

# Social Theory And African Tribal Organization: The Development Of Socio-legal Theory



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The Challenges of Evolving and Developing

Management Indigenous Theories and Practices in Africa

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## Abstract

The evolution and development of indigenous management theories and practices in Africa has been seriously affected and retarded by colonialism. The colonial administration introduced western management theories and practices, considered as the drivers and the panacea for the continent's socio-political-economic development. Western scholarship and literature generally devalued and deprecated the astonishing management prowess and practices of early African civilizations, as evidenced, for example, in the building of the great Egyptian pyramids. These foreign management systems generally failed to achieve the expected goals as they discountenanced African cultural inertia and social milieu. The paper argued for the development of indigenous African management philosophy, which will be rooted in the African culture, value system and beliefs, to provide the practical way for the efficient and effective running of organizations in Africa, with its global competitiveness. The *Ubuntu* management system and the "new management techniques", which emphasize humanness, communalism and African patriotism, provide the veritable starting point for the development of indigenous African management philosophy.

**Keywords:** African management philosophy, *Ubuntu*, New management techniques, Management theories, Management practices, Management principles

## 1. Introduction

Scholarly conceptualization from Europe and the United States of America concerning management in Africa have tended to disparage its development, creating a binary management systems of "developed" western management theories and concepts and "underdeveloped" African management thoughts. Western management literature stridently emphasizes this dichotomy, with unabated importation of western management theories and practices to Africa at the detriment of developing indigenous African management theories, which will accommodate the continent's cultural inertia. Gbadamosi (2003) aptly notes that:

"Western management concepts and writings have dominated the thinking of academics and managers in Africa for a long-time. Such writings have not shown how culture might be taken into account in managerial practice" (pp. 274).

There is no doubt that "management in Africa is strongly rooted in cultural beliefs and traditions" (Fashoyin, 2005, pp. 43). The arrival of colonialism in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century disrupted the people's cultural beliefs and traditions, and thus "triggered the beginning of what may be called "colonized African management" according to (Eze, 1995, pp. 136-137). The colonial regimes in Africa created both administrative bureaucracies and colonial companies to exploit the vast natural resources of the continent. A workforce was created made up of the best African brains and trained in western management principles and practices to supply energies for the colonial establishments. "These trained and elevated brains comprised the pioneer group of foreign-loyalist African managers who make up today's African management" (Eze, 1995, pp. 137). The colonial training has not created the salubrious conditions for nurturing African indigenous management practices. Rather, "the colonial training is psychologically emasculating in terms of self-and national identity" (Eze, 1995, pp. 137). The blanket application of those principles and/or the "unmodified transplantation of those practices which are being utilized in the industrialized countries" (Deihl, 1984, pp. 247) has not in any way helped in the progress of developing indigenous African management theories and practices. There was an erosion of African management thought system. Africans, for example, have been skilful managers have a systematic approach based on historical and practical experience to move from the real to the ideal (Osuntokun, 2001).

Any management education programme that facilitates the entrenchment of western management theories and practices in Africa is not desirable. The desire training "must enable the African manager to transform imported theories and concepts into acceptable cultural norms which can then be applied to management practices in Africa" (Fashoyin, 2005, pp. 45). This can further create the opportunity for the development of indigenous African management principles and practices, which will recognize and accommodate our cultural social, political and environmental factors.

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