

# Ethnos Oblige

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# Ethnos Oblige: Theory and Evidence

BY

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Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83867-516-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83867-515-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83867-517-2 (Epub)



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Dedicated to my spouse (Aleshia S. Zoogah) and  
children (Coniah A. Zoogah and Jalen Baniyelme Cloud Zoogah).  
Their love shielded me from life's thorns.

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# Contents

|                                            |                  |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|
| List of Figures and Tables                 | <i>ix</i>        |
| List of Abbreviations                      | <i>xi</i>        |
| About the Authors                          | <i>xiii</i>      |
| Foreword                                   | <i>xv</i>        |
| Preface                                    | <i>xvii</i>      |
| Acknowledgements                           | <i>xix</i>       |
| <b>Introduction</b>                        | <b><i>1</i></b>  |
| <b>Part I: Understanding Ethnos Oblige</b> |                  |
| <b>Chapter 1   Context</b>                 | <b><i>15</i></b> |
| <b>Chapter 2   Concept</b>                 | <b><i>25</i></b> |
| <b>Part II: Elements of Ethnos Oblige</b>  |                  |
| <b>Chapter 3   Outcomes</b>                | <b><i>53</i></b> |
| <b>Chapter 4   Drivers</b>                 | <b><i>77</i></b> |
| <b>Chapter 5   Contingencies</b>           | <b><i>89</i></b> |

**Part III: Studying Ethnos Oblige**

|                  |                                       |            |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 6</b> | <b>Ethnos Oblige in Organizations</b> | <i>103</i> |
| <b>Chapter 7</b> | <b>The Tribal Man</b>                 | <i>125</i> |
| <b>Chapter 8</b> | <b>Perspectives</b>                   | <i>137</i> |
|                  | Appendices                            | <i>153</i> |
|                  | References                            | <i>165</i> |
|                  | Index                                 | <i>179</i> |

# List of Figures and Tables

## Figures

|     |                                                                                               |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 0.1 | Typology of Tribe Concept                                                                     | 10  |
| 2.1 | Schools of Ethnicity                                                                          | 32  |
| 2.2 | Perspectives of Ethnic Obligation                                                             | 37  |
| 2.3 | General Model of Ethnic Obligation                                                            | 41  |
| 2.4 | Multilevel Model of Ethnic Obligation                                                         | 44  |
| 2.5 | Contingencies and Outcomes of Ethnic Obligation                                               | 46  |
| 3.1 | Ladder of Causation and Ethnic Obligation                                                     | 58  |
| 3.2 | Standardized Trend of Ethnic Obligation Responses (2003–2012)                                 | 61  |
| 3.3 | Interaction Plot of Dual Context moderation                                                   | 62  |
| 3.4 | Plot of Agency by Sector (Afrobarometer Study, 2004 – Round 2)                                | 63  |
| 3.5 | Structural Equation Model Results of Ethnic Obligation on<br>Positive Organizational Behavior | 74  |
| 4.1 | Multilevel Determinant Model                                                                  | 78  |
| 5.1 | Conceptual Model of Contingencies of Ethnic Obligation                                        | 91  |
| 5.2 | Conceptual Models of Curvilinear Dynamics                                                     | 92  |
| 5.3 | Examples of Empirical Dynamics                                                                | 94  |
| 5.4 | Interaction Plot of Technology Moderation                                                     | 98  |
| 8.1 | Circumplex Model of Ethnic Obligation                                                         | 139 |
| 8.2 | Prediction of Ethnic Obligation as a Function of Identity Fusion and<br>Malleability          | 141 |

## Tables

|     |                                                                                                                 |    |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 3.1 | Regression Results of Agency on Foreign Direct Investment (2012)                                                | 62 |
| 3.2 | Interaction Results of Agency and Sector on Leader Performance<br>Ratings (2012)                                | 63 |
| 3.3 | Regression Result of Agency on GDP per Capita (2008)                                                            | 64 |
| 3.4 | Interaction Results of Agency and Sector on GDP per Capita (2008)                                               | 64 |
| 3.5 | Results of Agency Effect on Leader Performance and<br>Management of the Economy (2002)                          | 65 |
| 3.6 | Correlations of Agency and Ethnic Group Outcomes                                                                | 65 |
| 3.7 | HLM Results of Agency (Leader Obligation) Effect on Ethnic<br>Group Economic Conditions and Political Influence | 66 |

*x List of Figures and Tables*

|      |                                                                           |     |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 3.8  | Multilevel Results of Economic Deprivation                                | 70  |
| 3.9  | (Individual Level) Correlations (Study 1)                                 | 72  |
| 3.10 | Regression Results of Predictor of Experience of Ethnic Obligation        | 73  |
| 6.1  | Ethnicity of Vice-Chancellors of the Three Major Universities<br>in Ghana | 107 |
| 6.2  | Propositions on Tribe of Origin                                           | 122 |
| 7.1  | Ethnicity Across Asian Countries by Period                                | 127 |
| 8.1  | Theory S and Theory E                                                     | 145 |
| 8.2  | Evaluation of Ethnos Oblige as a Theory                                   | 146 |

# List of Abbreviations

|              |                                                        |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ADUM</b>  | Acquisition, Development, Utilization, and Maintenance |
| <b>CAB</b>   | Cognitive, Affective, Behavioral system                |
| <b>KNUST</b> | Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology     |
| <b>KSAOs</b> | Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other characteristics |
| <b>NDC</b>   | National Democratic Congress                           |
| <b>UCC</b>   | University of Cape Coast                               |
| <b>UEP</b>   | Understand, Explain, and Predict functions of science  |
| <b>UHAS</b>  | University of Health and Allied Sciences               |

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## About the Authors

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# Foreword

Social psychological research has demonstrated that the answer to the question, “Who am I?” is strongly influenced by the social groups one belongs to in a society. Pioneering social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1974)<sup>1</sup> captured this phenomenon in his theory of social identity. Social identity refers to an individual’s knowledge of belonging to certain social groups that hold some emotional and value significance for him or her. Most interpretations of social identity theory dwell on its prediction of negative in-group/out-group dynamics while overlooking its positive effects. Belonging to and identifying with a social group enhances one’s self-esteem and contributes to a positive identity. It can also provide collective solidarity among members of a social group.

Research has also shown that the ethnic group one belongs can significantly affect how one answers the question. Tribes are a major social identity group for people in Africa because of the size and diversity of ethnic groups. However, the answer to “Who am I?” is particularly complicated for people in Africa because of the long history of the denigration of the continent and negative portrayal of African ethnic groups as savage, uneducated tribes hopelessly mired in tribal conflict. The default conclusion is that belonging to an ethnic group or tribe is not desirable or beneficial. *Ethnos Oblige: Theory and Evidence* challenges this conclusion by making a convincing case of the benefits of tribal or ethnic identity in Africa. Zoogah achieves this goal by introducing the concept of ethnic obligation. Ethnic obligation is a cultural norm that regulates the interactions of ethnic group members with one another and with outsiders. A core element is the mutual obligation of members to be benevolent and agentic in their dealings with one another.

*Ethnos Oblige: Theory and Evidence* systematically builds a case for the benefits of tribes by first drawing upon history to understand the ontology of tribes and the effects of colonialism on the tribal structure of the continent. According to Zoogah, what seems to be missed by those who hold negative views about tribes is that precolonial Africa was thriving economically and socially, well on its way to modernity before the brutal intrusion of colonialism. Colonizers disrupted Africa’s development, reconfigured tribal micro-nations (tribes) replacing them with arbitrary macro-nations, discouraged tribal affiliations, and fueled

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<sup>1</sup>Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, 13(2), 65–93.

tribal conflict to achieve their goals. Thus, much of the contemporary ethnic conflict in Africa today has its roots in colonial practices. Zoogah also points to the survival of tribal identities among Africans despite postindependence efforts to suppress them in the pursuit of nation-building. In fact, many have argued that tribes hinder nation-building in Africa and contribute to interethnic conflict and economic stagnation. It is this negativity about tribes and ethnic groups in Africa that *Ethnos Oblige: Theory and Evidence* tackles head-on.

Building upon the ontological and colonial history of tribes in Africa, Zoogah then shares the results of empirical research that tests the effects of tribes on individuals and organizations. What makes his empirical work so convincing is that he does not posit a simple linear relationship between tribes and positive outcomes. Instead, he explores the antecedents, contingencies, and dynamics of the relationship. This careful empirical work lays the foundation for recommendations on how obligations of individuals to their tribes or ethnic groups determine positive (and negative) outcomes for themselves, others, organizations, and ultimately society.

*Ethnos Oblige: Theory and Evidence* makes an original and influential contribution to building the insufficient knowledge about ethnic group behavior in Africa and its importance to employee behavior and building effective organizations in Africa. This book is foundational reading for anyone interested in making contributions to building management theory relevant to Africa. However, ethnic obligation is also relevant to other parts of the world where ethnic groups are salient. Thus, this book is an invaluable resource for understanding how leaders and managers can leverage strong ethnic affiliations to enhance individual, group, organizational, and national performance beyond the default assumption of adverse effects. It also provides a research agenda for further exploration of ethnicity in Africa and the world.

Stella M. Nkomo  
Pretoria, South Africa

# Preface

The extant view of the concept of tribe and ethnicity is negative. It has been devalued so much that it is used derogatively and in an ascribed manner. One reason is the increasing drive to promote the macro-nation (i.e., state) over the micro-nation (i.e., tribe or ethnic group). Another reason or disguise is the so-called enlightenment which advocates for fair treatment toward all others rather than specifically toward ethnic group members. I believe the denigration of the concept of tribe is wrong, ill-informed, and misunderstood. My belief fits with others who have advocated a positive view of ethnicity and the right of micro-nations. It is wrong because the negative attributes are by individuals who lack the ecological validity (they have either not lived in tribes or being members of tribes). They are ill-informed because their views are etc. They are outsiders who observe the tribe and make attributions that have no validity. They are misunderstood because their views are not based on nomological essence. The writers seem not to have clear conception of what being a tribal member entails or means. To disparage, denigrate, or ask for its abolishment is to ask a Brit not to be a Brit or Chinese not to be a Chinese or a Jew not to be a Jew or a Japanese not to be a Japanese. Being a Brit, Chinese, Jew, Japanese, etc. is ontological. It comes with obligations.

The purpose of this book therefore is to help improve that understanding. I am discussing how obligations of individuals to their tribes or ethnic groups determine positive (and negative) outcomes to those individuals, their peers, departments, organizations, and even society. One of the functions of science is to explain phenomena. In that regard, explaining ethnic obligation helps us to understand the phenomena particularly in contexts with salient ethnicities. When scholars study the drivers, antecedents, and explanatory factors undergirding ethnic obligations, they generate insight for managers to establish mechanisms that either magnify the positive effects or control the negative effects. Insight from studies of the dynamics of ethnic obligation is also helpful to organizations. Last, effect studies enable managers to sustain the factors or mechanisms that led to the positive outcomes or muffled the negative ones.

So, my goal for this book is twofold. First, I want to encourage more research in ethnic obligation. Scholars in societies with salient ethnicities have a responsibility to improve their societies by examining phenomena operating therein. Through scientific studies, they can uncover insight that helps them to defend, promote, uphold, or support their ontology. It becomes an opportunity for them to rebuff destructive criticisms particularly by those who do not understand

tribes or ethnic groups. Second, I want to argue that managers in contexts with salient ethnicities have to dive into the deepest recesses of their creative genius to device operational and strategic mechanisms that make ethnicity beneficial. The ability of managers to understand, explain, and predict ethnic obligation enables them to effectively manage the behaviors of their employees. Both goals are functional. For both scholars and managers, tribal affiliation should not be “the elephant in the room” or the “hundred-pound gorilla.” There is nothing to be ashamed about being a member of a tribe. And there is nothing wrong with being a member of a tribe. What is wrong is weaponizing the tribe to do evil. This book is not intended to be a poison-spear in the quiver of scholars or managers of the latter category. Instead, it is to be a recipe for progress; a means to lock in the benefits of tribal affiliation.

# Acknowledgements

I am indebted to several people whose humanity directly or indirectly enabled me to complete this book. First, I thank my family. Aleshia, Coniah, and Jalen have been tremendous. They allowed me to spend more time on this book. I also appreciate the “bouncer,” Dr Phyllis Keys, who allowed me to bounce some ideas off her for feedback. Her comments were invaluable. Some other special people who supported me are Janice Walker, Tom Clark, Amit Sen, Mina Lee, Thilini Ariyachandra, and Lynda Kilbourne, who in varied ways lowered the temperature when the furnace was very hot. I continue to thank Fr Ugo Nacciarone, sj, for his support since 1985, Terence Charlton, sj, as well as Robert and Margaret Cloud, whose magnanimity transformed the trajectory of my life. Along the way, some other special people were influential. They are Peter Bycio, Jim Walsh, and Stella Nkomo. To them I owe much. I also thank my brothers and sisters for their support. My gratitude to all my siblings. Interactions with them unearthed some ideas in this book. All other friends who in indescribable ways assisted me deserve to be acknowledged. To them I say, thank you! To the micro-nations of Africa, I echo Jomo Kenyatta’s admonishment<sup>2</sup>: beware of the fangs of allochthons which are digging deeper into your neck to choke out your vitality.

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<sup>2</sup>The First President of Kenya. See his book, *Facing Mount Kenya* (p. 306), for this admonishment.

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# Introduction

On Thursday, September 27, 2018, the US Senate held a hearing on the accusations of Dr Christine Blasey Ford, a psychologist and professor who alleged that Brett Kavanaugh attempted to sexually assault her when they were teenagers. After the hearings, several commentators characterized the hearing as a display of tribalism. For example, Erick Black of the MinnPost wrote that there was “a display of tribal divisions at the Kavanaugh hearing”<sup>1</sup> and Jason Claffey reports that Senator Jeff Flake indicated in New Hampshire that the Kavanaugh Hearings were marred by tribal politics.<sup>2</sup> James Hohmann of the Washington Post wrote that “Tribalism fuels GOP embrace of Kavanaugh.”<sup>3</sup> Even before the hearings, there were indications that people should “expect transparent tribalism to be on full display in reaction to ford/kavanaugh hearings.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, some think the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency introduced or heightened tribalism. For example, the Guardian notes that “in an era of bile and tribalism, Christine Blasey Ford displayed the calm temperament of a judge while the supreme court nominee lashed out.”<sup>5</sup> Even academics joined the “tribalism” debate. For example, some scholars talked of “ideological tribalism.”<sup>6</sup> In the rigor-relevance debate in management research, Gulati (2007) wrote of tent poles, tribalism, and boundary spanning. Of course, his use of the term could not have been for naught. He notes that in the tribal warfare, there are causes and effects of tribalism and “this reconfiguration means freeing ourselves from the tribalism of either/or, to integrate rigor with relevance” (p. 781). His use of the term is different but derived from the same etymology and has the same meaning as those observed in the Kavanaugh hearing. The hearing was not the only place where the word or concept of *tribe*

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.minnpost.com/eric-black-ink/2018/09/a-display-of-tribal-divisions-at-the-kavanaugh-hearing/>. Accessed on October 2, 2018.

<sup>2</sup><https://patch.com/new-hampshire/bedford-nh/flake-nh-kavanaugh-hearings-marred-tribal-politics>. Accessed on October 2, 2018.

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/daily-202/2018/09/27/daily-202-tribalism-fuels-gop-embrace-of-kavanaugh/5bac1c5f1b326b7c8a8d16b8/?utm\\_term=.a648d6b75b71](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/daily-202/2018/09/27/daily-202-tribalism-fuels-gop-embrace-of-kavanaugh/5bac1c5f1b326b7c8a8d16b8/?utm_term=.a648d6b75b71). Accessed on October 2, 2018.

<sup>4</sup><https://medium.com/@munrkazmir/expect-transparent-tribalism-to-be-on-full-display-in-reaction-to-ford-kavanaugh-hearings-38faed2319f6>. Accessed on October 2, 2018.

<sup>5</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/27/brett-kavanaugh-christine-blasey-ford-hearing-analysis>. Accessed on October 2, 2018.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-n02P0qHS0>. Accessed on October 2, 2018.

was brought to the fore. Recall any past conflict in Africa (Biafra war in Nigeria, Rwanda genocide), Asia (Afghanistan, Myanmar), and Europe (Bosnia) and you hear musing of the “tribe” and its brother “ethnic” behind it.

One major question is, *what is wrong with the “tribe” or “ethnic” concept?* Do the above statements and similar others point to a “lack of understanding of tribes.”<sup>7</sup> The common meaning in all the views observed above is the in-group–out-group dynamic of psychological research which points to discriminatory practices of prejudice by the in-group toward the out-group. That might be the reason why the term “ethnic” seems more palatable; it relates to the identity of individuals and their sense of self. So, disparaging “ethnicity” is tantamount to disparaging the identity of individuals. In other words, “ethnic” seems less problematic than “tribe.”

## Origins

There is a diversity of sources of the concept of tribe. According to the online etymology dictionary, the concept of *tribe* was originally from either Old French, *tribu*, or directly from Latin, *tribus*, which referred to “one of the three political/ethnic divisions of the original Roman state” (*Tites*, *Rammes*, and *Luceres*, corresponding, perhaps, to the *Latins*, *Sabines*, and *Etruscans*). It may also perhaps come from tri- “three” + \*bheue-, root of the verb *be*. Others connect the word with the PIE root \*treb- “a dwelling.” It is also probably a Latin translation of the Greek *phyle* “race or tribe of men, body of men united by ties of blood and descent, a clan” (see *phyllo*-). The modern extension to ethnic groups or races of people is from the 1590s and referred specifically to “a division of a barbarous race of people, usually distinguishable in some way from their congeners, united into a community under a recognized head or chief” (Century Dictionary) but colloquially of any aggregate of individuals of a kind.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of ethnicity is also bedeviled by similar etymological ambiguities. The etymology of the word “ethnic” probably dates back to the late fifteenth century (earlier ethnical, early fifteenth century). It referred to a “pagan, heathen” and likely came from Late Latin *ethnicus*. Earlier in English, it was a noun, “a heathen, pagan, one who is not a Christian or Jew” (c. 1400). Further, in Septuagint, the Greek term *ta ethne* translates in Hebrew as *goyim*, plural of “*goy*” meaning “nation,” especially of non-Israelites, especially “gentile nation, foreign nation not worshipping the true God” (see *goy*). Others think it probably came from Greek “ethnikos” referring “of or for a nation, national.” *Ethnikos* is used by ecclesiastical writers in a sense of “savouring of the nature of pagans, alien to the worship of the true God,” and as a noun “the pagan, the gentile.” Some writers (Polybius, etc.) also referred to it as “adopted to the genius or customs of a people, peculiar to a people,” and among grammarians, it was defined as “suited to the manners or language of foreigners.” Others think it is from *ethnos* referring to a “band of people living together, nation, people, tribe, caste,”

<sup>7</sup><https://www.indianz.com/News/2018/09/19/lack-of-understanding-of-tribes-brett-ka.asp>. Accessed on October 2, 2018.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.etymonline.com/word/tribe>

even though it is sometimes used to refer to swarms or flocks of animals, properly “people of one’s own kind.” In modern use (i.e., from 1945), it refers to a “member of an ethnic group.” The classical sense of “peculiar to a race or nation” in English is attested from 1851, which marks a return to the word’s original meaning; that of “different cultural groups” is 1935; and that of “racial, cultural or national minority group” is associated with American English from around 1945. Ethnic cleansing is attested from 1991.<sup>9</sup>

This linkage probably accounts for the derogation of both “tribe” and “ethnic” in modern times particularly in Western societies which are trying to replace tribes or ethnic groups with nations. However, as Kotkin (1993) has pointed out, five major tribes – Jews, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and Anglo-Americans – have created new international business networks, shaped the world’s economy in the past – and will dominate its future. This observation suggests that “tribes” are part of us today, tomorrow, and forever. Understanding and exploiting the potential of the tribe will therefore help African societies and the world. Each Western nation (particularly those of Europe) is composed of tribes or ethnic groups (Macdonald, 1993; Thomson & Crul, 2007). But talking of the “tribe” seems to be an anathema; it interferes with nation-building (Applegate, 1999; Talentino, 2004). Compared to other contexts (e.g., Africa), Europe has had a longer time to slough off the tribe or ethnic identity and to don the national identity. It was not easy for Europe. And for others (e.g., Jews, Japanese, etc.), it is not easy either. You have Jews who are more oriented toward other Jews and Israel, their ethnic origins.<sup>10</sup> You have Irish who are more oriented toward Ireland. You have Germans who are more oriented toward Germany. You have Italians, Spaniards, English, French, etc. who are also more predisposed toward Italy, Spain, England, France, respectively. They are macro-tribes like Mossi in Ghana/Burkina Faso, Masai in East Africa, or Akans in Ghana. Of course, it may not be as strong and overt as in Africa but the fact that it is covert does not mean ethnicity does not exist. The desire to slough off the tribe or ethnic identity was embedded in the colonial enterprise in Africa particularly after the Berlin Conference of 1884 (Förster, Mommsen, & Robinson, 1988). However, it has not been successful. Take Ghana, for example. In 2018, through a referendum engineered by political elites, three regions – Northern, Brong-Ahafo, and Volta – were split along tribal lines into six new regions.<sup>11,12</sup> In the Oti enclave in the Volta Region, for example, 99% voted YES for the creation of the Oti Region while 1% voted NO suggesting that almost the entire ethnic group wanted their own region. Some considered the creation of the new regions according to tribe, in some cases, “a non-negotiable matter of internal self-determination.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.etymonline.com/word/ethnic#etymonline\\_v\\_11656](https://www.etymonline.com/word/ethnic#etymonline_v_11656)

<sup>10</sup><https://www.jpost.com/opinion/olmert-i-hate-everything-sheldon-adelson-loved-about-israel-opinion-656289>

<sup>11</sup>Based on an interview with the Chair of the Commission for the Creation of New Regions in Ghana, Justice Brobbey at his residence in June, 2018.

<sup>12</sup>[https://media.peacefonline.com/docs/201812/762942613\\_800218.pdf](https://media.peacefonline.com/docs/201812/762942613_800218.pdf)

<sup>13</sup><https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Creation-of-new-regions-is->

Africa is the continent with the largest number of tribes. These tribes or ethnic groups are not a recent phenomenon; they have been part of Africa since ancient times. Buzon (2006, p. 684), in his study of the biological and ethnic identity in New Kingdom Nubia, argues that:

while ethnic identity is sometimes thought of as relatively modern concept created in response to the emergence of nation-states (Handler, 1988), it is clear that some Egyptians set themselves apart from other groups through their visual depictions of various “peoples” of Egypt and surrounding cultures (Meskell, 2002; Smith, 2003). One example is the drawing from the tomb of pharaoh Seti I (Rossellini, 1932, p. 44; Fig. 2) (Buzon, 2006). In this drawing, Egyptians and others are clearly portrayed with distinctive dress as well as specific physical features, including face shape, hair, and skin colour. It is apparent from this illustration and others that at least some Egyptians conceived of physical and cultural differences between themselves and others (including Nubians).

Even though there has been intermingling of tribes over the years resulting in contestations of unique tribal identity or attributes, some tribal features or attributes (e.g., DNA) have persisted. The author is a witness. In 2020, he requested his ancestry composition from 23andMe.com. The results show that he is 99.9% West African. He is a Tallensi which is part of the modern Mossi tribe that straddles Ghana and Burkina Faso. The Mossi tribe migrated from the old Ghana Empire an area in modern-day Mali, Mauritania, and Guinea. Ghana was conquered by the old Songhai and Mali empires. The people and traders from those empires eventually settled in northern Ghana and were then incorporated into Burkina Faso and Ghana as part of the partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885. Even though the slave trade resulted in some Europeans raping and copulating with West Africans, it shows that his ancestors did not suffer that hideous fate; his tribal attributes remain unalloyed.

It is likely there are others like me among the several tribes in Africa. Cameroon has over 200 tribes, while Nigeria has over 100 tribes. Even though some tribes are small, others are big enough to be nations. As a result, Maathai (2009) suggested that the tribes in Africa are micro-nations which happened to have been aggregated to macro-nations through the partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884. The Zulu, Masai, Akan, Yoruba, Kikuyus, Mossi, etc. are large enough to constitute nations by themselves. Maathai, like others (e.g., Ayi Kwei Armah, Cheik Anta Diop) believe that tribes are more beneficial than have been shown. They argue that it is the manipulative behaviors of external agents such as pitting one tribe against another that creates conflicts and other problems. In Rwanda, for example, the colonialists deliberately institutionalized the Hutus as “better” than the Tutsis such that after independence, the former tended to not

only disrespect but maltreat the latter.<sup>14</sup> As Seth Godin (2008) indicates, “human beings can’t help it: we need to belong,” and “one of the most powerful of our survival mechanisms is to be part of a tribe, to contribute to (and take from) a group of like-minded people.” He adds that “we want to belong not to just one tribe, it turns out, but to many.” Indeed, he defines a tribe as

a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate.

He sees nothing wrong with the tribe. In fact, he explains why it is essential and important for humans.

This reason may account for the increasing growth of tribal groups of Africa in the United States, for example. When I arrived in Cincinnati in 1997, there was just one national organization, Ghana Association. All Ghanaians, regardless of tribe, belonged to it. After I returned 13 years later, there were about 10 tribal groups and 1 moribund Ghana Association. I interviewed some of the leaders of the tribal groups to understand why the shift from national to tribal groups. One leader remarked that there seems to have been an awakening about the obligations of individuals to their tribes and not the nation. As shown in Appendix 1, the Ga-Adangme ethnic group has about 10 associations in the United States and Canada. A similar situation manifests in Nigeria (see Appendix 2).

The above observations represent scholarly and non-scholarly views as well as general and specific meanings. They encompass diverse disciplines. Collectively, they raise one fundamental question of what is the tribe or ethnic group? As I discuss in Chapter 1, several perspectives or theoretical schools have attempted to explain the tribe or ethnicity.<sup>15</sup> The four schools of ethnicity (see Chapter 1) have bearing on *ethnos* oblige which argues that individuals act essentially, nominally, contextually, and habitually. Ethnicity in Africa is viewed from all these perspectives because the primordialism tendency manifest particularly in the rural sectors where traditional practices still dominate. The instrumentalist tendencies also manifest in the urban sectors where modernism and Westernism have altered the basic motivations of individuals particularly toward their ethnic groups. The person-in-community concept which undergirds rural traditional societies is replaced with the person-of-community concept where the individual only harkens to the ethnic group as a resource. The instrumentalist school is salient particularly in the political sphere where politicians appeal to ethnic or tribal leaders to mobilize ethnic members’ votes. Constructivist tendencies also seem evident in contexts where repatriates are motivated to transfer values or construct social systems into the community resulting in a mix of traditional and modern or foreign tendencies (Gyekye, 1997). Last, the socialization practices of the community which inculcate the ethnic obligation (Karenga, 2004) make

<sup>14</sup><https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/5523/2812.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>15</sup>I use them interchangeably in this book.

the individuals social agents act[ing] strategically in the pursuit of interests not only for themselves but for the collective because of the shared disposition of *habitus*.

## Ethnicity in the World

Tribes and ethnic groups abound in the world. Not only do the current groups around the world (e.g., Germans, Irish, Jews, Chinese, Indians, Japanese, Italians, etc.) which claim to have sloughed off the tribal cloak being tied to tribes in the past, but also they continue to think and behave like tribes. Joel Kotkin (1993) discusses five “global tribes” in the modern era – Jews, British, Japanese, Chinese, and Indians – because “science advanced, knowledge grew, nature was mastered, but Reason did not conquer and tribalism did not go away” (Isaacs, 1975, p. 25). Despite the different historical attributes, the tribes he mentions all show “strong ethnic identity and a sense of mutual dependence that helps the group adjust to changes in the global economic and political order without losing its essential unity,” have mutual trust that allows “the tribe to function collectively beyond the confines of national or regional borders” (Kotkin, 1993, p. 4).

Even though the concept of obligation is not explicit in Kotkin’s exposition, the “sense of mutual dependence that helps the group” suggests expectation of members toward each other. In other words, Jews expect other Jews to help one another in much the same way that Chinese expect other Chinese to help them, and Indians expect other Indians to help them. J Street, a pro-Israel group in the United States,

organizes pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans to promote US policies that embody our deeply held Jewish ... values and that help secure the State of Israel as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people.<sup>16</sup>

Embodied in J Street is an obligation to advance the Jewish tribe. That obligation, as I discuss in Chapter 2, is based on *benevolent* and *agentic* expectations. Members of J Street *centralize* the benevolence and agency expectations. Whatever outcomes they achieve – democracy, peace, nuclear armament, etc. – all derive from that tribal obligation. Indeed, van den Berghe (1986) argues that humans have always being ethnic. Value judgments such as “particularism,” “traditionalism,” and “tribalism” were applied to support the view that race and ethnicity were dysfunctional in industrial societies, represented traditional residues of previous eras. Of course, that did not happen! However, think of Bosnia and you have tribe. Mention Rwanda, and the response is tribe. Or bring in World Wars I and II carriages, and their wheels were tribe. In the twenty-first century, the tribe is cloaked in nationalism even by leaders who cheated their way into power. Yet, those leaders strive to deny others the opportunity of *being* in the guise of “being tribal is bad.” In short, tribes and ethnic groups have never been

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<sup>16</sup><https://jstreet.org/about-us/mission-principles/#.YKHDvKhKjIU>

dead and will never die. What is important is to understand the tribe (George et al., 2016). That is one function of science. Scientific studies of the tribe will unearth mechanisms for strengthening its benefits or pruning its thorns. That clarion call should be heeded by social scientists particularly in Africa. And for management and organization scholars, the clarion call is particularly urgent. The major transformations – coming into force of the African continental free trade area (AFCFTA) and Agenda 2063 – heighten industrial and organizational roles which undoubtedly are going to be influenced by tribal institutions.

## **Ethnicity in Africa**

Why is there a need to understand tribes or ethnic groups in Africa? Kenyatta (1965) observes that

careful study of the tribal system of education, the economic, religious, and political aspects of life will no doubt reveal the forces which hold the tribe together and make it happy and strong. (p. 96)

Black Africans are believed to have descended from ancient Egypt (i.e., Kemet or KMT). In KMT, archaeological evidence shows definition of ethnic groups both by ancient Egyptians and Egyptologists at “multicultural” sites (mostly Nubian fortresses and cities in the Middle and New Kingdom, towns such as Elephantine and Tell el-Dab’a, as well as cult centers such as Serabit el-Khadim, etc.). Ethnic identity emphasized collective identity during the Pharaonic period. As Africans traversed the continent over the millennia, the tribe or ethnic basis was not lost; rather it was strengthened as an existential force. That existential basis has not waned in modern Africa. So, studying ethnicity now matters for four reasons. First, it is entangled in political and economic facets of African societies such that the politics of production and distribution are inextricably linked to ethnicity. Shaw (1986, p. 592) notes that

once ethnicity becomes entangled with the politics of production and distribution, famine and fortune, it moves away from the orthodox definition and agenda as supplementary social relationships into primary political and economic determinants: from nationalisms into nations.

The entanglement of ethnicity with the economic and political systems suggests that it will always be at the forefront on a daily basis as national, regional, and local decisions are made based on ethnicity or tribal affiliations. Politicians appeal to ethnicity for votes and are therefore beholden to the tribal constituents once elected. Economic and industrial decisions are therefore not made based on efficiency considerations but “vote motivations.” Indeed, in times of crisis, politicians appeal to ethnicity as exemplified in the Kenyan postelection conflicts of 2007/2008 and the Rwandan conflict of 1994.

The second reason is historical legacy. It is not the histories of the tribes but the “artificial nature of post-colonial borders and alienness of the state” that emerged from the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 (Hameso, 2001, p. 38). The imposition of multiple ethnic groups into countries without regard for traditional or historical relevance of those unions compelled the tribes to live in “fear” of each other. Obviously, such forced unions became fodder for conflict particularly at the dawn of independence when leaders were attempting to forge paths and domination for their countries. Members of ethnic groups therefore are socialized to behave not only consistent with the precolonial norms but also continued in the postindependent nations to maintain or restore any value that may have been lost as a consequence.

The third reason is legitimacy. Tribes were micro-nations before colonialism (Maathai, 2009). They existed in ancient Egypt or Kemet. As micro-nations, they had the same status as the macro-nations that were created as a result of the partitioning of Africa. The tribes had leadership structures and governance systems some of which descended from ancient empires. Defence mechanisms that ensured protection of the societies and, in some cases, domination of others, also existed. For example, among the Akans of Ghana, the Asafo organizations were defence entities that protected the kingdom (Datta & Porter, 1971). In addition to leadership structures, the tribes had governance mechanisms that facilitated policies, plans, and strategies. Resource acquisition and distribution among members of the tribe were based on decentralization and/or centralization policies. In short, micro-nations were characterized by political economies similar to those of macro-nations today. The attempted, and in some cases, successful destruction of those political economy systems (Gyekye, 1997) obviously destabilized the micro-nations and motivated desires to restore the lost legitimacies in the post-independence era.

The fourth reason for studying tribes or ethnic groups is authenticity. The demonization of tribes as part of the psychological destruction project of Europeans is erased when an objective scientific lens is applied to the people without value judgments or condemnation. The authentic selves of the people which comes from behaving as members of the tribe is not appreciated when the masked selves derived from Western or European influence is studied. Behavior is in context (Johns, 2006) which suggests that studying the cultural context that influences behavior of tribal members is more likely to be authentic, rather than the pseudoscience of the past.

While the above reasons are ontological motivations, the scientific motivation is the need to understand, explain, and predict, where possible, the behavior of Africans as employees in organizations. Psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies show that individuals do not behave in a vacuum; their behavior is formed, shaped, and based on their cultural origins and socializations. To the extent that they are socialized according to the value systems of the tribe, it is likely they will transfer such behavior into organizations. For example, cross-cultural research shows that the mental programming (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies) of individuals (Hofstede, 2001) is a function of their culture. Management scholars are therefore likely to appreciate organizational behavior when the tribal lens is applied to the cognition, affect, and behavior of