Samatar currently teaches at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. This author has written many books and scholarly articles on Somalia, and is currently the chief editor of the *Horn of Africa Journal.*
Said Samatar is one of the leading Somali political intellectuals who, through his writings and consulting works, has attempted to make sense of the events unfolding in Somalia. Moreover, he is one of the leading researchers on Somali affairs.

*Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism* (2009) is a phenomenal piece of work, and in it the author not only provides the most extensive research about the Dervish movement, he also treats the history of social movements with due intellectual rigor. The author captures the historical moment in which the anticolonial resistance emerged out of the colonial experience. Among his processions he claims the Sayyid legacy and the oral literature left behind from it is key to Somali nationalism. Samatar’s personal location is central in understanding how and why he embarked on this project. The author brilliantly operationalizes the oral text in a way that pushes the discussion to a space where Somali nationalism can be taken up within a historical moment from a Somali cultural trajectory. Samatar looks in-depth at one particular aspect of the Somali movement, namely the oral tradition of the Sayyid’s armed resistance. I will focus on the three chapters most relevant to my thesis. They are titled *Occupation and Resistance: The Rise of the Somali Dervishes*, *Poetic Oratory of the Dervish Movement*, and *Myth and the Mullah*. These three chapters are central to the author’s thesis, indicating a strong correlation between the language of struggle and political life during the anticolonial armed resistance.

The author’s analysis of Somalis gabyee as a method of organizing Somali peoples against colonial rule is mapped out very well. In the first chapter, Samatar is forthright in arguing that throughout the region there was a rise in what he calls a religious reawakening to fight colonial aggression in Somalia during the last quarter of the 18th century. He claims that this rise transpired through groups called militant brotherhoods. Moreover, he argues that Somalis considered the colonial occupation a Christian fight against Islam in Somalia, which I
do not believe was at all the case. The colonized, from the onset, fought the colonial powers with whatever means were accessible to them irrespective of their religion. So it is ironic that this author, like Lewis, paints a picture of the Sayyid as a religiously overzealous leader who was trying to assert Islamic rule in the region. Also, the author places the British, the Italians, the French, and the Ethiopians in the same category of colonizer. This is problematic for two reasons, the first being that by treating nationalism as a ‘jihadist’ movement the author fails to capture the essence of the struggle, and situates the resistance within a spiritual idealistic framework that revolves around an Islamic dogma rather than a swift collective response to colonial injustices. The second reason for concern is that the scholar’s placing of Ethiopia within the same classification as the colonizing force is limited and rather suggestive of the geopolitical climate of 1982 in which the book was first written. As that time, Somalia and Ethiopia were at war in a territorial dispute. I am not proposing that African communities were not complicit or did not engage in colonial practices, or that issues stemming from such practices should not be addressed, but let us be clear about divisive colonial practices and the true nature of colonialism. I opt to keep a gaze on the colonizer rather than implicate the African in colonization. Further, I elect to treat the Sayyid’s legacy as Somali nationalism, and the Sayyid himself as the father of Somali nationalism after the partition of Africa, a view echoed by virtually all the Elders whom I interviewed for this study.

When asked about *jumassy* [colonization] all the Elders highlighted the struggle against the British, Italian, and French and the struggle for *Somalinimo*. From that historical premise it is quite evident that there are two competing narratives—that of Samatar and that of the Somali Elders. I am in strong support of the Elders’ position, a perspective that Samatar also alludes to
when he draws a comparison between some of the anticolonial struggles in Africa and the Dervish movements:

The Somalis had nothing in their experiences with the British to provoke them in a violent revolt. They do not seem to have suffered under the British authorities any gruelling physical or psychological trauma—not at least any of the trauma associated with the rising of other Eastern and Southern African peoples like the Kikuyu, the Shona and the Ndebele, whose resistance to European intrusion was on the scale similar to that of the Somali Dervishes. (p. 109)

In this work the author manages to capture the Sayyid’s vivid military strategies and the sophisticated social order in which the Sayyid chose to organize his ranks. This is a divergence from Lewis’s ideas. In fact, Samatar indicates that the Dervish were organized into four main groups. First were the *Khusuusi*, who had ministerial consul authority within the movement. Second came the *Gaar-haye*, who were responsible for security matters within the Dervish territory. Third were the *Marra-weyn*, the Dervish army personnel, and fourth in rank were the *Reer-beede*, the Somali civilian population. According to the author, the Dervish were “tightly organized—in a manner reminiscent of the Ndebele State in Zimbabwe” (p. 120). In essence, he’s hinting at the uniquely African character of the armed resistance, strengthening my earlier point, which stresses the importance of viewing the movement as an African anticolonial struggle rather than an Islamic movement.

In a complimentary fashion, Samatar outlines the statesmanship of the Sayyid as the leader of this movement, highlighting the ways in which he used Somali *dhaqan*, through lineage and oratory, to fight the colonizers. Samatar sheds significant light on the social, political, and militaristic strategies operationalized by this great leader to defeat colonialism by any means. He also eloquently measures the successes and challenges endured by the Dervish in the history of their nationalist struggle within a legacy of a governing order born out of the
aspiration of Somali peoples to live in freedom. More importantly, Samatar, unlike most of the historians who have written about the Sayyid, attributes the end of the Dervish era to divisions within the ranks of the movement by citing the incident of ‘Anjeel-tala-waa’ (the Tree of Bad Counsel). One of the most paramount contributions of this chapter to this book is that it contextualizes one of the key elements that led the way for greater Somali political ideology, and the subsequent struggle orchestrated by the Sayyid as the architect of Somali nationalism.

In the next chapter, Samatar champions Somali gabyee and carries out an extensive analysis to distinguish it as a traditional African medium for communication that is founded in the Indigenous ways of knowing. The author traces the essence of this artistic way of encoding messages through complex procedures to communicate in Somali society. With respect to the armed movement he highlights the critical role gabyee played as a medium loaded with Somali dhaqan to communicate certain key ideas encouraging the peoples to resist colonial rule. Throughout the chapter Samatar exemplifies gabyee as an instrumental tool for broadcasting the national aspiration of Somali peoples. He also situates the text composed by the Sayyid and his Dervish as monumental historical verses and documents of the utmost importance to Somali peoples, and as a window to the historical trajectory of that era. To extend Samatar’s analysis, this chapter provides a historically rooted contemporary reading of not only the genesis of Somalinimo within a particular moment, but also of a heroic anticolonial stance initiated through a social movement.

In the above-mentioned chapter, Samar points to an important Indigenous African way of thinking through the anticolonial struggles of Somali peoples which offers both the theoretical space and the practical grounds to raise questions about what it means to be Somali through the oratory composed in the heat of our historical struggles against colonialism. The lessons of
those times provide a means of marshalling key ideas to think beyond some of the contemporary challenges facing Africa and in particular Somali peoples. As such, the relevance of the Sayyid and the Dervish oratory as politically-loaded instruments that allow Somalis to strive for everlasting change within the field of Somali anticolonial struggles has not been fully explored and articulated. Therefore, Samatar’s presentation and critical engagement is a new reading of this body of works that concerns the skilful mastery of social, political, and ideological Somali visions, free from the brutality of colonial rule, and brings forth a new understanding of what it means to be an African of Somali ancestry. I contend that the author’s purposeful exploration of the influence that oratory has had on Somali political life provides ample space to understand Somali nationalism, both historically and within the contemporary moment, and to ask questions such as: how does the Sayyid and his movement help us conceptualize and politically imagine a Somalia free from colonial transgression? In what ways can we see the fragmentation, displacement, and decimation of the Somali national character as being rooted in the history of colonization? More importantly, how is our alienation, displacement, and dislocation connected to the colonial rearrangement of the Somali, socially, politically, and economically?

What is profound about Samatar’s articulation is that he clearly positions Somali *gabyee* within its rightful place. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993), with his ideas on the quest for the relevance of African orators, correctly argues that African oration composed in African languages is much more rooted in African societies then any foreign language. He goes on to state that, “for instance, written poetry in Swahili goes back many centuries. While the poetic political compositions of the great anti-imperialist Somali-speaking fighter, Hassan, will be known by heart by every Somali-speaking herdsman, not a line by even the best of African poets in foreign languages will be known by any peasant anywhere in Africa” (p. 87). Oral literature through
language is a culturally loaded weapon to be operationalized during resistance. The latter section of the quote, in which the author is directly citing the Sayyid, is central to engaging in the discussion about the political theatrics and national sentiments articulated by members of the movement. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) brilliantly elaborates on this idea, saying that oration, “like theater and fiction, is considered as a language in itself with its own structures of beats, metres, rhymes, half-rhymes, internal rhymes, lines and images” (p. 87). This line of thought explains why Samatar is better able to capture the importance of Somali gabyee during the armed resistance in his work. In essence, this chapter serves as a guiding anticolonial framework that encapsulates the unwavering selfless sacrifice of previous generations and the Indigenous African visions that they laid before us.

In his chapter titled the Myth and the Mullah, Samatar, through a rigorous textual analysis, positions the Sayyid as a monumental heroic figure to Somali peoples, enabling this work to stand as a foundational literature in the history of Somalia. He takes up the mocking title given by the British colonial imperialists and engages in a discussion about the Sayyid’s heroic character, examining the movement’s oratory to illustrate the Sayyid as the fountainhead of Somali nationalism. First he cleverly articulates that although many Eurocentric scholars who have taken an interest in producing works about the Sayyid were not the ones who gave this great African leader the name “Mad Mullah,” they were not enthusiastic about calling him by his actual name. Thus they inadvertently masked the historical significance of one of the leading figures in anticolonial Somali history. Samatar then indicates that towards the time of Somali independence the Sayyid’s public image abruptly changed with the rise of what the writer calls an Afrocentric historiography. Yet ironically Samatar manages to draw on I. M. Lewis, R. Hess, and B. G. Martin, all of whom are all from a Eurocentric tradition, in his book. To be fair, I
suspect that the author was trying to be as academic as possible within his Eurocentric academic discipline, thus inadvertently limiting the scope of his analysis within the canon. I contend that although the Sayyid’s life has been analyzed—often arbitrated—by historians, political scientists, cultural critics, economists, and legal scholars writing about Somalia, his life has never been examined in great detail for the anticolonial possibilities it offers.

In that sense, despite its limits, Samatar’s work offers an important platform to re-read the Sayyid’s body of works as critical theory anchored in an Indigenous nationalist African vision. Without a doubt, treating this extensive oral text that encompasses multiple Somali narratives within a colonial context offers today’s generation of Somalis a new lens to interpret and understand how colonialism operated in the past, and more importantly, how it continues to influence the current State of affairs in Somalia. In essence, our past is a fluid entity offering key lessons that enable us to understand our contemporary circumstances with a view to the future. With respect to the historicization by Samatar, it provides an important entry point to raise discussions about Somali nationalism and the Dervish movement.

Samatar goes on to explain how various authors, again from the Eurocentric cannon, have categorized the Sayyid’s work. Samatar briefly discusses the religious significance within his revolutionary stance against colonialism from a nationalist perspective. Moreover, he extends the analysis of this great leader as a statesman and Somali visionary by looking at the *gabyee* composed by the Sayyid and his followers in great detail. This analysis serves as a powerful premise to contribute to our understanding the social and political anticolonial ideas conceived during a critical time in Somali history. More significantly, in an age in which we speak about Somalia as a failed dysfunctional state, a new historical understanding of our history
from the oratory of our Ancestors provides a theoretical base to be operationalized as a vehicle for redefining our struggle.

I do not believe that Samatar was simply trying to explain a social phenomenon through a historical analysis. Rather, his work must be distinguished as a remarkable Somali effort to correct and seek to redeem an instrumental moment within a Somali historical trajectory based on his idealism and Somalinimo, generously drawing from anticolonial thought and ideas about Somalinimo from the standpoint of an African. In examining his own understanding of Somali nationalism, Samatar moves his thoughts succinctly in the direction of Somali nationalism.

**Italian Colonialism in Somalia:**

For the early writings during the 17th century, histories about African peoples have been written in a manner that presents colonialism as being of benefit to Africans. Traditionally historical accounts have often provided the analytical tools to support such colonial aggression. This distorted logic is quite evident in the seemingly casual and erudite works of Robert L. Hess. In fact his text makes for very mild reading, detached as it is from the brutal histories of colonization within the Somali context under Italian colonial rule. Professor Hess was a historian at Brooklyn College who specialized in 19th century Africa and published works on Italian colonization. Hess (1966), in *Italian Colonization in Somalia*, delineates the history of colonialism in this particular area. The author says nothing about how Italy embarked on a colonial project in Somalia. Instead he confines the course of his thesis to a few chapters dedicated to the important issues and sequences of events that have all led to the Somali colonial predicament. With respect to the history of social movement, a comprehensive analysis is lacking in this work. This could be because the book is written as a descriptive text attempting to
provide chronological accounts of what the author believes has taken place in Somalia. Therefore, I have chosen to pay particular attention to areas in which the author attempts to offer a sound inquiry into an account of events that led up to Italian colonizers setting foot in Somalia, and how he recounts takes up subsequent resistance efforts.

With the opening remarks this author highlights the historical debates that took place within Italian society regarding whether or not Italy should embark on its own colonial project like so many of its European counterparts. He notes the different proponents and opponents of the discussion, indicating their particular concerns with respect to the subject matter. The author then outlines the coastal interaction between Somalis and Europeans in a very casual fashion, without giving accurate depictions of what colonialism entails and/or what the Berlin Conference of 1884 meant for Africa. Hess mentions that the first Italian colonial efforts in East Africa started in 1885 and starts providing his analysis based on Somali tribes, as he calls them, to further drive home the idea that there was an element of disorder which was favourable to the colonial Italians. Hess also discusses the various missions that were sent to the Somali coast and the various reports on the landscape that were compiled by Italians. Further, the author goes out of his way to illustrate the fact that there was no political unity amongst Somali peoples and/or the tribal chiefs who ruled over them. In his analysis the author positions Somalia as an Arab land that somehow belonged to Sultanic rule. Moreover, Hess makes a sharp distinction between the peoples in Somalia, whom he called the nomadic peoples, and the peoples living on the coastal areas of Somalia. Ultimately he sketches a map of the different communities living in Somalia in relation to how the colonial administration interacted with them.

One of the standout features of Hess’s work is that it is conceptualized through a Eurocentric view negating everything that was in place prior to colonialism. The writer says
that the Italian colonial power created a colony in the South of Somalia in 1905. He explains that the administrative system was already in place, hinting that the colonial order was at work prior to 1905. He continues by historicizing the events showing how the colonial government operationalized various colonial apparatuses to maintain the imperial order in the South of Somalia. He also mentions various revolts throughout Somalia in which the colonial armies were deployed to bring the Somali populations to their knees. Ironically, Hess somehow manages to indicate that the Italians supposedly protected traditional rights, and recognized both Muslim Shari’a Law and customary law that he calls Testure. Moreover, the author explains that to ensure peace and order in the colony, the Italians created a colonial army force made up of “Somali, Eritrean, and Arab askairs under the command of Italian army officers” (p. 101). The author highlights trade that rose sharply after the end of direct colonial rule through the transfer of power to a Somali administrative rulership. He subsequently provides an analysis of what he thought were some of the challenges to Italy’s colonial business ventures, without any regard to the brutal nature of the colonial trade relations and the effects such colonial enterprises on the Indigenous populations.

In an interesting twist, Hess goes back in history, dedicating a chapter to what he calls the Northern Protectorate. In this section of his work the author attempts to flesh-out the political dynamics involving Italian colonialism in the North of Somalia. Hess somehow manages to diverge from his initial ideas suggesting that Somali people had no political structure by stating that Sultan Yusuf Ali of Obbia requested Italian protection in 1888 to both settle a dispute with the Sultan of Zanzibar and with his cousin Boqar (King) Osman Yusuf Muhammad. What the author manages to leave out is that these two respectable sovereign authorities both knew that colonialism was carving out territories and in many ways the signing of treaties that
many of the Somali Elders endorsed was a tactic to position colonial powers against each other and avoid direct colonial rule. As such, the treaties were a measure to ensure that the Somali signatories had a say in the ways in which their communities’ affairs were handled.

There are some historical accounts supporting this claim. For instance, Sultan Yusuf Ali refused to support an Italian proposal to enable the British to pursue the Sayyid in his territory. Moreover, it was his commander, Omar Samatar, who was responsible for a revolt against the Italians in 1925 in El-Bur. Therefore the idea, presented by the author, that Somali rulers invited Italian colonization is deceptive and far-fetched. From this historical inaccuracy the author goes on to suggest that because of the failure of the request to pursue Sayyid, the Italians were eventually forced to take on more responsibility in their colony. Hess also maintains that the constant infighting between these two rivals, despite having collaborated with the Italians to end an uprising in Harar, made them unruly.

He then claims, like many of the historians whom I have mentioned in this literature review, that Sayyid Muhammad Abdullah Hassan had declared a holy war against the British, and that his movement was rapidly gaining grounds in the North in 1899. The writer highlights some of the ground battles which were fought between the British and the Dervish movement from a Euro-American perspective under the pretext of protectorate ideology. Moreover, he describes the Dervish forces as a group of ‘Jihadist’ bandits who wreaked havoc on the land rather than a nationalist movement fighting for their rights. In addition, Hess highlights the ways in which the Somali Leaders/Elders, despite their differences, were drawn into signing agreements with the British and Italian colonial powers. The author also gives many historical accounts in which the British and the Sayyid met in battle. As I indicated, the explanations offered by the author in all accounts stress that the Somalis were the aggressors. Moreover, Hess
never mentions the Somali nationalist sentiments and the guiding principles in the struggle. In fact, he never once emphasizes the connection between the armed resistance to the national aspirations of the peoples. Therefore, the author misses an opportunity to examine the nature of the struggle and to highlight some of his thoughts about Somali nationalism. It is not illogical to think that any colonized group of peoples would resist oppression as a means of seeking justice and freedom. Yet Hess completely overlooks this factor. One of the most interesting aspects of Hess’s work, particularly in this chapter, is the fact that when he is talking about Somali Elders and their communities, he deals with them as separate entities. Elders are depicted either as being in direct conflict with the colonizers or in direct negotiations with them to resolve disputes amongst their communities. Interesting enough, even with the imbalance of this historicization, Somalis are presented as a resistant front while the colonial powers are always on the opposing side with their colonial agenda.

This predicament is quite clear in this book, and due to the author’s lack of engagement with Somali nationalism, this text serves as an opportunity to examine how some important aspects of Somali history have been omitted from scholarly texts. Reading this book encourages us to think about what has been left out of the conversation, and to think about what our role is in preserving our histories as well as how we can ensure that future generations know the stories of their Ancestors. I believe we all have to go back to our own roots to unlearn/re-learn what colonizers have taught us about ourselves. But the question is how do we shed some light on our ancestral paths and re-tell our multiple stories? We must ensure that future generations can find their way to the truth about our histories because we cannot depend on the Eurocentric canon to present them with the complete truth.
**Somali Nationalism:**

The final book that I would like to analyze in this chapter is that of Saadia Touval (1963), titled *Somali Nationalism*. Saadia Touval was a political scientist renowned for his work on mediating international disputes until his death at the age of 76, on April 17, 2008. Touval taught at John Hopkins University’s Paul H. Nitite School of Advanced International Studies in Washington from 1994 to 2007. The late Touval started his pioneering work in conflict mediation in the 1970s where American negotiators put forward some of his ideas to resolve key conflicts around the world. This particular book, written in 1963, discusses Somali nationalism. It was based on his dissertation at Harvard University.

Although the author wrote this book in a hopeful tone when many colonized nations were gaining independence, it is quite relevant to this study because a close examination of this work shows that not much has changed in the world since that time. The book is relatively fair, in terms of being written from a center/left political position. However, because Touval fails to account for the history of colonization, he does not pay particular attention to the challenges inherited by the postcolonial state; this makes his work problematic. In many ways this text exemplifies the Eurocentric conceptual mindset about the independence of former colonies. Therefore, understanding the logic behind Touval’s framework in trying to make sense of Somali nationalism and the inherent complexities with a state born out of a particular colonial experience is central to uncovering the limitations of Eurocentric arguments made in this text. Reading this text from an anticolonial lens nearly five decades after it was first written with an understanding of all the United Nations-mandated promises broken after WWII, it is evident that the Euro-American canon is still operational in Somalia.
From the opening remarks of his first chapter the author explains that the most far-reaching significance of colonialism was in fact the partition of states in Africa. As the author puts it, as colonial boundaries became national borders of sovereign States the colonial boundaries came into question. Interestingly enough the author moves on to explain that even Europe has gone through a period of reshuffling the boundaries of states during the modern era and that perhaps Africa will have to go through its own processes. In all fairness the author could have been under the impression that colonialism was coming to an end throughout much of the world. Nevertheless, Touval’s overly optimistic analysis presents an entry point to raise questions pertaining to comparisons drawn between Europe and Africa that do not account for the fact that Europe was built on Africa’s back. Moreover, it is from this problematic premise that the author begins engaging ideas about Somali nationalism. As such, he highlights the geographical landscape of the Somali state post-independence.

The author attempts to explain the origins of Somali peoples and he offers various theories stemming from Eurocentric anthropological ideas. He clearly states that according to archeological evidence the region was inhabited since ‘prehistoric’ times and he highlights some ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic records indicating trade relations between the ancient Egyptians and Somalis. He even suggests some biblical evidence, also highlighting that there were trading activities taking place between Jews and Somalis. He fast forwards in his historicization to the seventh century, to the arrival of Islam, as he suggests that all the coastal towns were inhabited by Arabs who later succumbed to pressure from the nomadic Somalis. In an ironic twist Touval goes back through history indicating that the Somalis on the Horn were known as the Berbers by the ancient Greek and Romans and that there is a town called Barber today in the North of the country. Yet the writer goes on to state that Somalis arrived in the Horn of Africa sometime
during the ‘middle ages’ and therefore they are relatively new to the area. This is an interesting hypothesis, one that serves to undermine the historical origins of Somali peoples.

Touval then carefully begins to explain the ethic make up of groups he calls ethnic minorities, the most important culturally relevant group being the Arab population, numbering about 35,000. Second is a group that the author classifies as Negroid living in the Southern regions of the country with an estimated number of about 44,000. The writer also goes on to name other groups smaller in number, such as the Swahili speaking populations and the Indo-Pakistani populations, numbering 120 people. Next, Touval prudently begins to explain that despite the existence of minority groups, the predominance of Somalis on the Horn is not diminished, and their ethnic homogeneity still dominates in the country. In a subsequent section of the chapter he describes the demographic makeup of Somali people in relation to lifestyle and occupation. In addition he highlights the most significant aspects of Somali nationalism, which he elucidates as being a common ancestry. The issue of common ancestry within Somali societies is rooted in the Somaal Creation story, a story which, remarkably, the author alludes to in this chapter when he tries to explain the difference between Somalis and Sab (non-Somali Africans) inhabiting Somalia, whom the author calls Negroids. Touval proceeds to present a linear chart structure similar to the one developed by Lewis; the one outstanding difference is that Touval traces Somali genealogies to the Qurayshitic lineage of the Prophet Mohamed.

The author designates Sammale the great Somali Ancestor, citing him as the immediate Ancestor of Somali people stemming from the Prophet Mohammed’s lineage. This lineage is considered to have great importance throughout the Islamic world. However, it seems the author is hypothesizing without any foundational bases. There are no traditional elements of Somali culture signifying or connecting Somali peoples to the Prophet’s ancestry, though there are,
however, designated *Sarief* statuses assigned to those believed to be of the Prophet’s ancestry (see Martin, 1974; Pouwels, 1978), including some Somali nationals of Arab descent. This cultural categorization is significant for two reasons. First, it explicates and names a people living throughout the world who trace their heritage to the Prophet. Second, it dismisses outright the idea that Somali peoples are all a part of this lineage. Therefore, with regards to the author’s thesis concerning this matter, by assigning Somali peoples an Arab categorization, he is placing Somali peoples outside their rightful geographical and cultural landscape with this identity. What this does is provide a vacuum to raise questions, not only about the true origins of Somali peoples but also about the legitimacy of their claims to the land according to this historicization. From such a perspective, how can the author realistically engage in questions about a national struggle born out of a quest for freedom and dignity?

In the succeeding third chapter Touval fleshes out his ideas about the Somali Nation with a cogent political historical analysis that is geared towards arguing that a Somali Nation in which all Somalis are to live in one state is not achievable. According to the author there are three criteria that would make the debate on nationhood for a Nation legitimate, the first being the question of a common language, and Touval illustrates that Somalis have one language and many different dialects, which would not seem to present a problem. The second significant condition that the writer lays out is the issue of territory, a condition that is met, he states. The third classification that Touval assigns is, surprisingly, a racial category. In the author’s words, “Indeed, the Somalis can be termed race conscious and affected by a sense of racial superiority, directed mainly toward Negroid Africans” (p. 25). To support his position he claims that Northern Somali tribes have historically subjugated the Sab tribes in the South of Somalia.
In addition he cites an incident in which members of the Somaliland Camel Corps military unit staged an uprising as a result of their dissatisfaction with being treated like Africans. Moreover, he states that Somalis were also classified as Asian in Kenyan towns. What the author fails to mention is that it was the British colonial administration that introduced this system, categorized Somalis as Indians, and introduced the Indian Penal Code in Somalia. Therefore, Somalis got treated a little less harshly. When their treatment deteriorated, the Somalis revolted. The author is thus working with the same frame of mind as that in which the Americas were discovered by Columbus, and the Indigenous people were called Indians. In many ways the author himself is conceptualizing Somalis as Asians, and he credits the Arab population with much of the civilized cultural contributions made by Somali peoples. What this does is negate the social, political, and cultural foundations of Somali peoples. As such, by the author alluding to the fact that Somalis are a distinct peoples who do not have their roots in Africa delimits or delegitimizes the struggle of a peoples for their land and way of life. In essence, denying Somalia’s right to self-determination does not enable one to study what was going on throughout the continent during the turn of the 20th century. To end this chapter, Touval mentions the political cleavage between what he calls the Somalis and the Sabs, and he explains that tribal rivalries between the nomadic tribes and the agricultural tribes could hinder Somali nationalism, thus leaving much uncertainty looming over the Somali political question. Nevertheless, he hints towards Somali sentiments that could be utilized as a political vehicle to move towards nationhood.

Touval moves on to talk about the partition of the Horn, as he puts it, elucidating that European powers became interested in 1869 after the opening of the Suez Canal, where Britain, France, Italy, and Ethiopia under the leadership of Menelik II, all carved out parts of the Horn
for themselves. Touval also starts to draw on the works of colonial explorers and adventures in a fashion that exalts in discovery. Throughout his analysis the author presents the encounters of colonial explorers on the Somali landscape with Somalis and non-Somalis, suggesting that explorers were engaging in noble acts. As such, he references many different Europeans who have embarked on their colonial journeys and documented their accounts leaving a trail for other European explorers. The author even suggests that there were a series of events, namely Egypt’s expansion into the Horn of Africa and Turkish diplomacy to secure their interests as well, that led to the British establishing a British Protectorate in 1887. These are all important events yet the author, because of this Euro-American perspective, treats them as leading reasons for colonialism to gain a foothold in Somalia, rather than, say, connecting the explorers with a broader colonial agenda. The author only casually mentions the Berlin Conference in 1884 in his chapter about the partition. With this lack of a conceptual framework the author attempts to explain French and Italian colonialism, and the origins of Ethiopia’s lingering border dispute with Somalia. Touval’s historical-political thought presents an imprecise picture that does not allow the reader to understand the violent ideologies enacted by the colonial forces to establish their colonies in Somalia.

In the following chapter Touval describes two main heroic figures in Somali nationalism, one being Ahmed Guray, a 16th century statesman, and now a folktale hero, who ultimately led the Somalis to push back the Ethiopian expansionists during that era. The other is Sayyid Mahammad ‘Abdille’ Hassan, both of whom I spoke about in chapter two. For the purpose of this literature review I would like to concentrate on the Sayyid’s movement because his struggle is connected to the objectives of my study. With that objective I will proceed in examining how Touval takes up the Sayyid’s legacy in this chapter.
The author first gives a brief autobiography of the Sayyid’s life. After that he quickly moves to talk about elements of the armed resistance in 1895 without any account for the historical genesis of the movement and the nationalistic ideals being articulated by it. In fact the author treats the noble acts of the resistance as nothing more than disorderly conduct. As such, there is no real discussion of the movement’s goals, its nationalist sentiments, and the nature of the freedom fight carried out by the movement.

Then the author begins deliberating as to whether or not the Sayyid’s movement was a nationalist movement or religious fanaticism. He states that there is no clear classification of the essence of the resistance. Yet he alludes to the fact that it was religiously motivated from his perspective. Ironically, he goes on to state that “the political struggle inevitably had nationalist ingredients, and the ultimate religious objectives of the movement had certain nationalist aims as their corollaries. It would seem, therefore, that characterizing the [Sayyid’s] movement as primarily a religious one, coupled with nationalistic corollaries, would be more appropriate than attempting to constrain it into a purely ‘religious’ or ‘nationalist mold’” (p. 65). But even with Touval’s argument it is essential to question the colonial order in its entirety and the oppressive conduct that led the Somali population to rebel. Must there always be a jihadist element to an Islamic population’s struggle for freedom, and does that necessary entail an Islamic social order that is out to spread Islam? If that is the case, what do we make of the struggles against colonialism that took place in non-Islamic societies? This line of questioning is essential to interrogate the author’s historical analysis as he misreads Somali nationalism of the Sayyid’s era. The scholar amplifies some of the challenges that members of the movement faced in their twenty-year struggle against colonialism and yet lays the blame for those difficulties on the Sayyid’s religious beliefs. In the last section of this chapter the author dismisses the leader’s
character and he goes on to explain how many Somali tribes did not like him. Additionally, he explains that many of the Sayyid’s followers were Darrod, members of his own clan, and he does not pay much attention to the Sayyid’s oratory, which was used to broadcast the movement’s nationalist agenda. Touval explains that the Dervish movement was far-reaching, moving as far South as the Italian colony, where the Italians grew concerned whenever the Somalis evoked the Sayyid’s name.

However the author fails to explore how this movement was instrumental, under the Sayyids leadership, in cultivating a Somali national consciousness. In the author’s own account the Sayyid’s oratory is well-known and respected amongst all Somalis, even his foes. Therefore, it is not unwarranted to think that the author negated the power of this leader’s poetics and ideas in a traditional oral society in which the spoken word was a medium for communicating cultural philosophies, traditions, and histories. As such, the oratory composed served as a political weapon to mobilize Somali peoples against colonial occupation. It warrants special attention as a way to understand the political motivations and nationalistic sentiments encoded in this oratory. Yet the writer chooses to cite Douglas Jardine, who states, “Intensely as the Somalis feared and loathed the man whose followers had looted their stock, robbed them of their all, raped their wives, and murdered their children, they could not but admire and respect one who begins the embodiment of their idea of freedom and liberty” (cited in Touval, 1963, p. 60). With this quote the author is creating a paradoxical predicament that places Somali peoples in relative obscurity. In fact, he turns a Somali nationalistic narrative against Somali peoples by misrepresenting the Sayyid’s legacy and overlooking some of his great accomplishments. Why else would Touval draw on Jardine’s colonial narrative?
In the next relevant section of his thesis the author attempts to explain the roots of Somali nationalism by looking at the SYL movement. The author begins this section by explaining that from its inception Somali nationalism was wrought by tribalism. This issue is one that anyone doing studies in Somalia will certainly have to deal with, but what is at the crux of the discussion is how a tribal identity becomes a nationalist identity? The ways in which the author centers the notion of tribalism throughout his analysis in this work makes it seem that Somali nationalism revolved around community interests as opposed to nationalistic claims that were part of a global fight to decolonize the world. Throughout this work the author keeps reverting back to the tribalistic nature of Somali nationalism and attempts to show how this political cleavage is hindering the transition to nationhood, from a primitive colony to a modern state. It is the author’s overemphasis on tribalism that allows him to claim some contribution to questions of self-determination. But from his perspective, the violent processes of decolonization and the new humanism born out of it are virtually nonexistent.

Furthermore, the nature of the anticolonial struggle that Somalis selflessly sacrificed for, and the colonial oppression that the colonizers used to secure their interests, even after the birth of a Somali nation, are overlooked. This is an important point to make because the Somali State was not given on a silver platter to the peoples. The contrary is true, because Somalis struggled to realize nationhood, yet in Western traditional thought there is a tendency on the part of scholars to emphasize inherent difficulties without indicating why new states should not succeed, all the while downplaying the colonial strategies in the face of colonizers that utilize brutality to maintain their power grip. This is quite evident in Touval’s hypotheses. Informed by a Eurocentric framework, he does not notice how the idea of a Somali State has organically emerged through struggle and how key Somali nationalists have articulated nationalism.
Struggles involved organizing the general public with the aim of addressing social, political, and economic oppression in Somalia by championing ideas of Somali unity. More importantly, through his historicization of Somalia the writer does not capture the Somali vision for a state, thus he diverts attention away from the pitfalls and obstacles placed there by the colonizing powers to silence the aspirations of the peoples. What Touval has done in this work is to give a fragmented portrait of Somali consciousness during the nationalists’ fight for independence.

One of the most contradictory positions articulated by Touval that would debunk his position on Somali tribalism is the section in which he speaks about the unification of Somalia. In this section of his book the author begins highlighting, in an investigatory manner, a host of issues chiefly stemming from the unification of the British Somaliland in the North and the Italian Somaliland of the South. According to the author this move has brought economic, political, and administrative problems, yet again, he does not state how colonialism is implicated and how the peoples under courageous anticolonial leadership have pushed to make it happen. It is obvious that unifying two former colonies, with two administrations attached to separate European metropolises, was going to be a mammoth task that would require resourcefulness, a great vision, and a tremendous resolve to succeed. However, this nationalistic sentiment is ignored in its totality by the author. Instead, what the author opts to mention are the systemic differences in the two former colonies. In addition, the author again explains that between the political leadership of Somalis in the two former colonies there were major disagreements due to kinship and tribal affiliation and that there was no unifying Somali vision, contrary to the reality of Somalis’ actions. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Somali national struggle is that it eventually sparked a unification campaign enabling British Somaliland to win its independence on June 26, 1960, joined by Italian Somaliland five days later on July 1, 1960, becoming a
Somali Republic. I do not intend to suggest that Somali independence was not a problematic entity, but rather that there was and is a Somali national vision that has been masked by Touval in this book. I contend that this vision is worthy of being explored in great detail when one is writing about the history of colonialism in Somalia. In his concluding chapter, Touval, manages to isolate the anticolonial struggle of the Somali peoples within the Horn, and articulates Somali nationalism outside the realm of Pan-Africanism, citing Somali and Ethiopian racism against their ‘Negroid’ neighbours. He then alludes to a change in attitude in favour of Pan-Africanism amongst Somalis, Kenyans, and Ethiopians. However, he expresses some concerns stating that in Somalia’s case even Pan-Africanism could not unify the peoples of Somali descent because, in his mind, there are no common bounds to link Somalis in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya.

Touval goes back on this idea towards the end of the chapter, explaining that perhaps political realism on the part of the leaders, and living with their problems, would serve Somalis better than pan-Africanism. Otherwise, the leaders might run the risk of playing into the Cold War and ultimately risking all of Africa’s independence. With this particular stance the author conveys a colonial discourse that positions the colonized peoples as passive participants in their own history. Yet it is important to note that the colonial discourse operates within a set logic one that often manifests itself in the daily lives of the colonized.

What Saadia Touval has done in this book is to examine Somali nationalism from a Western lens, a colonial gaze that was never designed to see the birth of a Somali state. With his ideas on Somalia the author implicitly expresses all the limitations of Somali nationalism, masking the aspirations of Somali peoples with notions of tribalism and kin-based affiliations. From the start, the author says that the partition was a painful part of Africa’s history that could potentially never be reversed, and that Africans would have to live with the prolonged issues
stemming from the partition and colonialism. Therefore, he says Somalis, like many Nations in Africa, will forever have to live with the scars of colonialism, Touval’s analysis needs an anticolonial Indigenous interrogation from a Somali philosophical perspective to challenge his Euro-American readings and bring to life the histories of social movements in Somalia that have emerged out of the anticolonial struggles. I contend that such a philosophical stance will offer a holistic Somali understanding of the aspirations of Somali peoples, shedding light not only on the events that took place in a particular historical moment, but also on how some of that history has been misrepresented.

Conclusion:

One of the outstanding features of all the reviewed works is that they all seem to have relied on Lewis’s work, especially when it comes to Somali genealogies. Embedded in Lewis’s thesis about the origin of Somali peoples is an anthropological, culturally-detached categorization that suggests that Somalis are not Indigenous to their land and that they live in tribal clusters with no social cohesion. Therefore, Lewis’s ideas are important for two reasons. First they allow those drawing on his work to embark on a search for the origins of Somali peoples. Second, because of the genealogy question, researchers are provided with the space to construct narratives about the peoples and the landscape from outside the Somali cultural context. There is no doubt in my mind that it is this space that opens the door to engaging in ideas about Somali tribalism that are rooted in a colonial logic, a common mistake that has been supported by colonial theories in which the colonized are discovered, studied, and understood, ultimately to be subjugated. Therefore, we should not be surprised when colonial narratives are structured in ways that omit certain realities from the conversation. It is because of Lewis’s Eurocentric foundations that this literature is inherently problematic and that it why when
Samatar attempts to delineate the Somali history from his perspective, he misses an opportunity to not only refute Lewis’s work, but to also anchor his own work in the Afrocentric tradition that he alluded to. I contend that this would have made his analysis much stronger. Nevertheless Samatar’s book remains a seminal text in the study of what seems to me to be one of the most over studied often-misrepresented figures in Somali history. Yet textual engagement, in particular with the work of Lewis, Hess, and Tovals, creates an avenue to interrogate the ways in which Somalia has been constructed as a disorderly cultural space.

The aim of the chapter was to look at how the history of social movements in Somalia have been written about in order to bring forth a comprehensive understanding of how colonial discourses on Somalia have been validated within the field of Somali studies. The four books discussed together within this body of literature have been examined to widen the scope of my analysis in a discussion highlighting the ways in which Somalia has been shaped and reshaped by colonialism and its aftermath. This literature review chapter has explored some foundational texts referenced in Somali history. As such, the reviewed works each look at histories of social movements in Somalia from a Western trajectory, fitting into the Eurocentric canon. From that perspective the works provide a deep historical analysis that would allow for questioning of the very nature of Euro-American knowledges that have been produced about Somalia.
Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework:

Introduction:

This chapter undertakes a historical analysis by combining anticolonial theory and an Indigenous knowledges framework. Given the complex nature of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and how our histories have been taken up, it is important to situate this discussion in theories that could bring forth a historically grounded analysis from a unique, decolonizing, Indigenous Somali perspective to understand the history of social movements in Somalia. My intent is not to engage in a conversation about the colonial narrative and Somali counter-narratives, but rather to work with the knowledges of my Elders to transform our society. Somalia today is in an unforgiving colonial predicament, and to study this social phenomenon, with the aim of exposing the colonial situation, it is essential to think through theoretical frameworks that are founded on the principles of resistance, humanity, and freedom. Therefore, I have chosen to work with the power of anticolonial theory and Indigenous knowledges frameworks to conceptualize social transformation and change.

My intent is to raise new questions about power within an emancipatory politics. Working with select texts I will seek to critique, discuss, and project the voices of my Elders in our collective struggle to offer a historical perspective based on Somali dhaqan worldviews. With this stance I am of the opinion that the centrality of Somali history and interpretive culture is inextricably linked to the comprehensive understanding of the contemporary moment and current events in Somalia. In that sense, history is the entry point to understanding the past and present, while keeping a gaze on the future.

The theories chosen here are intellectual tools with which to engage in the struggles of the colonized and create spaces to think through the colonial circumstances. Applied to a study on the history of social movements, these theories offer a holistic understanding of not only the
events which took place in Somalia but also how colonialism and neo-colonial relations are still imposed on Somalia more than five decades after so-called independence from colonial rule. From my personal location as a Somali living in the Canadian Diaspora, anticolonial theory and Indigenous knowledges are discursive paradigms that occur together like two sides of the same coin, and without either it would be virtually impossible to conduct this research. What is profound about these two theories, again from my own subject location, is that they provide a framework for the colonized, by the colonized, to assert key identity claims. Being armed with these two theories permits me to be cognizant of key epistemic tenets in and through Somali dhaqan philosophies and to push the debate for undertaking an anticolonial historiographical project. To understand the nature of our anticolonial struggle within the contemporary context it is essential for us to come to terms with our histories and unlearn our past from the dominant Eurocentric perspective. I contend that it is only then that we can reengage our past from a critical perspective and march forward with a politics of resistance.

The strength of these two theories is that they provide a trajectory for anchoring my analysis in Somali dhaqan worldviews and produce knowledge that contributes to a better understanding of what it means to be Somali in Somalia and in the Diaspora. One might ask, what does knowledge production have to do with an anticolonial struggle? For me the question of a theory is one that is concerned with the ways in which a theory is employed for finding a way forward (see Dei & Kempf, 2006). Therefore theory must be a tool to embark on a struggle for self-determination and freedom. It is only with such a perspective that I can work with such ideas. I contend that without a radical stance, a sense of social responsibility, and the acknowledgement of the Indigenous African institutions that govern Somali societies, one cannot honestly engage in such a discussion. In this chapter my inquiry will be based on the following questions: What is the essence of these two theories? How can they enable me to make sense of the current state of affairs in Somalia? How will they bring forth a new understanding of the history of social movements in Somalia within the contemporary moment through Somali
*dhaqan* worldviews? And in what sense is the question of Somali *dhaqan* most relevant in Diaspora communities?

**Anticolonial Thought:**

As I try to make sense of how colonialism has configured and reconfigured Somalia it is imperative for me to use a theoretical framework that places colonial social, political, and economic relations at the center of the conversation. To engage in a discussion about colonialism in Africa with an emphasis on Somalia, it is crucial for me to ground my analysis in a theory that is built upon notions of capturing the essence of the struggle for the colonized. Therefore this study will be conceptualized through an anticolonial lens to provide a historical look at how social movements in Somalia have responded to colonialism as a means of providing a comprehensive understanding of how the postcolonial state was borne, and what key struggles previous generations of Somalis have undertaken. It is vital to highlight how Somali peoples have understood the brutal nature of colonialism and how they have tried to come to terms with it. Let us be very clear about the essence of anticolonial thought; as a discourse it has always been around, and peoples have used it to fend off colonialism. The colonized peoples’ struggle for victory over colonial rule was part and parcel of the visionary courageous leadership of the anticolonial champions who fought for the rights of their peoples. To understand the political/social dynamics within the current milieu of the Somali nation state, it is imperative to engage in an analysis that allows me to interrogate the colonial relations that are at play in that part of the world. In this day and age, Somalia is in a unique predicament with some unforgiving circumstances.

Principally, anticolonial discursive frameworks bring forth a comprehensive reading of the contemporary issues arising from colonial relations. It is a theory that equips one to work with the epistemologies of the colonized to engage in questions of identity, history, and context in relation to notions of Indigeneity (see Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Theoretically,
anticolonialism is grounded on challenging constructions of valid knowledges, and it is centered on interrogating power. Within this paradigm, power is not simply bringing forward the ways in which colonial power has re-shaped the colonized world, but also entails drawing from the power of local practices and ways of knowing to subvert colonial domination through social action (see Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). This theory is thus equipped with the tools to read resistance as counter-insurgency for exercising self-determination.

Anticolonialism emerged during the mid-20th century, as the likes of Fanon, César, Cabral, Ghandi, and Nkrumah tried to reclaim their humanity from colonial oppression and dehumanizing circumstances that occurred in the critical moments of spearheading national struggles. Armah (2010) illustrates this anticolonial intellectual endeavour when he states:

> For any society to reach such a level of cultural awareness, it needs to nourish itself from the work of a small groups of intellectuals committed to the search for real accurate data, however long suppressed or deeply buried, and willing to devote time and intelligence to the slow, steady research needed to unearth the buried data for presentation to an awakening universe. (p. 11)

In strong agreement with Armah’s ideas, this theory would allow me to unravel the colonial/neo-colonial relations that dominate Somalia, and thus provide me with a holistic reading of the anticolonial struggle. Though all anticolonial thinkers write from different perspectives, their thoughts revolve around the cessation of colonial oppression. In Somalia’s case this framework allows me to express a Somali sentiment to be free from colonialism and to imagine a world without the Eurocentric colonial regime that pretends universality throughout the world.

Although we have celebrated a defeat of colonialism during the 1950s, 1960s, and well into the 1990s throughout the colonies, colonialism is alive and well. As such, it is present in the colonial discourses that are imposed on former colonies, which are now referred to as the developing world (see Bhabha, 1984; Kelley, 1999; Said, 1991; Seed, 1991; Tiffin, 1995; Williams & Yousaf, 1994). Throughout Africa colonialism still has a firm grip on our minds,
bodies, and souls. Moreover, there is a demarcation of our lands, particularly in Africa, that
names and configures them through colonial logic. Africa seemed to have been at a crossroads
during the mid-20th century, moving towards a revolutionary path in an era that promised to
usher in universal human rights and emancipation, but not much has changed in terms of how
colonialism operates. Therefore, we must engage in a theory that would enable us to analyse the
colonial rationale that continues to marginalize the peoples of Africa.

One of the key aspects of any people’s struggle is the social consciousness of being
aware of the debilitating circumstances facing a people under domination. Steve Biko (1979)
captures the essence of social consciousness as he states:

Black Consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to
rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression—the
blackness of their skin—and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of
their shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude…the interrelationship
between the consciousness of the self and the emancipatory program is of
paramount importance. Blacks no longer seek to reform the system because so
doing implies the acceptance of the major points around which the system
revolves. (p. 49)

Biko’s analysis offers the centrality of the anticolonial social consciousness based on the
realization that people are in bondage simply for being Black. Extending this analysis to
Somalia would mean that the people there would have to come to terms with being under
colonial domination because they are African. They would then have to rally as a collective and
evoke Somalinimo in their struggles. This would make anticolonial thought as a social-political
theory optimal in a study that revolves around the struggles of a people. Armah (2010, p. 10)
also stresses the importance of the Africans awaking as he links this awaking to their history
when he explains:

[Awaking] will ultimately take practical political and social forms. However, our
recent history reminds us that no matter how huge the energy that goes into it, any
attempted political awakening will be abortive unless it is preceded by a
preparyor process of cultural rebirth, the kind of renewed self-awareness that enables a people long and relentlessly misrepresented—as essentially childish, stupid, incapable of management, averse to challenged intellectual undertaking, with aptitude only for the easier occupation of rhythmic work, music and dance, and therefore capable of facing and solving the problems now blocking our path to a future of our own.

Armah’s brilliant articulation of the social and political awaking of a people necessitates a historically grounded process of reclamation, renewal, and revitalization.

Focusing on Somali *dhaqan* as an anticolonial paradigm enabled me to conceptualize and center my research through Somali African worldviews as I conducted this study. As our Elders articulate the histories of social movements from an African cosmological point of departure, it is essential to account for the root causes of the current state of affairs in Somalia. It is important that, as our Elders tell our collective histories through their own interpretations, we understand their cultural views, because they are the holders of our knowledges and they can connect not only to our histories, but also to a holistic way of life that encompasses our rich cultural traditions, ceremonies, institutions, and our living memories as peoples. Unlocking some of these knowledges is instrumental for me to provide a comprehensive culturally-appropriate understanding of the history of social movements through the eyes of our Elders. The revolutionary thinker, Amilcar Cabral (1973) of Guinea, in *Return to the Source*, eloquently captures the value of culture in the struggle of peoples as he states:

> The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and the historical realities of the society that is dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people’s history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evaluation of relationships between man and his environment. (p. 41)

Thus, if I am to work with Somali cultural values that have been devalued as nomadic, tribalistic, and backwards, it is essential to operationalize a theoretical framework that is equipped with tools to facilitate an in-depth discussion about what took place in Somalia in
relation to what is going on within the contemporary moment. This is particularly important for
those of us living in the Diaspora in what our Elders would call Qurbu (a stranger’s land),
because we are, in my opinion, disproportionately exposed to Eurocentric discourses about our
homelands, and many of us have internalized this logic (Du Bois, 1989; Fanon, 1967b; wa
Thiong’o, 1993). Our Elders’ perspectives thus serve as a powerful reminder of the knowledges
that they hold. I strongly believe that our Elders’ wisdoms can guide us both in Somalia and in
the Diaspora.

The premises of anticolonial thought lies in the theoretical relevance of this theory on the
everyday lived experiences of the colonized (Fanon, 1967b; Memmi, 1991). According to Dei
and Asgharzaeh (2001), anticolonial theory:

[I]s an epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the Indigenous sense of
collective and common colonial consciousness. Colonial in this sense is
conceptualized not simply as foreign or alien, but rather as imposed and
dominating. The anticolonial approach recognizes the importance of locally
produced knowledge emanating from cultural history and daily human
experiences. Its goal is to question, interrogate, and challenge the foundation of
institutionalized power and privilege, and the accompanying rationale for
dominance in social relations. (p. 300)

In agreement with Dei and Asgharzaeh’s attestation, to cast the gaze on colonialism and to think
beyond the dominant colonial narrative on Somalia, as being in a state of anarchy since 1991, I
must work with the locally produced knowledges to explain what the resistance traditions look
like on the ground. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) refers to this culture as an African tradition and
he is of the view that “[t]his is a patriotic national tradition developed in resistance and
opposition to imperialist-sanctioned African culture. Under colonialism this was a culture which
through songs, dances, poetry, drama, spoke of the reflected peoples’ real needs as they
struggled against...colonial exploitation and political oppression” (p. 44). Understanding the
people’s anticolonial traditions is central to making sense of the ways in which resistance was
performed. Loomba (1998) pointed out that “colonialism had exercised its sway over 84.6 per
cent of the land surface of the globe. This fact alone reminds us that it was impossible for European colonialism to have a monolithic operation. Right from its earliest years it deployed diverse strategies and methods to control representation. European discourses about ‘the other’ are accordingly variable” (p. 19). Thus, to understand the legacy of colonialism and how it has impacted and continues to devastate Somalia it is worthwhile for me to conceptualize through a theory that is capable of uncovering colonial ideologies and explain how they were used and how they continue to be employed to wreak havoc.

In her writing Wane (2005) explains that she always thought of colonialism as being something that started out with an idea. To draw on her perspective through anticolonial theory my question is what is the colonial idea that is at work in Somalia? How does it manifest itself in the daily lives of Somali peoples, wherever they might be located? How do we, as Somalis, resist this colonial idea? More importantly how do we and who have we resisted this idea? In addition, as Africans we have developed a critical gaze to subvert colonialism not only as a means of survival but also as a means of asserting our voices in our struggle (Dei, 2011). Anticolonial theory not only highlights the complex/brutal nature of colonialism, it also encompasses a decolonizing approach (Dei, 2000; Fanon, 1967b; Smith, 1999; wa Thiongo, 1986; Wane, 2005). A key component of this theory is that it allows the colonized to theorize in their own voices and to tell their own stories (Dei & Kempf, 2006). To borrow Thomas King’s (2003) famous words, “The truth about stories is, that’s all we are” (p. 172). Thus we should be able to tell our histories. Ali Abdi (2001a) in his work, *Culture, Education, and Development in South Africa: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, highlights the importance of the colonized/Africans writing their own histories within educational contexts, given “the falsity of educating and, therefore, the civilizing mission that colonialism so heavily depends on. It is essential to expose the specificity of the European historical trajectory that has forced them to acquire new lands for their own economic and social survival” (p. 12). As such, anticolonial theory would permit me to anchor my perspective in my Indigenous culture and history about
Somalia. This theory allows me to speak about Somalia prior to Western colonization, shed some light on the colonial encounter, and draw on the vision of our Elders to articulate our intergenerational anticolonial struggles as a way of highlighting the key lessons from our collective past and claiming our stake in the future. Most importantly, I am drawn to anticolonial theory because it is a theory that emerged out of a global struggle against colonialism. Therefore, it is only fitting for me to converse about colonialism using a theory that has been articulated to subvert oppression. Dei and Kempf (2006), for example, with their re-theorizing anticolonial thought, argue that anticolonial theory allows:

Context specific examples, grounded discussions of local struggles of resistance (and how these struggles connect the colonial encounter to the Indigenous experiences) [to] emerge. These discussions offer significant lessons for social change. At the global level, there is the on-going struggle for Indigenous peoples to retain their identities. (p. 13)

In agreement with their theorizing on anticolonial thought, a discursive framework is essential to ground my ideas in a theory that is shaped by the everyday struggles of the colonized in their own voices.

Anticolonial theory provides the theoretical space to process colonial histories in relation to the contemporary challenges facing Somali peoples. This theory enables one to expose the underlining power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized through a historical portrait. As Albert Memmi (1991) explained long ago, “The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from community. Colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility” (p. 91). This conceptualized explanation offered by Albert Memmi exemplifies the essence of the current crisis facing Somali peoples. The reality is that we have moved away from our histories, our identities, and our communal African way of life.
With colonialism came conquest and the totalitarian dismantlement of the African way of life throughout the continent. In response Africans organized, engaged in resistance, and laid down visions for the futures of their communities. In the modern era this struggle continues with us today in Somalia and throughout Africa. Therefore, we must reach back in history to think of ways of fully evoking our legacies. The strength of anticolonial theory in this research project is that it provides an insight into the central elements of life that Somali peoples fought to preserve after the encounter. Ayi Kwei Armah (2010) eloquently expresses the importance of understanding our histories in Africa as he states, “The accident of history make us what we are today, but we can work to shape the course of our future if we give ourselves the trouble to know what it will take” (p. 9). This quote is quite powerful in offering history as a gateway to the future. More importantly, in my eyes, it alludes to the historical genesis of the anticolonial struggles in Africa. As such, for anyone to be able to engage in their anticolonial struggle, they would have to understand what took place in the past. Dei and Kempf (2006) remind us how important history is to a people in their struggle as they suggest, “History and context are crucial for an anticolonial undertaking. Understanding our collective past is significant for pursuing a politics of resistance” (p. 1). In relation to the positioning history and context of Dei and Kempf one might ask what the correlation is between historical context and struggle, and anticolonial thought. To put it simply, anticolonial thought is a theory in a context-specific, historically rooted epistemological knowing that calls for the subverting of colonial domination in any given era.

The essence of anticolonial discourse is the quest to place the African cultures in Africa in opposition to the cultures of the colonizer, using myths, legends, orators, and the metaphysical ancestral connections to preserve the African way of life. In all encounters that took place in Somalia, the colonizers did not initially arrive with guns; rather they came with their aggressive colonial ideologies. Therefore, the anticolonial paradigm was encoded in the cultural interactions with the colonizers in a Somali consciousness broadcasted in various cultural
domains to ensure that members of the Somali public shared a common sentiment of hatred of colonial domination. This is what conditioned a quest to challenge colonialism through common dhaqan values, Somali heritage, and an ancestral connection to the land founded on moral principles and spiritual rootedness in a place called Somalia. It is these dhaqan values which provided the resistance using cultural capital, a knowledge base, and an Indigenous African canon built on Somali worldviews. Mazrui (1986), in his brilliant work, *Africans: A Triple Heritage,* explains culture as being an interconnected set of values that influence judgments in any given society. In the Somali context these very values stand for the total rejection of the colonizers and their ways because it was commonly believed that the colonizers would ultimately change the Somali way of life. Therefore, there was a resistance in and through Somali dhaqan, an Indigenous African culture that the colonizers could not access. In Somalia, as in many parts of the world, it was the cultures of the colonized that gave way to anticolonial resistance. Cabral (1973) asserted that independence movements are also marked by the oppressed peoples’ cultural resistance. In fact he suggests that culture is an instrumental weapon for organizing peoples in their fight for freedom. Therefore, it is through cultural epistemologies that the people of Somalia were able to interpret colonial aggression, racialization, and genocidal policies. It is this collective dehumanizing experience that enabled the Indigenous communities to engage in a knowledge production process for understanding the phenomena which they were undergoing. Working with this theory enables me to access this anticolonial knowledge not just for the sake of historicity, but also to make conceptual connections between how people understood it in the past and how to utilize it to bring forth a nuanced reading of today’s colonial predicament with regards to the Somali political question.

The fundamental question of this research is how we think of the knowledges in African cultures in relation to the histories of social movements. I am thinking of knowledge here as a foundational medium to respond to a social phenomenon within any given society and/or context. As colonizing powers were reshaping the existence of the various societies that they
were colonizing, the colonized produced key ideas about the colonizer and their ways, and about colonization. What I am most interested in is how such knowledges were/are historically rooted in the Somali frame of mind. This historical process was initiated as an inward-looking, multidimensional, reflective understanding of what it means to be African, and within the Somali context such procedures meant holding on to some of the key values that constituted being Somali. It is only through a theoretical framework that is equipped to converse with such critical anticolonial knowledges that I can provide a holistic analysis of what took place in Somalia.

I recall one Elder I interviewed telling me that one of the reasons peoples were so up in arms about British colonialism in Somalia was because the colonizers were against people visiting each other. When I asked the Elder why, he indicated that “Somali people regularly visit each other without an appointment and that Elders liked to casually pay each other visits. The colonizers on the other hand did not see one another without scheduling a meeting, and/or having a particular reason for visiting one another.” The British prohibited this practice of casual visits, which was a point of concern for Somali peoples. With respect to such a cultural practice, only applying an anticolonial lens would help get to the essence of what this tradition was all about, and why it is was so important to Somali peoples, particularly Elders. Elsewhere, Cabral (1973) warns us:

It is understood that imperialist domination, denying to the dominated people their own historical process, necessarily denies their cultural processes. It is further understood why the exercise of imperialist domination, like all other foreign domination, for its own security requires cultural oppression and the attempt at direct or indirect destructions of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated. (p. 142)

The above quotation highlights the impassioning of colonized cultures in which the people’s worldviews are found. Cabral’s discussion is vitally important because it challenges colonial domination in regards to culture. More importantly, these values are communal practices that
signify the often complex ways in which our Ancestors, as great thinkers and visionaries of their times, evoked their Africanness to articulate Somali worldviews.

I contend that anticolonial thought would sanction me to vindicate such knowledges in my research and work with them. One might ask: What is the relationship between the histories of social movements in Somalia and how previous generations articulated their thought? The two are interrelated and as Somali peoples we cannot fully understand what has happened to us as African peoples without knowing how events of the past continue to prevail. For me the issue of evoking the African understanding, in which certain views were articulated in and through culture during the colonial encounter, is central to understanding the current historical epoch. Fanon (1967b) long ago stressed the importance of retrieving the cultural logic of the colonized African of the past to imagine a new humanism. Therefore, by attempting to engage with this logic I seek a way of getting to a place for imagining the possibilities of such knowledges and thus transforming our society. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) best takes up knowledges and cultural values when he states:

These values are the basis of a society’s consciousness and outlook, the whole area of a society’s make-up, its identity. A sense of belonging, a sense of identity is part of our psychological survival. Colonialism through racism tried to turn us into societies without heads. Racism, whose highest institutionalized form is apartheid, is not an accident. It is an ideology of control through divide and rule, obscurantism, a weakening of resistance through a weakening of a sense of who we are. Thus psychological survival is necessary. We need values that do not distort our identity, our conception of our rightful place in history, in the universe of the natural and human order. (p. 77)

What wa Thiong’o notes is that a cultural foundation in any given society is imperative to how members of that community perceive themselves, not only as they stand in opposition to colonialism, but also as a means for communities to see their identities as whole. As such, cultures provide a powerful local knowledge base that is heralded in the past, encompassing culture, history, and heritage, which are all related to the question of identity (Dei, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2012).
As an intellectual tool, anticolonial ideology helps bring a nuanced reading to the ways in which our history has been written about us by the colonizer and it assists in exposing it as a violently inhumane process. The history of social movements in Somalia, as written about in most texts, is steeped in Eurocentric logic, and heavily couched in a very problematic British-Euro-American historical tradition. One of the most disturbing features of this model is that it is very dismissive of the salient elements of the struggle, and the core values that drove the movement. I contend that dominant scholarship not only masked the brutal nature of colonialism but also reproduced the racist colonial logic in which colonialism operates, further perpetuating dominant stereotypes about Somalis. Fanon (1963, 1967a, 1967b) eloquently captures the essence of colonialism as a phenomenon that creates a compartmentalized world, enforcing realities containing two different species: one for the colonized and the other for the colonizer. This asymmetrical relationship is quite evident within the colonial text written about Somalia because this literature is loaded with epistemic violence. There are real implications for the colonized to live in a world under an order that is aimed at advancing and maintaining a colonial agenda and that continues to reinforce the power relations between the colonizer and the colonized.

Therefore, I engage anticolonial concepts to move away from this dehumanizing relationship towards a place where I can think about some of the lessons I have learned from my Elders and so anchor our history in Somali *dhaqan* as a method of unlearning/learning from a Somali centred platform. As such, anticolonial analysis as a theory emerged in response to Eurocentric philosophical domination (see Abiola, 2009; Ez, 1998; Serequeberhan, 1997; Wiredu, 1997). I believe this approach provides new possibilities to work with the legacies of our Ancestors to assert our voices in our anticolonial struggle. It is only then that we can stand in opposition, challenge colonial arrogance, and deflect colonial epistemic violence. My concern is not with the trappings of Eurocentricity that have continued to negate the histories of social movements in Somalia, but rather with exposing these trappings through the present
study. It is with an anticolonial approach that we can truly understand the power of the knowledges rooted in the history of our social movements, can ground ourselves in that history, and claim our stake in our future. The essence of social movements in Somalia, like many parts of the colonized world, was borne out of such a quest for liberty.

Kwame Nkrumah (1965) argued that anticolonial movements during the 20th century in Africa were about struggles for political anticipation as he stated:

We have witnessed the greatest awaking ever seen on this earth of suppressed and exploited peoples against the powers that have kept them subjected…Hence the twentieth century has become the century of colonial emancipation, the century of continuing revolution which must finally witness the total liberation of Africa from colonial rule and imperialist exploitation. (p. x)

Nkrumah’s intellectual contributions regarding the anticolonial struggles in Africa present the resistance as a social-political movement asserting self-determination. It is only when we engage colonialism critically that we can begin to think about how our Ancestors fought for cultural, political, and spiritual emancipation. Furthermore, one of the most important aspects of anticolonial ideas is that it enables one to move the discussion beyond issues of representation. I ask why Somalia is represented as a failed state in the contemporary era so I can raise questions about sovereignty. Questions of identity representation are important in any struggle for sovereignty, but I think what is more important is how we find our way back, back to our own centers and to our grounding in our intergenerational struggle. I believe this process has to be seen as an anticolonial journey in order to decolonize our ancestral homelands (see Ilmi, 2011).

The strength of anticolonialism is that it warrants all Somalis interpreting our social and political realities through a larger geopolitical struggle in Africa, one that is also connected to the broader colonized world. This is vital for those of us living in the Diaspora because we live in an anti-African world that is racially wounding. Therefore, if we are to understand the nature of colonial aggression we must locate all our contemporary issues within an African historical context to better grasp our ‘political crisis.’ An anticolonial reading is essential, as it facilitates a
collective sense of identity through a historical struggle. This approach naturally leads to a collective resistance politics evoking Somali Indigenous knowledges and seeking Elders’ advice on how to navigate a stranger’s land.

**Indigenous Knowledges:**

An Indigenous-based inquiry is a powerful alternative or oppositional theory that fits perfectly into anticolonial discursive frameworks. The foundation of Indigenous knowledges is anchored in the question of Indigenous worldviews. This paradigm recognizes the histories of Indigenous people. Smith (1999) reminds us of the importance of critiquing the ways in which history is often told for Indigenous peoples by the colonizers, and she explains that “for Indigenous peoples history is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming of history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization” (p. 30). I contend that the Indigenous ways of knowing are an integral part of any anticolonial struggle of any peoples, and the concept of Indigeneity as a process and identity are key. Therefore, in addressing problems stemming from colonialism and its aftermath, it is imperative to incorporate a theory that would make it possible to facilitate a discussion about Indigenous experiences and identities. The strength of Indigenous knowledge is that it challenges what constitutes a valid body of knowledge and the social construction of such knowledge. The essence of Indigenous knowledge is to reclaim our spiritual foundation, exercise agency, and evoke our ancestral wisdom. This approach urges that we reconnect with the ways of our Ancestors. I am not suggesting that it is a question of Western knowledge and/or Indigenous knowledge because this paradigm recognizes multiple ways of knowing (Dei, 1999; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). Rather, I suggest that by not reaching back into our histories we risk silencing a part of ourselves and never find our way back to our cultural domains. I affirm that Indigenous knowledge refers to multiple bodies of comprehensive knowledge that anchor us in a way of life on ancestral homelands. They center us in our intergenerational anticolonial struggles spiritually, socially, and politically. In engaging
in an honest dialogue about my embodied African perspective on Somalia, it is vital for me to situate my analysis in a framework that is able to amplify my African Indigenous knowledge, epistemology, ontology, and axiology.

At the core of an Indigenous theoretical framework are questions of Indigeneity in a place of origin vis-a-vis land, histories, cultures, and a communal way of life. The African Indigeneity that I speak of is a societal social order that cannot be explained outside of the Somali epistemic understanding of what it means to be human. An Indigenous knowledges framework is holistic and does not compartmentalize human experiences or validate one body of knowledge over the other. Thus it enables me to anchor my study on Somali Indigenous ontology and to center notions of knowledge as power. Knowledge here is not simply about abstract knowing, but also about contextual communal knowledges and the inherent right to produce, validate, and operationalize Indigenous knowledges for the greater good of society. Within this theory are the parameters to engage in subjected knowledges that reside in the body, thus making room for one to understand the resistant politics within a particular subject location and social context. According to Warren (1991) Indigenous Knowledges (IK) are:

Local knowledge—knowledge that is unique to a given culture society. (IK) contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Such knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, in many societies by word of mouth. (cited in Arawal, 1999)

In concert with Warren’s ideas, I firmly believe in theorizing in and through my embodied Indigenous African cultural knowledges to produce, disseminate, and validate our own histories as Somali people. Moreover, our collective Somali cultural knowledges encapsulate a holistic vision of how we see Somalia. Through the Eurocentric lens, our homeland has been depicted as the “failed State in the Dark Continent.” But Warner’s ideas are especially useful because of the
emphasis on local context. They offer me a way to engage with the local knowledges produced and disseminated within the Canadian diasporic context in terms of how we in the Diaspora converse about and conceptualize Somalia.

Trevor W. Purcell (1998), in his writing *Indigenous Knowledge and Applied Anthropology: Questions of Definition and Direction* explains Indigenous knowledge as “a body of historically constituted (emic) knowledge instrumental in the long term adaption of human groups to the biophysical environment” (p. 260). Purcell’s articulation is principally important here for two reasons within an Indigenous framework. First, it identifies Indigenous knowledge as a holistic method of generating knowledge. Second, it is anchored in history from an Indigenous mode of thought. This definition positions me to give philosophically more accurate historical information generated in the local environment. I strongly believe that our locally-produced knowledges in relation to notions of Home, both physically and spiritually, are profoundly unique. As such, these knowledges offer a unique perspective not only in terms of the oppositional culture and the political cultural armour that those in the Diaspora wear, but also ensure that the connection with Somalia as an African space is not lost. In agreement, Dei (2011) in his work *Indigenous Philosophies and Critical Education* eloquently captures this sentiment by conceptualizing Indigenous knowledges as being:

> [P]rimarily about epistemology. Like every body of knowledge, Indigenous knowledges has its own ontological, conceptual/philosophical, methodological, and axiological grounding. Indigenous knowledge is science, philosophy, and practice of knowing about one’s existence as not conscripted by simple colonial and colonized experiences. It is also about understanding the nature of social reality as real (i.e., materially consequential for the body) as meaningful in physical and metaphysical realms. Indigenous knowledge speaks of the inseparability and inter-dependence of selves and the collective. It heralds the mind, body, and spirit connections and connectedness of society, culture, and nature in the ways we come to know about ourselves and the worlds. (p. 4)

This theory offers a comprehensive perspective on how Somali culture encapsulates strong bonds between individuals and the collective in the community with codes of social
responsibility, reciprocity, and togetherness. It sheds some light on the spiritual interconnectedness between all Somalis, hence the Somali saying *Geel walba Geele kehorary isammehwesouwacha* (“every camel follows the footsteps of the camels ahead”). In most Somali cultural traditions camels are sacred creatures and proverbs that revolve around them have a very powerful meaning to Somali peoples. In terms of an Indigenous anticolonial struggle, the above proverb signifies an intergenerational struggle with which we all must engage. Moreover, it speaks of a profound sense of responsibility upon the older generation to walk the courageous path of the previous generation and to chart their anticolonial path so the community’s youth can continue the struggle. Therefore, articulating my ideas in this particular framework is my way of bringing forth a Somali epistemic understanding and thought about our own worldviews, thus allowing me to converse with my Elders and with the greater community about our histories. This is especially critical given the contemporary moment in which I choose to undertake this research. In addition this framework creates room for one to speak about Somali histories from various Indigenous perspectives without the search for a singular story and our truth.

More instrumentally, conventional discourses do not explicitly connect colonialism to Indigenous African experiential and historical realities. It is only through Indigenous knowledges that I am able to interrogate the colonial narrative and the dominant understanding of what is going on in Somalia, and to shed some light on the spaces created for the African Somali counter-narrative that places Somalia at the center of the conversation (see wa Thiong’o, 1993). Counter-narratives are important not simply as a technique of rehashing our history, but rather to figure out what happened and continues to occur on our lands, in the hope of getting us to that we can think about our own solutions from a Somali philosophical stance (see Higgs, 2009; Hoppers, 2001; Letseka, 2000; Serequeberhan, 1994). Studying the histories of social movements through this theory challenges the normative status assigned to colonizing knowledges. This very process allows one to question how this knowledge is taken up and
reproduced, and it enables one to examine colonizing knowledge. Through an Indigenous African lens, questioning the normalization of the Western theorization of the ‘Somalia crisis’ within a colonial canon is vital to unmask colonialism (see Kuokkanen, 2007; Smith, 1999, 2008). The historical misrepresentation of the realities on the ground and the reproduction of this knowledge are often left unchallenged. At the fore, this dissertation is built up on the power of local knowledges that are historically rooted in an ancestral homeland, to transform society as much as to take up our histories differently.

Central to discursive frameworks of Indigenous knowledges is the validation of African ways of knowing that would otherwise be denied through conventional discourses. Given the violent nature of the colonial encounter throughout Africa and the aggressive nature of colonial discourses in further replicating colonial relations, passing on how such histories are understood is imperative. Of importance are not only how colonial discourses operate and how they shape material realities on the ground within the contemporary moment, but also how our Ancestors resisted such colonial discourses, and how they worked reflectively with their own knowledges as an act of liberation. With respect to the history of social movements in Somalia, the Indigenous knowledges that I would like to work from are Somalia dhaqan knowledges, as they have been produced both in Somalia and in the Diaspora, and because such knowledges are informed by historical experiences including colonialism. Therefore, this approach offers a lens to articulate local Indigenous African histories. What is profound about Indigenous knowledge as a theory is that it makes room for Somali dhaqan philosophies and provides me with an understanding of how Eurocentric discourses have traditionally placed everything African outside the realm of philosophy (see Asante, 1987; Bernal, 1987; Diop, 1987; Gyekye, 1987; Karenga, 2006; Mbiti, 1969; Obenga, 2004; Oruka, 1990; Wiredu, 2004). This paradigm exposes the essence of colonial discourses and it subverts the power of Eurocentric knowledge. Indigenous knowledges use the concept of discourse to disorganize the colonial order. They assist in examining how knowledge about the Other is created by offering a
reflective analysis of how the colonial logic producing such knowledges are produced (see Césaire; 1972; Hall, 1992; Loomba, 1998; Mohanty, 1998; Mudimbe, 1988; Said, 1978, 1994). These ideas debunk the colonial discourses that expand the territories of the colonial empire by generating violent images and ideas about the colonies. As such, these colonial discourses are with us today, continuously shaping and re-shaping the ways in which our identities are taken up. The power of Indigenous knowledge is that it is equipped with the theoretical tools to work with the knowledges of the Indigenous/colonized to articulate their own ideas about how to decolonize this world.

With this in mind I hope to learn/re-learn the histories of social movements from our communities’ Elders so they can share their knowledges, wisdoms, and experiences with me for this research. Within the African continent, Eldership is one of the most powerful cultural, social, and political institutions. Our Elders signify our living histories. In this respect Somali Elders stand in a very unique position to alter the course of our modern history by working with their anticolonial cultural capital. Given the enormous challenges facing Somalia, it is our duty to learn from our Elders as we seek to secure a better future for our communities. We must evoke their courageous ancestral visions and respond to their calls. As a peoples, we cannot talk about the histories of social movements in Somalia, and/or Somali history for that matter, without asking our Elders about what that history entails. For me the question goes beyond notions of knowledge and simply being the “knower.” It is rather about planting our feet in our historical ancestral anticolonial struggle and seeking guidance from our Elders as we make sense of the contemporary challenges. This is where Indigenous knowledge comes in handy because it makes room for alternative conceptual frameworks to imagine a new future. There is a need within the modern era for us as a people to revert back to the moral ideals of our Ancestors and begin to thinking in circles.
This mode of thought offers the valuable insight needed to ask new questions such as: How do we work with what we have learned from our Elders to reshape our future? How do we as Africans continue working with Somali *dhaqan* resourcefully to subvert colonialism in our communities? How has Somali *dhaqan* helped to move the Diaspora communities? And how do community members operationalize Somali *dhaqan* as a cultural index and as an analytical tool to understand their place in the globe today? These questions are deeply rooted in how our communities work with our collective histories through Somali *dhaqan* as a method of continuing the struggle. More importantly, how do we as a Diaspora group contribute to the community-building project in North America from a Somali perspective, like the communities that came before us to this land? It is through the many colonial experiences that African peoples have been driven from their lands to find their way to North America. The centrality of Indigenous knowledges permits one to think through their own cultural values and communal moral/ethical understandings of the universe in search for solutions. This is the vital challenge facing my generation of Somalis because we must not only hold on to our values, but also evoke them as we navigate the North American landscape, and ensure that our traditional and spiritual practices are bequeathed to future generations of Somali youth. These traditional values must emphasize the centrality of social responsibility and community ethics (Asante, 1988, 1991, 1992). In conceptualizing *dhaqan* knowledges within our communities, certain issues must be broached that would only be possible to understand from an Indigenous African point of view. The premise of this idea is that it offers avenues to challenge and dislodge the linear Western notions of who we are as peoples and to resist Eurocentric discourses about our way of life. We must evoke and practice our communal ways of thinking in circles where our Elders preside over community issues and continue our struggle (Ilmi, 2012). Therefore we must think through theory and practical frameworks that are culturally rooted to engage with the history of our social movements.
Finally, I would like to think through an Indigenous knowledges framework for this research as I develop Somali *dhaqan* methodologies to carry out my research in the community. In conducting research in the community with an anticolonial politics, it is crucial for me not only to ask new questions but also to step outside of Eurocentric methodologies to interpret Somali cultural knowledges. Conventional research methodologies would not enable me to fully access our communities’ Elders and to center their Indigenous African perspectives in my research. Moreover, *dhaqan* methodologies would allow me to enter Indigenous African social spaces as a member of a community and interpret my interactions from the point of view of a Somali located within the Canadian Diaspora. This conceptual understanding is imperative as I try to navigate community spaces as a member of the community first, and as a researcher second. As such, there are protocols that one must follow when conducting research with Elders (both men and women) in the community for the research to be valid in accordance to Somali *dhaqan*.

Smith (1999) points out the negative impact colonial research methodologies often have on Indigenous communities as she stated:

[The] collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about Indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized. (p. 1)

Many of the Elders I have interviewed were concerned about my researcher status and asked what would happen to the information that was collected. Many in fact were concerned about if I was a reporter working for one of the news agencies, voicing some of the concerns highlighted by Smith. One of the most instrumental aspects of this research, from Indigenous knowledge perspective, is that it moves beyond the dominant research methodologies that marginalize African cultural institutions as primitive and underdeveloped. This methodology highlights the ways in which African cultures move with the times. More importantly, it theoretically explains
how knowledge production takes place, debunking the notion that the Indigenous African knowledges have to be located physically within Africa to function holistically. Indigenous knowledges research theories enable me as a member of the Somali community to work with a community of learners/researchers that are committed to producing knowledge that is centered on our histories, experiences, and holistic way of life (see Ilmi, 2012). Through these frameworks I can truly begin to work with the communities’ knowledges to envision change.

**The key Dhaqan Principles Governing this Research:**

Somali *dhaqan* worldviews are Indigenous African philosophies which encapsulate multiple bodies of comprehensive knowledge that manifest themselves in Somali society, enabling Somalis to be part of a greater collective. These philosophies are the founding pillars of Somali societies and comprise all of the principles governing Somali peoples both in Somalia and in the Diaspora. These philosophies are the common threads, which connect Somali peoples to their ancestral homelands in Somalia, and to their communal ancestral way of life. These holistic teachings are passed down from one generation to another. This cultural system signifies the very existence of Somali peoples in the Horn of Africa. In Africa there are many Nations and communities with their distinct worldviews that explain the very existence of those communities and their relationships to their Creator, their environments, and individual community members in their societies. For Somali peoples, these wisdoms are contained within *dhaqan* worldviews and cultural philosophies as the encompassing conceptual frameworks of the axiological and epistemological traditions of the peoples who trace their ancestral homelands to Somalia. Philosophically, African knowledge systems are:

> [E]xpressed both in the oral literature and in the thoughts and actions of the people. Thus, a great deal of the philosophical material is embedded in the proverbs, myths and the folktales, folk songs, rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people, in their art symbols and their socio-political institutions and practices. (Gyekye, 1987, p. 13)
African philosophies are holistic socializing mechanisms designed to enable individuals to become part of a collective. For instance, I was raised by Somali parents and by the Somali community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Somali dhaqan has always been part of my domain. I was always guided by it, and it informs my everyday practices in terms of a moral code of conduct encompassing communal social ethics. For the purposes of this research I chose to work with four main tenets that are rooted in our Indigenous African homeland, which are: 1) ancestral homeland; 2) family lineage; 3) Somali language; and 4) being Somali as an embodiment. These principles are all interconnected and they inform each other within Somali dhaqan worldviews. I contend that these four concepts are the pillars of Somali dhaqan, and they guided me in my research. I say that they are concepts rather than key issues because each identified virtue has its own governing protocols and procedures rooted in the Somali way of life, and these values are intended to be cultivated in the community.

The first concept, ancestral homeland, is underpinned by a notion of collective existence on land and common historical experiences connecting the peoples to that land. The notion of common history within Somali communities goes back to the roots of that particular community, where the founding Elders of the community came from, and where they are buried. Moreover, the knowledges that have been generated on that land by the community are also important because they are built upon notions of intergenerational existence. Somali peoples pay particular attention to how their community’s legacies are understood and treated.
Second, the concept of family is a notion that revolves around ideas of righteousness and being part of a collective community. Hence, Somalis call an individual by their parent’s name, if, for instance, their parent is or was a community Elder, a customary law specialist, a teacher, or a community activist, in recognition of the important role that individual holds in the community.

Third, the concept of Somali language is a central element of Somali *dhaqan* worldviews because it is the medium in which *dhaqan* is articulated, validated, disseminated, and sustained. Without the Somali language there would be no access to Somali *dhaqan*, especially since Somali peoples have traditionally been oral societies, with complex methods of communication, up until the arrival of colonialism at the turn of the 19th century (Abdi, 2001a; Lewis, 1967; Sheik-Abdi, 1993). In fact, it was not until 1972 that Mohamed Siad Barre’s government opted to write the Somali language in Roman alphabets (Mazrui, 1986). Yet oratory is still one of the most popular methods of communicating and transmitting culture in Somali society. Our language is the gateway to understanding the African cultural systems that are operationalized in the daily affairs of Somali peoples.

The fourth and final concept that I would like to mention is the notion of being Somali as an embodiment. Throughout the existence of Somali peoples, being Somali has been exemplified by interrelated sets of values and ideals within *dhaqan*, which is a social domain between all Somalis concerning rights and collective duties to the community in harmony with our way of life.

The principles that I have chosen to work with allow me to conceptually centre key Somali claims to an ancestral homeland and a way of life. During the height of the anticolonial
movements in Somalia not only were all the above concepts instrumental to organizing the peoples, they are still relevant in how Somali communities function today. The centrality of these principles in this research means that one cannot make claims to a history, an identity, and a way of life without any one of these principles as they inform Somali cultural contexts. Interestingly, these principles are not written down, and they are often not spoken about, but as I discovered through my research they are widely understood in the community as being key tenets, especially when conversing with Somali Elders. What came out of the research for me was that without a good grasp of all of these virtues, carrying out the research in and through Somali dhaqan would have been impossible. Take, for instance, the question of language. Without a solid command of Somali language one cannot fully comprehend the Indigenous African values being articulated by the Elders. Regarding the notion of the ancestral homeland, without an understanding of where that homeland is, and the values placed on it, it would be difficult to come to terms with how the people articulated their sense of identity through connections to their lands. The idea of family lineage was instrumental in organizing the peoples against colonialism, because Somalis did not want to lose their own heritage. The notion of being Somali as an embodiment emphasizes how we all come from somewhere, and that is a crucial idea to hold on to. Throughout this research, the centrality of these core principles became quite evident and I have done my best to highlight them throughout the study. Moreover, many of the Elders inadvertently alluded to these principles as they stressed that Somalis, particularly the youth, must hold on to their dhaqan as it relates to those principles.

Somali cultural philosophy focuses on the social, cultural, and historical interpretations of our past, present, and future through Indigenous African worldviews. Therefore operationalizing Somali dhaqan allows me to delineate powerful critical historical accounts of the colonial encounter. Clearly my interest is in centering my discussion on the effects and affects of colonization as well as shedding light on how our Ancestors have made courageous
sacrifices to preserve their way of life and how they have produced resistant *dhaqan* knowledges to pass their values on to us. Moreover, colonization initializes the privileging of colonizing knowledges and the presenting of them as universal, while simultaneously devaluing and negating non-Western Indigenous knowledge to ensure the continuation of domination over their colonial subjects. In addition, Eurocentric canons have been utilized to produce theories and ideologies based on colonial ideals and imagery about the peoples under their domination. Nevertheless, this dismissal of an African tradition must be understood within a history of Eurocentric discourse that places all African philosophies outside the realm of philosophy and is very dismissive of everything African (see Bodunrin, 1981; Eze, 1997, 1998; Masolo, 1994; Outlaw, 1997; Serequeberhan, 1991; Wiredu, 1997). With respect to Somali *dhaqan* and/or anything to do with Somali cultural systems, one of the questions that are often raised is: If it has not worked to resolve anything back home, how can it work elsewhere? This is a question that I am often faced with, but the reality is that Eurocentric colonizing traditions are greatly invested in uprooting non-Western knowledges. Therefore there will always be a high probability that the question of relevance will be a part of the conversation when it comes to non-Western knowledges. Ali Abdi (2012) in his work, *Decolonizing Philosophies of Education*, explains that:

> [D]e-philosophizing of the colonized populations rested on a premise that certified the idea and practical outcomes as requiring higher levels of organized thinking that was propagated as particular to the West. Interestingly, one cannot and should not disengage from the reality that all societies including those in traditional, pre-colonial context, designed their education on thoughtful analytical trajectories that defined and justified this education as society important, culturally and linguistically viable, and capable of ameliorating the livelihood of its recipients. (p. 4)

Abdi captures key points here in terms of how Indigenous philosophies have been positioned by Western thought. The importance of the author’s ideas is his emphasis of Indigenous philosophies in educating the Indigenous learner as an instrument of socializing members of a particular group. This point of departure is useful in engaging with nonconventional
oppositional social science research that provides an Indigenous historical trajectory. I contend that this approach provides endless possibilities within situational local knowledges and ways of knowing for engaging with the history of social movements in Somalia from a philosophical standpoint that would facilitate capturing Elders’ narratives, gathering research data, and thinking of strategies of working with Somali *dhaqan* worldviews in the community.

More importantly, while my research is structured within the conformities of a Eurocentric institution, which is primarily concerned with Western knowledge production, the genesis of my research questions and the theoretical frameworks is anticolonial and therefore emancipatory. From a Somali perspective within *dhaqan*, ethics of caring, sharing, and collective existence prevail, and the knowledges and community are inseparable such that communal wisdom is highly valued within a cultural milieu. As far as African traditions are concerned, knowledge is only validated on merit insofar as that knowledge is utilized to serve the greater good of the community. Traditionally, in an oral society this would entail the art of story-telling and oratory. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) reminds us that:

> The importance of the oral tradition is that through its agency African languages in their most magical form have been kept alive. One of the highest developments of this was the *griot* tradition in West Africa. Whole epics and histories of families and nations were banked in the memories of these keepers of the word. (p. 19)

What wa Thiong’o’s ideas, with West African traditions of the *griot*, indicate is that orators within African societies point to the values of the spoken word as a method of recording and preserving histories of a people. Therefore, the relevance of stories in this research is how they allow me to conceptually think through Indigenous oratorship that is being shared by the Elders as I map out my research design and engage some of those stories in my analysis. The essential thrust of this research methodology is instrumental because it shows the ways in which Indigenous African cultures keep the communities connected, and it shows the ways in which the ancient/ancestral is operationalized to preserve resistant histories. This qualitative method of
inquiry is central to a sacred code of conduct between community members, and as a Somali myself this entails an experiential process including gaining the right of entry, engaging our Elders, and asking questions of responsibility and community commitment.

In her work, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Margaret Kovach (2010) explains the nature of story-telling as she states:

> Story and Indigenous inquiry are grounded within a relationship based approach to research. The centrality of relationship within Indigenous research frameworks, and the responsibility that evokes, manifests themselves in broad strokes through research in the form of protocols and ethical considerations…. This is significant in the Indigenous qualitative methodologies involving story where there is a primary relationship between researcher and research participants. For the story to surface there must be trust. (p. 98)

Kovack’s perspective provides a key point of departure in how research should be conducted in Indigenous communities. In my own research in the Somali community this approach leaves room for me to conceptualize what a Somali *dhaqan* research methodology should look like and what exactly such an Indigenous African methodology entails. I contend that this methodology is built upon ancestral traditions and the anchoring of the Somali *dhaqan*, centering culture in my research as an encompassing knowledge production system as a means of sanctifying the sacred and acknowledging our Elders. It is with humility that I sit before our Elders in the circles of knowledge in which they preside, as custodians of Somali *dhaqan*—ancestral wisdoms, and as contemporary visionaries in our communities. The roots of the circle in the Somali community are founded upon ideals and principles called *Geedka Hoostiisa* (Beneath the Tree). *Geedka Hoostiisa* is a practice where community members sit in a circle as a collective to address community matters, take part in ceremonies, and make community decisions. Traditionally, Elders convene community meetings under a known tree out in the open. Now the collective gathers under this tree to take part in, to witness, and to bring their concerns forward in public where they are to be addressed.
After the meeting is called an Elder opens up the meeting with a traditional prayer, proceeds to indicate to the audience why the meeting was called, and then delineates the pressing issues in the community. The Elders in the community subsequently generate consensus and attempt to address matters based on their moral stature. In societies in Somalia, this institution is the governing body that upholds the Somali *dhaqan* social order. The beauty of this Indigenous cultural system is that it permits Elders to ponder on questions, thoughts, and historical accounts, then provide responses through their visions. This is ultimately a process of exercising their authority and sharing their expertise and knowledge through Somali *dhaqan* in the community. This approach provides me with a comprehensive, holistic historical analysis of the events that ignited social movements in Somalia. I say it is holistic because Elders/participants are not just responding to questions. Rather, they are sharing their knowledges because “a fundamental principle by Indigenous Elders is that subject matter is properly examined and interpreted contextually” (Snively & Corsiglia, 2001, p. 11). In that sense, the Elders will not only be speaking about Somali history in the abstract sense, they will also be situating it in its relevant context as it speaks to the living conditions of community members, both at home and in the Diaspora.

Marie Battiste (2008), in her short essay *Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, articulates:

Indigenous people’s epistemology is derived from the immediate ecology; from peoples’ experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and memory, including experiences shared with others; and from the spiritual world discovered in dreams, visions, inspiration, and songs interpreted with the guidance of healers or Elders. Most Indigenous peoples hold various forms of literacies in holistic ideographic systems, which act as partial knowledge meant to interact with the oral traditions. (p. 499)

From a cultural perspective this is a very powerful notion in the sense that these knowledges being articulated are anchored in a geophysical homeland. It also speaks to questions of identity, community, and self-determination. Yet because of their lived experiences in the Canadian
Diaspora these knowledges are also particularly relevant to the Somali communities living abroad. I believe that because of the Elders’ unique local gaze with which to visualize some of the communities’ challenges with a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the Somali creed and a grasp of our distinct cultural characteristics, they create a special place. It is from such a reflective lens that I see our Elders as a living cultural institution that is representative of our anticolonial intergenerational struggle. As such Eldership is equated with embodiment, experiential wisdom, being connected with a cultural psycho-historical memory, and Somali/African social consciousness. It is through such an understanding that we can claim our humanity. A Somali dhaqan methodology supports the idea that within the Somali collective there are complex processes in which ideologies are fashioned and contained through cultural expressions to make sense of the material conditions in which one is located. Contextually, drawing on the Elders’ voices would enable me to articulate an Indigenous African communal research agenda as a co-producer of knowledge in this project. From a dhaqan perspective, working with the community to gather knowledge is central to bringing questions of rights and responsibilities to the collective to the forefront.

As mentioned earlier, notions of collectivism are the cornerstone of any society in Africa. In fact the existence of collective communal dhaqan philosophies and cultural systems is an outstanding feature which centers the community in their traditions, particularly for those of us who live in the Diaspora; because community members bring cultural production (Gilroy, 1987a, 1987b, 1991, 1993, 1994, 2000; Hall, 1997). Within Somali dhaqan the vital notion of communalism is distinctly rooted in an individual’s relationship with their community. There is a strong emphasis on collective responsibility and doing good for the greater collective. In this respect Kwame Gyekye (2003) in his paper, Person and Community in African Though, asserts:

Communitarianism immediately sees the human person as an inherently (intrinsically) communal being, embedded in a context of social relations and interdependence, never as an isolated, atomic individual. Consequently it sees the community not as mere association of individual persons whose interests and
ends are contingently congruent, but as a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds, biological and/or non-biological, who considers themselves primarily as members of the group and who have common interests, goals, and values. The notion of common interests and values is crucial to an adequate conception of community; that notion in fact defines the community. It is the notion of common interests, goals, and values that differentiates a community from a mere association of individual persons. (p. 299)

To the extent that it places notions of collectivism at the heart of what it means to be African, Gyekye’s categorization of his thought is about a way of life that is practiced throughout Africa, with each community, society, and/or nation having its distinct collective code of conduct, social, and ethical norms that are embedded within its own cultural views.

That said, notions of collectivity are not hegemonic and they do not override individual rights within Somali *dhaqan* values. Moreover, community here is not a community without difference, competing claims, or inequalities. But within this value system there are corrective measures to respond to social phenomena facing the community and to address questions of justice within the collective. It is with this in mind that I push this research towards a decolonizing platform and continuously ask myself the following questions: How can this research benefit the community? How do I exemplify Somali *dhaqan* ideals through processes of self-cultivation in my research in order to stay true to the moral teachings of my Elders? How do I walk the talk towards a decolonizing journey? Smith (1999) articulated a very powerful idea about a research agenda that is centered on questions of Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization through research within the politics of movements. In this research I envision working with the narratives of Somalis as a way of re-thinking some of the key aspects of our anticolonial history as a method of seeking to transform the contemporary circumstance.

**Conclusion:**

In this chapter I have outlined the research theories that would enable me to provide a critical analysis on the history of social movements in Somalia. I have also clearly indicated my
reasoning for combining anticolonial theory together with Indigenous knowledge frameworks to provide a nuanced reading of the history of the anticolonial struggles in Somalia. Due to the complex nature of colonial relations within the modern epoch it was essential for me to move away from the Eurocentric ideologies and to situate my discussion on Somali conceptual frameworks that would allow me to work with the epistemic knowledges that have been preserved in the community. It is only through a critical lens that I would be able to first validate these knowledges through research, and then work with the data to provide a holistic understanding of some of the historical events of the past. My argument here is that because of the histories of colonization, we as a peoples have been situated in a ‘political crisis.’ Therefore, we must see our own embodied histories with a new lens to be able to understand where we are today and to get to a place where we can reshape our own futures.

To understand this vicious colonial predicament and study this social phenomenon, with the aim of exposing the colonial situation, it is necessary to take the time to learn from our Elders as thinkers, activists, and decision makers in our communities, as well as the custodians of our Indigenous anticolonial wisdoms. We must create the spaces for them to guide us in our quest for liberty and freedom. Our anticolonial resistance as a struggle for our collective futures is vital. Therefore, we must ensure that we learn from our Elders and search for Indigenous solutions that are reflective of the very Somali ideals that were operationalized when our Ancestors first experienced the colonial encounter. With this stance I am of the opinion that the centrality of Somali history and interpretive culture is critical to the comprehensive understanding of the contemporary moment and of the unfolding events in Somalia. In that sense history is the entry point to understanding the past and the present while keeping a gaze on the future. Therefore, we must think through discursive frameworks that would allow for an ample understanding of the history of social movements in Somalia from an Indigenous African perspective.
Chapter Five

*Dhaqan as a Qualitative Research Methodology:*

**Introduction:**

As expressed earlier, the goal of this research project is to look at the history of social movements through the eyes of our Elders by engaging them in processes of knowledge production to draw on their epistemological Somali cultural capital as they articulate their vision for the future. In addition it will investigate how to create spaces for dialog, under the direction of the Elders that is founded on Somali *dhaqan* worldviews to think about reconciliation and to document the voices of some of our Elders for future generations. In conjunction with the anticolonial and Indigenous knowledges frameworks, I have chosen to carry out this research through a qualitative research approach. I have designed a Somali *dhaqan* methodology as an Indigenous approach to meet my objectives. Although qualitative research methodologies enable the researcher to isolate and reveal the participants’ understanding of the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), due to the complex Somali cultural systems and the philosophical conceptions from which the Somali Elders will be articulating their perspectives it is only appropriate to design a research methodology that would capture their voices within an Indigenous paradigm. This research design must be equipped with the tools to process the knowledge which they produce from multiple standpoints, because this study is epistemologically informed by a Somali *dhaqan* worldview.

Somali *dhaqan* encompasses key ideas and principles that constitute what it means to be Somali in a community setting. I contend that operationalizing Somali *dhaqan* philosophies as a critical Indigenous qualitative research methodology would allow me to create spaces for new ideas and imagery for the research participants to anchor their ideas in their own intellectual
traditions. That is a way for them to tell their own versions of the historical accounts narrating some of the events that transpired during our anticolonial struggle. For me this study is more than a process of producing a counter-narrative and it offers possibilities of seeing the world from a non-Western lens (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Conceptually this approach is more about a way of looking at our Elders as thinkers, decision makers, and community activists with an African/anticolonial cultural capital and a comprehensive historical understanding of what took place on our ancestral homeland. With this viewpoint I am able to approach my Elders’ in and through Somali dhaqan protocols and procedures to learn from them and journey through their wisdoms in this research project.

Conceptually, this qualitative research methodology is founded on Somali worldviews and is equipped to capture and make sense of the Indigenous knowledges being produced by the research participants. A Somali dhaqan methodology operates outside the conventional Eurocentric research designs and is an African research paradigm. The question of Somali dhaqan epistemologies is central to this research approach and is the most appropriate research methodology for this study because it would enable me to account for Somali ways of knowing. Moreover, there is a tension between Western research methodologies and Indigenous knowledges because it is difficult to remove the underlying assumptions and tools that are built within dominant research methodologies. Shawn Wilson (2008) highlights this tension as he states:

We have tried to adapt dominate system research tools by including our perspective into their views. We have tried to include our cultures, traditional protocols and practices into the research process through adapting and adopting suitable methods. The problem with that is that we can never really remove the tools from their underlying beliefs. (cited in Chilisa, 2011, p. 108)
Therefore, it is essential to move away from this methodological pitfall. It is important to depart from the mainstream research methodologies and not conduct this study through a case study, narrative, phenomenology, or grounded theory approach. A Somali dhaqan Indigenous methodology would bring a new understanding of the ways of entering Indigenous African learning/community settings. Culture cannot be divorced from social sciences research (see Stanfield, 1993). This methodology differs from the traditional research approaches because it conceptually makes room for me to explore the ways in which Elders think, through Somali worldviews, as they engage in discussions about our histories. Methodologically, this approach enables me to recognize the institutional and philosophical ideals some of our Elders are guided by as they give various historical narratives. Each Indigenous society has its own processes in which knowledge production is validated and disseminated throughout the community. Therefore, I chose to draw on the Indigenous principles, philosophies, and ethics of my peoples as they allow me to ask questions about the history of social movements in Somalia. A Somali dhaqan methodology would enable me to journey deep into my community and theorize Somali history as a valid anticolonial Indigenous transformative body of knowledge to be explored in articulating questions of self-determination and rethinking notions of Somalinimo. As a Somali, dhaqan permits me to access fountains of knowledge and wisdoms rooted in a homeland encompassing a holistic way of life. In its entirety it offers holistic worldviews which signify the essence of our existence as a peoples on our lands and the experiential histories which took place in our communities. From a researcher’s perspective it makes room for me to explore the ways in which Somali communities make sense of the colonial aggression and how our communities,
under the leadership of our Elders, have continued to operationalize their moral ideals to maintain their way of life. Moreover, Somali *dhaqan* as a body of knowledge provides a decolonizing avenue to bring new understanding to contemporary issues that are facing Somali peoples by facilitating a community dialogue led by community members. From that stance an Indigenous research methodology enables me to focus on notions of self-determination, emancipation, and struggle (see Battiste, 2000; Bishop, 2008; Dillard, 2006; Hountondji, 1997; Mkabela, 2005; Smith, 1999). Somali *dhaqan* is an important African Indigenous knowledges cultural system equipped to address some of the historically rooted challenges stemming from colonialism. Therefore I write to center principles of *dhaqan* worldviews in my study through a qualitative research design. With this in mind I firmly believe that no process of knowledge production is apolitical and/or neutral, and for me the centrality of this research does not revolve around historicity per se, but rather, is about getting to a place where the multiplicity of stories and narratives are generated from a Somali perspective.

As an Indigenous methodology, Somali *dhaqan*, because of its rootedness in the Horn of Africa, enables me to work with a host of Ancestral ideals which are adhered to in the community. Dialectically Somalis have complex, non-linear, and holistic ways of articulating social phenomenon that a *dhaqan* methodology would enable me to examine in the thesis. Questions of power, moral authority, community activism, and lived experiences are central to this discussion with each interviewed Elder. Therefore, it is essential for me to work from the premise that our Elders are the custodians of our ancestral wisdom, histories, and traditions. It is only through such a clear stance that I could connect the histories of colonization to the current political turmoil in Somalia, and move away from the dominant notions that Somalis are
tribalistic and/or dysfunctional peoples. Most importantly this approach is foundational to notions of Indigenization. Bagele Chilisa, in her book, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, (2011) explains Indigenization as:

[A] process that involves a critique and resistance to Euro-Western research methodological imperialism and hegemony as well as a call for the adapting of conventional methodologies by including perspectives and methods that draw from Indigenous Knowledges, languages, metaphors, worldviews, experiences, and philosophies of...[the] colonized. It is a process that is informed by modern critical theory. (p. 101)

As argued by Chilisa, methodologically this theory is pivotal to Indigenous perspectives and is equipped with the tools to enable me to carry on a discussion by working with Somali cultural capital, thus permitting me to position our Elders as an integral institution with guiding visions and worldviews that could transform the current circumstances. In this chapter I will first introduce the researched community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), give a brief sketch of the research participants, and then explain how I navigated the community.

**The Somali Community:**

This research was conducted with the full cooperation of members of the Somali community living in the GTA. I have reached out to three communities, the Toronto West End Etobicoke community, the downtown communities of Regent Park and Alexandra Park, and the Somali neighbourhoods scattered in the East End of Toronto. I have chosen to carry out my study in these communities because these are the neighbourhoods in which there is a large population of Somalis and where the community is most intact. What is profound about all these areas is that Somalis by and large have carried on with their ways of life in Toronto. From the outside it might look impossible to live in these communities because of how these neighbourhoods have been ghettoized and have been classified as priority neighbourhoods. But
I have always felt at home in these communities because of the ways in which Somali *dhaqan* is the norm in these areas. As such, it is in these communities that you are greeted as a non-outsider and people’s homes are always open for tea and a warm meal. In these communities Somalis always address each other by family name and the Somali *dhaqan* bond is strong. The Somali social structure governing the community is visibly present in the ways in which the Elders conduct themselves, interacting with community members, and how they attempt to socialized the youth as Canadian youth of Somali descent.

What is extraordinary is that there is a unique social-cultural milieu that is uniquely Somali/Torontonian in nature exhibited by most Somalis living in those communities. Even though conversations are rooted in Somalia they are located in Toronto. Not only are most of our Elders residing in these communities, so they do not feel alone, but all the essential, locally performed spiritual/cultural services are found in these communities as well. Most of the Somali businesses, Mosques, social clubs, and community centers are also concentrated in those neighbourhoods. Most importantly, a large percentage of Toronto’s new arrivals from Somalia settle in these areas, and community members living there are most connected to Somalia. In fact, Somali television, social, and print media are readily available, connecting Diaspora communities together, and to the Horn of Africa in those neighbourhoods. Evidently, Somali traditions and customs are not lost in these communities living in Toronto. This makes Toronto, arguably, a new Somali cultural capital in the Diaspora. As such, every summer people travel from all over the world to attend a number of sporting tournaments and social events in this city organized by members of the Somali Toronto’s Diaspora population.
**Criteria for Recruiting Participants:**

As I went into the research I had an idea of what a Somali Elder signifies. Although I did not have a clear picture of who my research participants would be, I knew what kind of participants would be most appropriate for this research study because their selection is based on a purposive sample. All the participants had to be knowledgeable in Somali social-political affairs and my task was to connect their perspectives to the histories of the anticolonial armed resistance as it relates to life in the Canadian Diaspora, as outlined in the objectives of this study. One thing was evident, and that was that my interviewees had to be known Elders in the Somali community. By that I mean they had to be Elders with extensive community service records. At the same time, there were no set criteria to qualify the Elders in this study. The issues of timing and availability were also a factor, because some of the community Elders were not available to participate when I was conducting my data collection. Furthermore, a few Elders that I had hoped to interview for this study have passed away since I was first admitted into the PhD program. To ensure that my research participants exemplified Somali Eldership prior to conducting the interviews I have established the following guidelines:

1) Elders have to be of a known lineage in the community, and by that I mean they have to come from families known for their service.

2) All the participants have to have some lived experiences; in particular, they have to have witnessed some of the struggles in the Toronto communities over the last twenty years. They also have to self-identify as Elders in the community.

3) They have to be culturally grounded and well informed of the various communal histories.

4) They must see their roles as Elders as an inherent duty to the collective.
5) All the participants must have a record of being trustees in the community, and by that I mean their Elders’ wisdom, activism, and moral decision making authority must be unchallenged in the community.

**Profile of the Research Participants:**

As indicated earlier, I have been privileged to have in depth conversations with sixteen Elders. I have assigned my participants pseudonyms to conceal their identities. In some cases the information provided might give away some of the participants’ identities. But in the Somali community this is the best way to grant the participants confidentiality. In some cases some of the Elders were not concerned with keeping their identities anonymous. The participants’ profiles are as follows:

1) Ali is a former senior civil servant in his late seventies. He has lived in Toronto with his family since 1994.

2) Sallah is a Somali political activist in his early sixties, and is a member of the Council of Elders and Intellectuals of the Somali Diaspora. This participant has lived in Toronto since 1991 with his family.

3) Elmi is in his early fifties and is educated in Somalia’s post-independence era, in the areas of Somali traditions and customs. This interviewee comes from a lineage of traditional peace makers. He has lived in Toronto since 1989.

4) Hussan is a former teacher and civil servant who was involved in orchestrating local initiatives to introduce the Somali written language to elementary schools in the North of Somalia. This interviewee is a specialist by training in Somali oratory. He has lived in Canada since 1988.
5) Said is a long-time community activist in the city of Toronto who runs a few developmental projects in Somalia. He is in his late fifties and has been living in Canada for the past twenty-two years.

6) Hajji Mohammed is one of the oldest living Elders in Canada from the north of Somalia. As a young man he was a political activist, as well as a former colonial soldier stationed in Aden. He witnessed the SYL in action and traveled throughout the country during the fight for independence. He has been in Canada since the early 1970s.

7) Hashi is a Somali social critic and a renowned political commentator in his late sixties. He has written a few political plays and books, and is considered to be one of the most knowledgeable cultural historians in the Toronto Diaspora. He has been in Canada since 1990.

8) Hamoud is a political blogger and activist. Trained as a teacher, he is one of the strongest proponents of Somali dhaqan education for Canadian youth of Somali descent. He arrived in Montreal in the 1980s.

9) Hajji Abdirahaman is one of the most well-known Elders in the city of Toronto. He is in his late seventies, and is recognized in the community for being a motivational speaker for young people. He is also an established businessman who came to Canada in 1990.

10) Hajji Ismail is in his early eighties. His late father was an Italian soldier who fought in Eritrea, and he was one of the earliest Somali police recruits after independence. He came to Canada in 1994.
11) Abdi is a former Somali politician in his early sixties, who has been trained in Islamic law and is active in the Somali community organizations in Toronto. He has been living in Canada for the past eight years.

12) Halimo is a community organizer in her late fifties. Her father was a renowned Somali Elder who was instrumental in organizing Somalis during the armed struggle against the Italian colonial rule in the South of Somalia. She has been trained in Somali cultural heritage. She has moved to Canada in 1998.

13) Mohamed is in his late sixties and is a well-known storyteller in the community. He moved to Canada in 1992.

14) Selman is in his late seventies. He is a cultural authority in the Somali community. His grandfather was responsible for signing one of the communal colonial treaties in the North. He has been living in Canada since 1987.

15) Kadjia is in her late seventies and is one of Somalia’s most recognizable political voices in the world. She is a renowned peace activist who has participated in many Somali peace conferences around the world. Furthermore, she is a community educator who works with community children and youth. She came to Canada in 1993 and has lived in Toronto ever since.

16) Hawo is a Somali artist in her late seventies. She is a singer, song writer, and playwright. She is one of Somalia’s iconic cultural figures. She has also traveled to many peace conferences around the world. Her activism comprises of teaching community children and youth Somali culture through the arts and she educates Somali youth. She came to Canada in 1994.
The research participants’ ages range from early fifties to early eighties, and three of the sixteen Elders are grandmother figures in the community. All of the above Elders have contributed greatly to enriching my research. Coming from various social and political backgrounds each of their perspectives shed light on key aspects of Somali history and gave me ideas about how to work with their stories in the community. Yet not all their shared stories fit in to this research study because of the linear academic structure of the thesis. Many of the Elders understood this but still continued because of their conviction that some of these stories would reside in me, and that as long as I shared them with other Somalis, the stories would live in the community. All the Elders responded to all of my questions. However, because of their diverse expertise, each Elder added to the wealth of knowledge in the research data. Therefore, as a researcher I draw on what I thought were the most captivating narratives in which the Elders advanced salient knowledge claims. The Elders also viewed questions as more of a formality and the discussions were a lot more vibrant when I was not so focused on getting them to answer questions. Most importantly, they saw the questions as an entry point to share their knowledges and experiential wisdoms with me as a member of the community. As a researcher, in the areas that I disagreed with the Elders, I interrogated their positions against my chosen theories and literature. In the following section I inserted a table outlining my research questions. Table 1 below.
**Questions Guiding this Research:**

My preliminary questions to research will include the following enquiries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Objective of the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>How do you conceptualize the history of social movements in Somalia?</td>
<td>To get the Elders to articulate their understanding of social movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>What do you think are the key factors that were the catalyst for those movements?</td>
<td>To get the Elders to speak about how social movements have emerged in Somalia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Do you think that Somali <em>dhaqan</em> was instrumental in mobilizing Somali peoples behind various social movements and the personalities who spearheaded those movements?</td>
<td>Identify various elements of Somali culture that can move society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>What are some political/social ideologies that were crucial in driving social movements in Somalia?</td>
<td>To get the Elders to articulate the social-political ideologies that were operationalized to transform society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>What are some of the successes and failures of the social movements in Somalia?</td>
<td>To highlight some of the fundamental changes social movements were able to establish and/or failed to achieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>What are some of the key lessons that you can pass on to future generations of Somali youth from your participation and/or witnessing of social movements?</td>
<td>To get the Elders to historicizes their perspectives for future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Do you see any similarities and/or differences in Somali society during different moments in history where Somali peoples mobilized around certain key issues that today’s youth can learn from?</td>
<td>Find out how we can operationalize lessons of the past in the contemporary moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>How important do you think the history of social movements is to Somali youth?</td>
<td>This question seeks to provide Elders with the space to offer future generations advice as to how to proceed in meeting societal challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>What are some of the challenges facing Somali society stemming from the prolonged civil war in Somalia?</td>
<td>This question seeks to find out what some of the societal challenges are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>As a Somali Elder how do you think Somali society should proceed in meeting some of the contemporary challenges facing society?</td>
<td>This question seeks to enable Somali Elders to again articulate some of our challenges as Somali peoples in their own voices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Research Questions.**

**Entering the Circle of Knowledge:**

Community Elders were interviewed for this research project. I met with my sixteen participants only once during the interview process. All the interviews were digitally recorded with the exception of the first one. I had to record that interview with pen and paper because the first Elder I interviewed was not so sure about my intentions for this research. Therefore, he did not give me permission to digitally record his interview. Interviews were done face to face and ran between approximately 45 minutes to a little over an hour. Extensive field notes were also taken to record all of the interactions. The data collection took place over the course of three weeks. Data was analyzed and organized into minor and major findings in chapter six. The minor findings constitute issues raised by a few participants, and the major findings are the themes touched upon by most of the interviewees. Initial interviews were conducted with a
heightened awareness of Somali *dhaqan* protocols as stated earlier, with an emphasis on the
Elders’ lived experiential knowledges of Somali history, and cultural moral authority. The
dialogue was based on the following questions: 1) How do these Elders conceptualize
anticolonial histories in and through Somali *dhaqan* worldviews? 2) What does the articulation
of history from an African trajectory offer in terms of our anticolonial struggle? 3) What are the
implications of broaching these stories in the Diasporic context? The participants where
approached based on their family lineage, meaning that an interviewee would have to come from
a family that traditionally ruled. The significance of this categorization is that the Elders being
interviewed would have to have been trained in Somali *dhaqan* protocols and have a good grasp
of communal matters. They were also recruited on the basis of community service. Particular
attention was paid to the interviewees’ knowledge of Somali history within the oral traditions
and linguistic mastery, as well as their ability to articulate their views on the contemporary
challenges facing the community. For this research knowledgeable Elders who are historians,
writers, artists, and activists of any age were also interviewed. All the interviews were conducted
in Somali and later translated to English as I transcribed the interviews. After my first dialogue
with an Elder, my interview style changed due to my interaction with this interviewee. This was
partly because the Elder re-educated me on the protocols of sitting with the Elders. He not only
made me realize how my academic training had distanced me from the spirit of the community,
he also guided me in the ways in which I was now to approach and engage the Eldership as a
sacred cultural institution. It was after this first interview that I recognized that this dialogue
was not about the questions I had but rather about the wisdoms the Elders were sharing with me.
When I first began working on the field research component of this study I was confident that I
would be granted access to the community Elders. But as I started looking for research
participants I realized that although the Elders were visibly present in the community, I could not
directly reach them because of the protocols surrounding the right of entry. What made matters
worse was the fact that community members were quite suspicious of my line of questioning,
and my attachment to the University of Toronto, as there have been many instances in which
members of the Somali community were misquoted in the media. The issue was not that I was
not recognized as a community member, yet, interestingly, I had to approach some of the leading
community figures through a third party as a way of gaining access. The word of mouth third
party dialogue that I undertook to secure interviews with Somali Elders was an incredible
journey for me to get re-educated in Somali traditions and cultural systems.

After initial conversations with community members and reflectively identifying the
Elders whom I thought would be most suitable for this research project, I began calling Elders,
approaching them in their meeting places, and inquiring about their whereabouts. I soon came to
recognize that there was an enormous amount of community surveillance and surrounding
suspicions around the true intentions of my project. I could approach any of the Elders
regarding any personal matters, for it was my right to seek advice and/or guidance from any of
them as a member of the community. However, formal interviews were a different case. After a
week of trying to find an interviewee, I was finally able to get an Elder to agree to be
interviewed; this participant was one of the Elders from my clan. I have given him the
pseudonym Ali to keep his identity private. I already had his phone number so I initially called
him and explained my research. He hesitantly agreed to an interview and indicated the times in
which I could drop by his family home for an interview. My best friend picked me up and
dropped me off at the Elder’s home. I knocked on the door of his house and upon entry he
greeted me and asked how my family was. Then he immediately asked about the nature of this
research and what this whole thing was about. I formally began to explain what this research was all about, why I was doing it, and the importance of the research for future generations. I also proceeded to explain that this research was approved by the University of Toronto and started to pull out the ethical protocol and consent forms. Ali indicated that he was not interested in looking at the forms because he knew me and my family. The Elder then stood up and asked me if I would like to have some tea. I told him that I could not have any more tea and/or coffee because I had drank so much tea that day as I hung out in Somali coffee houses and gathering places seeking potential interviewees for my research. He sat down and instructed me to go on with my interview. However, he also told me that I could not digitally record his interview. Thus I pulled out my question sheet and a writing pad on which to record the Elder’s responses to the questions. At the start of the interview I was formal because of the academic training I had received at the University of Toronto. But as the interview went on and the Elder started talking about his autobiographical life experiences and Somali history I began to relax and allow him space to reflect on the questions. As the interview went on with this new approach the Elder continued in-depth with his answers. I completed that interview and thanked the Elder for hosting me in his home and for sharing his knowledge with me. I then indicated to the Elder that I needed to find more participants to interview. In response he offered to contact other community Elders and suggested places where I could find research participants. He also went on to give me contact information for a few more Elders. I then asked him if I could tell potential research participants that I had interviewed him. He indicated that I should. In fact, he encouraged me to do so. Further, he suggested that I ask my father to contact other community Elders on my behalf. I took the names down and left his home.
After that dialogue I began to reflect on the interview and what had transpired. As I waited on the bus, I received a call from some of my friends. I told them that I was waiting for the bus on my way home after my first interview with a Somali Elder, at the end of an exhausting one week of trying to get interviews. My friends told me they were close by and offered to pick me up if I was willing to hang out with them for the rest of the evening. I agreed to the arrangement, and my friends came to get me. One of them then asked what I was up to these days. I told my friends that I was doing research on the history of social movements in Somalia, and that I was interviewing Elders for the study. The same friend who asked me what I was doing looked at me and told me that he had heard about my research but did not know whether or not I was serious. I then stated that I was actively looking for Elders to take part in this research. In response he told me to get in contact with his father-in-law—whom I have called Sallah for this research study—because, as he put it, Sallah was good at public speaking and leading communal ceremonies. Moreover he offered to place a call to set up an interview with the Elder, and he eventually led me to my first participant. I told him that he should, and that I would be grateful for his assistance. He made the call and introduced me by my family name, describing me as a doctoral student at the University of Toronto. Then he passed the phone over to me so I could speak with Sallah. I greeted the Elder in Somali, and then told him about my research and why I was conducting it. The Elder offered words of encouragement and pledged his full support. In addition he told me to meet him at a local Dixon community coffee shop between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. the following day. As the Elder ended on that note, I felt an enormous weight lifting off my shoulders. I was also left wondering why I was having such a difficult time recruiting participants when other community members had access to them with relative ease. Then I started questioning whether or not it had anything to do with the fact that
this research was connected to the University of Toronto. From that point on, I started keeping my ears and eyes open to absorb how community members viewed this study.

The next morning I met Sallah at the agreed-upon coffee shop. I greeted the Elder and formally introduced myself by my family name. Then I indicated to the Elder that I knew and had grown up with his eldest son, and was good friends with his son-in-law as well. He then began in a very congratulatory manner, offering words of advice and encouragement. From the onset this meeting was very warm. I carefully observed without interrupting the Elder, and did not start the interview until the he advised me to begin asking my questions. That is when I told him I would like to digitally record our conversation. As I began to give the Elder some background information about the nature of the research, I shared the name of my first participant. He told me he knew that Elder, was good friends with him, and that they had served together on many community event committees. I then went ahead with the dialogue. The interview was informative and formal. One of the things which stood out for me was that this conversation was focused more on the Diasporic context and was less grounded in the events taking place in Somalia per se. In many ways this opened my eyes to an Indigenous way of producing knowledges within a local community context. Therefore, while this process honours an Indigenous way of life, the idea of being Somali is not one that is confined to the ancestral homeland—hence, the focus on what is going on in our Diasporic communities. Moreover, this particular Elder was talking about community building strategies within the contemporary geopolitical moment to deal with the calamities facing the community in Canada. What was striking about this interview was that he was not talking about our histories in abstract, but rather drawing connections between our histories and what the community is going through today. When I reflected on this interview together with the previous one, I realized that I was now
being educated in the ways of my Ancestors. I say this without reservation because the first interview schooled me in the formal sit down with Elders, and from it I learned how to enter the circle of knowledge. The second conversation introduced me to the power of the Elders’ historically rooted Indigenous African visions as articulated through Somali *dhagaan* worldviews. This is quite profound; in fact these two conversations conceptually directed all the other interviews. I am not at all trying to privilege the status of these two interviews over others. Rather, I am indicating that the first two interviews opened my eyes to a whole new way of interacting with the Elders and engaging the community. These participants also suggested a few names that I should get in touch with for this research project and gave me a few contacts as well. After the interview was over I thanked Sallah and told him that I was going to get in touch with him as the project progressed.

I departed with the Elder and started looking around the coffee shop for potential interviewees and for community members who could easily put me in touch with Elders. I started approaching people by first greeting them in Somali. To many I was a familiar face because I frequented the coffee shop and other establishments in the local community? As I had now interviewed an Elder in the shop patrons were more willing, it seemed, to assist me in the search for Elders to interview. Consequently, before noon that day I had contacted and scheduled three interviews within the neighbourhood. Moreover, I was put in touch with two Elders from nearby communities, and that is how I was able to recruit the remaining nine Elders interviewed for this study. More importantly, some of the patrons gave me good leads on Elders whom I should interview and some went as far as offering to make the contacts on my behalf. It was from the collective community voices that I was able to compile a list of potential participants. In addition, I came to realize that asking other middle aged women and men to
formally extend a request for an interview with Somali Elders would give me a better
opportunity to secure interviews. Thus they would make phone calls on my behalf and tell the
Elders about me, and/or take me to the Elders and whisper in their ears that I wanted to interview
them about Somali history. This method of recruitment enabled me to secure all the remanding
research participants.

More importantly, from the list of identified Elders I was able to categorize the Elders
according to their life’s work in terms of being political activists, designated cultural figures,
part of the early Somali national civil service, historians, orators, writers, academics, and artists.
I also categorized them in terms of having witnessed some of the historical anticolonial
struggles. One of the outstanding features of this method of recruitment is that the members of
the community were collectively identifying those whom they deemed to be important to this
research by highlighting what the Elders had accomplished in their lifetimes. Once I decided
who to approach for the study the data collection process was relatively smooth. Moreover,
most of the Elders asked to participate in this research were enthusiastic once they were aware of
my intentions. The conversations for this research took place in Elders’ homes, meeting places,
Mosques, social clubs, and coffee houses.

**Having Conversations with the Elders:**

The Interviews took place over a course of four weeks between November and December
2011. All the participants stepped outside of the formality of my research questions, offering
rich data by sharing their lived experiences, visions, and words of wisdom. I had initially
anticipated that would happen but was amazed by the amount of knowledge the Elders shared
with me throughout this study. As I interacted with the Elders I was mindful of the sacred nature
of the interview process, but as I stated earlier, the reality was that I was taken on a journey in which I was educated in Somali *dhaqan* worldviews. I must also say that interrogating specific aspects of the Elders’ responses is in no way an attempt to dismiss their perspectives. The fact remains that the Elders, within their stature, hold the right to preside over community decisions, and in instances where they are wrong, this does not take away from their life’s contributions. Principally, the idea is that the Elders have the right to revisit some of their decisions, and implement corrective measures.

In this study I consciously centered Somali *dhaqan* in the research rather than having it as a subject in this study. Perhaps that was the best thing I had going for me given the age gap between myself and my interviewees, as well as the complexities of Somali cultural protocols. My ability to understand different Somali dialects also facilitated this research. This approach was acknowledged by many of the Elders, and was considered honourable. Moreover, my constant awareness of the Somali *dhaqan*, as I engaged the Elders, enabled them to open up in ways that they would not have if this were simply an academic research project. It also transformed the process from an interviewer and interviewee, to a community member seeking knowledge from his Elder and the Elder subsequently sharing knowledge. How else would I ever captured have the depth of the knowledges that were being shared with me? It was because of my approach that the Elders not only shared their life experiences but some of them also offered prayers, composed oratory, and told Indigenous African stories. Some even requested to be part of my graduation ceremony so they could thank the teachers who taught me. One Elder I interviewed, whom I will call Hawo, went into a box that was in her living room and pulled out a play that was written by an artist who recently passed away in Columbus, Ohio. This late playwright was part of a major production studio in Somalia. Hawo had told me about the role
he took in the peace conferences, in particular how instrumental he was in various Somali peace initiatives. She stressed that this artist chose to stay in Somalia throughout the 1990s despite receiving many offers to go abroad like many of his fellow artists, because of the love he had for the country as well as the profound sense of social responsibility he felt towards the peoples. The Elder stated that “he was acting on the principle that if conscious voices did not articulate the issues facing the nation and broadcasting their social commentary then who would?”

Hawo also expressed the importance of returning to Hedou and Dhaqan (Customs and the Ancestral way of life), and teaching Somali youth both at home and in the Diaspora the centrality of the Somali performing arts. To ensure that the Elders were leading this conversation I was not so much focused on the interview questions, but rather on actively listening and on observing their body language.

**Conclusion:**

It is time that we as a peoples go back to learn from our Elders and evoke our embodied Somali ancestral visions. It is time that we look back at our histories within the contemporary geo-political landscape in search of answers. We have to begin asking ourselves some critical questions, not only about what is going on in Somalia and how we got here in the first place, but also about how we as a peoples can begin thinking of ways to move forward and claim victory over our circumstances. I contend that there are important lessons in our histories that we must all learn from. However, before we can see the relevance of our history in the modern era we must see our past in relation to our present and our future. As such, the histories of conquest, colonization, and subsequent struggle for freedom are all part and parcel of what is taking place throughout the content of Africa, where the footprint of colonialism is quite evident. And as noted in this chapter, colonialism has had devastating effects on Somalia.
In all the various colonial encounters Somali peoples were faced with they were/are resourceful, courageous, and often found themselves contemplating the faith of their communities. Yet our Ancestors kept a gaze on the future with the aim of preserving their Indigenous African ways of life, and it is their legacies that they have bequeathed to us to engage with our Indigenous African worldviews and embodied histories to continue our struggles. In Somalia our Ancestors fought for our freedom under the courageous conscious leadership of our Elders in a quest to see the peoples, our lands, and our way of life liberated from foreign colonial domination like their brothers and sisters throughout Africa. In my eyes the greatest tragedy of our times is that we have treated and continue to treat our anticolonial legacy as a thing of the past without giving any thought to how the colonizers are still working with their colonial ideologies to maintain their control over our minds, bodies, and souls; or to how some much of the political turmoil that goes on in Africa is tied to the social, political, and economical interests of the colonizers. So what is our responsibility as a peoples? I strongly believe that we must plant the seeds of struggle in our histories and that we must turn back to our Elders and learn from them how previous generations have mobilized around key issues to seek social-political transformation in society. As such, the history of past social movements is a living history which contains many answers to key questions related to the future of our peoples. It is thus critical that we approach our Elders so they can share some of their knowledges and visions with us. We must ask for their guidance and evoke their wisdom to navigate the current social-political terrain both at home and within the Diaspora.
Chapter Six

Study Findings in Response to Research Questions:

Introduction:

In this chapter I outline the findings from the dialogue I had with sixteen Elders from the Somali community in Toronto over the course of two months. This chapter focuses primarily on conceptualizing the anticolonial struggle in Somalia. In it I raise discussions on matters that came out of our conversations. The interviews highlight the complex nature of Somali views on this topic through key knowledge claims, overarching nationhood questions, and normative discourses. The Elders’ historicization is structured into a grand Somali narrative with many standing contradictions, competing questions, and assertions. One of the most interesting aspects of the grand narratives is that they are situated in the colonial script, yet the Elders’ storytelling about the colonial encounter provides a powerful anticolonial narrative from their social location. Moreover, while the Elders articulated notions of an independent Somalia, they attributed many of the contemporary issues stemming from the civil war in Somalia to colonialism. They also expressed their visions and articulated how best to meet those challenges and secure our national interests.

Elders as decision makers and front-line workers identified some of the key challenges facing Somali peoples. As participants they helped sketch the history of the struggle with their eyes on the contemporary issues facing the community. Based on their dhaqan expertise, personal experiences, and reflections they were able to speak about the way forward in our anticolonial struggle from multiple understandings. Through our dialogues a number of theoretically loaded knowledge declarations were voiced with regards to Somali nationalism, the nation state, and life in the Diaspora, expanding the boundaries of the discussion within a Somali
epistemological understanding. Although some of the Elders’ views were constricted by the ways in which the colonizers wrote about our history, once the discussion moved to Somali dhaqan and the essence of our struggle, the Elders steered the conversation towards an Indigenous African paradigm borne out of a Somali experience.

While most of the Elders seem to have agreed on the importance of Somali history and dhaqan there is an underlying difference in their perspectives because Somali dhaqan is not a linear cultural system, and it has many cultural interpretations, depending on local/regional practices in Somalia, and on the ways in which it has been carried over to Diaspora communities. Differences in responses also stem from the Elders’ understanding and articulation of Somali dhaqan depending on their life experiences, status in the community, traditional training in Somali dhaqan, and schooling experiences. There are additional factors influencing the Elders’ perspectives, such as having worked as artists, politicians, educators, and decision makers after independence in Somalia. These factors are important because after independence there was a national cultural renaissance project aimed at restoring all that colonialism had taken away in the hopes of a better tomorrow. Yet the quest to explore the possibilities of Somali dhaqan seems to be represented by these narratives as a heroic attempt to remedy all the ills in Somali societies. But with respect to the Somali political question one cannot ignore the political differences amongst the Elders that are not so apparent, yet are known by members of the Somali community. While the Elders’ commitments cannot be questioned, according to Somali dhaqan teachings, the internal aspects of our conflict cannot be ignored. Given these tensions in the community one is left wondering how much of this conflict is rooted in the Elders’ political/philosophical positions. Of course, community tensions were not
The interviewees’ readings of Somali history unquestionably cast a gaze on the colonial relationship and the salient features of colonialism. As highlighted in the previous chapters, many of the Elders are knowledgeable in Somali history and are very active in community affairs in the GTA where they are moral authorities. Their voices are a testament to the intergenerational anticolonial struggle of Somali peoples. They speak about and embody particular experiences. Furthermore, their conversations are representative of both a way of life and the history of our peoples. In an age where we are constantly experiencing an erasure of all the functional elements of Somali societies, their narratives reveal a dedicated effort to struggle towards liberty in Somalia, and an overarching commitment to building and sustaining Somali communities in the Diaspora. It is evident in the interviews that the Elders were continuously working for a national reconciliation project in Somalia and were also faced with meeting everyday communal challenges in the GTA. Indeed, the complexities of the issues underscored the call for an understanding of Somali political questions in and through an anticolonial Somali dhaqan Indigenous reading. Evidently, the mainstream Eurocentric political paradigms do not provide space for Somalis to determine their own destinies, hence the constantly imposed crisis. As evident from this research, Somalis have multifaceted ways of making sense of the events unfolding in Somalia through our dhaqan epistemologies and through anthologies that enable community members to produce discourses that rupture dominant ways of knowing.

I have structured this chapter into two sections: The first looks at the instances where the Elders’ narratives are confined to the colonial script. The second examines the accounts that rupture how our history has been treated by anchoring conversations in Somali dhaqan
worldviews. I have chosen this structure to highlight the complicated ways in which the master narrative has been internalized by the colonized and how it is often utilized to make key claims. Of course there is the history of colonization, modernization, education, and democratization of the world. These processes took place and continue today in the name of human enlightenment. What is interesting is the fact that most of the Elders interviewed moved away from the colonial narrative at some point during our dialogue, which suggests to me that the Elders value our ways of knowing. In most cases the shift took place at the beginning of the interviews. This experience left me with the following questions. Was the Elders’ re-articulation of the colonial narrative a result of their perception of me as a member of the Somali Diaspora who had spent a considerable amount of his life in Toronto and was now conducting research through the University of Toronto? Were the responses I received a result of how I structured my questions? Were the Elders influenced by Western education while also being well trained in Somali dhaqan?

As a researcher, I often found myself asking how some of the Elders arrived at some of their positions. But in terms of providing an anticolonial Indigenous African perspective, all the narratives gave me enough data to consider and interrogate. As I sat before the Elders this research complexity was not apparent. But as I reflect on my field work and study the data, it is clear that some of the Elders where attempting to give me the grand narrative of the Somali national anticolonial struggle in support of the post-colonial state born after independence in 1960, a perspective that is entrenched in the colonial narrative supported by the mainstream literature on Somali history. As highlighted in chapter three, this perspective is one that is written by the victors of the conquest. More importantly, such a view presents a linear notion of thinking about the post-colonial state as the only logical way of organizing Somali societies, a
state that the colonizers have claimed to have given to the Somali peoples. Thus, the major findings in this chapter are presented as follows: the history of the colonial encounter in Somalia, Western knowledge about the Somali struggle for independence, the nature of the struggle, an Indigenous social awareness, principles of unity in the struggle, and the centrality of a Somali Indigenous narrative.

The colonial sentiments that some of the Elders expressed and rationalized to explain the role of social movements in Somali, particularly with respect to contemporary political issues, appear to be out of context. Yet their responses speak volumes to the nature of anticolonial struggles, because some notions are very hard to debunk. Teasing out these contradictions is central to affirming Indigenous Somali ways of knowing, and making key knowledge claims to move the struggle forward within a decolonizing politic. Thus, moving beyond the 1960 post-independence era and the reiterating of the national narrative, we come to a place where we can see the essence of our intergenerational struggle and stand in opposition to colonialism. While the colonial perspectives fit together with some of the Somali narratives to minimize the effects of colonialism, an anticolonial Indigenous reading provides some answers and unravels many normative understandings. Cross-examining some of these notions is critical to conceptualizing a comprehensive understanding of how colonialism operated and continues to influence Somalia. Working with Somali dhaqan and drawing on the Elders’ theoretical and experiential knowledges of the history of social movements in Somalia, we can find meaning in the historically rooted obstacles and room enough to interrogate parasitic colonial relations.
The Colonial Encounter in Somalia:

One of the most oversimplified historical notions about the anticolonial struggles in Somalia is that these movements were largely peaceful. Although all the signs point to colonial violence and a responsive counter-insurgency organized by Somali peoples in the name of dignity and cultural unity, it is aberrant that some of the participants have adopted the colonial historical perspective. For instance, the second Elder I interviewed, with the pseudonym Hajji Mohammed, had this to say about the encounter:

The anticolonial struggle was largely peaceful. Somalia as a country has been divided amongst the British, Italians, French, and Ethiopia. Where I and your father were born is known as British Somaliland. The capital has always been Hargeisa.... There weren’t many provinces in the region... There wasn’t a heavy colonial military in the area either. We had a British governor, a district commissioner, and a secretariat.... There wasn’t much resistance to the British occupation.

This notion of the colonizers not being resisted paints a deceiving picture and overlooks the sacrifices that our Ancestors made to protect their lands. The above quote is covertly rooted in a sense of denial on the part of the colonizing forces as to their true intentions in Somalia. As stated earlier, such a perspective is supported by the colonizers’ accounts of the events which took place prior to independence in the dominant literature. However, Hajji Mohammed takes a completely opposing position as he states, “Sayyid Abdullah Hassan wanted independence for Somalia... and he was the first one in the whole of Africa to be bombarded from the sky. That’s how the anticolonial movement started in Somalia.” Such an assertion contradicts his earlier statement and offers a different historical account. Nevertheless, there were many instances where the Elders subconsciously, as I would argue, operationalized colonial ideologies to explain how the Nation of Somalia came to be, which means some of the Elders internalized these perspectives. This discourse is so powerful and it illustrates one of the most popular
leading misconceptions about the Somali story and the fight for liberty. What is most troubling for me is the prevailing logic expressed by some of the interviewees that colonialism came about as a result of Somalis being roaming nomads as highlighted by the following exchange with Sallah:

Somalis as a people collectively were always nomads. Then the Italian colonial forces arrived. They colonized us. After that Somalia was divided up between the Italians and the British, who also embarked on their own colonial project in the Horn of Africa. As the colonization continued the anticolonial movement named after its leader, Sayyid Mahammed Abdille Hussan, was born in the North of the country. This movement fought hard against the occupiers and they struggled for a long time until they were defeated. After that Somali youth organized the Somali Youth Congress (SYC), later known as the Somali Youth League (SYL).... and the fight for independence gained momentum again. This political movement quickly gained popularity in the capital. Many people died during this struggle, both Somalis and non-Somalis. This movement spearheaded the political struggle that achieved independences on July 1, 1960 in the South. In the North the Somali National Movement (SNM) organized the masses.... They also fought for independence in the North and achieved it on June 26, 1960.... Then two newly born governments united in Mogadishu on July 1, 1960.

This claim is perhaps easier to digest when it is read in a colonial text. Yet this perspective is reflective of how the colonial narrative has been adopted as a part of the National Somali story. To consider how prevalent this outlook is, it is essential not only to offer a critique, but also to expose the colonial origins of this perception. Notwithstanding the strong correlation between colonialism and Western knowledge production, as well as the privileges awarded to those who adhered to this type of colonial ideology, one cannot overlook how such discourse has been planted in the minds of the colonized when studying history from an Indigenous African stance. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) points out this correlation by arguing that colonialism, with its foreign knowledges, is squarely focused on distancing a peoples away from themselves and taking up center stage by universalizing and generalizing local histories. The author goes on to point out that such perceptions of history do not accurately reflect the living histories of the
colonized. I am not suggesting that the Elders whom I have interviewed are steeped in colonial rhetoric, but rather that there were/are certain colonial processes employed to transmit colonial ideologies to the masses that are with us today, which we need to expose. Moreover, we must question these problematic notions in order to be able to trace them to the violent colonial order. Without such a grounded understanding of the root of such notions, articulating a sense of self within a historical movement will be difficult.

A popular misconception that supports the above statement is that the colonizers, in particular the British, did not come with a specific agenda to colonize the North of Somalia. The popular fallacy is that they came to create a Protectorate, as it was called, to secure their interests and trade routes in the Gulf of Aden. This notion feeds into the Euro-American historical perspective that alludes to the positivist attributes of colonialism. As an Elder named Hashi expressed to me:

Somalia was not a place that the British wanted to settle. They wanted to keep an eye on their troops in Aden... Aden was like Dubai is today, a duty free port; it had a very important port that enabled goods to be moved from the East to the West in those days. That is why the British made the Northern part of Somalia a protectorate. That was the aim of the British.

This observation speaks to the masked intentions of the colonialists, and it is quite potent when it is uttered by a colonized body. Yet most importantly, such an uttering signifies a historical gap where an anticolonial reading would be instrumental in exposing the essence of the colonial conquest. History indicates that the colonizing forces, although they had various intentions for their colonies, never declared these intentions openly to the colonized populations. With respect to the North of Somalia, the idea of it being a ‘protectorate’ with no colonial agenda minimizes the ways in which Somalia as a geographical/political space has been reshaped and exploited. More importantly, such colonial relations continue to be ascribed to Somalia. Nevertheless, the
historical narratives of the anticolonial movements in Somalia serve as a counter-perspective that ruptures such claims. Interestingly, Hashi, in the same conversation, indicated that the colonial canons are dominant in relating knowledges about Somalia. The colonizers have written their perspectives in their texts and those texts have been taught in our schools. This takes me to the next research finding.

**The Nature of the Struggle:**

In addition to the Elders retelling the histories of the anticolonial movement, a number of them gave detailed accounts of the brutality of the colonial order and the selfless sacrifices endured by Somali peoples at the hands of the colonizers. As some of these Elders were narrating the histories of the struggle, the pain and the anguish of the events which took place seemed to be fresh in their minds. Some of these events have not been well-commemorated by Somali peoples, in my opinion, and in instances where they have been documented, the Elders’ accounts gave life to the struggle because of the ways in which the stories were narrated. This is partly because, as Mohamed put it, “The history that is written by the colonizers is from their perspective.” Moreover the fact that Somalis are traditionally oral societies and that much of our histories have not been written compounds the problem of scarcity of knowledges about our anticolonial social movements. Here is a good example of anticolonial resistance as articulated by Abdi:

> There were many Somali communities that fought against colonial rule, in cities like Marka. Those communities paid a heavy price for their resistance and gave their blood instead of accepting colonialism. We cannot forget the battles of Bardera, were the Portuguese armies were defeated. We must remember the battle of Markablay, where a town in the South of the country was named after that battle. There were communities in the town of Afguo that refused to be indentured on their lands, but ended up surrendering the land after being
overwhelmed by colonization. All these acts of resistance are anticolonial in nature in opposition to European colonization.

The above historical events mark monumental moments in the histories of Somali peoples. This commentary presents a different outlook on colonialism in the South of Somalia and highlights what the Banader communities underwent. Diriye (2001) examined the Portuguese encounter where colonizers bombarded the coastal areas from the Indian Ocean. But there hasn’t been much written about this colonial encounter, especially from a Somali perspective. The significance of the above story is that in it there is an Indigenous orator documenting this anticolonial struggle in Somali with the name Markably, memorializing the events which took place. One of the moments immortalized in our history was Dajix toor (The stone thrower), which was essentially an act of agency through protest when the Italian colonizers tried to crush Somali protesters. This is how Hamoud spoke about the events that took place:

You probably heard of dajix toor. Many Somalis died during that battle with Somalis on one side and the Italians, with their supporters, on the other side. That fight was between an unarmed group of Somali protesters, and a well armed group of colonizers. The statue of dajix toor is of a man named Mohamed who died during that fight. The goal of the protestors was to achieve freedom, and they indeed sacrificed for it. It was their organizing and acts of political agency that brought about ideas of unifying all Somalis under one flag. But the colonizers infiltrated the nationalist political organizations, to ensure that their pro-Italian supporters were a part of them as a means of marginalizing the post-independence Somali government.

This struggle has been memorialized with a monument in the capital named after this event. This monument acts as a testament to the sacrifices made by the peoples. This monument and other anticolonial shrines serve as structures to evoke national memory through an act of public remembrance.
As I conducted my data collection some of the most profoundly moving findings with respect to the nature of the struggle were voiced by some of the female participants. Their perspectives were fascinating, and many of their stories had never really been told. The salient feature of their narratives is how they embodied what I would argue was the strength of Somali womanhood. Not only were their answers personal and detailed, they also highlighted a collective solidarity between the female and male counterparts in the anticolonial struggle, a historical reality seldom spoken about. For instance, Kadija proudly declared that, although rarely mentioned in Somali social circles, if it were not for the women’s struggle in Somalia the country would not be liberated. The following conversation fleshes out their sentiments, as one of the Elders beautifully expressed:

When I was young I used to hear stories of Halema Godanna, a renowned female anticolonial activist, who organized a women’s group. They used to regularly meet and were actively involved in the armed struggle against the Italian colonial forces. They also collected monies, when financial resources were very limited. These brave women were fighting for nationhood. Some were around when our beautiful flag was raised and some were not so fortunate. I remember some of those women like Maryan Abdi Dhaleture; she was actually a friend of my mother, and visited us regularly with Raxha Ayallia. They spared nothing for the nation’s freedom. I can recall hearing the story of Temera Okasha, a prominent figure in the women’s circles. She was jailed for her resistance efforts, this after her husband was killed, and she ended up giving birth in prison. Her baby girl was named August, and she recently passed away in London, UK. She went into labour and the jail guards refused to allow her to get some medical attention, so the inmates helped her with the delivery, and they broke a water bottle to cut the umbilical cord. Without the women’s struggle the fight for independence would have never been fruitful. In fact I believe without our desire for freedom the idea of independence wouldn’t have been conceived.

The Elder in the above quote is an artist and political activist. Her comments explain Somali women’s traditions of resistance, affirm their role in the struggle, and stress the ways in which women sacrificed for the Nation’s freedom. Central to the women’s role in the struggle are principles of community as an active self-sustainable origin that dislodges colonialism. The
location of the women, as presented in the above narrative, connects Somali women’s acts of agency to the grand anticolonial narrative.

**Unity in Struggle:**

One of the outstanding themes the Elders alluded to was the concept of unity and Somalinimo. For many of those interviewed, anticolonial history is connected to the current political crisis. When I began discussing solutions, many of the Elders reverted to principles of unity and linked issues of identity fragmentation with colonialism. To most of the participants the fragmented Somali identity results from colonialism and its aftermath. In fact, a number of them suggested that the conflict brought about new forms of colonialism in which Somalis’ internal affairs are in the hands of external actors because Somalis are bitterly engaged in a civil conflict. “It is like two rhinos fighting in the wild with a pack of cheetahs watching them from nearby waiting for one of the rhinos to fall so they can consume both animals,” as Selman told me. This statement is in many ways alarming and profoundly moving because it paints a predicament that we have been in since the beginning of our civil war. In the midst of this colossal challenge many of the Elders cited unity and a collective struggle to point to the successes of the anticolonial movements of previous generations, particularly as a model for mobilizing peoples to define their own destiny. Many of the Elders warned that this mission is not going to be an easy task, as demonstrated by the following expression articulated by Hussan, an Elder who was an educator by training:

I think the problems are quite obvious...our backbone has been broken and we have fallen prey to all sorts of predators. No peace, stability, and no life. I honestly see Somalis coming together to resolve our problems as the only way forward. That is the only way I see our prolonged civil war ending. It is the coming together as a collective of peoples in search for Somalinimo. Today’s
predicament is unbearable. I believe that we can resolve our differences, which are minor, through a collective vision of what we would like our nation to look like. I ask God to purify our hearts and souls, without pointing any fingers about some of the events that happened in our resent past. We have committed some horrific acts against each other.... We must come together and collectively achieve peace by any means.

Hussan’s vision provides a moral imperative based on Somali dhaqan and Eldership as an overarching institution governing Somali societies through ancestral visions and cultural customs. Within this imperative is an agenda for peace building through collective consensus and self-determination. In essence, cultural unity within the Somali context, both in the Diaspora and at home, is positioned to be the only remedy to end all national hardships. Through his vision Hussan sketches a road map anchored on Somali xeer (customs) to reconstruct Somali nationalism. Although Hussan did not explicitly say it, his values reminded me of the Somali cultural principle of Colaade yessen dely ahanne (“the conflict must not continue to hover over the community”). Now this is a Somali dhaqan philosophy that is instituted traditionally in the time of war to end conflicts through consensus building with an eye on the future. Chiefly, the above notion is articulated and implemented by Elders to, again, end conflict in the community. Within Somali tradition this principle points to a measure of restorative justice that remedies conflict through forgiveness, public acknowledgement, and commemoration of past injustices.

When asked about the differences between the Somalis of today and previous generations, Elmi cited the individualism and the loss of cultural unity as a point of departure. To get his message across, he compared the acts of collective struggle embedded in Somali dhaqan with the plague of individualism in the Somali peoples of today:

Previous generations were quite different because they were fighting to achieve a goal. They did not want to be colonized and that was the foundation of their
struggle. They did not want to live on their lands under occupation. Their selfless sacrifices enabled them to put the collective interests before their own. But today’s generations they do not want to struggle for anything, some even want to gain personally at the expense of the collective. I think that is one outstanding difference between our generations and the generations of our fathers and grandfathers. Today’s generations seem to be suffering from moral bankruptcy, and they are rarely moved by anything. Also, while previous generations had solid foundations and they knew where they came from, today’s peoples and youth have been influenced by other cultures and knowledges and it is sometimes very hard to understand them. Moreover those that are formally educated think that Somali *dhaqan* is backwards and is to blame for all our social ills. All this explains why we are so disenfranchised and unsure of ourselves. The peoples of today have a lot of work ahead of them, especially the youth, because they must turn the pages of history and collectively work for *Somalinimo*.

Elmi’s hypothesis is ingrained in the language of social responsibility and collective duty to the Nation and community. His ideas are to be understood as a part of a moral contract to a greater Somali/African identity. Although the Elder is highly critical of today’s generations, indicating many of the social ills facing us, his articulation inadvertently speaks to the discourse of cultural unity, the strength of the virtues of moral responsibility and collective histories.

**Colonial Knowledge and the National Struggle:**

*Aquan lana wa iftenlanad* (“The lack of knowledge is the lack of light”) is a well-known Somali saying. While this saying, voiced a few times during my dialogue with Elders, encapsulates the importance Somalis assign to knowledge, there was a clear-cut disconnect between the Indigenous anticolonial conceptions of what constitutes knowledge and the Elders’ understanding of knowledge. The participants’ reading of knowledge was equated with colonial education. Although most of them expressed that the anticolonial struggle was one anchored on preserving a way of life and maintaining Somali *dhaqan* as the governing cultural institution, it is clear from the Elders’ narratives that in the struggle for knowledge, Somali cultural knowledges were subverted to the margins and colonial education became the tool to reorganize
colonized societies. Therefore, to understand the Elders’ position one has to bring forth an anticolonial Indigenous reading to recognize how the experiences of colonial education and the psycho-cultural amputation that takes place, disconnect the African from their Indigenous knowledges. Epistemologically, there is a philosophical entanglement between Somali *dhaqan* and Western knowledges through colonial education. Historically, the two socializing paradigms have different outcomes with respect to the colonized populations. Indigenous cultural systems, on one hand, are in place to root members of a community in ancestral wisdoms. Colonial education, on the other hand, was designed to uproot the Indigenous from their environments, their community, and ultimately from themselves.

In today’s world where knowledge is synonymous with institutional education, the struggle continues for the validation of African Indigenous knowledges. The question becomes, where do we draw the line? For me, it is not a matter of Indigenous Somali *dhaqan* knowledges or colonial education. Many of the Elders stressed the importance of our youth knowing their *dhaqan*, histories, and identities, in addition to becoming well-educated in schools. Yet it is important to highlight the standing contradictions in their perspectives for an in-depth historical analysis of core values that moved Somali societies during our anticolonial struggle. It is essential to interrogate what constitutes education or knowledge, and how Elders conceptualize these two distinct notions. I suspect that the Elders understand Somali *dhaqan* as a sacred embodiment, something that Somalis cannot be disconnected from, due to the mythical/physical/spiritual aspects of what it means to be Somali. Colonial institutions have always been sites of struggle for Indigenous African bodies because of the negations of the embodied non-Western knowledges therein. But I believe the Elders’ steering of the conversation towards Western education comes from their recognition of how colonial education
has reshaped the world. Therefore, there is validity in engaging with questions of classroom education. More importantly, from an anticolonial perspective, the task is how to think about making spaces to articulate Indigenous knowledges as a valid body of knowledge.

In line with Eurocentric logic, the idea that Somalis were not educated in institutions was a notion widely held by many of the Elders. This prevailing understanding stresses the lack of educated Somali peoples to lead the national movement in the struggle for independence. The story goes that many of the leading figures who spearheaded the anticolonial movement had only a basic education and did not attain post-secondary schooling. From many of the interviewees the scarcity of formally trained Somalis was a problem, and the overarching line of reasoning was that the masses did not possess the Western cultural capital to challenge the colonizers. Nevertheless, this shortcoming was resolved through and/or compensated for by a Somali national consciousness. From such a vantage point there is an inadvertent negation of the Somali cultural knowledges and Indigenous ways of knowing along with a privileging of the colonizers’ education. This notion is quite troubling and is working with an underlying assumption that Western knowledge is superior to Somali Indigenous knowledges. The following responses, from some of the Elders, provide good examples of this prevailing discourse:

The struggle was born out of Somali leaders, those of whom have had some formal school training deciding that they would fight for independence. That is how independence was ultimately realized.... The other thing that I would like to mention to you is the fact that none of the men who fought for independence had a university degree. The most educated ones had a mere grade seven or eight education obtained from British schools in Aden. The Somali Youth League was organized by Somali youth who were well trained in their time. They came together to organize the peoples in the struggle for national independence. The people were not knowledgeable and those that were formally educated were far and few in between. (Hajji Ismail)
The Sayyid, who arrived in the country after spending some time abroad, appeared to be more knowledgeable than most Somalis during his time. It is widely believed that he had interacted with leaders who were also at the time struggling for their independence, namely the Mahdi of Sudan. (Hamoud)

The idea of Somalis not being knowledgeable is ideologically embedded in the Somali national narrative. Indeed this discourse is troubling because it creates a category of knowers by privileging the colonizer. As a Somali researcher I am quite concerned about this logic because even when Indigenous Africans are articulating anticolonial sentiment in their native tongue this contradiction is quite evident. The inconsistency here is that the colonized were fighting for their way of life, which includes their knowledges, yet Somali leadership, according to this claim, had to look elsewhere for knowledge. Moreover, if the struggle is indeed for key ideological/cultural principles, how could Somalis overlook their own knowledges and/or aspire to the colonizers’ knowledges? This inconsistency goes against the genesis of the anticolonial struggle in Somalia.

On education/knowledge, when asked about the differences and similarities between the youth of today and the youth who spearheaded the nationalist campaigns in the Nation, the following comments were made by an Elder:

They are quite different because today’s youth have a lot more access to education. In our time that was not the case. Many of today’s youth are educated, with engineering degrees, and PhDs. When I was growing up it was only the top three students in elementary school who were offered the chance to go on to secondary school. That is not the case in today’s world. Moreover, the material resources education extends to educated youth is beyond my wildest imagination. We would work every summer or be taken to the countryside, because we could not afford living in the city. Only the sons of fathers with good jobs were taken to school. So we are quite different and if they ever wanted to take advantage of all that they could. What our youth need is to organize themselves, select good leadership, and then work for the people. (Hajji Ismail)

The concept of knowledge in Somalia in moments of struggle against colonial rule signifies an inherent disconnect between the social consciousness of the peoples and the fight for self-determination, and the lack of knowledge. The Elders’ treatment of knowledge as formal
education, indicating a lack of knowledge amongst Somali peoples, inadvertently overlooks the knowledges that drove the peoples to resist colonial occupation. To my surprise, many of the interviewees stated that Somalis gained more access to formal education after independence, and more so now over the last twenty years when many Somalis left the country. The logic behind this thinking is that those who have left Somalia have been afforded opportunities to study in Western institutions aboard. In fact, many expressed that there is a highly skilled well-educated Somali population around the world. But the question remains, is knowledge about formal education or about a social consciousness? Or is it both? As stated earlier, colonial education has re-shaped the world in profound ways, and not having access to it can hinder a people’s ability to move with the times. Yet it is vitally important to evaluate the Western imposition over Indigenous ways of knowing. In fact a few of the research participants articulated that one of the great achievements of the movement is access to education, as supported by the following remarks:

The anticolonial movements succeeded in giving birth to our nation; our lands are free. The colonizers have been defeated. That is the first greatness. The second is because of the anticolonial movements Somali people came from the countryside to enter cities, gain education, and then finally create a government for themselves. (Halima)

They succeed in enabling the UN to give the Italian government a ten year trusteeship to transition Somalia to statehood …Italians created a few NGOs, and primary schools…..to help us with education... They also created trade schools to train students in commerce, manufacturing, and a naval academy. They also created teacher training schools, and agricultural training institutions. (Said)

The above quotes highlight significant national claims. While somewhat problematic because the discourses in them are deeply entrenched in the postcolonial state, they also speak of the achievements secured after independence from colonial rule. The logic here is that native populations were able to achieve what the colonizers insisted the native populations could not
accomplish. From that perspective, the issue of education is more than a matter of national pride and symbolic achievements because it speaks to the Somali peoples’ intellectual abilities to express their humanity through learning. On the subject of formal schools, most of the Elders interviewed spoke of the importance of education in uplifting the community, especially when it comes to resolving the current political crisis in Somalia. In fact, few offered any other solutions besides education. Theoretically speaking, education might be more accessible today, but that does not prevent one from asking which knowledges are Somalis learning about themselves today? How is Somalia conceived of in education today? And what adversarial effects does Western education have on both Somali and non-Somali learners? Such questions are unavoidable, especially when critically examining the ways in which Eurocentric education racializes students and negates their identities and histories. Sadly, this discussion was entirely absent, and education was presented as the only option for today’s youth to secure their futures and claim their stakes in their nation’s history. When looking at the Canadian context the educational challenges facing the community’s youth with respect to racialization, criminalisation, and the high push-out rates (Dei, Mszzuca, McIssac, & Zine, 1997) were not taken up in any of our conversations. Instead, there was an overwhelming emphasis on the power of formal education to modernize and transform societies, as encapsulated by the following question posed to me during my last interview by a renowned Somali female artist and cultural icon named Hawo, as she asked:

My question is: There are many youth that have been educated that have asked us for knowledge. I say to them all the time, If God gives you the chance to reach the masses will you serve them? Do not keep the knowledge to yourselves; can you make the knowledge reach the people, wherever they may be...? Will you get into our neighbourhoods with your education? Will you walk on the snow to get this message across? Can you call the peoples about for knowledge? Will you have the courage to respond to that call? Will you tell the youth in prison to get their education? Can you convince the community to unite and have one voice?
May God help you…if you are seen as a Somali in today’s world it’s like you have a marker and all the doors slam shut in your face….I think that you must work hard for future generations to ever have a chance.

The above question is the most insightful because it is articulated in and through Somali *dhaqan* and it is steeped in principles of collective identities, shared history, and interconnectedness.

From an African epistemological understanding, Hawo situated education within the collective contemporary anticolonial struggle to encourage those who have had the opportunity to attain education to utilize their knowledges to move the masses. Her perspective is calling for a critical approach to use education to broach ideas about a Somali Nationhood. Although the education that she is advocating for is Eurocentric, the way she chooses to advance it for emancipation and freedom through collective consciousness and social responsibility is quite moving.

**An Indigenous *Dhagan* Social Awareness:**

*‘Somali dhaqan does not allow Somali peoples to live under occupation’* (Abdi)

One of the most powerful sentiments which came out these interviews was the fact that Somali *dhaqan* did not allow for colonial rule to dominate the peoples. The Elders uniformly expressed that, due to a genuine concern for our collective existence, as one Elder put it, the masses united and joined the movements to rid the Nation of colonialism. Moreover, Somali *dhaqan* was one of the most powerful instruments in the fight for independence. The Elders unanimously stated that Somalis wanted to maintain their way of life and felt threatened by colonialism. Thus, Somali *dhaqan* was operationalized to broadcast the struggle to Somali peoples throughout the country. As Hashi stated:

A person can only aspire to what is familiar to them, what one does not know and/or understand they cannot feel. So the leadership used songs, oratory, and
ceremonies to connect messages of the struggle to a way of life. This was purposefully done to uplift the aspirations of the peoples so that they can take a stance against colonialism. The Elder’s remarks are quite holistic because the notion of Somali Indigenous cultures as an anticolonial tool is suggested in his remarks. The ways in which Somali values were transmitted to the peoples through various culturally appropriate methods is also advanced here. This is a position that strongly supports the works of Said S. Samatar’s (2009) *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad ‘Abdille Hassan.* As highlighted in chapter three, this work showed how Somali oratory was utilized to broadcast the struggle and how powerful of an instrument it was in conjunction with the Elder’s understanding of the role of Somali *dhaqan.* Most interviewees cited the Sayyid oratory as a living body of Indigenous knowledges containing the history of the anticolonial movement from a Somali perspective. Many of the Elders made reference to this great leader’s anticolonial oratory as the sacred text that one must comprehensively study to understand Somali history. This notion counters the earlier historicization suggesting that Somalis were not knowledgeable, and in essence provides proof that Somalis have a unique set of African values that are rooted in a way of life. When pointing out the success of the anticolonial campaigns, it is key that one understand the social/cultural messages that were used to propagate the resistance to better comprehend why the peoples revolted against colonial rule, how they fought back, and how this history was passed down from one generation to another. Elder Hajji Abdirahaman, who is known as an orator in the community, stressed:

The leadership was very active in forewarning the masses that their way of life was in danger, because the colonizers would change everything. The peoples were told that colonizers would change not only the current social order, but would also change the future, and change the future of their children for generations to come. Somalis used to comprehend current issues through their cultural wisdoms. Therefore, when the peoples were told that their way of life is
at risk they responded because Somalis are so strict with their *dhaqan*. That is what triggered the anticolonial movement. Therefore, the essence of the struggle was one for values.

Given the degree to which Somali *dhaqan* has been protected and preserved for the community the Elders approached this topic with caution. Here is where the Elders took it upon themselves to train me on the ancestral ways of knowing. Of course the Elders had different entry points to this conversation depending on their experiential knowledges and formal training. After pausing for a minute, Hajji Abdirahaman continued to express the importance of Somali culture in the struggle:

Somali *dhaqan* was instrumental in making the populace more aware of their circumstances, and to make them come to terms with the risks that their arts and culture would be taken away. The peoples were told that the ways in which their sons and daughters dressed would be changed and that Somali *dhaqan* would be turned on its head. Moreover, that the ways in which they managed their wealth would be changed…. So the people’s priority was first Somali *dhaqan*, second came the issue of language, third was the issue of land.

The latter part of this Elder’s comments is quite remarkable as it indicates a social consciousness that is rooted in a way of life and a commitment to fight for this way of life. This loaded expression is not often explored in most texts about Somali history, as I have highlighted in the literature chapter. More importantly, the concept of Somali worldviews, as articulated within an Indigenous African historical trajectory, highlights a commencement of the essence of what it means to be Somali. Within the Canadian Diaspora, this idea serves as a lesson in terms of what we can learn from how previous generations struggled for their rights. Inadvertently, it also speaks to our inherent responsibility to respond to questions of identity, language, and culture. The truth of the matter is that one cannot learn about his/her history and forget about the contemporary historical moment in which his/her society is living. Today we Somalis are living in a time where everything Somali is being turned on its head, and as Hajji Mohamed put it:
The peoples of the past were extremely respectful; they acknowledged one another and recognized the values of being Somali. In the past you would be walking in the countryside and you would arrive at a family’s home and they would slaughter you an animal for you to be served. The head of the household would swear that they would slaughter for you to eat, so you could not refuse. But today that is not the case at all. Milk used to be given for free and today milk is for sale. You used to be able to journey for hundreds of miles through cities and strangers gave you a place to stay, food to eat, and you were extended a peace of mind. Today you cannot travel the country in peace.

The values outlined by the Elder in this dialogue, when looked at from a Eurocentric paradigm, would have no relevance to the anticolonial history. But from a Somali epistemological understanding these customs revolve around principles of the collective, a Somali identity, and a national narrative of life prior to colonialism. The narration of this cultural milieu within a historical context stressed the common values and traditions. This narration is both philosophically and practically powerful, particularly for those of us living in the Diaspora, because it signifies what we Somalis should bequeath to future generations. Along the same line of thinking, Halmio eloquently stated the importance of Somali dhaqan not only to the anticolonial movement but to future generations when she said:

Somali dhaqan played a huge role in the anticolonial struggle, because we had customs that were orderly, that we used to utilize to dialogue and inform each other. Today no one respects Elders. Elders are the customary leaders. They have always provided guidance and unconditional support to the peoples. Elders traditionally worked to resolve conflict and bless the community with their wisdoms. We cannot be a peoples without guidance. Our traditions are important and we must hold on to them, especially for the sake of future generations. We must show our kids and youth the ways of our peoples.

This historicization is laying claims to a holistic identity through a social consciousness with a profound sense of responsibility to our youth in stressing that Somali culture is our foundation. The Elders’ point of departure, in a way, serves as a warning for Somali peoples to hold on to our culture while asserting the questions of culture as a governing social order that is instrumental in our struggle. The participants’ reading of Somali dhaqan as a site of struggle
certainly sheds light on how important notions of culture are as salient features of the people’s understanding of themselves and their social order.

**Indigenous Anticolonial Histories:**

In line with the anticolonial traditions of our Ancestors, many of those in this study held the history of social movements in Somalia as a sacred struggle for the dignity and human rights of Somali peoples. Most stressed the importance of this history to the peoples and drew strong connections between our historical struggles and the current political unrest and disenfranchisement of millions of Somali across the globe, as stated many times in this thesis. The question of Somali self-determination was one that has faced the peoples since the beginning of the colonial encounters, and many of the issues stemming from colonial/neocolonial relations have never been resolved, as indicated by the interviewees. Elders also indicated that our past histories contain many solutions for some of our contemporary problems. Therefore, this history should not be seen and/or read in the abstract but rather viewed as an embodiment of what it means to be Somali in a world were colonialism is real. When it comes to the Somali conceptualization of our past many of the Elders’ analysis was anchored on notions of moving forward in our intergenerational anticolonial resistance by learning to evoke this memory through a Somali lens. More importantly most of the Elders approached this research with a renowned sense of responsibility and treated this history as knowledge that they should share. Moreover, they saw the research as a sacred journey in which I was being educated. In addition, the tone most of the Elders used in conversation with me was one that amplified a national Somali wake-up call to respond to colonialism in the 21st century.
The most captivating aspect of these interviews was when the subject of how colonialism was implicated in today’s unrest in Somalia. One very interesting response was articulated by Elmi as he stated:

Somali peoples until today are separated by colonial boundaries, which is a pressing issue. The colonial mindset implanted by the colonizer is still present in the minds of many Somali elites and is with us today. Many of the ideas that the colonizer has trained our peoples on are still prevalent and they often clash with Somali dhaqan. That is a major obstacle that contributes to our political problems that the colonizers have left us with. They have also turned our political system on its head. For Somalis to kill each other, that is part of the colonial legacy that we have inherited. Somalis would not have killed one another if the colonizers did not brand us differently and divide us up into tribes with opposing interests, where each tribe believes that they are better than the others. That is why it seems that our pressing issues are out of control.

Elmi’s understanding registers a powerful knowledge claim, one that serves to counter the popular post-independence rhetoric that celebrates the defeat of the colonizers. This notion provides room to interrogate colonial relations and to explore how the Somali identity has been shaped through that relationship. It leaves one to question, in an era where human rights are widely celebrated, how much has really changed in Africa, and in particularly Somalia, since the first UN declaration more than 50 years ago? The strength of the above statement is that it steers the conversation towards an anticolonial space in which we can dialogue about our intergenerational struggle because as much as we think humanity is advancing, not much has changed in most of the colonized world. As Said, the community activist told me, “No one can tell you about colonization because it is colonization and you know it. But I say that the colonization of the past is much better than the one that we are in right now, because colonization used to be physical, but now it is of the mind.” This participant’s response is a testament both to the complex nature and the brutality of colonization. On the question of
history one response that really caught my attention was that of Abdi, a Somali politician and scholar, as he expressed the following sentiments about Somali history:

Everything that we have been through has a place in history. Any history has many different effects on a peoples. In my mind the only useful aspect of history is its ability to provide one with the tools to correct the mistakes of the past for a brighter future. Categorically, history has to be seen as a vehicle to secure a future. Problems on the ground are social, political, and economical. Moreover, there is a lot of foreign meddling with our affairs. Western powers are not yet interested in having stability in Somalia, they keep experimenting with it, with various different policies, and they control it through the UN. They also keep creating Transitional Federal Governments that are controlled by the West, and that have very little control of Somalia’s natural resources. As long as they keep holding us by the ankles we are not free. Moreover, we as a peoples are not ready for freedom.

Abdi’s ideas bridge the gap between our anticolonial history and the political situation on the ground in Somalia. The Elder’s understanding centers the Somali struggle for independence in the face of colonialism on correcting our history to be able to assert our voice in today’s world. Moreover, implied in his answer is the need to return to the Somali dhaqan and the ways of the Ancestors with a deeply embodied historical understanding of the past in relation to the present to organize the Somali struggle. Therefore, anticolonial historical memory serves as a binding force to ignite the social consciences of Somali peoples according to this Elder’s understanding.

Regarding the importance of history, most of the Elders cited the need to learn from the social-political character of the personalities who led the anticolonial movement. Most of the Elders were also in agreement when it came to the lesson that present day Somalis can learn from the selfless acts carried out by some of the leaders and from the moral characters they exhibited. Currently, as Somalia is in a state of crisis, one of the contributing factors that prevent the peoples from reaching solutions is the notion of individualism. This grave concern was captured earlier by Elmi, and this is how Hawo articulated the issue:
The people of yesterday and the peoples of today are not the same. Yesterday’s world and today’s world are not the same. Peoples today are more individualistic and they think that they are clever if they cheat and deceive people. Previous generations had values, strong bonds, and collective values. When you reached an agreement with someone in the old times they always kept their word. But today no one keeps their word and you do not really know what anyone stands for anymore.

What emerges from this comment is the change in values between the current generation of Somalis and previous generations. In the backdrop of this discussion is the need for Somali peoples to take up the social, political, and cultural traits of previous generations, and to embrace notions of collectivism in the face of colonial domination. When asked about how Somali history can benefit the Somalis of today, especially the youth, Hajji Abdurrahman had this to say:

The anticolonial history certainly has benefits for today’s youth because they can learn from the ways in which members of the SYL, that was made up of thirteen individuals, who we should say brought independence after a long fight. They went to the United Nations and traveled distant lands to make the case for Somali nationhood. They were youth, many of whom were in their teens. When the youth return to that history they can perhaps be encouraged to take their path. The youth can benefit from learning about how those youth were unified and how confident they were with one another. Take for instance the collective decision making processes that the SYL had.... As one of the organization’s leaders was due to travel to New York to address the UN it was agreed that no one can greet him due to security concerns. His own mother was told by members of the SYL that she could not meet with her son, moreover, that she would have to accept their sincere apology.... All the SYL youth understood that it was a collective decision that could not be overturned. So that shows how those youth moved in solidarity.

In his response to this question Hajji Abdiraham focused his advice on Somali youth citing how the SYL functioned as a political unit for anticolonial action during their times. His words are timely for our youth to take advantage of their youthfulness in sacrifice for the peoples and the nation. The notions of unity, selfless sacrifice, and consensus-building are key in the Elders’ words of wisdom. These principles mark the anticolonial Indigenous Somali dhaqan values that were instrumental in the successes of our social movements. Therefore, when read from that
perspective, this response points to the principles that our youth must work with to achieve true independence. The strength of such an idea is that the youth, with their decolonizing politics, would not be individually overwhelmed by the circumstances of the day, but rather, would work in solidarity with other Somali youth for the collective.

**Conclusion:**

The group of Somali Elders interviewed for this research are community activists who are invested in their community’s everyday struggles and most of them are charged with the task of articulating a vision and guiding the community on a daily basis. The responsibilities that are entrusted to our Elders require their undivided attention, constant reflection, and continuous prayers for the well-being of the community. As community leaders they are invested in the community building mission and the national decolonizing project. All of our Elders, rightly so, believe in the power of the Creator, the collective, and the Somali identity. Moreover, they reject the Eurocentric ideas about Somalis being passive victims of their circumstances. To them the national reconciliation project is one that requires courage, resourcefulness, and the will of the peoples. They indeed see the struggle as the only means of regaining what is lost. As visionary thinkers of our time, they share their words of wisdom and their lived experiences to ignite a national consciousness through a culturally-rooted Somali identity. As part of a living Indigenous institution, our Elders are community agents always on duty to serve the community regardless of the cost, and in many ways they are the binding force holding the community together. They often operationalize their knowledges and expertise in sophisticated ways to meet the challenges of the day, yet many of them also engage issues with a common sense approach. As evident from this community research project, Somali Elders’ *dhaqan/African* Indigenous knowledges provide key culturally appropriate tools to strengthen the nation and the
communities in the Diaspora and at home. Although the Elders responded to the questions from various points of departure depending on their training and experiences, their conversations offer rich data to engage in questions of history, identity, nationalism, and the role of Somali *dhaqan* in the lives of Somali peoples, wherever they may be. As such, their critical voices shed some light on a collective path that could lead to nationhood, because in their thoughts they have outlined various processes to reengage with what it means to be Somali in the current day.
Chapter Seven

Dhaqan Worldviews: A Re-visitation of Somali Cultural Philosophies:

Introduction:

In this chapter I engage with a very important question, the question of Somali culture. The centrality of this question is at that heart of the struggle of Somali peoples. I contend that for a powerful historical analysis to be not only critical of colonialism but also anchored in a Somali ancestral vision that is counter to the Eurocentric social order, one must come to understand Somali worldviews. Abdi and Cleghorn (2005) write that in Africa, one way to break away from the Eurocentric narrative is to revisit the African philosophy and systems of knowing. It is only then that one can discuss and begin to debate the histories of social movements in Somalia from an African perspective. In fact, it is only through Somali culture that we are able to reflect and collectively examine the histories of the anticolonial movement in Somalia and make sense of the key philosophies that were a catalyst to the struggle.

Interestingly, this topic was not covered in any of the literature discussed in chapter three, except by Said S. Samatar’s (2009) book Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad ‘Abdille Hassan, in which he delineates the role of Somali poetry in the Sayyid’s movement. As such, this area of research has not been studied within a historical context of the independence struggle, notwithstanding the matter of Somali tribalism in Somali societies that has been exhausted, in my view. Therefore, although I highlighted some of the emerging themes in chapter five, I have decided to take up Somali dhaqan in this chapter to provide an in-depth analysis of its role in the nation-building project. As such, culture has always been an instrumental method of resisting Western domination (see Appiah, 1992). In fact, all sixteen of the Elders paid significant attention to this topic and treated the histories they narrated, through Somali dhaqan, as sacred. The Indigenous research methodology operationalized to conduct this research enabled me to better facilitate a dialogue with the
Elders. Guided by the Elders’ visions and informed by Indigenous knowledges frameworks and anticolonial thought, I focus on the power of Somali *dhaqan* in articulating different Somali sentiments in the face of colonial violence.

Somali *dhaqan* is about an Indigenous way of speaking, being, and living for Somali peoples, and that is why I operationalized Somali *dhaqan* as a methodology to undertake this research as highlighted in chapter five. My understanding of Somali *dhaqan* is that it is a holistic cultural order with a philosophical paradigm, governing the everyday actions of Somali peoples through specific cultural practices. From Somali worldviews, the philosophy and the practical aspects of *dhaqan* are interconnected. Moreover, because the philosophies are not disconnected from the practice, the term *dhaqan* is used to describe both Somali worldviews and culture. Somali *dhaqan* is rooted in local knowledges articulated, expressed, and preserved for future generations. The emphasis on local context is also important here because each community articulates its cultural norms differently, yet Somali *dhaqan* is uniformly practiced by all Somali peoples. Each local community has its own unique cultural practices and communal ways that are particular to that community and these local customs constitute their Somali *dhaqan*. On an individual level, *dhaqan* governs the social norms of all Somali peoples in terms of how they interact with other Somalis, their community, and their immediate social environment. But that does not mean that individuals cannot opt out of the community, or adhere to specific aspects of Somali *dhaqan* while disregarding certain beliefs. Yet the fact remains that all individuals have a place in the community.

To a community where it is practiced, Somali *dhaqan* is the foundation upon which all decisions are made concerning the collective with respect to resource-sharing, educating the youth, making decisions, and engaging in community-building efforts. Somali *dhaqan* is passed down from one generation to another through word-of-mouth using Somali language, folktales, proverbs, songs, ceremonies, and dance. Somali *dhaqan* is not static, and it enables Somalis to
interpret and understand their social world within their living moment. It is valued as an Indigenous knowledges base that is built upon notions of community improvement and response to social phenomena.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine *dhaqan* philosophies as a fundamental knowledge base anchored in Indigenous ways of life to articulate visions of Somali nationhood. Thus I will engage in a dialogue about the ideals, morals, and ethical principles guiding Somali anticolonial movements. This chapter is an invitation to critically think through the power of Somali Indigenous historiography in countering the dominant story. In it, I stress the importance of re-conceptualizing and operationalizing different sacred bodies of historical knowledge as a way of reconnecting with the Somali way of life. I will conclude this chapter by offering Somali *dhaqan* philosophies, which evoke our ancestral wisdom, as a means of engaging in our intergenerational struggle.

**The Fight for Liberation and Somali *Dhaqan*:**

The struggle for independence from colonialism within a historical context was one that took many phases, giving rise to several movements throughout the history of the struggle. One of the outstanding features of the anticolonial resistance in this undertaking was and is the attempt to ensure that the Indigenous ways of life prevail over the land. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) pointed out that “culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the spiritual eyeglass, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe” (p. 10). Thus the struggle was more than an armed standoff. Generations of Somali women and men have heroically taken up the cause and ultimately sacrificed their lives for the nation. As highlighted in the interviews, it was in and through struggle that they explicitly outlined their ideologies through Somali worldviews, organizing the peoples to join the movement. These Indigenous efforts gave way to a dynamic political history that exemplified various elements of *Somalinimo* both philosophically and practically. Anticolonial leadership emerged, paving the
way for the Somali personality to shine during key moments in our history, signifying the true moral and ethical values of the peoples irrespective of the circumstances. Moreover, their strategic, innovative, and daring ways gave birth to a new age of Somali politics, undermining the colonial agenda through resistance.

This cultural process created visions for a free Somalia and a future where the will of the people rules the land. Cecil Blake (2005), in his essay, “An African Nationalist Ideology Framed in the Diaspora and the Development Quagmire: Any Hope for Renaissance?,” movingly captures this process as she explains the wretched conditions that drove African peoples to respond through political ideologies, outlining their vision for freedom and how African leadership saw this as their mission. During the height of the struggle, the leadership asserted their Indigenous voices and embodied the ancestral Somali knowledges as they pushed forward. When asked about the ways in which Somali *dhaqan* was used to resist, Said eloquently said:

> They couldn’t stop the ceremonies, the songs, the dancing, gatherings, the collective sharing, and the prayers...when members of the SYL came to a town they used to say let’s clap for them...one person would bring milk, one would bring the dates, and the people would gather to hear the messages of the struggle...it was a known thing; when they came, the people came. That way of congregating under a tree was a Somali hereditary practice that was utilized to break the back of colonialism.

Said’s narrative highlights the ways in which cultural features were used to create spaces for dialogue about resistance. What is quite obvious is the ways in which Somalis understood the call and responded to it. As a method of resistance this approach holds importance in two ways. One involves reclaiming Somali culture and heritage from the colonial project. The second involves affirming and instituting Somali culture in the struggle to bequeath anticolonial legacies to future generations. Fanon (1967b) long ago asserted that, “The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future a national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is [also] responsible for an
important change in the native” (p. 210). As suggested by Fanon in studying the cultural ideals of the various societies of the past, it is essential to shed light on what exactly constituted national values in Somali societies during those moments.

Born out of the culture were the desires for freedom and liberty through the creation of unity amongst the peoples, in a state of their own. Ideologically, this process fostered thoughts of independence through a collective identity in which the very ideas of a nation were imagined. This desire for independence was in line with Pan-African political movements aimed at freeing Africa from colonial domination and material exploitation. These movements exhibited some key cultural practices of African peoples (see Mbembe, 2002; Senghor, 1994; Young, 2001). For Somali peoples the idea of nationalism was symbolized by a flag with a light-blue background and a large white five-pointed star, as well as by a unique Somali political culture. This nationalism showed that during the anticolonial struggle Somalis aspired to a nation in which all ethnic Somalis living under the rule of different colonial powers would live together under one sovereign state. Politically this idea serves as a very powerful social-cultural reference point to imagine and struggle to create a governance structure that is founded on the ideals of a collective; further, it is a cultural manifestation brought about as a result of the total rejection of the colonial order and the humiliating conditions that the Somali peoples were subjected to on a daily basis. What is unique about Somali dhaqan is that none of the Elders pointed to a specific aspect of Somali culture, but rather made reference to it as a way of holistically understanding the world from a Somali perspective. From an anticolonial movement standpoint, the very idea of nationhood became the blueprint by which all national sentiments could be articulated for laying claims to selfhood and humanity. As a process, nationhood entails a cultural unity and an Indigenous vision steeped in African traditions as a driving force to organize the movement. As a body of works this Indigenous cultural capital paves the way for a new activism that is distinctly different from the colonizer’s ways. As one Elder named Elmi told me, “People will only respond if you speak to them in a language that they understand...Therefore [the
leadership] encoded the political messages into the drumming ceremonies, [the] oratory, and the dancing.” This expression encapsulates a cultural milieu, born out of resistance, as stated earlier, that is rooted in Somali people’s ways of knowing. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) provides an excellent example of the role of resistance arts in the Ma Mau movement in Kenya as he explains:

Dance, mime, and song were more dominant than words in telling this story of repression and resistance. The visual and the sound images carried the burden of the narrative and the analysis. The medium of slides was also introduced to give authentic visual images of the period of the twenties and thirties. And at every stage in its evaluation more peoples from many Kenyan nationalities were involved in “Maitu Njugira” (Mother sing for me), a drama in music, which had more than eighty songs from more than eight nationalities in Kenya, all depicting the joy, the sorrow, the gains, the losses, the unity, the divisions, and the march forward as well as the setbacks in Kenyan people’s struggle. (p. 59)

Within the Kenyan struggle for independence, as the above quote illustrates, the performing arts provided an Indigenous theatre with which to partake in anticolonial resistance. With respect to the performing arts in Somalia, Kadija spoke of how Somali peoples composed songs to be sung during the resistance, alerting the peoples of the atrocities taking place in Tanzania and in Kenya, echoing the resistance arts that wa Thiong’o has captured in the above quote. What is interesting is that it is very difficult to understand some of those pieces without being familiar with the context in which they were composed. In essence, those songs are time capsules indicating some pressing dangers.

In Africa there are many nations and communities with their own distinct worldviews explaining the very existence of those communities and their relationships to their Creator, their environments, and individual community members in their societies. For Somali peoples, these wisdoms are contained in dhaqan philosophies. Somali dhaqan encompasses conceptual frameworks of the axiological and epistemological traditions of the peoples, who trace their ancestral homelands to Somalia. African philosophies are “expressed both in the oral literature
and in the thoughts and actions of the people. Thus, a great deal of the philosophical material is embedded in the proverbs, myths and the folktales, folk songs, rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people, in their art symbols and their socio-political institutions and practices” (Gyekye, 1987, p. 13). As a tool for resistance, the operationalization of culture is in and of itself an expression of self-determination. This process is about a cultural sovereignty that moves beyond both the colonial moments of the day and colonial relations. Therefore, it should not be read as mere nationalistic consciousness that Fanon (1967b) warned us about. For our visionary Ancestors were more concerned with who we were as peoples and with our collective futures than with fighting for our version of a colonial state. When asked about the Somali State being born out of a struggle, Ali stated:

The peoples during those days recognized that the world was changing as a result of this colonial order that came with a governance structure that has fundamentally changed our landscape....I recall the story that was often told by many Elders [of what] took place on the eve of independence from the British. The outgoing governor told a group of the Elders, “This new Somaliland government is like a loaded vehicle with all of your belongings on board... Mohamed Ibrahim Egal is driving, as the head of state; therefore, if the vehicle gets into an accident then you are all in trouble.” So the question that they had to ponder was [whether] to have a Somali driver or to keep the colonizers in the driver’s seat....The search for governance was a struggle taking place throughout the world.

Ideologically this narrative is very captivating and explicates the inherent issues that came with the post-colonial state. Yet one of the outstanding features of this narrative is how previous generations saw the world as they tried to hold on to their cultural integrity while steering the nation. The foundational principle here is that no Somali leader could be equated with a colonizer because of Somalis’ lineage, socialization, beliefs, and embodied heritage. Therefore, it was better to have a Somali driving the foreign vehicle, because there are Indigenous ways in which we can understand each other and resolve our issues. Conversely, Somalis would always have to understand and adhere to the colonizers’ ways while they were in command. This is a pressing issue that has always been part and parcel of the Somali political question.
As a moral vision Somalinimo became the central axis to define the anticolonial movement in Somalia, with questions of cultural integrity revolving around the struggle. Cabral (1973) long ago stated:

Whatever may be the ideological or idealistic characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because of history, culture as its material base level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humans in which it develops, and it reflects the organic nature of the society, which may be more or less influenced by external factors. (p. 42)

Conceptually, Cabral’s understanding of culture offers a unique departure point to engage the question of culture within the history of social movements, centering it in the liberation struggle. Moreover, by contending that culture itself is not only a product of a peoples’ history, but is also being shaped by a peoples’ experiential, social, and material realities, Cabral captures the encompassing value of culture as a social engine that drives the consciousness of a peoples in response to their contemporary conditions.

Within the Somali context, dhaqan as a liberating apparatus is not only about key social practices that are rooted in an Indigenous ancestral homeland but also about how a society experiencing colonization collectively thinks through its own cosmological understandings to struggle against being dominated. As a historical manifestation, then, Somali dhaqan is a powerful African Indigenous ideological frame of thinking that is equipped to respond to colonization. Mohamed, when asked about the importance of Somali culture, expressed:

Somali dhaqan is how our peoples see the world. Take it away and we would be blinded to this world...take for instance the art of composing a language. If a people don’t have that, they can’t express themselves and therefore, they are not free....This goes with every aspect of Somali dhaqan...someone can have all the education in the world, but if they can’t articulate themselves then they can never really find themselves.
This quote is moving and, in many ways, speaks to the importance of a people. Moreover, it highlights some of the dangers with which our Ancestors were confronted at the arrival of colonialism.

Somali peoples made sense of the colonial encounter and its consequential aftermath through Indigenous knowledges. Thus Somali dhaqan has been portrayed as the driving force during the resistance that projected a vision of a free society, leading the way to highlighting key Somali characteristics. Somali dhaqan was used to define the scope of the struggle through an African orientation to the world, and by engaging in collective action in Somalia. Kadija expressed that the leaders of the movements used to:

Forewarn the masses that their dhaqan would be turned on its head... that the ways their daughters dress would be changed, that the ways their sons dressed would be altered....The ways in which Somalis managed their wealth would be changed, moreover, that the land would be taken away and that people with white skin would occupy the land... people that were not known to Somalis, who did not speak Somali; people you do not know, people who don’t speak our language.

The prediction that the colonizers would turn Somali dhaqan on its head signifies the erasure of the Indigenous way of life. This narrative is loaded with cultural connotations and provides a morally binding vision to bring the populace together to fight for a holistic way of life by allowing the peoples to attach particular importance to some outstanding Somali cultural features.

Cosmologically, dhaqan as a driving force also becomes representative of the key virtues that society must hold onto in the face of colonialism, outlining a distinctive code of ancestral beliefs. Founded upon Somali philosophical cultural capital, dhaqan is attached to the essential values of what constitutes Somali humanity. For instance, going back to the issue of visitations, one of the restricted activities by the British was the peoples’ right to pay each other unannounced visits. As indicated by Selman, this very cultural practice was significant enough
in a critical moment of history to provide a social marker that is strongly affiliated with the peoples’ way of life and is worth of continuing. In response to this colonial ethnocentrism, the rejection of this restriction is an outstanding feature of Somali resistant culture. This colonial prohibition brought about a heightened Somali self-awareness—a consciousness that drove the peoples to an inward-looking reclamation process that was aimed at dislodging colonialism revolving around key concepts of a Somali cultural identity. According to Stuart Hall (1990):

Cultural identity [is] in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes that provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. This ‘oneness,’ underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of …the black experience. (p. 223)

I strongly support Hall’s ideas and believe the conceptual framework of Somali dhaqan is the foundation—and a commanding social order—of Somali peoples, representing a shared identity through cultural resistance. Hall (1990) goes on to indicate that this oneness is and was instrumental during post-colonial struggles and has fundamentally reconfigured our world, as a central vision for key Pan African struggles in which the colonized have mobilized to express their ideals. Moreover, he argues that this unity revolves around certain representations of what characterizes an identity. In the study of social movements in Somalia it is instrumental to conceptually understand how this collective cultural unity functions as a binding force in the anticolonial resistance.

**Oral Histography:**

Somali community Elders are a foundational source of anticolonial knowledge and Somali nationalism within the contemporary moment. Although their voices are located outside of the geographical boundaries of Somalia, their assertions and often contradictory stances on
some of the historically rooted challenges facing the nation offer groundbreaking views on the question of self-determination. Philosophically, our Elders, through their community service and Indigenous Somali *dhaqan* cultural expertise, provide radically different historical accounts of how social movements have responded to colonialism. Frederic Cooper (1994) argues that the African experiences of colonization gave way to relying on anticolonial historiography to narrate African history. Focusing on the African experiences of colonization centers the Somali experience in the conversation and presents enormous community building possibilities by working with Somali knowledges. Dialectically, the Elders did not just retell the stories of what took place in Somalia, they also articulated social and political thoughts oriented towards communal change. As such, in their thoughts about anticolonial movements, they moved through various definitions of Somali nationalism, emphasizing the importance of returning to our source (Cabral, 1973) and building stronger connections between continental Somalis and Diaspora communities. In fact, all the Elders expressed grave concern for Somalis departing with their cultural ways, in particular those living in the Diaspora. Hajji Mohammed had this to say about the Diaspora communities in Canada:

I remember driving down St. Clair Avenue West when Italy won the world cup in 1982, and seeing all these young Italians waving their flags. Some of those youth’s parents were born in Canada, yet they showed so much enthusiasm for a country that many have not ever seen, because they are proud of their Italian-Canadian heritage... most people have their roots in other parts of the world...our youth must also be proud of the Somali-Canadian heritage.

This Elder’s alluding to a Somali-Canadian identity is very idealistic. Hajji Mohammed is one of the oldest Elders in Canada. Therefore, his imagining of a Somali-Canadian Diaspora is groundbreaking in many ways because not only is this Diaspora, according to his ideas, located in a distant land, it also connects politically to an ancestral homeland. Although the Elders came with many diverse perspectives from various entry points, their views are fundamentally different from the dominant historiography about Somalia. That is why they unanimously saw the importance of teaching our
children and youth about their history from a Somali perspective as best captured by the following interview with Selman:

I think it is important to teach Canadian born youth the histories of our movements. In this world there is a lot of knowledge that is being added to this world and the world is aging. It is critical for our youth to know their histories. There are many things that are impossible today that will be possible tomorrow. It is important for them to have their roots stemming from their ancestors and their beginning. It is a part of their freedom, their humanity, and salvation… it is something that is part and parcel of who they are…something to be proud of. They have to see themselves as a part of that history; it is good for their education….and for their identity.

The question then becomes, how do our Elders share this knowledges? Somalis traditionally having an oral society, Elders usually share their knowledges with the community, in particular the young, through storytelling. That is why Somalis pay special attention to their oral traditions (see Ali, 1999; Andrzejewski, Pilaszewicz, & Tyloch, 1985; Laurence, 1963), hence, my reasoning for treating the Elders’ narratives as Indigenous cultural text that is produced through social interaction. Ali Jimale Ahmed, in his works, *The Somali Oral Traditions* and *The Role of Storytelling in Somalia*, captures the centrality of Somali oral tradition to our society as he states:

The Somali oral tradition, like any other oral traditions, extols the virtues of memory. And memory presupposes two things: the existence of a pool of memorizers and secondly, a constant repetition of the “word” for its survival. In our cultures, children are taught about their tradition by word of mouth. Each generation in the process selectively preserves its wisdom and that of the preceding generations for posterity. Oral literatures, therefore, apart from their aesthetic quality and the experiential wisdom inherent in them, ensured the survival of tradition in the minds of the young. (p. 1)

As far as Somali culture is concerned, storytelling is a way of captivating the souls of the children and youth who are being socialized. A good storyteller takes his/her audience on an imaginative journey in which the listener truly experiences the story. This process engages the soul of individuals, in which they make meaning of the story, interpret it, and retell it to others. What is profound about Indigenous African stories is that there is no
single story because each story has multiple versions as a result of the listeners retelling the story. This gives all listeners opportunities to connect to the story from their own vantage point and process it through their own lived experiences (Andrzejewski, 1988; Jama, 1994; Lewis, 1969, 1993; Samatar, 1980). The power of the story is its ability to resonate with members of a particular community for multiple generations. In addition, stories are quite dynamic as each generation modifies and adds on the stories that were narrated to them (see Akporobaro, 2001; Ogunjimi & Na’Allah, 2005; Okpewho, 1992). Historically speaking the oral narration of Somali peoples histories is structured through our Indigenous ways of knowing, providing a unique trajectory from which our history can be connected to the contemporary epoch. Gary Y. Okihiro (1996), in his essay, “Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History,” indicates that “Oral history is not only a tool or method for recovering history; it is also a theory of history” (p. 209). With respect to Somali peoples, this is one avenue for us to break free from colonial history and theorize our own history as we live through the contemporary political moment. The significance of historicizing through this method is that it contributes to a Somali culture that does not rely on Europe to see itself.

The premise of this process is that it not only broaches different stories about Somali history but also, through oral documentation, enables the researched community to preserve this anticolonial heritage for the community. Dei (2008) cautions us that in teaching and learning about Africa, African approaches to history must be central to teaching about our ideas. Therefore, in creating public memories, particularly in the Diaspora, it is important to categorize them in connection to an ancestral homeland through a distinct cultural process that is grounded in African values. In essence, the stories told by our Elders are expressions of the national narratives archived through memory, signifying important historical themes of our people’s history. Wane (2008) asserts that the leadership of resistance movements through oral traditional knowledges utilized storytelling, proverbs, idioms, and riddles to transmit cultural values in their
communities in most African societies. Therefore, with oratory, the reengagement with history allows me to revisit and unlock some of the knowledges being narrated by the interviewees. More importantly, with history being a site of continuous struggle for self-determination, the Elders’ storytelling becomes a tool of identity construction that evokes the embodiment of Somali *dhaqan*. As such, it is Indigenous African historicization that explains various elements of the Somali experiences, creating the spaces in which all these stories can politically be operationalized to lay claims to a Somali identity. Kadija shared the following assertion:

> Our kids must have a mark and that must be *Somalinimo*. They have to know their peoples and who they are or else they will be lost. If we teach them about their roots, history, and identity they will be better able to navigate this world. When you talk to them all they say is “*Say-Walahi*” [*I swear to God]*. They must be told that their peoples come from Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, and that they are African peoples...That they have a history and an identity to be proud of.

JoAnne Banks-Wallace (2002), in her essay, “Talking That Talk: Story-telling and Analysis Rooted in African American Oral Tradition,” in which she examines story-telling in African American communities, argues that one way of constructing Africa is through stories, as she explains:

> The collection and sharing of stories is considered sacred work. Major functions of folklore and story-telling include nurturing a harmonious African American community, sustaining a unique cultural identity, and undergirding the struggle for spiritual and material freedom. (p. 412)

The oratory of Elders is a living body of knowledge articulated to shape the national identities of Somali peoples in the Diaspora in a unified front. Their utterances of Somali/African history are steeped in anticolonial traditions rooted in the Horn of Africa as an embodiment of the geographical locations in which the encounters took place, and the social-political history of our peoples. Thus, their perspectives establish new boundaries for conversations revolving around
the Somali political question by planting their feet firmly in the struggle with an emancipatory agenda.

Outlining their ideas of what both nation building and local community strength initiatives ought to look like, the Elders understand that before the community can come to a place of dialogue around Somali history, we must engage the community with political education that revolves around what is at the center of our struggle. The task is then to enter the circles of knowledge and converse with our Elders as a means of reflecting, with a series of critical questions around our political history, identities, and culture. We must learn from them how to talk the talk, how to walk the talk, and how to keep an eye on the prize. I contend that such spaces would allow for a comprehensive analysis of what took place in our homeland and how we are affected as a result of those events. We must reflectively converse and continue working resourcefully with our African knowledges to find our own solutions. This question of us finding our own solutions is one that is deeply rooted in how our communities work with our collective knowledge as a means of avoiding a cultural crisis (Karenga, 1986, 1988, 2007). Thus, this dialogue would allow the community to look eternally for creative solutions.

In fact, broaching Somali histories in and through Somali *dhaqan* would be an outstanding anticolonial feature to centre the community in our tradition and histories, particularly for those of us who live in distant lands. As such, community members are a mode of cultural production that needs to be socialized (Gilroy, 1987a, 1987b, 1991, 1993, 1994, 2000; Hall, 1997). I am of the opinion that only though Somali historiography can an awakening in our peoples be nourished, by the transmitting of vital information about the nature of our intergenerational struggle. As such, we need to increase awareness of our history in order for us to:
Our stories are then an avenue of recovering our past as an instrumental method of constructing knowledge and strengthening community links to our history.

Therefore, oral history becomes a means of creating public memory in the community and shaping the national historically rooted identity with a resistant politics. This communal narrative will without a doubt be best illustrated by some of the major colonial encounters such as the Sayyid’s movement and the SYL’s political struggles. As highlighted by this research project centering the history of the struggle on key national aspirations and claims from a Somali conceptual understanding is essential in constructing a holistic self-identity. This process is critical, not only to the extent that it goes beyond mainstream notions of how independence was achieved in Somalia, but also to the degree that it is operationalized by community members and Elders to link our histories with the unforgiving contemporary circumstances and the future of our peoples. This anticolonial mode of thought is built upon a distinct Somali collective code of conduct, social, and ethical norms employed to make sense of the history of social movements in Somalia through the everyday communal social interactions. The epistemic primacy of this historical memory is profoundly powerful in two ways. First, as a result of how this history is articulated, validated, and circulated in the community, it creates spaces in which community members can reflect on philosophically moot questions of self-determination from an African lens. Second, it allows community members to collectively see themselves outside the dominant Eurocentric history, a history that Okihiro (1996) articulates as being a colonized one in which:
The primary characteristic of “colonized” history is the view of the outsider and not the people themselves. The historical evidence upon the variety of history draws from the colonizer. Usually this is in the form of written documents—letters, diaries, and reminiscences of the victories—which describe the author’s position among the people and his/her perceptions of that people. For various reasons, from the resumption of the primacy of written documents over oral ones to the assumption that the elite are the only ones who matter historically, the people themselves are ignored and are not asked about their ideas or perceptions of history. As a consequence, the actions of the colonizers are magnified so they become the central figure in the narrative; they are portrayed as the historical actors which the people are rendered as passive, powerless objects. (p. 211)

The author’s articulations and categorization of the colonizers’ history explains the ways in which Somali history has been positioned against Somali peoples. As highlighted in chapter two, much of what is written about Somali people only reflects the colonizers’ views about the historical events that took place.

Hashi highlighted the colonizing nature of Eurocentric literature when he said, “The history written about Somalia is predominantly from the colonizers’ perspectives. In later years when Somalis started writing we were able to get a few books in our own voices...but they are few and far between.” The above assertion is quite captivating as it revolves around the aggressive nature of the Western canon and the scarcity of Somali historical literature. This Elder is a playwright and legendary cultural critic with numerous productions to his credit; his treatment of oral language in relation to the written signifies the complexity of the debate. Here we are engaged in an Indigenous circular process in which we are dialoguing about our sacred histories, where oratory is the main mode of social interaction. Yet we are discussing the written word, in particular from the Eurocentric canon. Ali Abdi (2009), in his work, *Recentering the Philosophical Foundations of Knowledge: The Case of Africa With a Special Focus on the Global Role of Teachers*, highlights the privileging of the written over the oral within African educational contexts as he says:

In Africa’s encounter with the colonial project, African epistemologies went the way of African education and attached philosophies of learning. Here historically entrenched and socially effective oral epistemologies were
rescinded willy-nilly, and the imposition of the test-borne knowledge created specific impediments that immediately disfavored any educational development for African people. (p. 273)

Hashi, in the same segment of the interview, spoke about the importance of the performing arts for future generations of Somalis as he explained:

They live in many different countries with different languages. They themselves need to be shown how to communicate with one another. Many of the young ones living in North America, Norway, and Finland do not have command of the Somali language. So what language can they use to communicate with each other? Now because of the loss of the Somali language it is difficult to get all those on the same page no matter how much you translate…. Somali is a rich old language, and it is very complex….if one does not know Somali, it is something that they should work on or else it would be very difficult for them to grasp their history since it is largely transmitted through oratory. But it is essential for them to learn.

Moreover, the interviewee composed and shared a poem with me for this research project, and narrated two stories that stress the importance of Elders’ wisdom and experiences. What I took away from his stories and poems is that one could not fully grasp the moral lessons in the Somali oral literature unless they have a good command of the Somali language. In essence, he understood the centrality of the oral traditions in our societies. But like many of us he has had to contend with what is written about us as well. This dilemma was best captured by Selman, who called it “the arrival of the pen and the paper.” This is a predicament that in many ways calls for deep reflection on how we as Somalis engage with our oral historiography with an emancipatory politics in our intergenerational anticolonial struggle. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) highlights the crucial role African writers and scholars have in responding to colonial literature in an attempt to remedy the realities on the ground. He also cautions us about some of the dangers often associated with writing in foreign languages. Chielozona Eze (2011), in his work, Postcolonial Imagination and Moral Representation in African Literature and Culture, also argues for a new generation of thinkers who not only actively work for the African renaissance but also center these processes in African cultures as opposed to ‘writing back.’ In agreement
with both authors’ ideas, it is time that we re-conceptualize our sacred historiography as we make sense of our contemporary realities.

**The Role of Somali Dhagan for Communities in the Diaspora:**

Many of the fundamental Somali *dhagan* principles that govern our everyday practices have been reinterpreted and re-conceptualized to fit our lifestyles in North America (see Ilmi, 2012). As I argued throughout this chapter, *dhagan* is an instrumental part of Somali peoples. Somali *dhagan* is practiced by members of the community wherever they may be. Moreover, Indigenous Somali storytelling about our histories is alive and well. In fact, stories are told to strengthen ideals of collectivism in the community, and to reproduce a Somali cultural identity in the Diaspora. Yet notions of Western individualism are slowly creeping into our way of life in North America. That is why all the Elders interviewed stressed the importance of returning to our principles of collectivism. When asked about the differences and/or similarities between the previous generations and community members living in Canada, Elmi stated:

> Somalis living in Canada are a migrant community that live in a different part of the world with their own culture.... Therefore we are losing our culture and language. So the Somalis living in Canada are quite different from the generations who fought during the anticolonial struggle in Somalia. Those peoples were good at *isakal soo* [collective action]. If I can use it as an example, when they were fighting colonizers they operated by pooling community resources. Their *iskasho* took them to the path of freedom. They also had one political ideology which was *Somalinimo*. The people in Canada lost their values and their *Somalinimo*. They have left principles of collective action behind and they function as individuals. They are even different with respect to what it even means to be Somali. They don’t see the value of unity and togetherness. But instead they’d rather put their own individual interests before those of the peoples.

With his precise cautions and call for a return to Somali resistant culture that he alludes to as *Somalinimo* with the principle of *Iskasho*, Elmi outlines how Somali values have changed in Canada. I strongly believe that we must return to our communal values as a people in order to
strengthen our communities because our Indigenous values encapsulate an oppositional cultural capital that we must evoke in our everyday anticolonial struggles. The idea of revisiting our principles of collectivism is one that is founded on the *dhaqan* philosophies operationalized to build our communities in Somalia. I contend that such virtues would enable the community to evoke our ancestral wisdoms to guide us as we navigate a stranger’s land. This return must also encompass a critical consciousness of the historical events of the past in relation to where we are today as peoples with decolonizing politics. A return to *dhaqan* virtues would require us to see our histories as an embodiment and a living testament of our country’s struggle. The challenge at hand, then, is to establish how to work with the historical knowledge to marshal new ideas and a central vision of what it means to be Somali in the world today. This understanding of history and culture born out of historical events must be seen as non-static and transformative in re-organizing the colonial world order (see Cabral, 1973; Fanon, 1967b).

Yet with the very idea of evoking this anticolonial tradition some individuals will raise questions about the validity of Somali culture within the contemporary moment including: If Somali *dhaqan* is the cornerstone of Somali society, why hasn’t it been able to bring about peace in Somalia? The times have changed, so why would you want to bring your ancient traditional practices to Canada? The community is fragmented, so which community are you talking about? How would it work for Somalis living in the West? Regardless of the opposition, I take a firm position that Somali *dhaqan* is with us today and we still practice it in our communities, and it is time that we conceptualize it as a cultural index to continue our struggle. Cheik Anta Diop (1989), in his foundational work, *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: The Domains of Matriarchy & of Patriarchy in Classical Antiquity*, provides for the aggregation of African peoples through culture. In accordance with this social-political categorization that is steeped in African epistemology, I advance Somali *dhaqan* as the central domain holding the Somali communities together. In Somali societies there has been a remarkable degree of resiliency of our institutions and communal practices to resist outside influences.
Moreover, each of our Elders (both men and women), within their own right, continue to guide us through their wisdoms and their knowledge of Somali *dhaqan*. They are the inherent custodians of the Somali way of life through lineage, community service, and their *dhaqan* expertise. Our Elders are the binding force holding our communities together throughout the world and they continue to courageously struggle to meet the communities’ challenges. More importantly, they continue to pass their local knowledge on from one generation to another (Wane, 2005). Therefore, we must listen, learn, and leap forward with their lessons. I believe that only this approach will enable us to work with the power of historical memory together with Somali *dhaqan* to create communal spaces to deal with contemporary challenges from an Indigenous lens. Within the Diaspora communities, *dhaqan* is the ideal cultural capital, encompassing African values dealing with all the oppressive Eurocentric institutions. It is through Somali *dhaqan* that most of us connect to Somalia in our everyday lives. Therefore, it is essential that we continue to work with the Somali ways of knowing in a new cultural milieu, and carry on with the rich African traditions of our Ancestors to design our destiny.

On the issue of the changing times, many of the Elders were appalled by many individuals in the community being self-centered and questioned if modernization meant that one had to be selfish. Many also acknowledged that the people of today are quite different and are moving away from being part of a collective. This is an alarming trend, as most of the research participants expressed, a sentiment best captured by the following statement:

The people today are so hard to understand because their values are all over the place. They think that they are outsmarting you when they lie or cheat you. We had values in the old times, people stood for values and they stood by their words. But today even the ones in so-called positions of authority don’t have values, and don’t care about anyone else. I blame the educated ones who came to the West, because even if 40 percent of them with good *dhaqan* came together and agreed upon a few ideas we would not have been in this situation. But instead they are the ones running around for everything but they do not have values.... The people used to give each other a place to stay when one was traveling, the families that did not have were given by the ones that did have. Not like the cleverness of today—when I am coming to see you I must call you so you
can make sure that I am included in your meal plans.... The people supported each other. This selfish life, I am saddened by it…. I ask God for guidance. I think if you bring together your education with the communal way of life and a collective solidarity, we might be able to find solutions. Even the young ones called the *Say-Walahi* generation, I don’t understand them. The ones that came to Canada are first generation. What will be the fate of the fifth generation. I am honestly worried about what the future has in stock for us. I really worry about life in a stranger’s land. (Halimo)

In line with the Elder’s grave concerns, Somalis stress the importance of not abandoning *dhaqan* and trying to assimilate into a non-Somali culture with the proverb, “It’s like the fox which left his walk and couldn’t fully get the other walk”. This proverb rejects the idea of leaving one’s natural state of being to try and emulate another being’s character. Humans are the way they are because of set social norms which are used to organize peoples into communities and families with those values. *Dhaqan*, though, as captured by this proverb, metaphorically alludes to the risk that people run into when trying to do away with their culture to assimilate to another. The lesson here is that, in the process, individuals might not be able to reach the optimal character of the culture they are aspiring to emulate, and they might simultaneously lose their own culture. In essence, this proverb stresses that all peoples are custodians of their own cultural ways and interpret their own cultural experiences in and through their own ways of knowing.

In the Diaspora it is time to ask ourselves, in coming to a distant land, what have we left behind? What is the necessity of thinking about the ideals that we left by the wayside? There is no doubt that as a community we are still intact, and I see our Elders’ concerns as constructive criticisms on this generation, and as a warning for future generations. Nevertheless, it is time that we begin asking ourselves what the value is in rethinking our ancestors’ vision for our nation and our communities. As we think of the current political turmoil and how our communities in the Diaspora are doing today, we must ask ourselves what lessons we can learn from our past.

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1 Canadian youth of Somali descent are often referred to as the ‘*Say-Walahi*’ generation by older members of the Diaspora community. The term *Say-Walahi* is a fusion of English and Somali, which loosely translates to ‘swear to God’
How much do we know about how previous generations collectively faced adversarial circumstances? How much of our national political culture and consciousness have we inherited? And how can we think through our historical memory? There is no question in my mind that Somali anticolonial ideals are relevant to our conversation about Somali nationalism today. Revolutionary thinker Malcolm X (1992) advanced the notion of cultural migration and a return back to Africa as he stated:

[T]he solution for the Afro-American is two-fold—long range and short range. I believe that a psychological, cultural, and philosophical migration back to Africa will solve our problem. Not a physical migration, but a cultural, psychological, philosophical migration back to Africa—which means restoring our common bond—will give us strength and incentive to straighten our political and social and economic position right here in America, and to fight for the things that are ours right on this continent. (p. 152)

Although I am speaking about a different African Diaspora within a different social-political context, the above quote is relevant in studying the Somali community in Canada because of the centrality of the ‘common bond’ and the physiological cultural return. This concern has always been central to a political process of claiming Africa as a source of identity (see Du Bois, 1965).

Throughout my field research all the Elders unanimously articulated that it is through the Somali *dhaqan* and our encompassing culture that we can achieve unity through what they called *Somalinimo*, as stated earlier. The very idea of *Somalinimo* as a unified African identity born in the Horn of Africa is a founding principle that gave way to the anticolonial movements. The essence of the movements was the courageous foresight on the part of our leaders who saw that if the colonial order was not challenged, then our way of life was going to be lost. This is a vision reiterated time and again by our community Elders. This position was best articulated by Kadjia, with respect to Somali youth in the Diaspora:

In my opinion, unless we campaign for them now… they have lost their *dhaqan*.… When a tree is growing and the tree is not straight, you tie the tree to a wooden stick to correct its growth, so we have to correct them because they don’t have their *dhaqan*. They are innocent and they have left their *dhaqan* so we must
correct them before they get poisoned…. We have to encourage our youth to embrace their African ways, and to educate them in school, or universities and to tell them about their dhaqan…. Our youth have to be shown that they are African, from East Africa, and that they are Somali.

Like the Elder that was just quoted, I stress the urgent need for reengagement with Somalinimo through Somali dhaqan and through Indigenous historiography to educate our children and youth about Somali nationalism with an African lens. As stated earlier, my sole intention with this method is to create a critical communal space to re-envision Somali nationalism. On the issue of educating our youth, our culture opens up a world of possibilities for us to teach our youth about their African identities. Otherwise, as the Elder stated, we run the risk of losing our youth.

**Conclusion:**

As I have argued throughout this chapter, dhaqan philosophies were and are an instrumental feature of the Somali struggle for self-determination. Dhaqan social and political thought is a central conceptual premise that enables Somali cultural institutions to function in harmony and to stand in opposition to colonialism. In cultural processes, protocols, and procedures, dhaqan is about an African orientation to the world that is rooted in the Somali experience. It is a signifier of an ancestral way of life and a social order encompassing many virtues that are situated within a Somali cosmological, epistemological, and axiological standpoint that allows social cohesion within Somali communities. Somali traditions provide the collective with a social and moral/ethical horizon that all members of society are encouraged to reach. Moreover, such ideals encourage self-cultivation and exemplify the moral teachings of the Indigenous African ways through every day practices. What is profound about Somali culture is the elastic nature of the founding pillars that enable a member of the community to interpret dhaqan philosophies from his/her own understanding. Therefore, when our ancestors were faced with colonial warfare they laid down their visions through their collective
intergenerational cosmological understandings of the predicament in which they were in, as well as their view of what the community ought to look like to ensure the cultural integrity of Somali peoples. One of the foundational visions that came out of the encounter and the subsequent movements was the political ideals of Somalinimo epitomized by Somali dhaqan. As indicated by the Elders, Somali dhaqan is the only way to understand, unlock, and/or articulate Somalinimo. Therefore, they unanimously stressed the criticality of holding on to dhaqan, because without dhaqan we cannot find our way back home.

The pivotal challenge for Somali peoples both at home and within the Diaspora is that we must seek knowledge from our Elders and those who have been trained in all the encompassing communal practices to ensure that their knowledges are passed on to future generations. We must also not take our traditions for granted, but evoke the power of historical memory to engage in resistance politics. We must treat our knowledges and oral historiography as sacred and be conscious of the ancestral wisdoms encapsulated in them which keep our communities intact. Those of us in the Diaspora must strengthen the spaces for discussions about what it means to be Somali from a philosophical stance and begin to embrace our culture and histories. I contend that this will lead to further questions and more communal engagements with Somali dhaqan philosophies, and this will ultimately strengthen our institutions. Moreover, documenting dhaqan knowledge must be a collective priority to ensure that future generations continue with dhaqan traditions, as indicated by a few of the Elders. At times we Somalis view our knowledge as non-relevant in our lives today because of Eurocentric dispositioning, despite all the rich histories of our peoples. However, we must not be in a reactionary mode of thought, but rather, we must enable our communities to claim their place in history. The importance attached to Somali dhaqan is that it is the cornerstone of the Somali peoples’ struggle for freedom and it is centered on ancestral visions together with an anticolonial resistance that we have operationalized since the arrival of colonialism at our shores. The value of our culture is that it is laid in rootedness of our ancestral teachings in the lands of our forefathers, and this
knowledge offers the Somali community the possibility of responding to some of its contemporary challenges.
Chapter Eight

Somali Dhagan and Diasporic Youth:

Introduction:

In learning, researching, and dialoguing with Elders in the Greater Toronto Area I saw many of the interviewees struggle with the Somali political question and the state of Somali peoples both at home and in the Diaspora, with particular concern for Somali youth. The Elders often tried to provide answers to the following questions: Where is our history located in the contemporary moment? How do we as a nation overcome the current circumstances? How do we now articulate Somalinimo given the colonial disenfranchisement ascribed to our peoples? As expressed in the previous chapter, Somali dhagan and unity have been identified as a means of moving the nation forward. Nevertheless, these are complex questions, intertwined with deep divisions created by colonial policy, resulting in the rise of classes of political elites who manipulated the post-colonial state and those who adhere to colonial policies.

For me the question of the lack of unity is one that involves both the colonizer and the colonized. Although the colonizers educated and placed some of these individuals in prominent places of power, the idea of engaging these individuals with an Indigenous orientation is our collective duty. Therefore, we must internally reflect and dislodge individualistic, dehumanizing colonial values, or run the risk of being complicit in maintaining the imperial order. In essence, there are Indigenous ways of socializing Somalis to become productive members of society and unless we revisit and work with those principles, we cannot internally strengthen our communities. More importantly, without such ideals we cannot ensure that community values are in line with our cultural philosophies. This predicament is especially troubling for our youth, because without a strong foundation, they will not be in a position to be revolutionary Somali anticolonial thinkers of their times. As such, time and again the Elders warned me of the grave dangers facing our youth, and upon reflection, the fact that the Elders saw me as a youth gave
me an entry point for carrying out this research. Of course, this access comes with the responsibility of transmitting to the community, particularly the youth, the knowledges generated in my research. The power of dialoguing in Somali about our anticolonial social movements allows us to collect ourselves, and leaves us room to raise new questions about our sense of direction for the future.

This chapter is based on the Elders’ vision of how important these sacred anticolonial knowledges are for Somali youth as a means of resisting colonial subjectivity in their everyday lives, and how to generally bridge the divide in the community through Somali dhaqan worldviews. Within the chapter, I examine the cultural disconnect of our youth from the culture that our Elders have identified. I will examine how our Elders expressed that the history of social movements encompasses Indigenous social and political philosophies that could provide our youth with a critical lens to engage with their identity politics in contemporary times. This chapter highlights how the Elders encouraged our youth to walk the path of the Somali youth of the SYL and to exemplify their moral and political character. I also argue that the Elders stressed that a Somali-centered dhaqan approach to our histories provides a critical social consciousness for our youth to partake in radical anticolonial politics.

History and Identity:

In my view, this chapter is the most thought-provoking part of this research because of the political nature of some of the conversations and debates raised when it came to our youth. Admittedly, the reason as to why it is provocative is due to my own witnessing of how some of our Elders have made bad decisions or failed to reach a consensus on how to end the armed conflict and bring the Toronto community together. I say this with the utmost humility. But I think the act of witnessing is a generational phenomenon that most of my age mates experienced, that is, those of us who happened to find ourselves in the Greater Toronto Area during the early 1990s as the war raged on back home. What this witnessing has done is it
has created a philosophical distance between our Elders and us. On one hand, we needed the civil war to end by any means, for the conflict was too painful to endure, and robbed us of our childhood and youth. On the other hand, it seemed like from where the Elders stood, matters were more complicated. Moreover, there were multiple international factors and all the issues were mushrooming out of control. This disconnect resulted in a genuine mistrust between Somali youth and our Elders. It is not like we were dismissive of our grandparents, parents, and kin, because we are surviving with their guidance, blessings, and ceremonies. However, our reading of particular political moments left us often wondering why our Elders could not provide us with solutions. Initially I was a little hesitant sitting in front of some of our community Elders because the conflict is still fresh in my mind. Now that I have had a chance to conduct interviews in the community, I come away with one lesson, which is that in spite of the events that led up to the war we all have a collective duty to resolve our problems. This is an enormous sense of responsibility, as Somalis say, “Catastrophe can only be stopped during the start and not the end.” The challenge then for the current generations and future generations, as stressed by our Elders, is to uplift the Nation and to realize the dreams of our ancestors. We must regain what seems to have been lost.

This is a foundational point of departure as I work with certain ideas of collective social responsibility to engage with questions of nationhood from anticolonial premises. Philosophically, modern history is not a burden, but rather a conceptual point to raise new questions and re-think our history and our dhaqan, to courageously seek solutions. I contend that the question of national liberation can never be addressed without the holistic understanding of the biographies of some of the personalities who led the anticolonial movements. That is why most of the Elders expressed how Somali youth of today can learn from the heroic acts of previous generations of youth. When directly asked how the youth can benefit from our histories, Abdi made the following statement:
Our youth can certainly learn their histories…. First and foremost, those who have sacrificed for our country must be remembered and never forgotten, and their names must be taught in schools…. History must pay homage to those fallen warriors…. Our youth will benefit greatly from learning from our histories and following their learning actions…. It is not just about knowing, but what one does with their knowledge that is important in my mind…. From your assessment it would be difficult to understand how critical it is to teach our youth the history of the Sayyid in the 1900s and the youth of the SYL who all decided to expel the colonizers from Somalia…. Today’s youth living in the 21st century, who [have] acquired education, must have something to aspire to… that is very, very important.

The Elder’s assertion signals the very idea that we cannot know ourselves without knowing our histories. Therefore, it would be safe to say that Somali youth in the Diaspora cannot come to know the visionaries of the Somali national state and/or the leaders of the anticolonial movements without a profound understanding of their identities.

My argument here is that one cannot work with the power of embodied histories without being aware of such knowledges that exist within one’s communities and that have been instrumental for understanding local ways for generations (see Lebakeng, 2010; Purcell, 1998; Warren, 1996). Processes of (re)claiming African knowledges are central to notions of identity and how one comes to know who they are, so it’s not only important to know about those knowledges but also to know how and why those knowledges are an important part of who they are. Ayi Kwei Armah (1979), in his seminal work, Two Thousand Seasons, challenges African peoples to contend with their continental origins, to look beyond the colonial havoc of today, and to “link those gone, ourselves, those coming [together]” (p. xiii). Ideologically, this gaze is quite powerful and transcending as it serves as a political tool to assist in charting a course towards a new tomorrow. This view is precisely what is highlighted by Abdi, the Elder in the above quote. The legacies of our heroes serve as a testament to the sacrifices made by previous generations with the potential of providing a platform to re-think that history in the current times, rather than being overwhelmed by the everyday images of what is going on in Somalia from a Eurocentric lens. Armah (1979) elsewhere states:
The eyes of the seers should range far into purposes. The readers of the hearers should listen far towards organs. The utterer’s voice should make knowledge of the way, of heard sounds and visions seen, the voice of utterers should make this knowledge inevitable, impossible to lose. (p. xiii)

The authors’ brilliant articulation of the true nature of the African identity in the face of colonial circumstances is signifying the importance of a resourceful frame of thinking that is solely focused on liberty. The Somali identity that many of the Elders were speaking about, that is articulated as Somalinimo, is a collective identity rooted in historical and cultural experiences which are unique to peoples who trace their ancestral lineage to that part of the world, as stated earlier. One of the most profound sentiments expressed by most of the participants was a notion that identity is inherently planted in the souls of our youth and all that needs to be done is to resourcefully nurture the seeds of struggle within them. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) brilliantly articulates the importance of children to the struggle of a peoples by saying,

Children are the future of any society. If you want to know the future of a society look at the eyes of the children. If you want to maim the future of any society, simply maim the children. Thus the struggle for the survival of our children is the struggle for survival of our future. (p. 76)

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s comments are parallel in thought with what the Elders expressed when it came to talking about the role of Somali youth in the struggle. Moreover, many felt that this identity cannot be shaken and that evoking cultural memory and Somali dhaqan enabled the youth—especially those in the Diaspora who are physically distant from their ancestral homeland—to articulate a sense of self in relation to where they stand in history and to hold on to images of their Indigenous African heritage as expressed by our anticolonial leadership.

The reality is that in the North American context African identities are marked by histories of colonialism and radicalization (hooks, 1992; Ibrahim, 2008; Omi & Winant, 1998; West, 2000). I firmly believe that our youth can evoke and visualize such ideologies and images outside the confines of racialized identities ascribed to them but not without anchoring their voices in their past. This vision would direct our youth to imagine, as they simultaneously
struggle to achieve, their Ancestors’ imagined dreams for nationhood. Asante (2003) asserts the power of vision:

> Quest, the king of commitment that demonstrates vision… a visionary aspect to a relationship establishes a purpose outside of and beyond daily considerations of living… Visionaries do not simply work for others, they extend what they find… The visionaries say we shall do such and such and believe it will be done because all things are possible. (p. 69)

The question for me, then, is: How do we re-conceptualize and operationalize the visions of yesterday to move the nation forward? More importantly, how do the youth of today, as visionaries themselves, connect with the visionaries of our past to assert some of their key *dhaqan* values and thus claim their stakes in the future? The most important aspect of Asante’s assertion is the notion of a consideration beyond the contemporary. This is a powerful principle that, if properly understood, would enable members of the community to chart a decolonizing journey, despite all hardships, and work for tomorrow. The relevance of the historic anticolonial thinkers here goes beyond the symbolic because these thinkers signify the very embodiment of the fight for sovereignty; furthermore, they became historic personalities through both their politics and practice. Therefore, their legacies are ideological vehicles to aspire to *Somalinimo*. It is my firm belief that a holistic understanding of cultural identity rooted in anticolonial history as a form of resistance to colonial domination is a reflective method of contextualizing what it means to be from Somalia in today’s world. This brings forth a new reading to our voices and experiences.

> A moral positioning from both an ideological and practical stance could only be translated to an inherent belief that we all as individuals have duties to the collective and that we all should learn from the social, political, and spiritual portraits of those who contributed to our cause. Again, this historical learning can only be attained when our youth are conscious of the social responsibilities which rest on their shoulders to work with the ideologies and the knowledge conceived by some of our founding anticolonial thinkers. The idea here is not to
categorize the legacies as historical encounters and/or stories to be collected in libraries, but rather that these legacies be evoke in response to the contemporary challenges facing Somali peoples. Hajji Abdiraham powerfully expressed the need for today’s youth to connect with some of our anticolonial heroes when he asserted:

Every generation is met with specific challenges, catastrophes, and/or pressing issues that require the collective actions of a select few to remedy the circumstances, and to heal the peoples from those ills… that is the essence of national leadership…. They do not have to be perfect, but that is how history remembers them…. So if today’s youth do not know how their peoples faced difficult circumstances, how will they know that they too can change their circumstances...? When you tell some of them that we had a government they get shocked.

To draw on the Elder’s remarks, knowing how older generations courageously stood for key values is instrumental for our youth to know they can also mediate some of the challenges facing the peoples. Such a critical understanding could provide our youth with sacred imagery that shows what a politically charged national character looks like for accomplishing foreseeable goals. In the current age, engaging in a study of the personalities who led our anticolonial movements will allow our youth to see themselves in the multiple living lessons that encapsulate what it means to be Somali in a holistic historical perspective. Here is one example highlighted by Hussan as he described what our youth could take away from critically understanding how members of the SYL operated as one unit under one command:

When they learn about that history they can know that they are a part of a collective and that being Somali is something to be proud of…. For instance, members of the SYL were all youth, with very little resources and life experience. Yet they worked for the nation and they dared to alter the course of our history and they moved the nation with them…those youth stood for something irrespective of how big of a task. In fact it was because of their heroic acts, and the acts of their peers, that we are even Somali today…Who knows what the colonizer would have done to us if someone did not stand up to them...? People of the past have very unique characters, with values, and they were resilient.
Principally, the idea of standing for something as part and parcel of the Somali character is quite inspiring here. As far as the struggle for justice is concerned, the above remarks illustrate the bravery of the older generations, and how their efforts bore the fruits of nationalism. To return to Hajji Mohammed’s ideas, if our youth are aware of this history, they have an opportunity to change the history of our peoples if they dare to chart that course. This style of leadership demonstrates an excellent African character built upon notions of collective cooperation and sacrifice. Yet part of the equation is that the Elders have to also do their best to inspire the youth to embody some of these values. Understanding this Somali way of sacrificing in the name of the collective will also help with organizing the peoples for collective actions in today’s world. The cornerstone of this method is constructed on a consensus-building model rather than a totalitarian approach. Most importantly, it connects the youth to a shared history which reflects various styles of leadership and debunks the Eurocentric historicization about the ways in which independence was “granted,” as highlighted in chapter two. Within the Somali communal context, it also encourages the processes of moral dimensions, inherent beliefs, and a collective response to injustice to change the political realities facing the population.

For the youth, working with a politicized and historically rooted anticolonial reading of their Somali identities equips them to develop oppositional perspectives that would only be valid if critically understood through the portrait of the colonizer and the colonized (see Memmi, 1991). The question of power here is relevant because Somali identities, like all colonized identities, are read and interpreted in particular ways through colonial relations. Therefore, the embodiment of an African youth’s identity is an inherent site of struggle where the youth are constantly engaged in political acts of agency. For instance, with respect to how Somali peoples are regarded as stateless peoples lacking the basics of a governing structure, this has a profound impact on how our youth can position themselves in the world. When asked about the potential effects of the negative images of civil war back home, some indicated that they have a negative impact:
When our youth are always exposed to pictures of catastrophe and peoples fleeing, depicting the situation on the ground is always hard on them…the pictures on TV are never easy…. Moreover, when no one seems to see an end to the civil war and the youth see how developed this country is, it is quite disheartening. (Sallah)

The teenagers who were four years old when they left Somalia, and even the ones born in Canada, they all look at you with amazement when you tell them that Somalia had a stable government and a flag… because that is all they see on TV, and images of death and destruction is all they see…. We need to educate them on how things were really like in the good old days.... Their perceptions of Somalia are not their fault. Today’s youth are being raised during some of our nation’s darkest hours. So the task before those of you who are educated and the parents is to come together and re-educate our youth and children about their histories. They must be told that they are African and Somali. (Kadjia)

The Elders were correct in their assessment of the youth’s predicament, and the challenge before them then becomes how to better prepare our youth. If Somali identities are demarcated by historical encounters and a subsequent subjective gaze, then our youth must politically re-imagine their own subject location (Ibrahim, 2008). They must also, as Somalis, find their way back to their homeland. The process that I am advancing here is one that is connected to an ancestral soil, and a rootedness in the historical struggles that took place on the land. This is where the latter part of the above dialogue, in which the Elder constructs the Somali identity as an East African civilization, becomes vitally important precisely because of the connection to Africa. I contend that our youth must come to know their community’s subject location in the world and where they are placed as a result of colonial relations. When the question of our youth came up, Hussan went further than all the other Elders, explaining:

If we do not educate our youth and teach them who they are, then others will, and in that case we could have Somali youth that do not fit into themselves.... They might look Somali, but something could be missing.... Some might end up embracing other identities.
Hussan’s concern is warranted and it speaks to a mammoth mission facing Somali peoples, because if we cannot train our young ones, we run the risk of having them be alienated from themselves. Of course, there is always the hope that their life experiences would drive them to find the spiritual connection to their Somali culture and to their ancestral homeland. Our aim as a society should be to nurture their souls and provide mentorship and support through storytelling and consultation about a place called Somalia. This support will enable them to better connect with their Somali dhaqan, to connect identities and histories of the present with an imaginative gaze that will allow them to construct a brighter future. It is only through such a political categorization that our youth can become Somali in the contemporary moment, both as a political embodiment and as a physically formative engagement that is central to their Somali identity, the latter being a continuous transformative process that is anchored in our ancestral wisdoms. It goes without saying that in today’s world it is virtually impossible not to recognize how Somalis are treated across the globe and how we perceive ourselves as a result of our everyday social interactions. Nonetheless, the hardships that come with being seen as a Somali are character builders that could enable our youth to reclaim their historical identities in response to the total disenfranchisement of our peoples, and that would connect every Somali in the world to the political questions in the Horn of Africa. For me, these politics go beyond the representation of the Somali identity, beginning with the self as an integral part of a collective, and as a decolonizing mechanism that positions our peoples in their histories.

**The cultural Disconnect:**

When asked about the issues of transmitting this communal dhaqan knowledge to our youth and the ways in which our youth are to call upon their embodied wisdoms, the Elders
pointed out that many of the Somali youth of today are culturally disconnected. When expressing their worries for the community and articulating some of the pressing matters that they all experience on a daily basis and feel obligated to resolve, Said stated clearly:

The issue of language in our society is a major issue, because most of our youth are not picking up their mother tongue, and our peoples are mainly oral. So one must be able to articulate their feelings, aspirations, and thoughts in Somali clearly to be able to find themselves in our society and to feel like they belong to a heritage.... So without language how can we build someone’s foundation if it is the basic foundation?

The interviewees’ perspective is expressive of a very complex issue facing Diaspora communities of Somali descent, this being the question of language. Although the above dialogue centers on the youths’ linguistic abilities, an issue also highlighted by Hashi in chapter six, I believe this is a larger question, one pertaining to Somali societies as a whole, because language is a vital connection to identities, histories, culture, and ways of knowing (see also Amin, 1997; Bailey, 2000; Ilmi, 2012; Pennycook, 1998). For our youth, then, it is more than being aesthetically Somali, and more about becoming socially responsible agents of the struggle and transformation. With the African cosmos, notions of embodiment are important, both while one is on earth and in the metaphysical world, yet this embodiment is closely linked to the kind of communal character one exemplifies. Somali youth are brought up and socialized in their communities with set values of collective responsibility, hard work, and selfless sacrifice in and through Indigenous worldviews, which explains the communities’ existence and relationships to the social and environmental world. In this equation, youth are at the center of their communities where they come to learn about themselves, their communities, and their world (Andrzejews et al., 1985; Okpewho, 1992). This is where their experiences are validated, their voices are acknowledged, and their values are affirmed. As such, the youth develop a sense of belonging, a connectedness that no one can take away.
This notion of belonging comes with responsibilities, and is not simply about rights, but also about what an individual does with those rights in serving the collective. So it is a matter of how a member of this collective helps to build the community. How does one make the community a better place? What kinds of legacies does one leave his or her community? Therefore, without a good grasp of the Somali language, as touched on in chapter four, access to the Somali virtues, communal political sentiments, and ways of knowing, is going to be limited. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) asserted:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, in particular through orator and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics, and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (p. 16)

Linguistically, the centrality of the African mother tongue as categorized by wa Thiong’o, is a complex medium of expressing human social relations via a particular identity and history.

Within the context of the findings of this research, there is a disconnect between the youth and their Indigenous language, as highlighted by many of the Elders. This disconnect has powerful implications for their social formative processes in relation to how they interact in this world. What makes matters worse is the racist colonial environments where Somali youth find themselves, particularly in the Diaspora, where their identities are constantly being disfigured under a Eurocentric gaze. Therefore, the youth find themselves unable to holistically articulate a sense of who they are through their own Indigenous mother tongue to counter the violent colonial discourses. This causes a fragmentation of the self, which can be psychologically demoralizing. The danger, in my mind, is in an environment where whiteness is the norm and all other identities are at the periphery. Somali youth need the language skills to be able to historically read and understand the nature of their struggle. As suggested by wa Thiong’o, language is both a carrier of culture and a medium of expressing it; therefore, Somali language is
loaded with Indigenous wisdoms that can only be accessed and unlocked with adequate mastery of the mother tongue.

From a narrative perspective, oratory is still the preferred method of communicating. Traditionally speaking, as an oral society, oratory from an Indigenous philosophical mode of expression encompasses key social-political virtues that have been articulated, disseminated, and validated by societal thinkers. Therefore, when coming to know one’s history and identity within a moment of struggle, the essence of Somali language for youth is how it provides a lens through which to interpret the world. Ahmed (n. d.) argued:

The classification of time in Somali oral literature shows the existence of a clear distinction between narratives which are perceived to be true, that is those which have an historical basis because of their depiction of a real character or a true event in Somali history, and narratives which, in a fictionalized form, are meant to entertain and to impart a moral lesson.... Somali historical narratives, by virtue of their definition as “real” accounts of “real” people, are accorded a higher status. Thus children and adults are expected to memorize these accounts verbatim. (p. 2)

The author here articulates the centrality of Somali narratives to historical accounts, the lessons encapsulated in them, and how community members are expected to know them. As a method of recording and transmitting vital information, language is then to be understood as a process of creating historically conscious beings that are a part of a collective. More importantly, for our youth, as an Indigenous knowledges base of inquiry, the Somali language is a powerful oppositional frame of learning about their own histories, identities, and political terrain.

In this communal research journey, I found that most of the Elders, through their Somali worldviews with varying interpretation, saw the youth of today as the stakeholders of tomorrow. Yet as stated earlier, so many have expressed a cultural disconnect between our youth and their Somalinimo. This alarming reality was best captured by Hamoud in the following comment:

The problem with our youth today is that it seems like they are being co-parented with their Somali families by parties that dislike our values.... When the kids go
out there to leave the home it seems that everything in the outside world is telling them to leave all their values.... Surely we are not a perfect peoples. But I think when you are told to do away with everything that you are on a daily basis, you are not being offered anything.... Worst of all our youth are taught how to not love themselves, which is counterproductive.... One cannot leave their dhaqan and just float... We live in a society where most peoples come from another place, so when our youth are asked about their values they must be able to explain what their culture is all about, and exchange ideas with people.

This shocking quandary offers both challenges and possibilities for us as a community to build stronger Somali dhaqan foundations for our youth so they can find their place in the world. Yet because of the above circumstances, there is a disconnect between the youth and their selves, their community, and Elders. Although quite skeptical, Abdi had this to say about the youth’s disconnect:

I don’t think they can ever benefit from our histories because the movements were part of our Eldership rising to the occasion and fighting for freedom. But the youth of today, they are in a modern era and they are not interested in the dark ages... where the peoples were ignorant, so they don’t trouble themselves by thinking about Somalia or what it means to be Somali. The reality is that we and the youth are a world apart.

Respectfully, the interviewee here is outlining a major ideological distance between our Elders and our youth. This epistemological cleavage is created by colonial violence on the souls of our youth and is in part due to the physical distance from our ancestral homeland, because the youths’ social environment teaches them to hate their own traditions. When asked what caused this situation, Abdi alluded to the brutally of colonization stating that:

Yesterday’s colonization is quite different from the colonization of today.... In the old days they wanted our resources and now they want our minds... That is why today, despite all the talk about freedom, some of the youth’s souls are being held hostage by a culture that is not their own.... They also dislike everything they are.

The Elder’s hypothesis here is accurate. The question is then, how do we resourcefully bridge the gap to disentangle this dichotomy between the Elders and our youth? The community activists’ point of contention is that there are key intergenerational dhaqan values that make
Somalis who they are, values that our youth are encouraged to emulate. A good example would be respect for Elders and the power of their storytelling, and believing the blessings of their conventional wisdoms. Societal traditional values imply an underlying concern for the collective welfare wherein the community functions in harmony as a social organ reproducing itself. Now with this intergenerational dilemma, the community’s ability to sustain itself is at risk because of the disconnect between the youth’s identities and *dhaqan* knowledges, which stems from the reality that the young learners in the community do not always see Indigenous knowledges as valuable. Julius Nyerere (1968), the First President of Tanzania and an iconic Pan-Africanist, also known as *Mwalimu* (“teacher” in Swahili), stated in his acclaimed essay, “Education for Self-Reliance,” that:

> [A]t present our pupils learn to despise their own parents because they are old-fashioned and ignored; there is nothing in our existing education system which suggests to the pupil that [s]he can learn important things about farming from his/[her] elders. The result is that [s]/he absorbs beliefs about witchcraft before [s]/he goes to school, but does not learn the properties of local grasses; [s]/he absorbs the taboos from his family but does not learn the methods of making nutritious traditional foods. And from school [s]/he acquires knowledge unrelated to agricultural life. [S]/he gets the worst of both systems. (p. 278)

The author’s reflective conceptualization of the African learners’ dislocation within their social environments as a result of colonial socialization is quite relevant in this context because the privileging of Western knowledges over African values is an outstanding feature, hinted at by Abdi. Somali youth are often exposed to Indigenous knowledges in their homes and immediate community environments and, as abstract as some of these values are, they are also very practical. Additionally, like most systems of Indigenous knowledges, they are not static, contrary to what some modernists often argue (see Agrawal, 1995; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hall, Dei, & Rosenberg, 2000; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Warren, 1996). In addition, these Indigenous ways of knowing acknowledge the multi-centricity of world knowledges. Therefore, it is not a matter of Indigenous knowledges and/or Western knowledges. It is time that we
radically re-think and re-envision our ways of how we conceptualize and transfer our Somali-centered histories to our youth.

As African communities, especially in the North American Diaspora, we must struggle for a teaching model that enables African learners/youth to be a part of their educational experiences without fragmenting their souls. Working with the communities’ anticolonial histories is a method of nurturing and centering our youth in their Somali personalities. The approach of teaching about Somalia’s past in relation to its present that I am calling for is not apolitical; rather, it is a subversive and culturally rooted approach. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, with his ideas on subversive history, argues that human beings make their histories through action, first against themselves and then against their immediate environments. He goes on to indicate that history is in essence about struggle. Therefore, in the struggle for our youth’s education, we must strive for learning that teaches our youth about history through struggle. This all begins, in my opinion, with historical lessons encapsulating how their national identities came to be shaped by particular accounts.

The engagement with ideas of social movements in Somalia is a key point of departure from which to assert questions of self-determination, cultural integrity, and struggle. As highlighted throughout this research, our Elders are in a very unique position, one that comes with enormous responsibilities to instill the values of our anticolonial struggle in our youth to ensure that they are aware of their own legacies. As such, teaching critically about the Somali personalities who have led the anticolonial movements, as well as about collective national pride in connection to an ancestral place of origin, is central to building strong cultural roots.

**Somali Youth and the Anticolonial Struggle:**

With a profound sense of urgency, the interviewed Elders stressed the importance of Somali history being taught to our youth, and they kept referring to the organizing of the SYL
Somali youth movement. Unanimously they argued that if the youth knew their history, identities, and culture they would be able to navigate any social environment. What is unique with the Somali Canadian Diaspora is that the youth are the first or second generation of Canadians in the community, and often find themselves in a world where Somalia is taken up as a “failed state,” and being Somali is a particular kind of racialized marker associated with chaos. Making matters worse, being Somali often translates to a constant feeling of being out of place, not African enough, and not quite fitting into a North American Blackness, where being Muslim is only more relevant in a post-911 world with respect to surveillance and detention in Canadian society. In addition, community youth are considered as being Somali even when born in Canada. There are also constant tensions between the values and expectations which the youth’s parents place upon them and the Canadian values to which they are exposed in mainstream society. While I am sympathetic to the Elders’ perspectives, and strongly believe in ideas of a Diasporic Indigeneity and being Somali wherever one is located, the current political moment calls for continuous dialogue about questions of the Diaspora and what it means to be Somali in our times.

As such, there are implications in terms of the ways in which Diaspora youth take up Somalinimo and relate to a place called Somalia, or decide to disassociate from it altogether. As far as Somali dhaqan is concerned, it is a question of genealogy and patriarchal lineage, in which case the Somali dhaqan principles that I have mapped out in chapter five are foundational to questions of identity. Of course, Somali dhaqan as a social order has been structured to produce certain kinds of individuals and communities. But within Diaspora communities, questions of self-definition and identity politics are central to the debate. It is at this critical juncture that it is necessary to re-think Somali dhaqan, and the values that make us a distinct peoples in the world. While ideas of a Somali Diaspora present a wide array of complex questions about identity, they cannot be answered at this moment, and need to be left for future generations.
Despite these tensions, because most of the Elders are invested in reproducing a Somalinimo and holding on to particular Somali dhaqan ideals, they overwhelmingly stated that Somali youth needed to learn their histories, identities, and culture. Moreover, many believed that because of the youth’s lack of knowledge about the civil war and the events that led up to it that today’s youth are in a better position to seek solutions for our contemporary problems. They also commonly articulated that Somali youth have a duty to struggle to resolve our nation’s ongoing challenges. As stated by Hamud, “I am happy and believe that the youth of today are the medicine of our future and that they will mend our future.” But this future is one that is not without struggle and sacrifice. This perspective moves always from the notion that Pedro Noguera (2003, 2008) calls seeing youth as a problem, and is in agreement with his idea of seeing the possibilities of youth transforming their societies. Shifting to a focus on the youth’s possibilities calls first and foremost for an in-depth, holistic understanding of what our history entails, and then for courageous activism. These notions are two sides of the same coin, because history in its abstract sense, without the exercise of agency, is ineffective, and without the comprehension of history and being grounded in one’s cultural worldviews, one will lack the critical capital to engage in the struggle. This critical capital “is facilitated by intergenerational advocacy” (Ginwright, 2007, p. 404). Thus, the promise of anticolonial history is only relevant for our youth as a tool to be operationalized in the struggle, one that is dedicated to the total liberation and emancipation of the Somali peoples.

In fact, most of the Elders looked at my research from an activist’s perspective, and they kept highlighting my need to think through the knowledge they were sharing with me and to disseminate it throughout the community. As Hajji Mohammed explained:

We no longer have the energy to meet and organize the community... We have so many obstacles. But we have enormous human capital because the majority of our population is youth.... But the question is: every day we have different groups representing different organizations come to us to ask us about our knowledge. So what happens to the knowledge? When will we see the fruits of that information in our communities? Every other day one of us is taken to their graves and our
time is limited here.... The privileges you guys have is here only if you know how limited your resources are back home.

What emerges from this response is not only a central concern about the state of the community in Toronto, there is also a task bestowed upon me and those who are knowledgeable to respond to the call of duty, and to share their knowledge with the peoples. Most importantly, this sentiment is reflective of collective action built upon notions of Somalinimo to uplift the national spirit. This politics is not one that emerges only to fulfill nationalistic sovereignty, but rather one that is anchored on an African way of life. The optimal role, as narrated by many of the Elders, of this historical knowledge is that of a tool for socializing Somali youth as far as the anticolonial struggle is concerned. Their arguments about resistance and community building raise the centrality of working with our anticolonial histories to awaken the social conscience of Somali youth.

Reiland Rabaka (2009), in his work, *Africana Critical Theory: The Black Radical Tradition, From W.E. B Dubois and C.L.R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral*, examines the intellectual traditions of Black political activists. He argues that we need to revisit the rich theoretical African traditions as we fight for freedom and re-think the possibilities of resistance in this colonial world order. To explore the possibilities of this line of thinking, one needs to see the potential of human capital and youth’s ability to contest their own future. In fact, most of the Elders tended to view the power of history in the minds’ and hearts of our youth beyond the chronological experiences of colonial histories, but rather as entailing processes of regaining their humanity and connecting to a larger story of peoples. Halimo argues:

It is very important for you younger ones to mobilize....We do not have the energy any more. The youth are more educated then our age group. We struggled to bring you here and to raise you. First, you younger ones have to establish your home, help your families, and then, with your extra time, work for the peoples. You younger ones have to build the community so your kids can be proud of their communities.
Locating her conversation within Somali traditional thought, Halimo expresses the intergenerational nature of the Somali communal existence. She’s also making explicit connections between the past and the contemporary, the past here metaphorically meaning notions of the embodiment of the older generation through cultural values and traditions, and the contemporary exemplified by Somali youth. Halimo correctly points out that the older generations creatively worked with what they had, to give us a better future. Although she articulates this notion as an overarching burden facing future generations, her opinion is significant because it recognizes the potential of today’s youth. In and through an anticolonial frame of thinking, this notion can be extended analytically to hint towards a shared path for Somalis to walk, as expressed by Hawo in the following statement:

Today’s realities call for a major war in which we must all work cooperatively together.... The educated ones must begin work to highlight our culture and work for a Somali renaissance in our communities. I have been working with a few educated youth from a couple of universities and trying to preach about Somali dhagan.... I have been doing this through the performing arts, songs, and plays teaching the young ones about our rivers, oceans, and our land.... The three armies we had, our flag, and our national anthem. The youth must be educated on all those things.... Your knowledge is more beneficial in the community and it is not for you to keep it only for yourselves... spread your knowledge to the peoples.

Hawo courageously articulates a very powerful principle of social action and activism. As noted previously, within a decolonizing project, past social movements are only relevant as a radical way of rethinking the future.

Hajji Mohammed and Hawo’s explanations are part and parcel of revolutionary discourse and politics exemplified by various nationalist leaders as recorded by Somali history. From an anticolonial stance, if history is a country’s path to be undertaken, then this history can be treated as a courageous point of departure from which to evoke and imagine a glorious future for Somali
youth—but only through struggle and sacrifice. Julio Cammarota and Michel Fine (2008) remind us that “the knowledge that human agency constructs reality is power—a power that has very specific education and development outcomes. Young people possessing critical knowledge of the true workings of their social context see themselves as intelligent and capable” (p. 7). Therefore, our youth’s critical knowledge must be based on their historical origins and must allow them to make sense of their social context.

Although the research participants made various contradictory statements, this principle of the intergenerational call for duty was quite apparent. Moreover, despite the enormous challenges facing Somali peoples, and youth in particular, if history is seen as the ultimate dream to imagine and realize, then history becomes an avenue that presents a wealth of opportunities to change the current circumstances. Faced with the reality of carrying the people forward, both at home and in the Diaspora, Elders in many ways also expressed nationalism as an imperfect way for the youth and future generations to achieve our ancestral dreams.

Ideologically, then, the history of social movements is to be seen as an apparatus to evoke and educate Somali youth as demonstrated by the Elders’ dialogue. From a community building perspective, the lessons for the youth, the Elders, and the greater collective is that this history is centered on a call for action. It requires the Elders to creatively interrogate colonial relations and work concurrently to achieve social change and transformation by ensuring that the community is aware of this history. Although, our Elders are not the only ones who can teach Somali dhaqan, I contend that the Elders’ greatest strength is their ability to gaze beyond the contemporary hardships without ignoring them completely, while working with Indigenous values to chart a new course. Their call for action involves disseminating relevant Indigenous knowledges while generating context-specific knowledges for the greater good of society. As stated earlier, the youth have the responsibility to listen, learn, and converse with our Elders constructively so that we can carry our struggle forward. As such, within an Indigenous African
paradigm, a key role for Elders is to socialize community youth to guarantee that communal social values and commitments are instilled in all of the youth.

**Conclusion:**

One of the major overarching points of discussion in this particular chapter was the Somali political question; in fact, every subtopic in this chapter was speaking to this dilemma. The conversations under this major topic were especially enriching because in many ways they outlined the inherent challenges facing not only the present generations but future generations as well. The strength of the conversations which were categorized in the chapter is that they all prophesize a bright future in and through struggle. Moreover, the significance of our embodied histories is only apparent when it is evoked and acted upon for the greater good. In many ways the Elders’ words were incredibly idealistic, and I read that as their effort to plant seeds for the future they would like to see. The idea here is that this future is not one that will be reshaped without a comprehensive understanding of all that our ancestors have endured on our behalf. As indicated by many of the study participants in this era, there is an urgent need for Somali youth to embody the true nature of the African personalities who lead our anticolonial movements.

Their argument was that history is an embodiment that cannot be de-personalized and it is only relevant as long as lessons from our past can guide us to overcome today’s hardships. Nevertheless, many of the interviewees cited a disconnect between Somali youth and their culture. This disconnect is linguistic, ideological, and in many ways is a result of our youth operating form a colonial mindset and wanting to be “modern.” For many of our youth these are pressing issues that need to be confronted head on. Yet the prospect of learning from our Elders and from each other presents enormous possibilities for our youth to decolonize their souls. Most importantly, the Elders, with an overwhelming majority, expressed that our youth have an inherent responsibility to march forth and resourcefully try to correct the mistakes of our
collective past to fashion their future. This is a mammoth task that we all need to confront. I will now turn my attention to the concluding chapter of this research study.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion:

The importance of the Elders’ narratives is that their perspectives are anchored in a system of educating our youth founded on Indigenous Somali traditions. Infused in this system of education are the philosophical principles to provide youth the critical dhaqan knowledges to be agents in their own struggle and, more importantly, to envision their own futures. Teaching our youth about the history of social movements is a means of connecting them with the experiences and struggles of previous generations. As learners they can benefit greatly from their ancestral knowledges, because these ways of knowing are linked to epistemic perspectives in our communities, where our youth come to know who they are in relation to their social-political environments and the historical moments in which they are living. They can also articulate and address local issues happening in their communities from their own historical, cultural, and philosophical points of view, with these knowledges. While the previous chapters in this dissertation delineated research findings and provided an analysis of the research data, in this chapter, I will first look at the implications of the history of social movements in classroom education. Then I will summarize the major finds of the thesis. After that I will conclude with a few closing remarks.

Implications for Education:

Within the African context, schooling is generally concerned with educating members of a particular group in their own community’s worldviews. At the core of these processes are key philosophical virtues concerning what it means to be a member of that community. Ali Abdi (2012), in Decolonizing Philosophies of Education, eloquently articulated this notion:
The main concerns of the philosophy of education usually look into issues that pertain to the rationale as well as the way we educate people, the select learning methodologies we deploy to achieve such education, and the reasons the project is undertaken in the first place. As such, in all the locations where human societies manage their lives, interact with their ecologies and prepare the situation for future generations, the expansive presence of the fundamental questions [of the] philosophy of education has to be naturally present. (p. 131)

This African scholar’s comments offer an encompassing framework to engage with questions of education. The overarching goal of Indigenous education is to produce culturally grounded individuals who are moral, respectful, selfless, and self-starting (Nikiema, 2009; Omolewa, 2007). Pertaining to the African Indigenous education, the challenge then becomes what kind of conversations we should be having around what exactly constitutes African education, and how we think about such learning processes and practices, both within the Indigenous setting and within the Eurocentric schooling environments. In today’s world where knowledge is considered synonymous with education, where all aspects of African Indigenous knowledges are constructed as non-scientific and therefore non-valid, we must engage education critically. The Eurocentric classroom has been utilized to fundamentally reshape the world, and has become a powerful tool to institute notions of modernity and development in local communities throughout Africa. Moreover, it is a means of categorizing non-white bodies as the Other, and this is highly problematic, especially in Diasporic communities. Iseke-Barnes (2003), in her work, *Living and Writing Indigenous Spiritual Resistance*, highlights the difficulties of journeying through Eurocentric educational institutions in her opening statement:

Indigenous Elders encourage us to walk with our traditions, finding support for our lives and our work in these ways. But in educational institutions there is a contradictory tension. We come from cultures and peoples who place value on speaking from the heart but educational institutions encourage a very different kind of speaking and being. How can we be healthy and whole in contexts where only a small portion of our work is valued and we are encouraged to leave our traditions behind? The effects of our colonization have caused alienations,
separation, and the disruption of kinship-base relations. These impacts are further experienced inside educational institutions. (p. 211)

While the author’s ideas are anchored in national colonialism within a local context, the questioning that she raises on the importance of navigating educational institutions despite the tensions and separations from Indigenous traditions and community is critical. This is a call for resistance through designing a collective destiny in education and in all spheres of society, one that often carries a psychological, physical, and spiritual cost. For most Indigenous bodies this is an unavoidable task. Therefore, we need to re-think pedagogical strategies and tools to affirm the multiple identities of our learners. As such, the struggle to (re)assert an Indigenous identity must embody Somali ways of knowing that are rooted in an ancestral homeland.

Since colonization most African people have been schooled in a formal classroom setting, and this trend will most likely continue. Although the classroom itself must be interrogated as a location of continuous power struggle, how do we support our youth in the classroom? How do we engage the classroom as a site for our anticolonial Indigenous knowledges? More importantly, how do we incorporate teachings from our Elders in the schooling curriculum? Dei (2008), in his short essay, “Indigenous Knowledges Studies and the Next Generation: Pedagogical Possibilities for Anticolonial Educations,” courageously poses the following point of contention with “the question of how to create spaces where multiple knowledges can co-exist in the Western academy” (p. 8). Dei’s ideas offer an important point of departure with respect to African learners and schooling. The reality is that the Eurocentric classroom setting has not been built to validate non-Western values. In fact, it is a space where popular misconceptions about the colonized are often maintained. It is in educational institutions that the African deficiency myth is constructed, legitimized, and instituted.
Moreover, it is here that both African and non-African learners get educated on Western principles of what constitutes being human.

With that in mind, how do we Somalis situate our sacred Somali *dhaqan* values and histories of struggle in the classroom, and make room for the voices of our communities? We need to locate ways of finding spaces for our stories as a base for the critical knowledge that is essential for the development of all learners (Ikuenobe, 1998). The centering of our histories in our schooling would move the imagination of all students to a place where they can resist colonial education. Thus engaging in the classroom with an anticolonial politics opens up room to ask new questions about what is going on in Somalia today, such as how colonial history is implicated in the current state of affairs in Somalia. This line of questing permits learners, and the greater community, to see the possibilities of working with the Elders’ historical narratives and to take up the African Indigenous knowledges that have been marginalized in schooling as non-valid bodies of knowledge in the classroom (see Aikman & King, 2012; Battiste, 2002; Cajete, 1994; Dei, 2000; Hoppers, 2002; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Trask, 1991; wa Thiong’o, 1986; Wane, 2009b). Some of the key arguments that might be raised, especially for the community living in the Diaspora, are, which Somali social movements are you talking about? What is the relevance of Somali *dhaqan* in today’s classroom? How would teaching students about the history of colonization and struggle be beneficial to them in this day and age? If Somalis can benefit from knowing their *dhaqan* and histories, why has this knowledge not brought peace in Somalia? While it is clear that such a line of questioning is steeped in colonial ideology, these are important questions to interrogate. Perhaps by addressing these questions collectively we can work towards changing people’s mindsets, particularly in terms of how schooling is conceptualized.
Indigenizing the classroom with an Indigenous anticcolonial politics must lead to different educational processes and practices that center African ontological, axiological, and epistemological ways of knowing in students’ learning. Indigenous knowledges cannot be engaged with a business-as-usual attitude because one has to be clear about the politics one brings to the table. Given the relentless opposition to all African knowledges, including Somali *dhaqan* knowledges, within mainstream society, taking up Indigenous ways of knowing must be central to addressing questions of identity, history, and a decolonizing agenda. Decolonization is a historical process that sets out to change the world that can only be achieved through struggle and a rejection of the ‘colonial situation’ (Fanon, 1967b). Therefore there has to be a radical re-thinking of what the classroom should look like. We must ask, what constitutes knowledge? What should history education look like in our classroom? How we work with our Elders’ narratives, with an emphasis on Somali *dhaqan* worldviews, in the classroom is critical to answering these questions.

This is not going to be an easy task, because those invested in the colonial project will continue working against anticcolonial Indigenous education. The key question is, how do we re-envision education to seek different outcomes? I would argue for evoking various elements of traditional Indigenous education in the classroom. Within African communities traditional Indigenous education is a foundational aspect of socializing community members into a particular society. Traditional education begins at childhood, where children are trained through oratory, customary dances, proverbs, folktales, mythologies, social interactions, and ceremonies. Each mode of socialization teaches specific moral values upheld by a community. Through this process, traditional lessons are facilitated to ensure that a community’s youth and children are
socially equipped to deal with the outside world, move their communities forward by working for the collective, and live up to their civic duties.

The relevance of traditional Indigenous education is that it is in place to advance the goals of the community, notions of mutual interdependence, and a collective identity and culture. The virtue of culture is one that is rooted in the history of anticolonial struggle, and I am speaking of African cultures as a fountainhead of anticolonial Indigenous resistance. Principally, an African conceptual framework provides a philosophical compass for understanding some of the social phenomena facing peoples through their own Indigenous knowledges and worldviews. Culture—as a central domain that holds communities together through principles of a shared identity, social consciousness, and reciprocal social relations that interplay, exemplify how communities ensure their survival by putting key values in place. In the classrooms, drawing from African Indigenous cultural knowledges serves to work with the possibilities of Elders’ wisdoms and lived experiences. There are going to be many challenges, in my opinion, because Indigenous knowledges have not been conceptualized and built for the Eurocentric classroom. But as I stated earlier, if the classroom is a place where knowledge has been shaped and re-organized, then as Indigenous African bodies we must continue working with our ways of knowing in view of Indigenizing the classroom. As highlighted in chapter seven we must make the classroom an environment where we can think in circles and evoke our ancestral visions as they guide us in our intergenerational anticolonial resistance.

Pedagogically speaking, the premise of African Indigenous knowledges, wherever African students are learning within a classroom context, is to equip them with the moral and social values of their peoples’ through their historical trajectory. Therefore, a question of how students learn about Somalia is important. What they learn about their histories is important to
center students in their learning and teaching. In addition, this learning has to be built upon notions of reclaiming the past with a gaze on the future. I contend that education has never been apolitical and/or disembodied, therefore, for the African learners key ideas about African identities have to be broached. Students must be validated in their embodied knowledges, experiences, and voices, and they must be spiritually nurtured as they are African souls (Dei, 1999, 2000, 2012; Dillard, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Paris, 1995; Palmer, 1999; Tisdell, 2003; Shahjahan, 2004, 2005, 2009; Wane 2002, 2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2011). I firmly believe that one cannot speak about anticolonial histories within Indigenous African education without a comprehension of what it means to be an African student, and a keenness to affirm that identity.

What I am alluding to are principles of community building, excellence and achievement for the greater good of the community, and for values of reciprocity. These principles are contrary to the individualistic Eurocentric educational paradigm, and they offer an African epistemological point of departure to re-think education for African bodies, in particular for Somali students. By grounding our education in our sacred dhaqan knowledges, this approach offers multiple anticolonial Indigenous avenues for Somali learners, educators, and the greater community to raise critical questions about the epistemological educational philosophies we think through in aim of offsetting some of the contemporary challenges facing our communities. How we collectively choose to meet those hardships is equally as important. Furthermore, we have to be clear about what the rights and responsibilities of the community’s youth/children are in relation to the collective. In Somali dhaqan educational thought, African students don’t learn for the sake of learning, but rather parents, teachers, and the community invest in the students’ education with the underlying goal that the youth of today will transform their society tomorrow. More importantly, we must be resourceful in operationalizing our sacred knowledges, and be
aware of the wisdoms that have sustained our societies for centuries in order to envision a holistic educational model. I contend that this will lead to further questions and more communal engagements with our spiritual philosophies, which will ultimately strengthen both Diasporic and continental communities. In the following section I will summarize the study.

**Summary of the Study:**

This study was undertaken to provide a historical understanding of some of the past social movements in Somalia that have mobilized to transform that society. I went into Somali communities in Toronto to dialogue with Elders who are knowledgeable about our history, culture, and community affairs, and get their perspectives. The idea of looking at such a history was to create spaces to re-think some of the historical occurrences as vehicles for addressing some of the contemporary challenges facing Somali peoples. In this thesis, social movements were broadly defined to refer to Indigenous anticolonial resistance because the struggle for independence marked some of the most significant movements in the modern history of Somali peoples as well as a long tradition of Indigenous knowledges. When looking at the contemporary calamities Somali peoples are confronted with, both at home and in the Diaspora, I am of the opinion that there are key lessons we can all learn from the struggles of our Ancestors. As such the liberation movements gave me ways to think about new ideas regarding what it means to be a Somali with a *dhaqan* consciousness that pushed previous generations to fight for their humanity.

To meet the objectives of this study I designed the research through an Indigenous qualitative research methodology. The strength of this research methodology was that it enabled me to bring forth a nuanced reading of the Elders’ narratives through the Somali *dhaqan* cultural
system and philosophies, and to make sense of the key epistemic spaces in which I was conducting this study. As a critical methodology it gave me room to capture the Elders’ ideas as they grounded their responses in the intellectual Indigenous traditions of their Ancestors. For me this data collecting process was about more than producing a counter-narrative to the Western hegemonic discourse on Somalia, it was chiefly about getting the Elders’ perspectives on how things ought to be. Our Elders are thinkers, community leaders, activists, and Somali *dhaqan* experts with a comprehensive historical understanding of what took place on our ancestral homeland. Moreover, they are aware of how certain colonial historical realities are rooted in the political turmoil in Somalia today. Therefore, recognizing and adhering to the Indigenous African institutional and philosophical ideals that they are guided by is central to understanding the knowledges they embody. A Somali *dhaqan* methodology granted me the opportunity to formally meet the Elders and to journey deep into the Diaspora communities in Toronto to theorize particular moments in Somali history as sacred anticolonial bodies of transformative knowledge to be operationalized for asserting questions of self-determination and re-thinking notions of *Somalinimo*.

The interviewed Elders were able to cast their gaze on colonialism and many of its outstanding features. In fact, their voices paid tribute to anticolonial resistance and, in an era where we are violently experiencing the erasure of all standing elements of Somali societies, their narratives exposed their commitment to continue working for freedom and strengthening their communities. More importantly, their perspectives highlighted their unwavering investment in the Somali national reconciliation project, and they stressed the need for an understanding of the Somali political situation from an Indigenous African lens. It is from that position that many of the Elders re-told the various chapters of our anticolonial resistance, often giving detailed
accounts of the inhumanity of the colonial order. While at times some of them reverted to
drawing from a colonial script, when it came down to the grand ideas about colonialism and its
interests in Somalia, they all articulated their vision for how the resistance should continue.

The subject of unity through Somali *dhaqan* and principles of the collective kept coming
up in most of the interviews. The essence of unity, according to many of the Elders, is a
collective obligation for all Somalis, and this concept goes beyond notions of embodiment and
sacrifice for nation and community. Unity was cited as means of creating solidarity amongst the
peoples and harmonizing communities towards a politics of resistance. Elders categorized unity
as the only logical way of addressing Somali identity as it is presently being fragmented, which
they attributed to violent historical experiences, namely colonialism, rather than an inherent part
of the Somali national character.

The idea of knowledge and education as being crucial for all Somali peoples, especially
for our youth, was also articulated by most of the Elders. In fact they expressed with a profound
sense of urgency the importance of Somali peoples being grounded in their *dhaqan*, histories,
and identities, in addition to being well educated through formal schooling. The centrality of this
duality is that when one is connected with their Indigenous histories and heritage, no one can
lead him/her astray. Furthermore, with formal education Somalis would have a greater chance to
succeed in this world and contribute to the community. Adhering to this advice takes courage
and resourcefulness because colonial structures have never been invested in producing learners
who are committed to serving their communities, as argued earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless,
this is a reality that we have to contemplate, and it is one that our Ancestors and Elders have
been pondering since the arrival of colonial education.
The power of Indigenous historical narratives was also an outstanding theme in this study, and most of the Elders said that our histories contain many of the answers for our current day challenges. Therefore, many identified history as a body of knowledge encompassing the dreams and aspirations of both previous and future generations of Somalis in a world where colonialism is real. When re-thinking the past most of the participants situated history as being anchored in notions of moving forward in our intergenerational anticolonial path. With that in mind they all treated the study as an opportunity to pass some of their knowledges on to the community through Somali *dhaqan* processes of knowledge sharing. They emphatically called for the emulation of the personalities who led the resistance in the face of colonial aggression, because the Elders believed that we could all learn from the ways in which some of these leaders sacrificed for the collective and for their moral characters.

The most significant topic that came out of this research is the centrality of Somali *dhaqan* philosophies as a cultural system that is instrumental to the Somali political question, both as a way of life and as a paradigm of conceptualizing everyday thought. Overwhelmingly, the Elders spoke about the ways in which Somali *dhaqan* enables Indigenous cultural institutions to function in harmony, and the pivotal role it took in organizing the peoples against colonial rule in the past. As such, Somali traditions provided the masses with a collective sense of identity, and with a social-moral point of reference to aspire to through resistance and sacrifice. It was the Indigenous traditions, as narrated by the Elders, which enabled previous generations to differentiate themselves from the colonizers’ ways. The rejection of the colonizers’ ways forced the peoples to look inward and to reflectively think of the values that constituted what it means to be Somali. This process captivated the imagination of the masses, giving birth to a political ideology of *Somalinimo* and to resistance movements that were dedicated to the total liberation
of the homeland. In all the conversations the Elders alluded to a need to return to the Indigenous ways of life and to revisit this resistant culture. Community Elders also warned that we must not take our traditions for granted but we must evoke the power of historical memory to continue the anticolonial journey.

Emerging from all the dialoguing with the Elders was the Somali political question, which was in many ways unavoidable. This is the one issue that I and all the participants were most concerned about in relation to the state of peoples back home and in the Diaspora. The reality of the political situation in Somalia was especially troubling for Elders when it came to our youth in the Diaspora, because for too many, the only knowledge they have of themselves is often that of civil unrest. What makes matters worse is that the youth are often culturally disconnected, as identified by the Elders. The overarching concern for the research participants was how today’s youth, who are removed from themselves, will be able to comprehend the hardships endured on their behalf. Their argument was that history is an embodiment that one must be aware of and it is only relevant as a guiding tool with which to triumph over difficult circumstances if evoked. The Elders kept referring to the need for today’s youth to walk in the footsteps of our anticolonial leadership and stand in opposition to colonialism. Moreover, they all argued that Somali youth have an inherent responsibility to continue the struggle and to fashion their own futures.

**Final Remarks:**

Although this work looks at the history of social movements, broadly speaking there are many overarching questions pertaining to issues of identity for Somali peoples, in particular for Diaspora youth. The fact remains that we as a peoples have to look at how we organized
ourselves as a means of expressing our voice. This work highlights the ways in which previous
generations have organized themselves in response to political challenges with the aim of
arguing that Somali have their own intertwined cultural system that was operationalized to
establish societies. However, inadvertently, this thesis also speaks to the popular notions that
Somalis are chaotic peoples vis-a-vis their stateless present, though this question is outside the
focus of my thesis. Nevertheless, there are prevailing colonial discourses that are always going
to be interjected when speaking about Somalia. The usefulness of an anticolonial Indigenous
African reading in this case is that it allows one to disentangle these colonial discourses and to
situate Somali conversations outside of the colonial binaries.

This dissertation contributes to the scarce literature on Somali history within the
Diasporic Canadian context. It also provides a historical understanding of Somali dhaqan
worldviews as an integral part of what constitutes Somalinimo. This study is one of few
scholarly works that attempts to root the discussion about Somalia through an Indigenous
contextual lens with implications on questions of history and identity. In many ways it is my
attempt to go back to our Elders as a source of knowledge and ancestral wisdoms, and to try and
get their perspectives on the history of social movements in Somalia. In addition, this work
strives to attain a better grasp of the values that continue to keep the Somali peoples intact
despite the political unrest back home and the racism in the Diaspora. But what came out of the
study was the importance of Somali dhaqan as an Indigenous cultural system for all Somalis to
think through. As highlighted by most of the conversations with the Elders, there are multiple
versions of the historical accounts that all took place during the fight for liberty, yet there is a
oneness to the experiences and a bond born out of a desire to be free. More importantly, for one
to understand the histories of the anticolonial resistance from a Somali perspective, one needs a
good grasp of the Somali *dhaqan* values that were operationalized during the armed struggle. As expressed by the Elders, these ideals are about Somali Indigenous beliefs, cultural philosophies, teachings, and histories, which all revolve around what it means to be Somali. Although there are multiple comprehensions of Somali *dhaqan*, the Elders’ narratives often focused on the larger question of what it means to be part of a Somali collective. It is from this trajectory that many of the Elders offered guiding lessons for future generations.

In revisiting some of the Elders’ concerns and questions, I asked myself, what is the purpose of this research? How will the community benefit from this study? What will I do with the Elders’ stories? And how do I intend to publicize the knowledges shared by the Elders and composed in this dissertation for the community? Admittedly, although I do not have any answers to these questions, I will probably be thinking about them for a long time to come. But my pursuit in writing about the ancestral wisdoms and particular aspects of the histories of Somali peoples is part of my ongoing commitment to bring an African understanding of what it means to be Somali. In today’s world where everything about Somalia in mainstream society seems to be articulated through a singular Eurocentric point of view, often associated with a crisis, it is worthwhile to re-visit the histories of our social movements to unlock some of the lessons encapsulated in our resistance traditions and worldviews. As such, our sacred histories beginning with the *Somaal* origin story, together with our Indigenous African cultural systems, offer us a continuum, not only in response to colonization and its aftermath but as a means of laying claim to specific values that construct a Somali story in and through a culture rooted in a homeland. The challenge is how to reinterpret some of our *dhaqan* values within the contemporary moment, especially for those of us living in the Diaspora. The question of the relevance of Somali *dhaqan* will always be part of the challenge. Nevertheless, working with
our Indigenous values is an imaginative political attempt to foster our national/cultural aspirations and shape our density in significant ways for our collective survival.
References


1. TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT
The History of Social Movements in Somalia Through the Eyes of Somali Elders.

2. INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

Investigator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: Mr.</th>
<th>Name: Ahmed Ali Ilmi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department (or organization if not affiliated with U of T): Sociology and Equity Studies in Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing address: Unit 150-400 Mississauga Valley BLVD Mississauga, Ont</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 416 877 4767</td>
<td>Institutional e-mail: <a href="mailto:ahmed.ilmi@utoronto.ca">ahmed.ilmi@utoronto.ca</a></td>
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Level of Project
Faculty Research □ CBR/CBPR Research □

Post-Doctoral Research □

Student Research: Doctoral ☒ Masters □ Student Number 996539535

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Department (or organization if not affiliated with U of T): Sociology and Equity Studies in Education</td>
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*Please append additional pages with co-investigators’ names if necessary.*

3. UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD:

Health Sciences □ Social Science, Humanities and Education ☒
Please consult http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/human/boards-committees/ to determine which Research Ethics Board (REB) your proposal should be submitted.

4. LOCATION(S) WHERE THE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED:

If the research is to be conducted at a site requiring administrative approval/consent (e.g. in a school), please include all draft administrative consent letters. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine what other means of approval are required, and to obtain approval prior to starting the project.

University of Toronto
Hospital specify site(s)
School board or community agency specify site(s)
Community within the GTA specify site(s) This research will take place in interviewees’ homes and agreed upon meeting points. My research participants will be Somali Elders who reside in the GTA.
International specify site(s)
Other specify site(s)

The University of Toronto has an agreement with the Toronto Academic Health Sciences Network (TAHSN) hospitals regarding ethics review of hospital-based research where the University plays a peripheral role. Based on this agreement, certain hospital-based research may not require ethics review at the University of Toronto. If your research is based at a TAHSN hospital please consult the following document to determine whether or not your research requires review at the University of Toronto. http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/human/at-a-glance/where-to-apply-tahsn-institutions/

5. OTHER RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL(S)

(a) Does the research involve another institution or site? Yes No

(b) Has any other REB approved this project? Yes No

If Yes, please provide a copy of the approval letter upon submission of this application.
If **No**, will any other REB be asked for approval?

Yes ☐  No ☒

Please note that REB approvals from other sites must be submitted to the ORE at U of T.

6. FUNDING OF THE PROJECT

(a) Please check one:

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<td></td>
<td>Submission date:</td>
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| Unfunded ☒ |

This is a small project that will be conducted in the GTA and I will be utilizing my Graduate Student funding from the University of Toronto/Ontario Institute for Studies in Education funding to support this research.

If one protocol is to cover more than one grant, please include all fund numbers:

(b) If waiting for funding, do you wish to postdate ethics approval to the release of funds?

Yes ☐  No ☒

(c) For funded research, will more than one protocol be submitted to cover all research funded by the respective grant?  Yes ☐  No ☒

Please list these protocols by title and RIS # (if known):

7. CONTRACTS
Is there a University of Toronto funding or non-funded agreement associated with the research?  
Yes ☐  No ☑

If yes, please include a copy of the agreement upon submission of this application.

Is there any aspect of the contract that could put any member of the research team in a potential conflict of interest?  Yes ☐  No ☑

If yes, please elaborate under #10.

8. PROJECT START AND END DATES

Estimated start date for this project: August 10/2011

Estimated completion of involvement of human participants for this project: September/30/2011

9. SCHOLARLY REVIEW

(Please note: for submissions to the HIV REB from community investigators, scientific review is a pre-requisite for ethics review. If your study is unfunded, please contact the OHTN to arrange a scientific review prior to completing your ethics submission.)

Please check one:

☑ The research has been approved by a thesis committee or equivalent (required for thesis research)
☐ The research has undergone scholarly review prior to this submission for ethics review  
(Specify review committee – e.g., departmental research committee, CIHR peer-review committee, OHTN scientific review, etc.)
☐ The research will undergo scholarly review prior to funding  
(Specify review committee – e.g., departmental research committee, CIHR peer-review committee, OHTN scientific review, etc.)
☐ The research will not undergo scholarly review

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

(a) Will the researcher(s), members of the research team, and/or their partners or immediate family members:
   (i) Receive any personal benefits (e.g. financial benefit such as remuneration, intellectual property rights, rights of employment, consultancies, board membership, share ownership, stock options, etc.) as a result of or in connection to this study?  Yes ☐  No ☑
   (ii) If yes, please describe the benefits below. (Do not include conference and travel expense coverage, or other benefits which are standard to the conduct of research.)

(b) Describe any restrictions regarding access to or disclosure of information (during or at the end of the study) that has been placed on the investigator(s). This includes controls placed by sponsor, funding body, advisory or steering committee.
(c) Where relevant, please explain any pre-existing relationship between the researcher(s) and the researched (e.g. instructor-student; manager-employee; minister-congregant). Please pay special attention to relationships in which there may be a power differential.

(d) Please describe the decision-making processes for collaborative research studies. If Terms of Reference exist, please attach them.

SECTION B – SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

11. RATIONALE

Describe the purpose and scholarly rationale for the proposed project, and, if relevant, the hypotheses/research questions to be examined. The rationale for doing the study must be clear.

My doctoral research examines the History of Social movements in Somalia and the implications of uncovering the history of certain movements to highlight how those movements have shaped the Somali Nation State for future generations of Somali youth, in particular Somali-Canadian youth to look at what Somalia was. Over the last twenty years Somali has had a violent civil and this prolonged conflict has had many phases that all Somalis have lived through and internalized to various degrees, in particular Somali youth. I content that there is danger for Somali-Canadian youth to see their Somali identity through the popular often violent images that have been projected in the media over the last two decades. As such, the last twenty years exemplify the most difficult moments in our modern history, and in this research I intend to highlight the nation of Somali and its peoples have rich histories and traditions that demonstrate Indigenous African values that signify the essence of what it means to be Somali outside the curves of civil war. I am not suggesting that we romanticize about that past, but rather, that our past is fluid (Wane, 2008) and it contains key lessons which encompasses a holistic way of life that is deeply rooted in an ancestral homeland. Therefore, in uncovering that history we get a more accurate depiction of the key pillars of Somali society that can lead to the total transformation of our society. I have chosen to look at Social movements to examine different moments in which Somali peoples have mobilized around key issues to see change. I contend that there are pedagogical in studying the histories of struggles in Somalia, the movements which lead those struggles and the key figures behind which can offer Somali-Canadian youth the abilities to see Somali outside the curves of civil war.

The rationale for this study is to look at Somalia beyond the contemporary challenges revolving around the political Somali question as a means of offering future generations
of Somali youth the space to articulate a sense of being Somali within the Canadian Diaspora. By interviewing Somali Elders who currently reside in the GTA and who have participated and/or have witnessed the historical struggles of various social movements I hope to document their stories of struggle, selfless sacrifice, and hope as a means of articulating their visions for the future. I will also connect with our Elders to seek advice from them to indicate how we should proceed with our lives within the Diaspora and how to build and sustain vibrant healthy communities in Canada. In the spirit of intergenerational struggle we must reach back to our collective past to be able to claim our stakes in the future.

The objectives of research are as follows: First to expatiate the voices of Somali Elders residing within the GTA as they articulate their visions on how the Somali community should processed in resolving some of the contemporary challenges facing the community by offering some of the lessons which they have learnt through their participation and/or witnessed some of Somalis historical struggles, especially to Somali-Canadian youth. Secondly, the results of my research study will create a field of Somali Elders’ cultural knowledges, which becomes a tool for Somali-Canadian youth to articulate their sense of self-hood within the Canadian multicultural mosaic. Thirdly, to work with Somali Indigenous African culture, with the guidance of some of our Elders in Canada, to develop a community engagement model to transform society.

12. METHODS

Please describe all formal and informal procedures to be used. Describe the data to be gathered, where and how they will be obtained and analyzed. If research includes intentions to publish in other than standard academic venues, please indicate.

Methodology

In my research I will employee qualitative research methods to capture the voices of Somali Elders. I contend that qualitative methods approach will enable me to engage the interviewees in processes where they came to a place to theorize their own lived experiences and/or share some of their knowledges with Somalis living in Canada as a means of creating an epistemic community with the political conciseness to articulate some of the Somali communities’ challenges and to contest the future. In agreement, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains “In many projects the process is far more important than the outcome. Processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate. They are expected to lead one small step further towards self-determination” (p. 127). In addition this research is informed by Indigenous knowledges theoretical frameworks with the aim of insuring that participates are not
objects of my research but rather active visionaries in their struggle. Moreover, qualitative methods approach was chosen because it would enable me to draw on the Elders’ embodied Somali *dhaqan* philosophies [ancestral way of life] to look at the epistemological cultural capital that they generate as African Elders who now live in Canada. Operationalizing Somali *dhaqan* philosophies also permits me to ground my research in the sacred ancestral knowledges of the Somali community and to build relationships to work for the embitterment of the greater collective. I believe the strength of qualitative approach lays in its ability to capture data descriptively (Merriam, 2009). This would enable me to highlight the ways in which the Somali Elders operationalize Somali *dhaqan* from various conceptual points of view as they recount the history of Somali movements in Somalia. Thus help reveal the often multiple and complex realities of participants lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As a data collection method I will conduct face-to-face interviews with community Elders.

In my research I will conduct 20 in-depth interviews with Somali Elders who have led and/or have participated in some of the Social movements in Somalia. The interviewees will be selected from two neighbourhoods primarily Rexdale and Region Park. 10 of my participants will be from the Rexdale community and the other 10 will be from the Region Park community. I have chosen to conduct the research in these communities for two reasons; the first being that these two communities have the largest enclave of Somalis living in the GTA, and the second is because I have access to those communities as a result of existing pre-established community relations. I will carry out semi-structured interviews. My research participants will be made up of self-identified Elders who are active in the community. I hope to have two interviews with each participant, and the interviews will be done on two separate occasions. All the interviews will be digitally recorded, I will also be writing field notes to try and document some of my observations, and I will be writing reflections on each interview to enable me to revisit any issue and/or question(s) that I feel would enrich my data with any of the interviewees. During my interviews I hope to isolate for autobiographical narratives that would signify the historical struggles that my participants have engaged in and continue to take part in to highlight and describe some of the tensions, contractions, and challenges facing this group of Somali Elder within the contemporary geo-political landscape.

**Data analysis**

In my research the data analysis will be informed by principles of Somali *dhaqan* philosophies together with my theoretical frameworks, and research methodology that I have chosen. At this juncture I am anticipating that the research process and findings will shift my conceptual frame of mind as I interview Somali Elders and get access to some of their knowledges. Moreover, in researching in the Somali community, a community which has been branded through research I will constantly be asking myself the following question: How can my research be emancipatory in nature? How can research benefit the greater collective? What are my responsibilities as a researcher to the community that I am coproducing knowledge with? I contend that research as
a process of knowledge production that is centered on the voices of marginalized groups must provide room for the researched community not only be active participants in their own research but also to plant the seeds for transformation in society through research.

The analysis of the contextually derived results will include multidisciplinary approaches: Indigenous African knowledges, anti-racist and anti-colonial education, and community participatory action plan. These approaches facilitate critical understandings of the historically rooted contemporary challenges facing the Somali community within the GTA.

Attach a copy of all questionnaires, interview guides or other non-standard test instruments. Please include a list of appendices here for all additional materials submitted (e.g., Appendix A – Informed Consent; Appendix B – Interview Guide, etc.):

See appendixes attached

13. PARTICIPANTS OR DATA SUBJECTS

(a) Describe the participants to be recruited, or the subjects about whom personally identifiable information will be collected. Where recruitment is required, please describe inclusion and exclusion criteria. Where the research involves extraction or collection of personally identifiable information, please describe from whom the information will be obtained and what it will include. Strategies for recruitment are to be described in section #15.

- I will interview ten (10) Elders from the Rexdale community. The Elders recruitment shall be categorized based on their community service track record, their age, and their expertise on social movements and Somali history.
- Also, I will interview five (10) Elders for the Region Park community. Again, the recruitment shall be categorized based on their community service track record, their age, and their expertise on social movements and Somali history.

(b) Is there any group or individual-level vulnerability related to the research that needs to be mitigated (for example, difficulties understanding informed consent, history of exploitation by researchers, power differential between the researcher and the potential participant)?

There are no group or individual-level vulnerabilities that relate to this research that need to be mitigated.

14. EXPERIENCE

(a) Please provide a brief description of (i) the principal investigator’s, (ii) the research team’s and (iii) the people who will have contact with the participants’ experience with this type of research. If there has not been previous experience, please describe how the individual/team will be prepared.

I will be the sole researcher, but I will work in close collaboration with my thesis supervisor Dr. Wane. I have done researches before for my supervisor, Dr. Wane under the GA project and also
(b) For projects that will involve community members (for example, Peer Researchers) in the collection and/or analysis of data, please describe their status within the research team (e.g. are they considered employees, volunteers or participants?) and what kind of training they will receive.

N/A

15. RECRUITMENT

Where there is recruitment, please describe how, by whom, and from where the participants will be recruited.

Where participant observation is to be used, please explain the form of insertion of the researcher into the research setting (e.g. living in a community, visiting on a bi-weekly basis, attending organized functions). Please make it explicit where it is reasonable to anticipate that all or some of the participants who will be recruited will not speak English or will speak English as a second language. Describe any translation of recruitment materials, how this will occur and whether or not those people responsible for recruitment will speak the language of the participants. Attach a copy of all posters, advertisements, flyers, letters, e-mail text, or telephone scripts to be used for recruitment. This copy should be exactly as it will appear for recruitment.

I will recruit participants from the two communities. My main methods of recruitment will be through word of mouth by asking community Elders to participate in my research. Moreover, I will contact Somali community organization and request the names of community Elders who are knowledgeable in Somali history who are active in the Somali community. The process will be repeated until I get the desired number of participants. Those who express interest will have to sign the consent form. Then we fix dates for the interviews.

16. COMPENSATION

(a) Will participants receive compensation for participation?

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(b) If Yes, please provide details and justification for the amount or the value of the compensation offered.

(c) If No, please explain why compensation is not possible or appropriate.

The research will primarily take place in two Somali communities within the GTA. The Elders taken part in this research understand that student researchers don’t have money to pay for remuneration of research participants. I will also make it known to them at the time of recruitment that there will be no compensation for their participation.

(d) Where there is a withdrawal clause in the research procedure, if participants choose to withdraw, how will compensation be affected?
SECTION C – DESCRIPTION OF THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

17. POSSIBLE RISKS

Risks to participants as individuals or as members of a community may include:

(a) Physical risks (including any bodily contact or administration of any substance); Yes ☐ No ☒

(b) Psychological/emotional risks (feeling uncomfortable, embarrassed, anxious or upset); Yes ☐ No ☒

(c) Social risks (including possible loss of status, privacy and/or reputation); and/or Yes ☐ No ☒

(d) Legal risks (potential of apprehension or arrest or being identified as a member of a legally-compromised group).

Please describe the risks involved in the study, and what steps will be taken to ensure that they will be managed and/or minimized.

There are no risks involved in the study

18. POSSIBLE BENEFITS

Discuss any potential direct benefits to the participants from their involvement in the project. Discuss any potential direct benefits to the community, including any capacity building which is integrated into the study design. Comment on the potential benefits to the scientific/scholarly community or society that would justify involvement of participants in this study.

Benefit to participants, their voices/perspectives will constitute the tenet of the study. Recommendations to be made for the study will anchor on participants’ voices. This will provide a chance to participants to document Somali history for future generations in their own voices.

Copies of the study outcome will be given to the participants through the mean indicated in the consent form.

SECTION D – THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

19. THE CONSENT PROCESS

Describe the process that will be used to obtain informed consent. Please note that it is the quality of the consent, not the format that is important. If the research involves extraction or collection of personally identifiable information from a research participant, please describe how consent from the individuals or authorization from the data custodian will be obtained. If there will be no written
consent, please provide a rationale for oral or implied consent (e.g., discipline, cultural appropriateness, etc.) and explain how consent will be recorded.


Where applicable, please attach a copy of the Information Letter/Consent Form, the content of any telephone script, screening materials, introductory letters, letters of administrative consent or authorization and/or any other material which will be used in the informed consent process. If any of the information collected in the screening process - prior to full informed consent to participate in the study - is to be retained from those who are excluded or refuse to participate in the study, please describe how those individuals will be informed of this.

### 20. COMMUNITY AND/OR ORGANIZATIONAL CONSENT, OR CONSENT BY AN AUTHORIZED PARTY

(a) If the research is taking place within a recognized community or an organization which requires that formal consent be sought prior to the involvement of individual participants, explain whether consent from that community/organization will be sought. Describe this consent process and attach any relevant documentation. If consent will not be sought, please provide a justification and describe any alternative forms of consultation that may take place.

The research will take place in agreed upon locations between myself and the interviewees and I do not need to submit any formal letter of consent to any community organization and/or institution. For the research participants I have attached a consent letter in the appendix.

(a) If any or all of the participants are children and/or are not competent to consent, describe the process by which capacity/competency will be assessed, the proposed alternate source of consent - including any permission/information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the alternate consent – as well as the assent process for participants.

N/A

### 21. DEBRIEFING and DISSEMINATION

(a) If deception or intentional non-disclosure will be used in the research study, please justify. Please consult [Guidelines for the Use of Deception and Debriefing in Research](http://www.research.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/GUIDE-FOR-INFORMED-CONSENT-April-2010.pdf)

Since this study will take place in the Somali community located in the GTA the findings of the study will be made available to the community by means of presenting the findings in community events and journal articles.

Please provide a copy of the written debriefing form, if applicable.

See copy attached in appendix B

(b) Will participants and/or communities be given the option of withdrawing their data following the debriefing? Please explain.

In the event of attrition, participants’ perspectives/information already gathered shall be deleted and never to be used again in the study (see appendix B)
(c) Please explain what information/feedback will be provided to participants and/or communities after their participation if the project is complete. (e.g., report, poster presentation, pamphlet, etc.)

I will provide feedback to participants through written reports, and or brief pamphlets. However, this will also depend on the format that participants prefer to receive feedback (see appendix A).

22. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

(a) Where applicable, please describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project. Outline the procedures which will be followed to allow them to exercise this right.

Participants can withdraw from the study at their own will and time. In the event that they want to withdraw, they simply need to notify me in writing (email or postal letters), telephone, or verbally and give reason(s) for withdrawing.

(b) Indicate what will be done with the participant’s data and any consequences which withdrawal may have on the participant.

Participants’ data and all personal information will be deleted. The withdrawal will also be kept confidential so as to respect participants’ privacy

(c) If participants will not have the right to withdraw from the project at all, or beyond a certain point, please explain. Ensure this information is included in the consent process.

Participants can withdraw at any stage during the study. There are no restrictions

SECTION E –CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

23. CONFIDENTIALITY

(a) Will the data be treated as confidential? Yes ☒ No ☐

(b) Describe the procedures to be used to protect anonymity of participants or informants, where applicable, or the confidentiality of data during the conduct of research and dissemination of results. Data security measures must be consistent with UT’s Data Security Standards for Personally Identifiable and Other Confidential Data in Research. All identifiable electronic data outside of a secure server environment must be encrypted, consistent with the standards described at: http://www.utoronto.ca/security/UTORprotect/encryption_guidelines.htm

See appendix B

(c) Describe any limitations to protecting the confidentiality of participants whether due to the law, the methods used or other reasons (e.g., duty to report)

N/A
(d) Explain how written records, video/audio recordings, artifacts and questionnaires will be secured, how long they will be retained, and provide details of their final disposal or storage. Describe the standard data security procedures for your discipline and provide a justification if you intend to store your data for an indefinite length of time. If the data may have archival value, discuss this and whether participants will be informed of this possibility during the consent process.

See appendix B

(d) If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, please explain. Also, explain how identifiable data in written records, video/audio recordings, artifacts, questionnaires, etc. will be secured.

N/A

24. PRIVACY REGULATIONS
For research involving extraction or collection of personally identifiable information, provincial, national and/or international laws may apply. I will report any apparent mishandling of personally identifiable information to the Office of Research Ethics. My signature as Principal Investigator, in Section G of this protocol form, confirms that I am aware of, understand and will comply with all relevant laws governing the collection and use of personally identifiable information in research.

SECTION F – CONTINUING REVIEW OF ONGOING RESEARCH

RISK MATRIX: REVIEW TYPE BY GROUP VULNERABILITY AND RESEARCH RISK – check one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Vulnerability</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See the Instructions for Ethics Review Protocol Submission Form for detailed information about the Risk Matrix.

Explain/justify the level of risk and group vulnerability reported above:
**Review Type**

Based on the level of risk, these are the types of review that a protocol may receive:

**Risk level= 1: Delegated Review (formerly expedited); Risk level = 2 or 3: Full Board Review**

For both delegated and full reviews (SSH&E, HS, or HIV REB), please submit one electronic copy of your protocol and appendices (e.g., recruitment, information/consent and debriefing materials, and study instruments) as a single Word document or a pdf. Please ensure that the electronic signatures are in place and e-mail to new.ethics.protocols@utoronto.ca

All other submissions, which are not new (e.g., revisions and continuing review submissions), as well as general inquiries, should be sent to ethics.review@utoronto.ca

The deadline for delegated review (SSH&E or HS) is EVERY Monday, or first business day of the week, by 4 pm. HIV REB reviews all protocols at full board level but applies proportionate review based on the level of risk.

REB meeting and submission due dates are posted on our website (SSH&E, HS or HIV).

Please note that the final determination of Review Type and level of monitoring will be made by the University of Toronto REB and the Office of Research Ethics.

**SECTION G – SIGNATURES**

The faculty supervisor/sponsor and his/her respective Departmental Chair/Dean or designate must sign below:

As the Investigator on this project, my signature confirms that I will ensure that all procedures performed under the project will be conducted in accordance with all relevant University, provincial, national and international policies and regulations that govern research involving human participants. I understand that if there is any significant deviation from the project as originally approved I must submit an amendment to the Research Ethics Board for approval prior to its implementation.

For U of T student researchers, my signature confirms that I am a registered student in good standing with the University of Toronto. My project has been reviewed and approved by my advisory committee (where applicable). If my status as a student changes, I will inform the Office of Research Ethics.

Signature of Investigator: Ahmed Ali Ilmi  Date: August 12, 2011

***For Graduate Students, the signature of the Faculty Supervisor is required. For Post-Doctoral Fellows and Visiting Professors or Researchers, the signature of the Faculty Sponsor is required.***
As the Faculty Supervisor of this project, my signature confirms that I have reviewed and approve the scientific merit of the research project and this ethics protocol submission. I will provide the necessary supervision to the student researcher throughout the project, to ensure that all procedures performed under the research project will be conducted in accordance with relevant University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations that govern research involving human subjects. This includes ensuring that the level of risk inherent to the project is managed by the level of research experience that the student has, combined with the extent of oversight that will be provided by the Faculty Supervisor and/or On-site Supervisor.

As the Faculty Sponsor for this project, my signature confirms that I have reviewed and approve of the research project and will assume responsibility, as the University representative, for this research project. I will ensure that all procedures performed under the project will be conducted in accordance with all relevant University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations that govern research involving human participants.

Signature of Faculty Supervisor/Sponsor:

As the Departmental Chair/Dean, my signature confirms that I am aware of the proposed activity and that it has received appropriate review prior to submission. My administrative unit will follow guidelines and procedures which ensure compliance with all relevant University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations that govern research involving human subjects. My signature also reflects the willingness of the department, faculty or division to administer the research funds, if there are any, in accordance with University, regulatory agency and sponsor agency policies.

Print Name of Departmental Chair/Dean (or designate): ______

Signature of Departmental Chair/Dean: ____________________________ Date: ______
(or designate)
APPENDIX A
August 13th, 2011

Dear Madam/Sir,

Information Letter for Potential Interviewees

I am PhD candidate in Sociology and Equity Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am doing research on the History of Social Movements in Somalia. The main aim of this study is to examine the implications of uncovering the history of social movements in Somalia as a means of highlighting how those movements have shaped the Somali nation state for future generations of Somali youth, to look at what Somalia was like prior to the prolonged civil war.

The reason that I would like to speak with you is that, as a student, your perspective is quite significant as Somali Elders who are knowledgeable in the history of social movements in Somalia.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview about some of the historical struggles in Somalia, the movements which lead them, and the key figures who spearheaded them. Your estimated participation time will be about 45 minutes, and this shall take place in a pre-arranged agreed upon location by the two of us that is safe for the both of us. All information derived from the interview will be used for research and academic purposes only. Your identity will be kept entirely confidential. Of course, please feel free to say if you are not interested in participating, or are unable to participate at this time.

If you do not want to make a decision at this time, please let me know when I should contact you again. You may also reach me at the following telephone number/email at a convenient time: Tel: 416-877-4767, e-mail: ahmed.ilmi@utoronto.ca, ahmedilmi@gmail.com.

Please read the enclosed consent protocol, and let me know if it is acceptable, and if you would like to participate in this study. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ahmed Ali Ilmi
APPENDIX B

Consent Protocol for individual interviews

Research topic: The History of Social Movements in Somalia through the Eyes of Somali Elders.

The aim of this research is to look at Somalia beyond the contemporary challenges revolving around the political Somalia question as a means of offering future generations of Somali youth the space to articulate a sense of being Somali within the Canadian Diaspora. By interviewing Somali Elders who currently reside in the GTA and who have participated and/or have witnessed some of the historical struggles of various social movements I hope to document their stories of struggle, selfless sacrifice, and hope as a means of capturing their visions for the future. The information will be used in my PhD thesis and will also be presented in the form of conference presentations, journal articles, working papers and book chapters. The reason that I would like to speak with you is because of your knowledge of the history of social movements in Somalia and your lived experiences as Elders in the Somali community.

I would like to confirm your agreement to participate in this research. If you do not wish to take part, please feel free to say so. If you agree, and there are any topics that come up during the course of the interview that you do not want to discuss, please just say so. If at any point attrition arise (you decide that you do not wish to continue with the interview), please let me know and we will stop immediately. In that case I will not use any of the information you have provided. All the data you have given to me will be deleted and not used any more in the study. However, I request that you give rationale for withdrawal from the study.

Participation in this study may involve answering/addressing the following questions/topics:

1. How do you conceptualize the history of social movements in Somalia?
2. What do you think the key factors that were the catalyst in those movements?
3. Do you think that Somali dhagan was instrumental in mobilizing Somali peoples behind various social movements and the personalities who spearheaded those movements?
4. What are some social/political ideologies that were crucial in driving social movements in Somalia?
5. What are some of the successes and failures of the social movements in Somalia?
6. What are some of the key lessons that you can pass on to future generation of Somali youth for your participation and/or witnessing of Social movements?
7. Do you see any similarities and/or differences in Somali society during different moments in history where Somali peoples mobilized around certain key issues that today’s youth can learn from?
8. How important do you think the history of social movements is to Somali-Canadian youth?
9. What are some of the challenges facing Somali society stemming from the prolonged civil war in Somalia, in particular Somali youth living in the Diaspora?
10. As a Somali Elder how do you think Somali society should processed in meeting some of the contemporary challenges facing society?
I would like to have your permission to record the interview. The audio file will not have your name attached to it, and will only be listened to and transcribed by myself. If you wish, I will provide you with a copy of the audio recording and/or the transcript. I will keep the audio files for three years after the study is completed; they will then be deleted. Transcripts with no name attached may be kept for five years after the study is completed (in case a follow up study is warranted). If you are in any way uncomfortable with the interview being recorded, please just say so; in that case I will just take notes during the interview.

All information contained in this interview is confidential and anonymous. Only I know the names of the people who are being interviewed, and there will be only one copy of these names, which I will keep under lock and key/saved as an encrypted file.

Any reports I write for this study will ensure that you are kept anonymous. For example I might speak in a general way, saying that a particular issue was reported by several of the people interviewed. Or I might quote you by saying that one individual interviewed said……. In no instance would anyone reading the study be able to guess that you are the person who was interviewed. Also, pseudo names will be used to further protect your identity.

If after the interview has been concluded you would like any follow-up information, or a summary of some of the research results so far, please indicate by providing your e-mail or mailing address below.

One copy of this consent protocol and letter of introduction will be left with you for your records. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Please read the consent protocol carefully. If you agree to participate, please sign below.

I, ___________________________, agree to participate in an interview for the project on The History of Social Movements in Somalia through the Eyes of Somali Elders.

I, ___________________________, agree/ do not agree to this interview being recorded (please check appropriate response).

I would like a summary of the research results to be sent to me at: _______________________________________

Date:

Signature:
APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My preliminary questions to conduct this research will include some of these enquiries:

1. How do you conceptualize the history of social movements in Somalia?
2. What do you think the key factors that were the catalyst in those movements?
3. Do you think that Somali *dhaqan* was instrumental in mobilizing Somali peoples behind various social movements and the personalities who spearheaded those movements?
4. What are some political/social ideologies that were crucial in driving social movements in Somalia?
5. What are some of the successes and failures of the social movements in Somalia?
6. What are some of the key lessons that you can pass on to future generation of Somali youth for your participation and/or witnessing of social movements?
7. Do you see any similarities and/or differences in Somali society during different moments in history where Somali peoples mobilized around certain key issues that today’s youth can learn from?
8. How important do you think the history of social movements is to Somali-Canadian youth?
9. What are some of the challenges facing Somali society stemming from the prolonged civil war in Somalia, in particular Somali youth living in the Diaspora?
10. As a Somali Elder how do you think Somali society should processed in meeting some of the contemporary challenges facing society?
2. TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

The History of Social Movements in Somalia through the Eyes of Somali Elders’

Protocol Reference #: 26910   Original Approval Date: April 10, 2011
Previous Renewal Date:
Completion/Closure date: 12,10,2012

3. INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

Investigator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (e.g., Dr., Ms., etc.):</th>
<th>Name: Mr. Ahmed Ali Ilmi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department (or organization if not affiliated with U of T): Sociology and Equity Studies in Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing address: Unit 150-400 Mississauga Valley BLVD Mississauga, L5A 3N6 Ont</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: (416) 877-4767</td>
<td>Institutional E-mail: <a href="mailto:ahmedilmi@utoronto.ca">ahmedilmi@utoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Faculty Supervisor/Sponsor:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: Dr.</th>
<th>Name: Njoki Wane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department (or organization if not affiliated with U of T): Sociology and Equity Studies in Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing address: 252 Bloor St. West</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 416 821-9503</td>
<td>Institutional E-mail: <a href="mailto:nwane@utoronto.ca">nwane@utoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. PROJECT INFORMATION

a) How many research participants were proposed for the study? 16
b) How many research participants were involved in this study? 16
c) Did any research participants actively withdraw from the study?
   Yes [ ] No [x] If Yes, how many?
   Please describe circumstances.
d) How many research participants completed the study? 16

e) Please provide a brief summary of the findings of your study (100-200 words):

The Elders’ historicization helped me construct a Somali grand narrative with many standing contradictions, competing questions, and assertions. One of the most interesting aspects of grand narratives is that it is situated in the colonial script, yet the Elders’ storing, from their own social location, about the colonial encounter provide a powerful anticolonial narrative. Moreover, while the Elders articulated notions of an independent Somalia they attributed many of the contemporary issues stemming from the war to colonialism. They also expressed their visions as how to meet those challenges and to secure the national interests of Somali peoples both at home and in the Diaspora. Elders as decision makers and front line works in our communities identified some of the key challenges facing Somali peoples. Based on their ḍhaqan expertise, personal experiences, and reflections they were able to articulate a way forward in our anticolonial struggle from multiple understanding. Through our dialogue a number of theoretically loaded knowledge declarations have been voiced with regards to Somali nationalism, the Nation State, and life in Diaspora expanding the boundaries of the discussion within a Somali epistemological understanding. Although, some of the Elders’ views constricted by how the colonizers wrote out history once the discussion moved to Somali ḍhaqan and the essence of our struggle the Elders steered the conversation towards an Indigenous African paradigm born out a Somali experiences.
f) Since receiving original ethics approval, have there been any adverse or unanticipated events?
   Yes ☐ No ☒ (If Yes, please submit an Adverse/Unanticipated Event Report Form)

   g) Please give the reason and provide explanation for closing the study (i.e., end of study, accrual met, not enough participants, etc.):

5. DATA AND CONFIDENTIALITY

   a) Please describe how study-related documents will be stored and/or retained after the completion of the study, explaining privacy protection and supporting security.

   The audio files together with the field notes will be stored in a save location. I will keep the audio files for three years after the study is completed; they will then be deleted. Transcripts do not have any names attached to them I will keep them for five years after the study is completed (in case a follow up study is warranted).

   b) Will this be different from what you described in your original submission to the REB?

      NO

My signature certifies that the above information is correct and that no unapproved procedures were used in study. Proper safeguards to confidentiality and security of data will be maintained until all data are destroyed. Please email your Study Completion Report to ethics.review@utoronto.ca

Signature of Investigator: Ahmed Ilmi____________ Date: October 11,2012

AND (if applicable):

Signature of Faculty Supervisor/Sponsor: __________________________ Date:

NOTE: We cannot process the report until all the signatures are in place. Please submit your protocol and supporting documents as a single attachment (if possible). Signatures should be included as an inserted
image into the document, or the hard copy can be signed, then scanned and e-mailed to us. If neither method is possible, the ORE will accept confirmation of Investigator or Supervisor representation, provided that an institutional email is used.