

Thorn in the Foot: Is African Culture a Menace to Data Protection Advancements

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I once visited Ilmorog: a village isolated from capitalism, and urbanisation. Technology is as rare as a diamond in the rough. (A fictional village in Ngugi Thiongo's *Petals of Blood* 1977). A beautiful culture of African heritage invites you from afar. Ilmorog people bathe in the river, bask along the river bank watching and chatting with others who are still bathing. They live as a community. I wondered if they knew anything about privacy. I asked myself, whether they had any personal data to protect.

Later, I flew to the Hub. A sophisticated city where Ilmorog people have never set foot. Here, capitalism is a lifeblood, it is the heart of urbanisation, and technology is water to the fish. They almost scanned the pupil of my eye to grant entry. They swapped my Identity card and my data was scanned in a second. They allowed me in. Unlike Ilmorog, they had all sorts of personal data to protect, from their healthcare systems to confidential client reports. They are in the era of data protection.

African culture is a two-world in one. We have Ilmorog and the Hub. Nevertheless, a majority of Africans are still enjoying life in Ilmorog. The culture of community and collectivism. While they have personal data to protect, they do not know the significance of data protection. This is unlike the Western culture of individualism which encourages privacy. On the other hand, people in the Hub are connecting with the outside world and advancing technologically. Artificial Intelligence is taking shape in all aspects of their lives. Technological advancements are spreading like fire in California. Soon, the people of Ilmorog will have to change and adapt to the new world. The world of data and technology.

This paper interrogates the negative effect that our African culture has on our trajectory in advancing data protection. It narrows down to what this means in terms of economic gains, development as a region and the future of Africa in taking part in global markets. Objectively, it raises an alarm to Africans to ensure they are not left out of the global round table due to their cultural practices. It exposes the current African cultural practices depicted as Ilmorog. Communism and collectivism are slowly becoming extinct. Africans are becoming more individualist. This means they are moving towards data protection. This says much about what we should be doing as Africa. Data protection or privacy generally, is a new concept to the people of Ilmorog. However, it is either they change and adapt to the new world or perish.

Although there is literature with regard to cultural influence on privacy in Africa, this paper is interested in demonstrating what we are losing by holding on to our collective and communist cultural practices. In summary, besides depicting the African culture with regard to privacy, the paper compares Africa with the outside world which has appreciated the benefits of data protection. It further depicts the current sophisticated state of affairs: for instance, crime and justice have surveillance technology for security, healthcare systems are advanced, courts are conducting trials online, and confidential arbitration and mediation meetings are held virtually among many other fields which are advancing Artificial Intelligence. In addition, it discusses the controversial area of cross-border data protection among African states. All these are tested on the theoretical framework of the theory of privacy in Africa. The research is methodologically desktop analysing literature in the area.

In light of the above, the paper finds that our African culture impacts negatively on how we are leveraging technological advancement such as Artificial Intelligence. The paper concludes by giving proposals on how to create awareness for the people of Ilmorog. It provides recommendations for coming up with accommodative standards and regulations among other recommendations. It proposes a solution to cut the overdependence on first-world countries for technological progression.