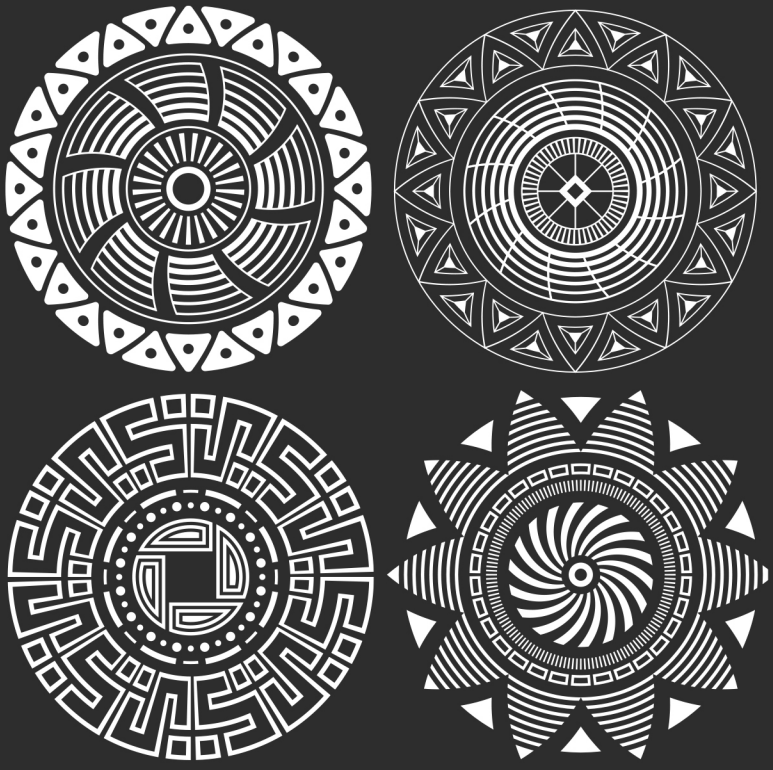
RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

VOLUME I

Traditions of Principled Entrepreneurship



Edited by

KEMI OGUNYEMI
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Responsible Management in Africa, Volume 1

If you ever thought that 'Africa is a country', this book on responsible management in Africa with chapters from the diverse regions of the continent will quickly erase that error. The book gives you two for one; an insightful history on the different peoples and how that history shaped their perspectives on managing responsibly. It is amazing how much indigenous wisdom is condensed in one proverb such as the basotho's 'give me, give me, makes one hungry' and the hausawas' 'the grass which you disregard will injure your eye'. Responsible management styles which are effective in Europe may barely hit the mean in the African continent. An example is the local practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) discretion in Algeria and in many north African countries as against the standard western practice which may be regarded with scepticism by the peoples of that region. This book is a recommended read for anyone doing, teaching, or thinking of doing/teaching business in Africa.

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This book offers a colourful array of Africa's rich history for responsible businesses and principled entrepreneurship, and shares evidence about traditional and informal responsible management systems that existed in the continent long before the adaptation of western management practices. The book draws on the diverse indigenous African ethnicities that could positively complement the current global responsible business management movements and in turn advance the African responsible management discourse. I am looking forward to using its many chapters in my classroom and integrating parts into my assigned course readings.

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Responsible Management in Africa, Volume 1

Traditions of Principled Entrepreneurship

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

to Chinonso Anozie and Omotara Ogunyemi

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Foreword

Responsible Management in Africa

The anthropological record will show that Africans have long lived in harmony with nature and have sought to ensure the survival of all species, through various practices. Religious, medical, cultural and social engagements often connected effective human existence to environmental sustainability. In many places across the continent, nature was believed to represent the Creator and was therefore revered. Indigenous knowledge about the cosmos, nature and even military sciences have been found to have been far advanced in historical Africa. Yet, discourses on responsible business tend to ignore the African experience. Advancements in these and other areas of African existence were rudely interrupted by colonial imposition. The African philosophies that supported the responsible human–nature balance was distorted by colonialism but have struggled to survive to this day. *Responsible Management in Africa*, therefore, has managed to outlive the colonial assault.

For purposes of rendering the African inferior, the colonial project and its discourses painted a distorted picture of knowledge in Africa: a continent where no form of knowledge existed before the colonial order was imposed; a continent where people are so preoccupied with survival instincts that there is no time and effort, or even the ability, to think of anything else; a continent that remains totally dependent on Western ideologies to shape her own histories in Africa. Using various instruments of colonial rule, a caricature of Africa was created. That seems now to represent the worst in human existence – war, famine, disease, primitivism and savagery. Sadly, there exists a latent process that continues to entrench such beliefs around Africa and African inferiority.

In this book, indigenous African knowledges and histories are being reconsidered to represent the truth about Africa. The collection of chapters in the volume speaks to *Responsible Management in Africa* towards demonstrating the strength of African-grounded discourses in enhancing responsible management knowledge in the global sphere. Covering a broad spectrum of areas from history, philosophy, sociology through several other disciplines, the volume presents a vibrant outline of African indigenous knowledge to suggest the active role that Africa has played – and continues to play – in responsible management. Together, these chapters share only a small bit of the wealth of African knowledge with the rest of the world, not the mention that such knowledge sharing interrupts the flow of negative information about Africa and Africans.

'Africa is various', as the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has suggested. The continent is large enough that it will be easy to fit China, Europe, India, Japan and the United States of America together into it. The 54 countries that make up the continent do not have the same political, cultural and economic systems. Recognising this diversity, the collection of chapters in the volume attempts to capture both the geographies and knowledges of the entire continent – North, South, East, West and Central. About 77% of the continent's population of over one billion people are under the age of 35. That is, the continent's peoples are very young, with an ever enlightened sense of African identity; yet there is no singular or collective African identity. The growing interest among the youth in African histories, clothing, languages and other markers of identity underlies the need for more research to overthrow the dominant African discourses that are often in reference to Western imagination.

This volume, *Responsible Management in Africa*, is one avenue for such an effort. While offering a critical perspective in entrenching the value of Africa indigenous knowledge into the global discourse, the chapters in this volume, as a collective, take a reconciliatory approach to establishing an objective record. The approach is in sharp contrast to the colonial approach of imposition. The chapters are presented in a manner that one can appreciate the facts and arguments towards reasonable conclusions – hopefully in line with the authors' views. This does not mean a singular understanding and interpretation of the chapters. After all, 'the author is dead', as Roland Barthes would argue. However, the chapters contribute to a story, regardless of the diversity of possible interpretations. Though not written as a conscious rebuttal to the colonial discourse, the chapters in this volume come together to remedy the idea that African indigenous knowledge is inferior and of no value to the rest of the world. They speak of history, science, business, culture, power and poverty that reside in African imaginations of past and present, pointing to the idea that Africa is knowledge itself.

Imagine Africa as a recognised part of the global research agenda on Responsible Management. Impact!

This is only the beginning as you join this journey of rediscovering African through indigenous methods and practices that inform *Responsible Management in Africa* for the world. Welcome to Africa!

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November 30, 2021

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Gratitude is due to each chapter contributor, author and coauthors, for providing a wealth of information gotten through their research. The authors often had to interview people from across the continent and we are grateful for their willingness to assist in making the project a robust exploration of the topics. We wish to thank Dr Imelda Wallace for her support and willingness to review chapters and her helpful comments for improving the drafts. We thank Dr Mohamed Eid, the Director of the Internationalisation Office, The British University in Egypt, for his invaluable contribution to the chapter on Egypt and for his readiness to respond to questions from the authors and editors.

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