

A CRITIQUE ON THE UTILIZATION OF INDIGENOUS MATERIAL CULTURE AS AN ART FORM OF COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION AMONG FEW COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

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Received: **01 Apr 2018**

Accepted: **05 Apr 2018**

Published: **20 Apr 2018**

ABSTRACT

Initially, it was believed that Africa as a continent did not have art, at the onset of the 20th century, after it was established that African art did indeed exist, it was termed as Primitive art. Traditional African culture has always incorporated art forms in their daily lives as a way of communication for various reasons. The following article is intends to give a brief review of how art forms have been utilized by various communities in Kenya and what meanings those communities derive from their artworks with relation to culture and tradition. In the hope that it will reveal to the rest of the world what Africa defines as art and how they incorporate it into their daily lives. The study was conducted in Kenya using quantitative data collected from libraries and museums and past recordings on Kenyan culture.

KEYWORDS:

Body Art: *Art made on the body as a canvass to express feelings, ideas and for communication. In some instances, the art is considered one with the body. Examples include: tattooing, scarification, painting, piercings, etc*

Circumciser: *An individual who performs circumcisions in traditional African society during the rites of passage circumcision ritual*

Colonization: *Establishing control over natives initially occupying a certain area.*

Indigenous: *Also known as native of natural occurrence.*

Laibon: *A ritual, spiritual leader of the Maasai community who uses mystical powers to heal the sick and perform protection rituals before heading for war.*

Material Culture: *Symbolic and functional objects a community uses in daily life, such as bones, leather/hides, natural beads, seeds, wood, coconut shells, ostrich eggshells and feathers, guards, iron ore, pottery, animal teeth, sisal, etc. that are relevant to that particular community.*

Mother Tongue: *The local language is spoken in the community from which one is born/ originates from.*

Rain Maker: *A ritual leader in African societies whose purpose was to conjure up rain at the beginning of planting season or when needed or stop rain if they caused calamities to their environment.*

Rites of Passage: *The cycle of life according to African culture: childhood- adulthood-marriage – death*

Scarification: *A form of tattooing that has a symbolic meaning practiced by some communities in traditional Kenya. Also known as cicatrization.*

Witchdoctor: *Someone (male/female) who is believed to heal through magical/ spiritual powers.*