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# **Proliferation in Tanzania: A Human Resource Management Approach**

## **Book Review**

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### **Abstract**

Marxist analysis of wage labour and its contradictions in the capitalist mode of production provides the guiding framework for theoretical and empirical understanding of the emergence of the working class and its struggle in Africa. Shivji's book, *Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania* (1986) thoroughly documents the evolution of wage labour, its exploitation and struggle against colonial and immediate post colonial state in Tanganyika. Whereas this book had previously been reviewed by Gutkind (1987) and Nimtz (1989), the current work depart from these previous literature by employing Human resource Management, as an alternative theoretical approach for examining the influence of labor management in the process of proliferation in Africa and Tanzania in particular. Arguably, it was the introduction of human resource management practices and capitalist industrial exchange relations on Tanganyika pre-colonial socio-economic system that constituted to the emergence of the system of wage labour known today.

Marking the beginning of the two phases of wage labor system, Shivji uses chapter one, two and three to explain the development and condition of semi-proletarian system in pre-colonial Tanganyika. The standard prescription holds that human resource management practices contributed substantially to its emergence. Assuming that indigenous people (workers) were normally distributed and hence differ in their productivity, in order to maximize profit, the colonial administration used recruitment practices such as direct force, taxation and recruitment agencies to deceive and force people to work. Despite significant protest from indigenous people, the use of force conditioned people to the habits of work and gradually led to semi- proletariat and finally full proletarianization. In Shivji's terms, conscriptions, as one of the forced recruitment practice, introduced people to the paid labour for the first time. Equally important to note is the fact that these recruitment practices worked in tandem with maximum punishment such as fines and imprisonment for those who did not show up to work.

The author also raises observation that, whereas the target was acquiring cheap labour and therefore perpetration of wage system, the colonial State made little, if none, investment in training for the native workers resulting into work-inefficiency. The influence of human resource management practices also manifested itself in the paid wage practice. Workers were paid very low salaries which were disproportionate to the actual living costs. Low pay meant labour dependency to the wage system and therefore gradual separation from their means of production. The *kipande* and *Bachelor-wage* systems are good examples pointed out by Shivji. From a Resource-Based view theoretical reasoning, such human resource practices that do not view workers as an asset were responsible for high labor turnover and a series of work desertion and absenteeism prevailed during this period. At the center stage, the State through Master and Native Ordinance Act of 1923 played a significant role in the enforcement of these exploitative human resource practices.

Chapter four notes the development of a full-proletariat system in Tanganyika. The potential feature of this development was a creation of permanent employment system and therefore a complete separation of labour (workers) from their means of production. Infrastructure, construction and transport were the first sectors to experience the beginning of full-proletarianization. During this period, recruitment targeted both semi-skilled and skilled workers and to a great extent was based on racial discrimination. Shivji also notes that training of African workers was meagre and rudimentary mainly limited to the on-the-job training. On another account, wages continued to remain low and bad working conditions persisted resulting into low productivity and high turnover. No wonder this was a period that was characterized by rampant industrial actions. Most notably, this phase saw the adoption of human resource management techniques such as service grades and salary scales, as it was stipulated in the Employment Ordinance Act No. 47 of 1955 and its subsequent amendments.

The analysis of chapter five, six and seven highlights the story of the Tanganyika and later Tanzania working-class struggles, and the rise and fall of the trade unions movements. Whereas Human resource theoretical reasoning explicates that working conditions is a prerequisite for employee productivity, this was not the case during colonial times. Drawing from a wide range of sources and examples, Shivji argues that workers were exposed to inadequate safety and health standards including loud noises, high temperatures and other environmental hazards, and doing otherwise of this meant wasteful spending and thereby affecting capitalist profit. Withstanding, the author also shows that informal nature of the employment relationship, lack of substantive details in employment entitlements such as contracts, minimum wages, working hours and maternity leave, coupled with weak collective bargaining affected workers' ability to negotiate their conditions of employment and therefore continued exploitation. Indeed, Shivji points to this as a beginning of workers movement, as it was later characterized by vibrant trade unions and a wide range of collective action.

Indeed, this text thoroughly accounts for the rise of active labor movements in Tanganyika. Tracing from 1920s up to the end of 1950s, Tanganyika witnessed the formation and existence of various Trade Unions such as The Tanganyika Territory African Civil Service Association (TTACSA) and Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL), although they were subjected to the control

of colonial administration. Just like elsewhere, the main objective of these civil society organizations were to protect workers' rights against the oppressive colonial state, even as they later joined hands with TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) in the fighting for independence. However, this relationship did not last long. Soon after independence Trade Unions and post colonial administration were not reading from the same script. While the government embarked on implementing favorable social and economic policies that would encourage foreign investment to improve the living condition of the masses, Trade Unions on the other hand were busy organizing strikes that were perceived by the government to scare away investors. Such industrial actions were deemed to be a threat to the newly independence government and the only viable option was their subjection to the state control. It is worth noting that the law was instrumental in the implementation of these policies.

Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania contain a wealth of information on the development of labor law in relation to the development of wage labour in colonial Tanganyika. Apparently there is a debate among scholars over the usefulness of Marxist approach to the study of social change and economic relations in the society. Notwithstanding, the author deemed it fit to solely rely on Marx's theoretical approach to the analysis of social change and economic relation in Tanganyika. This is however not to dismiss the value of the analysis, rather, to point out that social change and exploitation is anchored in many factors such as religion, ethnicity and gender.

Upon reading the book, the verdict rendered by the author is that the development of wage labour had no (if any) positive implication to the socio-economic development of indigenous Africans, Tanganyikans in particular. This is evident when Shivji himself explains in this volume that areas where workers were drawn were also areas of economic backwardness and stagnation. However, it is clear without fear of contradiction that wage labor, which was entirely a new phenomena to indigenous Tanganyikans transformed subsistence traditional economy into cash production system allowing cash needs to enter into rural life resulting into improved social conditions without substantially altering their-work-life pattern. In addition, Shivji completely ignores some transformative human resources management practices employed in the process of proletarianization in colonial Africa. Arguably, indigenous Africans who had initially lacked skills from formal education were trained to serve in various factories and service sectors. Shivji narrate that in 1922 Governor Byatt had proposed training African personnel to man government departments. Indeed, training was done for clerical, craftsmen, drivers, artisans, carpenters, mechanics, and mason. Also training was done in the transport sectors such as railway workshops and docks. Also Health and education sectors saw training taking its way. Training though was meagre had imparted some kind of awareness which led to the rise of first generation freedom fighters.

There is limited assessment of Human resource management practices employed by the post-independence regime and its effects on the social-economic development on workers. The post independence period saw Tanzania implementing a policy of socialism and self-reliance from 1967 to the mid-1970s. Socialist implementation strategies had significant contradiction on Tanzania's economic development and management of workers in particular. This piece of work

was written in 1986 and it accounts events from 1920 - 1964. The author gives no explanation as to why be oblivious to this important literature. Analysis of the post independence working class would allow assessment of the role of the working class not only in the struggle for independence but also in the post independence struggle for economic and cultural development.

Shivji, a household name in Tanzania, has successfully managed to make readers understand a historical perspective of a working class creation in Tanzania, even as human resource management practices played a significant role in the whole process. The title of the book resonates well with the content in chapters and therefore its rigor. Without fear of contradiction, this is one of the significant literature containing a wealth of knowledge and understanding of historical perspective of human resource management from one of the least developed country, Tanzania. The most striking aspect discovered in this volume is that whilst it is assumed that High Performing Human Resource Practices (HPHRP) leads to higher performance, this work suggests otherwise, that Low Performing Human Resource Practices (LPHRP) leads to higher performance. As such, a further research is needed to confirm this newly hypothesized relationship in the current context.

Whereas the usefulness of this book lies in its critical look at the question of capitalism and its source of profit seen in the context of the dominant role of the worker, there is however limited discussion on the alternative theoretical framework that can assist in explaining how these human resource practices were linked to capitalist profit. Nevertheless, this study has supported the view that human resource management can have significant influence on any dependent variable. For human resource researchers and practitioners, this is a must-read-peace of work providing a handful insight into the history of human resource management in Tanzania mainland and Africa in general.

**Title:** Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania: 1920-1964

**Author:** Issa G. Shivji. **Publisher:** Portsmouth, N.H. Heinemann. **City:** London,

**Year of Publication:** 1986. **Number of Pages:** 288. **ISSB Number:** 0-85255-302-1