

The Right Hand in Indigenous African Economic Thought: The Case of the Benin People of Southern Nigeria

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Abstract : The paper analyses the right hand in indigenous African economic thought using the Benin people of Southern Nigeria as a case study. The Benin people esteemed handiwork and industriousness and embodied it with the right hand, which was regarded as the ultimate bringer of material wellbeing and societal status. The paper aims to contribute to African economic thought by analysing the conception of the hand in pre-colonial Benin society as the source of material wherewithal and to reveal how the hand was epitomised as the ultimate purveyor of economic providence and class status. The study adopts the historical method, and the interpretive design was used. Primary and secondary sources were utilised, and the findings confirm that the conception of the hand as the giver of material wellbeing was calculatingly done to recompense an industrious and productive lifestyle worthy of accolades and emulations. Findings also show that the people of Benin thought that the right hand is the ultimate bringer of material prosperity and therefore placed tremendous value on it up to the point of veneration. The paper also reveals that the Benin people thought that the fruits of one's labour outvalued other possessions like an inheritance. The paper also shows that the Benin economic thought, on the hand, as signifying productiveness, intensely encouraged productivity and disdained indolence in the society.

Keywords : Benin, economic thought, hand, industriousness

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