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**AESTHETIC, FUNCTIONAL AND SOCIAL-CULTURAL  
SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL ART  
AMONG THE MAASAI OF KENYA**

**A Study of Forms, Ornaments, Design Patterns,  
Decorations And Their Symbolic Meaning**

**A Thesis Submitted In Fulfilment  
For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy  
Of The University Of Nairobi**

**Department Of Design  
Faculty Of Architecture, Design And Development  
College Of Architecture And Engineering  
University Of Nairobi**

**2000**

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SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL ART AMONG  
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THIS THESIS IS HEREBY RECORDED FOR  
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MAINA, SYLVESTER J.M.

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DECLARATION

I SYLVESTER J.M. MAINA do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

DECLARATION OF THE SUPERVISORS

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.



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S.J.M. Maina.

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to study an important aspect of a greatly respected African traditional community, the Maasai. The dissertation sets out endeavours to study the aesthetic, functional, social and cultural significance of the Maasai art-forms and design patterns. The study investigated the symbolic meaning behind Maasai ornaments, decorations and other art-forms.

In carrying out the aims of the study, analysis has been made of Maasai lifestyle in general and such aspects as social and cultural characteristics, economic organization and material culture. When dealing with material culture, the study has essentially, concerned itself with traditional art-forms, design patterns and aesthetic concepts. Thus, the following items and terms have been analysed; design criteria, concepts and symbolism, colour code and symbolism, household items and storage equipments, dresses, body decorations, head-dress and ornamentation, necklaces, waistwear and belts, arm and finger wear, footwear, ear ornaments, bead decorations and related jewellery, animal ornaments, weaponry, items of defence and warfare, entertainment, fun and play gadgetry and other objects for general and other uses.

The above items of social, cultural, functional and aesthetic values convey meanings to the users. These objects are much more than just good crafts and beautiful ornaments. On the contrary, they have deep symbolic meanings. However, it is important to realise that their symbolic meanings can only be properly appreciated in the traditional context. For example, shields, spears, containers, pendants, bangles, ear-rings, etc, have clear roles to play in the social fabric and only when they played their roles properly did they acquire aesthetic value in the traditional sense.

At this point it is important to mention and emphasise that aesthetic, functional and social-cultural appeals are all closely interlinked and interrelated. Indeed to interpret one in a work of art is to interpret the other two therefore in this research the mention of any one of the three appeals is meant to also imply the others. In other words aesthetics is part of culture and culture is part of social functions.

In order to also find out about design concepts and principles of organisation that govern the making of Maasai art-forms and design patterns, the author has examined the basis of historical and environmental influences in relation to the materials used and their function in the community. The study has tried to link the above social-cultural values, which include birth,

childhood, initiation, marriage, moranhood and elders with With aesthetic factors and has tried to establish design concepts and principles of organisation involved such as shape, harmony of visual elements in the work of art, balance, unity, variety, rhythm, colour and skills. In terms of content the study has investigated the meaning, expressiveness and human response.

This research has established a number of observations, conclusions and recommendations and also identified a number of potential research possibilities. For example it has been found out that art plays a central role in Maasai lifestyle. Art forms and design pattern are used during the rite of passage, marriage, warfare, entertainment, household etc. Maasai art is symbolic and society sees it as a means to enhance their cultural heritage. Other African communities share this view with the Maasai.

Maasai art-forms are very dynamic in colour, form, texture and meaning. That is why they have been commercialised especially in the tourist industry. However these art forms and design patterns still retain maasai design concepts in them. For this to continue in future, great support is needed.

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## 1.0. CHAPTER ONE: APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ART OF THE MAASAI

### 1.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

East Africa has witnessed intensive acculturation mainly due to interaction among indigenous communities as well as foreigners. As a result of the interaction with particularly the Western World, new cultures and systems of education have taken deep root in East Africa. New ways and styles of living have been embraced by indigenous East African communities. This has led to a break in indigenous traditional, cultural, social and artistic beliefs and practices. At times, it seems, traditional concepts and ways could disappear forever due to the rapid change taking place.

However, the practices pertaining to traditional customs could be modified according to the new changes provided they are properly understood. Both the past and the modified practices can be significant for renewed appreciation and contemporary use of Maasai art by present and future generations.

One of the reasons why traditional African art has had little or no global appreciation is that African art has been depicted as though it is static, while the European one, because of its well documented history, has tended to be viewed as dynamic. What is clear, however, is that African art is as dynamic as European art. Considering the changes that have occurred in Africa in the last one hundred years, new

practices in art, music and architecture are acquiring new meanings and methods. Art-forms and design patterns are changing as a result of the European and other external influences among which are newly introduced religions, education and culture. Consequently, there is a need to scientifically study African art-forms so as to establish how people lived in the past and to reconstruct the history of African art so that the latter could, even today, be appreciated.

In the East African region, and elsewhere in Africa, there are some rich collections of traditional art-forms. Such collections are found in museums, art galleries and learning institutions. For instance, the Institute of African Studies of the University of Nairobi and the Kenya National Museum have numerous of these material culture objects, which constitute important sources of research information. From these collections it is evident that for a long time the mode of producing art in Africa was through sculpture for both artistic and utilitarian purposes. The latter reason is the force behind producing work of "art for art's sake", which can be classified in terms of their many distinctive art styles of decorative and ornamental patterns of which containers and sculptural objects are examples. Among the items within the collections are the Maasai art and design patterns with elaborate colour patterns. There are also the



Akamba wood carvings, utensils, bowls, pipes, pots, the Agikuyu kiondo baskets, Luo and Luyia pottery and so on.

Such collections are important because many African communities have almost completely abandoned their traditional cultures, artistic expression, dances, costumes, equipment, implements, etc. The few remaining, which are hard to come by, are vanishing rapidly. The Maasai among the Kenyan communities, are some of the few that retain some semblance of their original art forms. In this regard the community is a rich source of information on Maasai art-forms. The information likely to be available concerns how Maasai traditional ornamental art and design patterns would communicate, represent and express the social and cultural context of their lifestyles. Based on these, it is possible to find out and analyse the structure and variety of these art objects and to study Maasai culture, mobility, religious beliefs, rituals, magic healing practice, socio-economic relations and property ownership. These are important in understanding these peoples' lifestyle. So, these people's art objects have to be examined from the standpoint of design parameters. The latter include the shape of the art object, the colour scheme, aesthetic appeal, and design principles used in making the design and craftsmanship. The relationship between these parameters and the choice of different

art objects is an important aspect of the art-form which needs to be studied particularly from the vantage point of methods and technology. The methodological dimension involves comparisons and establishing the pattern of interactions which cumulatively establish the significance and symbolism in a cultural setting. Such comparisons with items produced within the modern social setting could establish the hidden meaning of the art-forms in the context of realism of symbolism.

For specific examination of Maasai ornamental art-forms and design patterns, the following criteria of art appreciation have been given special attention

- (1) Form - This is the overall composition and usual element. (see chapter 2)
- (2) Expression - This is the character and personality of images. (see chapter 2)
- (3) Content/Meaning - The nature of content and human response in terms of meaning and beliefs arising out of the art-form
- (4) Material and Techniques - This is the analysis of materials and their influence upon different art-forms and the techniques used in producing the latter.
- (5) The art-forms and ornamental design patterns studied in the context of mystic, religious, and secular aspects in essentially traditional terms. All these criteria are

also manifested in contemporary artistic creativities, particularly on the basis of external influences and the changes occurring at present.

## 1.2. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation is presented in eight chapters. The first of which is the introduction, background information and approaches to the study of traditional art of the Maasai. The second chapter is Literature Review which includes the review of scholarly, academic, research and professional works of the Maasai art-forms and design patterns. This chapter lays the basis for examining Maasai art. It looks at conceptual framework, the nature of art and theoretical framework.

Also in the second chapter is examination of the social and cultural models that are used to analyse the symbolism, meaning and content of Maasai art and design.

Chapter three looks at the ethnographic, historical and economic patterns of the Maasai society that determine the production of art objects.

The fourth chapter categorises the art objects in terms of use and form to facilitate their analysis in the following chapter.

The fifth chapter analyses and develops theoretical and conceptual foundations of this dissertation. Here the focus is on the reasons why Maasai produce art-forms and design patterns. Chapter five also concentrates on aesthetic and functional factors with analysis of the factors that influence the demand for Maasai art-forms and design patterns by the Maasai community and outsiders.

The sixth chapter looks at the design concepts on the basis of principles of organising a work of art. Interpretation of data labels, model and flow charts are presented in the seventh chapter.

The results of chapter five, six and seven are presented and discussed in the eighth chapter, which also extracts overall policy and attitudinal issues from the empirical results and includes recommendations and indication of spheres and areas that need further research. The final part of chapter eight focuses on the conclusions of the dissertation.

### 1.3. THE STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The concept of art is wide and art appreciation transcends all nationalities and cultures. Art can be expressed through various ways, such as people's customs, lifestyles, philosophy, music, costumes, etc. Sometimes it is difficult to categorize what is art and what is not art. The problem is, however,

compounded by the fact it is difficult to establish a clear distinction between art and culture. Due to close interactions among the different traditional communities of Kenya, it is difficult sometimes to differentiate the specific material culture of one community from the other. Different ethnic groups no longer live exclusively confined to themselves. The social interaction is dynamic and widespread.

East Africa, as a region, has been brought closer to the rest of the world through easy communication. Although, historically, the link with the outside world was there, the influence was not as strong. East African communities have borrowed many and varied attitudes from outside. Hence, there is a problem of determining what is authentic and what is not in African culture.

The problem is also compounded by the fact that much has not been documented in East African art. The present era of swift changes is witnessing the rapid disappearance of traditional arts. It is necessary, therefore, to find out how the remaining art objects can be properly documented; how they express people's values and to examine the details of the artistic and symbolic elements in the artifacts. The interest is to consider and establish the aesthetic qualities necessary for appreciation of the traditional art, and how the latter could find utility in present-day Africa.

Original art objects exclusively meant for traditional values are hard to come by. However, early missionaries and colonialists collected some of them which were shipped to Europe and America, where they were assembled in museums, galleries, institutions of higher learning and private collections.

Since not many authentic art objects have been collected locally and documented, there is need to rediscover and study more of these art objects still functioning among some traditional communities through establishing and documenting the principles of traditional art objects appreciation.

The Masaai have to a great extent still retained much of their traditional lifestyle but, just like most other African traditional communities, the Maasai traditional lifestyle is being superseded by new technology. For instance, the old homestead, costumes, etc. are being replaced by modernism. With the adaptation of new lifestyles, the principles of traditional Maasai art are being abandoned. The colourful design patterns and costumes are no more for those Maasai who have changed. The old materials are not being used any more, since the art objects have changed. Instead of the traditional necklaces and beads, there is an increasing adoption of western ornaments. In the process of adapting, the Maasai are fast losing their indigenous skills to produce

authentic Maasai ornamental decorations. This is happening due to definite pressure for them to change in the form of new lifestyles based on western culture and the infusion of modern education, religion and civic life. The pressure is also economic. The problem is further compounded by a growing money culture that requires selling local products in order to earn money.

However, there is evidence that some ingenious Maasais' are using modern raw materials to make traditional art objects for sale to tourists. There is also evidence that these art objects are being produced *en masse* for commercial purposes. These are efforts to meet modern social and economic requirements. Producing art objects specifically for tourists has a fundamental problem of lacking in originality and authenticity. Such art is produced for sale and not for a specific cultural purpose or value. Indeed, true cultural art is thus trivialized.

The use of new materials and the purposes that the art serve have changed the skills and techniques of producing art. There is need to study the effect of the changes on the social and cultural life of the Maasai with a view to enhancing appreciation of Maasai artforms.

Since art reflects a society's life, Maasai art depicts their nomadic lifestyle. For example their art objects are light. As the Maasai change from this

lifestyle their art also changes. Traditionally, most of this people's art objects are light weight for ease of mobility. Moreover, the locally available raw materials were used for making the objects. However, with the change in the economic set-up, there is also change in the traditional styles of artistic expression.

Rapid and mass production of Maasai art has eroded authenticity, which has affected flexibility, creativity and originality. Indeed these designs are not produced by authentic traditional artists but by well organised commercial oriented craftsmen. The former is original while the latter is copy.

Aesthetically, there is curiosity and need to study and establish how ornaments and decorations enhance beauty and to find out how ideological or symbolic patterns of the art objects reflect the Maasai lifestyle, culture and tradition. In other words, this researcher is hereby assuming that the socio-cultural norms are the basis for Maasai art-forms.

Among other issues relevant to this study are the nature of the relationship between Maasai traditional art-forms and their social and cultural setup, as well as how material culture was manufactured and symbolism is important in traditional Maasai communication. For example, it is necessary to know why Maasai produced their material culture objects, that is, whether for



age-sets or ritual and the types of messages. Further, one needs to know whether traditional art forms have power to communicate through signs and symbols. Considering that African art has undergone a lot of changes, it is important to study the impact and the extent of this change. As new ideas and technologies have influenced Africa, it is necessary to find out what is happening to African art.

Finally, one needs to know the relationship between the movement patterns of these peoples and the production of art objects so as to provide an insight into when the crafts people produce art objects. Answers to these questions would provide an idea on what remains of the authentic and original part of these people's art.

#### 1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main objectives of this study are:

- (a) To evaluate the Maasai art - forms conditions.
- (b) To examine the Maasai social-cultural practices.
- (c) To determine the social-cultural environmental factors that lead to the traditional Maasai art-forms.

#### 1.5. HYPOTHESES

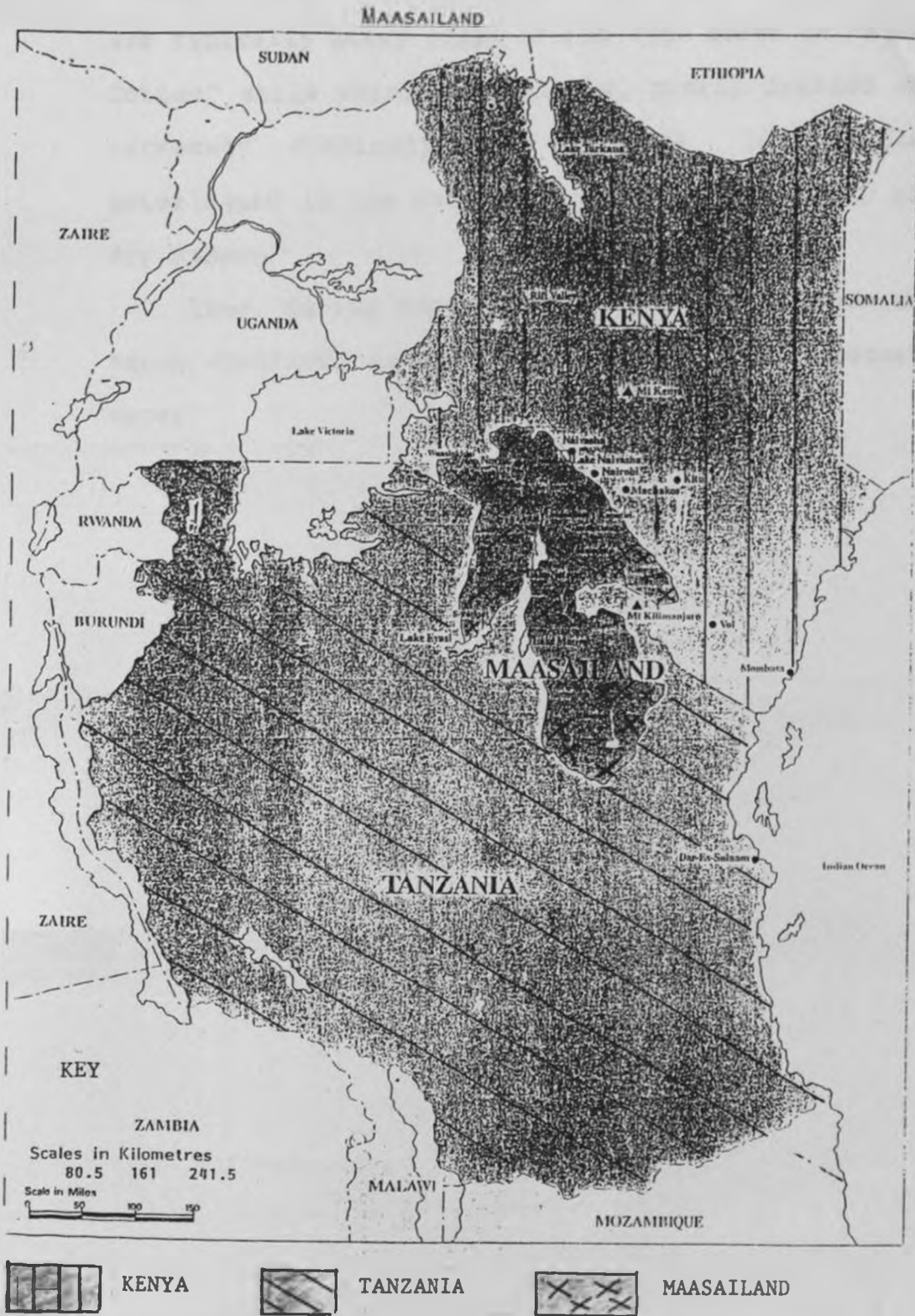
The hypotheses to be tested by this study is;

The Social-cultural environment of the Maasai influence their art-forms.

This study focuses on the Maasai of Kajiado and Narok districts whose art-forms and design patterns are studied in historical perspective starting from the turn of the century to the present. Kajiado and Narok districts in which Maasai is the dominant ethnic group are situated in the southern parts of Kenya. The two districts are below 2000m in altitude and cover approximately 35,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This area represents a considerable reduction from the past vast extent of Maasailand in Kenya which, just over 100 years ago, covered more than three times the present area, extending almost to the Coast in the southeast and beyond Lake Baringo in the north. Hence, this research also makes references to the Maasai in Samburu, Tanzania and elsewhere with an aim of showing parallel comparisons and similarities. See maps 1 and 2 pages 13 and 15.

Maasailand in Kenya is dominated by undulating plains, with the lower ones having an altitude of 1000-1900 m. in the floor of the Rift Valley while the upper part is 1600-2000 m. or so above sea level on either side of the Rift. Small volcanic hills are found scattered through the plains, and the streams which arise from these hills and the Rift walls have caused numerous valleys which are often steep-sided, thereby hampering the movement of people and stock.

MAP 1: MAASAILAND



Adopted from Potter H.L. some thoughts on the Prospects Intesfication in Kenya Maasailand

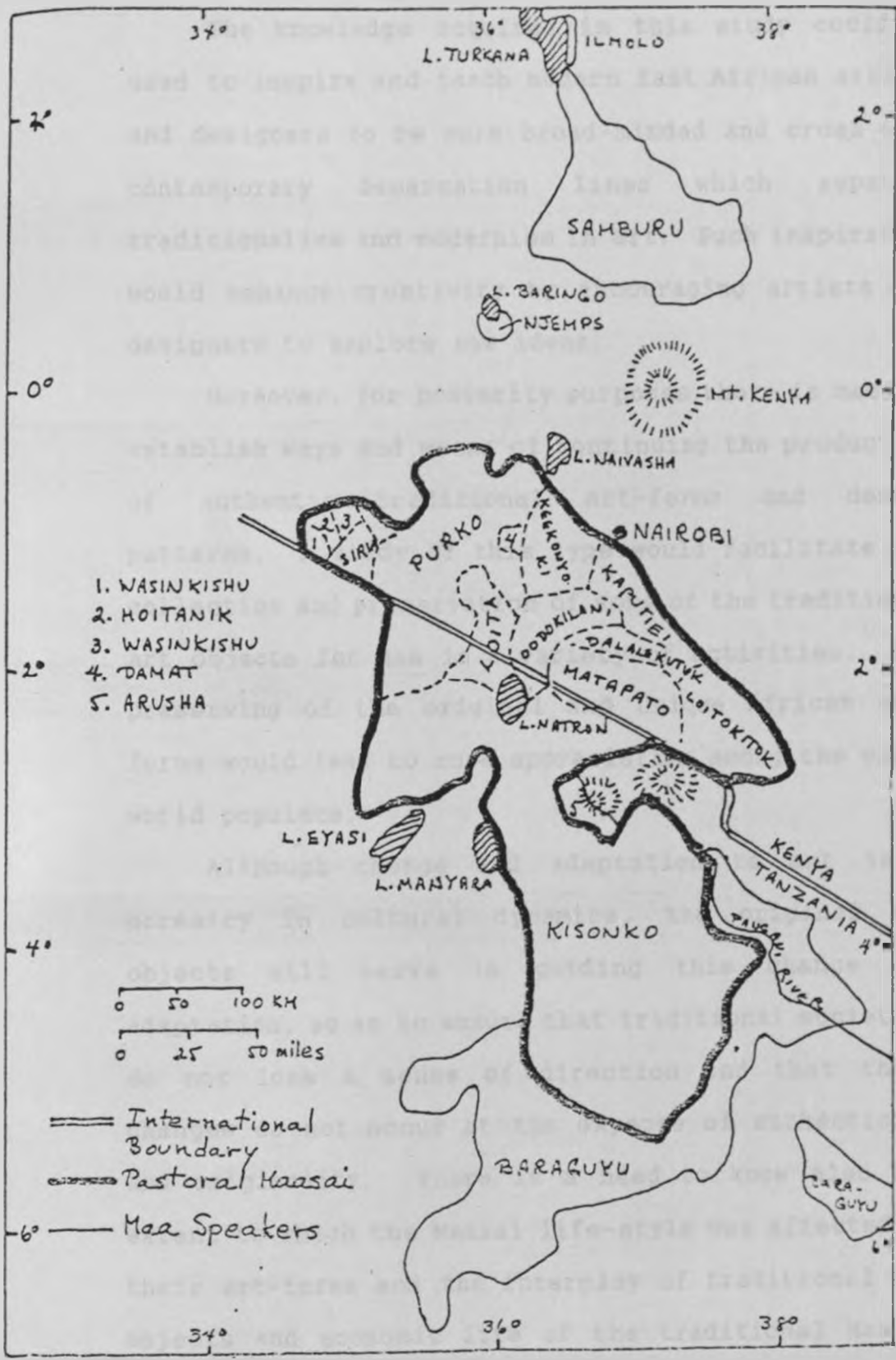
The soils are highly variable, depending on the substrate and topography. On the open plains, there are typically heavy clays of the type known as "Black Cotton" soils which are shallow, poorly drained and extremely difficult to cultivate, being often waterlogged in the rainy season and very hard in the dry season.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, during some parts of the year Kajiado and Narok districts are generally dry and lack adequate water.

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<sup>1</sup> Potter Harry L., Some Thoughts on the Prospects for Intesfication and Diversification in Kenya Maasailand. Research paper, Limuru, Kenya, 1990, pp. 27-29.

DETAIL OF MAASAILAND



ADOPTED FROM KLUM D., MAASAI ART AND SOCIETY

## 1.7. JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH

The knowledge acquired in this study could be used to inspire and teach modern East African artists and designers to be more broad-minded and cross over contemporary demarcation lines which separate traditionalism and modernism in art. Such inspiration would enhance creativity by encouraging artists and designers to explore new ideas.

Moreover, for posterity purposes there is need to establish ways and means of continuing the production of authentic traditional art-forms and design patterns. A study of this type would facilitate the collection and preservation of some of the traditional art objects for use in a variety of activities. The preserving of the original and unique African art-forms would lead to more appreciation among the wider world populace.

Although change and adaptation to art is a normalcy in cultural dynamics, the original art objects will serve in guiding this change and adaptation, so as to ensure that traditional societies do not lose a sense of direction and that these changes do not occur at the expense of authenticity and originality. There is a need to know also the extent to which the Maasai life-style was affected by their art-forms and the interplay of traditional art objects and economic life of the traditional Maasai

society. This is to show the nature of the relationship between economy and art and how the latter has influenced the former. This type of information is currently lacking with regard to Maasai art and culture and this study is likely to provide it.

Also, the knowledge gained from this research, throws more light on the role of traditional art objects and how they can be adapted to new functions. Finally the study is justified in that it will provide information leading to more appreciation of traditional ornamental art-forms and design patterns.

## 1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1.8.1. Qualitative Data Collection

This research has, in the main, employed qualitative research procedure with quantitative approaches being resorted to only where necessary and appropriate. The former has involved scrutiny of material culture objects from the points of view of form, texture, colour, harmony, balance, variety, symbolism, skills and workmanship so as to determine whether the objects are authentic Maasai art-forms or are imitations. A number of specific sources were used in this exercise. Among them are the material culture objects of museums, libraries, archives and those found in traditional settlements. Documentary

sources relating to the objects were also examined. Using the information obtained from such sources, this research attempted to classify and analyse the art-forms in terms of symbolism, content and meaning.

Specifically:

- (a) Studies were done in the museums out of the vast collections that are found there. References and reading of relevant publications in the museums formed part of this approach.
- (b) Published and unpublished materials on art and aspects of culture that are found in libraries were consulted.
- (c) Documents and audio-visual materials at the Kenya National Archives, as well as art objects there.
- (d) Numerous galleries found in Kenya also constituted important sources of information for this study.
- (e) Films, photographs and other sources in the museums, archives and libraries in Kenya and other African countries and overseas were scrutinised with the aim of providing the necessary information.
- (f) Semi-structured and other forms of interviews and discussions with knowledgeable elders on general Maasai culture, as well as consultations with key informants who are authorities on Maasai culture, were undertaken.



- (g) Non-participant observation involving watching traditional artisans producing Maasai art objects were resorted to.
- (h) Qualitative data from central bureau of statistics on commercialised art, from demographic profiles, etc., were used as key sources of qualitative information on Maasai art.
- (i) Consulting with the relevant government ministries about information concerning the effect of weather on the Maasai lifestyle was resorted to.
- (j) Measurement of the Maasai art-forms for height, weight, ratio of colour pattern, size relationships, span of life, durability, strength of materials used, etc. formed part of the qualitative research procedure.
- (k) The research resorted also to reading of historical documents on the Maasai with a view to gaining more understanding of the nature of the relationship between art and other aspects of Maasai culture.
- (l) In order to get maximum qualitative data and information, the following items were examined and analysed: masks, decorative surfaces, symbols both geometrical and representative; pattern designs, body markings, monuments, murals, figure paintings, carvings, sculptural forms, tools, shields, necklaces, beadwork, etc.

These items were classified into a number of categories in order to facilitate their easier identification and analyses.

- (m) Briefly, therefore the qualitative data was collected through a review of relevant literature for better conceptualization of key variables.

#### 1.8.2. Quantitative Data Collection

Where applicable quantitative data collection was undertaken using relevant questionnaires. The aim was, where necessary to support qualitative data used in this research. Questionnaires were used mainly in conducting structured and, at times semi-structured interviews.

- group and personal interviews
- direct observation
- key informant interviews
- focus group discussions
- social mapping techniques
- recording equipment, maps and cameras

The categories of forms that emerged in this classification are:

- (a) Household items and storage equipment
- (b) Dress and related jewellery
- (c) Body decoration

- (d) Headdress and related ornamentation
- (e) Necklace
- (f) Waistwear and belt
- (g) Arms and fingerwear
- (h) Footwear
- (i) Ear ornaments, bead decorations and related jewellery
- (j) Animal ornament
- (k) Weaponry, defence and warfare
- (l) Entertainment, fun and play gadgetry
- (m) General and other uses

### 1.8.3. SAMPLING

- (a) The research used random sampling based on identifying randomly selected art objects for verifying what the researcher had observed on primary data. The data was collected from stratified randomized samples from the research areas.
- (b) With the help of authoritative persons on Maasai art, limited samples of material culture objects were collected for verification and authentication of information given and observed. The number was restricted to three hundred (300) objects so as to avoid duplication and clogging of information.
- (c) Sampling provided this researcher with an

opportunity to test a reliable and representative collection of relevant Maasai objects that are the focus of this study.

- (d) Samples were collected from the relevant research study areas categorized as resource areas.
- (e) The researcher collected samples from a wide variety of relevant items that form the focus of this study, in line with the objectives and hypothesis outlined in page 11 of this dissertation as well as all the subject areas and topics of this research. So, the samples represent diverse points of view.

#### 1.8.4. DATA ANALYSIS

##### 1.8.4.1. Qualitative Analysis Models

Qualitative analysis is the search for patterns in data for ideas that help explain the existence of those patterns. This analysis was done to test emergent ideas on Maasai art against the observations recorded. This involved:

- (a) Constant validity check to look for consistencies and inconsistencies between knowledgeable informants.
- (b) Checking the environmental condition against more objective evidence.
- (c) Examination of possible existence of negative evidence.

- (d) Seeking out alternative explanations to extreme cases and endeavouring to fit them into the stated theory. Also an attempt was made to understand how much a particular pattern of ideas or behaviour is shared by members of Maasai culture, how collective it is, and how legitimate they think it is.
- (e) Checking statements and activities about the Maasai symbolic art, with particular attention to what has been observed either by individuals or groups of people.
- (f) Looking at the information collected in the light of whether it was volunteered or directed by this researcher.
- (g) Presentation of selected anecdotes and comments from informants.
- (h) Quotes, matrices and tables have been used.
- (i) The production of visual displays, done by laying out data in table or matrix form and drawing out theories in the form of a flow chart map. The data obtained from questioning a number of informants knowledgeable in Maasai culture stimulated a longitudinal study with data from a cross sectional sample. This data was checked with other information gathered by a questionnaire, along with direct observation and structured and semi-structured interviews. In this way, the researcher was able to test

pertinent theoretical hypotheses regarding symbolism in Maasai art. Further rechecking enabled the researcher to make clear statements about patterns of Maasai lifestyle. Such approach was used as an example and evidence of the use of qualitative data to develop a theory, and of the conversion of qualitative data to a set of numbers for testing that theory.

#### 1.8.4.2 Check Table

Chart table to check consistency and inconsistency has been formulated in order to verify information given.

Adopted from H. Russell Bernard<sup>2</sup>, this check table has the advantage of having been used before.

One objective of the above table was to check the Maasai peoples' explanation for preferring certain art-forms and design patterns to others.

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<sup>2</sup> Russell Bernard, Research method in cultural anthropology (1940 & 1988)

## CHECK TABLE

Chart Table to Check Consistency and Inconsistency

		Information Volunteered	Information directed by the observer (Researcher)	Total
Information	To observer (researcher) alone	Informant 1	Informant 5	
	To others in day to day conversation	Informant 2	Informant 6	
	An individual person	Informant 3	Informant 7	
Activities	A group of Maasai	Informant 4	Informant 8	

Adopted from H. Russell Bernard<sup>3</sup>

The other objectives of the table were to check folk explanation for buying Maasai art-forms and design patterns and the Maasai explanations rejecting or agreeing with them. This chart has been used for verifying authenticity and validity of the art forms. It involves checking sources of information constantly and systematically in order to be accurate. For instance it was used to check for differences in information, reports and what fits and does not fit into the theories. Hence, it was necessary to listen to the Maasai carefully as they explained their art.

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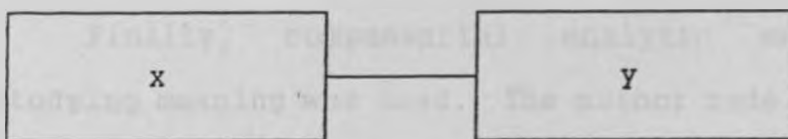
<sup>3</sup> Russell Bernard, Research method in cultural anthropology (1940 & 1988)

This is because not all explanations of Maasai art fit into the researcher's theories. Sometimes it was desirable to re-examine the researcher's ideas. The ideas of this researcher and the data collected were analysed, tested and verified by constructing tables.

Tables, as devices, have been constructed for checking the patterns seen in qualitative data. These patterns are of things that informants said or did. There was constant need to check how a particular pattern is shared by members of the Maasai culture and how collective and legitimate an idea is.

#### 1.8.4.3. Flow Charts

Causal maps were used to represent theories and show how things work in Maasai culture as far as art activities are concerned. Causal maps were also used to represent ideas that emerged from studying the data, seeing patterns, and coming to conclusions about what causes - what. These causal maps were also used as flow charts. The flow charts were supposed to show how one state leads to another. A simple flow chart (causal map), as a visual representation of the relationship between two variables, reads as follows:-



"X" leads to or causes "Y"



Decision models were used to analyse the kinds of choices people make under specified circumstances, so as to determine why the Maasai prefer certain art-forms to others.

However, the author has been careful to check out whether decision models simply predict behaviour, or whether they also reflect how Maasai really think about their art. As with all cognitive methods of cultural studies, such a care is desirable.

The techniques of native or folk taxonomies were employed to describe how the Maasai divide up domains of their culture in general and in art-forms in particular, and how the pieces of information in these domains are connected. For example, folk taxonomies were used to describe such items as defence/war implements, ornaments, patterns or costumes' names of the Maasai. This method of analysis was useful because it provided an in depth understanding of the Maasai people's culture and also assisted in providing deep insights into symbolism in Maasai art.

Consequently, this author mapped and constructed folk taxonomies from information provided by a number of informants, and also endeavoured to get an idea of the range of variations and areas of consistency in connection with how Maasai think about their art.

Finally, componential analytic method for studying meaning was used. The author made efforts to one specify the conditions under which the Maasai name

their art (descriptive analysis) and two, understand the cognitive process by which Maasai speakers decide which of the several possible terms they should apply to a particular art-form (causal analysis).

All these methods had specific aims of analysing, testing, verifying collected data, and consequently proving or otherwise the hypotheses of this dissertation.

#### 1.8.4.4. Quantitative Analysis Model

Data collected using questionnaire were analysed through application of quantitative statistical techniques to summarise, organise and present information.



their struggles with the hostile environment, the life within their society, and their fear of the unknown.

The San (Bushmen) peoples who are believed to have been the creators of rock art in some eastern and most of southern Africa, presumably had similar motivations for engraving and painting on rock. They all recorded mythical symbols of rituals, designed to overcome danger, invoke fertility and combat the threat of the supernatural. They tell of initiation and other ceremonials for which the clans probably assembled in the rock shelters. The rites centred on, and were inspired by, the art on the wall which depicted symbols known to all.<sup>5</sup>

Even at present, and in the recent past, many traditional African societies have shown and practised such rituals. These practices have tended to die out because of rapid changes.

Odak<sup>7</sup> states that the most acceptable hypothesis concerning the role and motivation of rock art in Kenya is that it reflects the life and habits of long bygone

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<sup>5</sup> Werner, Gillon, A Short History of African Art London, Penguin, 1984, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Odak, Osaga, Rock Art of Kenya Bollettino Del Centro Camuno Di Studi Preistorici, Vol. XXIV, Nairobi, 1988, p. 77. see also Odak Osaga, Figurative and schematic Rock Art of Kenya: Animal Representation and tentative interpretation in Morphy H. (ed) Animals into the Art, London Unwin Hyman

\* Gramly, Richard Michael, Meat-Feasting sites and cattle Brands: Patterns of Rockshelter utilisation in East Africa. AZANIA Vol. X, 1975.

days. He further says that ethnographic evidence suggests that ritual and religion are a likely explanation of much of Kenyan rock art and that the Maasai paintings are related to activities of initiation, fulfilling certain ritual requirements. Odak then sees oral tradition among the Samburu people as an avenue providing similar explanations and that in other cases, such as at Mandera, the rock art is associated with fertility rites. He explains that at Mfangano Island, the rock art sites are connected with ancestral worship, and the elders beseech the spirits to intercede for rain-making in times of drought. In his study of non-representational, Kenya rock art designs, Odak<sup>8</sup> maintain that schematic motifs outnumber the naturalistic representations and that only a few examples may be noted specifically. These include a red winged object, concentric circles, single circles, rayed figures, and a setting of concentric circles with hooked radial lines.

Chaplin<sup>9</sup> has made similar studies around Lake Victoria as cited by Osaga Odak in a paper *Rock Art in*

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<sup>8</sup> Odak, Osaga, Kakapeli and others *Recently Discovered Rock Paintings in the Western Highlands of Kenya*, Reprinted from *Azania* Vol. XII, Nairobi, Kenya, 1977. See also: Odak Osaga cup-mark patterns as an interpretation strategy in some southern Kenyan petroglyphs in Lorblanchet M. (ed) *The Rock Art in the Old World* New Delhi: Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Chaplin, J.H., *The Prehistoric Rock Art of the Lake Victoria Region* (edited with additional materials by M.A.B. Harlow), *Azania*, IX pp. 1-50.

Kenya.

Examination of some rock art in Kenya reveals that cattle and other animals are represented with horns drawn with considerable details and in a frontal position, animal feet are depicted as prominent, limbs are shown close together and are short in proportion to body size. These stylistic factors<sup>10</sup> may have interpretative significance. The exaggeration of horns and sexually distinguishing features could be related to certain cults. Probably the cult of horns and procreation, the latter being based on representation of prominent teats, horns, and the emphasis on certain parts of the animal body which show that these factors had certain ideological implications which may, or may not, be related to such a cult. On the other hand, depicting the limbs shorter than normal could easily indicate lack of interest in those aspects of animal bodies which did not have much prominence in the cult.

The different ways in which animals are represented in Kenyan rock art, and the way in which humans are depicted, can provide clues to interpretation. There is a possibility of symbolic meaning and relationship between different figures on rock paintings. This

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<sup>10</sup> Odak Osaga, *Archaeological Methods and Ethnographic Analogy: Some Evidence from a Pastoralist Society in Kenya* in Ogot B.A. and Leakey R.E.F. (eds). *Proceedings of the Pan African Congress of Prehistory and Quaternary Studies. Nairobi*, International Louis Leakey Memorial Institute for African Prehistoric, 1977 pp.36-38.

relationship of symbolic meaning should be studied in relation to colours used in these paintings.

It is the hope of this researcher that more interest in the study of such art will be awakened in due course, since the contemporary Maasai art like the art of other parts of Africa, is an apparent continuation of the rock art. In Kenya, however, not much has been done in the study of this art-form as a necessary preliminary to other art studies. Nevertheless, Adamson<sup>11</sup> noted some engravings near Lake Turkana, and at Machakos District Gramly<sup>12</sup> has surveyed various rockshelters in Kenya where he found a number of paintings. Robbins reported the existence of rock paintings on the Northern part of Mogila Range in Turkana District. Soper<sup>13</sup> reported petroglyphs in Northern Kenya which "are executed by pecking technique on flat faces of phonolite rocks of a hill" consisting of circles, stick figures, and arrows with semicircle. Around mount Elgon, Wright,<sup>14</sup> Sutton

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<sup>11</sup> Adamson, Joy (Kenya National Museum) Nairobi. 1948 p. 13

<sup>12</sup> Gramly, R.M., Recent Archaeological Survey of Central Kenya, Discussion Paper No. 19, University of Nairobi (Institute of African Studies) 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Soper, R.C., Rock Gongs and a Rock Chute in Mwanza, Tanzania, Azania III, 1968, pp. 175-79.

<sup>14</sup> Wright, R.A., Painted Rockshelter in Mt. Elgon, p.p. XXVII, 1961.

and Chaplin<sup>15</sup> reported paintings on Mt. Elgon while Odak's<sup>16</sup> research has revealed more than thirty rock art sites in Kenya.

Elsewhere in East Africa in general, rock paintings exist abundantly in Tanzania, particularly around Singida, Kondoia and Mwanza Districts<sup>17</sup>, while the rock paintings have recently been studied by Chaplin in reference to the Lake Victoria Basin area which includes many rock art sites in Uganda.

This ancient art, with its potent symbolism and aesthetic conventions, may well be the root of that African art which has stretched through the millennia, up to our time. The paintings in grottoes and shelters are based "on primary colours". such as red ochre, white, black and yellow, with the addition of blue and green. To this day this range of colours turns up in masks and dancers' regalia.<sup>18</sup>

Large human figures in the rock paintings are often shown side by side with small human figures, and the eland of the Bushmen is depicted oversized, surrounded by

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<sup>15</sup> Chaplin, J.H., The Prehistoric Rock Art of the Lake Victoria Region. pp.2-9. see also Poznansky

<sup>16</sup> Odak, Osaga, The Significance of Rock Art in the Cultural Heritage of Africa, New Delhi, India, Arnold - Heinemann, 1984. pp.2-5.

<sup>17</sup> Forsbrooke H.A., Tanganyika Rock painting. Tanganyika Notes and Records(TNR), xxix, 1950.

<sup>18</sup> Forsbrooke, Ibid.



tiny men. Similar considerations of primacy are evident in more recent times. The emphasis from Nok to modern Yoruba is on the head, depicted larger than nature; and the figure of a ruler is shown taller than his attendants. Symbolic abstraction and naturalistic addition of sculpted subjects are features of both rock and traditional art, as is dance with masks, often using animal heads<sup>19</sup>. In short, Africa (like other early artistic manifestations) has since ancient times been having an artistic tradition which integrated with the cosmology of the society and its values. The prehistoric rock art of Africa is, in fact, the opening chapter in the history of African art and by implication Maasai Art.

Lucie-Smith Edwards<sup>20</sup> looks at symbolic art as shapes and colours. She argues that behind the shapes and colours on a picture surface there is always something else, another realm, another order of meaning. In the study of the symbolist expression, she endeavours to bring to attention the communication aspect of a work of art. Margaret Trowell<sup>21</sup> attempts to document a number of aspects of appreciation in African art. She

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<sup>19</sup> Ki-Zerbo, J., African Prehistoric Art, Unesco, General History of Africa, Vol. 1, 1981, p. 680.

<sup>20</sup> Lucie-Smith, Edwards, Symbolic Art, Thames and Hudson, London 1988, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> Trowell, Margaret, African Design, Faber and Faber, 1960. pp. 7-14.

views African designs as visual patterns rich in expression and structure, and believes that African design had its own pattern. Margaret Trowell, who started the Makerere University School of Fine Art, also made many African designs herself in order to show what she considered a real African design.

It is obvious that these two writers hold the opinion that expression and symbolism are strong elements in African art. They portray African art as both ornamental and expressive. In Lucie-Smith Edward's<sup>22</sup> argument, expressions and symbols become vehicles of inner images. Thus, the symbols become elements which resonate within the mind of the spectator, and the work itself is more than a mere sum total of the symbols it contains.

Studies by Routledge and Routledge<sup>23</sup> on the Agikuyu, maintain that expression through artistic objects is a characteristic feature of African art production. Their conclusions are based on the observations made of the objects that were collected during their time. In an attempt to look for originality of ideas in these pieces, the Routledges even studied the

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<sup>22</sup> Lucie-Smith, *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People - The Kikuyu of East Africa*, London, 1910, pp. 97-102.

patterns of association in African ideas. Salim,<sup>24</sup> who wrote on the Swahili also pinpoints this expression of ideas through art. He sees Swahili culture as a historical evidence of expressions and artistic manifestations.

Hecht<sup>25</sup> on material culture at the National Museum attempted to document what has been collected by various people. However, in her endeavours she was not able to throw more light on the aspect of symbolism of these objects. But her research brings out much background information of strong visual presentations as evidenced through the collections. It is clear that more research still needs to be done in studying the content and meaning of these and similar collections. Somjee's<sup>26</sup> insight into the classification and categorisation of colour schemes among the Maasai is particularly remarkable. His study shows that, traditionally, the Maasai have a rich value heritage of beadwork, implements and ornaments. He argues that beauty among the Maasai is expressed through the visual arts and that Maasai art, like any other types of African art, is lively and has a

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<sup>24</sup> Salim, A.I., *Swahili-speaking People of Kenya Coast 1895-1965* (Africana Section), University of Nairobi, pp. 6-19.

<sup>25</sup> Hecht, D., *The Material Culture Collection of National Museum*, (seminar paper, Institute of African Studies), University of Nairobi, pp. 2-4.

<sup>26</sup> Somjee, Sultan, *Maasai*, (Institute of African Studies), University of Nairobi, pp. 2-5.

vibrant history and future. However, it is evident that Somjee has not paid much attention to the aesthetic value system that is the cogwheel of art production. Consequently, there is need to answer the question as to why the Maasai have preferences and distinct choices. Gacia, Galloway and Loimel<sup>27</sup> writing on what they call 'primitive art', argue that the prehistory of the African continent presents one of the most intriguing mysteries in the study of world art. However, their arguments are based on a one sided approach. This is because for a long time Africa was regarded as backward, conservative and unable to create forms of culture. Such viewpoints run counter to what is evident in Maasai art-forms in that the latter are dynamic on their own. In fact all African art is dynamic. Whereas Garcia, Galloway and Loimel see mystery in African prehistoric art, the existing evidence shows African art to be expressive and of clear communicative dynamism. To ascribe too much mystery in African art is to deny it its real meaning. Maasai art is part of the African heritage which should be seen in this context. That is, it is not just mysterious but vitally expressive and living.

According to Galaty, the Maasai have been able to reflect their lifestyle and social division of

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<sup>27</sup> Luis Pericot, Gacia, John Galloway and Andreas Loimel, *Great Epochs of Art. Prehistoric and Primitive Art*, 1969, p. 112.

responsibilities through various art-forms<sup>28</sup>. Galaty argues that this has been possible because of the historical development of their ornaments as art-forms. It should, however, be noted that Galaty does not examine or explain the forces behind this development in the context of Maasai cultural values. This research therefore, attempts to go deeper into aesthetic and symbolic perspective of the Maasai lifestyle, an attempt that should throw more light into the symbolic meanings of Maasai art.

Evidence and examples in Klump's<sup>29</sup> studies reveal that the Maasai have elaborate design principles. Klump argues that in making an ornament some Maasai colour sets are arranged according to five colour patterns, i.e., white, blue, red, green and orange. The writer analyses this pattern making as a form of systematic arrangement. However, in order to understand the content of their systematic arrangement, there is need for an analysis of forms. In this connection one needs to cite studies by somjee<sup>30</sup> which is concerned with material culture of

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<sup>28</sup> Galaty, John, *In the Pastoral Image, the Dialective of Maasai Identity*, Ph.d. Dissertation, University of Chicago, pp. 7-25.

<sup>29</sup> Klump, D.R. *A Preliminary Analysis of Maasai Body Ornaments*, Discussion Paper No. 157, (Institute of African Studies), University of Nairobi, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Somjee, Sultan, *On Material Culture of the Nationalities and Development of National Art*, Discussion Paper No. 89, University of Nairobi, (Institute of African Studies), pp. 2 - 6.

different peoples of Kenya. However, Somjee does not give an insight into aesthetic symbolism. Symbolic meaning would have been evident if the study further analysed aesthetic values of the ornaments. These studies have a lot of theoretical significance and historical knowledge but not as much symbolic content and meaning. This research attempts to fill the missing link, that is, to examine the symbolism and aesthetic concepts.

According to Tucker <sup>31</sup>, Maasai used only some types of beads in conjunction with colours in order to create patterns. However, Tucker does not explicitly show the relationship between functionalism and choice. This relationship must be studied if the symbolic content of any Maasai form is to be appreciated. So there is a need to fill this gap.

Although many researchers have noted the various effects of various combinations of patterns, not much has been done on the depth of symbolism and conceptual approach to traditional aesthetics.<sup>32</sup>

Donna Klump <sup>33</sup> has studied descriptive analysis of

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<sup>31</sup> Tucker, A.N., Ole, Mpaayei, and J. Tempo, 'A Maasai Grammar, London, Longmans Green and Company, 1955, pp. 3-10

<sup>32</sup> Thomson, Joseph, *Through Maasailand*, (London 1985), Frank Cass & Co., 1968, pp. 5-100

<sup>33</sup> Klump, Donna, *Maasai Art and Society*, Columbia University, 1987, pp. 1-50

ornamental bead work of the Maasai. She looks at art within a social organization, economy and belief systems. Klump states that Maasai aesthetic products are part of human behaviour. Here she relates aesthetic production to body ornaments and age-sets. There is need to carry Klump's work further and find out the nature of the relationship between her analysis and symbolic values that are attached to the works of Art by the Maasai. Whereas Klump has done a lot of work on social and historical stratification, as manifested in art forms, this researcher endeavours to relate her findings to symbolism and aesthetics, content and meaning.

According to Gohil<sup>34</sup>, the Maasai have over the years in the past travelled through vast areas of East Africa. Through this movement, they have influenced other communities in many aspects of their artistic expressions. Playre and Gale<sup>35</sup> state that the Maasai are said to have moved in a south-easterly direction from around Lake Turkana and then spread to other parts of Kenya.

Looking at a modern map of East Africa, one sees evidence of Maasai having travelled through long distances from far off places. Since they are a cattle

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<sup>34</sup> Gohil, M.M., *Historical Background of Textiles in Kenya*, M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1983, pp. 224-

<sup>35</sup> Playre and Gale, *East africa (British)*, Foreign and Colonial Compiling and Publishing Co., 1908-1909, p.59.

community, this movement is usually associated with their endeavours to search for greener pastures. This must have been quite practical since droughts are a constant phenomenon and feature in this region of Africa. In their movements, they carried their art and practised their crafts.

Charles Eliot<sup>36</sup> observes that the Wagogo and Wahehe of Tanzania resisted the Maasai movement by the turn of the century. This may explain why the Maasai are confined to areas not beyond certain parts of Tanzania, the dominant geographical feature of their present area being the Great Rift Valley. (See map on page 13)

The Maasai in their early history, have been referred to as Il-Kuafi or Wa Kwavi which is a Swahili name borrowed from the Maasais, themselves, which means "places" and suggest the nomadic nature of the Maasai.<sup>37</sup> This means that moving from place to place is a dominant lifestyle of the Maasai. Consequently, there is need to study the Maasai lifestyle in relation to their art-forms and their symbolic meaning. In this way, this author hopes to show the environmental and different material influences on the Maasai art. It is hoped that the

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<sup>36</sup> Elliot, Sir Charles, East african Protectorate, London, Frank Cass and Co., 1966, pp. 135-145.

<sup>37</sup> Gohil, M.M., Historical Background of Textiles in Kenya, University of Nairobi 1983, p. 225.



symbolic meaning will be more explicit when the above relation is studied in depth.

Many studies that have been done on Maasai art have tended to focus on the physical, social and historical aspects of their art. Although Lucie-Smith Edwards (cited) explains what symbolic art is, it is evident that the purposes of these symbols have not been given sufficient attention. So there is need to consider the analytical aspects of the content meaning of art objects in order to discover much needed information.

Trowell (cited) is more concerned with design expressions and has not examined indepth the ritualistic symbols and the meaning attached to these images. To appreciate African design of a people like the Maasai, it is desirable to study the whole artistic conceptual approach to their art forms and other social and cultural aspects of life. This is because design is an offshoot of a peoples' culture. Thus art-forms and design patterns are products of human life<sup>38</sup>. This researcher endeavours to study the aesthetic principles of the Maasai in order to understand the value of their artistic expressions as integral parts of their way of life.

Studies by the Routledges (cited) were based on the collections and observations available at the time. But

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<sup>38</sup> Papanek, Victor, *Design for the Real World*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1972, pp. 10-50.

there is need to further understand such art objects by conducting further analysis of their utility and meaning. Through interaction with Maasai this researcher goes deeper to study the aesthetic values behind utility considerations. For example, there is need to know the real meaning attached to each function of a piece of art in order to discover its fullest meaning.

Salim's (cited) studies are useful for comparison so as to provide insight into how the Maasai have used language terms to describe their art. Salim had studied the Swahili people and found that the terms used are borrowed from both the Bantu and Arabic languages. This researcher endeavours to compare a few Maasai terms relating to art with those of Swahili. The aim is to find out whether their value systems have anything in common. Through this comparison, the researcher was able to show how cultural exchange and inter-community social values affect aesthetic and symbolic values of the Maasai, based on their nomadic way of life.

Hecht (cit) concentrated on the documentation of material culture without in depth study of the artistry, aesthetics and symbolism, Somjee(Cit) on the other hand examines the art objects from theoretical perspectives which provide the art objects with their proper analytical status. He also argues from a nationalistic art point of view, with an objective of encouraging

appreciation. In his studies, there is a good deal of explanatory discussion and social justification of these art-forms. However, the analyses do not emphasise the symbolic and aesthetic values. In order to appreciate Maasai art more deeply, there is great need to study aspects of their symbolism and aesthetics in relation to lifestyle. This researcher has done that in order to fill the gap between aesthetic concepts and analytical information.

This researcher has also endeavoured to fill the gap between the historical and visual studies of the Maasai art-forms, design patterns and functional design. The missing link is the symbolic and aesthetic content of meaning in the Maasai art-forms and design patterns. This study therefore attempts to extend and expand the scholarly work that has been done, with the difference that he (the researcher) is endeavouring to bring out the symbolic, aesthetic, functional, communicational, artistic and social messages. This is the current gap missing in understanding of Maasai art. By studying aesthetic, functional and socio-cultural significance of traditional art among the Maasai it is the hope of this researcher that this gap has now been filled. In specific terms, the study concentrates on forms, ornaments, design patterns, as well as the decorations and their symbolic meanings. With the latter being

analysed if appreciation of Maasai symbolist art is to be enhanced.

In his studies of European symbolist Art, Edward Lucie-Smith<sup>39</sup> argues that symbolism is the spirit of art. Not to understand symbolism in art is to miss half its meaning. Consequently, if this approach is followed, more meaning of Maasai art will be known. Also, there is need to explain any conflict that may exist between "open" and "closed" systems of symbolic communication in Maasai art. For example, some messages are reasonably clear to see, while others, like religious ones, are hidden. However, all of them add splendour to the spirit and development of Maasai art. Once the symbolic dynamisms are clear, the spirit will be clearer, which would lead to a better and deeper appreciation of Maasai art-forms and design patterns.

In their study of African sculpture, Fagg and Plass<sup>40</sup> argue that art-forms cannot be understood without reference to their cultural matrix. This is the most plausible argument since in African sculptural art people tend to only see shapes like the cylinder, sphere and cone. However, the value of African art is immensely enhanced if art lovers can also "see" the symbolic spirit

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<sup>39</sup> Lucie-Smith, Edwards, *Symbolic Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1988, pp. 7-50.

<sup>40</sup> Fagg, William and Margaret Plas, *African Sculpture and Anthology*, New York & Great Britain, Studio Vista, 1964, pp. 5-41.

behind cylinders, spheres and cones.

Gombrich<sup>41</sup>, in his studies of symbolic images, argues that the images apparently occupy a curious position somewhere between the statements of language (which are intended to convey a meaning, and the things of nature), to where people only can give a meaning. Producing works of art is like making statements and conveying messages.

Kecskesi<sup>42</sup> in discussing African masterpieces shows that Africa is experiencing profound challenges in the social, economic and spiritual areas. She argues that modern African art differs in spiritual content and in execution from those of earlier artists who worked under quite different technical, social and spiritual conditions. Although she does not provide evidence, her statement needs further follow-up. Therefore, there is need for an in-depth research to study the reasons why spirit of symbolism, among other criteria, is important. This is what this study intends to achieve within the traditional social context. Studies by Danniell McCall and Edna Bay<sup>43</sup> contend that art, like language and myth,

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<sup>41</sup> Gombrich, E.H.J., *Symbolic Images, Studies in the Art of Renaissance*, Edinburgh U.K., (1972) pp. 1-14

<sup>42</sup> Kecskesi, Maria, *African Masterpieces and Selected Works from Munich*. pp. ix-xiii.

<sup>43</sup> McCall, Daniel F., and Edna G. Bay, *New York, 1987*, New York, Boston University, 1975, pp. ix-xiii.

consists of symbolic forms. This means that art is a language. In order to fully understand the message contained in it, it is useful to appreciate how the artist communicates with the public and what kinds of messages can be conveyed via the media of art practices, such as sculpture, paintings, ornaments, design patterns and decorations. The artist uses symbols, design concepts and principles of organising a work of art to convey his or her message. The audience in turn interprets the symbolic meanings and aesthetic values of the work.

In order to find out the symbolic meaning of any art-forms, it is important to first understand design concepts that govern the organisation of art-forms and design patterns.

Many scholars have studied the theory of design which cuts across cultural lines. Maser's work<sup>44</sup> on design philosophy discusses the nature of design and architecture, the philosophy of Descartes, the primary problem conception theory and design practice. He further expounds on communication theory, presentation, classic philosophy, idealism and design as a process. These, he sees, as the basis of comprehending the rudiments of the theory of design.

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<sup>44</sup> Maser S. *Design Theorie, Gestalterischer Probleme*, Wuppertal, Germany, Bergische Universität Gesamthochschule, 1995. pp. 9-21

In another book, Maser<sup>45</sup> looks at design theory as a helper in understanding design planning. Here he analyses systems, project themes and work model. He endeavours to show quality and criteria as planning theories and separates illusion from theory, as well as making distinction between group work and creativity through showing the meaning of morphology, pragmatic difference and project management. His aim is to show the difference between uniform and unity. In this book he sees theory as a vehicle towards production.

In another work<sup>46</sup> he discusses projects of aesthetic nature and shows the importance of trying to understand great literal figures if scholars want to seriously comprehend effective design theory. In this work he shows the influences of Kant, Schiller, Hegel and others on the Western processes and history of design philosophy. Here his aim is to portray aesthetics as a social need. The book underlines the effects of aesthetics on function, norm of aesthetics and interpretation of dialectic aesthetics. These, he argues, are crucial in comprehending artistic and design concepts.

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<sup>45</sup> Maser S. *Design Theorie, Zur Asthetic Gestalter Projekte*, Bug, Wuppertal, Germany, 1995, pp. 8-24.

<sup>46</sup> Maser S., *Design Theorie, Zur Asthetic Gestalteter Projekte* BUG, Wuppertal, Germany 1995, pp 21-36

A book on Aesthetics and Communication also by Maser<sup>47</sup> endeavours to explain the theory of Art by Aristotle as a basis of appreciating the arts of the world. Here history of art is seen in aesthetical and communicational concepts and a connection between major art movements in history such as Renaissance, Baroque, Classics and Roman are shown. The book by Maser goes further also to show that art work, form and symbol are important in general design theory, where the conception of general design refers to the designed implements people use every day. The last book particularly brings out the important work by Bauhaus and their modern ideas. In this book Maser endeavours diligently to connect modern design theory with the early rationalism of Aristotle.

"*Ecology and Design*", another title by Maser,<sup>48</sup> surveys design up to the year 2000. It considers the utopian and the difficult questions of ecology and politics. The book wonders what will be the role of philosophy, economy, design communication and architecture when the world will be faced by major ecological problems. Here, Maser poses the challenge of the need to deviate from "worshipping" the capital

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<sup>47</sup> Maser, S. *DESIGN THEORIE Asthetik und Kommunikation*, Wuppertal, Germany, 1995, pp. 30-36.

<sup>48</sup> Maser, S. *DESIGN THEORIE Okologie und Design*, Wuppertal, Germany, Bergische Universitat Gesamthochschule, 1995, pp. 11-29



(money).

"Aesthetics and Psychology", also by Maser,<sup>49</sup> provides an in depth analysis of design theory and analyses the following: art psychology, psychoanalysis, archetype and psychology, schizophrenic art, art production and the aesthetic illusion. Other are art therapy, aesthetic structural problem, Plato in objective and subjective views, social psychology, visual communication, psychology of personality, psychology of art production processes and psychological aspect of art therapy. The book underlines the role of psychology in understanding art and design symbols and shows the effect of association of ideas and shapes. Maser sees the association of ideas and form as an important leverage towards understanding the meaning of art and design. He argues that forms and shapes are just vehicles of symbolic and aesthetic meanings.

"Communication and Design", a detailed study of design theory by Maser,<sup>50</sup> looks at the sociology of mass communication and presentation, analysis of production, corporate identity, information design, marketing, functionalism, analysis of advertising, forms of

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<sup>49</sup> Maser S. DESIGN THEORIE, A'sthetik und Psychologe Wuppertal, Germany, Bergische Universitat Gesamthochschule, 1995, pp. 30-40.

<sup>50</sup> Maser, S. DESIGN THEORIE, Kommunikation und Design, Wuppertal, Germany, Bergische Universitat Gesamthochschule, 1995, pp. 36-45

structures in simple architecture, packaging design, and new products. The book generates the philosophical debate concerning creation by invention or by chance. This is a study that endeavours to penetrate the surface of communication theory and to explore the underlying reasons that enable people produce design products. According to the author of this book these underlying reasons are universal to all humanity.

Maser who has written extensively on design theory argues in his various books that design theory is not just a need. It is also philosophy and psychology. Symbolism is peoples' interpretation of this philosophy, and psychology is part of peoples' cultural feelings. Although his writings are heavily Western oriented, the design theories that are exposed are also applicable to African design patterns. Since Maser does not interpret the symbolism of African or Maasai art, this researcher has endeavoured to use his theories to explain African and Maasai Art. This is now possible because principles of organising works of art and design are universal.

Beckluth and Saitoti<sup>51</sup> and Adamson<sup>52</sup> have studied the Maasai people's geographical divisions, ornamentations, land and as well as various other

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<sup>51</sup> Beckluth, C., and Saitoti, Tepiliki Ole, *Maasailand and* *le*, Henry Abrahams Inc., 1980, pp. 10-20.

<sup>52</sup> Adamson, Joy, *The People of Kenya*, Oxford Publishers 1959, 5-30.

characteristics. The studies based on Maser's writings have produced significant insights. Although Beckluth and Saitoti do not specifically investigate the theory of Maasai art, their studies focus on the history and culture of the Maasai society, in the context of which Maasai art functions.

Frutiger<sup>53</sup> explains signs, symbols and signets in terms of comparison and interpretation. In this context he mentions astrology, geometry and symbols, sun symbols, abstract symbols, meditation pictures, object symbols, naturalism, figure symbols, plan symbols, scheme symbols and symbols for industry. Bauer<sup>54</sup> on the other hand deals with Indian symbols, mythologic symbols, Christian symbols, astrological and historical symbols. These two writers have collected a lot of data on symbolism and have given them wide interpretations with their explanations based on historical and social perspectives. Many of these perspectives are also explained in detail in Maser's writings such as the "Aesthetic und Psychologie" (see pages pp.50-53) Another scholar Braem<sup>55</sup> has studied these topics by explaining the

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<sup>53</sup> Frutiger, Adrian *Der Mensch und Seine Zeichen* Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1981, pp. 9-23.

<sup>54</sup> Bauer, Wolfgang, *Lexikon Der Symbole*, Wiesbaden, Germany, Fourier Verlag, 1980

<sup>55</sup> Braem, Harad, *Die Sprache Der Formen* Germany, Wirtschaftsverlag Langen Miller/Herbig, 1990, pp. 5-21.

meaning of signs. He concerns himself with a number of topics around symbols and signs. These include form, symbolic world art, fascination spirals, crosses as symbols, shape and head, letters, profiles, ellipse, pyramids, form and emotion, rooms and dwellings etc as forms and shapes. He sees artistic concepts and design theory as means towards an end.

Throughout the writings of Maser, Papanek, Baver and Braem, theory of design is depicted as a vehicle towards practical interpretation of the meaning of art. All of them agree that theoretical concepts must have a historical, social, cultural and economic background in order for them(concepts) to be properly rooted in the norms of a society.

Consequently, this researcher has traced the history of the Maasai people and endeavoured to root their social behaviour on their cultural and economic frameworks. Just as the Western artistic and design concepts trace their philosophical being on Aristotle and Plato, so does Maasai artistic tastes base their symbolic significance on Maasai cultural roots. This also goes for divers artistic practices of other African traditional societies. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this research, organising any work of African art requires the same principles, such as balance, unity, variety, harmony, colour, rhythm, etc. The difference between

works of art by different societies only comes in at the level of interpretation of content meaning due to the diversity in cultural values.

However, because of the uniformity of their cultural past, African artistic expressions have a lot in common (see pp. 100-102) For example, just as Maasai art is very much representational in nature so is the art of the Benin.

Philip Dark<sup>55</sup> writing on Benin Art demonstrates that this art is representational in character. This representational nature is evidenced in the bronze sculptures, and in the art and symbolic messages they represent.

Representational art is meant to convey a message and meaning whose aesthetic values and spirit behind the symbolic art of the Maasai this researcher has endeavoured to find out. This is because symbolic art of the Maasai is just as representational as the Benin Art.

## 2.2. THE NATURE OF ART

### 2.2.1. The Meaning of "Art"

Art has meant different things to different people at different times. The term as we use it today probably

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<sup>55</sup> Philip, J.C., Dark, *An Introduction to Benin Art and Technology*, Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 1-39.

derives from the Renaissance words *arti* and *arte*. *Arti* was the designation for the craft guilds of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries to which the artists were closely tied by the traditions of their calling. *Arte*, the word for craftsmanship, implied a knowledge of materials used by the artist, such as the chemical nature of his pigments and their interaction with one another, as well as the grounds on which a painter applied those pigments. *Arte* or craftsmanship also implied a skilful handling of those materials in the sense of producing images more or less like those of nature. Art in the Renaissance thus served as both a technical and an interpretive record of human experience; it has continued to fulfil this function down to the present time, although more meagerly at some times than others. At times, as in the 19th century, emphasis was placed on the technical aspects of art but, in the hands of the greatest masters, it always remained "interpretive." This means that art is also symbolic.

Art deals with visual signs to convey ideas, moods, or generalized emotional experiences. It may be called a language of visual signs. Unlike the language of words, however, art is not meant to be informative. Information is the providence of symbols, as in the words of literature, or the number of mathematics. Sometimes in the interpretation of ideas or moods, however, the

artist may employ visual symbols; but the meaning of such symbols is embodied in the forms or images which the artist creates just as are the ideas, moods, or experiences he conveys.

Since art is not intended to convey facts or information, the appreciation of art (by which we mean understanding art) may be enhanced when the observer attempts to grasp the meaning of works of art through intuition or instinct.

Although the observer may realize that the language of words and of visual signs as used in art are disparate, he may not recognize the varied problems of understanding and explaining art that arise. The limitations of the printed or spoken work in fully explaining art must be accepted as the natural inability of one medium to replace another. We have all felt the frustration which accompanies our attempts to describe a moving experience to a friend. We are soon convinced that the only description lies in the experience itself. Nonetheless, for education in the better understanding of art, the medium of words has to be used in order to attempt to explain the nature of art and the ideas presented by works of art.

Unfortunately, the most moving experiences are usually those which are least expressible, no matter how much we may wish to share them. The sensations of

experience vary according to the senses which are stimulated, and, since certain media have developed around each of these senses, we may assume that certain qualities exist which make these media separate and unique.

### 2.2.2. The Major Media of Art

The media which are most frequently used to convey human feelings are prose, poetry, music, dance, the cinema, the theatre, and the plastic and graphic arts. Subdivisions of the last two groups include painting, prints, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, and architecture. Each of these media exists to fulfil a specific need and, therefore, has its own province of expression. For example, one cannot paint a very successful picture of a novel, describe a melody, or dance a poem. There have always been attempts to extend the limits of media, but they have been successful only in so far as they have respected the particular properties of the medium of translation.

Opera, the theatre, and the cinema are fields in which other media often combine. They are rarely equally successful in all departments. Each medium contains its own problems. So, with so many demands to be met, it is obvious that concessions must be made. As an analogy,



the building of a house requires the sacrifice of some structural strength for lighting and visibility, living space for storage, utility for beauty, and so forth; each house represents a series of compromises according to the determinants of site, climate, the taste of the architect, owner, and builder, and finances available. The house which loses least in the inevitable series of compromises is, in the end, the most organically successful design. This is equally true of the composite art media.

There have been periods in which one or several of the media or art forms have enjoyed unusual interest. The people of the Italian Renaissance made art the measure of all things, and their lives were motivated by its enjoyment. Accomplishments in other fields were measured by their "artfulness," even to the extent that war itself became a work of art (Machiavelli). Though each of the arts found its enthusiastic audience, the epicentre of the art lay in painting and sculpture. Here, as elsewhere, the themes depicted were usually of religious origin, and of greatest interest to the people from the standpoint of subject matter. But the interest in the subject was equalled by the enthusiasm for the revolutionary concepts of form which derived from classical examples, and had been largely ignored during the intervening years. The transition from Medieval to

Renaissance style, based on the Graeco-Roman style of antiquity, produced a remarkable form consciousness in the populace, and introduced a period of history which was unique in its agreement on the value of art, and on its aesthetic value. However, the advances which marked this revised outlook eventually became ends in themselves, leading to emphasis on scale and technical facility. In addition, arts's alliance with the growth of scientific method at times produced a "scientific art" which was cold, calculated, and a product of conformity to standardized rules.

### 2.2.3. Narration, Description, Illusion, and Reality in Art

Narration or story-telling, the province of literature, should be seen as not a primary concern of art. Great works of art in the past have often told stories, but there is no obligation on the part of the artist to narrate, since it is not directly a part of his medium. If, however, the artist does choose to tell a story, there is no rule that says everyone should "see" the story in the same way. Great works of art normally come closer to the condition of music than they do to literature<sup>57</sup>. There is almost as little need to

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<sup>57</sup> Phillip J.C., Ibid.

identify the subject matter of a painting or sculpture, as there is in a musical composition.

In the 19th century, when the influence of poetry and prose reached its zenith, art often became a handmaiden of literature and, aided by science, attempted a factual interpretation of romantic and allegorical writing. There was a marked abandonment of form as an expressive agent in its own right, while the favoured subject matter was saturated with emotion and sentimentality. The role of art became narrative and descriptive, as though one attempted to give the feeling of battle by counting the troops and weapons; or tried to give the expression of mother love by taking an inventory of nursery equipment. In short, artists had de-emphasized the essential ingredient of art and had made it become a second rate translator of other media.

Art must, in its way, narrate and describe to some degree, for it is a medium developed out of man's need for a particular type of communication. However, art is at its best when its form communicates directly, with subject matter and symbols playing subordinate roles. The mechanics of art reception are quite different from those of other media. An art work does not flow in time; it does not involve physical anticipation as in turning the pages of a book or listening for the next measure of music. The complete unity of a painting registers in a

moment. The totality of the work can be taken in with one hard look, although this is hardly the recommended procedure for real appreciation. Hence, art does not lend itself wholeheartedly to the recitation of action in sequence form as does literature which is unfolding in its presentation. Narration is more properly a by-product of the artist's search.

Similarly, art is, by its very nature, more a matter of illusion than the other expressive media, music excepted. Action is never really present in paint or stone, and the actual human body plays no part in its expression as in the theatre or dance. Although the artist activates his tools in the creation of a work of art, in the work itself such activity has become static and a reminder of the past activity. Such a reminder may be stimulating in a manner somewhat like that of the present movement in the theatre and the dance, but it is "illusive" and not "real". Because of this gulf between art and objective reality, there seems little excuse for forcing art into a completely "realistic" or descriptive role. All media employ calculated deceits which help to create the "unrealistic" or imaginative atmosphere in which lies the unique value and appeal of the arts.

We certainly do not go to a play because we expect a duplication of every-day life. Instead we presumably hope to be transported into situations which, through the

imagination and perception of the artist, exalt and come to grips with the fundamental forces of life. The make-believe deception in a theatrical production is purposely emphasized by our isolation from the stage, the unnatural postures and diction of the actors, exaggerated costumes, and countless other stratagems. Unreality is sought in other ways in other media, always serving to draw man out of himself into a world of separate, yet meaningfully related existence. Yet, despite all this evidence of admittedly premeditated and justifiable guile, there are those who would miscast art in the role of a mirror of our practical every-day world. Imagination, invention, daring are ignored in favour of routine, rules and rote, and unremitting slavishness to visual details which even photography aids through manipulations of focus and timing. Art which places chief emphasis on accuracy of description is essentially repetitive and not creative, because it overlooks the unreality which is the basis of real art.

"Reality", as it has been used here, is a term of convenience, for the identification of the most common and superficial sensations of life. Even in this sense one could extend the description by pointing out that variations in physical and mental make up among individuals create differences of sensation in those individuals, and thus, varying ideas of reality. Art, of

course, constitutes an outlet for these differences of opinion. The genuine reality for each of us is defined by our most personal experiences and interests, which produce a specialized outlook. As we progress in our studies in any field, we experience a change of mind as to the truly important factors in that area. As we dig more deeply into the fields of the intellect and the subconscious, we become aware that more basic realities underly the appearances of common-place experience.

It is this reality of broader and deeper understanding which marks the work of the true creator. Einstein shared the conventional patterns of life with the rest of us, but his perception revealed relationships which have helped to re-shape our views of the world and our place in it. Between the world of convention and the world of perception there can be little doubt as to which, for Einstein, was the truer reality. Beethoven was very little different from the rest of us anatomically, but inwardly, he sensed revolutionary sounds which, in an abstract way, expressed the experiences and hopes of the human race. This, to Beethoven, was the true reality; not the payment of rent, the eating of meals, the reading of the evening newspaper. These two men, and all those of equal significance, contributed fundamental theory of reality as discovered and transmitted through the medium in which

they worked. Our society, receiving this creativity, gradually and often unconsciously experiences a parallel change in its own point of view. Creative men alter the frames of reference through which we see the things about us.

#### 2.2.4. The Special Nature of Artistic Experience

In reference to the foregoing, works of art may be called unique form of experiences intended to invoke sensations in the observer. They are "unique" because they are different from objects and incidents of everyday association, even though the artist may have used such objects or incidents as subjects. One should see a work of art from the special frame of reference of aesthetic or artistic experience. When looking at a piece of sculpture, for example, we have a special attitude which is not present when seeing an ordinary chair. Both forms stand on all sides surrounded by space, but the chair is seen as having a special function. On the other hand, the sculptural form is intended to arouse subtle emotional states in the observer which has nothing to do with use.

This very uniqueness of works of art sets them apart from functional or commonplace objects of everyday use; yet, most people fail to make a distinction in regard to

art. When they want to know what a painting is "about," they have the same attitude towards the painting as towards any ordinary object of use. Of course, a chair, let us say, may not be of practical usefulness only but also a work of art. When this take place, added dimensions of meaning and significance are found along with the usual commonplace meaning of practical use.

With the distinction of this added uniqueness in mind, the observer should be able to approach works of visual art as he would poetry, as opposed to a scientific treatise, or as he would a symphony or jazz concert as opposed to a commercial jingle on television.

Thus, we may call a painting or sculpture, the "objectification," "record," or "expression" of an artist's experiences during the age and place in which he lives. In this way it is opposed to the products of the industrial designer, or architect, which also have the practical associations engendered by their forms. Again, a work of art may be defined as a kind of "autobiography" of an artist's attitudes in line, value, shape, texture and colour, which the uninitiated observer must learn to read.

The mind determines "how" "what" we see and mental activity is necessary before the subtle qualities or characterful nuances of painting or sculpture are discernible. This is similar to the way in which hearing



the handsome inflections of metric rhyme in poetry or melodic counterpart of music, requires training by experience.

The province of the artist is to enlarge our comprehension of the world or universe, to widen our imaginative horizons, and to enrich our sensory enjoyment of all things. In order to do this, the artist is obliged to create new forms by the selection, rearrangement, or exaggeration (distortion) of those forms he sees or experiences about him in his environment. It is this environmental influence that causes the artist to reflect the time and place of his endeavours.

20th Century artists may be credited with reasserting this creative principle which is fundamental to the visual arts. This principle which was largely neglected during the 19th century, gradually obviated the representation of nature as a primary goal. The artists then began to re-assert it<sup>58</sup> The latter realized that there was no such thing as a "correct procedure" for originality, and that there was no basic "right" or "wrong" way to create. Artists began to see that the most effective art form was the most unique one; and, by its very uniqueness, it was not communicative of the

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<sup>58</sup> The term representation really means to re-present, as opposed to the direct presentation of meaning desirable in art.

ideas and feelings of the artist.

On the other hand, the public still tends to think of art in the 19th century terms. A surprisingly large number apparently believe that art should imitate nature, and that the best artists are those who make the most faithful duplication. A large part of the art of this century has little resemblance to nature forms; however, the ordinary layman seems to assume that the artist has wither not achieved the skills necessary to duplicate nature; or that he is merely seeking notoriety by sensational images. Since art is not science, or a technical performance in which the main aim is the avert description of objects, the sympathetic student must realize the nature and function of art before he can understand the goals he should try to achieve in studio performance.

The observer must re-orient himself away from a type of art that has as its highest aim the descriptive factual rendition of subject matter. After practising with the devices which may be found, by analysing works of art, the observer may eventually find that these become instinctive tools of expression. Then, like most professional artists of today (who are concerned with what people feel and think about, their tragedies, hopes, joys and aspirations), the observer may be able to

conceive or imagine forms in an original way<sup>59</sup>.

#### 2.2.5. The Components of a Work of Art

In order to approach art from the angle of expressing meanings and ideas, the observer will first need to know something of the ingredients or components which make up a work of art. These ingredients are: The Subject Matter, the Form, and the Content or Meaning of a work.

#### 2.2.6. Subject Matter

There is nearly always a subject matter in a work of art. This is true even when the form-style is abstract (subject matter is limited in so far as it may be based on perceivable objects from nature). Subject matter in abstract art may lie more in the realm of 'ideas' or of intellectual concepts which are abstruse rather than based on material objects or facts. However, even in works of art which may be more obviously based on a representation of perceivable objects, the subject matter or object used is not of importance in itself to the artist. Subjects which the artist uses are merely a stimulus to creativity. It is the artist's initial

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<sup>59</sup> Maser, S., Ibid

response to subject matter and the way thereafter in which he presents the subject that is important. In addition, the artist during the course of progress in giving form to his subject may re-interpret its character; thus, the final form of the work of art may be far removed, in terms of what the observer sees, from the original subject, or even the original response of the artist to that subject.

The most significant problem in creating works of art is not "what" one uses as a subject, but "how" one interprets a subject in order to achieve character. The "how" of works of art, involves the other ingredients of the art product form and content. These are the most important components of a work of art.

#### 2.2.7. Form

By form we mean the totality of the work of art. Form is the organization (design) of all elements which make up the work of art. Another way of defining this term is; the use made of the visual devices available to the artist. The visual devices or elements of form, as we tend to call them, are lines, shapes, value (varied lights and darks), textures, and colours. The use to which the artist puts these elements determines the final appearance of his work of art. Figure 1 illustrates how

elements form combine to make up the work of art.

#### 2.2.8. Principles of Organization

The use of the elements concerns the particular physical and psychological relationships made between visual devices which in some way seem to effect us in their own right; that is each element individually seems to have intrinsic (inbuilt) effects which are multiplied and made richer in their impact upon us when used in combinations<sup>60</sup>.

The physical relationships of the elements are founded upon traditional, nearly universal principles, which are generally called the 'principles of organization or of design', or as in the past at times, 'rules of composition' (i.e. balance, rhythm, domination, harmony, etc.). Some artists use these principles more consciously or logically than others; but, all artists can be said to have at least an instinctive sensitivity to the value of organization. These principles (of organization) will be taken up in more detail later on in this dissertation. They should be regarded as guides, not dogmatic rules; or else the expressive quotient of form may be lost and the work may become academic. Nevertheless, throughout the history of art, it is in the

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<sup>60</sup> Lucie - Smith, Ibid.

area of basic principles by which works of art are given order, that men have most often agreed, lies the locus of "beauty" in art. Thus "beauty," an abstract concept, becomes tangible and universal in terms of form-organization in art; hence terms like "beauty of form," or "formal beauty" are often applied to great works of art.

#### 2.2.9. Media and Technique

Form-ordering is not only concerned with the visual devices and principles of relating the said devices, but also with the materials (media) such as pigments, inks, graphite and the tools (i.e. brushes, pens pencils) used by the artist, and with the manner (technique) in which these are used. Technique in painting, drawing and print-making also has to bring into artistic consideration the support, ground, or surface on which the artist applies his materials. While this is also true of the spatial arts of sculpture, architecture and three-dimensional design where materials are more directly a part of artistic execution, it does not seem to be such a separate consideration as with the two-dimensional arts.

## 2.2.10. Organic Unity - Form Organization

The real feeling of a work of art cannot be exposed by a breakdown of its parts. However, for the purposes of illustration and instruction we are often compelled to isolate the elements composing the form of the work. One could make a comparison with the parts of a radio and the parts, or elements of form in a painting. If we should break down the radio and spread all the parts before us so that we were forced to examine each one separately, the form of the radio, as well as its meaning and function, would be lost to us. We could then put these parts together in such a way that a completely new device has been created. This contrivance would have the form of something not then recognizable (because it is outside human experience), nor even graced by a name. It would certainly not be the form of a radio, despite the presence of all the parts which are needed to make a radio. The device, obviously, would not fit our idea of radio form until all the parts were once assigned their original positions. Once re-assembled the radio would work, just as a competent art form, "works," although the elusive property of life, in a work of art, as in human body, is impossible to define effectively. This difficulty stems from the fact that we can recognize life when all the parts are working, but we do not know what

has been lost when they cease to work; life, like electricity, remains a mystery to us. 078892 | 2000

The anatomical parts of a painting which the artist manipulates are the elements of form which were previously listed. The artist hopes to assemble these in such a way that they will work together to create a meaningful organic or "living" unity. The result may be a hybrid work (similar to the device mentioned in the radio analogy) which functions only as a series of parts, and which consequently has no unity of meaning and function. On the other hand, the artist may be successful in creating a work in which each of the parts is vital, not by itself, but in the general functioning of the work as a whole. In such an ideal development, the total organization or form cannot be conceived when any one of its parts is missing. With such a work, an entity is created which, like the radio, has a separate and distinct personality but, unlike the radio, is incapable of being named or classified, except according to a broad category. A radio would not ordinarily be confused with a chair, for each has its own characteristic distribution of form in which all those things have been eliminated that do not serve the particular utility of those objects. So it is with a distinguished work of art, where every part aids in the purpose of expression. The painting, as an entity, is



inconceivable without those parts; and we can, therefore, say that it demonstrates perfect unity or total form organization. We could go farther and say that although there are many identical radios of a particular model, there are qualities in every art work which tend to make it unlike any previously created work; in the best sense of the word it is truly "original."

In the studio, the use of the suggestions offered in the study should place emphasis on the practice and observation of the potentialities for form building and on psychological or expressive impact.

#### 2.2.11. Content or Meaning

When we begin to attempt to analyze why form affects us emotionally or expressively, or stimulates intellectual activity on the part of the observer, we are concerned with Content or Form-Meaning, the third component of a work of art. This component is the one in which the quality or significance of a work of art seems to reside. We may define content as the final statement, mood, or spectator experience with the work of art. It can also be called the significance of the art form; the kinds of emotions, intellectual activity, or associations we make between art objects and our subconscious or conscious experiences seem to arise out of an art form

and are completely inseparable from it except for purposes of discussion. In other words, content is the essential meaning of form. As Frank J. Mather points out Concerning beauty, "Meaning and Form are merely two aspects of the same thing - a form containing and conveying a meaning cast in a form in order that it may be expressed."<sup>51</sup>

Considering for a moment the present-day abstract approach to form on the part of many artists, wherein the form is decorative or patterned, there seems to be little, if any, meaning. However, there is meaning because there is no form, artistic or otherwise, which in some way, does not have meaning for someone. In abstract art, it may be the unobvious, but direct meaning inherent in a visual relationship, such as a black line set-off against coloured shapes of varied contours. Abstract artists obviously must find much that is pleasurable in such artistic arrangements, and the form-conscious observer may also feel this kind of enjoyment-meaning to be found in well organized relationship of artistic elements.

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<sup>51</sup> Mather, Frank J., Concerning Beauty, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1935, p. 128.

## 2.2.12. Abstraction

Sheldon Cheney says that "abstraction is an idea stripped of its concrete accompaniments, an essence or summary."<sup>62</sup> However, everyone abstracts the experiences that are of value to him from environment, and these are not necessarily concrete if they lie within the realm of the intuition or the imagination. In art, if one only takes away a few of the surface effects from what is usually considered "real" or tangible, he is abstracting in a limited way. The artist who draws a "tree" as closely as he can to the optical appearance of an actual tree is still abstracting his idea of "tree" in order to put it down in the graphic signs of art. In art terminology, however, we usually reserve the term abstract art for a type of form arrangement in which the concept of relating artistic devices (or formal elements) is more important than any indication of the perceivable objects which the artist may have seen in nature and used as subject matter.

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<sup>62</sup> Cheney, Sheldon, *Expressionism in Art*, Liveright Publishing Corp., 1934, p. 80.

### 2.2.13. Non-Objective Art

There are some artists who use motifs entirely from within themselves, rather than observing them in nature. Such artists begin with form, such as areas of colour or of line and value, and arrive at artistic conclusions with these elements alone. Such artists have been called non-objective, since they never resort to the use of natural objects believing them to be inconsequential in artistic expression. Artists of this persuasion "feel" natural objects are unimportant as subjects, because they believe the work of art should "live" on its own merits.

Within these generally inclusive terms of abstract and non-objective art, many diverse form concepts have developed over the years since 1910-1911. Perhaps the present fashion in art called "Abstract-Expressionism" should be mentioned as an extension of abstract and non-objective art. It seems that artists interested in this style have usually abandoned the predilection for geometric planes found in abstract and non-objective art in favour of emotional abandonment and amorphous shapes.

### 2.2.14. Form-Meaning

Despite the fact that the terms abstract and non-objective may tend to bring to mind that "nothing is

perceivable in such works, in view of the preceding explanation that concepts, or ideas are manifest in such works (and these are equally valid as subject matter along with natural objects for the artist), it does not mean that such works have no content. Content or meaning lies in the form and is effective in so far as the observer is conversant with form-meaning.

There is little doubt, however, that the public has had its vision conditioned to "read" representational form, in much the same sense that a snapshot represents nature in an "optical" manner. Of course, as suggested earlier, photography also may be handled less in this "optical" or mechanical manner and more in an artistic fashion. Such images will probably not appeal as much to the "object-minded" person, but may have a certain acceptance for their technological value. Such individuals tend to look for similarly descriptive values in art and are only happy when natural-appearing objects are produced that provide an obvious basis of recognition.

With sufficient experience in looking at the work of art, however, most individuals will eventually begin to realize that no particular emphasis on visual description of objects is needed; for them, painting and sculpture may be optically understandable and yet have character above and beyond ordinary description. Almost anyone can

sense the universal quality of serenity in a Cezanne landscape (The Stockade); or the impassioned response to objects and life expressed by Van Gogh (as in his Cypress Landscape). Van Gogh has depicted the quality of nature as a living, stimulating force in such a way as to make his painting become a vital expression in its own right. This is made possible through the swirling shapes, the direct clash of colours, and the heavily pigmented surface. The meaning of "city" in the illustration by Stuart Davis should be apparent in his machine-like shapes, and movement-tensions, all of which are a part of his form concept.

#### 2.2.15. The Aesthetic Experience

Previously, in this chapter, it was mentioned that the quality, or significance of a work of art lies in our interpretation of the content. We called this 'the aesthetic value of the work of art'. The experiencing of a work of art, when it is enjoyable, persuasive, stimulating, disturbing, or otherwise evocative of our senses, is an aesthetic or artistic experience. This is meaningful and of value to us because it is really what we hope to experience when we look at works of art. Obvious recognition of common, everyday items carried over into art cannot make this much of an artistic

experience, and so not meaningful in the deepest sense as art. It merely has some small item of value on an associational basis; but once we have identified the object, we are done with the form and forget it. Works of art are meaningful when they seem to remain part of us after we have left them. If we are inclined to come back and see them again, we have had a worthwhile experience that does not terminate at the instant we have "seen" but one aspect. It is not enough, therefore, that art forms be merely associated with natural objects or natural forms. A "good" work of art must be "seen" by the observer as well as the artist, with aptness, power of expression, and flexibility.

When art represents natural objects, many people continue to assume that it is meant to tell a visual story; but, let us remember, from our earlier discussion of this point, that narration is really the province of literature. What the observer must learn to look for in works of art are not the specifically recognizable associations with objects, stories, or events in life, but a general expression of general experiences provided by the artist in new forms - and thus, with uncommon meaning or aesthetic significance.

It is, perhaps, interesting to note at this point, that the naturalist style of the 1870's and 1880's in France which has tended to be maintained as the layman's

"norm of vision" down to mid-twentieth century, was at its time a new form of art based on the science-centring of culture resulting from the Industrial Revolution. As a new form of art with unfamiliar meanings for its time, naturalism was largely rejected or neglected by the public in about the same manner as most people of our time react to the art of today.

### 2.3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This researcher operates within the realms of three different theoretical assumptions. The first is based on elements of organisation in design, that is, the assumption that design is the organisation of parts into a coherent whole. The second is based on psychology of seeing, which means that fundamental to either creating or appreciating a visual work of art and design is the process of "seeing". The third one is based on "Logico-Aesthetic Integration". This is the processes within which a whole culture and its art evolve. The researcher wishes to examine each of these paradigms in much more greater detail<sup>ii</sup>.

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<sup>ii</sup> Elsen E. Albert, *Purposes of Art*, Holt, Rinehart and Son, New York, 1981 Chapter 3 - 11.



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### 2.3.1. Elements of Organisation in Design

Although considered human expression, design and art are, in reality, the underlying process by which the universe was formed through orderly procedures of selection and evolution. Human designers and artists continue to construct "superficial patterns" inspired by nature. These human constructions, farms, cities, furniture, art-forms, design patterns, decorations, etc. are largely determined by natural design that existed before them. According to Bevin<sup>64</sup> the underlying aspect in both natural and human design is order. The quest for order does not stop at creations only. It also permeates all aspects of human life. Consequently, this researcher would like to study the importance and meaning of basic elements of design and art creations. The assumption here is that the more one understands a work of art, the more one is likely to appreciate it.

The basic elements of design and art creations are line, shape and mass, space, texture, pattern and colour:

- (a) Line is the most fundamental element in design. Since civilization began, people have been fascinated by lines, using them to decorate tools or walls of caves. Line can be used as an abstract symbol, contour, form,

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<sup>64</sup> Bevin, Elliott Marjorie, *Design Through Discovery*, p. 3.

pattern, texture, etc.

- (b) Shapes are of four broad categories: geometric, natural, abstract and nonobjective. On a flat surface, shapes become mass through illusion as a result of various devices used by the artist and designer, such as shading or the use of perspective. Closely related to shapes are masses which define shapes more finely. Masses in art objects and design patterns appear as cubes, spheres, pyramids, squares, circles, triangles, etc.
- (c) Space is a vast expanse, which is a vital part of even the smallest design or work of art. In creating a form of any kind, one must manipulate space. This is because space perception is a reaction of one's brains and eyes. Looking at any space, the brain reacts immediately to sensory response, and if one were to be assaulted simultaneously by the details of everything around us, one's intelligence would be incapable of handling all the information bombarding it.
- (d) Texture involves the tactile sense, or sense of touch. The variety of texture in the environment accounts for much of its interest and livability. Texture and pattern are

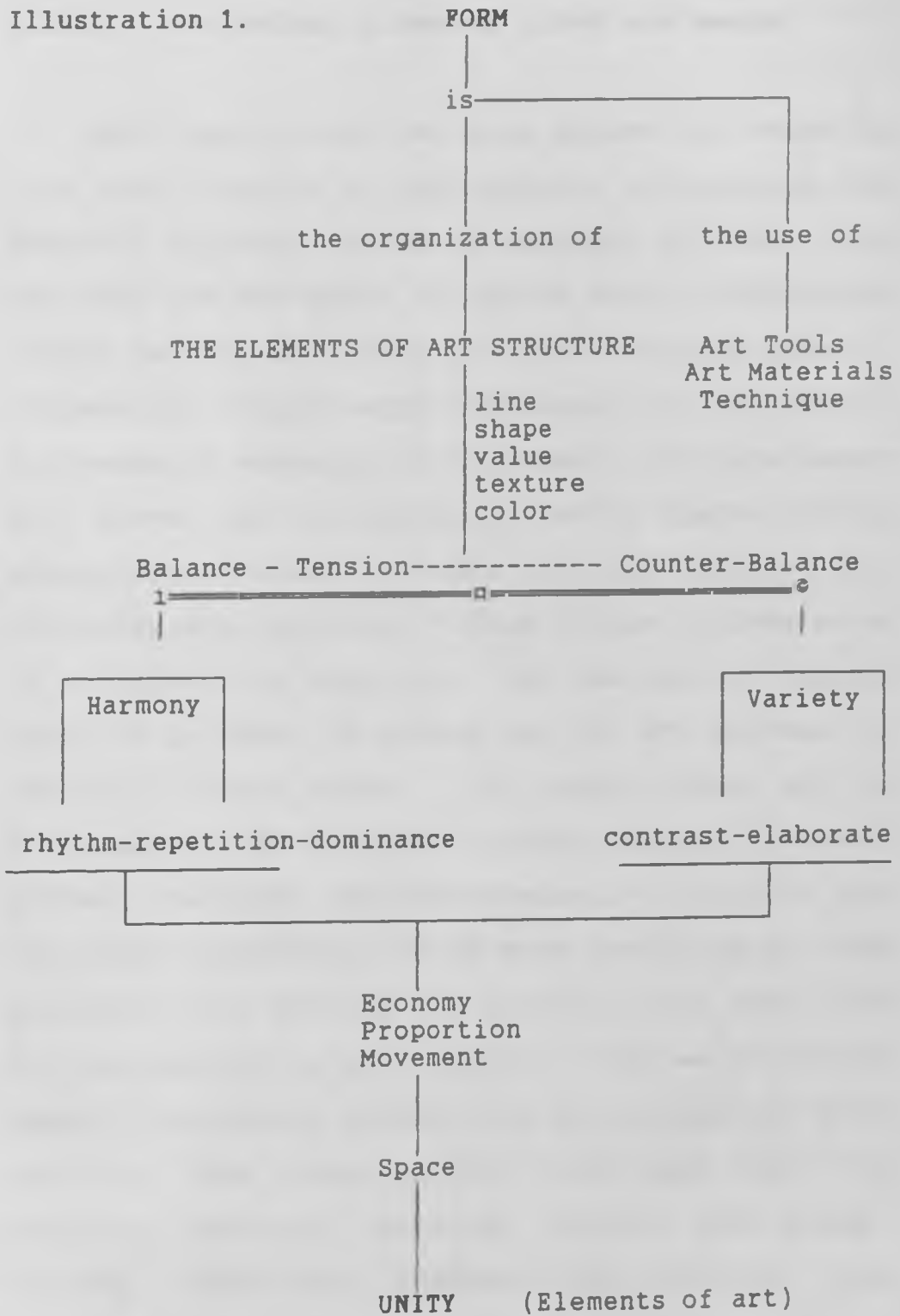
inevitably intertwined. A patterned fabric gives one a visual sense of texture, making one feel surface variations even when none exists to the touch

(e) Pattern and texture, as earlier stated, have a lot in common. For example, a single brick is textured, but a wall of textured bricks creates a pattern. The difference between texture and pattern is one of degree. Any pattern has visual texture but not all texture embodies a pattern. Patterns are used as repetition design, surface design, etc.

(f) Colour undoubtedly awakens the greatest emotional response, and suggests moods and depth. It can be combined in an unlimited number of ways and has an enormous capacity to manipulate emotions. Undoubtedly, colour is one of the most powerful tools of the designer and the artist.

With the above points in mind, it is important that the study of symbolic, aesthetic and ideological functions of Maasai art-forms and design patterns, should be examined from an analytical perspective. This is because the Maasai produce concrete art-forms that are based on fundamental design considerations.

Illustration 1.



Adapted from Ocvirk, O.G.,  
Art Fundamentals Theory and practice

### 2.3.2. Psychology of Seeing in Art and Design

What happens after the image reaches the retina has long been a subject of philosophical and psychological debate.<sup>65</sup> Thinkers, including Leonardo da Vinci, felt that the eye had power to extend rays to the object viewed, as well as to take in images emanating from it. Contemporary thought might conceivably be considered a philosophical extension of this theory; for experiments have proven that perception is not a simple, purely sensory mirroring but a process involving selective acts of considerable intricacy. Visual design involves works of art and design patterns. For the sake of clarity here, it is useful to define what is art and what is design, in broad terms. In simple terms, art is concerned with the creation of a work that will arouse an aesthetic response. The word "aesthetic" is derived from the Greek "*aisthetikos*," which means pertaining to sense perception; and although for centuries this meant that art was expected to be beautiful, today we extend the range of response to include the entire gamut of human reaction. What people perceive with their eyes - in painting, sculpture, drawings, prints, photographs, patterns, decorations, ornaments and art-forms - may result in their feeling delight, admiration, shock,

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

rapture, intrigue, disquiet, revulsion, or even disinterest. The important point is that the aesthetic experience is the work's primary purpose. The artist also undergoes an aesthetic experience in creating the work. In this context, art is a mode of communication; the artist expresses and the viewer responds. To carry the definition a step further, it could be said that art rises above the utilitarian aspects of everyday living to spiritual levels. On the other hand, design has an explicit purpose. A visual design has many possible reasons for being, or purposes, ranging from household efficiency to the encouragement of self-esteem.

In visual terms, design is the organization of materials and forms in such a way as to fulfil a specific purpose. There are four ideas here: organization or order, materials, form and purpose. In perception, however, these are interwoven in a single whole product. For example a cup or a pot or even a bicycle has all the four elements interwoven in it. See Ill. 1. page 86 on form. Between form and unity various art element come in between.

It is important to understand that art and design, while representing two distinct fields of activity, are in their fundamental aspects closely related.<sup>66</sup> This relationship is not accidental. It is the result of a

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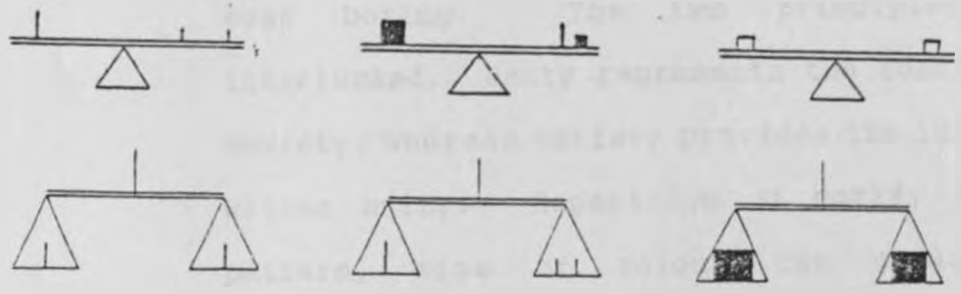
<sup>66</sup> Berlin, *Ibid.* p. 7

body of elements and principles governing the creation of both works. The elements, (which have been discussed earlier, and identified as line, shape and mass, space, texture and colour) are the ingredients with which the artist or designer works. The principles, unity and variety, balance, emphasis, rhythm, proportion, and scale - provide the means by which the elements can be combined in an aesthetic way. More light will illustrate the point.

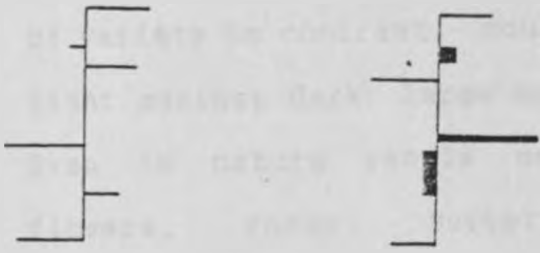


Illustration 2.

BALANCE



Horizontal balance



Vertical balance



Radial balance

Adapted from Ocvirk O.G. Art Fundamentals Theory and Practice  
(Considerations of Balance)

(a) Unity and variety implies that a work of art and design devoid of unifying elements is liable to seem haphazard and chaotic. A work that is totally unified, with no variety, can seem boring. The two principles are interlocked. Unity represents the control of variety, whereas variety provides the interest within unity. Repetition of motif, shape, pattern, size or colour can create an underlying unity. Although variety can be very subtle, the essence, meaning and content of variety is contrast - rough against smooth, light against dark, large against small, etc. Even in nature people notice variety in flowers, rocks, butterflies, animals, seashells - all these have ranges of colours and textures, shapes, etc.

(b) Balance, for the most part, is a basic characteristic of a work of art and design. Balance of shape and mass is traditionally divided into three categories of symmetry, asymmetry, and radial. See Ill. 2 page 90 on balance. Here a visual example is shown.

(i) In symmetrical balance one can draw an imaginary dividing line through the centre of a composition so that the two resulting halves

will form a mirror image of each other. Another term for this is bilateral symmetry. A composition that is balanced symmetrically tends to seem stable, dignified, and calm, so that it creates a sense of repose. For example, most architecture, and especially public architecture, is symmetrical

(ii) In asymmetrical balance, the two imaginary halves of a composition will have equal visual weight, but forms will be disposed unevenly. For example, on a seesaw, balance can be established by moving backward and forward from the centre or fulcrum. It can also be established by distribution of weight; for example, two small people will balance one large one. Stated mathematically,  $2 + 2 = 4$ , but so does  $1 + 3$ . Translated into visual terms, for example, interior designers use and exploit visual asymmetry to create a more interesting effect in a room, by balancing two chairs against a sofa, or group of small paintings against one large one.<sup>17</sup>

(iii) Radial balance results when a number of elements point outward from a centre core

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<sup>17</sup> Albers. J., Interaction of Colour, New Haven: Yale V. Press

- like the spokes of a wheel. It is found abundantly in nature - in rays emanating from the sun, an age-old symbol of the sun god; in the structure of flowers whose petals follow a radial pattern; and in the seed structures of such plants as dandelions and milkweed. Many species of zoological life also develop in a radiating pattern. In architecture, radial symmetry is used widely in the dome and other circular forms. It is perhaps the most dynamic type of balance, for it cannotes explosive action, like the sparks from a skyrocket that shoot into breathtaking circular patterns, filling the sky. It further has a connotation of infinity, as do the ripples of water spreading in a pond.

- (c) Emphasis:- Certain types of design have no special point of emphasis. These are repetitive and decorative by nature. In that case the artist or designer is more interested in the overall effect than in focusing on one part of the composition. Textiles and wallpapers are a good example of this.

However, many works of visual art benefit from having a focal point or points, some element that attracts the eye and acts as a magnet for other sections of the composition which thus provide the kind of emphasis that is supplied, for example, by the climax in a play. Without such points, one's eye is apt to move restlessly through the work, unconsciously searching for something on which to focus.

- (d) Rhythm is a regular pulsation; like the beating of the heart or a drum beat. Some artists and designers work to the accompaniment of music in order to transmute rhythmic sounds into their work. Others express a natural sense of rhythm without conscious effort, much as rhythm is expressed naturally by a dancer. All expressive processes can set up rhythms, and all works can convey them. In creating a visual design, the artist may lend a physical rhythm to the application of brush strokes, the impact of hammer on chisel, the thudding of the shuttle on the loom or the humming of the potter's wheel. The rhythmic leg motion in working the pedals of a potter's wheel, is vitally important to the smooth turning of the pot; in

fact, the entire body is engaged in rhythmic motion when a potter or a weaver is at work. On the other hand, in painting or sculpture, the rhythms may be purely visual, deliberately introduced into the composition to provide the impression of flow and unity.

- (e) Proportion: It is differences in proportion that make people look different from one another. The proportion of leg length to torso, of waist to height, of shoulder width to length of body, all differ widely in human beings. Proportions within peoples' faces give them individuality in appearance also. One person will have a short nose, another big eyes, another high cheek bones - all of these are matters of proportion. Many people would feel quite different if they were a few centimetres taller or shorter, or if they had a different nose or chin. Peoples' proportions become part of their appearance to the world and so, to some degree, determine their personality.

Proportion is usually based on an ideal or a norm. Different cultures have different ideas of what is beautiful, and these ideas are frequently a matter of proportion. Things

that are unduly out of proportion displease people to some degree, whether they are speaking of a giant, a small painting hung on a vast expanse of wall, a huge pattern in a dress on a diminutive woman, or an overreaction to an imagined verbal insult. This is not to say that disproportion is necessarily bad. Sometimes, it is unique and interesting. For this reason, artists and designers frequently and deliberately vary the proportions in a composition to attract attention or create impact. "Perception of size" bears a definite relationship to the distance from which people view it. The size of an object is not the size that projects on the retina of peoples' eyes but is supplied by the mind, which works from experience and preconceived judgement.<sup>58</sup>

The outstanding example of beautiful proportion in the history of art is the Parthenon (a Greek temple). In its design flexible units known as modules were used to ensure a unified relationship of each part to the whole building. These modules were not

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<sup>5</sup> Wolfflin, H., Principles of Art History (tr. by M.D. Sauer). New York, Dover, 1950

units of measurement as such but variable units, such as a diameter of a column, which would be different for different buildings. Built of blocks of pentelic marble with no mortar, the Parthenon is a supreme example of Greek subtlety. What appears to be a rectangular building is actually harmonious curves that give the various parts a fluid yet substantial harmony. Sculpture positioned above the eye level slopes slightly outward toward the top to compensate for the position of the viewer on the ground. The columns are thicker and closer together at the corners because they are seen against the sky and would otherwise appear to be slimmer than the rest. Individual columns curve outward slightly toward the centre because if they were straight the weight of the upper part of the building would make them appear to buckle. Numerous other refinements contribute to the graceful proportions that are still evident, even in the temple's present deteriorated state.

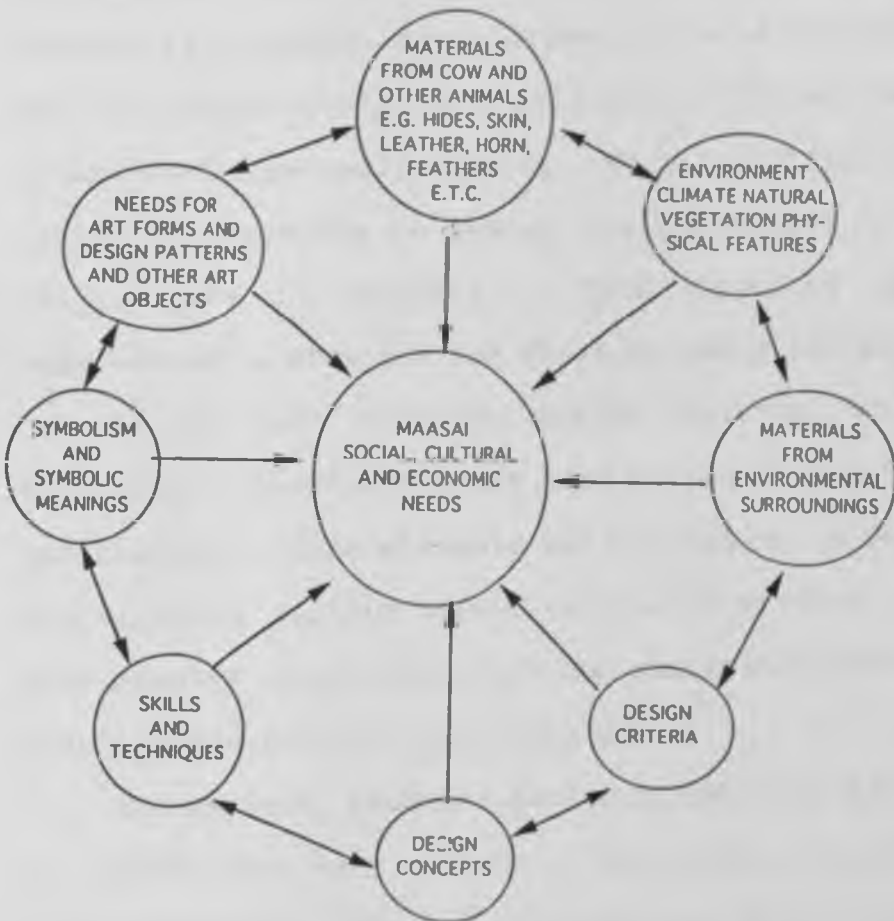
- (f) Scale: In discussing large or small shapes on a two-dimensional surface, proportion has been cited, since the shapes are in proportion to



the size of the area -- paper, canvas, flat surfaces, buildings, human body, wall - on which they appear. Masses are seen in scale with their surroundings or with human beings viewing them for this is a matter of comparison rather than of relationship inherent in the work. The use of scale can make a work of art or design remarkable.

FLOW CHART 1

HUMAN NEEDS FOR ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS AMONG THE MAASAI ARE DETERMINED BY THEIR (MAASAI) LIFESTYLE



Adapted from Wright, Frank Lloyd and Maser, Siegfried; Design Theorie 2, Zur Planung Gestalterischer Projekte 1992. p.173

By depicting an object in larger proportions than the others, an artist expresses an emphasis on the object through showing the particular object as of immense importance in a composition. This phenomenon can be reversed by depicting an object as a minute entity amid the awesome size of a setting. The use of scale in theatre is legendary, since drama can be heightened by the use of immense scale in a setting, which can dwarf the actors as Chinese paintings do. Many traditional African sculptors use scale to depict the importance of chiefs, kings, gods or spirits. This research has also endeavoured to show how the above elements and principles operate, not only in Maasai design patterns, but also in the field of their art-forms, and to illustrate the basic importance of these elements and principles in perceiving and creating various Maasai artistic products. It is only peoples' perception and the conditions governing it that transforms what they look at<sup>§§</sup>.

For example, from the design standpoint, African art is technically very simple. The technical skills are straightforward. However, the African design is based on fairly sophisticated physical concepts. Also, the engineering principles used are complicated and dynamic in nature. So, proper understanding of African art demands closer study of its aims and objectives. All

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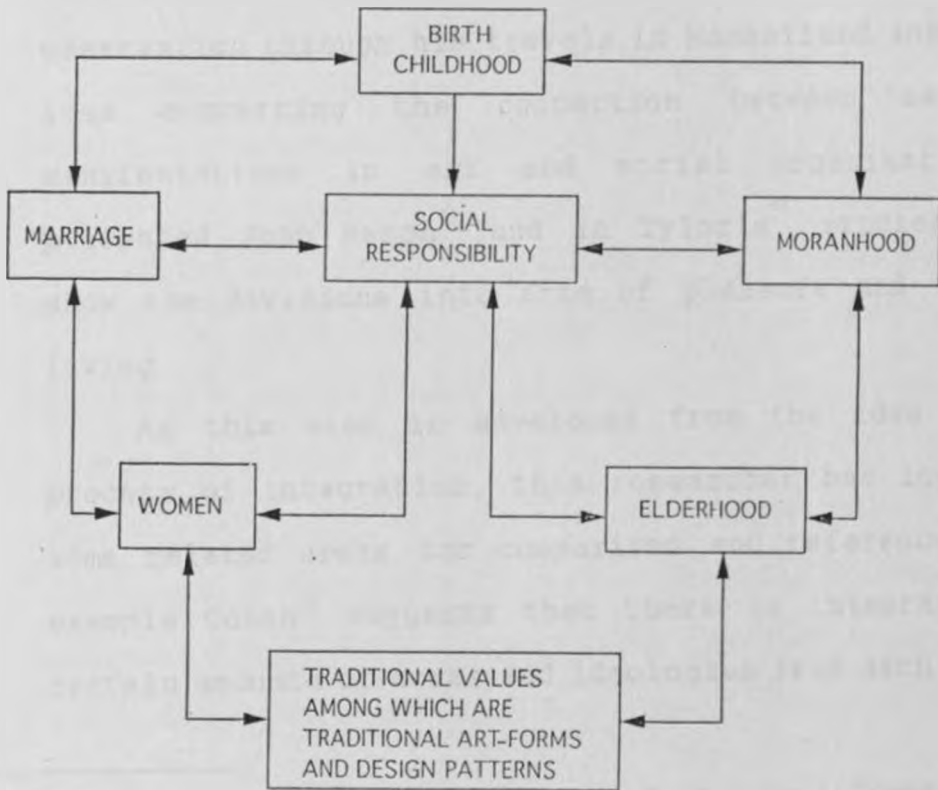
§§ Wolfflin, *Ibid.* p. 8-9

these are integrated in flow charts 1,2,3,4 and 5. pages 100-111.

The creative artist or designer also observes the universe with sensitivity, absorbing impressions from all around. See flow chart 1. page 100. These impressions drop into the subconscious mind like cells then divide and combine to form new entities, which could never be constructed by conscious effort. Often, when one least expects it, one becomes aware of new relationships and, seeing them in unique terms, works to give them a form that will make them apparent to others. This, in essence, is the phenomenon known as inspiration. By studying how the Maasai perceive their art-forms this researcher has found out what inspired Maasai artists and designers. For example, it has found reasons that explain the Maasai made imagery: Images can be direct representations of people, places and things; but they can also become symbols, evoking other things and ideas. The concept of imagery may become clearer when, for instance, two types are contrasted: perceptual (relates to real things that actually exist or that actually did exist and survive in memory) and conceptual (a kind of symbol, a shape or form that represents something in the artist's mind rather than what is actually seen). In other words, it is the artist's personal concept of a subject. Conceptual imagery derives from emotion,

FLOW CHART 2

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND AGE-SETS AMONG  
THE MAASAI DETERMINE THE PRODUCTION  
OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS**



Adapted from Maser, Siegfried, DESIGN THEORIE 1:  
Zur Philosophie Gestalterischer Probleme 1995 p.40

fantasy, or invention. See flow chart 2, page 102.

### 2.3.3. Aesthetic Integration

The third, the "Logico-Aesthetic Integration is "based on the materials of the Hopi Culture". Here one finds the processes within which whole culture and its arts evolve. This theory is based on Thomson<sup>70</sup> (1988) observation through his travels in Maasailand and on the idea concerning the connection between aesthetic manifestations in art and social organisation as presented John Mason<sup>71</sup> and in Tylor's<sup>72</sup> studies which show the divisions into arts of pleasure and arts of living.

As this view is developed from the idea of the process of integration, this researcher has looked at some related areas for comparison and reference. For example Cohen<sup>73</sup> suggests that there is integration of certain amounts of norms and ideologies from each or some

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<sup>70</sup> Thomson, Joseph, *Through Maasiland*, London, Simpson Low, 85, 1945.

<sup>71</sup> Mason, John, *Structural Recurrences of the Arabesque Art Form and Arab Genealogies*, Paper presented at the 12th Annual Meeting of the North Eastern Anthropological Association, Buffalo, April 21-23, 1972.

<sup>72</sup> Tylor, E.B., *Anthropology*, London, McMillan and Co. Ltd., 1904.

<sup>73</sup> Cohen, A., *Two Dimensional Man*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

of the traditional groups as some norms and ideologies are retained or rejected. This would mean that a traditional group develops and produces new art-forms and design patterns using traditional norms and ideologies to enhance its distinctiveness within the dynamics of contemporary situation. The idea here is that new concepts are accepted and people thereby learn to appreciate new art objects. See page 102 on flow chart 2.

The influence of psychology and cognitive studies has been appreciated through Freud's analysis of Da Vinci<sup>74</sup> Arnheims<sup>75</sup> work on visual perception, and through Wallace's (1954) analysis of Maya codices.

Both Herskovits<sup>76</sup> and Kroeber<sup>77</sup> have studied this phenomenon and note that as cultures integrate so do the aesthetic appeals. This is because art products and art appreciation are part of the whole culture. From the foregoing observations, this research has observed that the Maasai culture has determined the type of art-forms and design patterns that they (Maasai people) produce.

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<sup>74</sup> Freud, Sigmund, *Leonardo Da Vinci, A Study in Psycho-Sexuality*, New York, Random House, 1974, pp. 7-35.

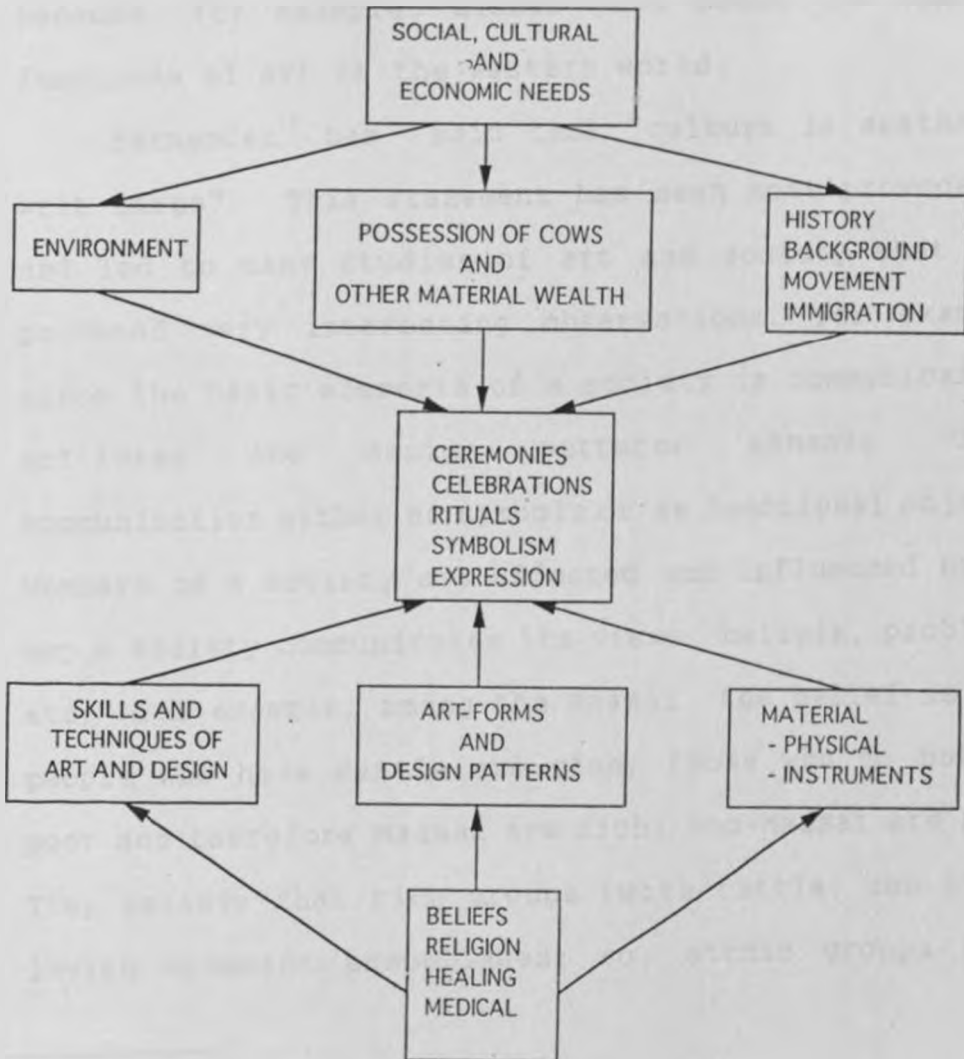
<sup>75</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf, *Art and Visual Perception*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1954, 1948, pp. 11-40.

<sup>76</sup> Herskovits, M.J., *The Aesthetic Drive in Man and His Works*, New York, Alfred Knopf, pp. 378-413.

<sup>77</sup> Kroeber, Alfred L., *Kinds and Properties of Style*. In *Style and Civilizations*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, A.L. Kroeber et al ed, 1957, Chapters 1 and 2.

FLOW CHART 3

DESIGN PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES WITHIN PARTICULAR ART AND DESIGN PRACTICES, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO GENERAL LIFE-STYLE OF THE MAASAI.



Adaptewd from Maser, Siegfried, DESIGN THEORIE 2  
Zur Planung Gestalterischer Projekte 1992 p.19



Any exposure, therefore, to a new and different surrounding and contact with new cultures and other traditional groups forced the Maasai to adopt new aesthetic products in the form of art-forms and design patterns. This however is not confined to Maasai alone, because, for example, Sieber<sup>78</sup> has noted the changing functions of art in the western world.

Fernandez<sup>79</sup> has said that "culture is aesthetics writ large". This statement has been most provocative and led to many studies of art and society that have produced very interesting observations. For example, since the basic elements of a society is communication, art-forms and design patterns enhance visual communication either as symbols or as functional objects. Members of a society are affected and influenced by the way a society communicates its views, beliefs, problems, etc. For example, among the Maasai, the belief is that people who have cattle are rich; those who do not are poor and therefore Maasai are rich; non-Maasai are poor. They believe that rich groups (with cattle) can afford lavish ornament assemblages; so, ethnic groups whose

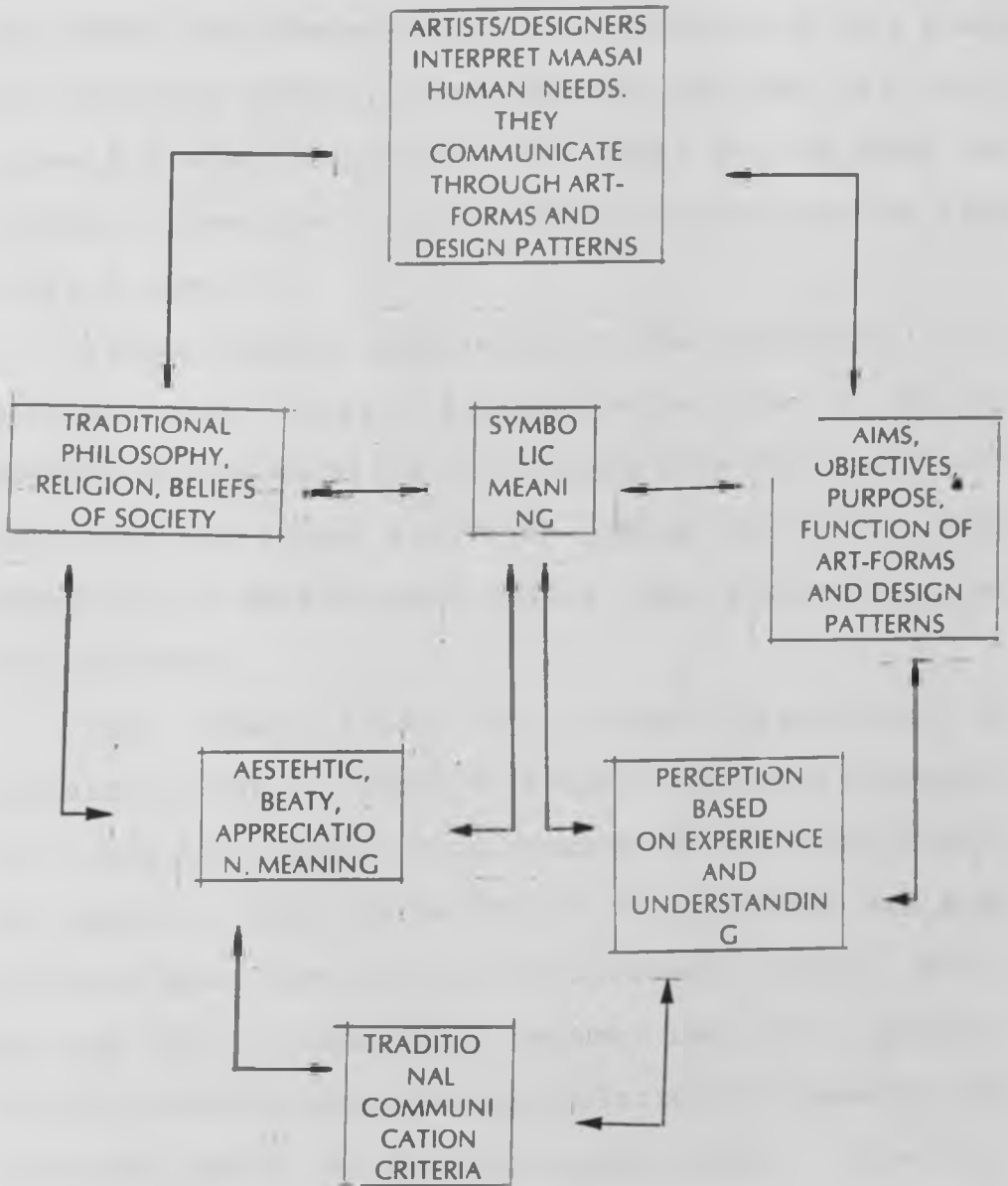
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<sup>78</sup> Sieber, Roy, *The Arts and Their Changing Social Function*. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 92 art 2, 1962, pp. 653-658.

<sup>79</sup> Fernandez, James, *The Exposition and Imposition of Order, Aesthetic Expression in Fang Culture in The Traditional Artist in African Societies*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, Warren Azevedo, ed., 1973, pp. 3-12.

FLOW CHART 4

COMMUNICATION OF TRADITIONAL AESTHETIC IDEA AMONG THE MAASAI IS DEPENDENT UPON THEIR (MAASAI) SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS



Adapted from Maser, Siegfried, DESIGN THEORIE  
Zur Philosophie Gestaltericher Probleme 1995, p.40

ornaments are small and few cannot be Maasai. See flow chart 3 page 105.

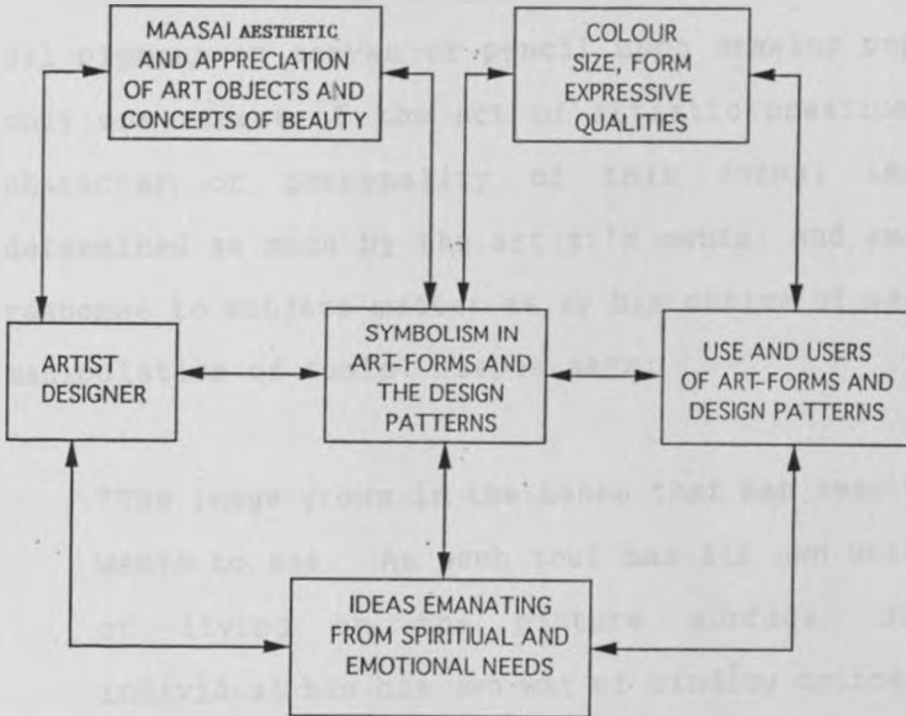
Another social dynamic that is connected to art appreciation among the Maasai is age stratification or age grade. For example, with the exception of very young and very old people, those Maasais who may wear many ornaments have little power and those who may wear few ornaments have great power. This is elaborated on flow chart 4 page 107.

Basing further observation on the foregoing, it is evident that social stratification has a direct connection and relation with production and utility of art-forms and design patterns. Among the Maasai, this connection is seen in clan, gender, age, status, etc., of an individual.

This author finds this concept appropriate in explaining what has prompted Maasai to produce different art-forms and ornamentation especially after the turn of the century. This difference in the products has also affected symbolism and representational imagery. Until tourism and urbanization became important economic factors in Maasailand, the accumulation of ornaments was connected purely to socio-cultural values. (See flow chart 1-5 on pages 99-109)

FLOW CHART 5

SYMBOLISM IN MAASAI ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS IS IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT IN UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING THEIR AESTHETICS FORM, CONTENT AND MEANING



Adopted from Maser, Sigfried, DESIGN THEORIE 4:  
Zur Asthetik Gestalteter Projekte, 1994, pp.23

## 2.4:

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.4.1 Forms of Expression

#### 2.4.1.1. Definition of Expression

The fixing of an image, whether it be in the form of oil pigment on canvas or pencil upon drawing paper, is only one aspect of the act of artistic creation. The character or personality of this formal image is determined as much by the artist's mental and emotional response to subject matter as by his choice of media and manipulation of tools. Kepes says:

"The image grows in the sense that man sees what he wants to see. As each tool has its own unique way of living on the picture surface, so each individual has his own way of binding optical signs into shapes and images that he would like to see."<sup>80</sup>

Expression in art is primarily concerned with the intangible quotient of creativity previously mentioned in this chapter, under "The Nature of Art." It is this unique creative urge and its formal crystallization which

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<sup>80</sup> Kepes, Gyorgy, Language of Vision, Paul Theobald & Co., Chicago, 1951, p. 194.

art critics consider when making distinctions between ordinary artists and those who are truly marked with genius.

The artist may be said to express his "feelings" about life growing out of his continuing experiences with people, places, events, objects, and ideas. These experiences, interwoven with the associations and sentiments in memory, are moulded or re-worked in the mind through the artist's understanding of artistic values. Finally, this "feeling image" is given form and meaning through the artist's mastery of his chosen medium. Expression becomes the stylistic form in which the artist couches his sensuous-visual meaning; it is an attempt to say something about his subject in terms of his own time. Expression is thus directly related to the basic components of a work of art. A parallel example is explained in flow chart 5 page 111.

#### 2.4.2. Classification of Expression as Stylistic Form

There are two broad classifications of expression as stylistic form: individual and group. Group expressions are those of a society as a whole coming into being and achieving sophistication with the birth and growth of its culture. An example of group expression would be the development in ancient Greek civilization of "idealism"

wherein the artist saw "humanity transfigured by its destiny".<sup>81</sup> Within such a group expression, social changes will affect its style so that quite discernible variations could be traced from the lively conceptualism of early Greece (7th Century B.C. to early 5th Century) through the refined perceptualism of the Classic Age (late 5th Cent. to 4th Cent. B.C.) to the Hellenistic Age (4th through the 3rd Cent. B.C.) when there is gradual loss of artistic values in favour of purely associational, imitative, and academic qualities.

The individual expressiveness in the handling of subject matter, form, and content seems more appropriate to our own time than the group expressions of the past. This is probably due to our present-day extolation of self-assertion and individualism. Although general groupings or categories of artists with similar intentions may be made in the art of the 19th and 20th centuries, hosts of variations within these basic directions are discernible. The contemporary accent on individuality has resulted in a greater diversity of artistic expression since mid-19th century than is found in art previous to that time.

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<sup>81</sup> Seltman. Charles. Approach to Greek Art, The Studio Publications, London, New York, 1948, p. 63.

Through a summarization of the movements in the art of today, we can be made to realize that the traditions of the past have not suffered wholesale rejection. Actually these traditions have been merely re-evaluated in the light of modern tastes. The changing concepts of physical beauty down through ages illustrate the fact that each period has its own standards of taste - women in paintings by Rubens look rather "bulky" when seen in comparison with those who fit our modern concept of fashion-figure slimness. In a like manner, certain artists of the past, who were once rejected, are now preferred to many others; occasionally, even a whole artistic tradition, once considered of great significance, may be relegated to a lower level of consideration. No tradition of the past, whatever its direction, should be completely rejected, as we can find something of beauty or quality in all of them. It is essentially a matter of orienting ourselves to "see" those qualities in the same way that their creator was able to "see" them. It is this manner of "seeing" which explains why once-rejected traditions are now wholly acceptable and even preferred to those which were at one time considered to be of greater significance.

The varied forms of expression in contemporary art may be accounted for through studying the psychological and sociological changes that occurred in the late 19th



and early 20th century art movements. The scope of this study will not permit us to completely explore these backgrounds; so, we have limited this chapter to a simplified accounting of the successive movements and attempted to explain their primary artistic aims.

All of the forms of expression in 19th century art have contributed in some degree to the character of art movements in the present century. Surprisingly, 20th century art, in general, may be considered a reaction to all art since the latter half of the 18th century. Without a background of understanding, it becomes impossible to see the art of today as a development of that produced in the past.

Until the middle of the last century, artists were still directly inspired by the visual appearance of the world around them. With the invention of the camera, however, science disposed of difficulties remaining to the imitation of natural appearance. By this time, artists as well had so completely solved the problem of representing reality that they were compelled to search for new directions of expression. Some turned toward introspection in their search for new forms; others looked toward a re-evaluation of concepts of artistic form which prevailed prior to the Renaissance. These included the ideals of ancient Greek art, forms of expression used by "primitive" man, and styles

characteristic of the medieval period. The opportunity to examine photographs of hitherto unknown art manners (Oriental art and that of the American Indian) provided a background for the evolution of new directions.

Economic influences, many of which still affect the art of today, also played a part in this search for new principles of expression. For the past two hundred and fifty years, the artist had depended for his economic welfare on the patronage of a wealthy clientele. Rather than asserting their own inventiveness and individuality, artists had gradually adopted the less aesthetic viewpoint of their patrons, the wealthy aristocrats and burghers. Many artists were content to supply works of art which were designed to satisfy and flatter the vanity of their patrons. A few great artists naturally evaded such bonds of artistic degradation and drew their inspiration from the society around them as well as from universal meanings.

#### 2.4.3. Neo-Classicism

The earliest new principle- actually a re-discovery of older intentions in art - was an attempt to see freedom from this economic bondage. A reaction to the earlier "patronized" form of art resulted in the formation of formalized institutions such as the French

Academy. The art of the Academy was characterized by rules for achieving "correct" works of art which contained "messages" of a high moral order. Artist involved in this Neo-Classic movement at the beginning of the 19th century did not reject patronage so much as they rejected the class of people who had patronized the artist of the 18th century. Such prominent artists as Jacques Louis David and Jean Auguste Ingres may be seen as largely replacing the patronage of the effete (weak and worn out) French aristocracy with that of the Napoleonic state and the upper middle class.

#### 2.4.4. Romanticism

The first group of artists to reject any kind of servitude to a patron, or even to a class of patrons, were the Romantics. They may be considered the first revolutionaries of modern times because of their concern with the work of art itself rather than its significance to a patron or even to an observer. The true revolutionary realizes that he does not have to seek an audience; if he has something worthwhile to say, people will eventually be convinced of his viewpoint. This has become one of the fundamental principles underlying the creative art of our time. As a result of this revolt, the artist has based his expression on his own

inspiration and his study of past traditions; he is again tuned to the world of all human experience. However, in this world, the artist has found many contradictions; as a result, we find many contradictions in the art of today.

The most important artists of the romantic group were: Eugene Delacroix in France, Francisco Goya in Spain, Joseph M. Turner in England, and Albert Pinkham Ryder in America. Illustrations of the paintings of some of these men will show the characteristics of the movement. Influenced by a climate of scientific positivism, the artists of the Realist movement strived toward a recording of the world as it appeared to the eye but with interpretations which contained overtones of timeless quality. Painting by Daumier suggests not so much a particular appearance of costume and setting but a universal quality in the subject of the "idea" that the working people of all ages have had similar qualities.

#### 2.4.5. Realism and Naturalism

Where the art of the Romantics had been a reaction to the pseudo-classic, academic formulas of Neo-Classicism, the Realist movement was a reaction against the exotic escapism and literary tendencies of Romantic art. Wishing to avoid the pretentious attitudes of the

previous group, and stimulated by the prestige of science, the Realists wanted to show the world as they thought it appeared to the average layman. Although attempting to avoid mere surface appearances, they wanted to give a sense of immediacy which they found missing in the idealizing expression of Romantic and Neo-Classic artists. A related group, now known as Naturalists, wanted to go beyond the results achieved by the Realists. Their attempts to make a visual copy of nature, exact in all its minute details, were probably influenced by the results obtained with the newly-invented camera.

#### 2.4.6. Impressionism

In the 19th century movement of Impressionism, we find a strong shift toward the contemporary view in art; the form of the work of art (materials and methods) is emphasized rather than significant subject matter from nature. Where previous movements had developed the trend toward freedom of choice in subject matter, the impressionists contributed a new technical approach to painting; this stressed the artist's interest in the appearance of his work, in terms of form, as much as it did the appearance of nature. Impressionism represents the transition between tradition and revolution. The Impressionists still wished to show nature in its most

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characteristic way but were mildly revolutionary in using technical aids to represent special conditions of light and atmosphere.

The Impressionist's interest in the illusion of light and atmosphere required an intensive study of the scientific light theory of colour and the effect of light on the colour of objects. They discovered the principle of juxtaposing complementary colours in large areas for greater brilliance; they interpreted shadows as composed of colours complementary to the hue of the object casting those shadows. To achieve the vibratory character of light, they revived the old principle of tache painting, a technique in which the pigment is put on the canvas in thick spots which catch actual light and reflect it from the surface. The artist method of painting seems to have been invented by the Venetians of the 16th century and may be seen in the work of Titian; later applications of the style may be found in the painting of Hals, Goya, and Constable. The impressionists employed the style in a new way by using complementary hues in the dabs of pigment; when seen at a distance, these tend to form fused tones from the separate hues.

Local colours became all important to the impressionists, because their whole intent was to capture the transitory effects of sunlight and shadow, or of any kind of weather condition. Landscape became favourite

subject matter of the Impressionist painter, because of this variability of local colours under changing weather conditions.

Traditional ways of artistic interpretation underwent a second alteration when the impressionists discovered the fascinating possibilities of unexpected angles of composition. The new photographic views of the natural scene were often different from the conventional arrangements used by artists for many years. This attitude was also partially encouraged by the character of oriental block prints which were being imported into France for the first time. These prints were often cropped down for shipment to Europe; as a result, many had curious, truncated compositions which seemed unique to western artists.

Artists representative of impressionism in France about 1870 were Claude Monet, Camille Pissaro, Auguste Renoir, and sometimes Edgar Degas. There were deficiencies in impressionist theory which caused some artists in the group to separate and pursue their own directions. One of the principal deficiencies was the loss of structural form resulting from the acceptance of surface illusion alone. A second was related to the effect which outdoor lighting has on the way an artist sees colour; in strong sunlight, it was difficult to avoid making greens too raw, and there was a tendency to

overload the canvas with yellows<sup>82</sup>.

#### 2.4.7. Post-Impressionism

Late in the 19th century, artists who had once been inspired by impressionist theories began to abandon many of the principles of the movement. The most important artists in this reaction were Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent Van Gogh; from these three pioneers stem the major expressions or directions of 20th century art (see pp. 121-135).

The group has been later classified under the term, post-impressionism, an ambiguous title meaning "following impressionism." This vague title does not satisfactorily indicate the far-reaching objectives of the artists in the movement. Among these aims were noted as (1) a return to the structural organization of pictorial form, (2) an emphasis on decorative organization for the sake of unity, as well as the enchanting patterns which might result, and (3) a more or less conscious use of exaggerations of natural appearance for emotionally suggestive effects (commonly called distortion). Cezanne may be said to represent primarily the first of these aims, Gauguin, the second, and Van Gogh, the third; each,

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<sup>82</sup> Schilder P., *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*. New York International U Press 1950.



however, had some aspect of the other's objectives incorporated in his form of expression. It was these similarities which cause them to be grouped under one movement although, unlike the impressionists, they worked independently toward their goals (see pp. 121-135).

Cezanne was the dominant artist in the post-impressionist movement. In a manner contrary to the haphazard organization and ephemeral forms of the impressionists, he saw the work of art in terms of an inter-relationships of all of its parts. He retained the individual colour spots of the former group, but in his painting, these became building blocks in the total physical structure of the work. Although he may be called an analyst of reality rather than a recorder of reality (like the Impressionists and Naturalists), he goes beyond mere analysis. Reality, for him, was not the object in nature from which he drew his inspiration, but rather represented all of the artistic conclusions arrived at in the completed work. He conceived of reality as the totality of expression derived from the appearance of nature as it became transformed under the artist's hand. Therefore, although Cezanne found his beginning point in nature (as was traditional), he became the first artist of modern times to consider the appearance of his pictorial form more important than the forms of nature themselves.

In this search for his own kind of "reality," he looked beneath the surface matter of the world for the universal or changeless form. He once wrote to a friend that he found all nature reducible to simple geometric shapes such as cones, spheres, and cubes. The essentialness of these forms seemed more permanent to Cezanne than the transient face of nature. Due to the intellectual processes involved in his "realizations" of form, he is considered a classicist in spirit; nevertheless he became the forerunner for modern Cubism as well as other intellectualized abstract forms of the 20th century.

In contrast to the architectural character of Cezanne's forms, the work of Paul Gauguin shows the invention of a vivid, symbolic world of decorative patterns. They owe their particular character to the type of form expression found in medieval frescoes, mosaics, and enamels. Although his themes were inspired by the "barbaric" peoples of the South Seas, the works always demonstrate a sense of the sophistication typical of most western art. An underlying suavity tempers Gauguin's work and gives it a quality reminiscent of the old masters' paintings in spite of its barbarity of colour and freedom of pattern. The decorative style of the French Fauves in the early 20th century primarily stems from the work of Paul Gauguin.

The work of Vincent Van Gogh, the third pioneer Post-Impressionist, represents the beginning of the new, highly-charged, subjective expression which we find in many forms of contemporary painting. The character of 20th century Expressionism owes a great deal to the impetuous brush strokes and the dramatic distortions of colour and object forms first found in the work of Van Gogh.

#### 2.4.8. Expressionism

French and German Expressionism, perhaps the most significant phase in the evolution of newer art forms, began as the first decade of the 20th century was almost over. The young artists of this movement were the first to declare on a large scale the complete freedom of the artist to work in a manner consonant with his feeling about a subject. In a sense, we see these artists as merely being more liberal Romantics; however, it was possible to be more liberal only after those intervening years of change which had introduced new ways of "seeing" and "feeling."

The 20th century saw the growth of a new awareness or consciousness which was related to the many changes taking place, or about to take place, in the whole order of existence. Cezanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh had opened

the door through which hosts of young artists were now eager to plunge; they were anxious to explore this new world of previously unknown artistic sensations, diversions, and mysteries. The shape of this new artistic world is signalled by an explosion of colour and an exciting style of drawing which ran the gamut from the graceful curves of Matisse to the bold slashings of Kokoschka<sup>11</sup>.

The members of the earliest Expressionist group were called the Fauves. This title was attached to them because of the "wild" appearance of their paintings in comparison to the academic formalism which was accepted and expected by the general public of the period. The term, literally translated, means "wild beasts." Where the public had been only dimly aware of Cezanne and Van Gogh as revolutionaries, they could not ignore this host of young painters which threw Paris into a turmoil with group exhibitions, pamphleteering, and other forms of personal publicity. In fact, the Fauves seemed to be trying to live up to the name which was attached to them; however, within a period of only seven years, they had lost their original vigor and were accepted as rather calm compared to the newer movements which were evolving. Fauvism is a form of expression which tries to arrive at the emotional "essence" of a subject rather than its

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<sup>11</sup> Schilder P., Ibid.

external appearance; its characteristic style is decorative, colourful, spontaneous, and intuitional. When the emotional excitement of the artist over his subject is communicated to the spectator, his work of art may be called successful.

The colour, brilliance, and persuading sophistication found in the work of Henri Matisse, nominal leader of the group, was largely influenced by Persian and Near Eastern art. The group, as a whole, felt similar influences, often searching for "patterns" in the areas of the museums dedicated to older and more remote group expressions; they received inspiration from the work of the Byzantines, the Coptic Christians, the Greek artists of the archaic age, as well as the traditional arts of Africa, Oceania and the American Indian. The use of African masks and sculpture as sources of Matisse's style can be detected in the masklike, impersonal quality of the human faces found in his paintings. Back of this impersonal effect, there also seems to lie a sense of mystery or threat engendered by the enigmatic quality of an alien style of expression.

Despite the rather strong, vibrant colour generally preferred by the Expressionists, Matisse, Utrillo, Derain, and Modigliani often build charming, decorative structures which continue the long tradition of classical restraint found in French and Italian art. Georges

Roualt, on the other hand, is an exception in French Expressionism, his work being more dramatic like that of the Germans. His painting expresses a violent reaction to the hypocrisy and materialism of his time through a favourite use of thick, crumbling reds and blacks. His images of Christ are symbols of man's inhumanity to man; his portrayal of judges reveal the crime and corruption that can reach even into those areas where justice should prevail. Roualt's comment, through his painting, on the French leaders of the day is anything but complimentary<sup>84</sup>.

Paralleling the movement in France, the artists of Germany felt that they, as prophets of new, unknown artistic values, must destroy the conventions which bound the art of their time. The foundation of painting in Europe for the next fifty years was provided in the aims of three groups of German artists: Die Brucke (The Bridge), the Blaue Reiter (Blue Knights), and Die Neu Sachlichkeit (The New Objectivity). The Expressionism of these artists, drawn from an environment that seemed complacent toward social and political injustices, was ultimately an art of protest. While producing work which protested against the outrages of the period, the artists attempted to create in as direct a fashion as possible

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<sup>84</sup> Easton M., Artists and Writers in Paris: The Bohemian India, New York: St. Martins, 1964.

work which represented their basic urge for expression. The combination of this driving creative urge with the desire to protest became the foundation for a number of varied movements in German art; the resulting art forms take on a quality of vehemence, drama, gruesomeness, and fanaticism never completely achieved through the *raison de etra* (reason) of French art.

The young artists of this style identified themselves with the religious mysticism of the Middle Ages as well as the arts of hunter - gathering peoples. Many followed the manner of children with their "naive" but direct expression of emotional identification with environment. For example, the art of Emil Nolde is similar in feeling to the mystic art of the Middle Ages while Edward Munch based many of his creations on medieval and "primitive" folk art traditions. Franz Marc was an artist who used the emotional reality of caveman art as a basis for his inspiration. Protests against Prussian jingoism became the subject matter of the painting of George Grosz and Otto Dix see pp. 130-151. This characteristic aspect of Prussian culture led to the first World War and ultimately to Hitlerism and World War II.

Max Beckmann, although not a part of any organized group of Expressionists, followed a path somewhat kindred in spirit to the work of Otto Dix. Following World War

Dix had worked in a style which satirized the swampy, degraded underworld of political society. Beckmann cultivated a similar style of frank, satirical veracity but modified his emotional intensity of expression with the calm, geometric arrangement which he had learned from Cubism. This latter quality gives a certainty of execution to his manner of painting quite reminiscent of the work of the "old masters."

The Expressionistic style had adherents in the Americas as well as in the European countries. The great depression of the "30's" influenced such artists as Max Weber and Ben Shahn to make mournful and satiric comment on American society of the period. Evergood and Levine are more recent artists who make similar commentary on the political and social confusion of the "cold war" years<sup>85</sup>.

Mexico, during the "twenties" and "thirties," was undergoing an artistic renaissance which many artists found fruitful ground for an Expressionistic style - a style based on their identification of themselves with problems inherent in the growth of freedom for the Indian and mestizo classes. Jose Orozco, whose art evolved in this period, became the greatest exponent of Expressionism in the Western hemisphere. Inspired by the

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<sup>85</sup> Easton M., Ibid and Ocvirk, Otto G and others, Art Fundamentals, Theory and Practice, W.M.C. Brow Co. Publishers Iowa, 1962 pp. 1-169.



rapidly changing social order in Mexico, he produced work which has a quality of Expression similar to that of Rovalt in Europe. There is something of the same black tragedy in the work of both artists although, at the same time, each has a style different in form and meaning.

#### 2.4.9. Abstract Art

Cubism - the beginning of Abstraction. Beginning about 1906 in Paris, a new attitude toward nature was observed in the work of certain artists. Before Cezanne, the artists of Europe tended to see nature in terms of material surfaces. Cezanne began the trend toward the search for "reality" (the universal unvariables) beneath these material surfaces by observing and emphasizing the basic structure of nature. This new way of seeing developed gradually over a period of twenty-five years paralleling the changing concepts of "reality" in science. Cezanne had stated his concept that the artists should seek the universal forms of nature in the cube, the cone, and the sphere. Artistic explorations founded directly on this concept gradually developed in the work of the Fauves and finally resulted in a style labelled Cubism.

One of the most active young artists of the Fauve movement in Paris from 1903 to 1906 was the Spaniard,

Pablo Picasso. Possibly because admiration for the work of Cezanne or because of a desire to challenge the leadership of the Fauves by Matisse, Picasso began to look for new possibilities of form expression in his painting. He based his explorations on an analysis of volume and space structure. With much of the same attitude as Cezanne, Picasso became dissatisfied with the emphasis on the external characteristics of objects and sought for a method of expressing their internal structure. He eventually developed paintings which displayed many facets of the same object at the same time on the same canvas. Many of Picasso's ideas may be traced back not only to Cezanne but to characteristic styles of ancient art forms - archaic Greek and African sculpture.

The most noticeable aspect of Cubist form, as evolved by Picasso, his colleagues, and followers was its geometric crystallization of shapes. By this means, the artists tried to arrive at a more permanent type of order than that found in natural form. At the same time, the traditional illusionistic rendering of space was re-ordered into what the artists felt was a more stable form of spatial relationship, independent of the vagaries of light and the distortions of shape caused by the use of

linear perspective<sup>88</sup>.

In his concern with arriving at a new statement of the structure of matter seen from an aesthetic point of view, Picasso often stripped away many aids to expression, for example, richness of colour. However, in this process of reduction, he formulated a new artistic language that put an end to the respect for surface appearance observable in all art since the time of the Renaissance. Paintings were now made with the intention of primarily emphasizing the artistic devices for their own sake rather than merely adapting these devices to the imitation of nature; traditionally accepted object forms began to give way to "pire" or maximum form. With the new emphasis on the intrinsic quality of the artistic elements (line, shape, value, texture, and colour) a new set of terms had to be invented in order to make a more convenient explanation of what the artist was trying to do - especially for those who were not prepared to accept complete "purity" of form. The term, abstraction, which had only a general meaning up to the 1900's, was now applied to this form of expression which was considered no longer associational, with observed objects. Cubism, which is a semi-abstract art form, can now be seen as the forerunner for all the later forms of abstraction in art.

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<sup>88</sup> Penrose, R., Picasso, His life and work, Ney York: Harper,

In semi-abstract art, we can generally still recognize certain objects from nature; the transformation of such forms in the process of abstraction are meant to express the artist's convictions about life and matter. Transformation of forms is a matter of degree and may vary from the semi-abstract styles of Cubism and Futurism to the "pure" abstraction of Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian.

Cubism, as the beginning of abstract art, was of major importance. It was introduced to the world not only in the works of Picasso but also in those of George Braque, a French artist, who collaborated with him - the two artists occupying the same studio for a number of years. Braque added uniquely expressive quality to the usual Cubist approach by use of foreign textured materials which he attached to the canvas surface - such a use was termed papier colle or just collage. On the whole, he remained true to the typical French art tradition of quietness of expression in spite of his use of new forms; this was a contrast to the more forceful, explosive quality found in the work of Picasso. In all Braque's work during the peak years of Cubist expression (1911 to 1914), there is a sense of charm in his restrained manipulation of colour and value patterns; these patterns are developed in terms of other finite volume of space, one of the chief cubist idioms.

Two other Cubists of note were Fernand Leger, another French artist, and Juan Gris, a fellow countryman of Picasso. These two preferred the more austere expression often found in Picasso, but not the violence which was the other side of that artist's personality. Leger and Gris developed individual form qualities within the Cubist pattern which set them apart as important creators in their own right. Because of the impact of industry on society, Leger accepted the machine as a styling motif for Cubist form. Instead of abstracting away from nature, Gris dealt with volumes or decorative patterns which suggested recognizable objects. He would then develop these shapes in the direction of object recognition without resort to mere imitation of superficial appearance.

Futurism, the second phase of Abstract art, like Cubism, remained a sub-movement within the over-all abstract category. Futurism was actually a form of cubism remodelled by certain Italian artists who had been to Paris during the excitement caused by the new artistic ventures of Picasso and Braque. Among the more important artists in this movement were Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla. These artists studied in France and on their return to Italy were much intrigued by the rapid advances that had been made in domestic industry. Together with the poet, Marino Marinetti, they formed a

union of ideas. Their expression was formulated on the basis of the modern machine, the speed and violence of contemporary life, and the psychological effects of this ferment on human mentality and activity. Boccioni, Severini, and their followers attempted to show the beauty of modern machines through sheaves of lines and planes which created an effect of dynamic movement and tension within the canvas<sup>27</sup>. The translation of rapid motion into artistic terms was a constant pre-occupation. The Futurists also attempted to interpret contemporary incidents of violence such as riots, strikes, and war which presumably would effect future events.

The favour of this group was not matched by its artistic contributions, as the artists merely energized the somewhat static geometry of Cubism and brought back richer colouring. Perhaps its attention to the new subject matter of the machine was the most important contribution, for the other artists and the public became more aware of the nature of our times. "Following the traditional mission of art this group expressed the age in which its art was created."

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<sup>27</sup> Penrose R. Picasson., Ibid and Ocvirk; Ibid.

#### 2.4.10. Pure Abstract Art - the Elimination of Nature.

During the period from 1910 to 1918, the idea of the complete elimination of nature from art became the chief motivation of artist throughout Europe. Deriving primarily from the experiments of Picasso, artists explored pure abstraction in two main directions. Some, like the Russian Wassily Kandinsky, preferred an emotional, sensuous expressionism which later influenced American abstract painting; other artists such as Mondrian were more interested in the cold precision of geometric arrangement. Kandinsky's best known work featured powerful rhythms and loose biomorphic shapes which have a feeling of great spontaneity. Although it was rarely evident, Kandinsky's paintings usually originated with specific conditions or circumstances of some kind. The artist always attempted an interpretation of his responses to these in terms of pure visual language without reference to their outward appearance. Kandinsky's loose, direct manner is essentially that of a romantic; his appeal is directed at pure emotion, and in order to assess his works, the observer must have an experience similar to that which motivated the artist. Later, while working at the German Bauhaus (an architectural school which stressed the unity of all art in terms of design), Kandinsky's work began to show the

influence of the geometric abstraction practised by some of its artists.

The most representative exponent of geometric abstraction was Piet Mondrian who dealt with the pure elements of form, but, unlike Kandinsky, purged them of the emotional extremes of romanticism. Mondrian's art is the unemotional rationalization of line, shape, value, and colour pushed to maximum optical purity. In such work, the meaning, or content, is inherent in the precise relationships established. This direction seemed sterile and shallow to artists and critics alike when it first appeared; that it was, instead, momentous and rich in possibilities seems proven by the tremendous impact it had on thousands of artists. The dissidents who had taken verbal slaps at geometric abstraction were soon in the minority.

#### 2.4.11. Non-Objective Variants of Abstract Art

Heretofore, the abstract art studied has originated with nature; the next development was so-called Non-Objective painting which presumed to divorce itself from nature altogether and originate entirely (in so far as this can be determined) within the mind of the artist. The differences in Pure-Abstraction and Non-Objective works of art are not readily apparent; perhaps attempts



to differentiate are only of theoretical interest. Both concepts opened up a new realm of aesthetic endeavour, and explorations in this area continue down to the present time. Obviously, the term "Non-Objective" is not to be interpreted as meaning that the artist has no objective; the artist is very definitely attempting to communicate but without resort to objective reporting. A certain amount of pure abstract and non-objective work is more imitative than original. Synthetic abstraction is easily produced as an end in itself. However, it is as a creative process that abstraction is more properly employed and this calls for the maximum powers of the artist.

A great part of what we see in our world today has been given its personality by the continuing influence of the abstract concept. The theories of form underlying this concept were readily assimilated by modern design. Buildings, furniture, textiles, advertising layout, machines, and costume are only a few of the areas which bear witness to the tremendous impact of abstract art. Stylistically, the gap has constantly narrowed between "fine" art and art of a commercial or industrial nature. This may be, in part, due to the fact that abstract art developed out of an environment in which the practical function of the machine had become an unconscious as well as a conscious part of life. In a sense the abstract

artist created a "machine-age" aesthetic.

Abstract art was slow in going to America, but shortly after the second World War, it quickly gathered momentum. The influence of European expatriate artists was an important factor in this change. Actually, many American artists, during the period between the two world wars, had been affected by the structural order of cubism. John Marin, Lyonel Feininger, Georgia O'Keefe, Stuart Davis, and Marsden Hartley were among the early pioneers of abstraction on these shores. In a peculiarly American way, however, they seem to have refrained from going completely over to pure abstraction and retained a strongly personalized vision. After World War II, a new generation of younger American artists renounced the last ties with nature. Some of the leaders in this movement of the mid-1940's were Irene Rice Pereira and Loren MacIver among the women, and G.L.K. Morris (who actually began pure abstraction in the thirties), Bradley Walker Tomlin, and Mark Rothko among the men. Toward the end of the "40's," a new impulse, stemming from a mixture of abstraction, surrealism, and expressionism, began to be manifest. Pure geometric abstraction began to slip almost indistinguishably over into this new direction. We must now go back in time to see how this came about.

#### 2.4.12. Fantastic Art: Background of Fantasy and Dadaism

A third major direction in 20th century art began to be recognizable about 1914, the first year of World War I. The war had evidently begun to raise questions about the individual's ability to master the machine; this suggested that individual freedoms might actually be destroyed in this age of technology. As a kind of antidote to the machine cult in abstract art, certain writers, poets, and artists began to extol artistic forms which re-emphasized the emotional, subconscious side of creativity. During the period, for instance, Picasso's art went away from the ennobled, monumental structures of early Cubism and began to take on structural perversions which eventually were to be the basis for Dadaism's destructive, cynical, and absurd puns on the cult of the materialism in society.

A certain element of artistic endeavour in the past had been devoted to the creative inventions of images that seemed manifestations of weird and fantastic imaginations. The centaurs of the Greeks; the strange beast-symbols of human sin in medieval manuscripts and sculpture; the superstitions, alchemist's nightmares of Jerome Bosch in the early 16th century; and the fantasies of Goya in the late 18th and early 19th centuries may be

cited as a few of the prototypes for 20th century fantasy<sup>65</sup>.

The years of the first World War nurtured the growth of an art that emphasized the irrational side of human behaviour. Neutral Switzerland had become the mecca for poets, writers, artists, liberals, and political exiles who had sought refuge there from persecution or the terrors of modern warfare. Out of the intellectual ferment largely motivated by disillusionment arose "Dada," a semi-philosophic creed for the protestation of the moral and social degeneracy which, it was felt, was responsible for the war. According to Dada, a complete erasure of accepted institutions and conventions was needed; only on completely virgin soil could mankind rebuild a more desirable society. The Dadaists therefore, embarked on a programmatic undermining of traditional "civilized" mores by cynical and sardonic derision of all its manifestations.

Duchamp, Picabia, Ernst, and others began to fashion machine-like humanized forms which suggested the robotizing of man. Later, with even more remarkable ingenuity, they created biomorphic images which discredited the semi-organic qualities of Kandinsky's romanticised abstract art. These inventions were meant

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<sup>65</sup> Schapiro M. "The Liberating Quality of Avant Garde Art" *Art s*, Jane 1957 and Ocvirk, *Ibid*.

to show disrespect for the experimental forms of the art leaders of the early century and shock the public already disturbed by a visual revolution.

The basic premise of this bizarre movement was that every Dadaist was given complete expressive freedom in his attack on the old order. In principle, there was no limit to the disorder which might be projected in painting, poetry, or general social behaviour. All of this left a bad taste in the mouth of the general layman, and he usually classifies all of modern art with the outlandish forms executed by the Dadaists. Actually, its disorder eventually led to the demise of the movement. Dada was pure negativism, an exhibitionism of the absurd; being against art, its only medium was nonsense publicly displayed to discredit all forms of sense. Its main value today is an historical one as the origin of Surrealism and the liberator of expressive freedom.

#### 2.4.13. Individual Fantasists

The inclination toward private fantasy seemed to be a general tendency in Western Europe during the period of Dada satire. This fantasy took individual, but quite influential directions in the hands of certain artists who were not a part of the Dada movement. Giorgio de Chirico, an Italian, placed incongruous modern machines

in ancient shadowed plazas. The decadence of the modern world seems implied by the image of a classical world of silent squares inhabited by statue-like remnants of an un-known people. The frozen, unprogressive, and even trance-like expression seems to suggest a wishful desire to recover the past.

Paul Klee, a Swiss, created an art of witty, abstract imagery which was based on Expressionism and Cubism. His work seems to poke gentle, but penetrating fun at the cult of the machine and smile shyly at human pretensions. There seems to be the implication that there is more to extra-sensorial perception than modern man's addition to practicality will allow.

Marc Chagall, Russian born, but a resident of France and the United States, originally worked in an Expressionist manner. His stay in France brought him under the discipline of Cubism. Eventually, he joined the two styles in his own brand of romanticised, poetic art which has an "Alice in Wonderland" quality. Chagall freely X-rays people and floats them about in a gravity-free world. The first contact with Chagall usually brings a chuckle to the spectator. On better acquaintance, his underlying humanitarianism is revealed.

#### 2.4.14. Surrealism

Surrealism was brought into being about 1924 out of the work of the individual fantasists and Dadaists. With the war over, there was once again a semblance of stability and a tendency for other public to become complacent about the ills of modern society. The Surrealists reacted to this by attempting to reassert "the importance of the individual's psychic life, and intended to preserve the life of the imagination against the threatening pressures and tensions of the contemporary world."<sup>89</sup>

According to Lester Longman, "Surrealism was Dada reborn with a program."<sup>90</sup> Both were a continuation of the counter-attack (first instigated by Romantics of the 19th century) against mechanistic materialism. The romantics often created the hallucinatory imagery in which the Surrealist delights. In so doing, they gave evidence of the growing belief that man could not solve every problem by the right application of science and that little-known, often seemingly unsolvable problems, existed within the human mind. Sigmund Freud's theories of dreams and their meanings lent strong credence to this

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<sup>89</sup> McCurdy, Charles, editor, *Modern Art: A Pictorial Anthology*, Millian Co., New York, 1958, p. 40-41.

<sup>90</sup> Longman, Lester, *Notes from Longman's Lectures on Modern Art*

belief. Operating on this thesis, Surrealist artists created a new pantheon of subconscious imagery which was claimed to be more "real" than activities and behaviour on the conscious level. The surrealists believed that only in dreams, which arise from the mind below the conscious level, (nightmares or daydreams) had man retained his personal liberties. In their art, the Surrealists cultivated images which arise unbidden from the mind. These were recorded through "automatic" techniques of drawing and painting. Such images bring to attention the heretofore unrecognized arbitrariness of our senses concerning reality by exploring incongruous relationships of normal objects in abnormal settings. Common sense notions of space, time, and scale were juxtaposed in unfamiliar ways by the Surrealists.

Max Ernst's "frontages" (invented about 1925) was one technique used by the Surrealists to shut off the conscious mind. These were rubbings made on rough surfaces with crayon, pencil, or similar media. In the resulting impressions, the artist would search for a variety of incarnations while in a state of feverish mental intoxication; a process that borders on self-hypnosis was practised to arrive at this state. Some artists, such as Salvador Dali, affected a similar creative fever, but used a meticulous, naturalistic technique to give authenticity to his improbable, weird,



and shocking images. Yves Tanguy used a method similar to Ernst's. Allowing his hand to wander in free and unconscious "doodlings," he used his creative visualization to bring on non-figurative objects which suggested life. Tanguy's pictorial shapes have the appearance of sentient, alien organisms which live in a mystical twilight land.

There have been many Surrealist artists, but Ernst, Dali, and Tanguy have been most influential, thanks to their unflagging invention of arresting images. The influence of these outstanding artists extended to the great number of other artists who did not hold to the restrictions of the Orthodox Surrealist brotherhood as set forth in Andre Breton's manifesto of 1924<sup>91</sup>. Many of these artists used some of the methods of the group while designing in a formal manner (an approach disdained by Orthodox Surrealists), thus combining the methods of the Abstractionists, the Surrealists, and the Expressionists.

#### 2.4.15. Recent Trends: Abstract Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Surrealistic Formalism

Various "labels" have been tentatively devised to cover the host of artists who mix certain aspects of the

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<sup>91</sup> McCurdy, Charles, Ibid.

three major directions of early 20th century art. Some of these names are listed in the sub-heading preceding this paragraph. The admixtural styles defined by them represent the greatest vitality observable in the art produced since 1950. Some of the more significant artists of this vaguely defined expression are: Joan Miro of Spain; ufino Tamayo of Mexico; Matta Echaurren of Chile; Mark Tobey, Jackson Pollock Theodoros Stamos, Robert Motherwell, and William Baziotes of the United States; and Europeans such as Willem de Kooning, Archile Gorky, and Hans Hoffmann, who, living in the United States, helped pioneer its aims.

To the artists of this general movement, abstraction seemed too impersonal, machine-like and dehumanized. On the other hand, Surrealism seemed to disregard man's fundamental desire for order. Many artists turned to the emotional content of Kandinsky's approach and some, strangely enough, began to recognize a kindred spirit in certain late works of the Impressionist artist, Monet. Within the "Abstract Expressionist" style, there are artists who work in a manner closely allied to the geometric branch of abstraction, while others abandon disciplined design and approach and freely executed early works of Kandinsky. Members of this latter classification are Jackson Pollock, James Brooks, John Ferren, and occasionally Archile Gorky, Willem deKooning,

and Mark Tobey. Lying between the two extremes represented above, are others who seem to paint with great spontaneity while retaining a detectable emphasis on organization. Gorky must also be added to this list, as must Hans Hoffman, Theodoros Stamos, William Bazotes, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Tobey<sup>32</sup>.

It is interesting to note that most of these painters are native Americans. It is a new phenomenon of art that, since the second World War, American tendencies have begun to be diffused abroad. Nations no longer seem to have a "colonial" complex in the arts. The art leadership of France, long taken for granted, seems to be seriously challenged on a wide international front today.

New and vital ideas will emerge from our temporary welter of constricting styles as they have in the past. At first, such new art forms may be difficult to accept, but eventually those which have something important to say will find gradual acceptance from the public.

There is some evidence that the Abstract Expressionists are beginning to "arrive" in this manner, as witnessed by the curiosity, interest, and enthusiasm their work is eliciting from art connoisseurs and collectors.

Perhaps the future artistic styles of some nations

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<sup>32</sup> Chapiro, M. "The Liberating Quality of Abstract Painting" in *Modern Art, 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: Braziller, 1978

and the world will burgeon in classes such as ours, where the meaning of art form and expression are being brought into focus.

## 2.5 Applicability to Maasai Art Forms and Design Patterns

The artistic theoretical paradigms which the author has examined in detail are not only relevant to the present study but are important as guides to the understanding and explanation of different aspects of Maasai art and design patterns. This is largely due to the fact that the Maasai art and design patterns are both aesthetically appealing and functional. In this section the author wishes to show how and why the artistic movements already discussed informed him in his research.

Firstly the art theories and movements discussed helped the author in various ways to explain and understand the various aspects of Maasai art. The theories act as guides in the complex world of Maasai art and design patterns. Thus, while neo-classicism assisted in assessing the art forms related to metal and to establish the level of the artist's competence in making finger rings bracelets and whether the material used produces the result intended, romanticism was typically inspirational through providing a social framework within which the author placed the Maasai art forms (such as the

relation between the decorations by the Maasai lading and in their contexts use of jewellery aesthetics and of traditional aesthetics and symbolism of warrior's hair styles. Impressionism as a theoretical trend assisted in explaining situation's in Maasai art where the form is emphasised. However, post-impressionism enabled the author to fruitfully examine and understand the structural organisation of pictorial form, how and why decorative organisation for the sake of unity is envisaged and in providing clues as to how enchanting patterns are likely to lead to the concious appreciation of design form, besides explaining the concious use of exaggeration of natural appearances for emotionally suggestive effect (eg. distortion and dominance). In the Maasai context, the use of glass beads as a colour source provided the Maasai artist with abundant freedom in the development of concrete aesthetic expressions through colour in graphic and plastic forms. These can only be understood in the context of post - impressionist theoretical orientation.

Both expressionism and abstractionism were equally useful in informing the author about certain elements in Maasai art and design patterns. By its emphasis on how the artist feels about his subject through creative experimentation, expressionism explained how physical beauty and body decoration are both important to the

Maasai warriors. On the other hand, abstractionism was basically important in interpretation of the physical materials through observing and emphasising the basic structures, such as when a piece of black ebony is inserted into the spear shaft to indicate a warrior's seniority, while a section of the pale wood would indicate his junior status.

The significance of 'pure art' as a movement in art theory is relevant to this study in that through it the author was able to understand when the Maasai artist prefers an emotional sensuous expressionism and is interested in cold precision of geometric arrangement, powerful rhythms and loose biomorphic shape which have the feeling of spontaneity. All these are directly relevant to some Maasai ceremonies where the boys' bodies are decorated with chalk and other white paints.

Dadaism's concern with the production of humanised form, which in itself was a liberation of expressive freedom, was a very relevant theoretical paradigm in providing an understanding of the freedom that exists in Maasai art form considering the fact that the Maasai make simple humanised forms every day. Many Maasai made anklets are fashioned in strong opposing colours for generating strong emotions and deep insights.

Fantasy as an art movement became handy in enabling the author to understand such Maasai art phenomena as the

toga which were decorated with beads of standard Maasai colours with their important visual and subconscious emotional values. Surrealism enabled the author to explain those elements in Maasai art, (such as long ostrich feather masks, head shaving, fly whisk etc) which use imagery. But recent trends, styles and theories have also affected Maasai artists. Some artists produce disciplined design while other approach art in a free execution style. Others mix certain aspects of the major directions of art.

As a result the modern Maasai art is now a mixture of traditional styles and the popular commercial and tourist ones. This tendency has also affected artists who are inclined to abstract surrealism, abstract expressionism and surrealist formalism. Therefore, full understanding of modern Maasai art is only possible through involving a multiplicity of theoretical trends propounded by various scholars in the contemporary world of art. Maasai art is now circulated to all parts of the world. Consequently, to really understand and appreciate maasai art forms and design patterns it is crucial to find out what the rest of the world has to offer. In that way, the study of Maasai art can be more fulfilling and more scientific.

### 3.0: CHAPTER THREE: MAASAI ETHNOGRAPHY

In this section the author intends to undertake the ethnographic descriptions of the Maasai people from holistic perspective. This will start with a description of the environment and geographical conditions of the areas inhabited by the Maasai, because biophysical environment has a role to play in the shaping of a people's culture.

After that, the author will describe different aspects of Maasai culture from the point of view of social and political organisation, ideology, material culture and technology as well as sociopsychological factors.

The main purpose of this is to place Maasai art in its proper sociocultural context. Indicative is the fact that aesthetic and functional parameters are integral parts of a sociocultural system whose significance is found in the extent to which it influences all aspects of maasai culture. The fact that culture and its elements can only be understood in holistic terms makes such holistic ethnographic description particularly relevant to the theme of this description. Further, each of the five themes under which this section is structured will be divided into sections, sub-sections and themes.



### 3.1. LOCATION AND CLIMATE

Since the middle of the 19th century the Maasai speaking peoples have occupied the vast region from near Mount Marsabit in northern Kenya to Kiteto in central Tanzania. To understand the Maasai culture, one needs also to understand how the environmental situation has helped develop this culture. Maasailand is part of the East African plateau which ranges from 914 to 1829 metres in height above sea level. The first valley from north to south divides the land into two regions which vary greatly in their topography and vegetation. On the higher altitudes lying mainly in the eastern side of the rift Valley, including the Mau and Aberdare ranges, are the evergreen forests. On the western side is the grassland with sparse bushes, salt lakes, and desert scrub<sup>ii</sup>.

The Maasai avoided the evergreen forest because of the tsetse fly and thus occupied the less favourable grasslands.

The average rainfall in the whole area ranges between 45-75 cm, and falls in two seasons, the long and short rains. As rainfall is unreliable, the main sources of surface water during the dry season are found in the

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<sup>ii</sup> Jacobs, Alan H., African Heritage, University of Nairobi, (Institute of African Studies)

form of wells and pods in stones, dry inner bed wells, springs, natural dams, pools and permanent swamps.<sup>34</sup>

Vegetation varies greatly following the rainfall patterns and plays an important part in social life of the maasai community. Grass is, for instance, used for building houses, grazing, as a sign of peace and for blessing during rituals. Trees and shrubs provide traditional medicines and herbs, some of which have special ritual value.<sup>35</sup>

Wildlife is abundant in Maasai land and important in the life of the people. Traditionally, the Maasai were not game hunters and they have abhorred the consumption of wild animals.<sup>36</sup> The lion hunt "Olomayio" was the only form of hunting that was permitted, mainly to eliminate predators.<sup>37</sup>

The Maasai love to relate with wild animals. This is seen through their hate for the Dorobo hunters who kill both domestic and wild animals and destroy what in the Maasais' mind should be left to exist for aesthetic values.

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<sup>34</sup> Kaj, Arnheim, Pastoral man in the garden of Eden, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969 pp. 17-36.

<sup>35</sup> Amin Mohamed, The Last of the Maasai, Nairobi, Camerapix. pp. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Sankaan, Ibid, p. 67

<sup>37</sup> Woldock, Jilly, people of The World. The Maasai of East Africa, Oxford University Press, 1959. pp. 27 - 29

The long rains come between March and June while the short rain is from November and December. Season rivers help the Maasai during dry seasons. Due to the rainfall pattern, the vegetation of Maasailand varies greatly both in composition and the cover, which plays a vital role in the social life of the Maasai community. For example one is expected to fully understand patterns of soft stones or dry river wells (Ilumbwa or Isiaya). This is because as early as childhood one is expected to distinguish between the various plants and grasses and their uses. In this case grass is particularly useful in various ways as has already been mentioned.<sup>18</sup>

In Maasai language the word for treat is the same as that for medicine (Olchani prural Ukeek). Every ailment has a traditional treatment by the use of leaves, bark or the fruit plants. The importance of trees and plants is also found during rituals when they are symbolically associated with certain notions of cosmology. The Oketeti tree (bark cloth fig) is one of these. Its size and structure, sturdiness and long life epitomize the ideal in life; hence it is sung about and invoked in prayer and blessings.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dwyer P., and Dwyer E.B. Traditional Art of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1973.

<sup>19</sup> Allan, Jacobs, Traditional, Political Organisation of the Maasai p. 61

### 3.2. THE MAASAI PEOPLE AND THEIR HISTORY

The Maasai have been described as physically splendid with energy and intrepidity. Lord Cranworth in his book "A colony in the Making", described the Maasai thus "Individually the Maasai are far from unattractive. Both men and women are slight and well made with pleasing features, though with somewhat high cheek bones...." Norman Leys<sup>100</sup> describes them as being "lighter in skin than ordinary Africans, are longer in head-infact the longest in Africa - have thinner lips and narrow noses and are taller. Physically they are among the handsomest of mankind with slender bones, narrow hips and shoulders and most beautifully rounded muscles and limbs. The warriors, burnished with grease and scantily draped in the skins of animals, have almost to a man the graceful carriage of athletes and the elders are scarcely ever fat.<sup>101</sup> Thus, Norman has strong views on Maasai.

The Maasai are supposed to have migrated to East Africa along the Nile. According to Hobley,<sup>102</sup> they belonged to different clans. The classification of the northern Maasai was in two groups which was based on the

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<sup>100</sup> Lord Cranworth, A Colony In the Making London, McMillan and Ltd 1912, p. 42.

<sup>101</sup> Norman, Leys, Kenya, 4th E.d., Frank Cass and Co., 1973, p.

<sup>102</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Tepilit. Maasai land pp. 31-34

colour of their cattle - the red and the black cattle. The Southern Maasai had their own classification. The Maasai have occupied five districts in Kenya as far as traditions go back. These are (1) Uasin Gishu(2) Laikipia(3) Naivasha, (4) Athi Plains, and (5) Kilimanjaro area.<sup>103</sup>

The Laikipia Maasai were subject to a great loss in their cattle from rinderpest and finally disappeared from the area. Originally this was a very powerful section of the Maasai and their raids would go as far as Somalia. The epidemic of the rinderpest was accompanied by smallpox which took the lives of many of the Laikipia Maasai. Some of them died of hunger and others moved to the surrounding tribes of Agikuyu and the Akamba.<sup>104</sup>

The headquarters of the Maasai chief Lenana, was Naivasha. Lenana's brother Sendeyo, had settled with his followers at Loita plains near Tanzania border and was regarded as very hostile to the Europeans. Lenana was the Maasai Chief in British sector, while Sendeyo was their chief in the German sphere (Tanzania).<sup>105</sup> The

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<sup>103</sup> Hobley, C.W. Social Organisation of Maasai. Political Records, Memoranda on Tribes. (The Kenya National Archives) DC/MKS/26/2/1

<sup>104</sup> Stigand, D.H. The Land of Zinj, Being an Account of British East Africa, Its Ancient History and Present Inhabitants, Frank and Co., 1966, pp. 194 -209.

<sup>105</sup> Sanford G.R. An Administrative and Political History of The Maasai Reserve. (The Kenya National Archives). K.N.A. 354, 672, PP. 9-12.

building of the railway to Kisumu was completed by 1910 and by 1902-3, many settlers had been attracted towards British East Africa. The Maasai at this stage moved frequently from one side of the railway to the other. Consequently, they were moved from Rift Valley to the Laikipia area and from around Nairobi to the Ngong area and were finally on the 9th April 1913 forced into the extended Southern reserve.<sup>106</sup>

Although the Maasai still practice nomadic pastoralism, this lifestyle has very little future. For example population pressure and increasing demand for basic needs are some of the forces exerting pressure on them. This includes the present peoples system of land use and involvement in the development of livestock industry in Kajiado, Narok and other districts.

The Maasai are a maa speaking people. They, even today, occupy the region near Mt. Marsabit in Northern Kenya to Kiteto in Central Tanzania. This covers a distance of 322 Kilometers from East to West. Three fifths of the Maasai are in Tanzania, while the rest are in Kenya. Due to this vast region, the Maasai have come into contact with a great number of people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These include the Cushitic speaking pastoralists, Turkana, Somali, Borana,

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<sup>106</sup> Gohil, M.M. Historical Background of Textiles in Kenya, M.A. Thesis 1984 pp. 33-245.

Rendile, the Agikuyu, Kalenjin, Abagusii, Akamba, Luo etc.<sup>107</sup>

Much of the area occupied by the Maasai is not fit for agricultural practices due to drought. The Maasai remain mainly pastoralist although there are some who are agriculturalists. Much of the land, however, is poor in grazing but rich in wildlife and scenery. The pastoralist Maasai mostly stay in the cool, wet highlands and depend on cattle for their livelihood.<sup>108</sup> The Maasai live in semi permanent settlements known as "enkanj". Several families join to form the enkanj and pasture their livestock together.<sup>109</sup>

The importance of the Laibon is always clear in the Maasai history. Whether a Laibon is senior or junior is usually not a problem because any of them can institute change. A Laibon can decide to change the style of dress, colour scheme and ornamentation. The reasons for doing this may range from magic to religious purposes. However, this usually happens to family age-sets, regional or sectional levels later on, these events become reference points from oral historians in the Maasai

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<sup>107</sup> Timoi, Ole G.S., and G.K. Ole Kuluo, Concept and Evolution of Group Ranches in Kajiado District, A seminar paper, 1989 pp. 4-7.

<sup>108</sup> Saankan, S.S. The Maasai, pp. 50-51

<sup>109</sup> Hollis, A.C., The Maasai, Their Language and Folk Lore, Chapters 1 and 3.

society.<sup>110</sup> The warring nature Maasai is due to the moran life, the moran young men, spend most of their lifetime being taught and practising fighting. These moran therefore have the obligation of protecting the tribe against invasions and also expanding the community's wealth through raiding.

The women, therefore are left to perform all the other duties in the home. It was for this reason that the Maasai women who were captured as slaves were highly prized trophies. Though the men fetched relatively high price, they were reticent and un co-operative. They only proved good when they were not compelled to perform certain manual tasks that were against their traditions.<sup>111</sup>

Within the main body of the Maasai are the following sections, I Loiten, I Idam Ilpurko, I Sira, Uasin Gishu - Uasin - Gishu and Illmotanik. All these are situated around Narok district. Within Kajiado district are found the Ikaputei, Iloodo - Kelani and Ilkeekonyokie who are split between Narok and Kajiado districts. There is also a small proportion of Ilpurko within Kajiado. Split between Kenya and Tanzania are Ilkisonko who are found around Mt. Kilimanjaro and Isikirani. Others include the Isampur, who are geographically isolated by their

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<sup>110</sup> Kantai, B.K. Ole, and Kantai H.N. Ole Interview.

<sup>111</sup> Stigand, Ibid, p. 226



location in north east of Kenya.<sup>112</sup>

Thousands of years ago a people called Nilotes lived in the Nile River Basin in the southern part of present day Sudan. They were a tall and slender Negroid sub-race who spoke languages of the Eastern sub-family of the Sudanic stock and subsisted by hunting and gathering.<sup>113</sup> Around 3000 B.C. the art of crop cultivation diffused across the continent from Western Africa, and during the ensuing centuries the Nilotes began to till the soil. But they did not flourish as an agricultural people. So between the sixth and ninth centuries A.D., the Nilotes turned their efforts to the less arduous pursuit of stock raising. Whether they were introduced to animal husbandry by another people, or whether they had engaged in it previously as an undeveloped adjunct to agriculture is a point worthy much debate. Whatever the case, the Nilotes discovered their nature. Some, living in environment favourable to agriculture, devoted themselves to animal husbandry as well as cultivation. Others, inhabiting less suitable areas, developed stock raising to such an extent that it no longer merely supplemented agriculture, but became the dominant factor of their economic life. These latter Nilotes became pastoral nomads. Territorial expansion was inevitable. The

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<sup>112</sup> Hamilton pp 137-142

<sup>113</sup> Amin The last of the Maasai 'Nairobi, Camerapix'

pastrol Nilotes migrated southward.

To the east of the Nilotes, in northeastern Africa, lived the Cushites, a group of peoples belonging to Ethiopoid sub-race of Negro - Australoid Great Race who speak a language called Cushitic. Those inhabiting the Ethiopian highlands developed a sophisticated system of agriculture based on terracing and irrigation. From archaeological records it is evident that by approximately 1000 B.C. the early Cushites were settling in the rainy highland areas of what is now East Africa. Their arrival displaced many of the indigenous Bushmanoid people, the little hunters and gatherers who dwelt in scattered numbers throughout much of the southern half of the continent. In the course of their southward movements the Nilotes encountered near Lake Victoria the highly evolved states established by the Bantu peoples who had been pushing eastward from the Congo basin in preceding centuries. This Bantu barrier deflected the Nilotic migration further to the east, into the lands of the early Cushites. And also, less than a millennium ago, the Nilotes engulfed the early Cushites not through carnage, but intermarriage birthing the forbearers of the maasai and dispersed the remaining Bushmanoids from the surrounding savannah lands (see Kedong cited).

The resultant mixture eventually produced somewhat different peoples. Some members of what are known as the

Kalenjin group, for example, became primarily agriculturalists, and groups such as the maasai continued to be pastoralists. (There are maasai speaking people who raise crops because they recently adopted agriculture. But they are in minority and are despised by the pastoral maasai). The physical characteristics of the Nilotes is dominant among the Maasai. The language, maa, from which their name derives is fundamentally that of the Nilotes too, although Cushitic elements have survived. Their culture reflects dual ancestry more equitably. Pastoralism, the absence of any centralised or complex form of political organisation and the removal of both lower incisors are Nilotic traits; the organisation of society into age grades, the drinking of blood obtained from living animals by means of a miniature arrow shot from a bow, and the circumcision of boys and clitoridectomy of girls are cushitic features.<sup>iii</sup> The social and cultural organisation of the Maasai is dealt with in detail in this chapter (three) of this study.

A gap of several centuries follows the Nilote absorption of the early Cushites. It is a historical blank spot until the southward migration of the Cushitised Nilotes known as Maasai. This movement probably began prior to the seventeenth century and is

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<sup>iii</sup> Kedong, Kenya, August 1970 - October 1971

recorded in a Maasai legend about "ascending the escarpment". They left the Kerio River Valley region of northwestern Kenya, near Lake Turkana, and wandered down to the more abundant grazing in the Great Rift Valley on to the surrounding plains. When the first European explorers trudged across East Africa the Maasai were already ensconced in their new lands. These new lands knew no bounds and ranged as widely as the Maasai roamed and they roamed from the deserts north of Mount Kenya to the plains south of Mount Kilimanjaro and from the shores of Lake Victoria to the beaches of Indian Ocean, as if this vast expanse were their private domain. A band of young warriors would raid one place one day and be eighty or a hundred kilometres away the next, surprising somebody somewhere else. They were ubiquitous. They were the constant scourge of other peoples. It is significant to recall the parenthetically mentioned Maa speaking people, those of agricultural persuasion. The pastoral Maasai - the true Maasai call them Iloikop. Ilkoikop were the culprits more often than not, but most victims and witnesses did not or could not distinguish between them and the purely pastoral Maasai. This lack of discernment has subjected the Maasai to an unreservedly defamed reputation. The Maasai, after all, held the Iloikop in check and thrice last century defeated them in major wars (see Kedong cited).

Ultimately the Maasai defeated themselves - with nature's unkind collusion. Rinderpest attacked their cattle in 1890. It devastated the herds drought followed rinderpest. Famine trailed in those dry and diseased tracks. Next smallpox reared its pestilential head and over half of the Maasai died. In sheer desperation some sections of the Maasai raided their neighbours for livestock. The neighbours retaliated, and soon intertribal warfare was doing to them what neither other tribes nor their own relations, the Iloikop, had been able to do. Yet the catastrophe was by no means concluded. In 1889 the influential Laibon (chief priest or prophet or seer ritual expert - the meanings are manifold), Mbatian died. His two sons disputed the succession. Rival factions formed among the sections, the dissension became entangled with raids and reprisals, and the already hopeless situation degenerated further into civil war.

The Maasai have recovered from those days of despair, those days which dragged through a decade. Numerically they prosper. Their population to-day is roughly 300,000 and straddles the Kenya-Tanzania border. But the memories of old men stretch far back and grip tightly. Circumstances have invaded the Maasai in the past. They may invade again in the future. There is defence against them. There is only the comfort and

consolation of custom. That is how the old men reason. The maasai therefore remain traditionalists. Their concessions to change are grudging.

### 3.3. SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION

One of the most important aspects of Maasai culture is concerned with the social groupings. Among cultural elements, traits and institutions that form part of such groupings are initiations including age sets and age groups and other aspects of social mobility. Others are, family lineage, organisation, deaths related rituals, marriage organisations and arrangements, clans, naming etc. Most of these elements together form what one would call the social structure of the Maasai.

#### 3.3.1 Social Structure

A Maasai family like the families of many other African traditional communities, is polygamous. This results from polygamous marriage between a man and one or several women. Klump talks about polyandry as existing among the Maasai but this is disputed by anthropologists(Odak 1998). But a man visiting a village was always provided with a hut and a temporary wife by his host and it was not considered ill if a woman bore a

child by another man provided that the father belonged to the same age group as the husband. This is not polyandry in a technical sense. Marriage is the seed of family life and affinity, which are compulsory for everyone.<sup>115</sup>

The type of family found among the Maasai is the extended one which is made up of a number of smaller or elementary family units. Extended families unite several lineages which make up exogamous clans to form exogamous lineages (il-gilat) which are known as Il-Kishomini. All clans in Maasailand belong to one or the other of the two groups (Odomongi and Orok Kiteng) found among the Maa speaking people. The clans are dispersed throughout maasailand and all tribes (Il-Oshon). These groups are further divided into clans which are also dispersed throughout maasailand. The main clan is En-Kishomi. The principal laibons (Ol-Olbowok) belong to one clan (Il-Aiser) which is known throughout the Maasailand. The clans are divided into the left and right hand groups. This dualism which is found throughout Maasai social structure is largely expressed in terms of cattle colour. The dualism is not only found in antagonistic settings as when cattle are divided after a raid, but also it in the sections into which a community may be divided. Thus, the Il-Wnasin-Kishu were divided into Il-Wnasinkishu

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<sup>115</sup> Somjee, Sultan, Maasai, Kenya, University of Nairobi, (Institute of African Studies) and Odak, O., personal communication, 8/8/1998.

Ooirok, (the black striped cattle), and Il Wnasin - Kishu Oo Nyokio, (the red striped cattle). The same is true of Il-oo-rock-ki (people of the black cattle) and Il-oo-ibor-Kishu (the people of the white cattle).

### 3.3.1.1. Birth and Childhood

The Maasai believe that the earth is fertile. So when a woman is barren she attempts to stimulate pregnancy by sculpting a little earthen doll to show Enkai that she wants a child. Pregnancy is carefully supervised. A pregnant mother is well cared for in terms of nutrition and hygiene so that gestation birth is eased for her and for good healthy child bearing.

A midwife attendant is usually at hand to receive the baby as soon as it is born.<sup>116</sup> The midwife severs the umbilical cord as she charges "you are now responsible for your life as much as I am responsible for mine. This conveys the sense that the child has been separated from the mother. The afterbirth is then taken out and thrown away and the mother fed on beehive honey. The father of the child obtains blood from bullock if it is a boy and the reverse for a girl.

The house in which the birth took place is blessed. Birth must take place in the expectant mother's own

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<sup>116</sup> Somjee, Ibid



house. It is considered bad luck for the baby to be born elsewhere. The blessing of the house varies from one family to another. To bless the house some families slaughter sheep while others use the cud chewed by either brown or black sheep (regarded as sacred colours) without any spots, injuries or scars. The sheep is slaughtered by visiting women in the morning and the meat is never eaten by men. Most of the meat is eaten during the day. The remaining meat is reserved for evening meal, when cattle return from fields, which is accompanied by singing and dancing. Another fat sheep is slaughtered, the fats are melted and given to the mother to drink while the rest is eaten by both men and women.<sup>117</sup>

Apart from suckling, the child's diet is supplemented by diluted milk mixed with certain herbs.

On the day of birth, the woman's hair grows again a small metal ornament in a shape of a bird is tied to the new hair above the centre of the woman's forehead. This becomes a mark suggesting that the woman has recently given birth<sup>118</sup>. After the birth, the mother makes armulets from fruits resembling tiny gourds. These are tied around the baby's neck to bring good luck.

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<sup>117</sup> Somjee, Ibid pp. 3-8

<sup>118</sup> Hecht, D., The Material Culture Collection of National Museum, Seminar Paper. Kenya, University of Nairobi, (Institute of African Studies) pp. 3-6.

### 3.3.1.2. Giving a Name

When a child is born, it is given a pet name, *embolet* which means opener. The child continues to be known by that name until his/her hair is cut and then it receives a proper name. The mother's hair *Olmasi* is retained until the child is given its proper name, when it is shaved. There are certain functions performed when a child is named.<sup>113</sup>

A piece of skin from the sheep's right hind leg is put on the mother's right hand fingers. The mother and child are usually accompanied by a selected woman and child during the ritual. These will remain lifelong friends of the family. Water is drawn from a spring in a small calabash and the mother drinks the water as another woman leaves the house saying "the child's meat is ready, the honey beer has been brewed." The women in the neighbourhood then come out singing and join in the festivities.

A name is then given to the child who is blessed with the words "may that name dwell in you." From hence to a couple of days later it is the mother who closes the gates to the home using green leaves and branches and opens it in the morning. She removes the piece of skin

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<sup>113</sup> Hecht, D., The Material Culture Collection of National Museum, Seminar Paper, Kenya, University of Nairobi, (Institute of African Studies)

put on her fingers and conceals it in the house. The child continues to suckle up to the age of two or three or even more.

Lobes are made on both ears when the children are old enough to take care of cattle. The girls, on the other hand should help mothers in domestic chores, such as drawing water, hewing wood and plastering houses.<sup>120</sup>

An uncircumcised girl does not decorate ears or wear a loin cloth. This distinguishes her from the circumcised or married woman. Boys who are not circumcised are prohibited from gathering or holding council and are liable for punishment for doing so. This rule is relaxed only when they are ready for circumcision. This was explained to this author by a Maasai elder.

When a boy or girl reaches the age of circumcision, or clitoridectomy, each one of them has to check whether he/she has been given the right names and whether or not the right rituals were performed.

This progression of childhood, growth and maturity is a bond expressed in the form of different Maasai art forms and design patterns as will be shown in due course.

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<sup>120</sup> Klump, D.R., A Preliminary Analysis of Maasai Body Ornaments, Discussion Paper No. 154. University of Nairobi, (Institute of African Studie), pp. 1-13.

### 3.3.1.3. Age Sets and Age Groups

According to Dr. Krapf and Ole Kantai, the maasai are of six age groups.

They are:

- (a) Engera(In-Kera)-the children
- (b) Leiok (L-ayiok) - the youth
- (c) Elmuran (Il-muran-warrior

All these three are not yet married.

- (d) Kihiko, the young married men who only occasionally went to war, but have cattle of their own, Esabutiu i.e. elders to the Ekieko.
- (e) Elkilimarisho-elders
- (f) Elkilishara or Elkijano, that is the adult men of the community or the aged.

All these form part of their social organisation which is divided into groups related to circumcision and age as follows.<sup>171</sup> The male organisation groups are:

- Ol-Laiyoni - boys before circumcision
- Ol-muran- after circumcision
- Ol-moruo - after learning the worriorhood.

The female groups are.

- En-dito - girls before clitoridectomy
- E -siangiki - girls after clitoridectomy

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<sup>171</sup> Krapf, J.L., Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours in East Africa, London 1860 pp. 358-359

E - Ngoroyon - woman.<sup>122</sup>

When a Maasai boy or girl has reached the age of between thirteen and seventeen he is now considered ready for initiation into the warrior, or the next grade as the case may be. This is done according to well established social criterion in the form of age sets.

Each age-set consists of two age groups the "right" one, i.e., the one circumcised first being known as Ilmanki, and the left one circumcised later and known as Ilmaina.<sup>123</sup>

The Ilmanki group was associated with turbulence, war and broken friendships while the second one was associated with peace, prosperity and plenty.

For the first age set, their fires are kindled using branches of a tree known as "Osopeperua" while their ochre was mined using an iron cattle brand which was very strong. The "Oloirien" stick was also used, hence this age group was known as the "orion strong cattle brand".

Although similar implements were at hand for the second age group, the "Essosian reed was used, hence they are known as the age group of "Essosian". This reed is used for cleaning calabashes when they have become dirty and stale and this is likened to cleaning up operation

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<sup>122</sup> Stigand, Ibid, p. 212

<sup>123</sup> Leuzinger, Elsy, The Art of Black Africa, Studio Vista Publishers, 1972. pp. 5-20.

after the land had been made "stale by all the bloodshed of the previous age group."<sup>174</sup>

Each age set kindles fire for the age which is next but one after them, i.e., every other age group below them. Thus A kindled fire for C and B kindles fire for D, etc.

A ceremony is held whereby the two left and right age sets combined and a name given to them. After this ceremony they can share their rights and privilege equally. However, as mentioned earlier, the kindling of fire has elaborate settings. For example, within the Ilmanki division.

Ilratanya kindled fire for Isalaash

Isalaash kindled fire for Ilkidoto

Ildidoto kindled fire for Ilnyankusi

Ilnyankusi kindled fire for Iltalala

Iltalala kindled fire for Iltareto

Iltareto kindled fire for Ilnyantusi

Within the Ilmaina the process was as follows:

Ilpetaa kindled for Ilmeirishari

Ilmeirishari for Iltuati

Iltuati for Ilaimer

Ilaimer for Iltuati

Iltuati for Ilterito

Ilterito for Nkerekeyia

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<sup>174</sup> Lord Cranworth, *A Colony in The Making*, p. 15-35.

It should be noted that each age-set normally organises and regulates its age-set's activities independent of each other despite a few rules that are observed in common, such as which section opens what ritual. Apart from the length of time the young men remain warriors. The age set organisation until very recently remained very much the same through the years.

There are two maasai sections which are responsible for initiating children and undertaking other related rituals. One of these is called "Ilkeekonyoikie which is the one that begins the circumcision of boys, since they are the ones who produce the bullock that the boys knockdown by its horns. There are people who live too far such as the keekonyokie to attend this ceremony before undertaking the same in their areas. This fact is tolerated when noted, since this was decreed by the founder of the Maasai. The sections which share the ceremony with "Ilkeekonyokie are the people who formerly lived in the Highlands around "Kinopop"(Kinangop) namely "Ilporko", "Ildamat", and previously "Ildalalekutuk" before the maasai were moved by the British government to their present abode. "Eldalakekutuk" have recently been replaced by "Ilwasinkishu" in the ritual.

"Ilkisonko" is the section which provides the facilities for the ceremony that seals and combines the age-set. It also decides on the common name that the age

groups are going to share among the "Kisonko" themselves, the way the name is decided upon is through following certain well established rules by which a man is selected who comes from a good family and who can say none of his sisters or brothers has died. A site is then selected and the man is given this name before it is applied to the whole age-set.

The age-sets that are remembered are the following:

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| (a) Irratanya   | (g) Ilnyankusi] |
| (b) Ilpetaa     | (h) Ilaimeru    |
| (c) Isalaash    | (i) Iltalala    |
| (d) Ilmeirishai | (j) Iltuati     |
| (e) Ilkidotu    | (k) Iltareto    |
| (f) Iltuati     | (l) Ilnyankusi  |

These age-sets can share their houses, even wives - and the members of each one of them call the other members of the age-set Olayi.

#### 3.3.1.4. Circumcision

Before circumcision a male is categorized as a boy "Ol ayion". At circumcision he moves to another grade and becomes a warrior "Ol-muran", one who has been circumcised and can associate with unmarried girls. The Ol-murans warriors may marry when they become senior warriors.



All boys must unflinchingly go through initiation. Simply blinking the eyelashes is enough to have a person declared a coward, in which case fellow initiate friends will not drink or take anything in his house and will deprive him of wearing favoured bird feathers for his crown.

Other important aspects during this time are the attire and habit. The candidates wear long black greasy robes, keep their hair long and greasy, like that of a woman in labour pains. The candidates are neither allowed to carry nor handle any type of weapons and the meat they eat is cut into small pieces to facilitate eating without the use of a knife. A candidate can, however, use a bow and an arrow to kill birds for his crown the whole idea is to stimulate a sense of innocence and peacefulness in contrast to the later life of a warrior.

In certain instances some boys might be circumcised earlier.<sup>125</sup> The reasons for this may be, for instances, where a boy is required to take charge of his father's property, or in case his younger sisters have grown old enough to marriage and cannot be circumcised before him. Boys in this category are known as "Ilng eetiani" and are

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<sup>125</sup> Gillon, Werner, A Short History of African Art, Pelican Books, 1984, Chapter 2 - 4.

the ones that herald a new age group.<sup>125</sup>

During the ceremony the boys dance for four days in the camps, two of the days being known as "white" days and the other two as "red" days. After this a bullock is slaughtered.

At this stage the chief councillor "Olaiguemani" is selected from among the boys. He is given the club "Orikna which has been blackened in mud as a staff of office. He is blessed with certain words and given leadership of the age group. He is the first to drink the warm blood of the bullock that is slaughtered. This bullock is usually set loose by sponsoring elders and those to be initiated run off to grab the bull by its horns and throw it on the ground. One who grabs the right horn gains distinction among his age mates. This usually marks the climax of this ritual. The selected age group leader is supposed to be mentally more mature than the others, and is thus respected so that his council is taken seriously by all. The family reputation influences the choice of the leader also. The leader provides the bull "Oloposi Olkiteng" to be chased wrestled with and slaughtered. He is the ceremonial leader for this particular ritual.

Following the "embolosat" is the recruiting

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<sup>126</sup> Tucker, A.N., Mpaayei Ole and Tempo J., A maasai Grammar, London, Longmans Green and Co., 1955 pp. 15-19.

campaign. This is the time when the boys roam in the countryside collecting more boys to form the locality's right - hand circumcision. Other younger boys form the left - hand circumcision seven years later. The suitable candidates retire to a selected secluded spot in the company of their sponsors - junior elders. They slaughter a bullock whose hide is given to each boy as a sign that he is a member of the circumcision group - to be worn as bracelets. The boys hunt small birds as the day of the operation approaches, knock them down by throwing clubs at them but are not allowed to trap the birds which are skinned. The skins are stuffed with straight stiff stems of dry grass. Feathers are smoothed and polished with a piece of sheepskin. Conical figures are fitted into a wooden frame to form a headdress which the boys will wear after circumcision sampling on the rooftops show the presence of a newly circumcised son within a house<sup>127</sup>. The boys are usually circumcised in their individual homes and remain initiates for sometime. When they are cared and well fed, they construct a home known as an "enkang" or "Ntaritik" - the home of birds where they are shaved for the first time since initiation. An initiate is usually identified by coiled metal ear-rings fixed to the side of his head. These are

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<sup>127</sup> Thomas, Joseph, Through Maasailand. Frank Cass and Co., 1968 pp. 1-120.

loaned to the initiates by their mothers who allow the initiates to keep them until healing occurs. The initiate also wears cow-hide sandals made for him by one of his uncles (mother's brother) on the day before the operation. When wearing it for the first time the putting on is done from the side. This safeguards the wearer from evil spirits. A bow and wax-tipped arrows may be carried to shoot at "nditos" (young girls) found outside the enjang. A girl who is hit must give a small ornament to the "Olaibartane" who shot her.

#### 3.3.1.5. Promotion to Warriorhood

After initiation the boys become young men (Ilbarnot) after recovery, warriors, Ilmuran, elder (Ilmoruak) and finally they retire as elders (Il-tasati). A boy is not born into a set, for his set does not come into existence as a named group until after circumcision.<sup>126</sup> About two years before circumcision takes place, the elders of the set immediately (senior to the existing warriors group -Ol-agi) start the process of inaugurating a new set at a ceremony called "empolosata" which is performed by individual fathers.<sup>129</sup> The elders who take part in this inauguration

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<sup>126</sup> Jacobs, Ibid. pp. 51-56

<sup>129</sup> Jacobs, Ibid, pp. 58-59

become the sponsors (Il-piurior), firesticks of the new set and the guardians and instructors of the initiates. The ceremony is followed by another (endunore). The cutting closes the current period of circumcision where a formal relationship of the instructors and initiates is established. After this follows a series of activities called "in-kepaata", beginning with a dance which gives its name to these activities.<sup>130</sup>

By this time the young warriors had elected a representative (Ol-aiguenani) who is a counsellor that must have special qualifications of birth, physique and social status. He is confirmed in his office by being given a black club which has been blessed by the (Ol-pirion) elders.<sup>131</sup>

The young warriors get divided into companies formed on a territorial basis each of which has its own barrack(e-manyatta).<sup>132</sup> By means of a ceremony called e-unoto the right-hand become serious warriors about seven years from the beginning of their circumcision period. This ceremony is known as the setting up (translation in English).

As junior warriors during the three years or so

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<sup>130</sup> Stigand, Ibid, pp. 92-120

<sup>131</sup> Stigand, Ibid, pp. 24.

<sup>132</sup> Woldock, Jill, People of the World, The Maasai of East Africa, p. 55

between the end of their circumcision and e-unoto, they start to fight the senior warriors(of previous Ol-perror) for the full privileges of warriorhood. This they get by means of the e-unoto and at the same time they elect a ceremonial leader called Ol-otuno. As senior warriors they may marry. Thus some of the main functions of the age-sets are to provide permanent source of manpower for fighting.

#### 3.3.1.6. Warriorhood

This stage lasts for a few months, after which the young men become warriors. The warrior keeps his hair braided with pigtails, applies red ochre on his body and carries a strong bladed spear and shield. Contrary to the popular belief, the warriors do not just roam about hunting lions though this is indeed a sport that they alone can participate in.<sup>133</sup> It is also another way of getting the lions if they become a nuisance to the livestock.

Warriors stay in their special camps (manyatta) with their sponsors and instructors, Ol piron - elders, who belong to the age-set above them and are the ones who impart the knowledge that the society expects the warriors to have in their behaviour as adults. Through

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<sup>133</sup> Vansina, Ibid, 201-205

close association with and the invitation of the elders the warriors learn and acquire skills such as the use of proverbs and the art of oratory. Through associating with their peers, they learn the meaning of co-operation unity and sharing. They are also exempted from tough domestic chores, except during the dry seasons, in order to allow them to familiarize themselves with all parts of Maasailand for as the saying goes, clever is the eye that has travelled.<sup>134</sup>

This researcher confirmed diverse views and information by keenly listening to explanations given by authoritative maasai elders.

### 3.3.1.7. Initiation of Girls

Like circumcision among boys clitoridectomy is performed by women where by a young girl "ndito" graduates from a girl to a woman ready for marriage. In case a girl "ndito" gets pregnant before clitoridectomy, herbs are administered to facilitate abortion before clitoridectomy is performed to enable her to marry.

Since women have no age-sets, they are considered to belong to the Ol-parror which was in formation at the time when they were circumcised. They are thus attached

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<sup>134</sup> Potter Harry L., Some thoughts on the Prospects for Intesfication and Diversification in Maasailand. A Research Paper Presented at a Conference, Kenya Limuru, 1990, pp. 6-8

to men in Ol-porrer. Circumcision for the men members of each Ol-porrer is done in batches whereby each forms an associating group through Maasailand and has a permanent name which recurs in each age-set and each succeeding age-set. Women are expected to just fall in this arrangement.

Likewise women are also to fall in the four men groups in the right-hand, called Il-careeopih (the big Ostrich fear her) Il-parinota (own swift runner). Il-kinimbot and Il-tareto (the helpers. The left-hand on the other hand has only the last three of these groups.

Again since women have no age-sets, at the initiation they go by age group or generation(Ol-agi). This is divided into 2 or senior known as e-murrata-ekedianye, the left-hand circumcision and those of the right-hand are circumcised first over a period of four years. Then enter the preliminaries for the formation of the next Ol-porro the left-hand are undertaken, that is the em-potasata, endureore and en-kipaata, as the previous Ol-porrer.<sup>135</sup>

A "ndito" undergoes clitoridectomy when she attains puberty. The parents notify friends and the guests come bearing gifts of milk and livestock for the feast. At dawn of the material day the "ndito" is seated on a cattle hide and held firmly in place by a few of the

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<sup>135</sup> Stigand, Ibid, p.124



participating women, while the operation is performed. As soon as a girl is circumcised she is dressed in black robe, a decorous chain, small shells, and a beaded leather decoration. During a healing session, the "ndito" is considered unclean. This is symbolized by her not being permitted to wash and not being allowed to leave the vicinity of the "enkang" nor speak to anybody outside her family.

She wears a special head band which identifies her as "enkaibartani", and who awaits healing. Ritual head shaving then follows which marks the beginning of womanhood, hence she is prepared for marriage. She is then allowed to marry a man of any age.

#### 3.3.1.8. Marriage

A man could meet a girl he likes and give her a chain. News about this would spread quickly and the parents would await the arrival of the man to declare his intention openly. The man was then to bring honey to the clanswomen to take to the home of the girl's parents. Honey known as "Esiret e nkoshoke" acted as a sign of an intent to marry, it was eaten by the women. The honey was supplied in great quantities and carried to the girl's parents' home together with milk, an act which is known as "enkirotet". This honey was brewed into beer

and drunk by elders. The father then invited his relatives and other elders of the same age group as himself. After the beer had been brewed, the man who had declared his interest in the girl was summoned and told whether his proposal was accepted. If the parents would agree, a lifelong friendship was cemented there and then, but if rejected he was informed about it, and everything was thereafter forgotten, and he could not attempt to recover the cost of his honey or any other expenses he might have incurred<sup>135</sup>. If the proposal was accepted, he would then give them presents according to his ability to do so, and nobody else was to interfere or to marry the girl. On the wedding day the bridegroom would bring two heifers and one bull, all of the same colour, with no scars and no unusual peculiarities. He also brought two female sheep and one fattened ram which was slaughtered and the fat is used for making ochre and for smearing on the bodies. Some of the fat is also put into a container which the bride carries on her back to her new home. The bridegroom also brought a lamb which he was to give to the mother - in - law and thereafter he and his age group were to call her "Pakar" which meant the one to whom I gave a lamb. Still the bridegroom was also to give the father of the girl a heifer and

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<sup>135</sup> Hamilton, Ibid. p. 11

thereafter<sup>137</sup> call each other "Pakitend" or "Entawuo".

After the arrival of these animals, they were led to the pen and trussed so that they would lie down for a while. Sheep hides were also brought and these were used for making the dress the bride was to wear on her way to her new home. A brass ornament was given to the mother of the girl as a sign that he had married their daughter, and this could symbolise the great respect that would be accorded to her by him and his age group. Beer was to be brewed beforehand and this was used for blessing the bride and wishing her well in her new home. An ornament was put on her right earlobe and another one on her right leg.

Other marriages also followed more or less the same process. However, the man was not forced to bring the cattle on the day of the wedding but, afterwards; all the cattle were brought and she would even become a "paramount" wife if the property was paid before she could deliver her first child. Should she give birth before she had been properly married, then only two cattle, one heifer and one bull were paid. The other animals remained the same<sup>138</sup>

In some cases a woman would go to live with a man without following the customs stated above. Then she is

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<sup>137</sup> Lord, Cranworth, Ibid. pp. 17-19

<sup>138</sup> Litel, Ibid, Chapter 3

relegated one stage below a properly married wife and she was known as "Enkapiian" as opposed to the "Esainoti".<sup>139</sup>

Another form of marriage entails the exchange of girls. This could happen when two young men in particular circumstances decided to exchange sisters. Another reason that would lead to that situation was when a young man had no other aid at home apart from his sister. He would not leave her go unless he got another helper in his home. The normal customary processes of marriage were followed even in such a case and both girls became properly married.<sup>140</sup>

Should a marriage break down there were certain items that were unrecoverable. Among these were the honey, beer, clothes, the lamb given to the mother, the brass ornament and the skin dresses. Cattle and sheep were recoverable in their original numbers.

### 3.3.1.9 Marriage Dresses

Among the maasai, necklaces, special skin dresses, bracelets and other body wears were necessary for the bride at the time of marriage. These are analysed in chapter five. In many African communities, marriage was a time to adorn the bride with beautiful decorations.

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<sup>139</sup> Alan, Jacobs, Ibid, pp. 5-15

<sup>140</sup> Alan, Ibid

Consequently, art-forms emanating from marriage in African societies take many shapes. For example masks have been used by communities such as Kono in Ivory Coast. They used masks for dancing during wedding ceremonies.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.3.1.10 The Ceremony of Marriage

Among the Maasai, one of the main events that takes place at the bride's home is a feast of which the bride and groom do not partake. This feast is followed by a ceremonial journey of the bride to her husband's home. She wears a freshly oiled garment and is accompanied by two women and, on arrival she is given a baby to feed. If the husband is still a warrior he will not consummate the marriage. They may live together at his father's house/home or in his own manyatta. It appeared to this researcher that a woman who had children could not marry again but one who was childless could marry the brothers of the husband if he had any. This still happens at present. Any children after the brother's death are counted as his. A married woman is expected to put on a beaded iron necklace as long as the husband is still alive. The removal of the beaded necklace made him angry, as this researcher was explained to by a Maasai

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<sup>141</sup> Hollis, Ibid pp 11-16

elder at Ngong.

#### 3.3.1.11 Polygamy

A man was allowed to marry as many wives as he wished so long as he was able to pay bride-wealth. But usually two was the common figure. Each wife had her own house in the husband's Kraal (en-an). The first wife was placed at the right side of the gate, the second on the left. Each wife is allocated cattle which she holds for her children.<sup>142</sup> Adultery was not common, due to the rules controlling man-woman relations which are wide and elastic. Any of the man's age mates could have access to his wife and, though this acceptable, this rule is little observed.

#### 3.3.1.12 Role of a Woman

A woman's personal and household belongings are few but are made in a decorative way. A woman's bag contains beads and ornaments (discussed in details in Chapter five). She carries pieces of household during migration. She fetches and carries firewood, water and babies as well.

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<sup>142</sup> Bascon, William, African Art in Cultural Perspective, New York, W.W. Newton Company Inc. 1973, Chapter 1.

A woman acquires special elegance through marriage rather than just child bearing and raising. She also adorns her poise with long sheepskin rainbowed by a thousand beads: This is all hand sewn and included in the bridegroom's gifts. An iron ankle ring is placed around her ankle on her wedding day by her husband. Included as well are wide flat earrings.

A woman has her head shaved regularly. She also shaves her husband's, children's and friends' heads. This is not only traditional grooming but also a rite of passage as well.<sup>143</sup>

### 3.3.1.13: Promotion to Elderhood

When the warriors have served several years as custodians of property and life in the community, and the elders think that it is time a different set of young men took over, a special<sup>144</sup> ceremony called Eunoto is performed.

When a suitable site has been selected, the elders choose a warrior of high respect and reputation, who is to open the way for the others to be initiated into elderhood. The selection councils are held in secret.

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<sup>143</sup> Maina, S.J.M., Traditional African Graphic Design In Kenya, M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984, pp. 20-150.

<sup>144</sup> Sankan Ibid, pp. 30-40

A man is chosen on the basis of his being healthy, without a scar, not left-handed or ambidextrous, not impotent, good natured and even tempered, must not have committed murder and his parents must be pure Maasai. He must be without blemish. The selected man is taken with a group of others to the chief seer, the Laibon who has to give approval. After this, one of his bullocks is slaughtered and he is the one who first drinks blood from the animal's neck. Another official selected during this ceremony is the "Olobuni-Enkeene". Less vigorous conditions are imposed on the choice of this one. All these leaders, the Olaiquenani, Olopolosi-Olkiteng, Olutuno and Olobuni-Enkeene are blessed by the elders and given a thorough grooming and instructions<sup>145</sup>.

At the ceremony, the warriors dance for several days and on the last day a special house and enclosure known as "enkanj" Osinkira. This is built outside the main ceremonial home. During this last day all the warriors who have never broken any of the laws of the warriors come and stone the house. Parents usually remain around to see whether their sons are among those who abstain (to abstain means that one has broken the law) White cattle are selected to occupy the "enkanj" Osinkira' after all the rituals connected with Uonoto are over. One of these

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<sup>145</sup> Gohil, M.M., Historical Background of Textiles in Kenya, M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984, Chapters 2 and 3.



cattle has to be a white bull upon whose back fire is kindled. Besides, it is made sure that a bullock belonging to "Olobuni Enkeene" is present. This one is slaughtered and the skin is carved out into a long strap on which later forty nine knots are made. The bullock's meat is roasted within the home and eaten by a select few<sup>146</sup>.

A new age group or age grade begins and the entire age group acquires a name. Participation in almost every aspect of life is communal, especially for age groups. It is the elders' duty to see that all ceremonies go on as required as several elders emphasised to this researcher.

After becoming an elder after the Ol-mesher, they can attend to family matters and get wives if they are not already married. They also have duties towards the uncircumcised boys as guardians and instructors. The elders of the Ol-Oji who are senior to them are said to be responsible for the Ol-oji of the warriors.

#### 3.3.1.14 ELDERHOOD

Elderhood among the Maasai is a period of responsibility for both men and women. Before settling down into elderhood, junior elders have to undergo two

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<sup>146</sup> Thomson, Joseph, Through Maasailand, London 1885.

major rituals: Olgngesherr and Olkiteng Lorrbaa.

Olgngesherr means "endorsement of complete elderhood", Elders are given a group name which shall mark their generation permanently, e.g. Ilmeshuki which was "never defeated in war".

Blessings of sour milk in well cleaned gourds are bestowed upon the elders who are also given rings made from the underbelly of the slain ox. Senior elders splash white ceremonial paint on the face of each new elder.<sup>147</sup>

The branding irons of the newly confirmed elders are anointed with ghee and honey and put into a fire. When the irons are hot, they are plunged into a pool of cow urine which cause smoke to rise. Elders then wave their cattle sticks in the smoke, for blessing. Ceremonial oxhide and a green shoot is planted at each entrance to their manyattas by a revered elder. This concludes the ceremony to elderhood.

#### 3.3.1.15. Role of Elders

Elders are guardians of Maasai laws and are spiritual advisors. They make all major decisions and have to be disciplined and hard-working persons. They give advice to young men and mediate disputes. They also

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<sup>147</sup> Stigand, *The Land of Zinji*. page 40-99.

ensure that harmonious links between different generations and clans are maintained and perpetuated. In Maasai society elders are the wisdom behind different pillars of society. They organize and lead religious functions and ceremonies, e.g., "Alamal Lengipaata" ritual which is performed by boys just before circumcision. The elders teach, direct and supervise the younger generation of both men and women. They also fence the camps, water the stock, and administer the general husbandry of the herd, such as castrating oxen and treating the sick. They hold frequent meetings to discuss social and cultural matters.

The "Laibon" presides over functions by elders supervises the process, gives advice and make sure that all ceremonial requirements are carried out. If a religious rite is mishandled or one is not performed at the necessary time, bad luck will befall the whole generation, e.g., disease, famine, cattle deaths and so on.

The role of elders in the Maasai society is all encompassing. They concern themselves with clan matters, social justice, law and order, religious affairs, youth affairs, age grouping, initiation and graduation, making of age-sets, marriage ornaments and other things.<sup>148</sup>

Age is respected because of the wisdom it brings the

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<sup>148</sup> Sankan, S.S., The Maasia, pp. 46 - 49

society. Not to respect the elderly is a serious offence that is unthinkable. This is a social order that binds the youth and the aged for the common good of the whole society <sup>145</sup> as many elders emphasised to this researcher.

Maasai social structure does not provide for the neglect of any section of the community.

### 3.3.1.16. Qualities of Elders

In Maasai society elders are expected to have certain qualities that qualify them as respected elders. Among such qualities is eloquence. During meetings one group may move away from the rest in order to discuss how best to present their views ("englilepata") Maasai elders have fine speech filled with proverbs, such as "epolos engiok anaimin" even in darkness the ear hears. The colonialists were very impressed by this eloquence and this researcher also experience such a situation. <sup>150</sup>

The other quality that characterises a good elder is reverence. The Maasai expect and even go to the extent of demanding respect and obedience from their juniors. <sup>151</sup> Refusal to carry out their requests,

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<sup>145</sup> Mukunga, S., Peoples of Kenya pp. 21-23

<sup>150</sup> Loitel, T., Maasai Way of Life, pp. 30-36

<sup>151</sup> Kabasanji. J., Ornamental Works, Chapter 2.

improper greetings, or worse, sexual relations with one of their wives leads to punishment. Thus a fine of honey beer or a heifer is imposed. Failure to produce these leads to one being cursed by elders, which is a fearful thing e.g. "may the calves of your cattle die." These curses are the main weapons that the elders have, otherwise referred to as wisdom of tongues. It is a privilege that the elders seldom abuse as two elders confirmed to this researcher.

The third quality is admirable personal traits where influential elders among the Maasai do not earn their status on account of their wealth. Respect and prestige are acquired from personality. Traits such as wisdom, intelligence, and modesty are the ones which command real admiration. Seniority is acquired through age: the older one gets, the more respect he commands, the only exception being those who are too deaf or senile to reason well.

Finally it needs to be recognised that junior elders are the "art of tongue" and "wisdom of mind". They normally attend meetings being held by old and experienced elders. These meetings may even last a whole day, till all parties concerned come to a suitable agreement.

At the family level, the elders who are married spend a lot of time at the kraals educating their

children, in the traditional Maasai way of life preparing them to be herders or herders wives. The children are urged to take special care of cattle. They are taught to sing songs, e.g. "ewoko" about the pride of having cattle.

The children are also taught to respect their elders. From an early age they learn to greet elders and respond to their greetings politely and promptly. They obey orders immediately and without grumbling. Failure to do so may lead to being cursed.

In the field of medicine, the elders are knowledgeable. They will always try to cure an ailment or disease themselves, before looking for outside help. This traditional medical skill is passed on to the children who learn to identify the various trees, plants and herbs, as well as the diseases they cure.

Elders are experts on the solar calendar (astronomy) (This is tabulated in details in the Appendices). By observing the movement of stars, they can tell when it is going to rain. The shape, size, colour and position of the moon determines the time for certain crucial activities in Maasailand, e.g. when the moon is full and white, major ceremonies may be held. The disappearance of the moon symbolizes death and the Maasai will do anything to avoid the bad luck that might befall them at

that time <sup>151</sup> One elder told this researcher that maasai elders act as reservoirs of knowledge. This researcher witnessed some elders holding a council and consultations.

### 3.3.1.17. Death and Burial

The lifeless bodies of most people were put off for hyenas to eat when one died. This was to put the body on the western side of the kraal and laid on the left side so that the face looked eastward with the legs drawn up. The head was supported by the left hand and the right was placed across the breast. The provision of new sandals., a stick and some grass in the hand is a further indication of a belief in after life.

The bodies of Laibons or rich men are buried in shallow graves under stone caves; anybody passing this place is supposed to throw a stone on it. If one lived to very old age one became one of the "Dasati", ancient retired elder, thus reaching the end of social responsibility. Generations were marked by an iron bracelet which was passed on from a dying father, to the youngest son. Elder sons, however, forged theirs from the smith to obtain progenital links.

When an elder who has children dies, a bullock is

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<sup>152</sup> Kantai, Ibid, p. 66-69

slaughtered and the corpse is anointed with its fat. New sandals are made to speed the deceased on his onward journey. A cattle stick is put in the hand of a man to symbolize his work as a herder. If it's a woman the tools of her trade such as a calabash or sewing needle are placed at her side. There after the corpse is carried to a shady place and left for the hyenas to devour it. If this fails, a sheep is slaughtered and its meat and bones are left around the corpse to encourage predators to come and feast on it meanwhile the whole family continues to mourn the death of the elder.<sup>153</sup> If it is a man his wives and daughters remove their ornaments, necklaces and earrings. The widow has to take off her earrings, necklaces and beads. The daughter takes off her armlets, chains and anklets. Sons, both youth and warriors, shave their heads. This mourning lasts one month.<sup>154</sup> Death and burial are rich in symbolism.

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<sup>153</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Saitoti Ole Tepilit, Maasai Elm Tree Books/Hamish Ltd., 1980 pp. 41-57.

<sup>154</sup> Beckwith, Ibid p. 25-40



### 3.3.2. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Political organization among the Maasai is related to their legal systems. That means that arbitrators in any dispute are at the same time the elders who play a crucial part in political administration.

Decentralization is the major feature in the Maasai's political structure. Every age-set section (olosh) has its own elected as well as ritual leaders. These ritual leaders officiate on religious rituals while the political leaders preside over meetings and secular functions. All these leaders retain their positions throughout their lives and are elected during the warriorhood. The diviner (Oloiboni) acts as a prophet or seer and officiates at rituals for all sections. He is the one who names the successive age-sets with the help of the leaders; he opens and closes successive age-sets and sees to the problems of the barren women. He is thus both ritual leader whose functions touch on political affairs.

Although he is not accorded any secular prerogative, a diviner can command a lot of power depending on his personality, e.g., Mbatiany, who managed to command many Maasai sections. Solving problems of inheritance is the order of the day for a diviner except for only one certain exceptional family in the Nkidangi location. The

reason is cultural and historical. The Oloiboni's role is very important, being so deeply entrenched in the social life of the people to the extent that physical ailments that cannot be treated by the traditional physician are taken to the diviner. A diviner can also change from a seer to a leader depending on his position and character.

The Maasai prefer not to report cases of any kind to government authorities, since they feel that the judgement would be one-sided, and would not consider the human elements. The constitution in Maasailand is custom. Government affairs are run by the elders. Each and every elder has a right to speak his mind, thus making sure that all issues are dealt with fairly. Elders deal with many subjects at their meetings. These include day-to-day problems like theft of a goat, as well as complicated issues such as inheritance.<sup>155</sup>

### 3.3.2.1. Council of Elders

Individuals take their problems to a well known elder who then decides whether or not the problem requires a council of elders to solve it. If so, warriors are sent to convey the message that the elders

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<sup>155</sup> Hamilton, Lord Laud, A Scrap-book of Maasai History, pp. 400-571.

need to meet. Once all the elders have arrived, a blessing is given. This gives the green light to the elder who called the meeting to present his case. Thereafter each elder will be given a chance to stand and voice his opinion on the case. After all the elders have spoken, the verdict becomes obvious. So the "Alaigwanani" (chief of elders) summarizes the conclusions that the elders have reached and states the fine. They close the meeting with a blessing. "We hope we have judged fairly. God bless us all". The fines are set according to Maasai law or in special cases as decided by the elders present.

One very interesting aspect of the Maasai judicial system is that there is no jails and they never inflict physical punishment.

Murder cases are rare. If they do occur, they are complex and require a lot of patience and wisdom from the elders. Thus they normally address themselves not only to the victim, but also to the society as a whole. They go to great lengths to ensure that they do not harm the society, as they are punishing the guilty party, because elimination or execution of the offender would result in a reduction in the size and strength of the community.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Loitel, T., *Maasai Way of Life*, pp. 11-41.

### 3.3.2.2. Senior Elderhood

Senior elderhood not only brings about natural retirement from some activities but also an increased sense of concern in community affairs. Senior elders become more sedentary in their ways and reflective in their bearing. A traditional look is acquired by wearing of a warm blanket as a cloak. Many also carry a beaded bamboo tobacco container which they may wear around their necks. These (the bamboo) are always presented to them by their first-born daughters. As elders gather to talk in the evenings to tell stories and discuss important issues, they preserve Maasai legend and folklore.

### 3.3.2.3. Hierarchy of Political Responsibilities

The first level of authority comes from the age-group. Before boys are circumcised, a chief councillor, "Olaiguenani" is selected from them and given a staff of office, a club known as "Okiuka". Marks of a brave warrior are made on his thigh<sup>157</sup>.

"Olobolosi-Olkiteng" is the second source of authority. He is selected before the boys are circumcised, provides the bullock slaughtered after boys have wrestled with it and is respected by the entire age

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<sup>157</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Tepilit, The maasai, p. 39

group<sup>158</sup>.

The third source of authority is "Olotuno", who is selected during the Eunoto ritual when the warriors graduate to become elders. He becomes the leader of elders, and he opens the way to marriage. The chief councillor and Olobuni-Enkeene do not fall under his authority.

Fourth in authority is "Olobeni-Enkeene" who shares almost the same authority as "Olotuno" though the latter commands more respect from age group and tribe as a whole.

Fifth is the man who decides the name for the age group. He is respected by the age-set and the whole community.

The chief seer's "Oloiboni" source of respect emanates more from the whole community than sub-divisions within it. He is not selected but grows up as a seer; hence the degree of respect accorded to him depends on his own ability. All the above named social hierarchies provide control within the Maasai which is the reason why the Maasai have been able to withstand the strains and invasions of powerful foreign customs. All social cohesion is due to the respect accorded to the people holding these responsibilities<sup>159</sup>.

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<sup>158</sup> Beckwith, Ibid, p. 41

<sup>159</sup> Hobley, C.W., Social Organisation of Maasai. pp. 27-33.

#### 3.3.2.4. Deterrence of Crime

The conditions which regulate the fines on people who have committed a crime vary as decreed by the mythical founder of the Maasai society.

There are three different fines imposed on cattle thefts depending on the type of animal one has stolen. For instance if a person(s) is caught slaughtering or eating a stolen bullock, each of the participants pays five cows. If it is a heifer, seven cattle are fined on each. Nine cattle are paid for a stolen bull. Sheep and goats are paid in a similar manner.

In case of marriage breakdown, the cattle paid as bride wealth are repaid in their original number. This is meant to discourage the girl's parents from urging their daughter to divorce.

The conception of the guilt of murder does not extend beyond the borders of Maasailand. A man is only regarded guilty if he murders another Maasai. After the bereaved have cooled down, peaceful negotiations are made and it is decided when the aggrieved family can go and capture "blood cattle." The fine for murder was forty nine cattle. The numerical nine remains constant though the rest can be altered because this is the number of orifices in a man's body. Women were normally not murdered because it was believed that this would bring

Ill-luck and create a social disgrace. One who has committed such a crime undergoes a ceremony of expiation in which he is cleansed against disaster or a curse upon him. The fine is either forty eight or twenty-eight sheep. Eight, being synonymous to the things related with women - a loin cloth, gut for repairing work, needle, calabash, razor, axe a reed for cleaning calabashes and cowrie shells. If it is not a Maasai woman who has been killed the victim only undergoes a cleansing ceremony.

If an uncircumcised boy is murdered, no fine is imposed until his agegroup has been circumcised. Whatever fine is imposed has to have the figure nine.<sup>160</sup>

For a person who has caused a fracture in another, a fine of one heifer is imposed. This fine is to be paid quickly because if the injured man dies, the perpetrator will be treated in the same way as a murderer.

### 3.3.2.5. Bequeathing Property

Normally, as soon as a man realises that he is about to die, he could divide his property among his sons and also could decide who was to pay his debts.

However, if death deprived one of this smooth endowment, the eldest son inherits all his father's

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<sup>160</sup> Hobley, *Ibid*, p. 40.

property and debts. He then divides the property and debts among his young brothers and step-brothers.

If a woman/mother dies before she endows her property to her various sons, the youngest son inherits all this property because he is the one whose duty is to look after the mother in old age. Therefore these are the only two sons whose inheritance ends clearly and is indisputable.

In case the family becomes extinct clan relatives decide on who is to inherit the property depending on the closeness of kinship or according to a meritorious deed which a relative might have done to the deceased man.

For a man who might have fathered only daughters, the man decides to prevent one of his daughters from getting married. She is allowed to have children at her father's home with any man, hence the first son she gets is pronounced the inheritor of the property. However, the mother acts as the trustee of the property as the son grows up. In such a case, disputes only occur when the daughter marries and gives her father one of her sons, since the son is not regarded as one of the family members.<sup>161</sup>

The next method of inheritance involves a warrior who dies before he is married, and therefore has no children. If the family decides that his name should not

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<sup>161</sup> Stigand, *Ibid*, Chapter 2.



be forgotten, it calls together members of the clan and a decision is taken to obtain a bride for the dead man. Her duties are to look after cattle and she is given the freedom to have children with any man that she chooses. A son who is born out of this "ghost marriage" inherits the "fathers" property. His responsibility is to keep the mans name alive, and look after his home when he becomes old<sup>162</sup>.

Another form of inheritance is concerned with naturalization, either through the man's own request and willingness or through being captured in war<sup>163</sup>.

#### 3.3.2.6. Warfare

A Laibon is consulted when a campaign is being organised. He is given presents and then he gives the warriors specific instructions on what to do and what to take with them, and how to conduct themselves. When the warrior delegation goes back, a group of spies is sent out to spy on the land. The group comprises nine or up to any other figure with the odd number. This group always includes strong, resourceful and intelligent men.

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<sup>162</sup> Stigand, *Ibid*, Chapter 2

<sup>163</sup> Sanford G.R., *An Administrative and Political History of the Maasai Reserve*, p.7.

They always take with them a charm provided by the Laibon<sup>164</sup>.

When they arrive at the site, they endeavour to find out the layout of the land, the location of warrior camps, major cattle centres, etc. This is done by climbing the highest hills around. They then pick up cowdung which they take back with them. As soon as they reach their land, they uproot grass and carry it with them. On their arrival, a horn is blown and all the warriors gather together. The spies take out the cowdung they had brought as a sign that they had reached the enemy country, and tell of their observations. War food is prepared and each warrior is supplied with two pairs of sandals. Elders who kindled fire for the age group assemble to advise the warriors and give them blessings. The warriors take with them all their ornaments and other items such as lion manes, head gears, big loud jingles etc. They do not wear these things until the day of the battle.<sup>165</sup>

They are usually led by the people who spied on the land who had counted the number of days to be spent on the journey. On the night before the attack all age group leaders are concealed in bushes so that they are not hurt during the attack. They then prepare their war

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<sup>164</sup> Stanford, *Ibid*, p. 10

<sup>165</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, p. 18-27

regalia, dress up and tie the long jingles on their thighs. They also carry the charm supplied by the Laibon.

The attack is planned to take place from several directions. Many men belonging to the enemy camp are killed except women, and those not circumcised. When the enemy has been vanquished, they take all their cattle (livestock) and some people are captured.

The warriors divide themselves into three separate divisions to guard against any rearguard action by the enemy. The vanguard drives the cattle, then there is one group that goes alongside the cattle and another that follows the cattle from a distance; this last group also takes care of animals that are too weak to go along with the rest of the herd.<sup>155</sup>

Spears are the moran's prized possessions. They were made by the "Kunono" clan of smiths. These were bought by the Maasai for a price of a calf. Thin shafted, leaf bladed spears were used for throwing and narrow bladed ones for stabbing. Most important was the war spear which had a black shaft and very long narrow blade. The colour of the shaft is black. This is most prestigious and the prerogative of a senior moran.<sup>157</sup>

Short spears cost a goat. They were also made by

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<sup>156</sup> Timoi, Ole S.S., and G.K. Ole Kuluo, *Ibid*, p. 40.

<sup>157</sup> Timoi, *Ibid*, p. 36

the "Kunono". Red leather sheaths were the works of the Wandorobo people. As many as six wooden clubs per person were carried into battle. Some were thrown at the enemy before the moran engaged in close combat.

The ostrich feather headdress was a common regalia for wars, cattle raids and war hunts. This had a psychological advantage to the wearer by creating an illusion of vastly superior height in the eyes of the enemy. Trophies from a hunt belonged to one who grabs the lion by the tail and who spears first.<sup>166</sup>

Though the Kudu horn is used as a regalia, it was more for ceremonies than for the battle. The jingling sound of thigh bells signal the intimidating approach of the moran. These days it is used in dancing and in celebrating social events. It produces sound by quivering tension and by deliberate movement.

Long hair is a helmet to a moran. A friend was usually the hairdresser for several days when one's hair grew long. It was parted across the head. The hair was all coated with a mixture of ochre (red earth) and animal fat. Strands of hair were nibbed between fingers and palms to form miniature twisted ropes. When styling, one patch was tied over the forehead, another over each temple and yet another at the end. The patch was gathered into a pigtail at the bottom by binding them

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<sup>166</sup> Amins, *Ibid*, pp. 29-31.

around a curved piece of wood.

Scarring of skin was done for the purposes of decoration. Patterns of cicatrisation run from shoulders down the chest and stomach. This was done prior to circumcision<sup>155</sup>. In the conduct for war, the Maasai have very elaborate regalia that fit with the aims and objectives of their armies. (See Chapters six & seven)

### 3.4. ECONOMY, TECHNOLOGICAL PROCESSES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The Maasai have an elaborate social structure that encourages economic, technological and cultural growth for the common good of the society.

#### 3.4.1. ECONOMY

##### 3.4.1.1 Land

Land is an important economic asset in Maasai society not because it is a means of producing crops and other agricultural items but because on land depends on the most important economic activity of this community, namely livestock keeping or animal husbandry. This has been made more clear from the foregoing description of

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<sup>155</sup> Hollis, A.C., *The Maasai, Their Language and Folklore*, Chapter 2.

Maasai economy.

The concept of individual land ownership is alien to the Maasai. Each section is not only politically autonomous but has its own clearly defined grazing lands also. These lands are subdivided into localities. A locality is determined by the proximity and amount of a permanent water supply. The number of people and settlements in a locality depend upon the water and pasture available. A family may live where it chooses within the limits of a locality.

#### 3.4.1.2. Settlement and Cattle

During the dry season the cattle graze around the permanent waters during the day. In both the dry and wet seasons kraals are built a few miles from the water supply. On one day the cattle are taken to drink and on the next day, they are taken in another direction, which means that they drink on alternate days but at the same time graze over a larger area than if they went to water everyday thus helping to conserve the grazing<sup>170</sup>

The Maasai existence is centred on cattle. Cattle are both important materially and spiritually and those who perform any other work other than tending cattle are despised. They believe that in the beginning God(Enkai),

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<sup>170</sup> Hollis, *Ibid*, Chapter 2.

gave them all the cattle in the world and therefore nobody else has a right to possess cattle. Cattle provide food in the form of milk, blood, and meat to the warriors. They, also give him mental and spiritual satisfaction through their existence, though it may seem like there is less ritual expression of the love of cattle. Unlike some East African peoples who combine pastoralism with agriculture, Maasai are predominantly pastoralists.<sup>171</sup>

It was essential in the past for the Maasai to keep and maintain the size of their herds by continual raiding, for the natural reproduction rate would not have been enough to give them satisfactory sizes.

Milk was not drunk on the same day it was milked. Meat was eaten or boiled but it was taken mixed with blood. This was on account of its high ritual value. Grass also has high ritual value being the food for cattle, and it is also used as sign of peace. In 1930 the average size of an elder's herd was officially estimated to be about seventy-five heads of cattle, eighty-five sheep and goats and eighteen donkeys. This was based on the estimate of 720,000 as the total number of cattle of the Kenyan Maasai. In Tanzania the average number of cattle to a family (Kishoni) in 1948 was between 100-200 heads.

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<sup>171</sup> Ley, *Ibid*, pp. 7-13.

Gourds were used for milking cows and it was the girls who milked them. The calf was allowed to suck and if it died the skin was sometimes stuffed with grass and called "Ol-kutu". It was presented to the cow during milking. Each cow yielded about one and half litres of milk a day. Cows were bled with a blocked arrow (Ol nonet shot into the jugular vein and the blood caught up in a gourd. Sheep can also be bled. Cattle are branded with marks on the rump or flank which indicates the owners clan or sub-clan and with time a private mark as well. The ears are also clipped for the same purpose. Salt for cattle is obtained by driving the herd to the salt lick (embalor).<sup>172</sup>

The ruling principle of inheriting cattle is that the eldest son of the senior wife gets the largest share, inheriting not only the cattle given in trust to his mother but also those which the father has kept for his own use.

Inheritance is also affected by the gate (Kishoni) arrangement in the Kraals, for cattle may not pass from one side to another. If the wife on the left hand dies without leaving any sons, her cattle may not go to any man on the right side so long as there are sons of the wives on the left side.

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<sup>172</sup> Cynthia, Salvadori, Maasai, Collins, St. James place. London 1974 pp. 27-32.



The clans(Ol-Osho) own land and grazing rights are acquired by residence. The clan controls the water rights. In the old days when the Maasai occupied new territory each warrior according to tradition, and the senior member of a clan living, claimed a well or a spring or water hole on behalf of the clan.<sup>173</sup>

Individual rights over water are ruled out by traditions, and the senior member of a clan living at a well decides, after consultation with other clansmen, on how people take their cattle at any well or spring. When water is plenty, possession is communal.

The Maasai keep donkeys in large numbers (il-sirkon) which are used especially for carrying their goods when moving. Donkeys are individually marked by slitting their ears in different ways.

#### 3.4.1.3 Division of Labour

Families were divided between the fathers' Kraal and the warriors' kraal. Warriors raided cattle. People concerned with the division of labour were mainly the uncircumcised boys, girls and women. Boys do most of the grazing assisted by the girls and women who do the milking. Girls help their mothers with housework until they become old enough to get married to the warriors.

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<sup>173</sup> Saitoti, Tepilit Ole, The Maasai, pp. 4-11.

Most of the work is done by the older women who, besides the milking and other ordinary household tasks also built houses, load and drive donkeys when moving, prepare skins for clothing and trade with neighbouring peoples for food and other things. Warriors prepare for war, organise dancing, visiting friends and relaxing in good company. However, nowadays their military activities have been replaced by other activities connected with cattle raiding from neighbouring peoples. The senior elders are occupied with political matters and, some of them with the instruction and control of the new initiates and younger warriors. They also take part in trading with the neighbouring peoples and help with the herding.<sup>174</sup>

The only people who are high specialists in the economy of the Maasai are the smiths (ilkunono) who live segregated, from the rest of Maasai and only marry amongst themselves. Their status is distinctively inferior and they are always despised by the other Maasai who oil their hands when they want to take something from them. Sometime ago the smiths used to live near deposits of iron ore such as those in Matapato river; but nowadays the availability of trade in iron, has given them higher freedom of domicile. They make the iron work objects used by the Maasai. Such are spears, swords and

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<sup>174</sup> Saibull, Solom Ole and Rachel Carr, The maasai of East Africa, pp. 7 - 28

ornaments. According to Hollis.<sup>175</sup>, a few Maasai women dealt in pottery. The Maasai normally buy their pots from the Bantu.<sup>176</sup>

Game hunting was no so common in Maasailand, but occasionally the Maasai killed wild animals like the elephants for their tusks, buffalos and eland for meat and hides, ostriches for their feathers, and lions and leopards to protect their cattle.

#### 3.4.1.4 Trade

The Maasai depended on the Bantu for their trade flow. The Bantu agriculturalist (Il-mEEK) supplied them with all what they lacked. Their chief suppliers were the Agikuyu, Chaga, Taveta, and for ivory and honey, the Dorobo.

There was barter trade (exchanging goods for others). Old barren cattle, old thin goat, sheep, and donkeys were given in exchange for agricultural products like beans, millet, maize and tobacco. The chief suppliers of iron were Indians, often Sikhs, whose warlike qualities appeal to the Maasai. The Maasai used to trade with the Swahilis in ivory during the caravan

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<sup>175</sup> Hollis, Ibid, pp. 7-14

<sup>176</sup> Hollis, Ibid, pp. 16-34

trade for cloth beads and wine.<sup>177</sup>

Trade outside Maasailand was conducted by women because they were allowed to pass unarmed from one people's territory to the other even during the progress of war.<sup>178</sup>

#### 3.4.1.5 Food

Except for cereals among the agricultural Maasai no other vegetable food is grown, nor was it eaten in old age. The warriors were fed with milk, meat and blood, while the agriculturalists provided enough salt. The animals that were later included in the Maasai diet consisted of cattle, buffalo and eland which were considered to be like cattle and hence fit for eating. Warriors were not allowed to take honey, drink honey-wine, use tobacco, though others took snuff. Children and married women ate vegetable food and the meat of cattle which died a natural death.<sup>179</sup>

Warriors ate meat in specially constructed structure in the bush called ol-pul. A boy to do the work for the warriors accompanied them to the ol-pul, small groups

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<sup>177</sup> Hayghe Rene', Lorousse Encyclopaedia of Prehistoric and Ancient Art with Special reference to Africa, Hamlyn, London 1957 pp. 120-249.

<sup>178</sup> Sankan S.S., The Maasai, Kenya Literature Bureau

<sup>179</sup> Sieber, R., Ibid, 1961 Chapter 1 and 2

feasted upon the meat of an ox supplied by the father of one of their members. The elder who supplied the ox was given some meat and this is one of the regular sources of meat for married people. Meat eating was the regular practice of warriors. Men and women are not supposed to eat together, and fish, eggs and game other than buffalo and eland, are not eaten by any Maasai.

#### 3.4.1.6 Mobility

For the Maasai to move, the area must be very dry with poor grazing grass. So they move looking for greener pastures for their animals. When they want to move they saddle their donkeys with skin and pack their goods on them. They carry as much as they are able. (Some containers during moving are in Fig 1 and Fig 2 in pg. 286 & 287). If they may happen to stop somewhere where the grass is not so abundant, they do not put up good houses made of skins, instead they make rough ones. Women are the ones who do the work of building.<sup>180</sup> This author interviewed a number of Maasai women and they all agreed that Maasai culture accepts this role for women. This has made women very valuable.

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<sup>180</sup> Cynthia Salvadori, Andres Fedders, *The Maasai*, Collins, London, 1973 pp. 40-111.

### 3.4.2. TECHNOLOGICAL PROCESSES

#### 3.4.2.1. Procedures of Building a Manyatta

During the first day of construction of the manyatta, ritual fire-making is used to symbolize the unity of the village and the special relationship of its membership to the alternate age-set.

Once the site has been selected twenty eight pure white cows and one black bullock are driven ahead of the warriors to the site to form the village herd. Black and white colour signify joy and solemnity. A large white rock and bits of grass are placed ceremoniously in the centre of the village by the "Fire-stick elders or "il pironi". These are usually elders two generations senior to the graduates. The "il pironi" then call upon God to bless and protect their sons and to cause their herds to increase, like the white rock and grass which cover the earth.<sup>181</sup>

Mothers are assigned to places at the circumference of the village to build their warrior sons houses. Women in maasai are held in high respect and are referred to as "in-kituak" meaning the important one. Women build and repair houses and give names to children, cattle and villages.

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<sup>181</sup> Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, Secker and Warburg. 1938 Chapters 1 and 2 and pp. 76-84

As the building takes place, the black bullock is caught, thrown and held to the ground while the ritual fire is kindled on his left side by the elders. The kindling is then used to ignite a bonfire of special wood placed over the buried rock and bits of grass. As it burns during the night, each warrior gives a burning ember to his mother to light her household hearth. The fire from this hearth is safeguarded and revered like a European or American eternal flame for dead heroes.

In Maasai ritual, fire is the most potent symbol of life. At any time a house is considered dead if it is not warmed by fire, but on this occasion the fire is holy and a mother will sin gravely if she allows the token of her son's new life in his first manyatta to flicker out and die.

In a sense, the manyatta itself is a symbol for some of the more important aspects of the prescribed life for junior warriors. They have to learn Maasai genealogy for which purpose the manyatta is split into half, one for each "moiety" and the hut sometimes is arranged in a sequence by clan and family.<sup>182</sup>

The morans are supposed to live absolutely as one body of brothers. No one is allowed to drift away and sleep or eat alone, or even relieve himself except in company with one or more of his age mates.

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<sup>182</sup> Cynthia, Salvadori, Maasai, London, Collins, 1974, pp.11-29

In the structure of the manyatta, this bonding is represented by the close grouping of the houses, each of which is a large barrack room for a full band of morans, plus their mothers' and their girl friends.

The compound of a manyatta is a wide-open leisure space for walking about, talking and dancing.

#### 3.4.2.2. Types of Kraals

There are two types of Kraals. The married men with their wives and children live in one type. The warriors with their mothers, sisters and lovers live in the other type. The difference between these two kraals is that the one for the warriors was not fenced. The first type varied in sizes. It may contain seven or several hundred houses, though very large ones were uncommon. The average was about 20-50 houses. The warriors' kraal would contain between 50-100 huts.<sup>153</sup>

#### 3.4.2.3.1. Warrior Kraal(Manyatta)

The warriors' Kraal or manyatta, is inhabited by all the members of one age set who constitute a company.<sup>154</sup>

A manyatta brings together both junior and senior

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<sup>153</sup> Leys Norman, Kenya, Fourth Edition Frank Cass,

<sup>154</sup> Adams, Joy, The Peoples of Kenya, oo. 39-44



warriors and forms them into a unified body, breaking down any division existing between them.

A beautiful site is chosen for a manyatta, one with access to water and good grazing. Forty nine houses (a lucky number in Maasai) are built there by the warriors' mothers while the warriors themselves built the sprawling fence around the manyatta.<sup>185</sup>

The houses are made sturdy and spacious enough to accommodate the many warriors and their friends. In each house a mother will build a private bed for herself and another bed for the warriors.

Everything in the manyatta must be the exclusive property of the warriors and elders instructing them. This author observed one such instruction.

Before the manyatta is built, certain warriors called "embikas" are selected by the other warriors for their bravery and maturity. Dressed in full war regalia this delegated group sweeps the country to obtain whatever is required for the manyatta.<sup>186</sup>

Soon after construction of the manyatta has been completed, a procession of well dressed warriors, with their mothers and their girl friends move in to stay. The warrior interact very intensely and closely within the manyatta and learn much from experience.

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<sup>185</sup> Sankan, Ibid, pp. 11-27

<sup>186</sup> Sankan, Ibid, pp. 19-29

A strong sense of clanship develops for the layout of the manyatta separates the black cow clan from the red cow. The elders present in the manyatta, act as ceremonial sponsors and instruct the warriors in the customs and values of the maasai society.

After the ceremony of "Eunoto" the warriors leave the manyatta and go back home as elders. The manyatta is then abandoned.<sup>137</sup>

#### 3.4.2.3.2. African Examples

As an economic, social and cultural need, the building industry in African traditional societies, has a key role to play. A comparative example is the Agikuyu people who are Maasai neighbours. Among the Agikuyu the hut had to be built in the right place. The selection of a plot for the homestead was a crucial task for the man. The land had to fulfil some standards. It was supposed not to have any association with any ancestral curse or taboo. The land had to have been lawfully acquired either by buying, inheritance, given as a token, acquired or a gift from another person. The plot was not supposed to be near or on a graveyard.<sup>138</sup> The Maasai had similar

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<sup>137</sup> Herdskovits, Herd and Spear, Ibid, pp. 8-13

<sup>138</sup> Klump, Donna, Preliminary Analysis of Maasai Body Ornaments, pp. 2-6

considerations. Thus there is influence among communities.

#### 3.4.2.3.3. An Osinkira

A suitable site is chosen at which to hold the "Eunoto Ceremony. The "Osinkira" a large manyatta is built to accommodate the participants who include the maasai elders who must supervise the building process. This ceremonial house is built in the centre of the manyatta with forty-nine houses. It is round with a conical roof made of thatch and is totally different from the typical flat-roofed maasai walling.<sup>189</sup>

In the construction of Osinkira a pure black bullock is produced for the ritual sacrifice of the Eunoto. This animal is force-fed through the night with milk, meat and potion provided by the Laibon.<sup>190</sup>

At dawn, after the singing of the celebration hymn, it is laid down on its side by the leaders of the left-handed circumcision group of warriors and smothered to death with the skirt of a married woman. It dies satisfactorily for the graduation juniors without making a sound of violent movement, which would signify an

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<sup>189</sup> Sankan, Ibid, pp. 4-16

<sup>190</sup> Stigand, C.L., The Land of Zinji, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. 1966 pp. 6-37

unsettled future for them as the new senior defenders of the tribe.<sup>191</sup>

After the slaughter has gone well, the morans celebrate with a dance, after which the arena is cleared of spectators for the secret communion ceremony. In this solemn ritual, the head of the dead animal is raised, a slit cut in its dewlap and the blood flow is mixed with milk.

A venerable elder then supervises the communicants each of which takes a sip directly from the dewlap and is individually blessed.<sup>192</sup>

After this the carcass is butchered and strung across the barbecue fire on eight forked stakes.

At this point, a bank of holy (respected) mothers move in to build an enclosure of hide around them and make a start on the inner sanctum or physical heart of the "Eunoto". They construct a wicker frame, then stop work while a contingent of warriors go off to collect heavier wood for the roof.

When the morans return, a crowd of elderly women and children go off to greet them with singing and then file on their right side, gesturing or pronouncing a blessing

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<sup>191</sup> Saitoti, T.Ole, *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*, pp. 5-19

<sup>192</sup> Bentsen, Cheryl, *Maasai Days*, London, Collins 1990 pp. 23-

as they go.<sup>193</sup>

At the end of this ritual, the Laibon arrives and selects from the piles of wood three stakes one of which is forked. These are carried into "Osinkira", set up reverently with the cross-piece in between the two straight poles and set in a hole in the group ground. The scene is prayed over and sanctified by the Laibon. It becomes the main altar setting for the Eunoto. After the completion of the ritual, a vein of cowhide knotted for each clan is woven into the framework of "Osinkira" house. The same is done with the ropes of the rain tree bark. The sheave of grass are attached and a prayer uttered to God to bless this new house.<sup>194</sup>

After this the holy mothers complete the roof and plaster the walls with cow dung so that a favoured group of elders could retire inside for a meal, beer and weighty discussions. This researcher witnessed two such occasions in Narok.

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<sup>193</sup> Amin, Mohamed, *The Last of The Maasai* John Eames Camerapix, Nairobi, 1987. pp. 4-13

<sup>194</sup> Amin, *Ibid* pp. 14-17

#### 3.4.2.3.4. Importance of Rituals in Traditional African Building Industry

Ritualism has been important in building industry all over traditional Africa. There is a direct connection between ritualism and the form the houses take or develop into. This is because the functions of a house determine the rituals that precede. Since culture differ in some aspects from place to place in Africa, so did the shapes of houses.<sup>195</sup>

In cameroon for instance the Bamileke and Bamoun people and their own unique architecture where houses were mushroom shaped and made of palm and bamboo materials. The Bamileke people built elaborate chiefs houses and shrines with carvings on verana posts, with heavy wooden door- frames. The traditional Zulu houses of South Africa had mud plaster walls and steep conical thatch roof on a circular platform on top of the wall.

#### 3.4.2.3.5. The Enkang (Elders Kraal)

After the "Eunoto" ceremony of the warriors leave the manyatta and go back home as elders. The manyatta is abandoned.

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<sup>195</sup> Sankan, S.S., The Maasai, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1971 pp. 6-17

The elders select a location to settle where there is plenty of pasture and water, little wind and a place with level land without rocks so that cattle can sleep comfortably. Often the combined effort of several families are required to cope efficiently with certain situations, security for example.<sup>136</sup>

A communal structure is therefore essential in the areas that are isolated and frequented by cattle raiders and predators. In this case, several different families will come together to share food, labour and most important to protect each other. In such large communities kraals may have between ten to twenty houses, a number large enough for defence and security during attacks.

Families that get along well frequently build kraals together and may stay together for years even moving with each other when grazing becomes poor and seasonal rivers dry up.

The actual structure of the settlement is roughly circular. Each family builds its own houses and part of the fence enclosing the settlement. The cattle are kept in the centre and small enclosures may be built to keep sheep, goats and calves. Since each elder has his own gate to the settlement, one can easily tell the number of

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<sup>136</sup>Oliver, Roland and Crowder Michael, The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa (Traditional Architecture In Contemporary Africa) Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 425-430

the families living together by the number of gates.<sup>197</sup>

Maasai who are travelling are welcome in any kraal and are always greeted warmly. They need only say what age group they belong to and they will be directed to the house of their age mates. Even if their age mates are not in the kraal at the time, a place will always be found for travellers.<sup>198</sup> In the construction of a maasai house the oblong shaped figure is drawn on the ground, then holes are dug and large branches inserted in them. Smaller branches are tied on the top of the larger ones and are bent to conform to the desired structure of the house. The leafy parts of the branches are woven together to fill in the exposed areas. Grass is packed all round and finally cattle dung is plastered on the sides and top to seal the structure. The interior of the house has one room. It contains one bed, large enough for up to six people to sleep together, and one small and more privately situated bed for the mother of the house and her children. The beds are made with strong branches and covered with soft hides. In the centre of the house is a hearth for cooking, warmth and light. Along the sides there is usually an animal den for newborn calves or goat kids, with a barrier separating it from the rest

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<sup>197</sup> Leys, Norman, Kenya, Fourth edition, London, Frank Cass, 1973, pp. 4-39

<sup>198</sup> Cynthia, Salvadori, Maasai, London, Collins, St. James Place, 1974, pp. 29-41



of the house.

There are no large windows but there is an opening in either the walls or the ceiling to let light in and smoke out. The door of the house is seldom closed.<sup>199</sup>

All the Maasai houses conform to a basic shape. The women who build them may vary the entrances, decorate the exteriors with symbolic markings, or modify details of the interiors with symbolic markings, or modify details of the interior. Just before the rains, a woman will patch the roof, filling the cracks with fresh dung and prepare the hides to spread on the tops.<sup>200</sup>

#### 3.4.2.3.6. Construction in Other Traditional African Societies

Culturally, construction is taken seriously in all parts of traditional Africa. For example in decorating the walls of his home, the African artist generally works free-hand, spontaneously following his creation inspiration as African artists must have done in rock painting of prehistoric times. In many areas it is customary to decorate exterior and interior walls of the home. This is predominant in parts of Uganda, among the

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<sup>199</sup> Anderson, Key, Bleguard, African Traditional Architecture, pp. 39-51

<sup>200</sup> Amin, Ibid., pp. 4-10

Zando of Zaire and Lunda of Angola. The finest paintings are reserved for royal residences and temple as in Dahomey. The Hausa of Niger make or cast high relief on clay facades with verses from the Koran, intricately designed to match surrounding geometric forms. The geometric forms are made by women, then skilfully paint is applied. Usually these paints are natural ochres. The decorated huts are where the daughter is given by her father to the clan of her bridegroom.

#### 3.4.2.3.7. Exterior and Interior of a Maasai House

The maasai houses are usually made up of a framework of sticks which is plastered with cow dung and mud sometimes skin are used on the roof and these are also plastered with cow dung and mud. Inside these are partitions which have a small opening as doors. There is only one main door to the house.

The materials used for building include Keleleshwa tree branches. These are strong and can hardly be destroyed by ants and are constructed into a criss-cross framework plastered with a waterproof coating of cattle dung.

The house is partitioned into three rooms. Firstly there is the entrance which is a snail shell like entryway. It has one long and narrow room used for

stabling calves and kids as well as lambs at night.

A passage skirts this enclosure and leads into the combination of living, sleeping, cooking and eating area. At the far end of this main section is a slightly elevated platform constructed of poles and covered with cowhide. During the day this space serves as a sitting space for the family and visitors. At night the same serves as a bed for the husband.

The wife's private room faces the main room. It is decorated by stripped and tied keleleshwa stems. There is a bed in which the woman and her smaller child sleeps. Her personal treasures household and kitchen utensils are also stored here. Supplies of milk and honey are stored here too.<sup>201</sup>

The home fire is in front of her doorway. It cooks and heats but does not shed much light. A hole is punched through the wall for more light on the side.

#### 3.4.2.4. Iron Ornaments

Most of maasai products including art-forms and design patterns are made of materials from their cattle and the general environment in which they live. So the maasai smith is both a labourer and artist. Spears and shields were made by smiths using iron. The smiths made

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<sup>201</sup> Jacobs, Ibid., p. 44

the weapons for purchase. They also made needles, bracelets and anklets, and various other things. The iron they work with is purchased from the Swahili. At times they smelt the iron which they find at the bed of the Matapato River - Every clan has its smith, but there is one clan, the "Kipuyon" to which most smith men belong.

There are many classes of people amongst the Maasai and each class has different ornaments that it has to put on. Beads made by women from ivory were used for decorating their long flop ears. Hooves and horns were drilled through the centre and then hung around the neck. Cowrie shells obtained from river banks were used for decorating the hair of the maasai moran (especially the young maasai) some were used for decorating shields and other war weapons.<sup>202</sup>

A bride wore an anklet ring as a gift from the bridegroom on the wedding day together with flat leather earrings. A bride also wore coils of wire which form a decorative load on a married woman's feet. The importance of the beads in the Maasai community was seen during the wedding day when the bride puts on a necklace(antinte) made of long straight lines of beads which reach the knee. These are analysed in Chapter five.

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<sup>202</sup> Krapf Ibid. pp. 30-56

Circumcised girls only decorated the upper parts of their ears. Large dangling earrings and flat bead collars were designed to attract attention to movement and enhance their natural appearance. These too are analysed in Chapter Five.

#### 3.4.2.5. Shield Making Technology

The leather from smaller animals is called skins while that from larger animals is called hides. The maasai shield is usually made from buffalo hide which is very tough, hard leather.

Once the skin is removed from the animal, the fatty layer under the skin is first scraped away. The skin is then washed and dressed with oil or fat. This is known as tanning to preserve the hide. Once this is done the leather is dyed using earth colours and is then dampened using damp sand. This is then smoothed by rubbing the leather with a small stone.<sup>203</sup>

After all this is done, the leather is now ready to be structured in a well "rounded and reliable shield. In times of wars or raids a spear will always accompany a shield as a moran treasurers these two weapons greatly. The thin shafted, leaf-blade spears are used for throwing, and the narrow bladed ones for stabbing. The

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<sup>203</sup> Kabasangi, Ibid., pp. 51-61

most important is the war spear, which has a very long narrow blade.

Colour of the shaft is important, too, black being more prestigious and the prerogative of the senior moran, than the light coloured.

#### 3.4.2.6. Fire - Making

When the maasai are moving to a near place they carry their fire with them when they move to a far place they cut a long pointed stick and a piece of flat wood. They then search for a donkey's dung and some grass. With these they can produce fire in the centre of the new kraal by drilling the stick into a hole in the wood. When fire catches the grass they set light to some of the leaves of *cordia ovalis* and throw the wood into the fire. Women obtain their fire from men. The maasai believe that the land stick is masculine and the piece of wood is feminine.<sup>204</sup>

The sticks are cut from sycamore and *ekerbergia*, the flat piece of wood from any fibrous tree such as *kigelia*, *Africana acacia*, etc.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Sankaan, Ibid., p. 49

<sup>205</sup> Woldock, Jill., pp. 29-33

### 3.4.3. MATERIAL CULTURE

#### 3.4.3.1. Gourds

Gourds grow in all shapes and sizes. They make excellent natural containers mostly used for carrying both fresh and curdled milk. These are the most prevalent of household utensils and are obtained through trade with agricultural peoples. They are decorated with beads and cowrie shells, fitted with caps which also serve as cups, and fastened to leather straps to wrap around the hand and hold when milking. This also acts as a ceremonial item such that a gourd stoppered with grass is usually brought by the father of the participant of circumcision.<sup>206</sup>

#### 3.4.3.2. Earthware Pots

While gourds are sometimes easily bought or collected from deserted kraals, one pot can be purchased for a goat. Some Maasai women are able to make earthenware pots, and these are those who are unable to purchase them. When the women make pots they make them in two different sizes, big and small. The pots are made with handles by which they can be picked up when warriors go to the forest to slaughter cattle. They carry their

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<sup>206</sup> Hollis, *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41

cooking pots by a strip of hide fastened on their handles. This author saw some of these items at the National Museums and at Namanga.

#### 3.4.3.3. Pipes

It was found out that pipes amongst the old men, are made from goats' bones, rhino horns or pieces of wood. Old men do not smoke much but they prefer to take snuff or chew tobacco.

#### 3.4.3.4. Medicine

In the maasai community there are both doctors who diagnose a problem and tend to get a solution for it, and tricksters or false doctors who are after amassing wealth by magic operations and make their patients to believe that they have been bewitched. For such cases one pays dearly in form of many cattle.

#### 3.4.3.5. Curatives

The curatives range from herbs, barks and roots which are either taken in their natural form, boiled, dried and crushed and then taken alone or used externally by adding other natural oils. People learn about these



drugs as they grow up and there is also a great deal of consultation among the elders when one is ill. These are used to cure diseases such as colds, painful joints, eye infections, pregnancy problems, gonorrhoea, etc.

#### 3.4.3.6. Loan Material Culture

The maasai have borrowed some material culture objects from other ethnic groups. Among the people from whom the Maasai have borrowed material culture objects are the Dorobo. A large number of the objects of material culture which the Maasai's use come from this source. Ilkurman or Songo hunters in exchange for small stock. The proverb goes "mitum ilrap etil inkinowtane" (you cannot obtain the arm band while the ram is with the flock). This shows the seriousness of this exchange.

Some of the products obtained in this exchange included a buffalo hide, shields, rhinoceros horns for making tobacco and snuff containers, wild beasts and giraffe tails used by elders as fly whisks, ostrich feathers which were made into warriors head - dresses and spear covers in time of peace, monkey skin used for making leg bands and robes, hyrax skin for making robes for distinguished elders, kuon horns used for war or ceremonial trumpets, eland skin for sandals, and leather

straps for carrying firewood and containers.<sup>207</sup>

#### 3.4.3.7. Food

The Maasai food consists of sour milk, meat and blood which was drawn out of live cattle by making incisions in the neck of the animals. Eating meat was done at various occasions with definite meaning attached to such feasts. The animals that were slaughtered had different colours for different ceremonies.<sup>208</sup>

After the birth of a new-born baby a sheep was killed. This sheep had to be red coloured. The women began eating the meat, which was well cooked, from the left side of the sheep, which was supposed to be a cleanser and they finished off eating the sheep's right side at night.

Except among the agricultural Maasai, no cereal or vegetable food is grown nor was it eaten in the old days by the warriors. Their diet consisted of meat, milk and blood, the latter providing the necessary salt. The animals eaten included cattle, sheep, goats, buffalo and eland. Warriors were not allowed to eat honey, to drink honey wine or take tobacco, though some took snuff.

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<sup>207</sup> Hamilton, Lord, Laud, A Scrapbook of Maasai History, Unpublished Manuscript, (Kenya National Archives), KNA 6762, pp. 59-62.

<sup>208</sup> Sigand, Ibid., p. 222.

Children and married people took vegetable food and the meat of cattle which die a natural death.<sup>209</sup>

#### 3.4.3.7.1. Meat

Meat was not eaten in the same time with milk. Healthy cows were a precious source of milk. Good bulls were used as breeders while bullocks were mainly for ceremonies. Meat of animals such as buffalo and elands was eaten mostly in times of famine. Warriors consumed more meat than any other persons. But this was done mainly in the forest. This author witnessed some warrior preparing meat by roasting it.

#### 3.4.3.7.2. Blood

Blood was an important supplement to the basic diet. For one to obtain blood from a bullock, a rope was drawn tightly around the neck of a bullock or cow to expose the jugular vein. A specially shaped miniature arrow is shot close up to pierce the wall of the vein. The blood is caught in a gourd as it spurts out. A few hairs from the hide and a pinch of cattle dung are stuffed into the puncture. The hide around the puncture is squeezed

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<sup>209</sup> Maina, S.J.M., *Ibid.*, Chapters 2 and 3

together until the blood coagulates.<sup>210</sup> Blood is stirred to remove filaments. When the filaments have been twined around a stick, the blood is mixed with milk and then consumed.

#### 3.4.3.7.3. Ritual Foods

Food has its ritual uses. In this case it was found that during the "embolosat" ceremony, selected women spray the participant boys with milk. Men receive the same shower after a cattle raid or lion hunt. When not actually used, milk is symbolised by a mixture of white chalk and water. Chalk was fetched from secret places by men dressed in women's clothing so as to hide identity.

Unblemished bullocks were most highly valued as sacrificial beasts. They were ritually slaughtered and consumed at major ceremonies. Apart from feeding people ritual meat on hoof or a stick, just presenting bullocks fulfilled ceremonial demands. Indeed any animal would be ceremoniously treated particularly if it is a favourite pet.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Maina, Ibid., Chapter 2

<sup>211</sup> Maina, Ibid., Chapter 3

### 3.5. IDEOLOGY

The term ideology refers collectively to the several component aspects of a peoples' system of beliefs about themselves and the reason for being. It is particularly concerned with the relations of the people to others, the world and the universe as they see it. Such beliefs both provide a means of comprehending peoples relation to environment and serve as guides to the actions necessary to maintain or secure their place within it.<sup>212</sup>

The term then encompasses both secular believes, values, ethics and moral systems that frequently fulfil functions parallel to supernaturally based belief systems and sometimes replace them. According to Freid "the root of ideology is explication: ideologies explain to man why he is, where he came from and what he should be. Ideologies also explain how the universe operates, how the environment may be dealt with and the end for which culture struggles" Aspects of ideology include religion, myths, taboos, norms, values, moral principles, rituals etc.<sup>213</sup>

This author consulted various books and sources from

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<sup>212</sup> Hammond Peter B. An Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology. New York. Mcmillan Publishing Inc. 1978 pp. 318-320

<sup>213</sup> Fried M. Readings in Anthropology, Vol. II, New York: Crowell, (1968) pp. 615-616

libraries in Kenya and Germany for more background information on ideology.

### 3.5.1. RELIGION

The Maasai religious beliefs are based on a great spirit, who directs their lives and fate God is referred to by Krapf as heaven (weittings on his journeys in East Arrica).

The pastoral Maasai believe that "Eukainaro the god of heaven, sent a strip of skin and gave them cattle. So all cattle belong to them. They believe that "Eukainayuki," god of earth, is a disgust to the Maasai because he does not want to be rained on. He is dry and dirty and thus he brings drought. One elder confirmed this information to this author. (Interview at Kesames)

Maasai religion has no name and it is monotheistic and personal. The contact is in group and individual prayer whereby they supplicate and adore God. However, they do not usually assemble in congregations as we know them. Magico-medical rituals are considered separate from worship.

Enkai is the name of God. He is neither male nor female. Enkais is sometimes referred to as Olosira Kumok and is associated with the sky. Thus Enkai is the He of many stripes (Oloomuani) the one of many colours, the one

who is unbreakable, the one who is indescribable, the one who is invisible etc. Enkai gave Maasai cattle and continues to give them rain.

Also Enkai has two main aspects as stated earlier. The Enkai Narok, the black aspect, the benevolent creator, the kind, loving and generous. The other aspect is the Enkai Nanyuki, the red aspect, the harsh, angry master of life and death, the unloving and ungenerous.<sup>214</sup>

### 3.5.2. TABOOS AND ABSTENTIONS

Among the Maasai, taboos concern mostly the youth and especially the warrior class. After a young man is circumcised, he is not allowed to drink milk obtained from cattle belonging to his family; he gives it to his agemates. He is not supposed to drink milk alone, another warrior has to be around to open the calabash and take the first sip. When hungry and alone he is allowed to drink milk given to him by uncircumcised young girls and elders belonging to the age-set that kindled fire for his own age-set. They merely hand the calabash to him. A warrior may not even drink water alone except for extremely exceptional cases. In such a situation he plants his spear on the ground, removes his robe and

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<sup>214</sup> Hollis, Ibid Chapter 1 and 2

places his hair cover on the spear to represent another warrior standing by him. For this matter a warrior is expected to be in the company of another every time, hence they should escort one another even when going to relieve themselves so as to prevent cases of a single warrior being ambushed by an enemy.

It is a taboo for a warrior to eat meat handled or even seen by women or even meat handled by uncircumcised boys after being cooked. Before this taboo is broken, the meat cooked and handled by women is first eaten by "Olaigenani" then "Olotuno" and finally "Olobuni Enkeene". This is done during a ceremony held for this purpose. For those who have infringed the customary law, delegations are sent to obtain cattle from those members of the agegroup concerned as a form of fine. The cattle are divided to serve different purposes in the ritual.

Another form of abstentions concerns people from different age groups. In this case, older members do not eat meat belonging to the younger ones, until bribed with cattle. One buys the privilege of sharing meat with elders.

Also, men did not eat the meat of a red sheep slaughtered after the birth of a child.

Taboos exist as a form of pride as far as the various age groups and age-sets are concerned. They are also purely for economic purpose, such that they help one



to accumulate wealth easily and above all they function as deterrents with an aim of providing acceptable moral standards prescribed by the Maasai society. In this way they play the role of maintaining the cohesion of the maasai culture.

### 3.5.3. LEGENDS

Legends are narratives that attempt to explain in imaginative ways the "why" as well as the "how" of certain occurrences. In them the Maasai endeavour to explain how they came to be situated where they are and other occurrences thereafter. Legends serve as historical. In the absence of a written historical documentation of the society. In the absence of a written history they serve as reference information on the Maasai. To show the role of legends in Maasai culture the author wishes to cite some examples of maasai legends. These are:

- (a) Legend on the first laibon,
  - (b) Ascending the escarpments
  - (c) Ilakinkoi
  - (d) Oltatuani
  - (e) Senteu and Olonana
  - (f) Enkai
- (a) "The first Labibon was called Kidongoi. As a

baby he was discovered by two warriors, one of whom picked him up and adopted him as his son. As the child grew, he proved to have unusual powers. On recognizing his special powers, the people made him their spiritual leader. Since then the position of Laibon has been hereditary. Laibons are supposed to have originated from God and descended from the Sky". The other relevant Maasai legends are the ascending of the escarpment, the Ilakinkoi, the Oltatuani, Senteu and Olonana, Enkai etc.

- (b) The maasai first found themselves in a crater-like country surrounded by inaccessible hills and escarpments. During drought it was observed that the birds came down the steep escarpments and brought green grass which they used for making their nests. Scouts were then sent to examine the land beyond. Ascending the cliffs was quite impossible but eventually a small track was found so steep that people had to go side ways or walk on all fours to reach the beautiful and fertile greenness of the land they found.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>215</sup>Hollis, A.C., Ibid., Chapters 1 and 2.

(c) A tribe living to the south of the Maasai known as "I larinkoi" felt threatened by the encroaching in of the Maasai. This tribe was ruled by a tall hefty, strong giant of a man. This tribe then ordered the Maasai to turn back or fight. The maasai tried to bribe them with cattle. The tribe was obstinate. They demanded impossible things such as frothing milk, a calabash full of fleas, a sandal with hair on both sides and a metal tooth brush. However the clever boy went and hit the I larinkoi ruler on the head with a club. The ruler was hit just above the ear and the giant died. Eventually the ilarinkoi were absorbed in the Maasai community.

(d) According to another legend, there lived a giant of a man called Oltatuan. He would forcibly seize property from the Maasai. He lived in a cave from which he took his loot especially cattle and feasted on them. This cave exists at a place known as Olkunyelei near Naroosura. He used to maraud at night and people in the neighbourhood got scared and moved far away from his camp.

A trap was laid by the Maasai. A beautiful

woman was put in his cave while the giant was away. The girl told the giant that she wanted to be his wife when he asked her who she was and where she came from.

The maasai informed the girl to take out all his arms when he starts snoring. This was done and the giant was killed.<sup>215</sup>

(e) Another legend speaks of the two sons of Mbatiany - Senteu and Olonana. The former being the eldest son while the latter was the son of a younger wife.

When Mbatiany was old, blind and senile he called his eldest son Senteu so that he could bequeath to him the secret of the Maasai. However Olonana and his mother conspired and decided that Olonana would impersonate Senteu. Thus Olonana went to Mbatiany very early in the morning. The father being senile would not tell the difference. The old man imparted everything to Olonana and asked him to move close so as to be embraced. Mbatiany then asked him to kiss him. Thus Olonana had received all authority from his father. Later Senteu came to his father but it was too late

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<sup>215</sup>Hollis, Ibid. pp. 29-36

and thus he had to accept Olonana as the leader.

- (f) Of great interest are the maasai myths about the cattle. One such myth states that Enkai, the sky (i.e., sky god or simply god), was once one with the earth. When earth and sky separated, cattle were sent to the Maasai from and by the sky by Enkai. The people interpret this myth of creation quite literally. To engage in any occupation other than herding is insulting to Enkai and demeaning to oneself. Perhaps because cattle are associated with grass, and grass with earth, a pastoral maasai can never consider breaking ground for cultivation. He does not even bury his dead or dig for water. His people were chosen by Enkai to be the recipients of cattle and they remain herders by choice. This complete dependence on cattle permeates all aspects of Maasai existence, from the common greeting of "I hope your cattle are well" to the ceremonial slaughter of bullocks for their everyday sustenance or the constant availability of milk. The slightest change can affect the entire intricate texture of

such a cattle centric society. Small wonder then that the Maasai are reluctant to adopt "modern ways". They have evolved their own ways over the course of centuries, and their own ways suit them admirably.

#### 3.5.4. A DIVINER

The diviner acts as a prophet or seer and officiates in rituals for all sections. He is the one who names the successive age-sets with the help of the elders.<sup>217</sup> Mbatiany the diviner managed to command many Maasai sections even though he had no political functions. This means that a diviner is not only a spiritual leader but can also command both political and ritual power. A diviner can only come from one family, which means that his post is hereditary.

#### 3.6. SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF MAASAI CULTURE

The sociopsychological aspect of Maasai culture include those aspects of culture that are concerned with stirring of human emotion while being engaged in such matters as entertainment, recreation, leisure, forms of

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<sup>217</sup>Hollis, Ibid., Chapter 3

expressive and other aspects of art that are relevant to communication. This includes music and dance, various forms of entertainment and leisure (e.g. games, feasts etc). In some cases activities of sociopsychological dimension sometimes include a variety of particular types of feasts. Also forming part of communication system under this subsystem of Maasai culture is Maasai language.

### 3.6.1. MUSIC AND DANCE

Music and dance are performed at almost all social and cultural ceremonies.

Maasai men will, for example, frequently take part in social or ceremonial jumping dances, competing for height, but always displaying a sense of effortlessness. They gather in a circle and sing with a strong, breathy beat. One or two of them move into the centre of the circle and jump rhythmically, embellishing their leaps by subtly trembling their shoulders at the pick of the jump.

During the marriage ceremony dances and singing by friends and relatives mark the ceremony.

Children sing the songs of praising the virtue of having cattle "ewoko". When morans are relaxing and are free they would sing and dance.

At dawn of the day of constructing of an Onsinkira

there is singing of the celebration song - and after the slaughter of pure bullock has gone well, there is a celebration dance. Also during the slaughter of the black bullock for the ritual sacrifice of the Eunoto there is a singing of the celebration hymn. When the slaughter goes well the morans celebrate this with a dance.

Elders, women and children greet morans with hymn singing when the moran returns from errands.

When a child is born and woman are eating meat they sing and sing and sing. The boys dance for four days in the camps before a circumcision ceremony and during the ceremony of graduation to elderhood and the warriors dance for several days.

Also when a contingent of warriors return from collecting heavier wood for the roof of Onsikira women and children go off to greet them with singing.

This author observed numerous film and video on maasai lifestyle. The author confirmed the information.

### 3.6.2. MAASAI LANGUAGE

Maasai people belong to the maa speaking group the Olmaa community. The others belonging to this group are Ilarus (Warusha), Iltimusi (Njemps), Ilbaraguyu (Ilparakuyu), Wukuavu of Nguruman and Taveta, Ilumpwa and



went about playing with gourds as toys and running around the compounds.<sup>219</sup>

"Eng'eshwi", a pebble game, absorbed attention of elders when they were not thinking about political affairs. This game was mostly played by old men seated somewhere in a relaxed mood.

The women would use their leisure time to make earthenwares, such as pots as well as making ornamentation and decorating their household goods (e.g. the gourds).

Little girls make dolls from fruits of sausage hill plants. Both boys and girls would build 'houses' and 'kraals'. Circumcised boys would go out hunting for birds and arranging feathers while the morans would take such time to dress each other's hair and decorate themselves.<sup>220</sup>

Maasai children collected pebbles or berries which they threw at cattle and sheep. They also built miniature houses and 'kraals' in the sand and made special spears out of bulrushes. Little girls made dolls from the fruits of trees. Also as mentioned above, "Eng'eshwi, the pebble game, is a favourite recreation both as a game and for leisure.

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<sup>219</sup> Klump, *Ibid.*, Chapter 3

<sup>220</sup> Sankaan S.S., *The Maasai*, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1971 pp. 23-33

When E-Unoto or the selection of a chief is done there has to occur a feast. It is done in each sub-district. The duties of an E-Unoto is to keep the warriors of a sub-district together and also to respond to the chief medicineman for their appearance in case of war. If any warrior disobeys the orders of the medicineman he is flogged or mistreated by his companions. If an Ol auron (Chief) is to be chosen there are some rules to be observed. Matters that are considered include, Whether a man still has all his parents, or whether his cattle killed anybody. Other matters also considered has to do with whether he is blind or his eyes are discoloured. When they succeed in getting such a person they do not inform him until the time of celebration comes.<sup>221</sup>

#### 3.6.4. DIVISION OF THE DAY

The Maasai have various names for the divisions of the day and the night. In the evenings the cattle return to the kraal just before the sun sets. At 8.p.m. just before people go to bed is the hour for gossip amongst women and girls. There is the night, midnight and the time when the buffalo goes to drink. This latter hour is before the sun rises, just before 4 a.m. There is also

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<sup>221</sup>Sankaan., Ibid., Chapter 1 and 2

the blood red period or when the sun decorates the sky, this is at 6 a.m. Morning is the period when the sun has risen. The sun stands at midday, shadows over themselves at (1-2p.m.) afternoon.<sup>iii</sup>

### 3.7. PREFERENCE AND COMBINATION OF USE IN MAASAI ART

To understand the Maasai art one needs to examine the incidences in which particular materials, colours and techniques appear in general Maasai culture. Also relevant is the examination of preferences in the combination of forms and uses. In this section the author wishes to examine these issues with a view to providing the foundation for the Maasai concepts of art.

<sup>iii</sup> Sankon, *Ibid*, p. 41-43

TABLE NO. 1

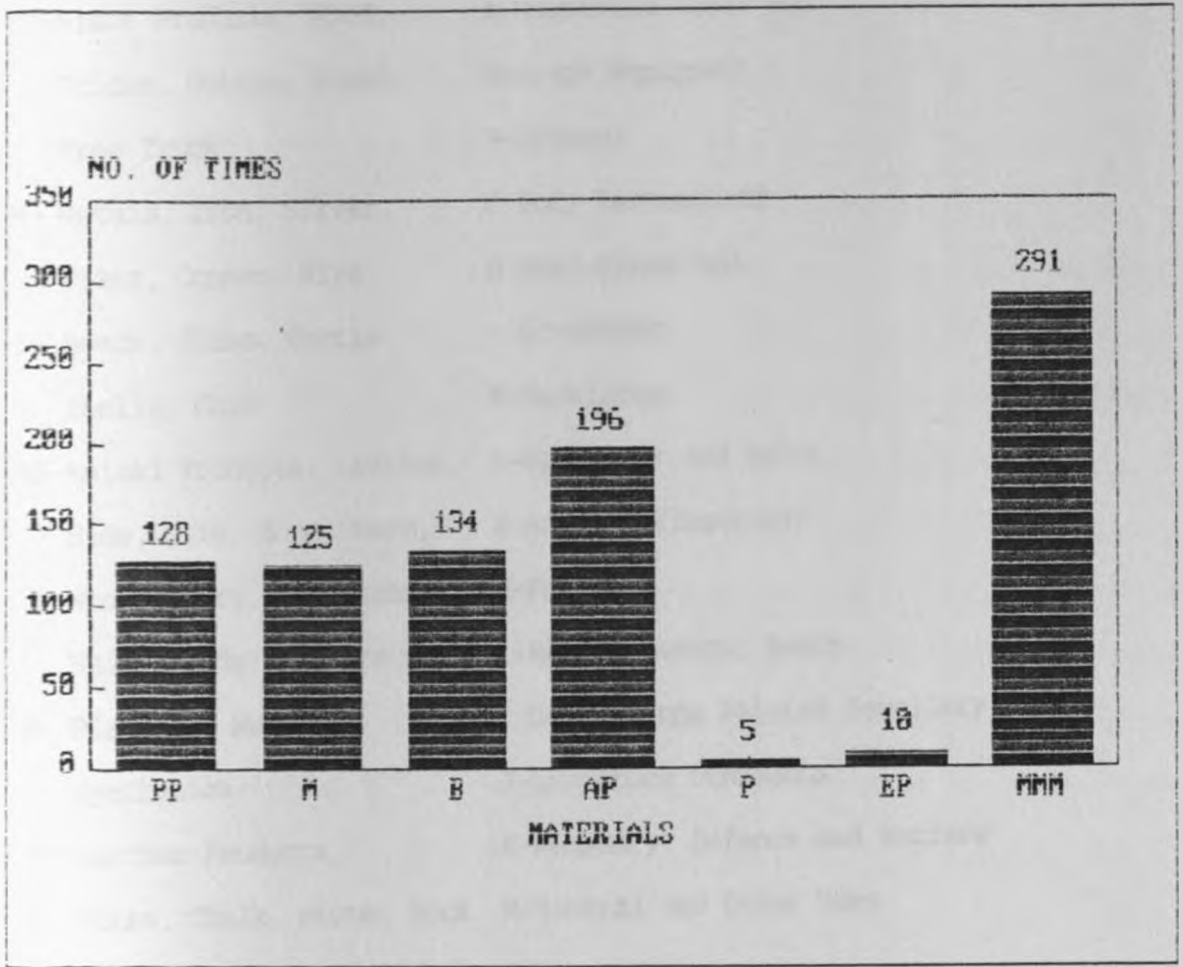
AN ANALYSIS OF MATERIAL USED IN MAKING SELECTED 300 SAMPLES OF  
MAASAI ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

		TYPES OF MATERIALS						
		PP	M	B	AP	P	EP	MMM
TOTALS AND CATEGORIES OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS ANALYSED								
TOTALS	CATEGORIES	TOTAL AND NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICULAR MATERIALS WERE USED FOR EACH CATEGORY OF ART-FORMS & DESIGN PATTERNS.						
46	A	46	4	42	46		6	46
10	B	1	2	9	9			9
6	C	4		5			1	7
13	D	4	6	6	17		3	13
24	E	4	14	21	13	3		24
6	F			3	5	1		5
9	G		7	2	2			6
13	H		6	1	7			9
50	I	13	27	36	17	1		50
29	J	16	21		26			29
70	K	24	27	4	45			69
10	L	7	3	4	3			10
14	M	9	8	1	6			14
300	TOTALS	128	125	134	196	5	10	291

For Legend please turn over

MODEL CHART 1

MATERIALS USED IN MAKING MAASAT ARTFORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS



LEGEND-

- PP - PLANT PRODUCTS, WOOD, STICKS, COTTON, SISAL, TREE TRUNK
- M - METALS, IRON, SILVER, BRASS, COPPER WIRE
- B - BEADS, GLASS, COWRIE SHELLS, CHINA
- AP - ANIMAL PRODUCTS, LEATHER, HIDE, SKIN, BONE, HORN, WOOL, IVORY, HAIR, LIGAMENTS, BIRDS, FEATHERS
- P - PLASTICS, RUBBER, SYNTHETICS
- EP - EARTHEN PRODUCTS, OCHRE, CHALK, STONE ROCK
- MM - MIXTURE OF MULTIPLICITY OF MATERIALS

LEGEND

TYPES OF MATERIALS

CATEGORIES

PP-Plant Products, Wood,  
Sticks, Cotton, Sisal  
Tree Trunk

A-Household Items and  
Storage Equipment

B-Dresses

M- Metals, Iron, Silver,  
Brass, Copper, Wire

C-Body Decorations

D-Head-dress and

B- Beads, Glass, Cowrie  
Shells, Chin

Ornaments

E-Necklaces

AP-Animal Products, Leather,  
Hide, Skin, Bone, Horn,  
Wool, Ivory, Ligaments,  
Hair, Birds Feathers

F-Waistwear and Belts

G-Arm and Fingerwear

H-Footwear

I-Ear Ornaments, Beads

P- Plastics, Rubber,  
Synthetics

Decorations Related Jewellery

J-Livestock Ornaments

EP-Earthen Products,

K-Weaponry, Defence and Warfare

Ochre, Chalk, stone, Rock

M-General and Other Uses

MM-Mixture of Multiplicity  
of Material

### 3.7.1. MATERIALS USED IN DATA TABLE OBSERVATIONS

Having classified the material culture of the Maasai the author has succeeded in constructing charts as an aid to establishing various forms of Maasai material cultural objects preferences (For percentage see Model Charts 1 and 5).

According to Table No 1 on page 263, the most preferred materials are the mixed usage of materials. (i.e. different materials mixed together and used). On the table (under MMM) their usage appears 291 (97%) times. The second most preferred are animal products such as leather, hide, skin, bone, horn, dung, wool, ivory, fat, feathers and ligaments. These appear 196 (65.3%) times on the table shown under AP. The other preferred materials are beads, glass, cowrie shells and china, which appear 134 (44.7%) times, as indicated under B, followed by plant's products such as wood, sticks, cotton, sisal and tree trunk, these appear 128 (42.7%) times.

The least used are plastics, rubber and synthetics (under P); they appear only 5 (2%) times, less than earthen products, ochre, chalk, stone and rock which appear 10 (3%) times as indicated under EP.

There is heavy reliance on materials that conform to the social, political and economic organization of the community. Thus, the three most used materials are fairly well distributed (as it appears) on the table. This appearance is a graphic proof that Maasai usage of materials for making art-forms and design patterns

is directly linked to their social organisation, ideology and sociopsychological factors. (For percentages see model chart 1 page 263)

Model Chart 1		Percentage of respondents	
Category	Sub-category	Percentage	Percentage
Social Organisation	...	...	...
	...	...	...
Ideology	...	...	...
	...	...	...
Sociopsychological Factors	...	...	...
	...	...	...



TABLE NO. 2.

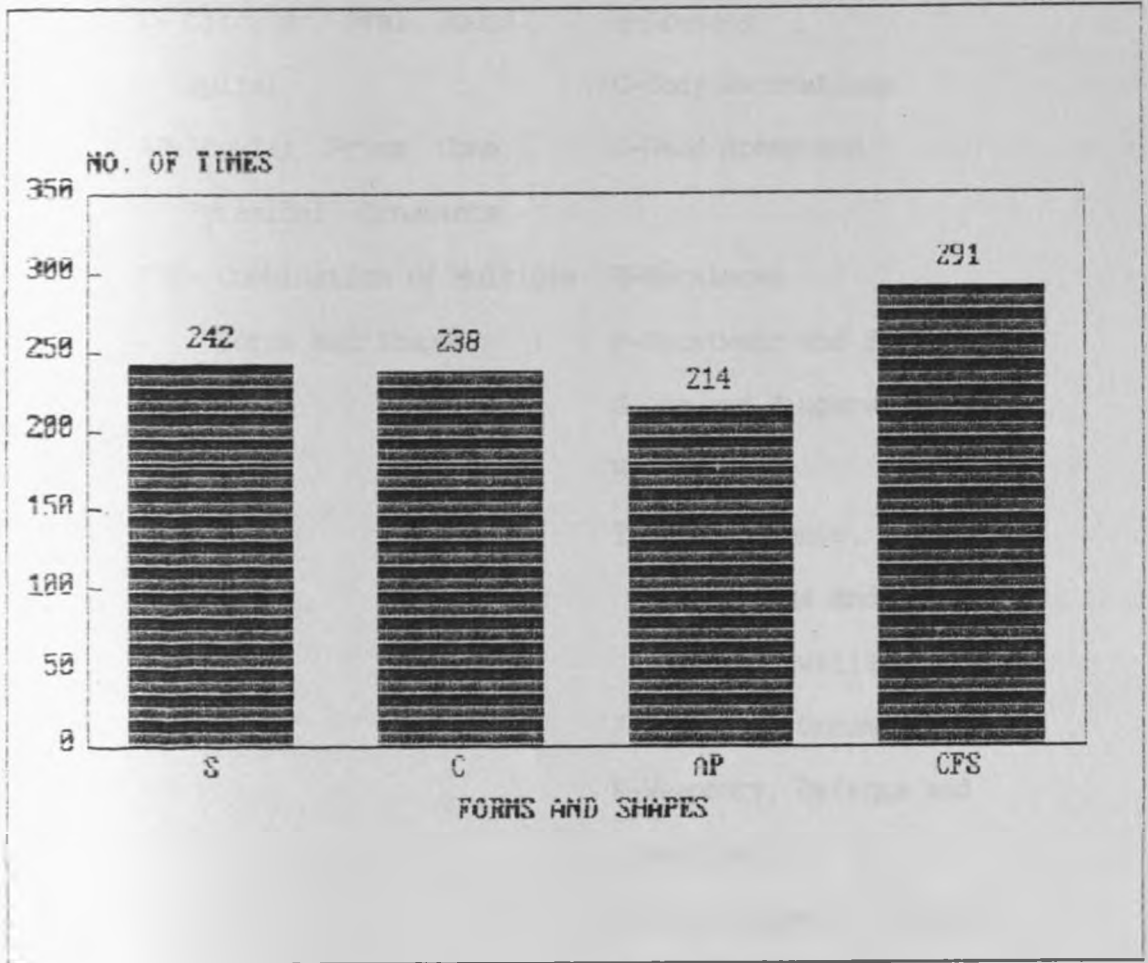
AN ANALYSIS OF FORMS AND SHAPES USED IN MAKING SELECTED 300  
SAMPLES OF MAASAI ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

		FORMS AND SHAPES			
		S	C	AP	CFS
TOTALS AND CATEGORIES OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS ANALYSED					
TOTALS	CATEGORIES	TOTAL AND NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICULAR MATERIALS WERE USED FOR EACH CATEGORY OF ART-FORMS & DESIGN PATTERNS.			
46	A	22	45	44	46
10	B	7	3	3	9
6	C	6	3	2	1
13	D	10	5	7	12
24	E	18	23	7	24
6	F	5	5	5	5
9	G	1	4	8	9
13	H	10	9	5	11
50	I	46	47	45	50
29	J	28	17	16	30
70	K	67	58	54	70
10	L	10	9	8	10
14	M	12	10	10	14
300	TOTALS	242	238	214	291

For Legend please turn over

MODEL CHART 2

FORMS AND SHAPES USED IN MAKING MAASAI ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS



LEGEND:

- S: SQUARE, RECTANGULAR, TUBULAR
- C: CIRCULAR, OVAL, ROUND, SPIRAL
- NP: ANGULAR PRISM, CONE, PYRAMIDAL
- CFS: COMBINATION OF MULTIPLE FORMS AND SHAPES

LEGEND

FORMS AND SHAPES

CATEGORIES

S- Square, Rectangular,  
Linear, Tubular

A-Household Items and  
Storage Equipments

C- Circular, Oval, Round  
Spiral

B-Dresses

C-Body Decorations

AP-Angular, Prism, Cone,  
Pyramidal Ornaments

D-Head-dress and

CFS- Combination of Multiple  
Forms and Shapes

E-Necklaces

F-Waistwear and Belts

G-Arm and Fingerwear

H-Footwear

I-Ear Ornaments, Bead  
Decorations and  
Related Jewellery

J-Livestock Ornaments

K-Weaponry, Defence and  
Warfare

L-Entertainment, Fun and  
Play Gadgetry

M-General and Other Uses

### 3.7.2. FORMS AND SHAPES USED IN DATA TABLE OBSERVATIONS

Maasai prefer combinations of forms and shapes (see Data Table no. 2 on pages 268) to other styles. On the Data Table, this combination of style is appearing 291 (97% times under CFS) followed by square, rectangular, linear, tubular forms which appear 242 (80.7%) times, as shown under S. These are followed by circular, oval and round 238 (79.3%) times, as indicated under C and lastly the angular, prism, cone and pyramidal shaped objects. These appear 214.(71.3%) times as indicated under AP.

However the usage of forms and shapes is more evenly distributed compared to colour (Data Table no.4) and material (Data Table no.1) usage. The mode of use of particular art objects determines the shape of the objects since in most cases significance of Maasai art-form or a design pattern will depend on its utility value. (For percentages see model chart 2 on page 268)

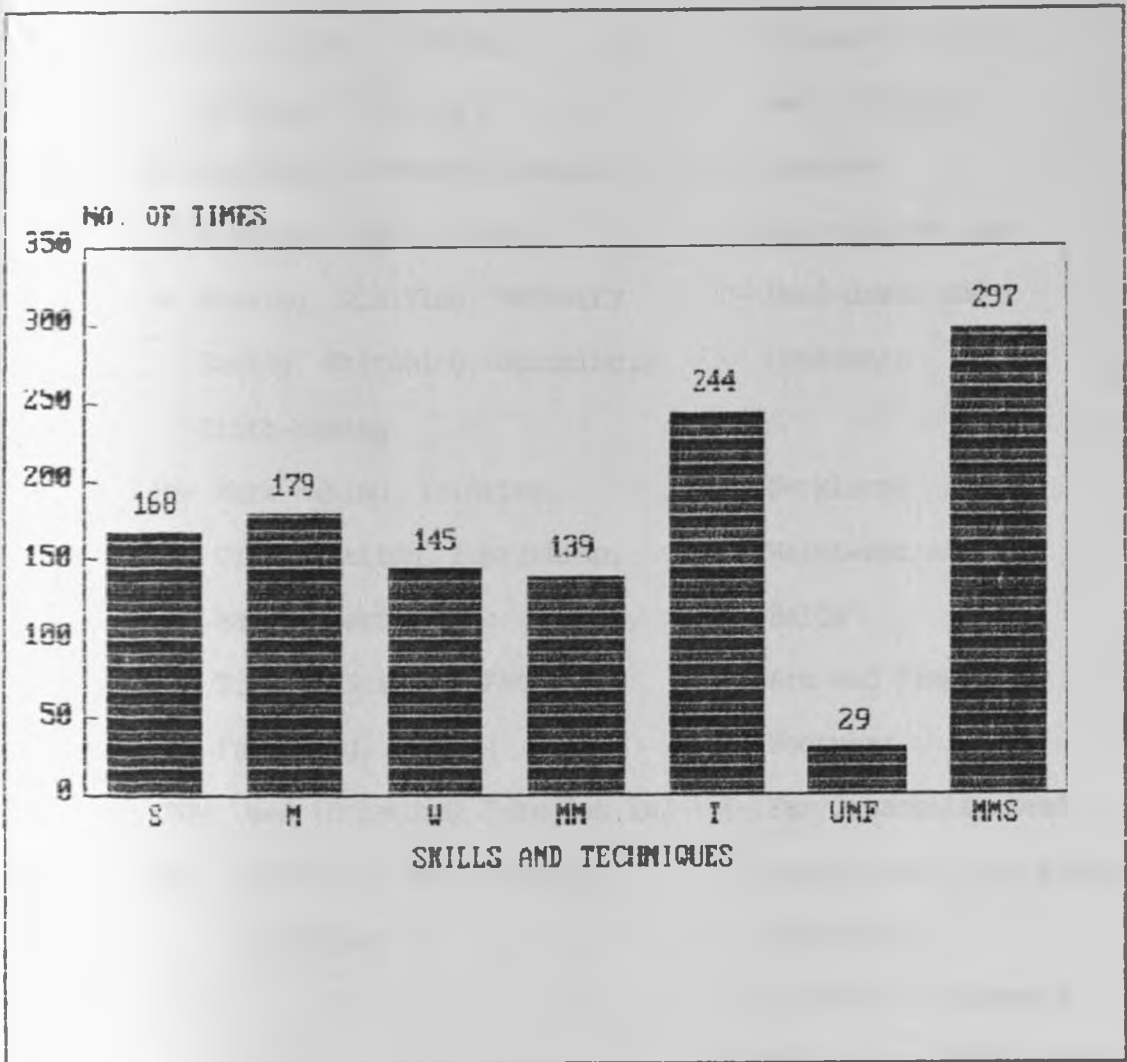
TABLE. NO. 3

AN ANALYSIS OF SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN MAKING SELECTED 300  
 SAMPLES OF MAASAI ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS.

		SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES						
		S	M	W	MM	T	UN F	MMS
TOTALS AND CATEGORIES OF ART-FORMS & DESIGN PATTERNS ANALYSED								
TOTALS	CATEGORIES	TOTAL AND NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICULAR SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES WERE USED FOR EACH CATEGORY OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS						
46	A	6	2	7	2	42	2	46
10	B	1	1	8	5	7	1	8
6	C	4	3	2	6	2	1	7
13	D	4	1	8	8	4	1	13
24	E	12	20	22	12	24	2	24
6	F	4	1	4	3	5	1	5
9	G	8	3	2	1	4	1	9
13	H	2	3	5	2	10	1	11
50	I	29	35	34	17	50	5	50
29	J	11	27	11	8	23	2	27
70	K	64	60	32	64	60	8	69
10	L	10	10	6	9	7	2	13
14	M	13	13	4	2	6	2	15
300	TOTALS	168	179	145	139	244	29	297

For Legend please turn over

**SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN MAKING MAASAT  
ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS**



**LEGEND:**

- S - SCULPTURAL, CARVING, CUTTING, SCOOPING
- M - MOULDING, POTTERY, CASTING, WRAPPING, CONSTRUCTING
- W - WEAVING, PLAITING, BASKETRY, SEWING, STITCHING, SPINNING, CLOTH-MAKING.
- MM - MASK-MAKING, PAINTING, CICATRIZATION, IMPRINTING, MAKING PATTERNS
- T - TIEING, JOINING, PATCHING, FASTENING, FIXING
- UNF- USED IN NATURAL FORM (AS IT IS)
- MMS- MIXTURE OF MULTIPLICITY OF SKILLS

## LEGEND

### SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

### CATEGORIES

S- Sculptural, Carving, Cutting, Scooping	A- Household items and Storage
M- Moulding, Pottery, Casting, Wrapping Constructing	B- Dresses C- Body Decorations
W- Weaving, Plaiting, Basketry Sewing, Stitching, Spinning, Cloth-Making	D- Head-dress and Ornaments
MM- Mark Making, Painting, Cicatrization, Imprinting, Making Patterns	E- Necklaces F- Waistwear and Belts
T- Tieing, Joining, Patching, Fastening, Fixing	G- Arm and Fingerwear H- Footwear
UNP- Used in natural Form (as is)	I- Ear Ornaments, Bead Decorations, and Related Jewellery
MMS- Mixture of Multiplicity of Skills	J- Livestock Ornaments K- Weaponry, Defence and Warfare l- Entertainment, Fun and Play Gadgetry M- General and Other Uses

### 3.7.8. SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN DATA TABLE OBSERVATIONS

The Data Table no 3 on page 271 indicates that the most used techniques are the mixture of multiple skills. They appear 297 (99%) times. This is indicated under MMS. Next are tying, joining, patching, fastening and fixing which appear 244 (81.3%) times as indicated under T. After these are moulding, pottery, casting, wrapping and constructing which appear 179 (59.7%) times under M. These are followed by sculptural, carving, cutting and scooping which appear 168 (56%) times under S. The next are weaving, plaiting, basketry, sewing, stitching, spinning and cloth making which appear 145 (48.3%) times under W. Mark making, painting, cicatrization, imprinting and making patterns appear 139 (46.3%) times under MM. Lastly there are some objects that are used just as they appear in nature without first making any changes on them. These are few and appear under UNF appearing for only 29 (9.7%) times. Most objects require some skilful knowledge on how to modify them before they are ready to be used, and this includes gourds. (For percentages see model chart 3 page 272).



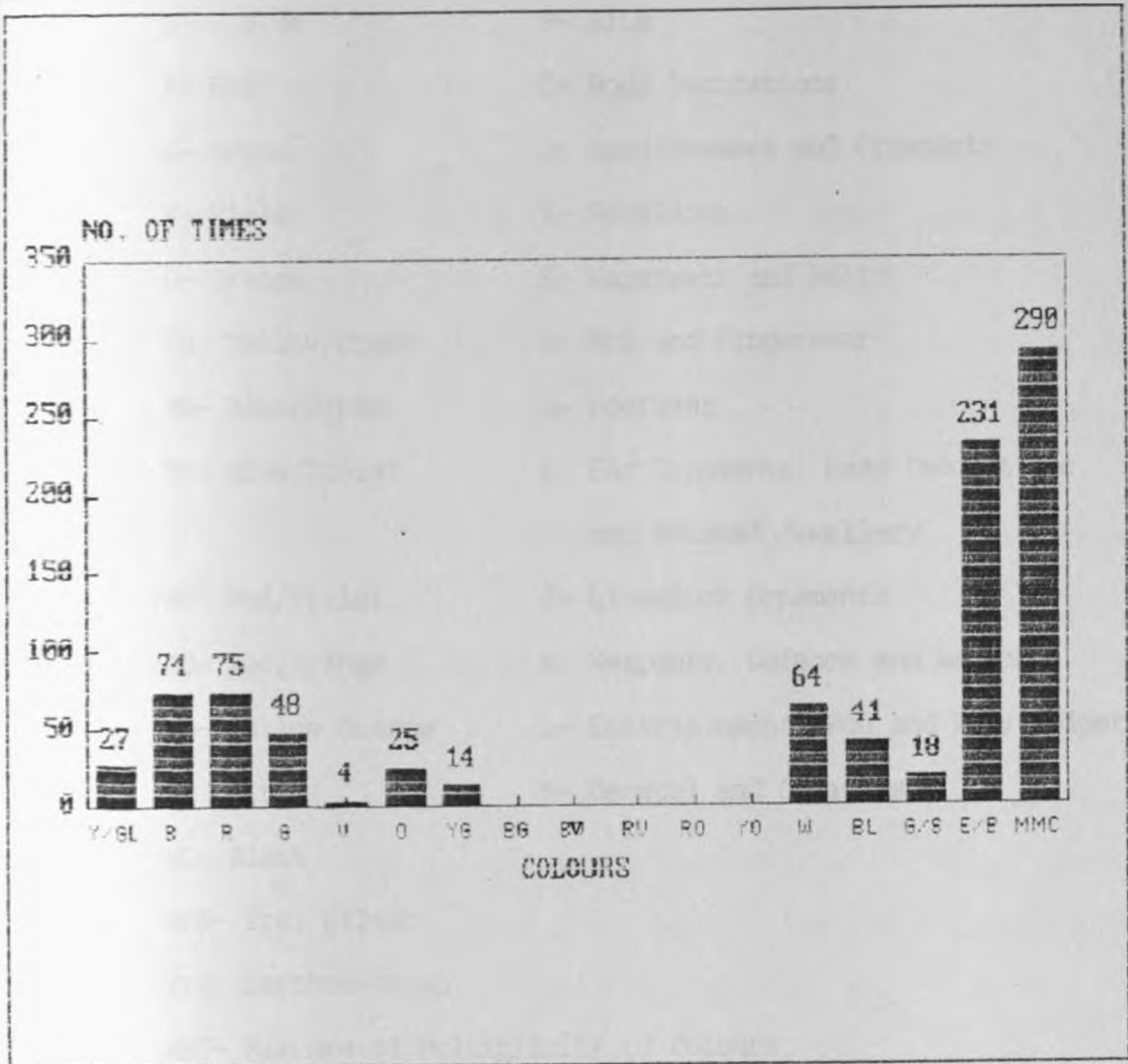
Data Table No. 4

AN ANALYSIS OF TYPES OF COLOURS USED IN MAKING SELECTED 300 SAMPLES OF MAASAI ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS.

		TYPES OF COLOURS																	
		T/B	B	V	R	V	O	TC	BG	SV	RV	RO	ZO	W	BL	G/S	E/B	YM	C
TOTALS AND CATEGORIES OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS ANALYSED																			
NO. OF	CATEGORIES	TOTALS AND NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICULAR TYPE OF COLOUR HAS BEEN USED FOR EACH CATEGORY OF ART-FORM AND DESIGN PATTERN																	
45	A	4	11	11	10	1	3	1						15	3	4	45	44	
10	B	1	2	4	7									2			10	8	
6	C		5	5	3		1							4	4	1	2	6	
12	D	2	5	5	1	1		1						7	4	6	7	14	
24	E	7	15	10	11	2	8							5	5	7	15	24	
5	F	1	2	1	1		1							1			6	5	
3	G		2	2	1									1		9		7	
13	H		11	1			1	1								6	8	9	
50	I	9	16	21	7		2	8						3	5	17	37	50	
23	J															6	27	29	
70	K	2	3	21	4		3	3						21	13	25	54	70	
10	L		3	3	3		3							4	1	4	6	10	
14	M	1		1			1							1		3	14	14	
300	TOTALS	27	74	75	46	4	25	14						64	41	18	23	29	0

For legend please turn over

**COLOURS USED IN MAKING MAASAT ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS**



**LEGEND:**

V/GL- YELLOW/GOLD  
 B- BLUE  
 R- RED  
 V- VIOLET  
 O- ORANGE  
 YG- YELLOW GREEN  
 G- GREEN  
 BG- BLUE GREEN  
 BV- BLUE VIOLET

RV- RED VIOLET  
 RO- RED ORANGE  
 YO- YELLOW ORANGE  
 W- WHITE  
 BL- BLACK  
 G/S- GREY/SILVER  
 E/B- EARTHEN BROWN  
 MMC- MIXTURE OF MULTIPLICITY OF COLOURS

## LEGEND

### Colours

Y/G- Yellow/Gold

B- Blue

R- Red

G- Green

V- Violet

O- Orange

YG- Yellow/Green

BG- Blue/Green

BV- Blue/Violet

RV- Red/Violet

RO- Red/Orange

YO- yellow Orange

W- White

BL- Black

G/S- Grey Silver

E/B- Earthen-brown

MMC- Mixture of Multiplicity of Colours

### Categories

A- Household Items and Storage Equipments

B- Blue

C- Body Decorations

D- Head-dresses and Ornaments

E- Necklaces

F- Waistwear and Belts

G- Arm and Fingerwear

H- Footwear

I- Ear Ornaments, Bead Decorations  
and Related Jewellery

J- Livestock Ornaments

K- Weaponry, Defence and Warfare

L- Entertainment, Fun and Play Gadetry

M- General and Other Uses

### 3.7.4. COLOURS USED IN DATA TABLE OBSERVATIONS

According to the observations of colour usage among the Maasai, (see Data Table no. 4 on page 275) the following facts emerge, primary colours (Yellow, Blue and Red), secondary colours (Green, Violet and Orange), neutral and earthen colours (White, Black, Grey, Browns) and mixture of multicolours are preferred to other colours such as the intermediates. According to Data Table Chart no.4, heavy concentration of usage is indicated on the top and bottom of the Chart where the above three types of colours are located.

Out of 300 art-forms and design patterns analyzed, the primaries appear in the following number of times, yellow (under YGL) 27,(9%) blue (under B) 74(24.7%), and red (under R) 75(25%). The secondary colours in the following times, green (under G) 48(16%), violet (under V) 4(1%), orange (under O) appear 25(8.3%) times. The neutrals and earthen are as follows; white (under W), 64(21.3%), black (under BL), 41(13.7%), grey (under G/S) 18(6%) and earthen 231(77%) times. Mixture of multiplicity of colours (under MMC) appears in 290(97%) times

Among the intermediate colours, only yellow green (under YG) appears and this only 14(4.7%) times, while the rest do not appear at all. Thus, on the Data Table no.4, the intermediate colours columns are virtually empty.

There is therefore obvious preference to colours that are easily obtained within the immediate physical environment and

economic organization and also preference for colours with high intensity and saturation. (For percentages see model chart no. 4 on page 276)

Country	Preference for colour		Preference for colour		Preference for colour	
	Intensity	Saturation	Intensity	Saturation	Intensity	Saturation
1. India	85	75	75	65	65	55
2. China	75	65	65	55	55	45
3. Japan	65	55	55	45	45	35
4. USA	55	45	45	35	35	25
5. UK	45	35	35	25	25	15
6. France	35	25	25	15	15	5
7. Germany	25	15	15	5	5	0
8. Italy	15	5	5	0	0	0
9. Canada	5	0	0	0	0	0
10. Australia	0	0	0	0	0	0

Data Table No. 5

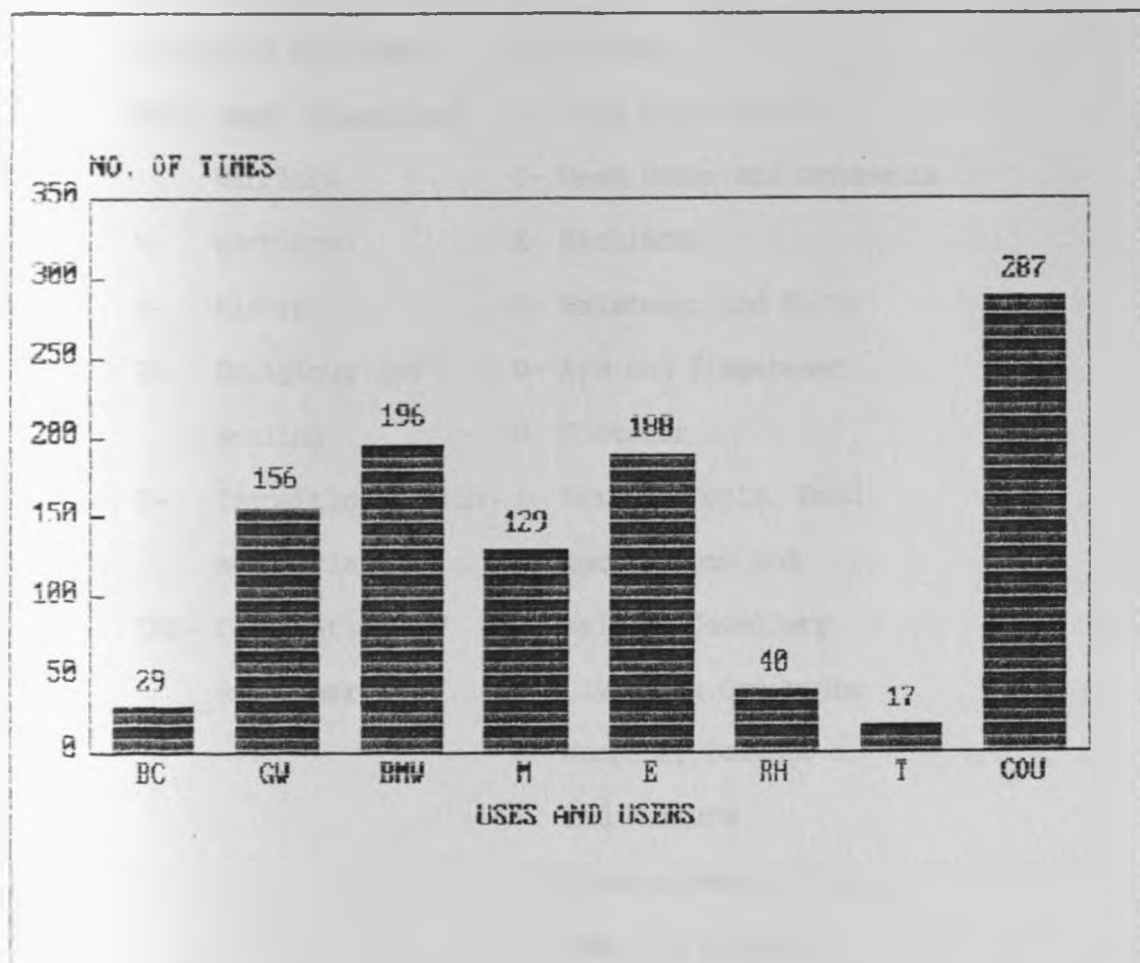
AN ANALYSIS OF USES AND USERS OF ART OBJECTS AS AESTHETIC  
FUNCTIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SYMBOLS DURING CELEBRATIONS,  
CEREMONIES AND RITUALS FOR SELECTED 300 SAMPLES OF MAASAI ART-  
FORMS

		USES AND USERS OF MAASAI ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS AS AESTHETICS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SYMBOLS DURING CELEBRATIONS, CEREMONIES AND RITUALS							
		BC	GW	BMW	M	E	RH	T	COU
TOTALS AND CATEGORIES OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS		TOTAL AND NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICULAR USES AND USERS WERE IDENTIFIED FOR EACH CATEGORY OF ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS							
TOTALS	CATEGORIES								
46	A	5	40	5	13	9	1	1	11
10	B	6	9	9	8	9	1	1	11
6	C	1	2	6	5	4	1	1	7
13	D	3	6	13	10	9	1	2	14
24	E	4	19	11	17	8	2	2	24
6	F	1	4	4	4	3	1	1	5
9	G	1	6	3	6	7	3	1	9
13	H	1	11	12	12	12	7	1	13
50	I	2	50	42	50	42	8	1	50
29	J	2	4	8	1	13	7	1	29
70	K	1	1	70	1	30	2	1	60
10	L	1	2	10	1	10	1	1	13
14	M	1	2	3	1	5	1	1	10
300	TOTALS	29	156	196	129	188	40	17	287

For Legends please turn over

MODEL CHART 5

USES AND USERS OF MAASAI ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS AS SYMBOLS DURING CELEBRATIONS, CEREMONIES AND RITUALS



LEGEND:

- BC - BIRTH AND CHILDREN
- GW - GIRLS AND WOMEN
- BMW - BOYS, MORANS AND WARRIORS
- M - MARRIAGE
- E - ELDERS
- RH - RELIGIOUS AND HEALING
- T - TRANSITION (DEATH AND BURIAL)
- COU - COMBINATION OF OTHER/USES

## LEGENDS

### USES AND USERS

### CATEGORIES

BC- Birth and Children	A- Household Items and Storage Equipments
GW- Girls and Women	B- Dresses
BMW- Boys, Morans and Warriors	C- Body Decorations
M- Marriage	D- Head Dress and Ornaments
E- Elders	E- Necklaces
RH- Religious and Healing	F- Waistwear and Belts
T- Transition (death and burial	G- Arm and Fingerwear
COU- Combination of/ and Other Uses	H- Footwear
	I- Ear Ornaments, Bead Decorations and related Jewellery
	J- Livestock Ornaments
	K- Weaponry Defence and Warfare
	L- Entertainment, Fun and Play Gadgetry
	M- General and Other Uses



### 3.7.5 USES AND USERS IN DATA TABLE OBSERVATIONS

On reading Data Table no.5 on page 280, a combination of usages appear to be practised widely. This (combination under COU) usage appears 287(96%) times. Boys, morans and warriors (under BMW) follow with 196(65.3%) usages. Then comes the elders(under E) with 188(62.7%) times, who are followed by girls and women (under GW), 156(52%) times. Marriage usages (under M) appear 129(43%) times, while religious and healing utilities(under RH) appear 40(13.3%) times. Birth and children (under BC) show 29(10%) times and transition (death and burial) (under T) appear only 17(5.7%), times since Maasai did not traditionally bury their dead.

According to the above readings, the distribution of usages according to different groups, celebrations, ceremonies and rituals is only well distributed in four areas, i.e., women, morans, marriage and elders. Combination of usage has more appearances because household items and war implements are used for a multiple of other purposes besides domestic use and in warfare. These other purposes may include social, and cultural (symbolic celebrations, ceremonies and rituals) usages.

Maasai art forms and design patterns are directly related to their history, culture and philosophy. The Maasai practice their artistic styles according to their needs for social, political and economic requirements. Their society is heavily influenced by age groups and age sets and particularly the major events in an individual's life cycle such as childhood, warriorhood, elderhood etc. That is why the Maasai art products depict such social dynamics as marriage, birth, death, wars etc.

Cattle and cattle products are key to Maasai lifestyle and art practice. Indeed whenever a kraal is constructed, the place of cattle is considered seriously. The Maasai society has many legends, taboos, and abstentions and celebrations, all of which are directly related to their art forms and design patterns. In other words all aspects of Maasai culture affect the practice of Maasai art.

This researcher obtained some of the data explained in this section from the Kenya National Archives and some from the Ministries of Tourism and Social Services. (For percentages see model chart no. 5 page 281).

#### 4.0: CHAPTER FOUR: MAASAI CONCEPTS OF ART

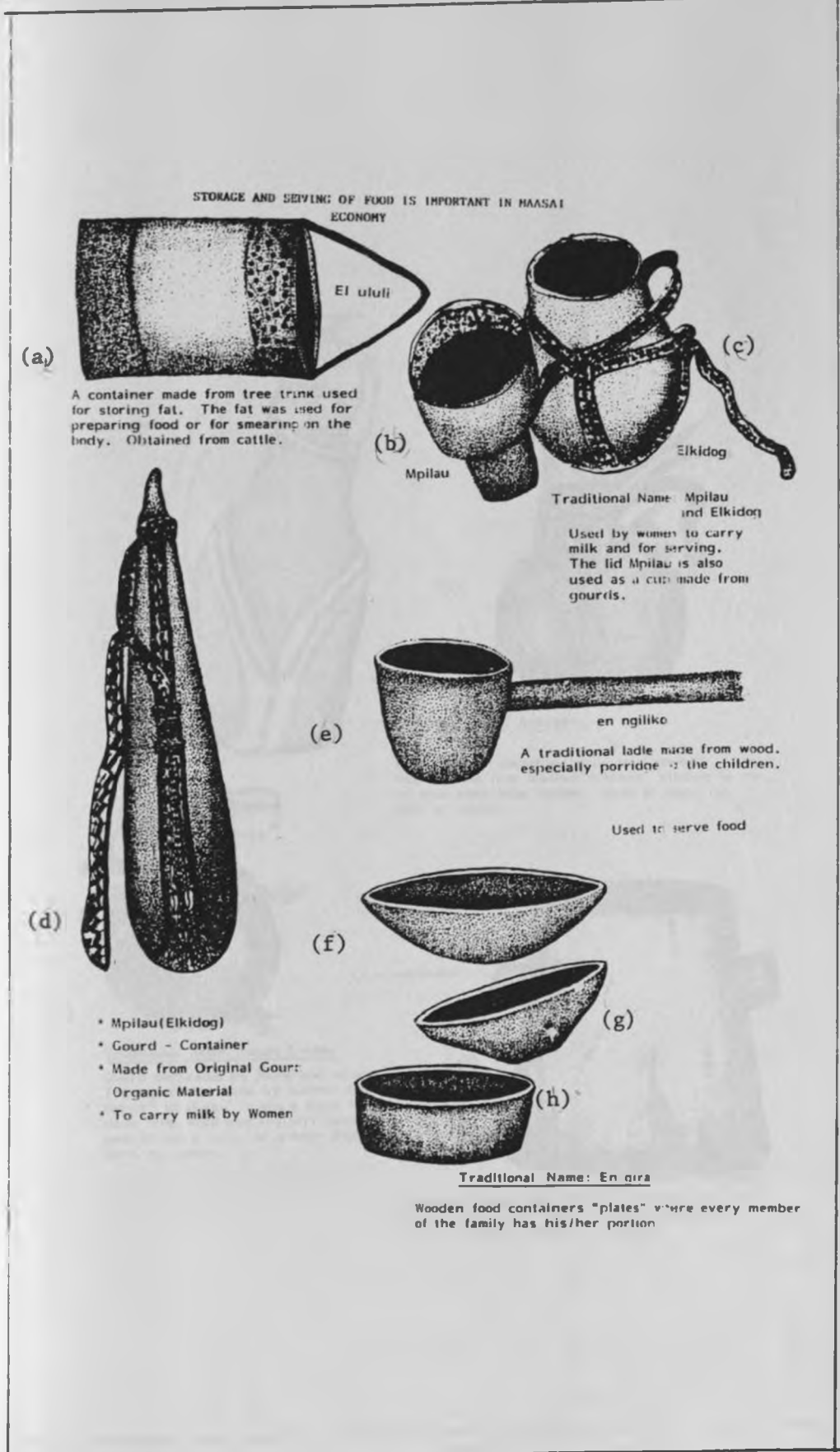
##### 4.1. ART IN MAASAI SOCIETY

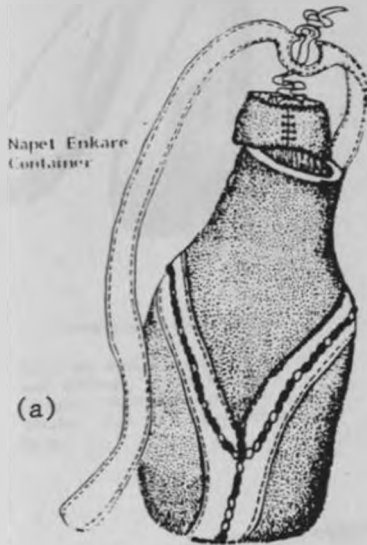
Artifacts are great signifiers of culture hence it is from these that the Maasai are so well identified. A certain common trend can easily be noticed when looking at the Maasai mode of life and equipment. The Maasai ornamentations, body decorations and clothing reveal a lot about the community.

There are three favourable colours of the Maasai which can be identified on almost every aspect of Maasai art. These are red which is made from powdered ochre mixed with blood from a bullock; white made from the ash of bullock bone mixed with water, and black which is obtained from charcoal of burnt calabash mixed with blood from bullock. These colours would be used to decorate bodies, ornamentations and other articles.

The beads used to make necklaces, bracelets, earrings and head straps were always made of the above mentioned colours. Thus, these provided identity of the Maasai. This was exhibited on items such as gourds and especially clothing, particularly wedding garments. Black was considered to be a colour of dignity and authority (see Klumpp, cited, chapters 3-5). In this case black would be used on stools for those in leadership, and clubs and spears for the senior morans.

Figure: 1





Napet Enkare  
Container

(a)



Ankret

(b)

Traditional Name: Ankret

It is a leather container made from cowhide. The neck is made from leather cylinder, stitched to the top with sewn palm fibres. Used to store fat. Made by women.



(c)

Traditional Name: Napet Enkare

Gourd decorated by blood and ochre. The straps are made by leather from the tail of cows. It has a tight lid made from wood and leather. Used by men to carry water on a long distance. Made by women.

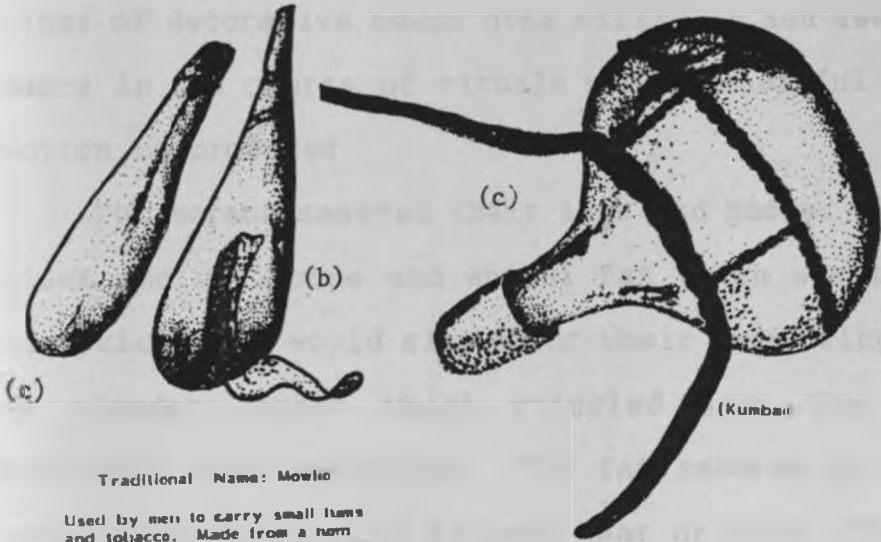


(d)

En a sho namga

A container made from wood for storing local brew. The brew was made from honey and mixture of herbs. Taken by elders of society.

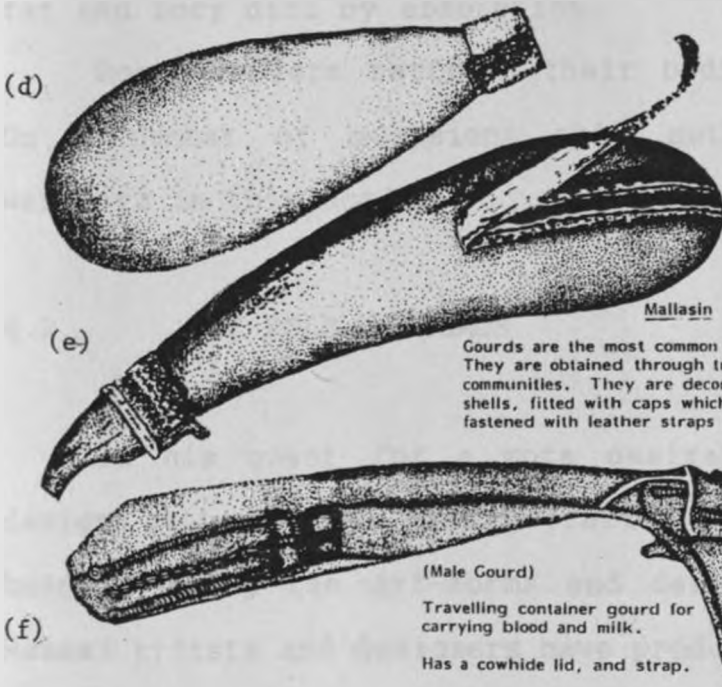
Figure: 3



Traditional Name: Mowio

Used by men to carry small items and tobacco. Made from a horn of cow. It is decorated by cowrie shells. The lid is made from cow hide.

Small gourd used as a tobacco (Kumbai) container for elders. Has a swan cap and beads for decoration and use for hanging down the neck.



Gourds are the most common household utensils. They are obtained through trade with agricultural communities. They are decorated with cowrie shells, fitted with caps which serve as cups, and fastened with leather straps for easy handling.

Travelling container gourd for carrying blood and milk.

Has a cowhide lid, and strap.

Some decorations are made of beads.

Aromatic necklaces and bandoliers of beads festoon a moran. Other bodily ornaments include wooden earlobe discs, metallic dolls hung on ears and those inserted through hands and legs. The women and young girls made rings of decorative beads done skilfully and used during dance in the course of rituals where beautiful rhythmic motion is produced.

The morans smeared their legs and bodies with shiny sleek and red ochre and animal fat which was the basic cosmetic. They would also paint their legs using designs of slender snakes which wriggled down the legs to represent high stockings. The fat smeared on the body acted as an insulation against heat or cold. The ochre, on the other hand, when applied with water removes the fat and body dirt by absorption.

Some warriors tattooed their bodies for beauty.<sup>123</sup> On a number of occasions this author photographed warriors in this action.

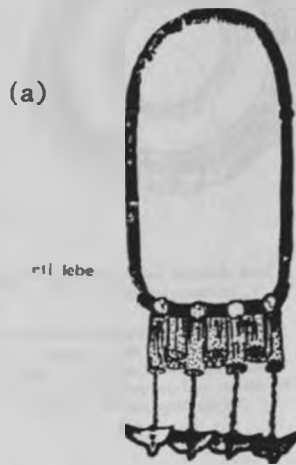
#### 4.2. THE ROLE OF BEADS

In his quest for a more desirable art-form and design pattern, the Maasai craftsman has widely used beads. Among the art-forms and design patterns that Maasai artists and designers have produced are neckwear,

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<sup>123</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, pp. 36-51.

Figure: 4



(a)

Oril lebe

Traditional name: Oril lebe  
Necklace

Made from min. ligaments, beads and silver pendants. Worn by Elders made by old women.

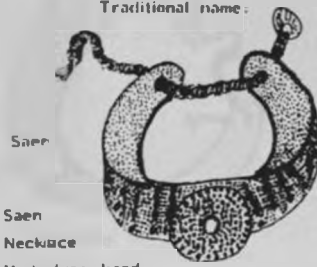
(c)



BEADED NECKLACES

(b)

Traditional name:



Saer

Saer

Necklace

Made from bead, metal and plastics.

Worn by warriors (New)

Neckbands

(d)



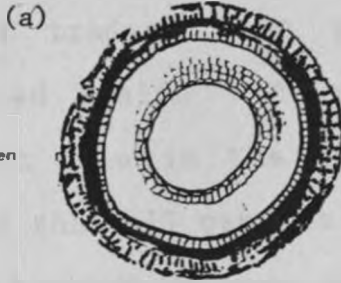
Il Pusi

Beads (Necklaces) - Il pusi

Beads are said to have been fetched from water, e.g. lakes. They were then stitched together with a thread extracted from the hump of a slaughtered cattle called Enopini.



Figure: 5

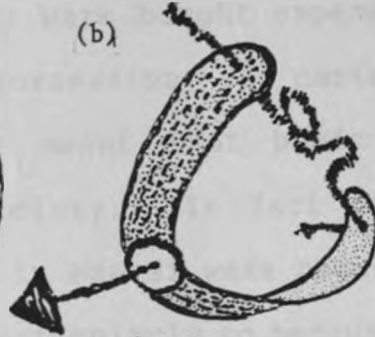


Saen

Saen Necklace  
(Saen)

Worn by women when they are brides and where there are important ceremonies.

The China and glass beads are sewn onto the cowhide, mounted with thread made from neck ligaments of cows. The pendant leads are also threaded by string made of ligaments. Made by women and girls.



A Necklace

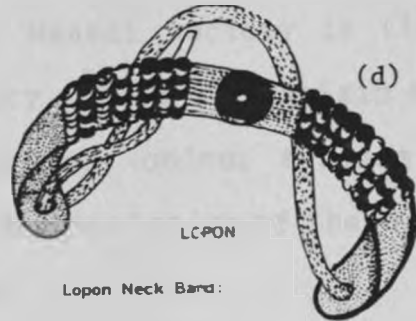
Made from skin, beads. Worn by warriors on all occasions. Also made of silver pendants.

(c)



A Necklace

Made from skin, beads and carved wood. Used by warriors.

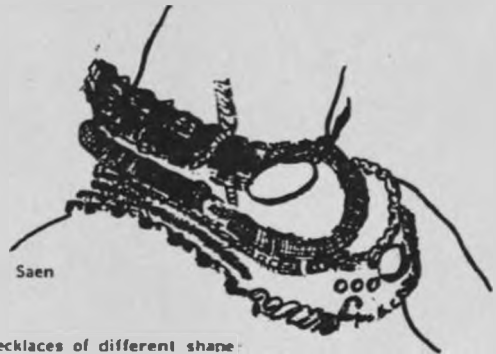


LOPON

Lopon Neck Band:

Worn by initiated men. Made of leather, beads and a button.

(e)



Saen

Saen necklaces of different shape

Used by warriors. Worn around the neck. Made of beads, metals and plastics.

body ornaments, utensils and architectural forms. All these forms are for Maasai comfort.

Beads have been key in the construction of ornamental displays, chains and even symbolic items. Since some of these beads were bought expensively from Swahili traders, the possession of certain beads, signified wealth. This meant that beads played an economic role in the society. In fact it could be assumed that all genders in Maasai were bead-sensitive. This situation was even particularly so because in almost all Maasai rituals, ceremonies, and gatherings, people wore beads.

The role of beads in Maasai society is that of a valued and revered commodity. This may explain why they (beads) come in many intricate colour schemes. This author measured various characteristics of these beads as explained in chapter three.

### 4.3. BEAD ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

Societies have over the years evolved very beautiful shapes out of beadcraft. People have been able to design and produce very well organised patterns using all kinds of beads.

Maasai in Kenya are experts in beadcrafts. They lay considerable emphasis on the neck, head, arms and leg ornaments. Beads make bracelets, hand bands, chains, rings and necklaces. They are made in a skilful manner with excellent finish. Some items in the house are also decorated with beads, e.g., gourds in many shapes and for many uses.

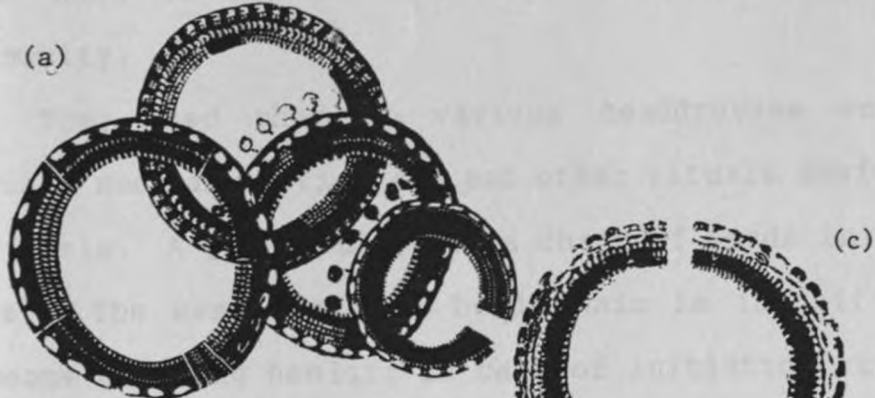
Apart from cows and other possessions that denote wealth, beads also portray richness and success. For example elaborate beads around the neck are a source of great social admiration.

The Maasai make some beads from ivory and use strings to tie them together. The chain is then tied around the neck of a bullock to signify the importance of that bullock. Also ivory beads are used by women to decorate long flap ears. The Maasai also carved beads from wood. Beads also came from animal parts like hooves and horns.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, p. 63

Figure: 6



(a)

Enkarewa (Tanga)

A wedding necklace, Enkarewa, and earrings- Tanga.



(b)

A Necklace

Young Maasai girl shows off her necklace



(c)

Enkarewa

'Enkarewa' special celebration necklaces with streamers.

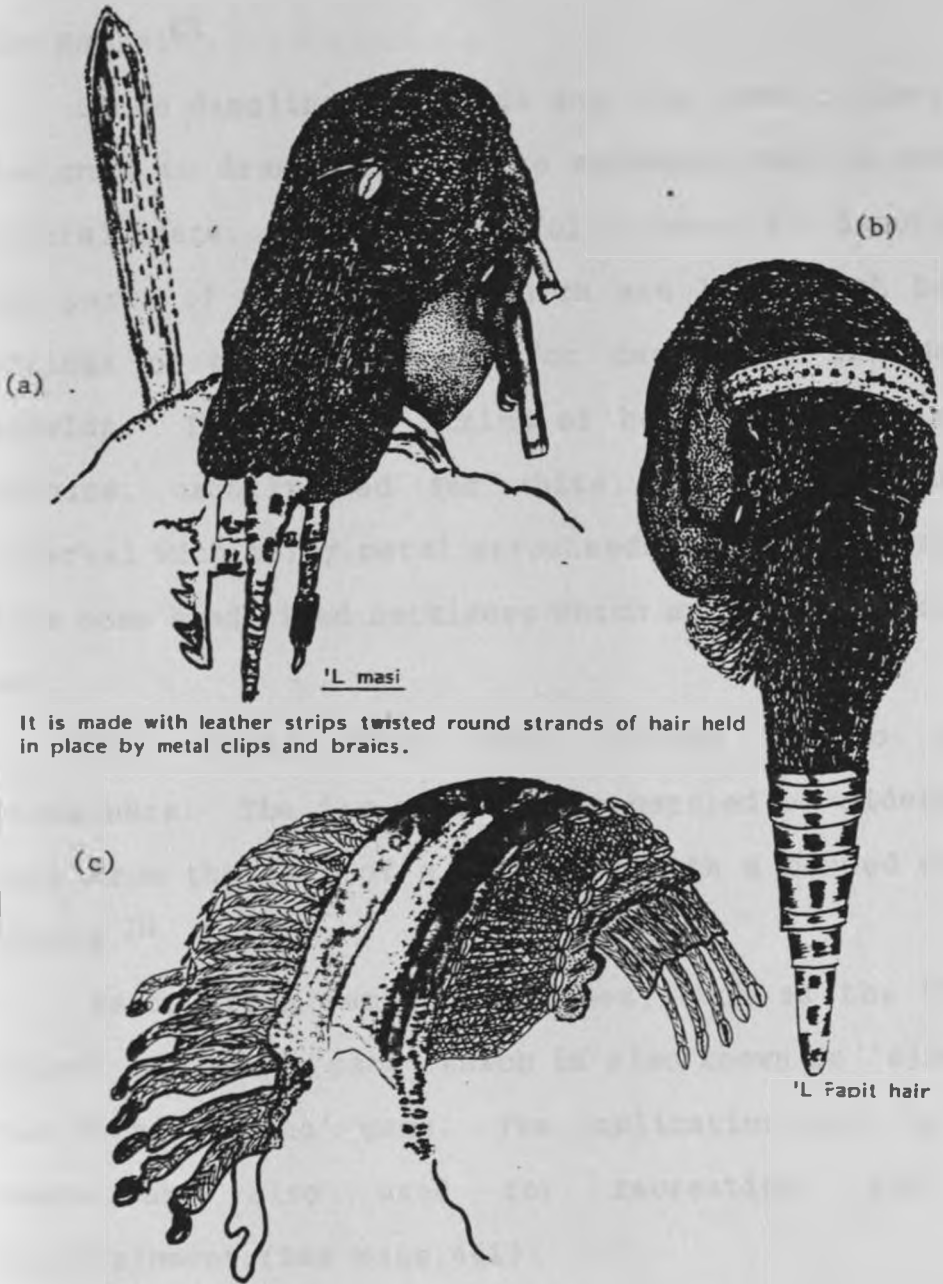
Some cowrie shells were, obtained and still come from coastal areas. Cowrie shells were used for decorating a Maasai moran's hair (especially the young Maasai). Some were used for decorating gourds and even calabashes; Combinations of cowries and beads were used for decorating shields and other war weapons. Also beads were used to mark some ritual activities in their community.

They used them in various headdresses worn in rituals such as initiations and other rituals designated for girls. A girl would have a chain of beads in such a case. The wearer of the bead chain is identified as someone awaiting healing in case of initiation rituals.

Sheepskin is at times decorated with beads and worn by the bridegroom. An anklet ring worn by the bride is a gift from the bridegroom on the wedding day. Bead designs adorned the husband's ear lobes while the wife wears a beaded necklace. The most significant of the beads is "entinte" a wedding necklace made of long straight lines of beads which reach the knees.

Beads are also used in garment manufacture such as leather shirts which are worn by the womenfolk, and beads here are arranged in straight lines. There are always two colours (red and white) which are used in alternate symmetry. Married women put on iron necklaces which are not removed so long as the husband is still alive.

Figure: 7



It is made with leather strips twisted round strands of hair held in place by metal clips and braids.

'L Papit hair: Used by Morans  
Material: Hair, cloth, and cowrie shells

Travellers in the past used to present the Maasai with gifts of beads so that they could cross through their land. The Arabs capitalised on this and introduced special glass beads and metal with which they traded with the Maasai<sup>225</sup>.

Large dangling ear beads and flat bead collars are designed to draw attention to movement and to enhance natural grace. Beads are carefully chosen for decorating the parts of short swords which are lined with beads. Strings of beads are used for decorating the Maasai shields. These are a string of beads arranged in two colours, usually red and white, which alternate at interval with shiny metal arrowheads. The Maasai morans have some head lined necklaces which are worn only during war.

The elders also carry beaded bamboo arrow containers. The fly whisk, also carried by elders, is made from the tail of a wildbeast with a beaded wooden handle.<sup>226</sup>

Beads often feature in games, such as the "Eagle shine" or "pebble game" which is also known as 'ajua' or the swahili 'mbao' game. The implication here is that beads are also used for recreation, fun and entertainment. (See page 441)

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<sup>225</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, p. 65

<sup>226</sup> Somjee, Sultan, *Maasai*, p. 8.

Prior to circumcision, the father of the son dresses in the garb of an elder, comprising a black calfskin decorated with beads over which he wears a cap of infrax leopard and blue monkey fur. In addition he wears adornment of beaded earrings, a necklace of black beads joined to a cylindrical tobacco container of ivory hung on a chain. He then returns to his family after the four days as an elder.

"Nbono" the long blue bead is only worn by married women (together with the beaded short containers suspended from around the neck)<sup>227</sup>. The shapes of the beads also at times are numerous. These shapes include oblong, round, cylindrical and odd shapes.

The following varied colours are used; blue, red, green, yellow, orange and black, Blue stands for God (as the colour of the sky Enkai inhabits). Cream stands for the vegetation after the rainfall and yellow for the sun.

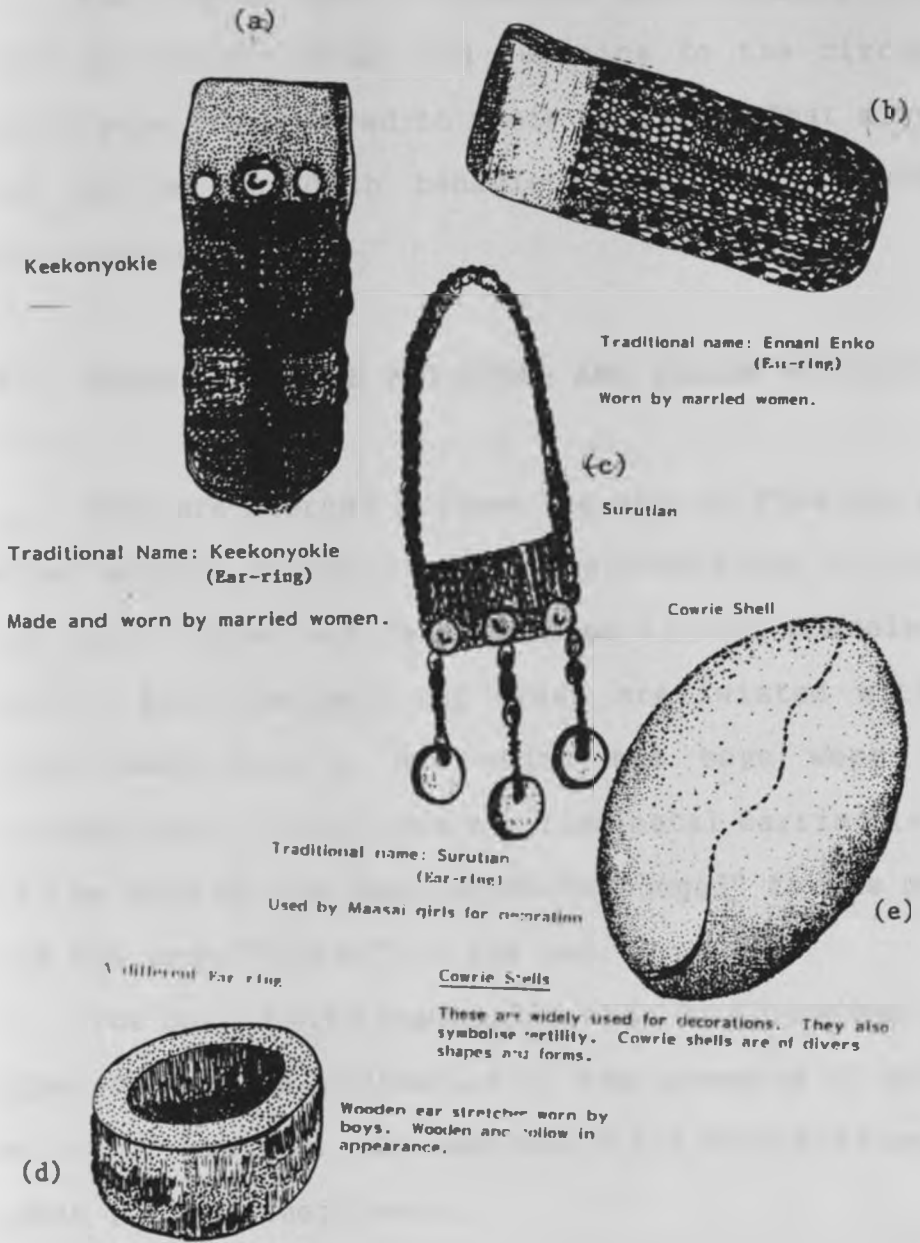
#### 4.4. COWRIE SHELLS AS DECORATIONS

These also at times functioned as beads. They were largely obtained from rivers. Some cowrie shells were obtained and still come from coastal areas. Cowrie shells were used for decorating a Maasai moran's hair

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<sup>227</sup> Somjee, *Ibid*, p. 9





(especially the young maasai). Some were used for decorating gourds and even calabashes; Combinations of cowries and beads were used for decorating shields and other war weapons.

The cowrie shells were also used to symbolise fertility in the Maasai community.

The cowrie shell ornaments which looked childish (not skillfully done) and feminine to the circumcised males were transferred to their mothers. That signified the end of childish behaviour and the emergence of warriorhood.

#### 4.5. OTHER MATERIALS ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

Ears are pierced between the ages of five and seven, after which a wooden piece is inserted so as to increase the size. After six years, strips of hide bracelets are worn. Bird feathers and grass are twisted with bark cloth made into a hat which the boys wear during circumcision. After this a coiled metal earring is fixed on the side of the head which "belonged" to the mother, and had been "loaned" to the son.

The coiled wire especially when worn by women on the upper arms is an indication of the presence of children being circumcised. Circumcised girls decorated only the upper part of their ears.

Leather earrings and coils of wire coils, form a decorative load on a married woman's feet to sheath her legs. This is, known as "so-ki-si-wa Maasai".

The Maasai leaders wear a brass pendant on the chest. The pendants of the women are called "Sunita". Also since head-bands are always worn, the hair has to be shaved constantly.

#### 4.6. BRAND MARKS AND ANIMALS

Those brandmarks used on the cattle are not the same for each clan and family. There is a principal mark whereby all cattle belonging to various members of a family are branded in a special way. The Maasai also use other small marks which can be identified by the individual owner. Each family in Maasailand has a special way of pricking the ears of their cattle, sheep and donkeys.<sup>226</sup>

Any animal may be ceremoniously treated particularly if it is a favourite pet. A carved ivory amulet distinguishes its presence in a herd. The ivory is considered a treasured find perhaps a gift from god, Enkai.

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<sup>226</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Tepilit, *Ibid*, pp.11-19

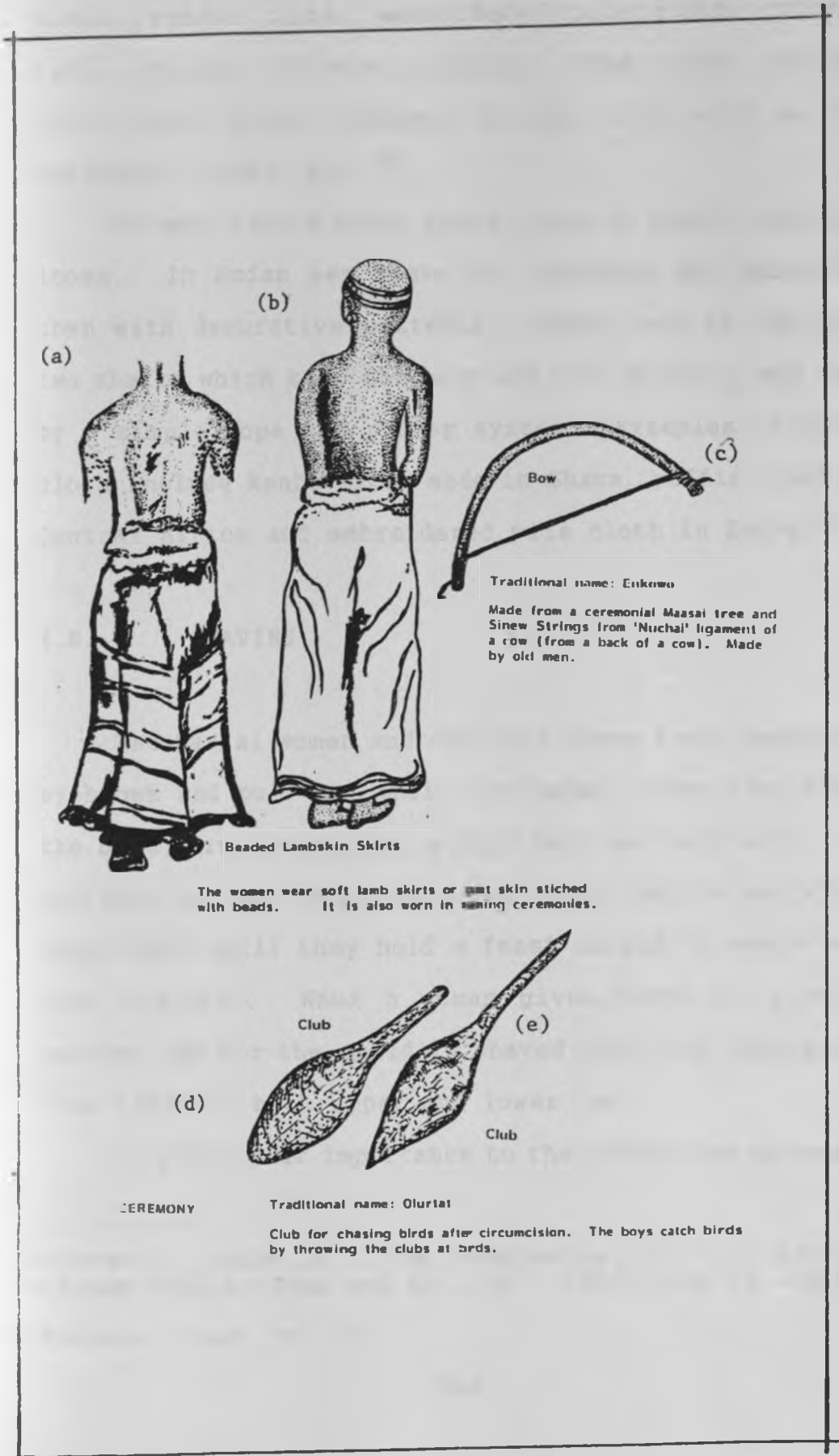
#### 4.7. GARMENTS

Before manufactured cloth became readily and inexpensively available, the moran wore a goat skin or calfskin cape as everyday uniform. The women did the skin tanning intended for their family clothing. The children would walk naked or, cover only the lower section of the body. Women would decorate their body wrappers with beads. The Maasai now wear brightly coloured cloth of red, reddish orange, and bluish which are shades which the Maasai fancy in particular. They could be draped toga-fashion over one shoulder wrapped around the body from chest to knees and suspended from criss-crossing beaded braces, or rolled down around the waist loincloth style, as shown in Fig 9a and b, pg. 303.

The cow's stomach when properly prepared serves as helmet to guard against raindrops or a covering over which to fit a head-dress. When a moran went on a major raid, he was given two pairs of sandals made from cowhide. Leleshwa leaves under arms served as deodorants. Clothing and fashion are important to all age-sets.

Clothing and textiles in traditional Africa are an integral part of both social and economic organisation of community life. For example all over Africa the following types of cloths are used, woven cloth, Kente

Figure: 9



cloth, raffia cloth, embroidered pile cloth, printed cloth, khanga, kitenge, adinkira, dyed cloth, applied cloth, bark cloth, European African cloth such as the Manchester prints, etc.<sup>225</sup>

In west Africa women weave cloth on simple vertical looms. In Sudan men weave the garments and embroider them with decorative patterns. Looms used by men have two shafts which keep the warp and weft moved up and down by a simple rope and pulley system. Examples of woven cloth include Kente cloth made in Ghana, raffia cloth in Central Africa and embroidered pile cloth in Zaire.<sup>230</sup>

#### 4.8. SHAVING

The Maasai women and children shave their heads and eyebrows and pull out their eyelashes. They also shave the beard, armpits and any single hair on their skin. If warriors are not in at their mourning, they do not shave their hair until they hold a feast called "e-unoto" and grow pigtails. When a woman gives birth to a child neither she nor the child is shaved until the baby grows four teeth in both upper and lower jaw.

Of particular importance to the production of Maasai

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<sup>229</sup> Jefferson, Louise E., *The Decorative Arts of Africa*, London, William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1974, page 75 - 106.

<sup>230</sup> Jefferson, *Ibid*, p. 111.

art forms and design patterns are beads, colours, animal products and metal. In expressing their artistic styles the maasai incise marks on individuals, animals, gourds, earthenware etc. Shaving is also an artistic ritual. So are the games, feasts, dancing and other expressive art forms. Indeed even food is an important ingredient in the practice and appreciation of Maasai artistic talents. Consequently, in order to fully comprehend the intricacies of Maasai artistic styles it is paramount to endeavour at analysing how the Maasai are economically and technologically organised.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ART FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

### 5.1. CRITERIA

#### 5.1.1. Materials Used

The authentic Maasai relied on nature for their materials. They used plants, animal parts, rocks, and soil. As time went by they derived a lot of material from raids and wars with other tribes and barter trade. They also derived some materials from the foreigners which were used for the construction of the railway line (metal coils and ornaments)<sup>231</sup>.

#### 5.1.2. Art-forms

These are generally initiated by their distinctive Maasai way of life. Their ceremonies and day to day activities inspire them to create their renowned art-forms, as illustrated in Fig. 5 - 8, page 291 to 299.

Today this has greatly changed and expanded as a number of art-forms are created for sale to tourists.

The authentic Maasai art-forms were characterised by their size, shape and colour. The modern art-forms have, however been modified to suit the tourist demands and have lost the original identity, where one could see

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<sup>231</sup> Oliver Roland and Crowder Michael, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa*. Cambridge University press, pp. 413-446.



something and immediately associate it with the Maasai<sup>132</sup>. (See data tables on pages 262-280 and also see questionnaire on pages 516-521).

### 5.1.3. Shape

This was characterised by initial and original shape from the original Maasai in ancient and early times. Shape has slightly been altered by present-day demands and the availability of the materials currently used. This change also applies to and affects the size.

Earlier on, a Maasai could make his shield, for example, from one animal and this influenced the size. To-day as hunting and cattle raids are prohibited, such material is scarce. The Maasai therefore have to make use of the little material left available.<sup>133</sup>

Elsewhere in Africa studies have revealed that the traditional African societies produced very beautiful and original art pieces just like the Maasai.

For example the Bijogo and Baga of the hinterlands of Guinea and Senegal had elaborate carving styles. Among the Bijogo, since the woman was the chief, many figures of women are found on the family alters. Among the Baga, such powerful and abstract styles of sculpture

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 448-450.

<sup>133</sup> Hecht, *Ibid*, pp. 4-7.

resemble that of the Bambara. Since the Simo secret society dominated the Bago life, this society determined masks and cult objects used for birth, circumcision, death, etc.

Sources of African art can be traced to prehistoric times and many researches are uncovering fresh evidences. The Maasai have elaborately decorated weaponry. The Sudanic, Bantu, Nilotic races and Palae Negroides tended to practice agriculture as seen in their art-forms. The Bushmen contributed to rock paintings of pre-historic times in Senegal, West Sudan, Atlantic Coast, Congo, etc.

In Nigeria, terracotta figures dating to 360 B.C. (the earliest sculptures in Africa) have been found. Indeed the migration of Bantu people led to introduction of iron-using in Southern Africa, and elsewhere in Africa.

To study one particular traditional<sup>234</sup> African society in the realm of art-forms and design patterns is like studying all traditional societies of Africa. The criteria, categorisation and symbolism are all based on the same design principles and interpretations.

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<sup>234</sup> Eisy, Lenzinger, *The Art Of Black People*, West Germany, Veriag Aurel, 1976, pp. 10-378.

#### 5.1.4. Maasai Male Attire

On looking at the Maasai dress one can observe certain resemblances to the attire of the ancient Romans who once occupied North Africa. The Maasai sword resembles the short Romans' fighting sword, the warriors hairdo follows the shape of the Roman helmet, and the toga and sandals are also similar in style to those of the ancient Romans. They share with groups of Nilotic origin such customs as shaving of the woman's head and the removal of the two middle teeth from the lower jaw.<sup>235</sup>

Cushite practices among the Maasai range from circumcision and clitoridectomy in initiation rites and the age grade system among young warriors to a dislike of eating fish and scorn for black-smiths. The Hamitic Nilote of Sudan also share the Maasai belief that they are the sole custodians of earths cattle.

Maasai sandals are made from cowhide and the clothing, bed coverings and ropes also are sometimes made from cowhide. Grass was also used for clothing, bracelets, necklaces, etc. This author saw some at Namanga.

The Maasai are unified at the core by their passage

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<sup>235</sup> Eisy, *Ibid*, pp. 380-381.

through age-sets.<sup>236</sup> The life of a Maasai male is a well ordered progression through a series of life-stages, which are determined by ages, initiated through ceremonies, and marked by specific duties and divisions. His clothing and ornamentation follow these progressions.

Bead decorations, headdresses, body wears and necklaces are made to suit each age-set. Three of the four major ceremonies performed by all Maasai males are<sup>237</sup>.

- (a) Alamal Langipaata, the ceremony boys undertake just before circumcision. They wear specially made garments to symbolise the peculiarity of this ceremony.
- (b) Emorata, the circumcision ceremony which initiates them into warriorhood. Body markings are part of circumcision ceremony. (see pages 362-394)
- (c) Eunoto, the graduation of warriors into elderhood acts as the confirmation of total elderhood. A very elaborate network of necklaces and beadwork is part of Eunoto. This author observed and interviewed an elder and a warrior at Kajiado and verified this information.

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<sup>236</sup> Eisy, *Ibid*, pp. 383-385.

<sup>237</sup> Somjee, Sultan, pp. 3-6.

All four ceremonies have certain features in common: Ritual head shaving, continual blessings, the slaughter of an animal, ceremonial painting of the face or body, singing, dancing, and feasting. The ceremonies are performed section by section.<sup>238</sup>

Attire for clothing for any gender in the traditional African sense must have its origin on the cultural norms of a society. Even today in many African scenes, printed motifs on African fabrics depict this sense of motifs originating from cultural roots. This does not only apply to textiles but to other media as well.

Intricate designs and patterns, most of which are results of influences from certain parts of the continent, are used to beautifully decorate the everyday objects created by Africa craftsmen. These decorations are influenced by legends, myths and proverbs from the past of the societies. They are therefore representational pictures to record time-honoured stories and legends; and these designs arranged in different schemes eventually become the motifs that could be read almost as written texts. Many carvings, castings and applied patterns depict battles, conquests and ceremonies involving historical events as the artists pour glories

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<sup>238</sup> Galaty, *Ibid*, pp. 29-51.

on their ancestors and their kings.<sup>239</sup>

#### 5.1.5. Youth (Inkera) Male Attire

Maasai in their love for children like to see them as simple as possible since children represent their fragile bones or their dear loved ones. Maasai boys do not wear sophisticated attire, but in their efforts to imitate their folks, keep on adding this and that. Normally Maasai children wear a long shirt made of skin or cow hide. This author witnessed this at Narok.

The children's clothing is normally not printed and is a very simple outfit. This applies to children of age two to four or five years.

This study noted that Maasai children try out every small detail they see the moran having, e.g. the walking stick and bracelets. They try to imitate the older ones. They will also wear a cooking pot (imitating a hat), necklace, goat hide shirt, bracelet and carry a herding stick.<sup>240</sup>

While still young, boys construct miniature kraals out of earth, dung or stones and place pebbles or berries inside them to represent sheep and cattle. This being a

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<sup>239</sup> Jefferson, Louise E.,: *The Decorative Arts of Africa*, London, William Collins Son and Co., Ltd., 1974, pp. 39-89.

<sup>240</sup> Jefferson, *Ibid*, pp. 17-26.

messy game, they require clothing to go with it, e.g., torn clothing, or even being naked or half naked with only a string round their waist.

When a boy is four or five years old, an experienced elder woman removes its two lower incisors, to enhance beauty and make it possible to feed the child through the small opening should it get sick from tetanus and be unable to open its mouth. After a second set of teeth grows in, they are removed once again.<sup>241</sup>

Between five and seven years, young boys look after older calves and may even accompany an older person herding cattle. This means that they graduate from simple attire to a little more sophisticated clothing.

Between seven and eight years of age the males have the upper part of their right ear pierced, and when that is healed the left ear is also pierced in the same spot. In a year or two a bigger hole is pierced in the lobe of the right ear and then in the left lobe. Wooden plugs or wads of leaves are inserted in lobes to increase their sizes. The larger the earlobe, the more beautiful the Maasai.<sup>242</sup>

When a child is grown, he may choose to have decorative patterns, called "Ilkigerot", marked onto the chest or stomach by burning an incision with a knife.

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<sup>241</sup> Tucker, *Ibid*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>242</sup> Tucker, *Ibid*, pp. 18-21.

This is not mandatory, however, and depends on whether one thinks it enhances physical beauty.

When boys reach puberty, their thoughts increasingly turn to the time when they will be promoted to adulthood. They spend countless hours checking whether their pubic hair has grown. In every way the status of uncircumcised boys makes them yearn to be warriors.<sup>243</sup>

They are not yet allowed to dress like the warriors, to put on colourful ornaments in their pierced earlobes, or to carry the tall spear of the warriors.

Rather, boys wear a plain togo with few and simple ornaments and no ochre makeup, and carry a spear with a short blade. Although they are forbidden to have sexual relationships or even to glance at the warriors' girlfriends, they will often try to visit the girls and befriend them.

Uncircumcised adolescent girls date the well dressed and handsome warriors; so the adolescent boy is envious and left in the cold.<sup>244</sup>

Alamal lengipaata is performed everywhere and immediately precedes the youths' formal initiation into manhood. In this ceremony the boys select a laibon from their father's generation to help them in making the important decisions which will affect their future. The

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<sup>243</sup> Playre and Gale, *Ibid*, pp. 11-17.

<sup>244</sup> Elliot, *Ibid*, pp. 23-26.



laibon gives them a new generation name in the place of ilayok (youth), the name they have been commonly known by, and blesses them to prosper. All the boys circumcised during this period will carry the new name of their generation throughout warriorhood. When they graduate to elderhood they will be given another generation name in place of the one given at Alamal lengipaata.<sup>245</sup>

Alamal lengipaata begins with a peaceful procession of well dressed youths, adorned with the warriors' ornaments which they have always longed for, such as ochred hair and ostrich feathers headdress and accompanied by the warriors' girl friends. The boys' bodies are decorated with the chalk white paint called enturoto.

When they near circumcision, they elect from among themselves an 'Alaigwanani'. This boy will preside over all the future meetings they hold and will be respected; he has to have been a genius amongst them while young.<sup>246</sup>

With circumcision a whole new life begins, new dress and ornamentation, new behaviour, new activities and above all a new freedom that the youths never had before as mere boys. They can now socialize with girls and have

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<sup>245</sup> Elliot, *Ibid*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>246</sup> Beckluth, Saitoti, Tepilit, *Ibid*, pp. 19-41.

friendships. They are free to roam Maasailand without asking their parents' permission. They have more control over their destiny and some degree of decision making power. During this period they dress perfectly and show off for the young women. They wear specific art pieces for specific ceremonies.

In many other African societies, evidences abound of specific art pieces designed and produced for specific ceremonies, rituals and occasions. In some African societies masks were worn on specific occasions such as harvest festivals or initiation ceremonies. Participants wore fitted masks or complex headgear and completed by robes or skirts. The mask bearer became the spirit he represented immediately. For example he became a warrior, justice or fertility, he became the ancestor or the symbolic animal, the evil spirit to be expelled or the good one to be courted with action. Masks were made by acknowledged and specialized wood carvers. Ordinary masks were made by the wearer. The Maasai use masks in times of war, thus masks are a strong art-form.

What the Maasai people depict on their material culture in the form of design patterns has parallel to many other traditional communities in Africa. For example the dynamic expressionist art of the Bamileke of Cameroon/Gabon area which included fertility symbols, and the majestic royal statues and life-size figures are

excellent examples. Their masks and head figures are strongly expressed by having thick lips and globular eyes sheathed in copper. The highly stylized masks of the Bacham are also found in these regions.<sup>247</sup>

#### 5.1.6. Attire For Circumcision (Emorata)

Initiation of a boy or girl into adulthood is both a mental and physical process to the Maasai. Prior to circumcision boys are faced with the task of collecting wax and ostrich feathers to be used after circumcision to start the youth's head-dress which is a very important attire in Maasai. Wax would be applied to the tips of his newly acquired arrows, which will become prized possessions carried everywhere, so being part of the dress.

The boy's head is shaved and all his belongings are given away since he must not retain any ornament or possession of his youth when he becomes a man. On that day (when belongings are given away) he is anointed with ghee and dressed in a garment made of a special hide cloth resembling that worn by women.<sup>248</sup>

After circumcision, during the healing period, the boy is helped in preparing his head-dress made of ostrich

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<sup>247</sup> Myers, Bernard L. and Coppelstone Trewin, *Encyclopaedia of African Art* pp. 30-76.

<sup>248</sup> Thomson, *Ibid*, pp. 6-41.

feathers and stuffed birds and in making his arms and blacking them with wax.

When the newly circumcised boy heals enough to be able to walk, his comrades decorate him with white face paint and then lead him outside. He spends his time shooting at girls with arrows and hunting birds for his head-dress. If he did not cry during the operation, he may kill colourful birds such as tairacos, lovebirds and sunbirds, but if he cried out he may use only unattractive grey ones such as asticola birds.<sup>249</sup>

Newly circumcised boys are very conspicuous, they wear either animal hides blackened with charcoal and oil or black garments also smeared with oil. Attached to their head-dresses or worn at their temples are isusutia, the round, coiled ornaments made of brass usually worn by women. A boy in this state is considered to be similar to a woman who has just given birth who is weak and needing to be taken good care of.

The newly circumcised youths wear black throughout and let their hair grow; they are not shaved until they have finished making their crown head-dress of beautiful stuffed birds. After the birds are caught, their inside are removed and stuffed with grass to prevent odour. The stuffed birds are then attached to a circular frame and form a crownlike shape. These head-dresses are important

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<sup>249</sup> Thomson, *Ibid*, 45-48.

to the warriors since they are used for ceremonies and dances. When their crowns are completely filled with birds the young men are shaved for the last time until elderhood. Some sections of the group then perform a transitional ceremony, called "Embolosata Olkiteng," in which the young men are blessed in several different ways by their elder sponsors.<sup>250</sup>

They become young warriors. They let their hair grow long and spend much time in grooming it. Everything they wear must be new to symbolize a new life.

They remove their stuffed birds head-dresses and their old clothing with all its accumulated black colour and replace them with the warriors' distinctive hair-style and togas dyed with red ochre. They also cover their bodies from head to toe with the same red ochre.

Their parents give them new long spears, and their mothers and girl friends make all brand new brand ornaments for them. With all these new colours, clothes, necklaces, and earrings, the circumcised youths emerge into total warriorhood.<sup>251</sup>

A warriors' full gear on their way to cattle raids or to retrieve stolen cattle, i.e., full regalia, is head-dresses of gleaming black ostrich feathers or lion's manes, elaborately patterned shields of buffalo hides and

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<sup>250</sup> Potter, *Ibid*, pp. 9-61.

<sup>251</sup> Potter, *Ibid*, pp. 62-65.

spears glistening in the sun, they also carry with them clubs, necklaces, bracelets, etc.

Today restricted by the ban on hunting wild animals, the Maasai find it harder and harder to obtain buffalo hides for their shields and lions' manes for their head-dresses.<sup>252</sup>

The physical beauty and decoration are important to the Maasai warriors in times of peace and tranquillity.

Anxious to attract girls, they spend hours decorating themselves with ochre and plaiting their hair. They first grind the ochre, then mix it with fat or water. After this mixture is applied to the legs and while it is still wet, decorative patterns are drawn with the fingertips or a stick. Warriors braid their hair into long plaits, often twisting in strands of wool to create length, and then dye it red with a mixture of ochre and fat.

They adorn their earlobes, necks, arms, waists and ankles with the beaded ornaments made by their female suitors.

The ever present spear of a Maasai warrior is a most precious possession. A traveller in Maasailand often sees the lightning flash of a Maasai spearpoint gleaming in the distance before the silhouetted body of a warrior

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<sup>252</sup> Potter, *Ibid*, pp. 70-73.

appears.<sup>253</sup>

The warriors develop a worshipful trust in their weapons, and certain braves will never flee from an attack as long as their spears are still in their hands, for fleeing would be like betraying their weapons. The warrior anoints his spear with animal fat and polishes it often to prevent rusting. All day long the spear is held in the warrior's hand or thrust, point up, into the ground by his side. It would be considered a serious insult to a Maasai warrior if anyone else were to insert his spearpoint into the ground. All night it is stored inside by his girl friends. It is not used for fighting alone, the spears are sometimes decorated to symbolize peace. Pure black ostrich feathers are attached to the tip of the spear with a string of beads forming a round crown.<sup>254</sup>

A piece of black ebony may be inserted into the spear shaft to indicate a warrior's seniority, while a section of pale wood indicates his junior status.

Young Maasai men properly initiated into warriorhood first become *Ilkeliani*, or junior warriors. The first feasting camp they go to as warriors is called *olkiten loo ngulalent* (the bull to insert ear plugs).<sup>255</sup> This

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<sup>253</sup> Payre and Gale, *Ibid*, pp. 30-39.

<sup>254</sup> Payre and Gale, *Ibid*, 40-44.

<sup>255</sup> Lord, Granworth, *Ibid*, pp. 19-27.

name derives from the fact that the new warrior must wear wooden plugs inserted in the holes of his ears until the end of this camp. While in the camp, the warriors must also remove all their ornaments and ochre make up.

Anyone seeing Maasai warriors after a successful lion hunt or cattle raid will always remember the experience. According to a Maasai elder, Moses Selempo, the towering warriors, victorious in the raid put on their ceremonial gear, they also put on the ostrich plumes on their heads, their head-dresses of lion's manes or even eagle feathers and the metal bells on their thighs rattling and bewitching. In this attire, they are exalted and form a procession, heading home with pride and confidence.<sup>256</sup>

Most of these Maasai warrior ornaments can be seen in the collection at the Kenya National Museum's Showroom.

When the pressure from the generation below becomes great enough, warriors are forced to graduate into elderhood to make room for the new generation.<sup>257</sup> through eunoto (planting) ceremony where long white poles signifying the coming of elderhood is carried<sup>258</sup>.

All warrior beads are fashioned by women, mostly by

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<sup>256</sup> Lord, *Ibid*, pp. 31-37.

<sup>257</sup> Lord, *Ibid*, pp. 41-51.

<sup>258</sup> Krapf, *Ibid.*, pp. 39-56.



girl friends; anklets or upper arm bands are particular signs of love.

Warriors normally wear vermilion or reddish kangas either at the waistline as a skirt or covering from below the neck to their knees.

Most of the togas are checked, making them match with the Maasai hairdo and the colours on the shields plus also the make-up on their bodies.<sup>259</sup>

Generally the warrior attire is harmonious - unique - and no colour is out of place. This harmony is achieved and enhanced by the presence of black, red, blue, white, orange, ornaments round their necks, legs and the body. This researcher measured, examined and analysed a number of these attire in a Maasai manyatta.

#### 5.1.7. The Moran Art-Forms

The physical appearance of the Maasai warriors expresses all the qualities that the Maasai, even foreigners, consider desirable. This is particularly true when the warriors are seen in full "regalia" war gear on their way to and from a cattle raid, to retrieve stolen cattle or a hunt.<sup>260</sup>

Their physical decoration is, however, not only

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<sup>259</sup> Krapf, *Ibid*, pp. 11-28.

<sup>260</sup> Hamilton, Lord Laud., *Ibid.*, pp. 9-21.

important to them during fights and wars, but even in times of peace. They use it to attract the young Masaai girls, "ndittos".

The basic full moran regalia consists of:

- a head-dress
- braided hair
- ear and face ornaments
- arm bracelets
- waist belts
- thigh belts
- anklets
- body decoration, especially the legs
- toga
- spears
- shield
- clubs
- sandals

Some morans were observed by this researcher and they volunteered some useful information.

#### 5.1.7.1. The head-dress - "Sidai"

This consists of gleaming black ostrich feathers or lion's manes. Those with lion's manes are more highly regarded as they also show a great degree of courage and bravery.

Those with the lion's (olnatung') manes were the first to throw their spears at the lion during a lion hunt. This requires a very strong sense of bravery, as the lion usually attacks the first to throw the spear, (see diagrams on pages 364 and 379).

The wildebeest (oleng'at) hide is used to make the fringe of the head-dress. However, the buffalo hide is also used, particularly by those who have killed the buffalo. In this case the value of the sidai is higher just as in the case of the lion's mane.<sup>261</sup>

The moran prefers female ostriches for their feathers as the plumage is of a richer quality than that of the male ostrich.

They also decorate the head-dress further but with few beads of standard colours.

The moran make their head-dresses themselves. They use them to elevate their height. This is intimidating to their enemies as it makes them seem to tower above them.

#### 5.1.7.2. Braided Hair

The long hair of the Maasai moran is a helmet. The moran grows his hair to a workable thatch and with a friend's assistance braids the hair for the duration of

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<sup>261</sup> Hamilton, *Ibid*, pp. 29-37.

several days. As shown in the diagrams on pages 362 & 394, the basic plaiting involves parting into small sections, dividing each section into two and then twisting each part, first separately then together. Cotton or wool threads are also used to lengthen the hair, as this researcher noted at Kitengela.

The hair is all coated with mixture of red oil (reddened oil) and animal fat. This is patted across the head at ear level. The hair is then ready for braiding.<sup>262</sup>

The moran either lets the hair hang loose or ties it at the end with leather. Some warriors may add cowrie shells on their hairdoes. This may symbolize fertility. (See Fig. 7 on page 296).

#### 5.1.7.3. Ear and Face Ornaments

These are made for the warriors by either their female suitors or mothers. They are fashions of beads, cowrie shells and leather. They follow the basic Maasai colours and arrangements (see page 278, where Maasai colours are tabulated and analysed, and see table 4 on page 275).

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<sup>262</sup> Hollis, A.C., *The Maasai*, pp. 19-49 and Woldock, Jill, pp. 3-39.

#### 5.1.7.4. Necklaces

Necklaces are also made of beads and sometimes leather. Like the ear ornaments they follow the standard Maasai colours. (See Figures 4, 5, 6 page 290 -294).

#### 5.1.7.5. Arm and Wrist Bracelets

These are made of leather, buffalo hides and beads. They are of special significance. The warriors wear small tight bracelets on their upper arm. These are normally made of the animal hides. It is no wonder that the proverb uses the bracelets as the metaphor: "Don't enter warriorhood without bracelets on both arms."<sup>263</sup> (Where Maasai colours are tabulated and analysed (see Fig 25 page 364).

#### 5.1.7.6. Waist Belts

Again these articles of clothing are also beaded and with the use of leather. They too are made by the female suitors. (See Figures 23 on page 261).

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<sup>263</sup> Hollis, *Ibid*, pp. 38-49.

#### 5.1.7.7. Thigh Belts

Thigh belts are made of leather, beads and shells. The top part of the belt is attached to the waist belt and the lower part is attached to the belt which is worn close to the knee. The strap from the hip to the knee is beaded.

Bells are incorporated into the clothing designs. The bells jingle as the moran walks. Traditionally this symbolized the intimidating approach of the morans to their enemies. Today a moran dons the thigh bell to dance and celebrate, producing the sounds by quavering tension as well as deliberate movement,<sup>264</sup>

#### 5.1.7.8. Anklets

Anklets are fashioned in the same way as the beads and anklets of opposing colours and are worn on both ankles. (See a child's anklet in the Fig. 54 page 425).

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<sup>264</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Tepilit, *Ibid*, pp. 6-11.

#### 5.1.7.9. Toga

Traditionally togas were mainly worn by women. The warriors relied on their body decoration. However as time went by they began using small togas of small animal hides. These were also decorated with beads of the standard Maasai colours.<sup>265</sup> Analysis of colours is done on data table on page 277. Also see Figs. 17 and 44 on pages 353 & 393.

#### 5.1.7.10. Sandals

Sandals were mainly used when the moran were going on a major raid. They were given two pairs of sandals. They are known as "Enamughe" in Maa language. (See Figures 26, 52, pp. 365 & 422). They are made of wildebeest, buffalo or cowhides. Today leather is also used.

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<sup>265</sup> Woldock, pp. 16-21

#### 5.1.7.11. Spear

Spear is an ever present most priceless moran possession. They are composed of a steel blade at the top, a shaft and a lower steel section as illustrated in the Figures 35 & 60 on pages 375 & 437).

There are several different kinds of spears. The spears with thin shafts and leaf blade are used for throwing. The narrow bladed spear is used for stabbing and the most important is the war spear with a long narrow blade. Junior warriors have wooden shafts while the senior ones have ivory shafts. The colour of the spear is important. Black, a more prestigious than a light colour is the prerogative of a senior moran.<sup>266</sup>

During times of peace the moran spear is decorated with beads at the blade.

#### 5.1.7.12. Shield

A moran's shield is made of buffalo hides, sometimes giraffe and zebra hides. Just as in the other mentioned art-forms there is a greater regard for shields made of wild animal hides. Such shields are highly treasured as art-forms of great cultural value by the Maasai.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Hollis, *Ibid*, pp. 39-52.

<sup>267</sup> Hopley, *Ibid*, pp. 29-47.



The designs of the shields are made by the moran. Much as the Maasai are communally working people, there is always an aspect of uniqueness in an individual's design. They try and make the best possible form, to elevate themselves symbolically.

However, half the design symbolises the moran's section, the other is the age group. In some cases fellow morans include a circular mark to proclaim the warrior's bravery. This would be done in the owner's absence. The edges of the shield are reinforced with a hardwood rib and sewn using animal entrails.<sup>268</sup>

The shields of today are much smaller, lighter, and their designs are less symbolic than the authentic shields. The shape is also different. The authentic shields were more circular and of a more rounded cross section as illustrated in the Fig. 33, 64 & 65 page 373, 442 and 447).

#### 5.1.7.13. Body Ornamentation

The maasai ornamentation, like that of other peoples of Africa, is concerned with sophisticated, excellent and spiritually inspired body adornment which provide (the ornaments with) the human spirit with possible religious implication. The necklaces earrings, different types of

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<sup>268</sup> Hobley, *Ibid*, pp. 50-59.

body ornaments and a variety of articles associated with body beautification are all part of artistic parameters and design patterns which are understandable and appreciable solely within the socio cultural milieu of the maasai<sup>269</sup>. Figures 42 and 43 page 390 - 391 illustrate the above.

#### 5.1.8. Attire For Elders (Ilpayiani)

Elders have different types of attire consisting of elaborate clothing and ornamentations which accord with the following social status:

a) Junior elder

This have necklace and ornaments, snuff containers, wildebeest's-tail fly-whisk and tobacco containers. Red or brown togas<sup>270</sup>.

b) Senior elders

Have necklace and ornaments, snuff containers, wildebeest's flywhisk and very heavy warm blankets. They also have two or three togas, which are checked or plain.

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<sup>269</sup> Bosto, J., *Ikenga Figures Among the North-West Igbo and Igola.*, Nigeria, Lagos, Federal Department of Antiquities, 1997, pp. 10 - 120.

<sup>270</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, pp. 51-61

Elders also have their leaders who wear special togas of decorated hides; those who are known to be the most generous and honest are honoured by having their forearms wrapped with blue beads. The elders also wear necklaces and light clothing, heavy blankets and have facial markings<sup>271</sup>.

Junior elders carry white sticks which symbolize peace. New elders are blessed and painted with white chalk called "enhuroto".

The laibon, the most respected elder wears a cloak made from fur of the rare tree hyrax for a formal portrait. The attire in this case is among other things, to enhance his dignity and provide an aura of mystery and to symbolise his status within Maasai society.

Religious sculptures were fashioned by the medicine-man, the smith or an independent artist, who must be inspired by a vision. Ancestral figures were the medium through which the living conversed with their ancestral spirits, and solicit him with the most varied requests. The figures are supposed to "reply". In the case of Pomdo figure of the Kissi the figure makes a bow, the figure of Ijo trembles, and in a case of perjury, the figure of the Bakundu spirit rocks<sup>272</sup>.

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<sup>271</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, pp. 63-69.

<sup>272</sup> Leuzinger, Elsey, *Africa: The Art of the Negro Peoples*, Germany, Holle and Co., 1960, pp. 19-60.

In many African traditional societies the elders play the role of medicine-man and the spirit. The correct costume must be used as without this, the function would lack the right aura.

Where there were central government structures like kingships, art was used as a form of enhancing and maintaining status of the rulers. Swords, stools, staffs, state umbrellas, royal drums and other regalia were insignia of the king's status, and his palace might be distinguished by special architectural features or forms of decorations. The Yoruba usually had splendidly carved doors and house posts.<sup>273</sup>

From the foregoing observations on the various traditional attires of the Maasai society, it is obvious that initiation has greatly affected their attire, creating the need for the different types of ornaments, clothes, weapons and accessories they carry.

The influence of age levels had an effect on the attire because of the social responsibility that the society bestowed on each age-set. The responsibility determined the attire of each group. Other factors that had direct influence on the attire were the economic and social structures of the community. Still other factors were climate, vegetation and movement.

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<sup>273</sup> Bascom, W., *African Art In Cultural Perspective*, pp. pages 3-27 and 183-187.

To illustrate this, one may note the presence of abundant traditional art-forms in West African region and not so abundant in the Eastern and South African regions. Compared to the West African region, fine Arts seem to occupy a strikingly modest place in the traditional cultures of Eastern and Southern Africa. In some cases migrations of pastoral peoples may have made it difficult to preserve a widespread practice of making sculptures and figurative art. In other instances belief in a higher god may have displaced the ancestral contribution that had stimulated the arts. The influence of Islam, may also have played a role in discouraging the making of some forms of art, especially art depicting the human form or face.

However there are impressive art and craft practices in a number of places in Eastern and Southern Africa. In these places are to be found artistic products that depict social and cultural beliefs of the particular communities. For example, figural wood-crafts among the Wakamba of Kenya are a source of information on how they lived and dressed. The Giriama of Kenya make sculptural carvings for graves and as commemorative points. This practice is also common among the Nyika or Mijikenda of the Coastal region of Kenya. The Makonde of Tanzania make masks among other crafts as part of their cultural heritage. Through their artistic practices it is also

possible to learn about their age-set and the mode of dressing. In African traditional societies, age-set, social responsibility and attire, should all be seen as playing the same role of defining a person in a community.<sup>274</sup>

#### 5.1.9. Colour

Colour is one marked significance of Maasai art-forms. The Maasai have particular colours and colour arrangements which have today been distorted by Western market demands that asks for a better order without understanding the need for Maasai uniqueness and authenticity.

The main colours are red, blue and white or orange, green (or a light blue) and yellow. At times black replaced blue, particular when they obtained material from other peoples such as the Akamba.

All art-forms were characterised by the opposing arrangements of the colours in both halves. One half of an ornament could, for example, have an arrangement of blue, red and white, the next have white, red and blue or white, red and green. This does not correspond well with the Western art where the art-forms are characterised by

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<sup>274</sup> RESCKESI, Maria, *African Masterpiece From Munich*, chapter 1.

a particular order with both sides having to match.<sup>275</sup>  
See Figures on page 296.

In short, traditional Maasai used colours basically as a tool of expressing and creating symbolism. Similarly many African traditional art-forms and design patterns are decorated in red, white and black dyes. It is easy to see why. These are colours of mineral, animal and vegetable origin which are easily accessible to the artist, and which also evoke definite associations in the mind of the artist as these are also symbolic colours.

In some African cultures white obtained from lime and plant ash suggests supernatural forces such as, danger and death. It is therefore used for dealing with sick people and painting masks which represent the supernatural. In Western Sudan and amongst the Yoruba, white is symbolic of purity and divinity. Black, obtained from soot, coal, etc., often symbolizes the earth. Red implies energy, vitality and joy. Red colouring matter obtained from camwood is used by communities in the Congo region and elsewhere to paint themselves at festivals or in other joyous situations, and red is also used to paint young men when they undergo initiation to show that they are entering the adult world. Painting the face with colour in rings or streaks and dabs is sometimes a substitute for wooden masks and

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<sup>275</sup> Sanford, *Ibid*, pp. 21-49.

perhaps even antedates their development and use.<sup>176</sup>  
All these significance provided to colour by other African peoples also refer to the Maasai in the like manner.

The fundamental criterion needed to critically analyse the Maasai art forms and design pattern hinges on understanding the techniques the Maasai artists use in making their art products. Other criteria such as material used, aims, objectives and purposes of the art forms as well as who produces them are also important. So Maasai art forms and design patterns appear in diverse shapes and scales, such as is found in such items as attire, headdresses, face and ear ornaments, bracelets, thigh belts, anklets, sandals, spears, shields, hairstyles etc. All these signify the nomadic and pastoral life of the Maasai people. Hence the Maasai culture and philosophy are reflected in their art. Indeed to analyse Maasai art forms is like analysing their (Maasai) culture in general and philosophy in particular.

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<sup>176</sup> Leuzinger, Esley, *Africa: The Art of the Negro Peoples*, Germany, Holle and Co, 1960, pp. 62-68.



## 6.0. CHAPTER SIX: MAASAI DESIGN CONCEPTS

### 6.1. MEANING

Maasai art-forms and design patterns follow the principles of organisation where the following concepts are important: unity, balance, variety, colour, materials techniques, movement etc. Forms of Maasai material culture follow these principles. The character and personal images of Maasai art can, then, only be understood when looked against the principles of organisation.

In order to get a good response in terms of meaning and beliefs arising out of the art-forms of the Maasai it is necessary to always first know why they were made, by whom and when. This is because design criteria of their art encompasses all aspects of Maasai lifestyle. Others, are the materials used, colour code, symbolism of art-forms, shape, Maasai men's attire, youth's male attire, circumcision(emorata), head and adornment, braided hair, face and ear ornaments, decorations, neck ornamentation, arm and wrist bracelets, belts around the waist, anklets, toga, sandals, spear, shield figure, household items and storage equipment, dress and related jewellery, body decorations, head-dresses and related ornamentation, necklaces, waistwear and belts, arms and finger wear,

footwear, ornaments, bead decorations and related jewellery, animal ornaments, items of weaponry, defence and warfare, entertainment, fun and play and other art-forms for general use.

The message behind a work of art of any traditional society is only well understood after comprehending the above elements. For example the symbolic meaning of a shield is defence or warfare in maasai society. Also in some African societies with kingdoms or centralised governships, art served the purpose of enhancing and maintaining the status of the rulers. Stools, staffs, sculptures, state umbrellas, royal drums, crowns and other regalia were insignia of the kings; status and his palace might be distinguished by architectural features or forms of decoration.

On the other hand, most African sculpture appears to have been associated with religion, which pervaded most aspects of African life. The religious genre included virtue figures which adorned shrines, ancestral figures, charm figures, stools used in initiation to the cults, the apparatus used in divination, dance staffs, musical instruments and other ritual paraphenaria.<sup>277</sup> Even for ordinary day to day life art forms assume traditional forms as shown in Figures 13-16, page 348 to 351.

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<sup>277</sup> Bascom, William R., African Art in Cultural Perspective  
W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1973 pg. 3 - 35

## 6.2. SYMBOLISM AND COLOUR CODE

The Maasai designs are a portrayal of the way they see the world around them. The system of bead work is very complicated to an outsider, but to a Maasai woman, the colour code is simple and easy to interpret.

The Maasai indicate all manner of social standards by the jewellery they wear, their beaded ornaments are loaded with symbolic reference to cattle and water forms. The kinetics of the jewellery on the wearer are related to the movements of cattle and the sound of dripping, falling and gushing water.<sup>278</sup>

The rainbow is the greatest inspiration to Maasai women as they create their jewellery. The rainbow to the Maasai, signals that the rain is about to stop an important phenomenon to them.

The rainbow consists of pairs in maximum contrast that complement each other. Orange and blue, red and green separated by white. In this system two weak colours cannot stand next to each other. White is also part of a triad with red and black seen here setting off the pairs of colours from one another and also acting as a high contrast border.<sup>279</sup>

The rainbow can be seen as the stronger member of a

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<sup>278</sup> Trowel, *Ibid.*, pp. 9-32.

<sup>279</sup> Trowel, *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13.

pair of mutually opposing and complementary colour sets, the weaker of which are red/white/black. These appear in necklace collars as borders.

Yellow equals green and blue equals black. The artist can change the colours as long as the pattern and rules are not altered.<sup>180</sup>

Necklaces that are predominantly orange, blue or red must be worn in combination with others to form a complete rainbow unit with red/white/black.

The rainbow and red/white/black are mutually dependent and pairs of colours can be recombined into triads that complete a single whole.

The discontinuation of importation of beads in 1980 has held back the Maasai bead work resulting into the use of substitutes, such as buttons and chopped up biro pens.<sup>181</sup> This situation is now slightly changing owing to the liberalisation of the economy.

### 6.3. THE MAASAI ATTACHMENT TO BEADS

Beads have been fought for, loved, begged and prayed for. To some people they have strange powers as amulets and provide a means of solving problems of a great social significance.

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<sup>180</sup> Somjee, *Ibid*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>181</sup> Somjee, *Ibid*, pp. 10-13

The Maasai during festive seasons may wear beaded collars that go up to 61 centimetres in diameter.

The ubiquitous calabashes of the nomadic Maasai are beautifully decorated with leather and beads, so are their togas. The sheepskin Skirt of the Maasai bride is also very heavily adorned with beads.<sup>282</sup>

The Maasai also used beads as spiritual charms. For instance, a Maasai child will wear a necklace bearing a bead from its grandmother's necklace to deflect evil.

The Maasai are a people who relate with nature in a very positive way whereby all answers to their design problems can be related to and solved by nature. They use the materials found in their immediate environment, such as the mineral that is mixed with animal fat to form ochre.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Galaty, *Ibid*, pp. 19-27.

<sup>283</sup> Galaty, *Ibid*, pp. 30-35.

## MALE AND FEMALE SYMBOLS

### Illustration 3.

- (a) - Male form is considered as stronger, superior and stable
- (b) - Female form that is unstable, ungenerative
- (c) - A male symbol
- (d) - A female symbol

These symbols are very common in all Maasai designs.<sup>284</sup> (The significance of these symbols is discussed in chapters four, five and seven).

#### 6.4. FORM CONTENT APPRECIATION

In order to appreciate form, content, meaning and symbolism, the following categories of art-forms and design patterns have been analysed (see the illustrations on page 86, 90 & 344)

##### 6.4.1. Household Items And Storage Equipment Forms

Items in this category include, gourds, calabashes, leather containers and bags, stirrers, spoons, "plates", wooden containers.

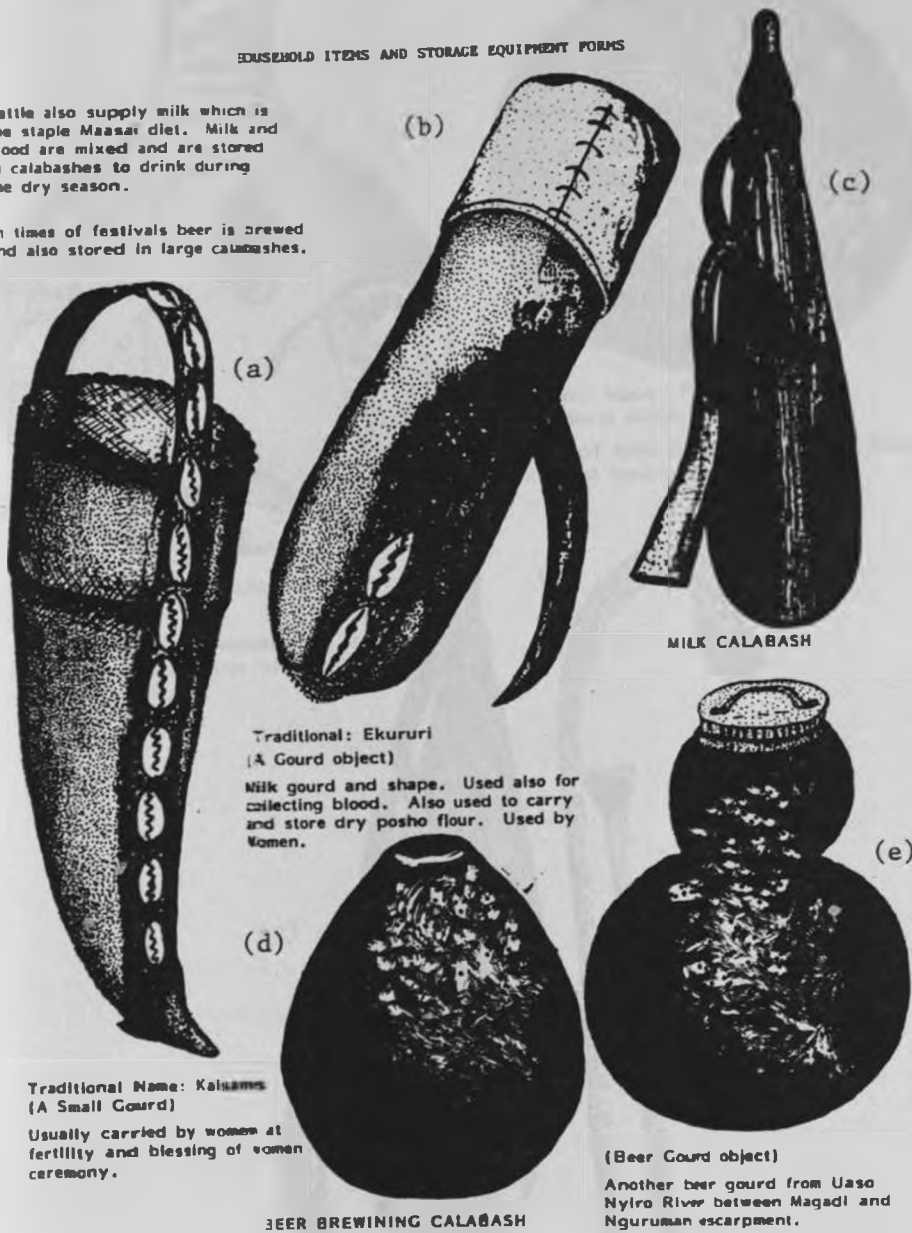
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<sup>284</sup> Ibid, pp. 47-53

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND STORAGE EQUIPMENT FORMS

Cattle also supply milk which is the staple Maasai diet. Milk and blood are mixed and are stored in calabashes to drink during the dry season.

In times of festivals beer is brewed and also stored in large calabashes.





(a)

Traditional Name: Ekukuri  
(A Gourd)

It is smaller and shorter. It is used for catching the blood when the cow is bled.



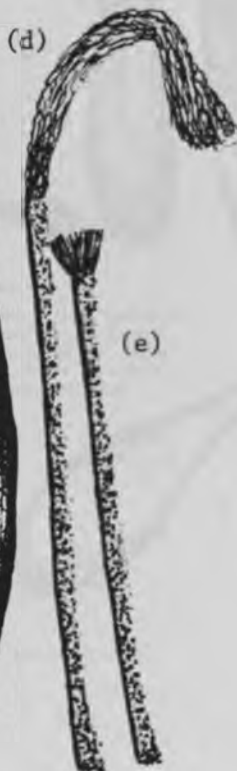
(b)

Traditional Name: Kaisamis  
(Beer Gourd object)

Beer gourd from Uaso Nyiro River-between Magadi and Iguruman escarpment.



(c)

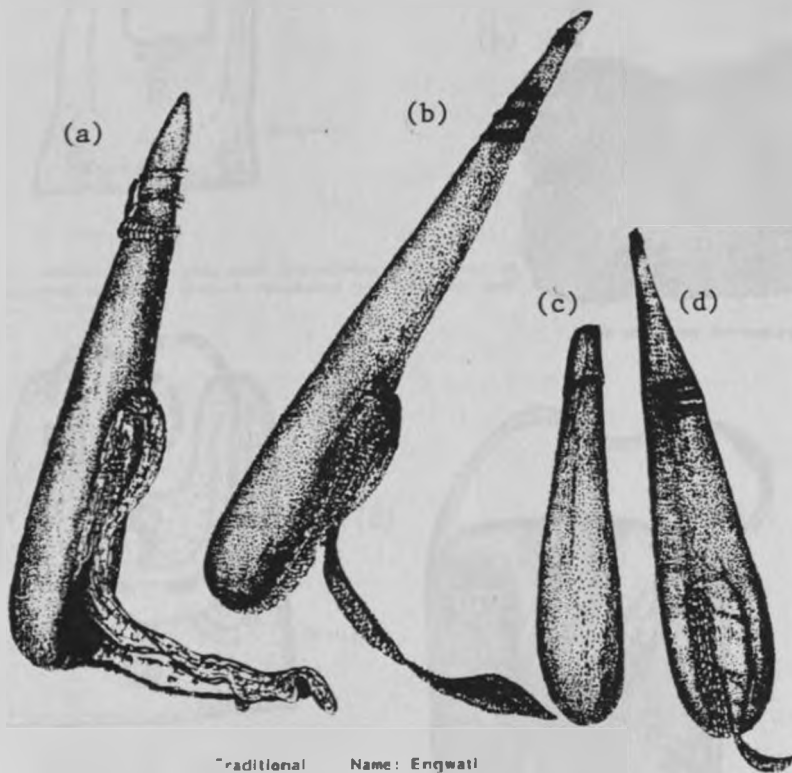


(d)

(e)

CALABASH WITH TWO CLEANING BRUSHES

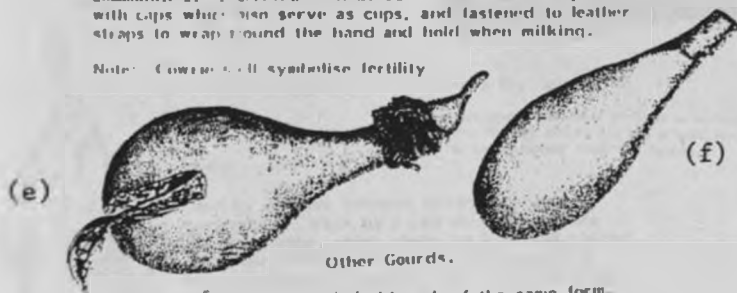




Traditional Name: Engwati

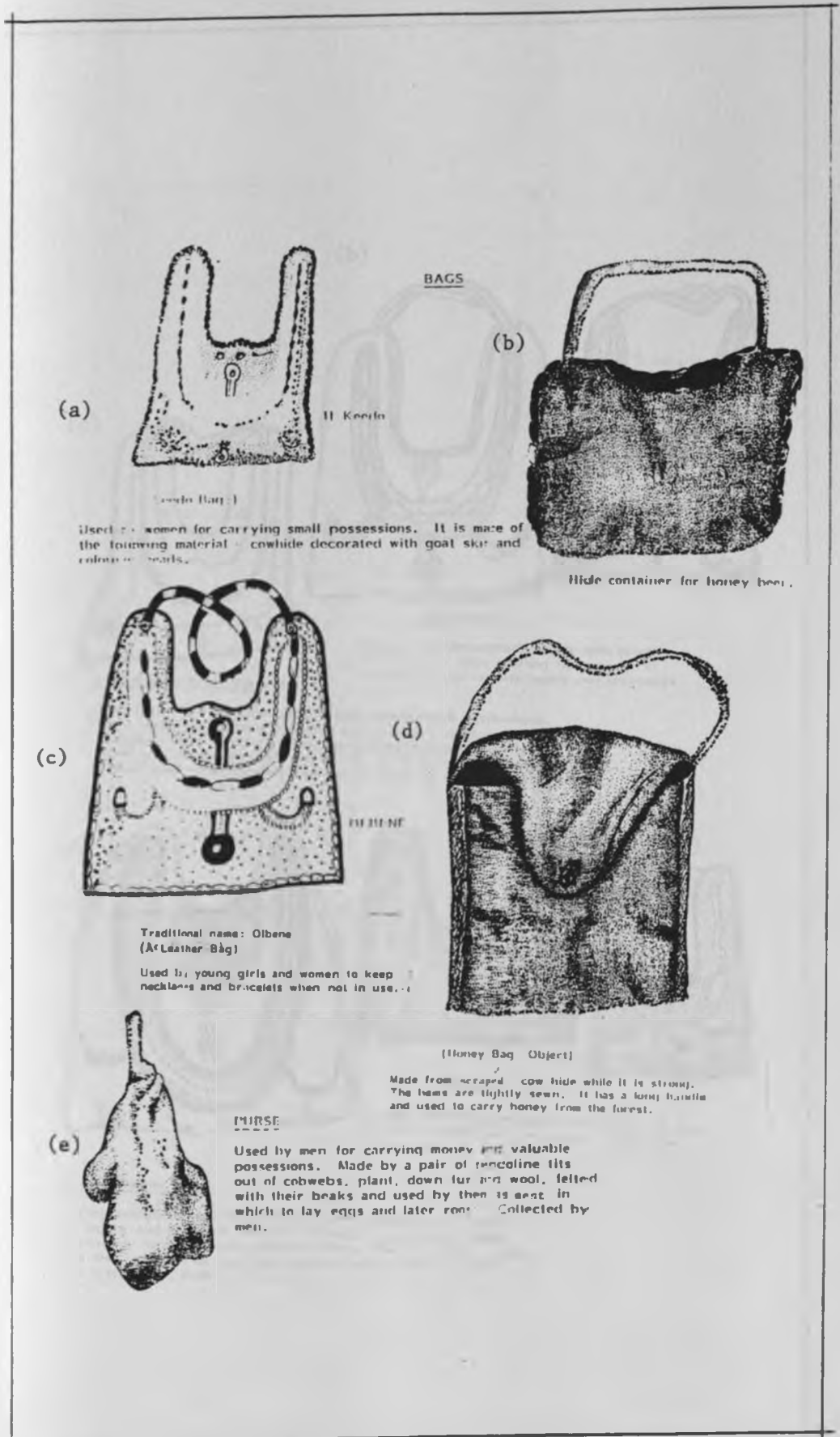
Gourds used for both fresh and curdled milk. Most prevalent household utensils obtained through trade with agricultural communities. Decorated with beads and cowrie shells, fitted with cups which also serve as cups, and lashed to leather straps to wrap round the hand and hold when milking.

Note: Cowrie shells symbolise fertility

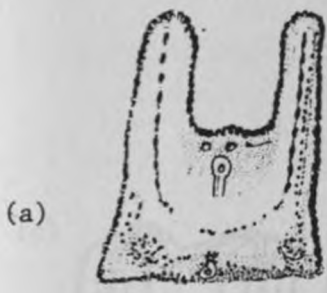


Other Gourds.

Shapes are varied although of the same form.



BAGS



(a)

II Koofo

[Koofo Bag]

Used by women for carrying small possessions. It is made of the following material - cowhide decorated with goat skin and colored beads.

(b)



Hide container for honey bees.



(c)

III III III

Traditional name: Oibene (A Leather Bag)

Used by young girls and women to keep necklaces and bracelets when not in use.

(d)



[Honey Bag Object]

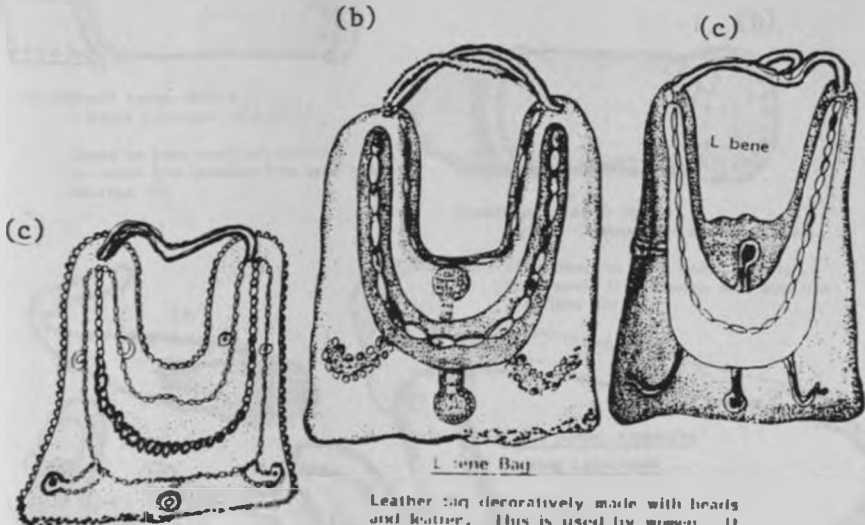
Made from scraped cow hide while it is strong. The seams are tightly sewn. It has a long handle and used to carry honey from the forest.

(e)



MIRSE

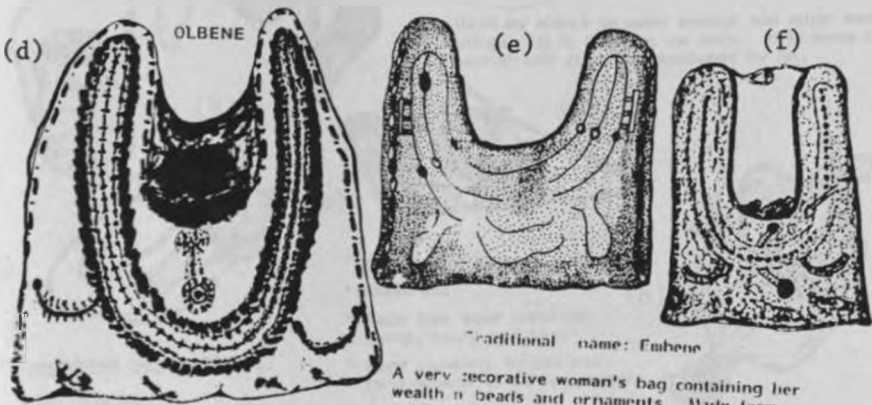
Used by men for carrying money and valuable possessions. Made by a pair of rancoline tits out of cobwebs, plant, down fur and wool, felted with their beaks and used by them as nest in which to lay eggs and later roost. Collected by men.



Traditional Name: Ilkeerin

Leather bag decoratively made with beads and leather. This is used by women. It contains a lot of the beads and ornaments.

Bag used by women for transporting strong small possessions, e.g. beads red ochre and beads work tied to a donkey on a journey. Made of cowrie-shell, decorated with goatskin strips, sewn in a chain-stitch with the aid of an oil and with coloured china beads attached with iron wire. Made by women.



Traditional name: Embene

A very decorative woman's bag containing her wealth in beads and ornaments. Made from animal skin.

Another Bag:

Used by women transporting/storing small possessions. beads, red ochre and beadwork tied to a donkey on journeys. Made of cowhide decorated with goatskin strips sewn in a chain-stitch with the aid of an oil and with coloured china beads attached with iron wire. Made by women.

SNUFF CONTAINERS

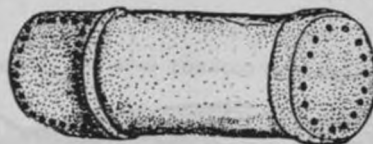
(a)



Traditional name: Rowuo  
(Snuff Container Object)

Used to keep snuffing material. It is made from bamboo tree and has a leather lid.

(b)



Traditional name: Mowuo  
(Snuff Container of another shape)

It is used to save snuff material. It is made from bamboo tree and has a leather lid also.



Local name: Kadang'ot  
Ilkidog Lelkumpau

Used by elders to carry tobacco and other small things. It is hung on the neck. It is made by leather and strap is smoothened by fat.

Traditional names: ikidogo

Snuff Containers

Made from carved wood beads and skin. Used by elders and respected warrior groups. Worn round the neck

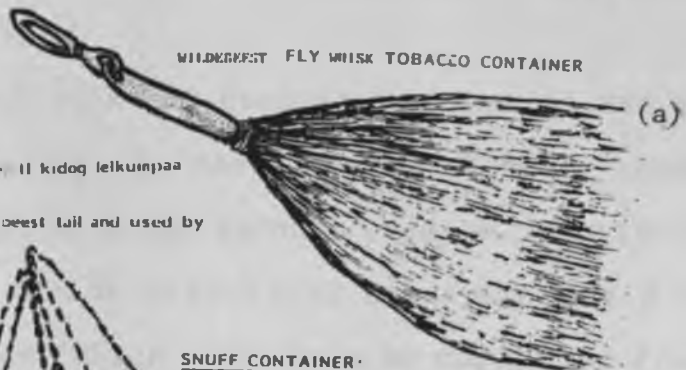
- \* Ilkidogo Lei Kumpau
- \* Snuff Box
- \* Made from wood carvings Beads, Ivory and Skin
- \* Used commonly by old men (and women) to carry tobacco

(o)



Traditional name: Kumbal

Tobacco wrapped up in animal skin and taken by elders of society.



WILDBEEST FLY WHISK TOBACCO CONTAINER

Traditional name: Il kidog lelkuinjaa

Made from wild beest tail and used by elders.

SNUFF CONTAINER

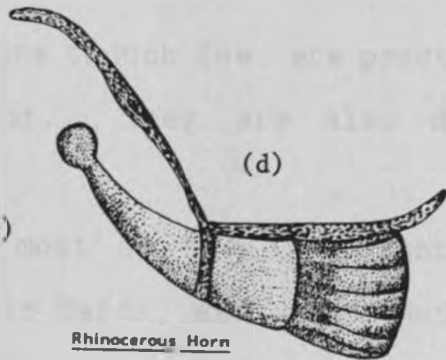
Used by men who are elders. Made of ivory with cow hide lid and decorated with iron and copper chain. Usually carried hung from the neck by the chains.

Probably made by a wood carver.



(b)

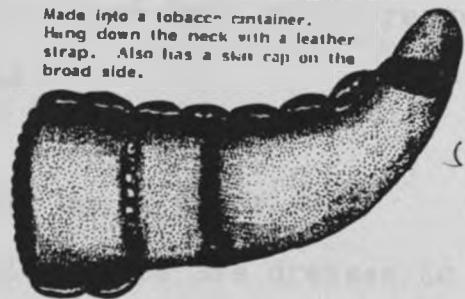
Made from carved wood and used by elders.



(d)

Rhinoceros Horn

Made into a tobacco container. Hang down the neck with a leather strap. Also has a skin cap on the broad side.



(e)

MOWUO

Mowuo Horn Container for snuff for old people. Made of horns with leather lid and decorated with cowrie shells.

The Maasai male and female symbols (see p. 358) can be seen in their decorative ornaments knives, stools, etc. Different and various materials in which such symbols are used are made of wood, leather, bamboo sticks and bead-work. These materials are commonly used in making household items. (Illustrations are found on pages 345 - 351).

Both fresh milk and curdled are carried and stored in gourds. Gourds are the most prevalent of household utensils and are obtained through trade with agricultural peoples. They are decorated with beads and cowrie shells fitted with caps (which also serve as cups), and fastened to leather straps to wrap around the hand and hold when milking<sup>255</sup>.

Household possessions though few, are practical and extensively made use of. They are also decorated lavishly.

During the rains, most of the inhabitants of an Enkai disperse with their herds, and women pack up the pieces of their household which they would reassemble temporarily somewhere else.

#### 6.4.2. Dress And Related Jewellery Forms

From children to adults there are dresses to serve every stage of life. For example the Toga made of

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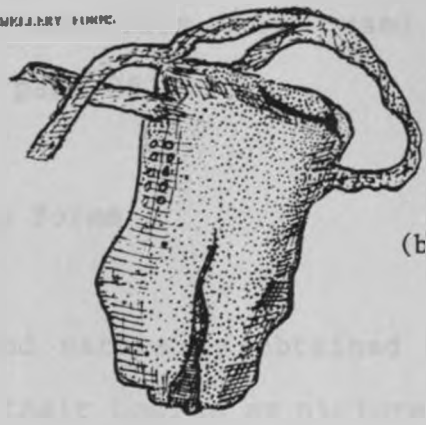
<sup>255</sup> Galaty, *Ibid*, pp. 37-45

SHIRTS AND RELATED FEMORARY TOPS



(a)

- Toga
- Made of Gazelle Hide
- Widely used by adult males



(b)

Traditional name: Lekesena

Lekesena Leather Skirt (For ladies) in a different shade. It is decorated with beads and has strap.



(d)

Traditional name: Of karasha

Toga like garment worn by a Maasai woman. Originally made of animal skin (goatskin/Calfskin) and worn as everyday uniform. Today the common covering is a brightly coloured cloth of red or reddish orange. May be draped over one's shoulder, wrapped around the body from chest to knees, suspended from criss-crossing beads or braces or rolled around the waist in a cloth strip.

Another skirt of a different shape

(c)

Traditional name: Lekesena  
Decorated skirt for married women. It is made of leather and decorated by beads. It is made by women.

gazelle hide is popular with adult males. Bells (kodong'ot) are considered part of dress for warriors; lambskin skirts are common with ladies. Decorations and dresses are inseparable from each other. Leather, metal, bead work among other materials, are used. (see illustrations on Fig. 17 page 353).

#### 6.4.3. Body Decoration Forms

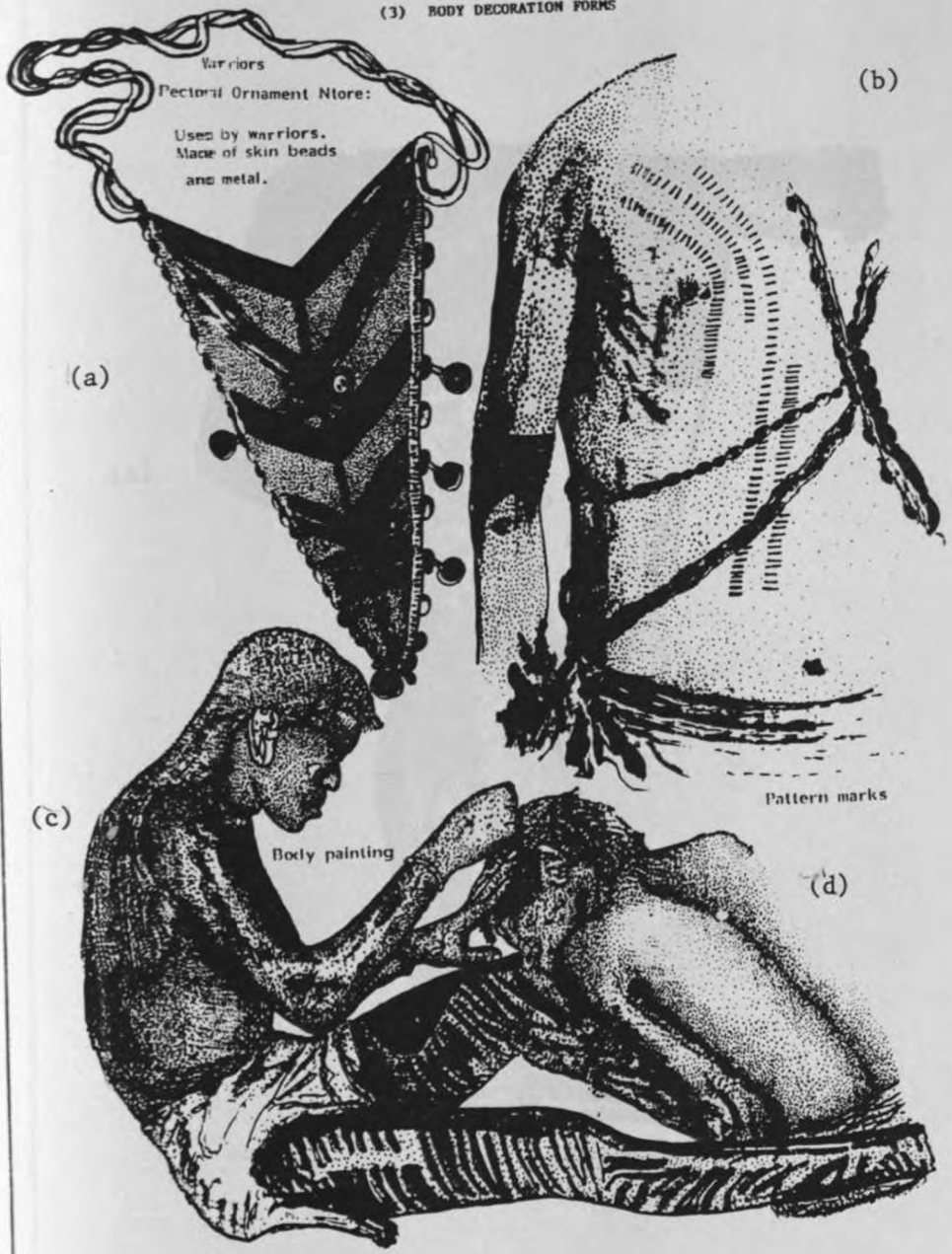
Using instruments and naturally obtained colours, the Maasai can re-create their bodies as picture planes. Art-forms and design patterns are applied on various parts of the body as decorations. From head to feet, decorations are elaborately done to fit or serve certain requirements and purposes such as ceremonies, rituals and dances. For example, patterns of cicatrization trickle from the shoulders down the chest and stomach. Although this scarring is an optional decoration, if desired it must be done prior to circumcision.

#### 6.4.4. Head-dresses And Related Ornamentation Forms

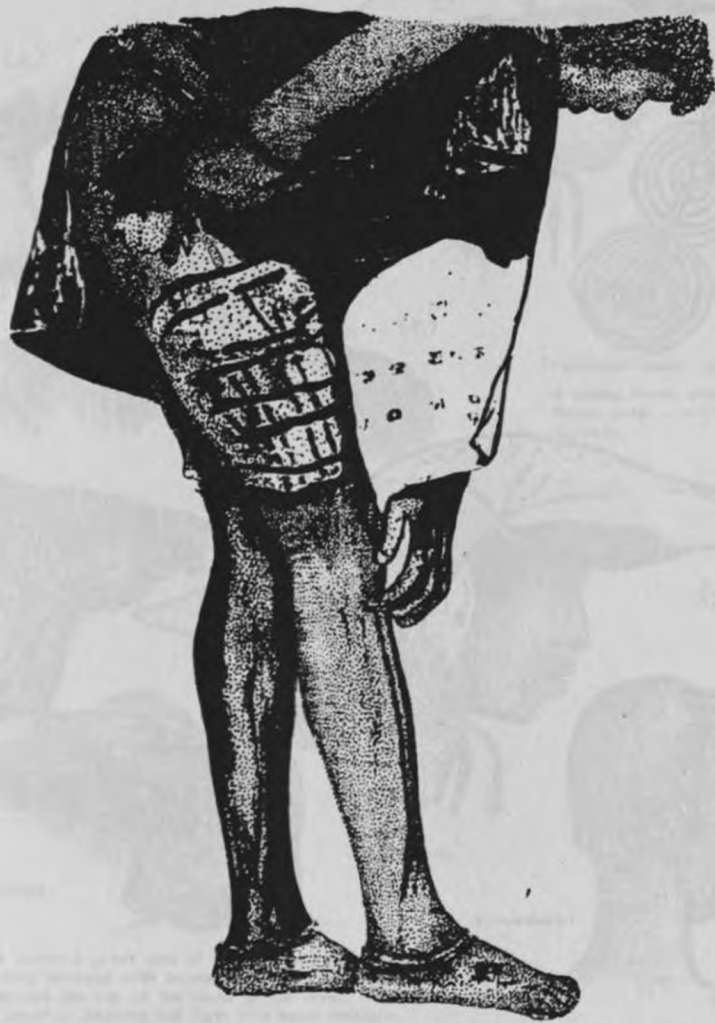
Both male and female have head ornamentation. For instance, a woman has her head shaved regularly, setting off the elaborate display of beaded jewellery to undisputed advantage. Head shaving is not only a traditional grooming, but part of every rite of passage



(3) BODY DECORATION FORMS

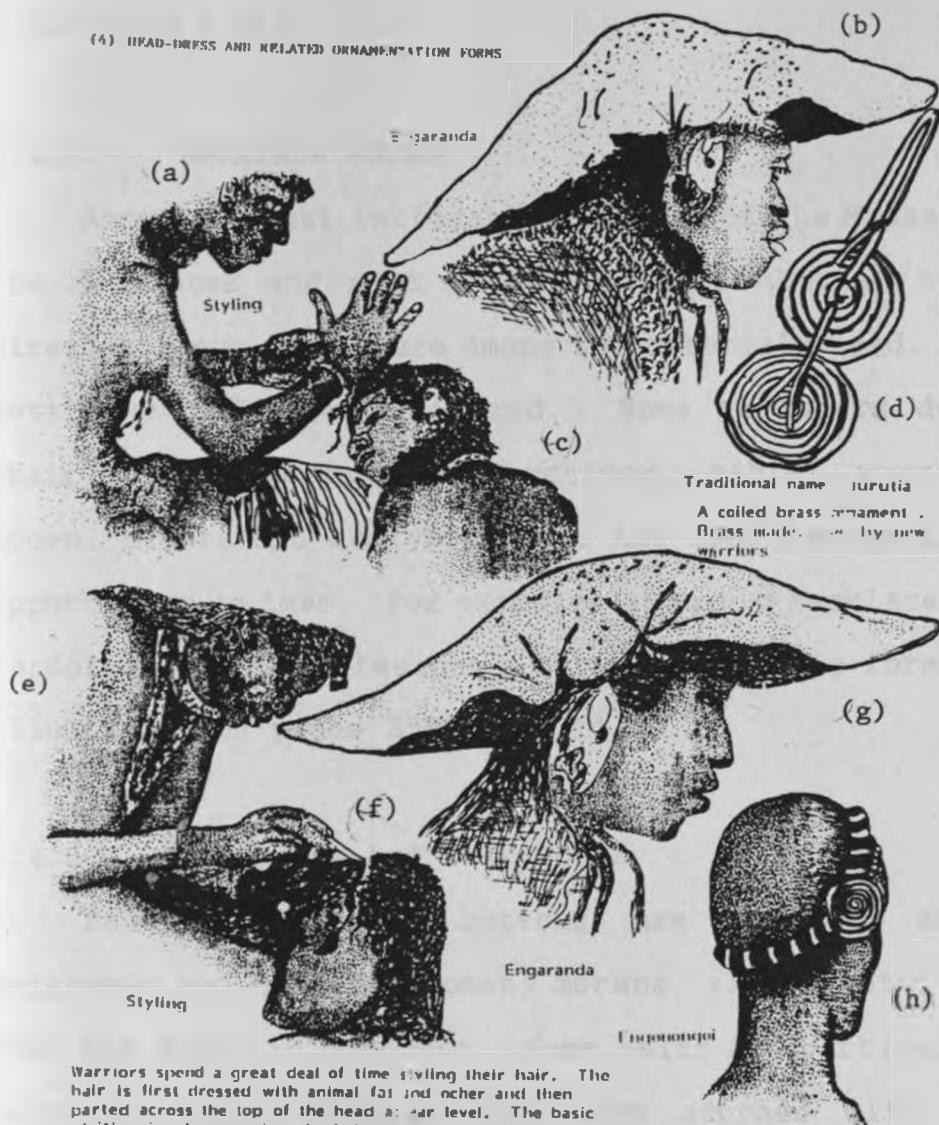


(a)



Body marks

(4) HEAD-DRESS AND RELATED ORNAMENTATION FORMS



Engaranda

(a)

Styling

(c)

(b)

(d)

Traditional name: *surutia*  
A coiled brass ornament.  
Brass made by new warriors

(e)

(f)

(g)

Engaranda

Styling

Engononqoi

(h)

Warriors spend a great deal of time styling their hair. The hair is first dressed with animal fat and ochre and then parted across the top of the head at ear level. The basic plaiting involves parting the hair into small sections, dividing each section in two, and then twisting each part, first separately and then together. Cotton or wool threads are twisted in to lengthen the hair. Plaited hair may hang loose (following pages) or be bound together in a lump or lumps.

Traditional name  
Engononqoi (headband)  
Materials: hide, brass  
User: New warriors

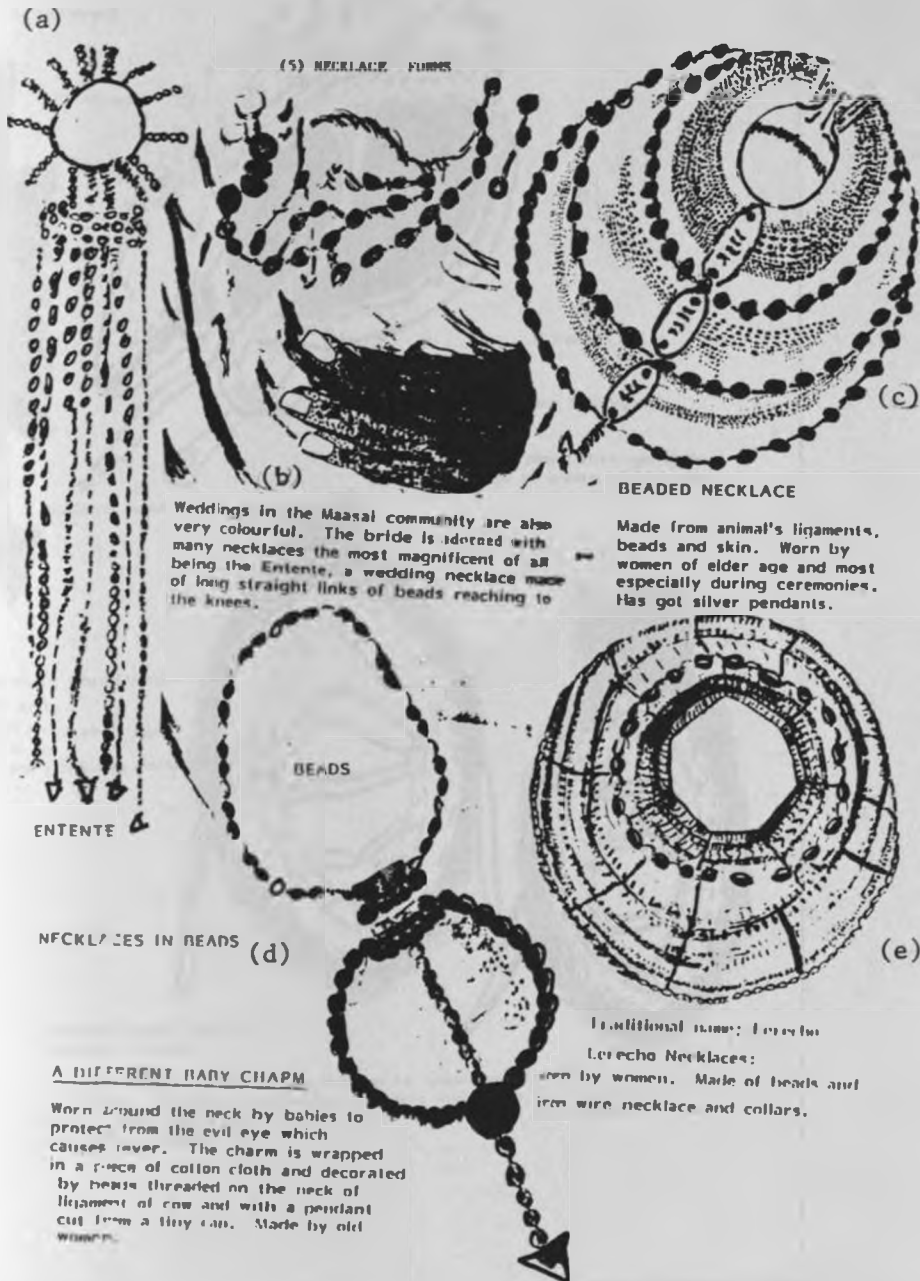
as well. The moran's hair is twisted and straightened into elaborate design patterns. Thus, beautiful patterns are applied in the hair and all over the head. Boys, girls, elders and, indeed, everybody in Maasai community is well catered for in having head-dresses and related ornamentation. (See illustrations on pages 357 & 405 Figures 20 & 46).

#### 6.4.5.        Necklaces Forms

Among the most intricate ornaments of the Maasai are the necklaces and neck wear. Coloured beads, hides, wires, strings, etc., are among the materials used. Even metals and plastics are used. Some neckwears double their uses as charms and protectives. Babies, warriors, women, elders and everybody else has specific necklaces apportioned to them. For example, aromatic necklaces and bandoliers of beads festoon a moran. (Necklace forms are illustrated on pages 359 Fig. 21).

#### 6.4.6.        Waistwear And Belt Forms

Beads, hides and buttons are used in making waistwear and belts. Women, morans, elders, etc., use them for specific purposes. Some belts are particularly very attractive because they are adorned with very colourful bead-work. (See illustrations of these forms on pages 361 & 431 Figures 23 & 49).



(5) NECKLACE FORMS

Weddings in the Maasai community are also very colourful. The bride is adorned with many necklaces the most magnificent of all being the Entente, a wedding necklace made of long straight links of beads reaching to the knees.

**BEADED NECKLACE**

Made from animal's ligaments, beads and skin. Worn by women of elder age and most especially during ceremonies. Has got silver pendants.

ENTENTE

BEADS

NECKLACES IN BEADS

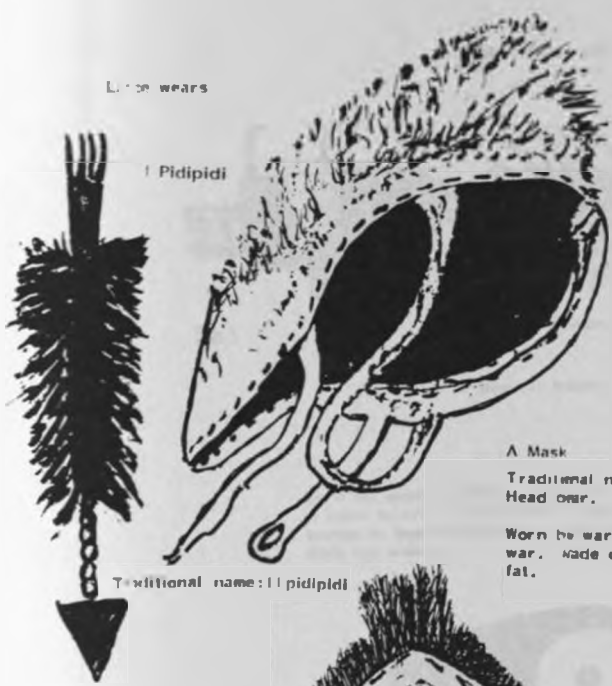
**A DIFFERENT BABY CHARM**

Worn around the neck by babies to protect from the evil eye which causes fever. The charm is wrapped in a piece of cotton cloth and decorated by beads threaded on the neck of ligament of cow and with a pendant cut from a tiny cap. Made by old women.

Traditional name: Lerecho

**Lerecho Necklaces:**

Worn by women. Made of beads and iron wire necklace and collars.



Line wears

I Pidipidi

(b)

II Karaga

A Mask

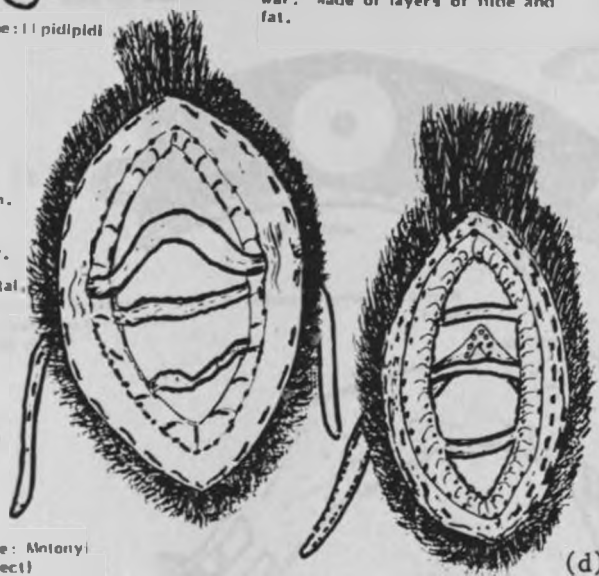
Traditional name Ikaraga:  
Head over.

Worn by warriors when going for war. Made of layers of hide and fat.

Traditional name: I pidipidi

(a)

Worn on the head by young men.  
It is made with a piece of wood and animal hair.  
At the top it has a comb and bottom a shining metal.



(c)

(d)

Traditional name: Mtonyi  
address Object

is a personal ceremonial head-dress for youngmen about to be initiated. It has six big ostrich feathers and goes down to the middle. Worn when going to hunt birds together with the mother's and brass (Sumbala)

(4) WAISTWEAR AND BELT FORMS

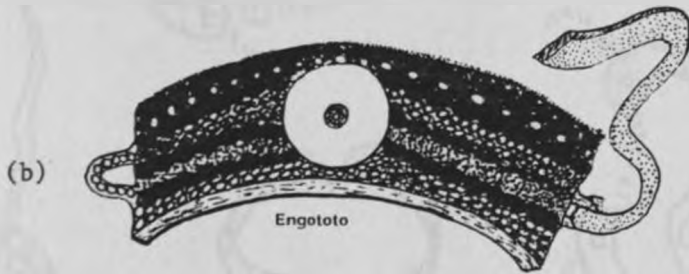


(a)

Traditional name: Ntore

Worn by: Women: Ntore

Worn by married women. Made of leather and decorated by beads. It is used to carry small items. The number of coloured beads vary from woman to woman according to the number of children one may have. Made by women.



(b)

Engototo

Decorated leather choker. Traditional name: Engototo (A Choker)  
Usually worn by women and girls.



(c)

Gitati

Traditional name: Gitati (Belt Object)

A wide cowhide belt worn by women after giving birth. It is made by women. (Also see page 343)



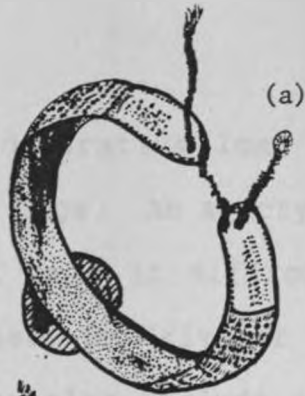
MORAN ACCESSORIES

Necklace

Made from skin, beads and carved wood.

Worn by Warriors

Made by Women



(b)



(e)



(c)



(d)



(f)



(g)



WARRIOR NECKLINES



#### 6.4.7. Arms And Fingerwear Forms

Armlets, cuffs, coils, rings, etc. are among the decorations of the arms and fingers. Materials used are wire, metal and beads. As far as metal is concerned, diverse types such as iron, aluminium or brass are used. for illustrations on arms and fingerwear forms are on see pages 364 & 417 Figures 25 & 50).

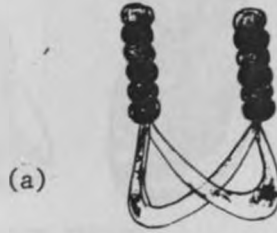
#### 6.4.8. Footwear Forms

Coils of wire form a decorative load in which a married woman may sheath her legs. An apocryphal legend goes that this added weight made it difficult, if not impossible, for a raiding enemy to drive or carry off a highly priced wife. Footwear also include shoes in the form of sandals. Among the materials used for making footwear are leather and metal, such as silver. Children, women, morans and elders have each some particular footwear for one purpose or another. (Illustrations are on pages 365 Figure 26).

#### 6.4.9. Ear Ornaments, Bead Decorations And Related Jewellery Forms

Beads, wire, copper rings, china, glass, hide, bone, wood, cowrie shells, aluminium and buttons are among the materials used. Both male and female use ear ornaments for various social and cultural activities as demanded by the culture. (See Ill. on pg. 366-369 Figures 27-30).

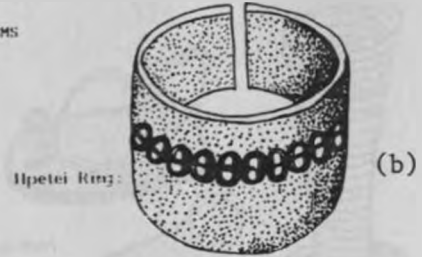
(7) ARMS AND FINGERWEAR FORMS  
WARRIORS



(a)

Traditional name: AITA

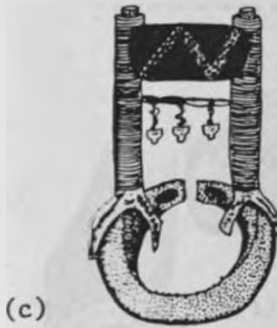
Aita, Horn Arm Ornament: Worn by warriors around the arm.  
Made of metal and beads.



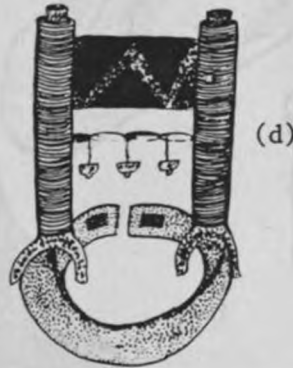
Ipetei Ring:

(b)

Ipetei Ring: Used by elders.  
Made of iron.  
Has a textured surface.



(c)



(d)

Traditional name: Erap  
(Armet Objects)

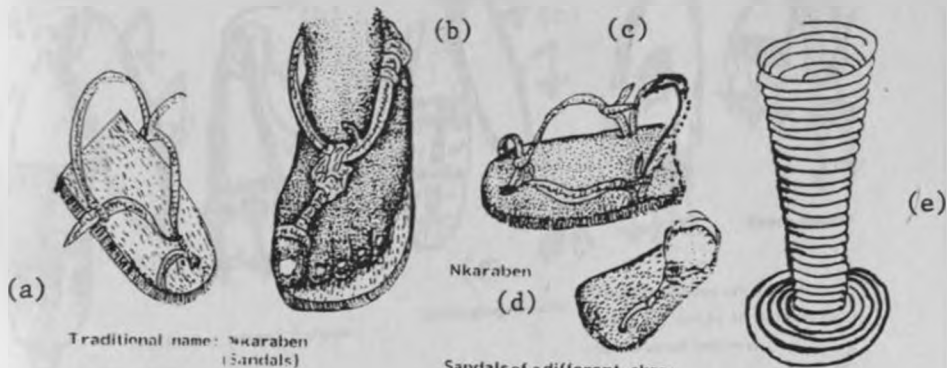
Special shaped armet worn by warriors. The material used is the Buffalo horn. The beads are put by a young girl. The round wire is also put by a young girl.



(e)

Used by elders  
Made of brass or iron  
Has a decorated surface.

(1) KINTUPAN PIRMA



Traditional name: Nkaraben (Sandals)

It is made of leather and strap from the tail of a bull. They are light and help in walking difficulties. As Maasais are Nomads they help to protect the legs on the hard surface and from thorns in the bush.

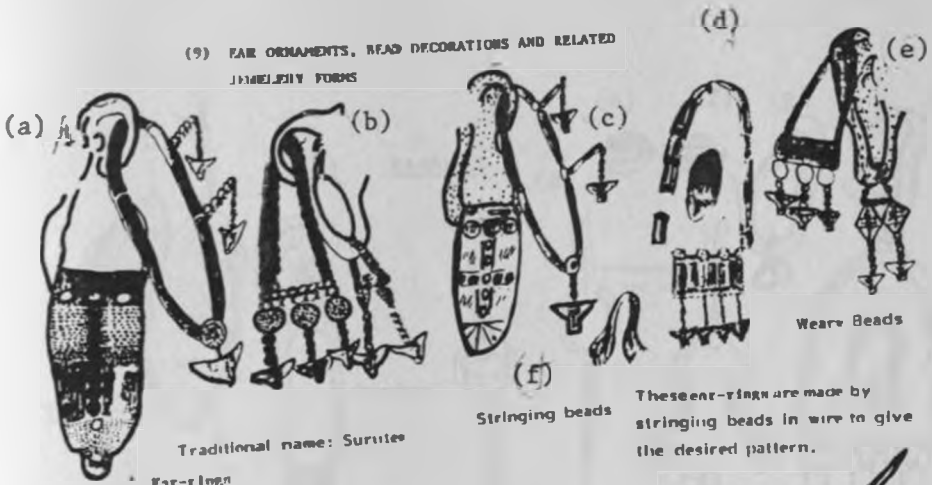
Made from cow's hide. It is worn when making long distance journeys or when going out hunting.



Made from cowhide and straps from the tail, worn when making long distance or thorny areas.

The Maasai sandals have different appearances

(9) EAR ORNAMENTS, HEAD DECORATIONS AND RELATED JEWELRY FORMS



Traditional name: Surites  
Ear-rings

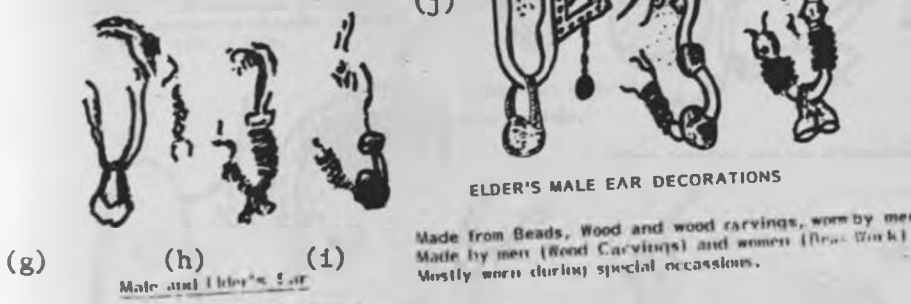
Worn by women (who are married) in their ears.  
The China and Glass Beads are sewn together with threads from neck ligaments of a cow.

Stringing beads

These ear-rings are made by stringing beads in wire to give the desired pattern.

Wear Beads

DECORATED MALE EAR



Male and Elder's Ear

The physical appearance of the Maasai warrior is of paramount importance to him. In times of war, the decorations act to instill awe on the enemy while in times of peace it is mainly a form of attraction.

ELDER'S MALE EAR DECORATIONS

Made from Beads, Wood and wood carvings, worn by men. Made by men (Wood Carvings) and women (Bead Work) Mostly worn during special occasions.

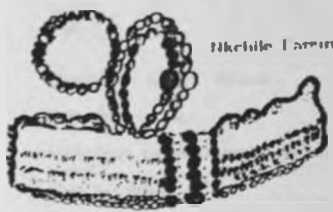
(n)

Nunai Earring

Traditional name: Nunai

Worn by elders. The beads are attached to a special wood, signifies wealth made by the eldest son for her husband.

With the lambskirt comes many beads, necklaces and heavy other making.

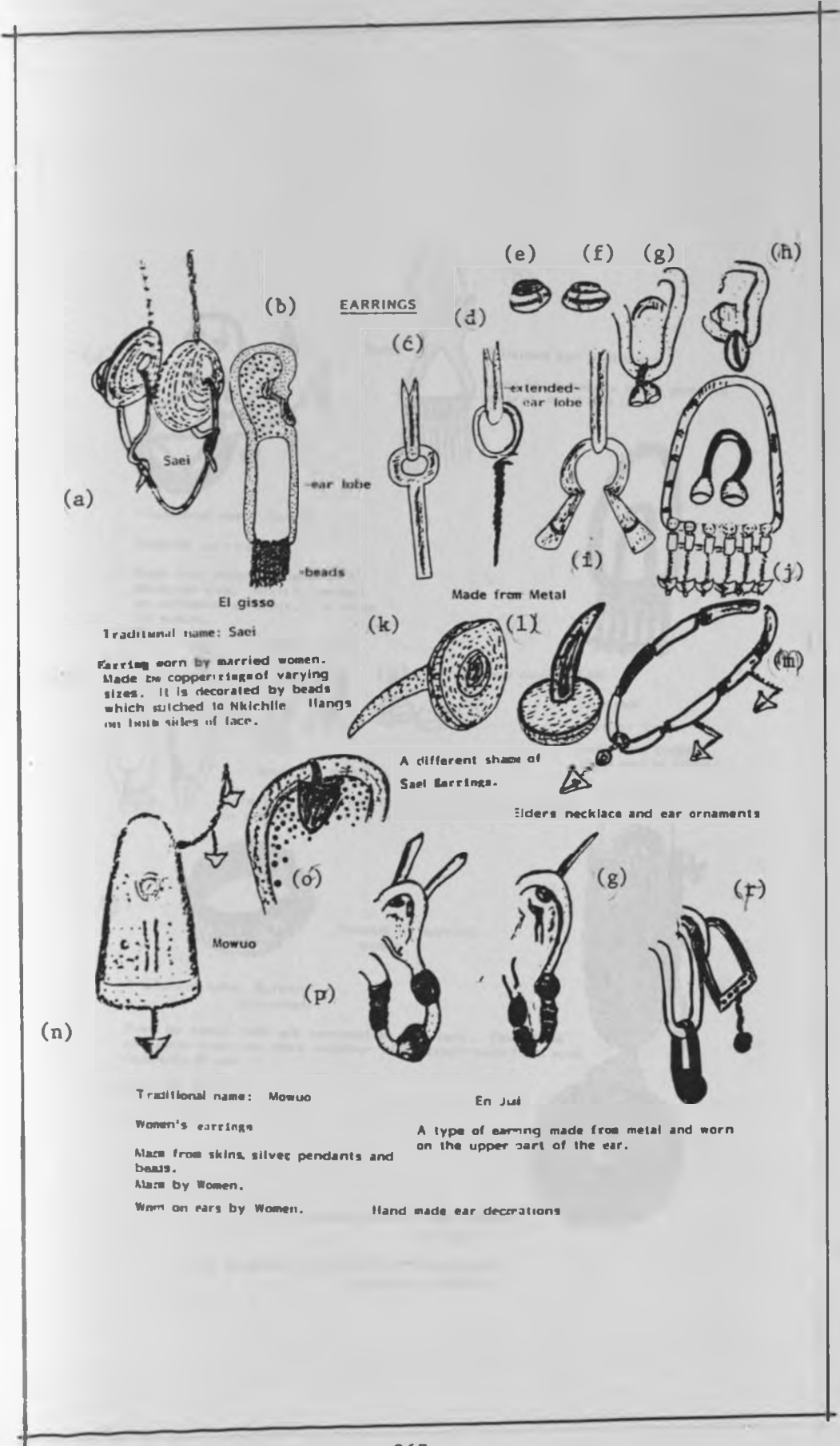


Nkchile Earring

(m)

ELDER'S NECKLACES AND EAR ORNAMENTS

It is worn by married women. The China glass beads are sewn onto the Nkchile with thread made from neck ligaments. They are hung on the pierced ear.



**EARRINGS**

Traditional name: Saei  
 Earring worn by married women. Made by copper rings of varying sizes. It is decorated by beads which stitched to Nkichele. Hangs on both sides of face.

Made from Metal

A different shape of Saei Earrings.

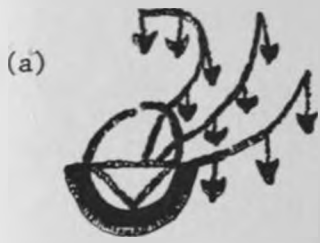
Elders necklace and ear ornaments

Traditional name: Mowuo

En Jui

Women's earrings  
 Made from skins, silver pendants and beads.  
 Made by Women.  
 Worn on ears by Women.

A type of earring made from metal and worn on the upper part of the ear.  
 Hand made ear decorations



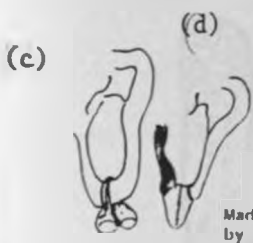
(a) Traditional name: Surutel  
 Women's ear-rings  
 Made from silver pendants and beads on skin. Worn by women on ceremonial moments. It is made by women.



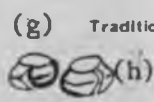
(l) Muna  
 Different Ear Stretcher  
 Used by women as above and also made of wool and beads.



(i)



(d) (e) (f)  
 MALE EAR RINGS  
 Made from silver metal and wood carvings. Made by men and worn by men.



(g) Traditional name: Sael  
 • Ear-rings  
 • Worn by Women  
 • Made from copper rings and of beads.

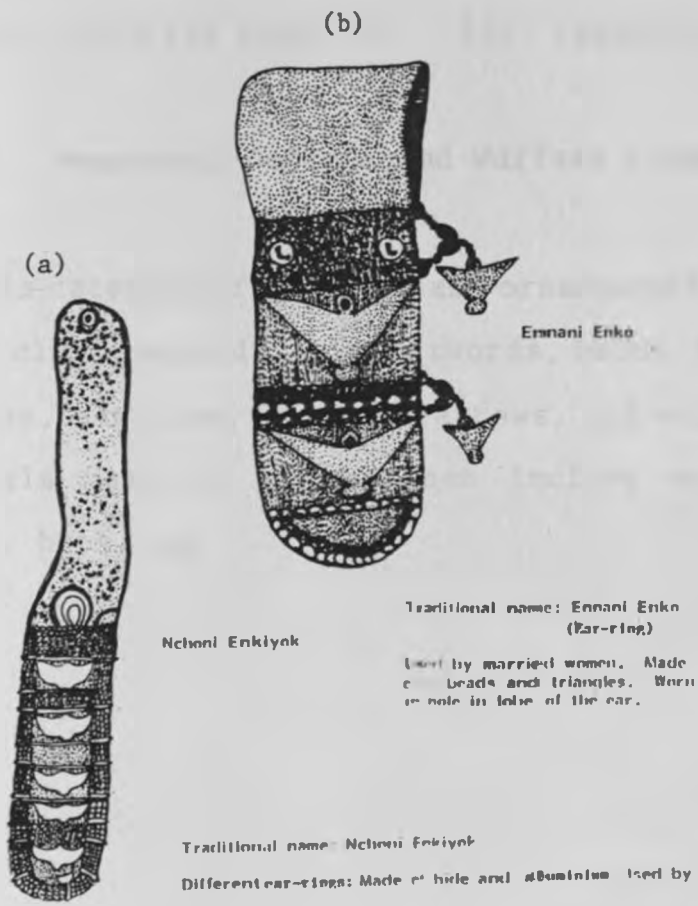


(j) Surutel for married women  
 Traditional name: Surutel (Ear-rings)  
 Worn by women (who are married) on their ears. The China and glass beads are sewn together with threads made from neck ligaments of cow.  
 Made by women.



(k)

Traditional name "choni Enkiyok" (Ear-rings)  
 Used by women. Made of beads, aluminum, hide and a button.



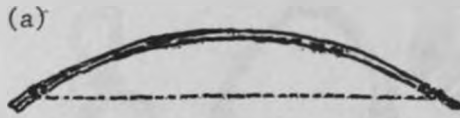
#### 6.4.10. Livestock Related Ornament Forms

Cattle bells, amulets, weaning devices, charms and branding iron and rods are some of the animal ornamentations of the Maasai. Materials used are metal, pebbles, hides, horns, wood, and copper. Cows, sheep, goats and donkeys have one kind or another of ornamentation attached to them. For illustrations of these art-forms see pages 371 - 372, Figures 31 and 32).

#### 6.4.11. Weaponry, Defence And Warfare Forms

This category of gadgetry and ornamentation includes spears, clubs, shields, horns, swords, belts, headpieces, necklaces, earrings, bows and arrows, and wrist gourds. Materials used in making them include wood, metal, leather, horn, etc.





Bow and Arrow

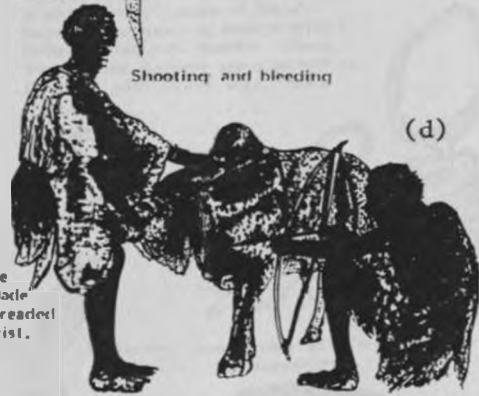
BOW AND ARROW:

Used by men to extract blood from cows for drinking. The stopped arrow is shot into the cow's neck vein and the blood caught in a gourd. The wound is squeezed together until the bleeding stops, then the cow is returned to the herd. Cows can be bled every two months. Blood is drunk fresh at ceremonies and fresh or mixed with milk when there is shortage of staple milk. The wooden Bow is strung with string made of cow neck ligaments. The wooden arrowhead is tanged and the wooden shaft bound with goatskin. The arrow is stopped with two ovals of cowhide. Made by men.



(c)

Shooting and bleeding



(d)

WRIST GOURD

Worn by men when shooting a stopped arrow into a cow's neck vein when extracting blood for drinking. Also used as a charm when wood is pressed against the wrist to stop a cow straying. Made of wood with a cowhide thong threaded through it to secure it to the wrist. Made by men.



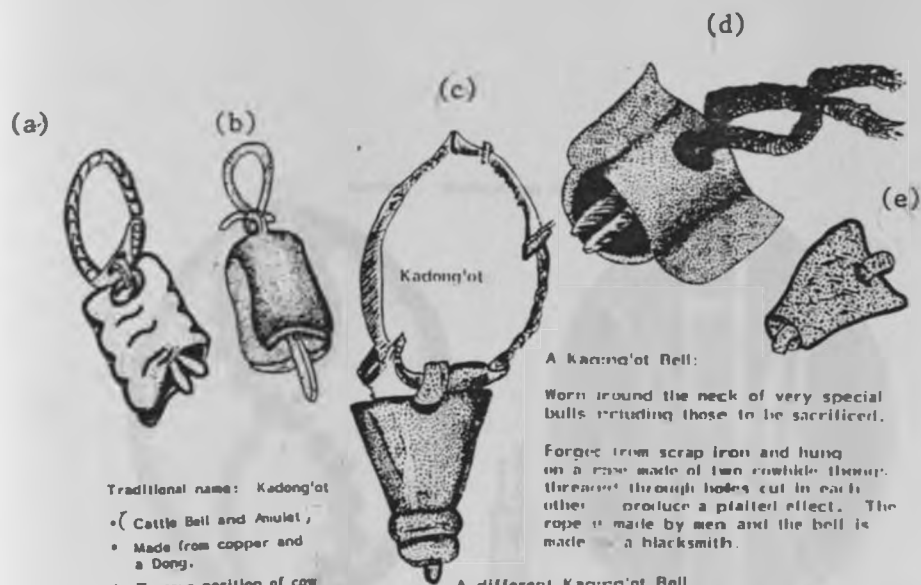
(e)

Donkey

fastening items



Donkeys are used for transport. These items are used to fasten the animals onto the donkeys' back. They are made of bent branches tied with rope and leather straps.



Traditional name: Kadong'ot

- (Cattle Bell and Amulet)
- Made from copper and a Dongj.
- To save position of cow and protect from evil spirits.

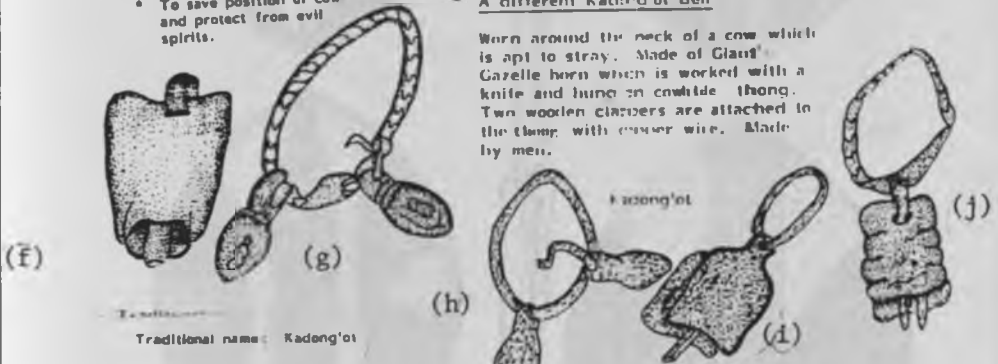
A Kadong'ot Bell:

Worn around the neck of very special bulls including those to be sacrificed.

Forged from scrap iron and hung on a rope made of two cowhide thong, threads through holes cut in each other to produce a plaited effect. The rope is made by men and the bell is made by a blacksmith.

A different Kadong'ot Bell

Worn around the neck of a cow which is apt to stray. Made of Gland Gazelle horn which is worked with a knife and hung on cowhide thong. Two wooden clappers are attached to the thong with copper wire. Made by men.



Traditional name: Kadong'ot

- (Cattle Bell and Amulet)
- Made from copper Metal.
- To know position of a cow

Cattle bells and amulets in different shapes and appearances

Traditional name: Kadong'ot

Worn around the special bulls including those to be sacrificed.

Forged from scrap iron and hung on a rope made of two cowhide thong, threads through holes cut in each other to produce a plaited effect. Rope is made by men and bell by blacksmiths.



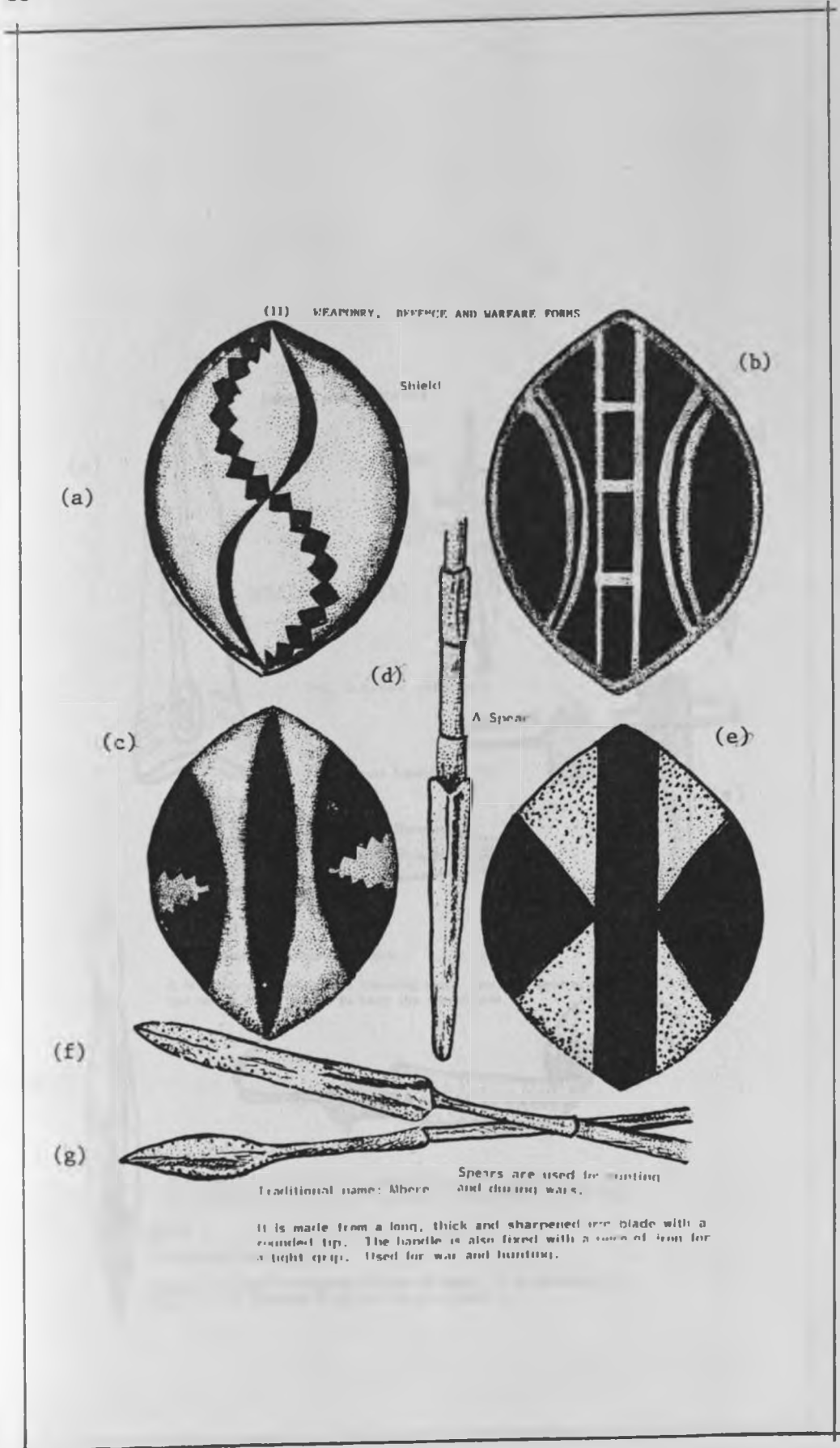
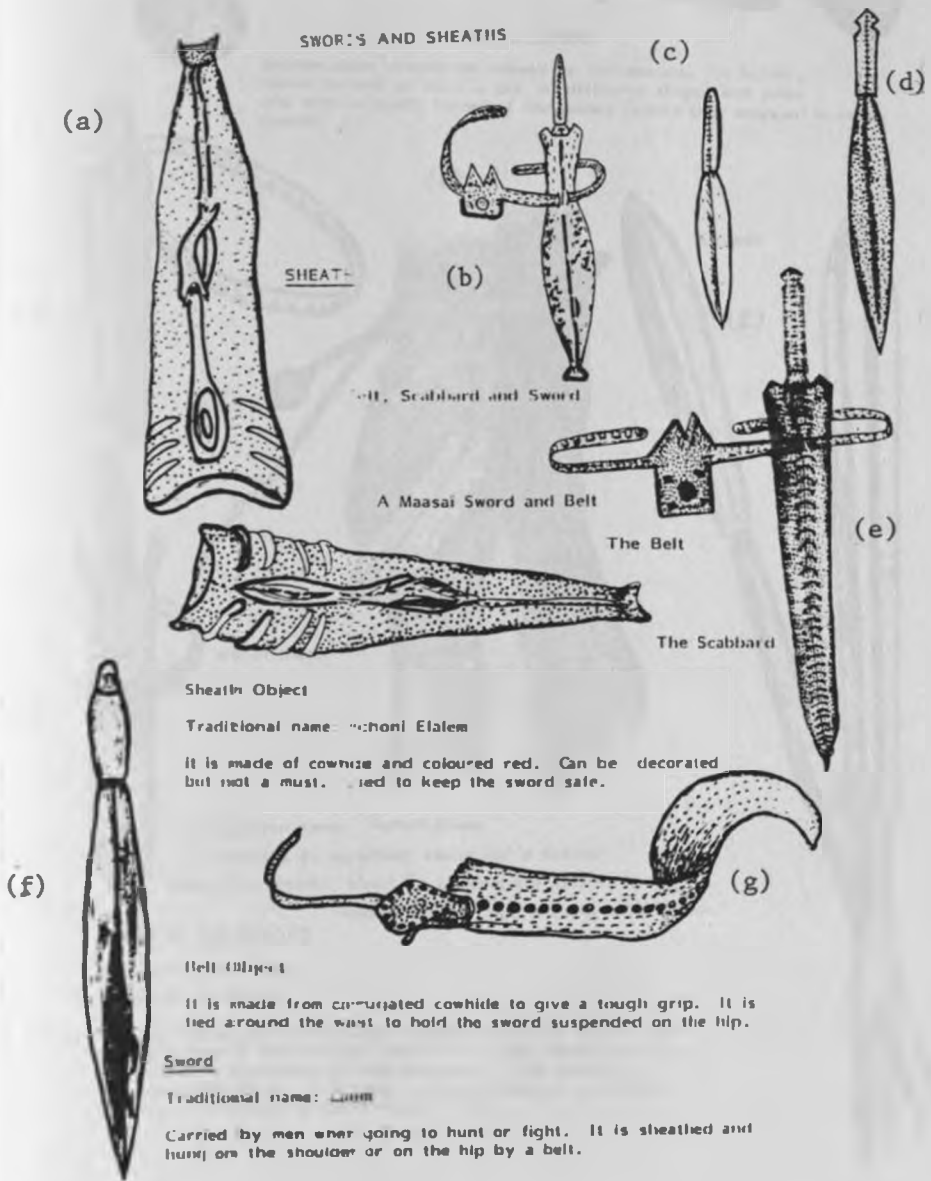
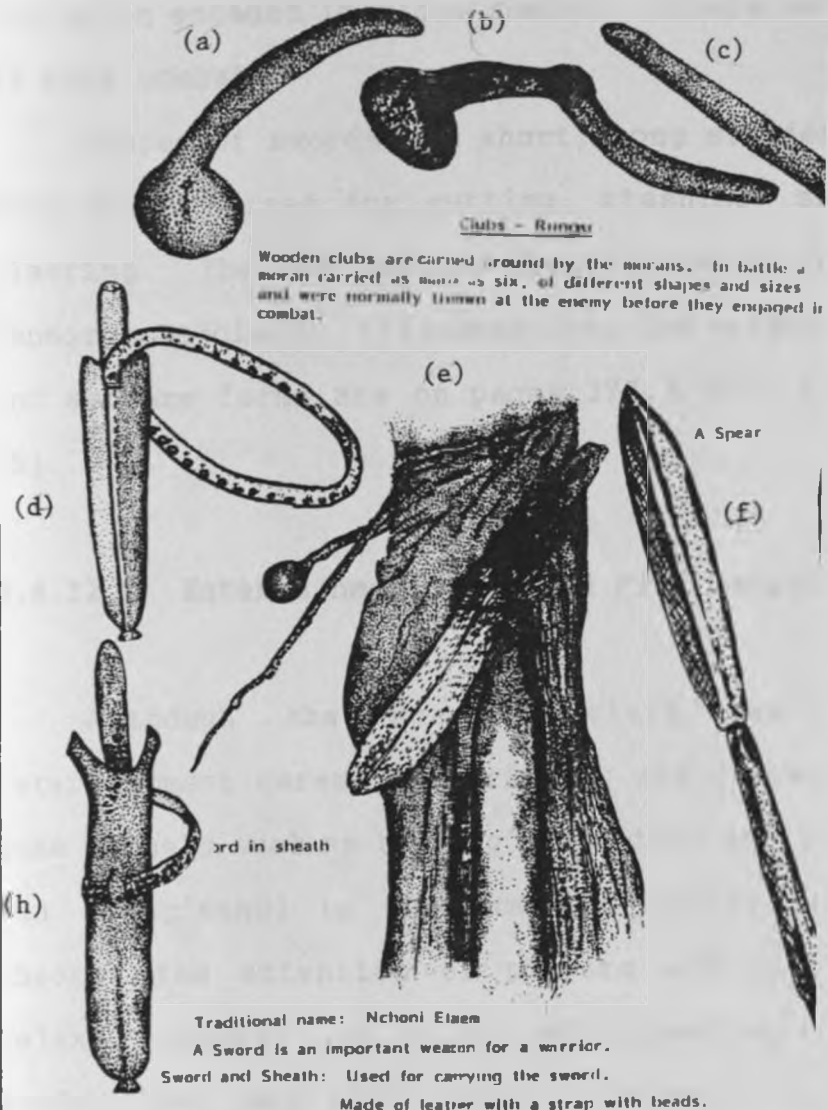


Figure: 34





**Clubs - Runaxi**

Wooden clubs are carried around by the morans. In battle a moran carried as many as six, of different shapes and sizes and were normally thrown at the enemy before they engaged in combat.

**A Spear**

**Traditional name: Nchoni Etam**

A Sword is an important weapon for a warrior.  
Sword and Sheath: Used for carrying the sword.  
Made of leather with a strap with beads.

**SWORD IN THE SHEATH**

**Traditional name: Lalem  
(Sword in the sheath)**

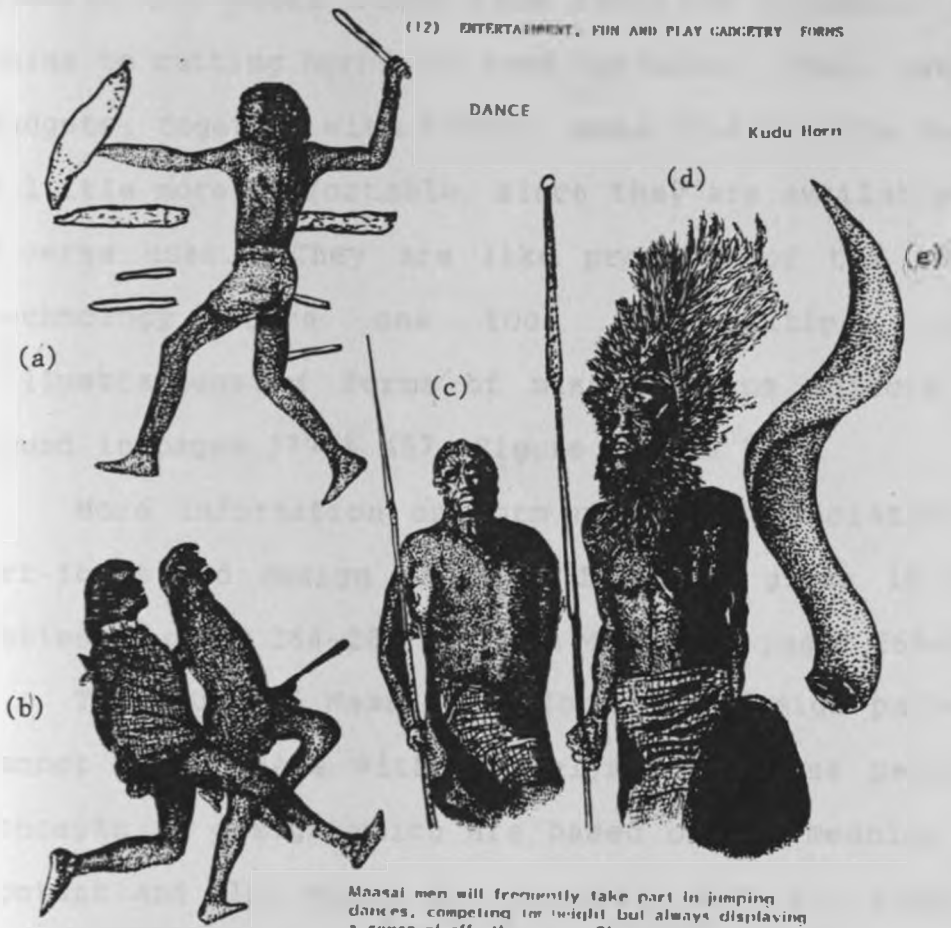
It is carried by men when going outdoors to hunt or fight. The sheath is made of leather and coloured red. The swords are bought from a blacksmith outside Maasailand. The sheath is decorated with beads. It is hung on the shoulder or a belt on the hip. The sheath is called Nchoko Etam.

A moran could carry as many as six wooden clubs into battle, all of different shapes and for differing uses. The main shapes are curved, bent, straight, thick light and heavy. Some of them were thrown at the enemy before the moran engaged in close combat. Others were for hand to hand combat.

Shapes of swords are short, long slender and wide. They are utilised for cutting, slashing, stabbing and clearing. The red leather sheaths are the work of the Wandorobo society. (Illustrations for weaponry, defence and warfare forms are on pages 373 & 375, Figures 33 & 35).

#### 6.4.12. Entertainment, Fun And Play Gadgetry Forms

Although the Maasai society has plenty of entertainment ceremonies, rituals and dances, there are some gadgets such as the Eng'eshui that are just made for fun. Eng'eshui is the game of pebbles, a game that absorbs the attention of players and allows them to relax. However, as it was mentioned earlier in this study, (see page 295), Maasai ornaments can also be a source of great social and related cultural entertainment. (Illustrations of entertainment, fun and play gadgetry forms are on page 377, Figure 36).



(12) ENTERTAINMENT, FUN AND PLAY GADGETRY FORMS

DANCE

Kudu Horn

(a)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(b)

AMES AND SPORTS

Maasai men will frequently take part in jumping dances, competing for height but always displaying a sense of effortlessness. They gather in a circle and sing with a strong, breathy beat. One or two of them move into the centre of the circle and jump rhythmically, embellish their leaps by subtly trembling their shoulders at the peak of the jump.

(f)



Thigh Bell

Thigh Bell

Tied around the moran's thigh and it produces accompanying sounds as he dances.

#### 6.4.13. General And Other Uses Forms

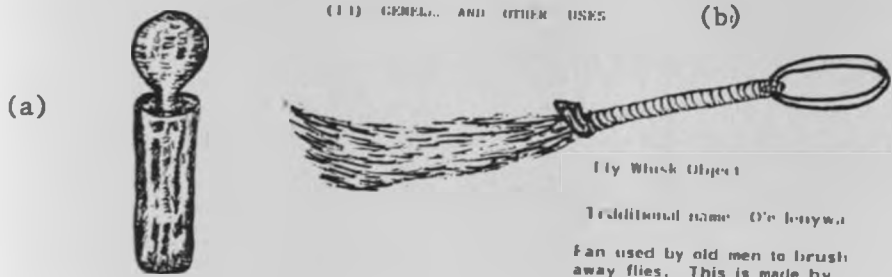
##### (Miscellaneous Forms)

Scrapers, hatchets, fly whisks, stretch sticks, headrests, etc., are among items that have other uses which have not been described as yet in great detail. General use would range from removing ligaments from skins to cutting herbs and resting heads. Thus, general gadgets, together with others, make life for the nomads a little more comfortable, since they are available for diverse uses. They are like products of the modern technology where one tool has multiple uses. (Illustrations of forms of miscellaneous objects are found in pages 379 & 457, Figure 37 and 70).

More information on form content appreciation of art-forms and design patterns 1-13, is given in Data Tables on pages 264-282 and Data Models in pages 265-283.

The study of Maasai art forms and design patterns cannot be complete without analysis of these peoples' concepts of design which are based on the meaning and content and also which are concerned with the symbolic interpretation of the art besides the colour code they used. This means in effect that the Maasai are attached to bead as a manifestation of their love for their art. Indeed all the maasai art forms are intimately related to their lifestyles. This is illustrated by the fact that





(a)

Traditional name: Imkompet

Use: Used by women to remove hair from hides.  
Made of iron with a wooden handle.

(b)

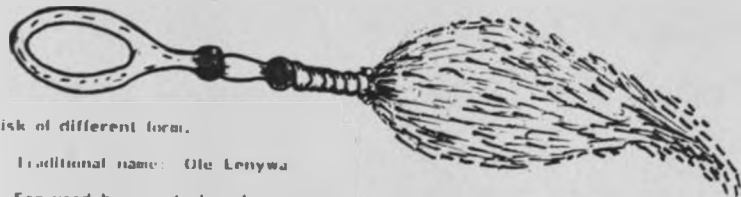
Fly Whisk Object

Traditional name: O'e lenywa

Fan used by old men to brush away flies. This is made by cutting away the tail of their cattle and dried.

FLY WHISKS

(c)



Fly Whisk of different form.

Traditional name: Ole Lenywa

Fan used by men to brush away flies. This is also made by cutting away the tail of their cattle and dried.

(d)



Ole Lenywa

Traditional name: El enyua

A fly whisk made from animal hair and used by elders of society to ward themselves against flies and other insects. A sign of prestige.

(e)



Front view



Back view

(f)

Headrest

Used by herdsmen while the flock to rest their heads. It is carved from a tree trunk. Some padding can be used for greater comfort.

storage equipment, jewellery, ornaments, weaponry etc are the art forms that serve as important economic utilities to the Maasai people. These utilities help in the interpretations of the objects as art-forms with symbolic meaning.

## 7.0: CHAPTER SEVEN: INTERPRETATIONS

Having discussed the theoretical bases in chapter two and general issues pertaining to various aspects of art and design patterns the author has, in chapter three focused on a detailed holistic description of the Maasai culture under the general theme "Maasai Ethnography" where the aim was to place Maasai material culture, the foundation of Maasai art and design pattern, in its sociocultural framework. The Maasai material - culture itself was treated under the theme 'Economy', technological processes and material culture. This description aimed at showing the existence of a relationship between the material culture objects and several other aspects of culture with a view to demonstrating the influence on maasai art and design patterns of the whole maasai culture. Chapter four of this dissertation was particularly concerned with the classification of maasai material culture elements into categories, as items of maasai art and design patterns.

In this chapter, whose main title is "interpretation", the author attempts to interpret the data, tables and models with the fundamental aim of discerning the artistic and design merits of the Maasai material culture in line with the stated objectives of this dissertation and to test the hypothesis. In order

to fully appreciate the aesthetic, functional and cultural significance of maasai art forms and design patterns, the elements of material culture have to be interpreted according to a number of stated categories of such material culture. The categories, whose individual items are to be interpreted are

- (a) Household items and storage equipment
- (b) Dress and related jewellery
- (c) Body decorations
- (d) Headdress and related ornamentation
- (e) Necklaces
- (f) Waistwear and belts
- (g) Footwear
- (h) Ear ornaments, bead decorations and related jewellery
- (i) Livestock and allied ornaments
- (j) Brand marks
- (k) Weaponry, defence warfare and associated objects
- (l) Leisure objects (e.g. items for entertainment, fun and play)
- (m) Miscellaneous objects of material culture

## 7.1. HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND STORAGE EQUIPMENT

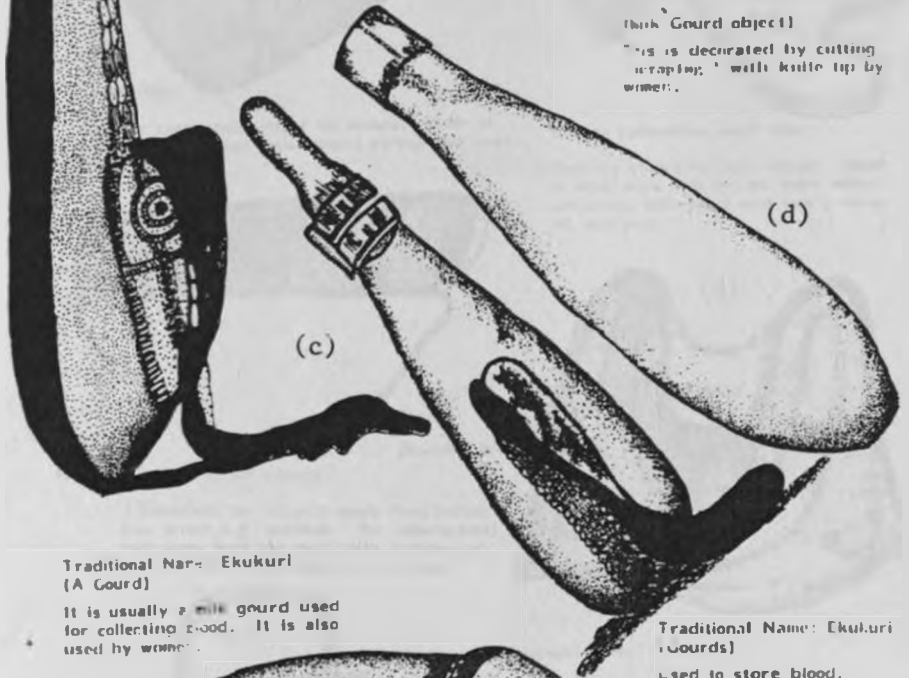
Analysis of materials used in making household items and storage equipment reveal that materials influence the making of different art-forms and the techniques used in producing these different art-forms. Designs of household and storage items range from abstract to realism. Containers, gourds, calabashes and bags are decorated lengthwise or along the width. Design shapes are simplified. Sometimes there is combination of colours. It is evident that the conception of colour and design is taken seriously. The style of execution is user-sensitive. Although some of the design patterns are executed in just simple outlines, the symbolic interpretation is quite evident as shown in Figures 38 to 43, pages 384 to 391).

Household items and storage equipments are in themselves design concepts created by a sensitive artist. This creative artist is not only a revolutionary innovator in either themes or techniques, but can also express old techniques and familiar themes through emphases selected by the artist that not only have a touch of difference from works of others but perceived as meaningful to the viewers. Moreover this creative artist is not just a craftsman but a sensitive person who feels the social issues that affect the society and goes

(a) HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND STORAGE EQUIPMENT

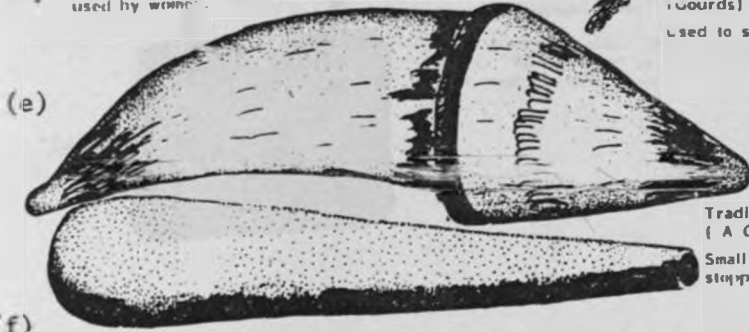


Gourds are Calabashes  
 Traditional Name: Lenesho  
 (A Gourd object)  
 This is decorated by cutting  
 a pattern with knife tip by  
 women.

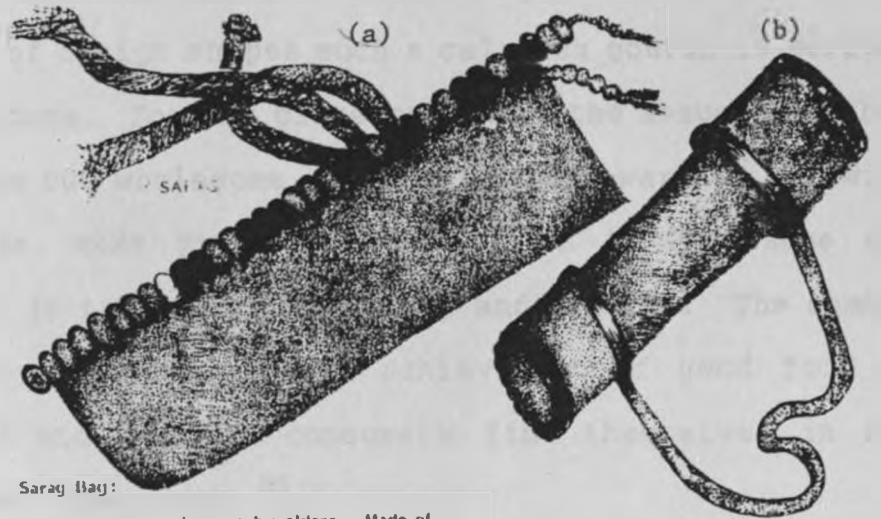


Traditional Name: Ekukuri  
 (A Gourd)  
 It is usually a milk gourd used  
 for collecting food. It is also  
 used by women.

Traditional Name: Ekukuri  
 (Gourds)  
 Used to store blood.



Traditional Name: Ekukuri  
 (A Gourd)  
 Small in size. Used with  
 stoppers.



Sarag bag:

Used to carry small items by elders. Made of hide and decorated with strong string and beads.

Ilkukoj teikumpat zouff box:

Used by elders to carry stuff. Made of wood with hide on both sides. Decorated with beads and has a strap for carrying.

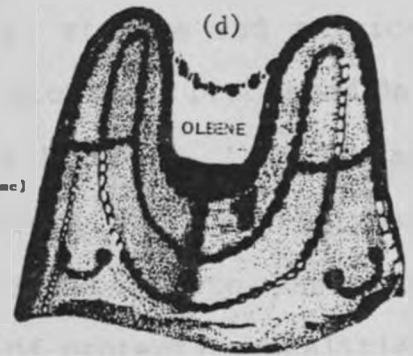


(c)

(Another Name)

Traditional name: Or'aidong'

A container for tobacco made from hollow tree trunk e.g. bamboo. For elders (men) and hang from the neck with a string of beads. Has leather caps on each end.



(d)

OLEENE

Traditional name: Sarag

Made from cow's hide. Used by warriors to collect honey. Can be made by both men and women. Also used for honey beer.



(e)

SARAG

ahead to depict them in his/her work.<sup>286</sup>

When it comes to processing and storage, a number of problems arise. It was difficult to identify and state the design merits, rationales or demerits associated with processing and storage. This is primarily because the choice of design shapes such as calabash gourds is derived from nature. Food is processed under the assumption that it turns out wholesome, palatable and rewarding. Brewing likewise, must yield a result which is wholesome and correct in taste, concentration and flavour. The common concern therefore is the achievement of good food or alcohol and as such consumers find themselves in all designed dimensions.<sup>287</sup>

Despite the difficulties expressed above, the following were still found to be true. The use of calabash gourds for processing, storage and service is satisfactory. The items to be stored or processed do not penetrate the containers which means the container materials are adequate and correct for their purpose.

The Maasai packaging design seems to ensure user protection. Subsequently, use of protection qualities is an important design consideration among the Maasai.

Packaging seems to cope with problems that exist

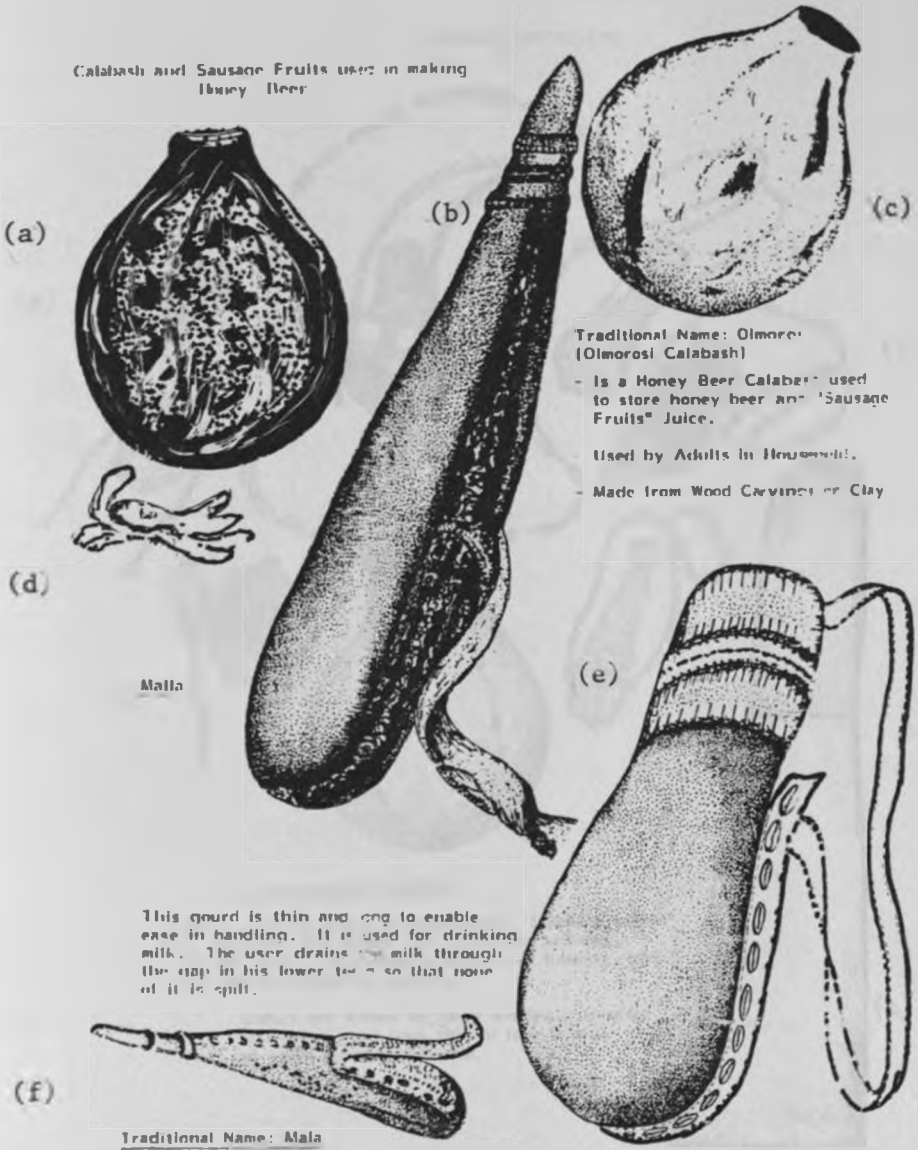
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<sup>286</sup> McCall, Daniel F. and Bay, Edna G., *African Images (Essays in African Iconology)* African Publishing Company, U.S.A., New York, 1976, pp. 3-21.

<sup>287</sup> Tucker, Ole Mpaayei, Tempo, *Ibid*, pp. 19-25.



Calabash and Sausage Fruits used in making Ibury Beer



Traditional Name: Olmorosi (Olmorosi Calabash)  
 - Is a Honey Beer Calabash used to store honey beer and "Sausage Fruits" Juice.  
 - Used by Adults in Household.  
 - Made from Wood Carving or Clay

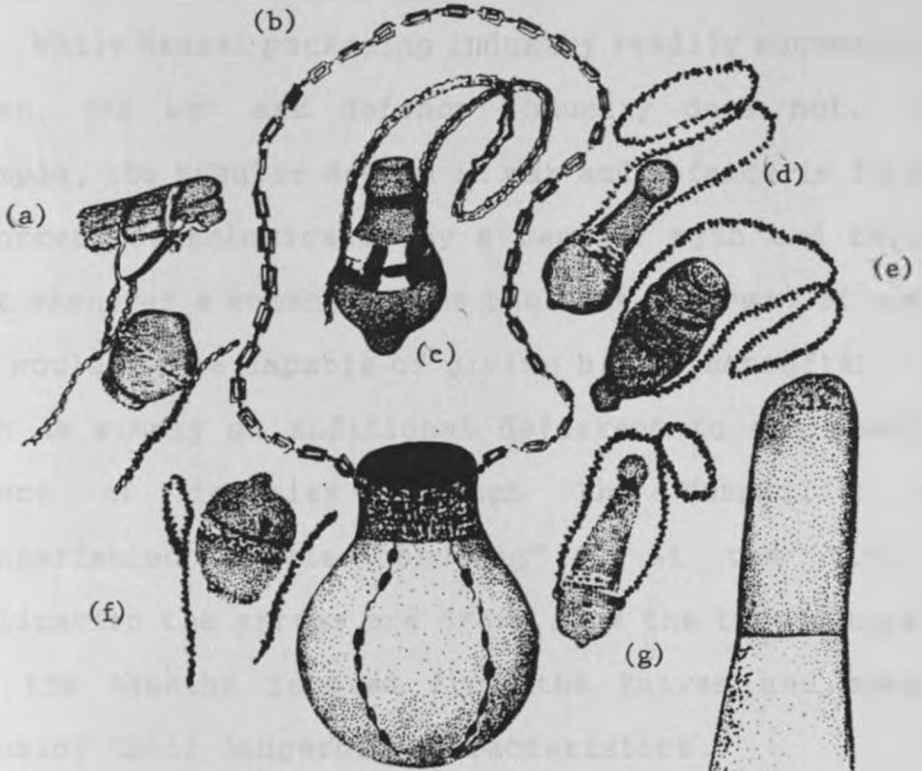
Malla

This gourd is thin and long to enable ease in handling. It is used for drinking milk. The user drains the milk through the gap in his lower lip so that none of it is spilt.

Traditional Name: Mala

Container used by men to catch blood extracted from a cow's neck. Made of gourd with a cork lid and strap. The strap is decorated with beads sewn on by thread made of cow neck ligament. Made by women.

SNUFF CONTAINERS



'L Kidong snuff container

This is used by elders to keep snuff. It has a leather top decorated with beads and the string to hang from the neck. It is made of beads and bamboo sticks. This main container is a gourd.

Elders are known for their wisdom. However they often find some time to take a quick dose of snuff to stimulate them.

Tanning knife

Tanning is done by women. Bark and animal dung are used. Hide that is used for cloths is laborously kneaded and supplied by hand.

during milking. The milking gourd "elepet" has a long and gradually narrowing neck. This allows for a wide range of grip to accommodate the warriors' sizes or smaller female hands. The length of the gourd allows it to be held with most of it away from the cow, so that when the cow kicks, very little container damage may be experienced and no milk is spilled.<sup>288</sup>

While Maasai packaging industry readily accommodates women, the war and defence industry does not. For example, the tubular design in war and defence is further enforced psychologically by a regular myth and belief, that whenever a woman touches the tube (quiver) of arrows she would not be capable of giving birth thereafter. The myth is simply an additional deterrent to any possible chance of injuries through the "unskilled and inexperienced female handling". At the time of application the arrows are drawn from the tube (quiver) and the sheaths removed from the knives and spears, exposing their dangerous characteristics.<sup>289</sup>

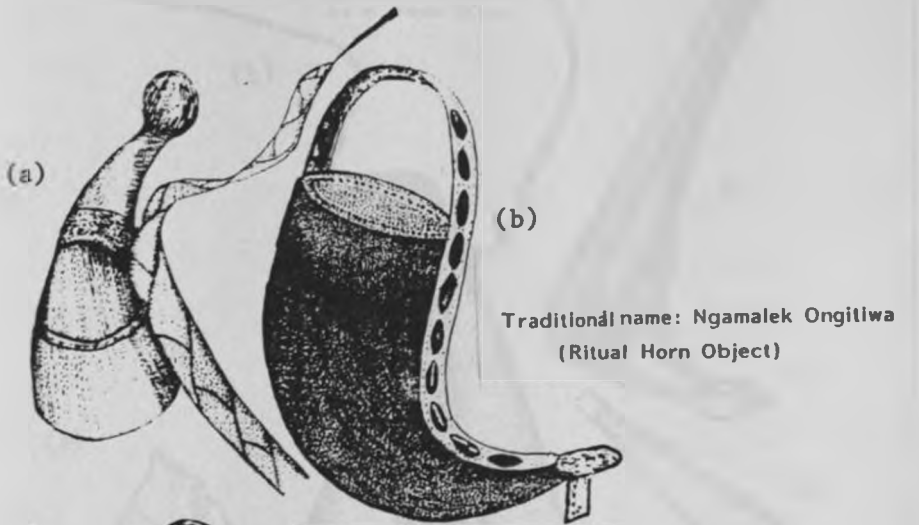
Containers mean a lot to the Maasai. Elders carry them (e.g. snuff containers) as a mark of their seniority. During certain ceremonies, such as circumcision, a main participant such as the father,

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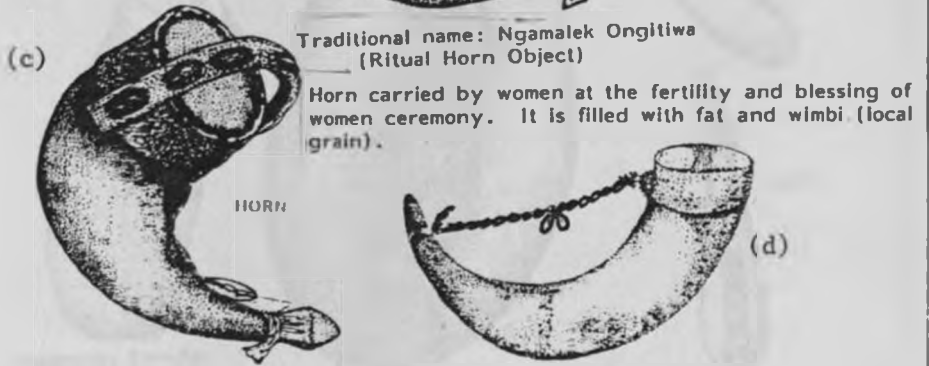
<sup>288</sup> Playre and Gale, *Ibid.*, pp. 23-51.

<sup>289</sup> Playre, *Ibid.*, pp. 56-66.

HORNS USED FOR MEDICINAL AND CURATIVE PURPOSES



Traditional name: Ngamalek Ongitiwa  
(Ritual Horn Object)

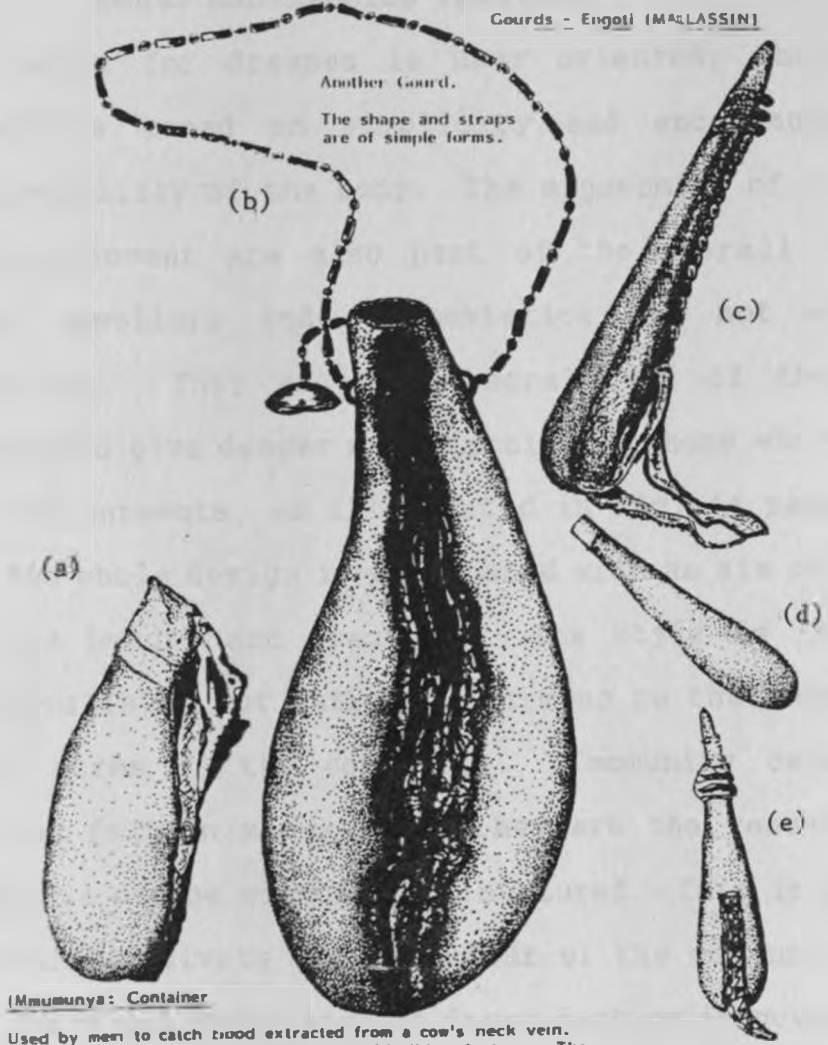


Traditional name: Ngamalek Ongitiwa  
(Ritual Horn Object)

Horn carried by women at the fertility and blessing of women ceremony. It is filled with fat and wimbi (local grain).

Traditional name: Esekekua (Horn Object)

Container made from cow's horn with a hide cover and strap. Used by witchdoctors for shaking pebbles and other small things during practice.



Used by men to catch blood extracted from a cow's neck vein. Made of a gourd (Mmumunya) with a cowhide lid and strap. The strap is decorated with beads sewn on with thread made of cow neck ligaments. Made by women.

These gourds for storing fresh and curdled milk were obtained through trade with agricultural neighbours. They are decorated with beads and cowrie shells, fitted with caps which also serve as cups and fastened to leather straps to wrap around the hand and hold when milking.

carries a gourd stoppered with grass, for collecting and storing milk and honey beer. Containers have very many other uses depending on their sizes and shapes; as this researcher was able to verify after an interview with knowledgeable Maasai women at Namanga.

## 7.2. DRESS AND RELATED JEWELLERY

Design for dresses is user oriented; the design concept is based on simplicity and encouraging the freedom agility of the body. The ergonomics of the body and environment are also part of the overall design. Beads, jewellery and ornamentation are not ends to themselves. They are an integral part of the dress fashion and give deeper satisfaction to those who own and wear the garments, as illustrated in Fig. 44 page 395).

The whole design is formulated with an aim of giving pleasure beauty and function. The style is not very individualistic but rather conforming to the understood social norms of the community. Community ceremonies serve as fashion shows since they are the venues where the spirit of the community is nurtured. This is because ceremonies motivate the behaviour of the community.

Taste and preference of dress fashion is governed by social status and responsibility. Texture depends on the materials used while colour tone depends on both the materials used and the added ornamentation.

(1) DRESS AND RELATED JEWELLERY

THE MAASI TOGA

Printed in maroon, red and orange colours

(a)



(b)



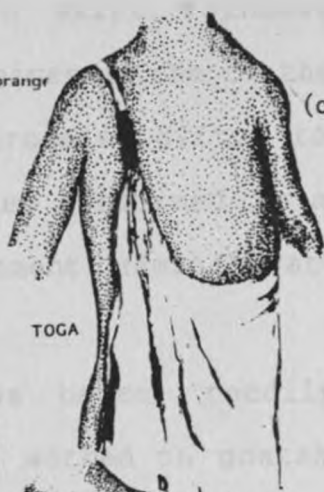
SKIRT

- Traditional name:
- \* Kadong'ot
  - \* Thigh Bell
  - \* Made from metal and ball bearings.
  - \* Worn by warriors

Traditional name: Lekenesena

Decorated skirt for married women. Made from leather and decorated with beads.

(c)



TOGA

(d)



Dress is a necessity as well as a primary form of artistic expression of the Maasai society, thus since, as is well known, African art can only be understood in its cultural context. This is because it is traditional in nature and integrated with the value of the society. Skill in technique is the Africans' major criterion for evaluating Art.<sup>290</sup>

Among the Maasai, only a married woman adorns her praise with the long sheepskin skirt rainbowed by thousands of beads. The skin is given as one of the four skins included in the bridegroom's gifts to his bride.<sup>291</sup> This information was also confirmed by a very experienced and informed government administrator at Ngong.

Before manufactured clothes became readily and inexpensively available, a moran worked on goatskin or calfskin laps as this was his everyday uniform. Today the common covering is a brightly coloured cloth both of red and reddish orange shades which the Maasai fancy so much. The cloth may be draped toga (fashion over or on the shoulder, wrapped from criss-crossing beaded straps or rolled from around the waist.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Sieber, *Ibid.*, pp. 9-31.

<sup>291</sup> Stigand, *Ibid.*, pp. 16-25.

<sup>292</sup> Stigand, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-37.



### 7.3. BODY DECORATIONS

Design patterns based on the human figure serve aesthetic, protective and symbolic purposes. Lines, colour, abstract shapes, geometric forms and simple marks are commonly used and stylized. This is verified in Figures 45 page 398).

Colours are earthen, vegetative and environmental. Design concepts derive their meaning from the spirit of the community.<sup>293</sup> Within an individual work of art organization elements are arranged to conform with traditional art concepts. Such concepts are expressiveness, utilizing vibrant colours and symbolism to carry out the themes. For many traditional Maasai artists, the conception of the work of art is more important than its manifestation.<sup>294</sup>

Body ornaments are meant to be demonstrated and described by visual means. This means that they must be graphic enough to be seen and admired by everyone. Since the basic concept is the most important element, the symbolic meaning is easily and quickly understood and appreciated within the cultural context. This is not confined to the Maasai alone.

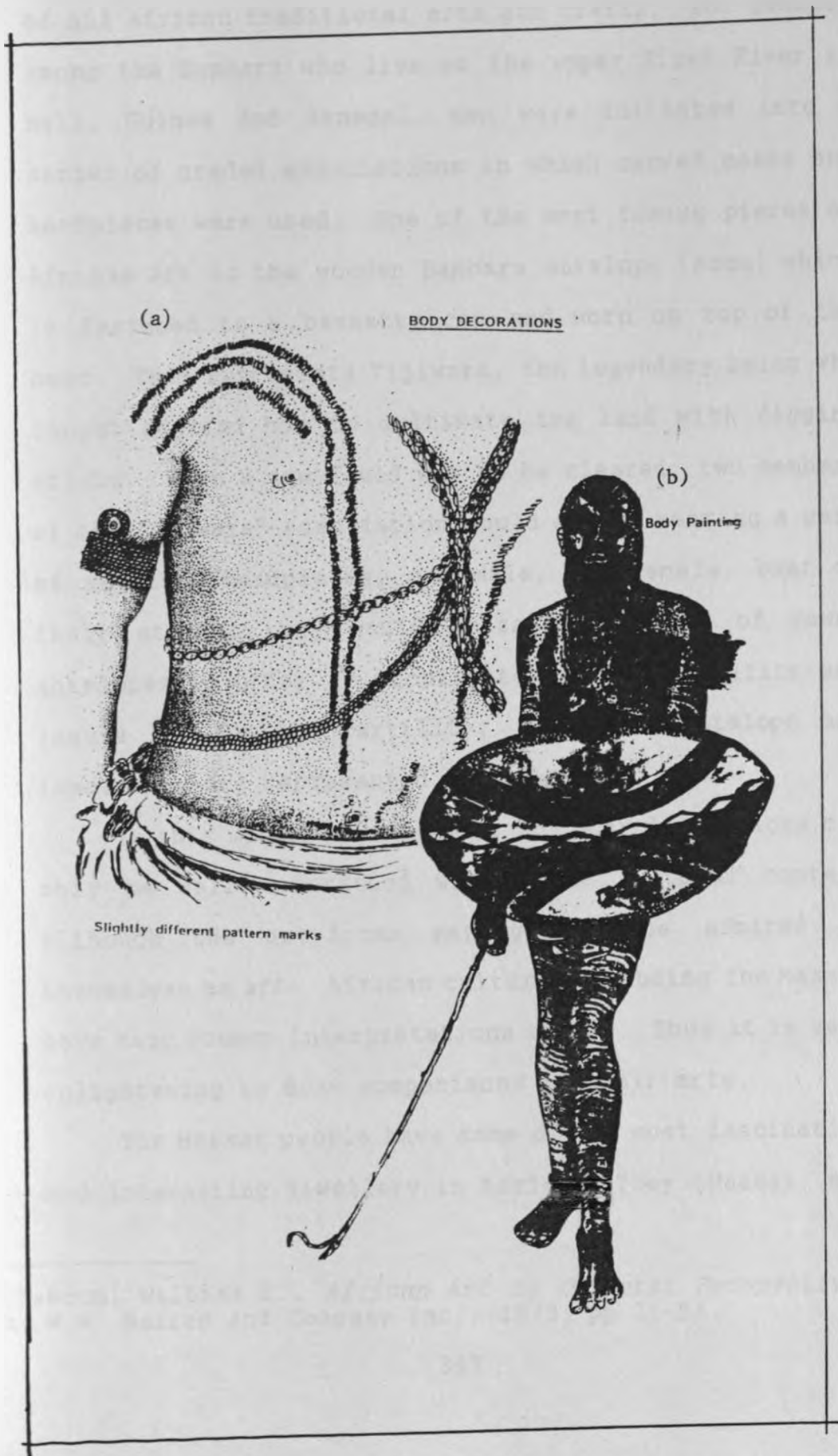
This cultural context shapes the content and meaning

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<sup>293</sup> Sankaan, *Ibid*, pp. 31-42.

<sup>294</sup> Saankan, *Ibid*, pp. 47-59.

Figure: 45



of all African traditional arts and crafts. For example among the Bambara who live on the upper Niger River in Mali, Guinea and Senegal, men were initiated into a series of graded associations in which carved masks and headpieces were used. One of the most famous pieces of African Art is the wooden Bambara antelope (Komu) which is fastened to a basketry cap and worn on top of the head. This represents Tijiwara, the legendary being who taught mankind how to cultivate the land with digging sticks. When a new field was to be cleared, two members of the "Tijwara" association would appear wearing a pair of antelope headpieces, one male, one female, bent on their sticks; they would imitate the play of young antelopes in order to propitiate the earth spirits and insure the field's fertility. The male antelope and female one are represented differently.<sup>295</sup>

In this matter the masks or any body decorations can only be well understood within the cultural context although the art-forms may greatly be admired in themselves as art. African cultures including the Maasai have many common interpretations of art. Thus it is very enlightening to draw comparisons of their arts.

The Maasai people have some of the most fascinating and interesting jewellery in Africa. They (Maasai) are

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<sup>295</sup> Bascom, William R., *African Art in Cultural Perspective*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1973, pp 31-51.

mostly distinguished by their striking and often peculiar body decorations. Some jewellery objects are covered with beads, others patterned with ritual scars, their ears and lips distended and plugged with ornaments.<sup>295</sup>

Ochre highlights the graceful bodies of the young girls, while some of the elders wear remarkable hairstyles packed in blue clay.

As noted earlier in this study, especially in Chapter 2, all these exotic fashions were not merely adapted for beauty, each item was of individual significance and proffered a wealth of information about the wearer, which tribe he came from, which age-set within the tribe he belongs to his exploits even in battle or in love. For example, during the Eunoto ceremony, warriors dip their fingers into wet chalk and draw designs on their bodies.<sup>297</sup> Some disguise themselves as zebras, others use symbolic patterns to indicate their bravery in having killed a lion or a man. During this time, the women also regularly shave their own heads to draw attention to their colourful jewellery. Their flat neck collars are made of beads threaded on wire and spaced with strips of cowhide.<sup>298</sup>

For obvious reasons, they tend to use what is found

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<sup>295</sup> Miller, *Ibid*, pp. 59-67.

<sup>297</sup> Loitel, *Ibid*, pp. 21-32.

<sup>298</sup> Lord Cranworth, *Ibid*, pp. 12-25.

in their environment. For example, they take forms that have natural beauty and put them together to signify symbolic meanings. One illustrative case is the eye when surrounded by sharp edges. In such instance the eye represents breasts or teeth in the Maasai community.<sup>299</sup>

In body ornamentation, each person was beautifully decorated, taking time in making the beads. This is what makes Africans so unique as compared to some cultures. African societies have a tradition of staying together, of keeping tradition close to them, as clearly seen in the Maasai community, unlike some cultures who keep things away from each other.<sup>300</sup>

Right from childhood, the Maasai wear jewellery; for example, the women make a necklaces for babies of seven months, usually a symbol of protection to be worn on daily basis.

In making of the necklace the women use blue shaped glass beads which they consider godly, two cowrie shells which stands for the sea; hence the heaven and earth are well manipulated. A piece of leather is also incorporated in this design. Red, white and black, which are used on the necklace are colours that signify concern for the child.

As noted in the drawings on pages 359 in this

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<sup>299</sup> Norman, Leys, *Ibid*, pp. 27-41.

<sup>300</sup> Norman, *Ibid*, pp. 62-73.

research, the Maasai women have particular techniques of making necklaces. They use the contrast of white and black which symbolises two sides of the Maasai. Black is stronger in terms of belief according to the Maasai people. The cut in an ornament symbolises their way of life, for example a mother would be depicted on one half and the other half depicting the same mother pouring a cup of milk.<sup>301</sup>

Black and white alternates are always depicted in the ornaments, this also shows in complete alteration of expressions, which runs from ear-rings, to necklaces, to wrists and to anklets.<sup>302</sup>

The Maasai are also fond of using the spiral shape. This represents a female form in their culture( see p. 246 of this study). Also, important elders may adorn expensive cloaks made from the fur of the rare tree hyrax as a symbol to enhance their prestige.<sup>303</sup>

Before the 19th Century, the Maasai used to wear spiral iron necklaces. This was before the importation of glass beads.

Glass beads provided colour, unlike the metal ornaments; they were also advantageous since they were lighter than metal, and enabled them (Maasai) to wear

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<sup>301</sup> Norman, *Ibid*, pp. 62-73.

<sup>302</sup> Stigand, *Ibid.*, 19-31.

<sup>303</sup> Loitel, *Ibid*, pp. 36-41.

lots of jewellery. Beads, therefore, appeared in the market because they were cheaper, lighter and did not leave marks on the neck.<sup>304</sup>

Wire jewellery, which the Maasai used before 19th century to make arm coils, was acquired during the making of the railway line. As adornments they are unique.

The arm coils were often worn by women, such that when they danced, they accentuated their graceful movements. This showed how much the Maasai were attached to symbolising beauty in their movements to suit their own interpretations.

The women did not remove the ornaments. They had them on throughout. It usually took a whole day to put on an arm coil.<sup>305</sup>

There are about 40 different types and designs of Maasai bead work made by women and girls for themselves and for the warriors, as this researcher was able to find out in an interview with three Maasai elders in Samburu. One of the most colourful occasions when jewellery is on display is during the preparation of the bride. The girl is dressed in a bridal gown of leather, a profusion of beaded ornaments and four leather rings made from the hide of the sacrificial sheep. She is also loaded down with symbols, including a calabash of milk, representing

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<sup>304</sup> Hamilton, *Ibid.*, pp. 36-47.

<sup>305</sup> Hamilton, *Ibid.*, pp. 49-60.

future prosperity. Four dolls are wrapped round her neck, three female and one male, which indicate the minimum number of children she might expect to produce. She also wears her slippers on the wrong feet to ward off evil.<sup>306</sup>

The bride is then led in procession to what will be her personal gate in the circular thorn fence of the enclosure. She is blessed by two elders who take yet another fertility symbol of tied grass dipped in milk and honey-beer and anoint her face, body and feet. The text of the blessing could include "may all your clan feed on you" and "may your back grow wide" presumably so that she can carry more children easily.

Smearing arrangements are sometimes part of body decorations. For example, the warrior collects dung from both a heifer and a bull which have not yet produced offspring, and the elders mix the dung together with milk and beer in preparations for the smearing ceremony. When they smear the warrior up his right side from the foot to hand, including the sacred sticks he has been given, added blessings are pronounced.

After the smearing is over, the warrior's head and eyebrows are completely shaven off by his mother. He then herds the cattle out of the homestead enclosure by striking them with the sacred sticks he has been

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<sup>306</sup> Wolldock, *Ibid.*, pp. 21-30.



presented with.<sup>307</sup> Following the ceremony, neighbours flock into the homestead throughout the day for a ceremony of song, dance and feasting.

Body decorations may also come to a boy. Take for example a boy who is a herder: at the age of four to six years his lower incisors are removed and he is entrusted with lambs and very young calves. When the boy is considered capable of looking after full grown up animals and of herding them from pastures, his lobes are pierced.

As ritual dependants, initiates are thought to be especially vulnerable to people with bad "eyes". To protect themselves, male initiates paint an intricate pattern of chalk round their own eyes when they visit neighbouring villages and band together to dance. When initiates collect together at a dance, they are now visibly weak and anxious, but exuberant and distinctively dressed, with blackened cloaks, scrolled ear-rings of brass and ornate feathered head-dresses. Everyone gazes in their direction and gasps, "Haii! Here come the initiates." Those with sad memories of lost children, who would even now have been dancing among them, feel involuntary pangs of yearning as they watch the initiates exposed to their soulful gaze. Indeed, the pattern around their eyes is so striking and allusive that it can hardly fail to draw attention to the belief, arousing

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<sup>307</sup> Wolldock, *Ibid.*, pp. 33-49.

memories and fears. Before boys are circumcised marks of a 'brave warrior' are made on his thighs.

#### 7.4. HEAD DRESS AND RELATED ORNAMENTATION

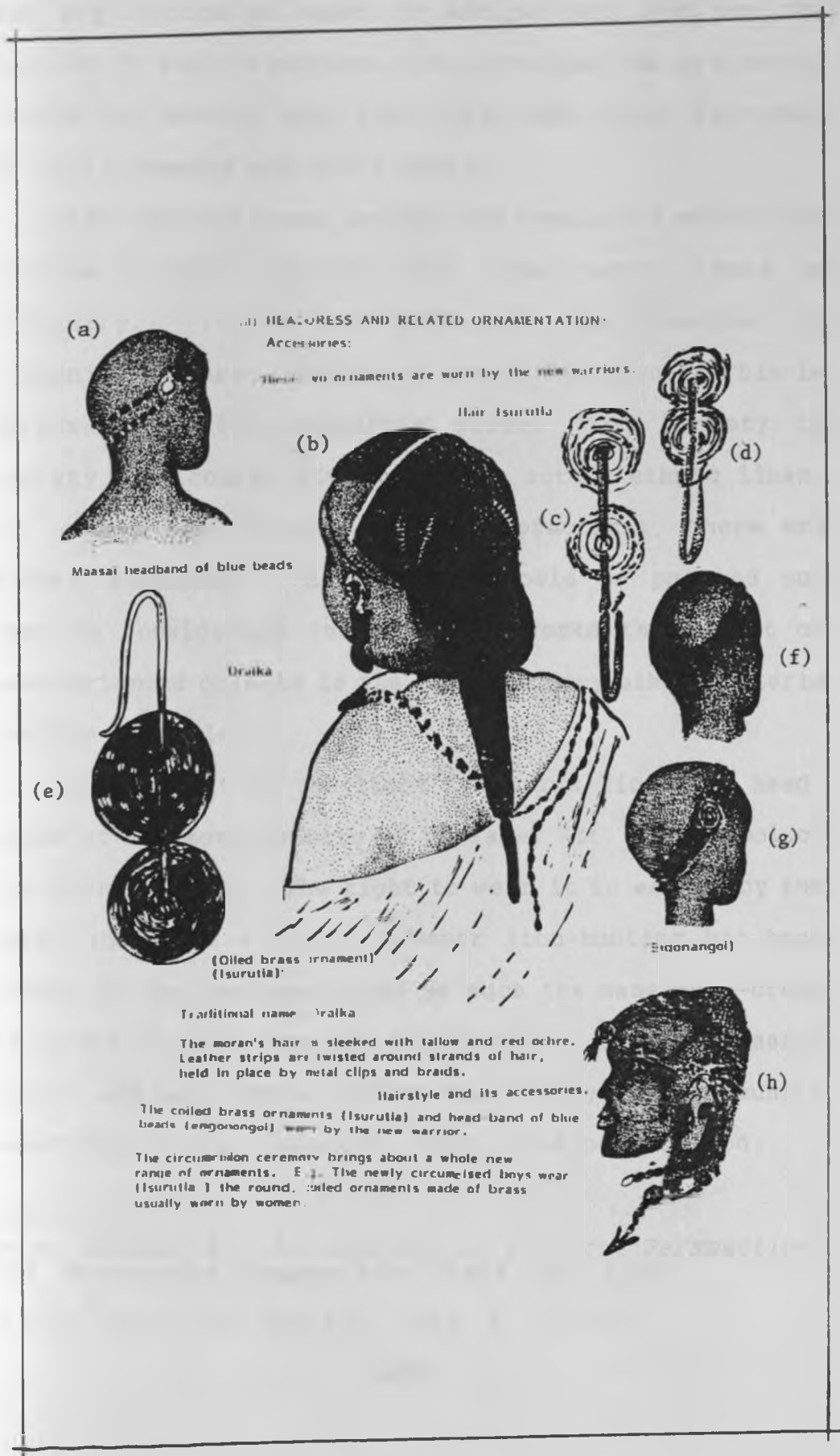
Head-dresses and ornamentations have specific sizes, structure and style. Hair designs are part of this. The hair is done into pigtail shapes that stand vertically. This can be seen in Figures 46 and 47, page 405 & 407 in some hair designs beads and cowrie shells are employed.

Coiled brass ornaments in circular shapes are also used as head ornamentation. The spiral idea is prevalent here and the patterns are colourful. Also long circular bands are carefully prepared as headbands<sup>308</sup>. They are colourful, linear and fitting, giving an impression of smartness and alertness of the users, the moran warriors.

A ceremonial head-dress acquires an elliptic shape. Vertical ostrich feathers are added to it to give it a vibrating effect which in turn gives it movement and makes it kinetic. As the wearer moves and the head-dress vibrates, there is a mutual harmony between the two. Such techniques of emphasis are used by African artists to highlight the expressiveness of a piece of art. This emphasis can be by either simplification or exaggeration. They are African stylistic conventions. Indeed it was

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<sup>308</sup> Miller, *Ibid*, pp. 46-52.



the stylisation of most of African art and not the realism of Benin's artwork that attracted the artists of France and Germany when they first made their discovery of it in museums and curio shops.

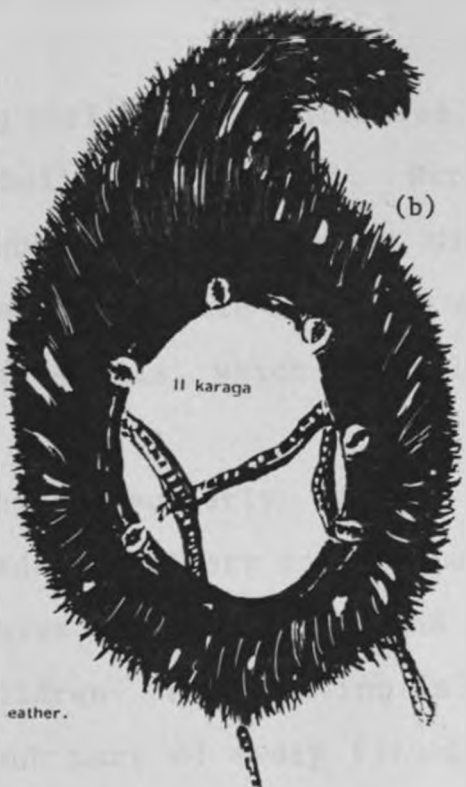
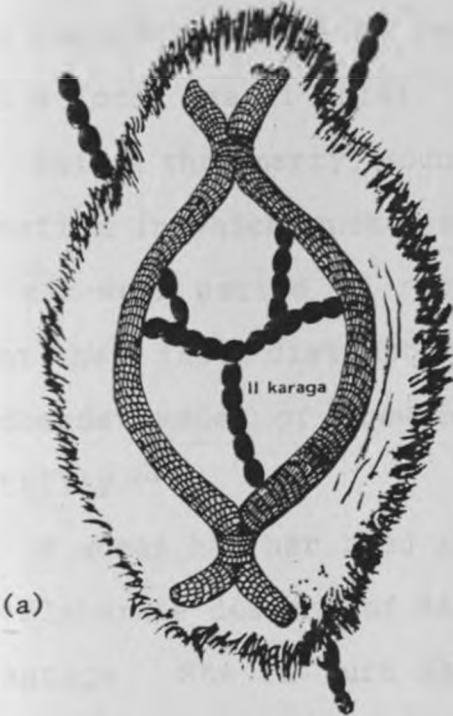
African head dress designs are consistent within the African styles. Within this consistency, there is diversity. It is not difficult, for example, to recognise a Maasai head dress from a Benin one. This is because stylistic standards differ from society to society. Of course styles may cut across ethnic lines, but within the broader stylistic practices, there are always substyles.<sup>309</sup> However it should be pointed out that in considering indigenous artworks the spirit of user-oriented objects is the same and many other criteria are the same also.

Achievement is the right to wear a lion-mane head-dress at the moran's rite of passage. It is a symbol of the warrior elite. The right to wear it is earned by the moran who kills a lion. However lion-hunting has been banned by the Government and as such the mane head-dress is given to the bravest brothers<sup>310</sup>. Their (Maasai) social welfare system covers the sharing or community ownership of the livestock, land, housing and food.

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<sup>309</sup> Bascom, William R., *African Art in Cultural Perspective*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1973, pp. 3-35.

<sup>310</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Tepilit, *Ibid*, pp. 19-25.

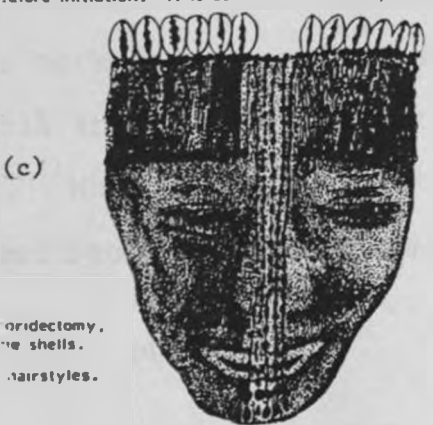


karaga headdress: Used by warriors.  
Made of Ostrich plumes and leather.

Traditional name: Iikaraga  
Used on the head

Traditional name: karaga

Worn by initiates. Made of leather strip and feathers of birds, the initiates have killed. It is a charm to protect them from illness. Young boys make before initiation. It is ceremonial and only worn on such occasion.



Traditional name: Esambar

A headdress worn by girls after undergoing scarification, during healing. Made from beads and cowrie shells.

Other accessories and Maasi hairstyles.

The young uncircumcised girl-friends of the Maasai warriors decorate only the upper part of their ears. Their large swinging ear-rings and flat bead collars are designed to draw attention to their every movement and enhance their natural grace.<sup>311</sup> This was confirmed by this researcher when he was discussing Maasai culture with a local Maasai chief.

Before they marry, young girls must be initiated, an operation in which much symbolism is attached. During the six-week period of recuperation, the Maasai girls paint their faces distinctively with white chalk and wear headbands made of cowrie shells which symbolise fertility.<sup>312</sup>

A woman has her head shaved regularly, setting off the elaborate designs of beaded jewellery to undisputed advantage. She in turn shaves her friends' heads and those of her husband and children. Head shaving is not only traditional grooming but part of every ritual of passage as well.

Birth, circumcision, marriage and progression through age-grades, each is marked by a ritual shave, using a ritual mixture of milk and water.

Long hair is a helmet. When a moran's hair has grown to a big thatch, a friend becomes a hairdresser for

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<sup>311</sup> Beckwith, Carol and Tepilit, *Ibid.*, pp. 19-25.

<sup>312</sup> Beckwith, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-37.

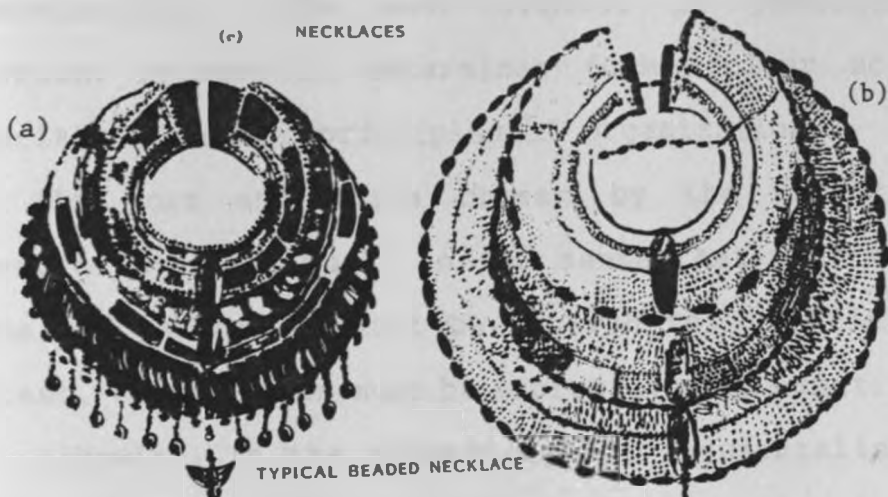
the duration of several days. First, the hair is parted across the head from ear to ear. All of it is coated with a mixture of ochre (red earth) and animal fat. Next, straps of hair are rubbed between fingers and palms to form miniature twisted ropes. Those twisted hair ropes in front of the parting are separated into three sections over the forehead and one over each temple. They are then tied at the ends. The twisted hair ropes back of the parting are gathered into pigtail at the bottom by binding them around a carved piece of wood. These examples are also available at Kenya National Museum and at National Archives, as witnessed by this researcher.

#### 7.5. NECKLACES

Many necklaces have an oval shape with a number of rings within the main shape. The rings depict different colour schemes depending on the purpose of the necklace. Colours are used in elaborate and well conceived patterns. Sometimes there are long straight links of beads reaching the knees to create rhythm and movement with the design, as can be seen in fig. 48 page 410.

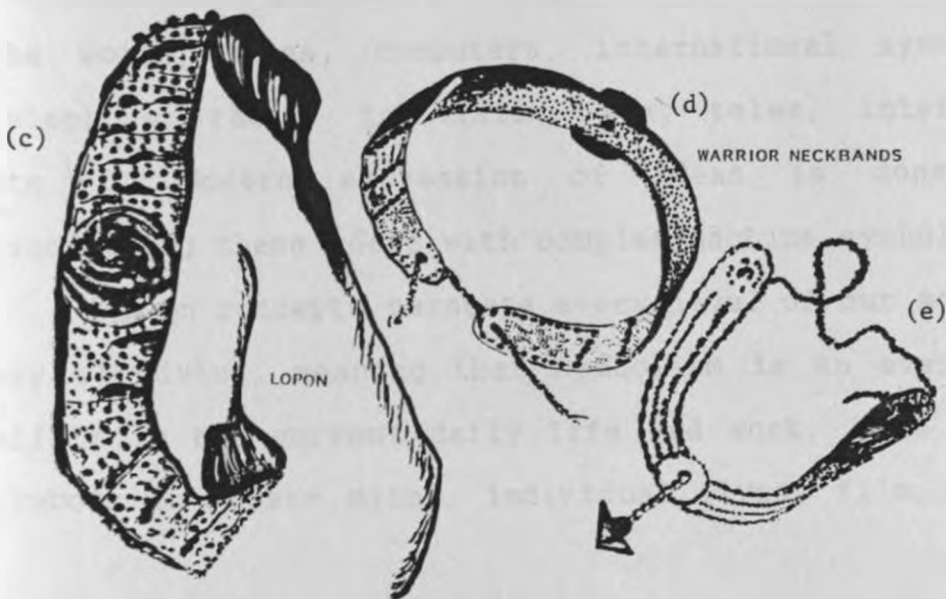
Neckwear, such as charms and protectives, have both round and circular shapes and are adorned with attractive beadwork and strings, etc. Also, neckbands are

(c) NECKLACES



TYPICAL BEADED NECKLACE

Most of the women make their own necklaces and ornaments in the Maasai community following the trends of fashion and when it is all done the ornaments end up in the Ollhene; a bag for a woman's necklaces, beads and ornaments.



WARRIOR NECKBANDS

Traditional name: LOPON

Worn by Morans around the neck. It is made of leather strap and Cowrie beads. Made by women for their sons.



decorated. However, neckbands have the shape of small belts. Other types of necklaces are adorned with streamers.

Neckwear art-forms and design patterns are made for and worn in the context of secular, religious understanding. The user element is particularly important because it determines form, colour scheme, material, and other principles of organization.

The form and style chosen by the artist are essentially traditional, in the sense that traditional norms and parameters must be adhered to. Within this context, the neckwear must be expressive and functional.

Likewise, in the present age of industrialisation and information technology, expression of ideas is done within certain parameters, such as various alphabets of the world, signs, computers, international symbols, telephone, radio, television, fax, telex, internet, etc.<sup>313</sup> Modern expression of ideas is done by associating these ideas with complex machine symbols.

Design concepts permeate every level of our modern way of living, meaning that symbolism is an everyday affair in the current daily life and work. One sees symbols in modern myths, individual lives, film, mass

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<sup>313</sup> Frutiger, Adrian, *Der Mensch Und Seine Zeichen 2 Band Text* bearbeitung Horst Heiderhoff. Die Zeichen der Sprachfixierung Horst Heiderhoff, Germany, Verlag Exhzell, 1979, pp. 10-50.

media, social communication, etc.<sup>314</sup>

Just as it is crucial that traditional societies understand the symbolic meaning of their design forms, so it is also with the contemporary societies. This is where the parallel of design concepts of both these societies meet. Meaning and style, thematic developments plans of a house and other modern design concepts are just steps towards symbolism.<sup>315</sup> This researcher's discussion with two community development officers at Kajiado confirmed the above fact.

#### 7.6. WAISTWEAR AND BELTS

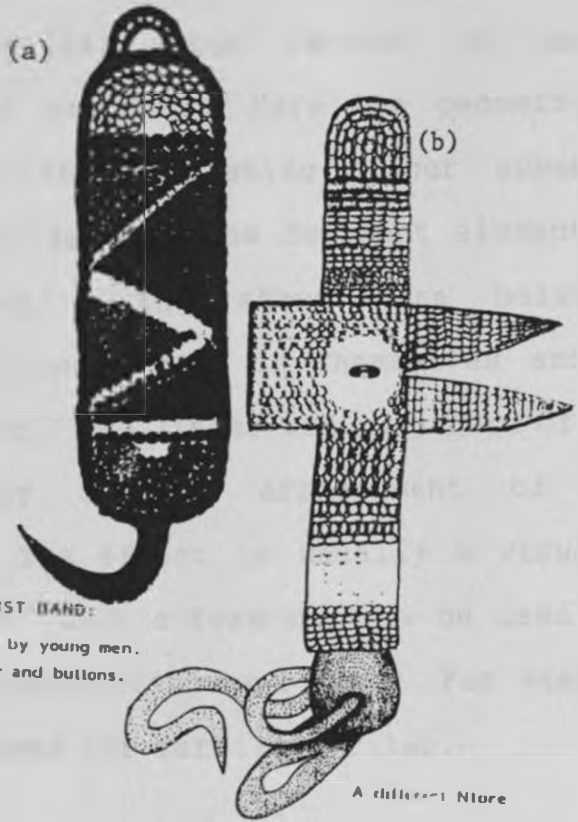
The basic design forms for waistwear and belts are long shapes. Sometimes these shapes have strings to help in tying the belt. There is plenty of bead work and decoration. As a result of the longish shapes, waistwear and belts give impressions of movement inherent in the linear form. This linear element with its highlights of beads produce attractive design patterns. It is representative just like so many symbols seen in cities today where design forms are linear and elements are

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<sup>314</sup> Jung Von C.G.,/Franz, Maria-Louise Von, /Henderson, Joseph L.,/Jacob, Jolande, /Jaffle, Aniela, *Der Mensch Und Seine Symbole*, Germany, Walter-Verlag, Olten und Frerburg in Breisgau, 1979, pp. 11-41.

<sup>315</sup> Jencks, Charles, *Symbolic Architecture*, New York, Rizzoli, 1985, pp. 20-39.

(1) WAISTBAND AND BELTS



Men: Nchoni Enkiyok

NCHONI ENKIYOK WAIST BAND:

Worn around the waist by young men.  
Made of beads, leather and buttons.

Ntore Waist Band:

Worn by young women around the waist.  
Made of beads and hide and has straps with which to tie.

A different Ntore

symbols. Linear forms may also be points, horizontal, vertical, symmetrical, asymmetrical, symbols in ornaments and simple signs.<sup>115</sup> Figure 49 in page 416 illustrates this value.

Waistwear in the traditional societies, like all the other art-forms of these communities, were user focused. For example, the number of coloured beads in a certain waistwear among the Maasai would vary from woman to woman according to the number of children she has. In some other types of waistwear, shapes and forms have no reference to the natural world because of design criterion among other reasons. Here the geometrical shapes are basically for regulating colour schemes. Colour in this respect becomes the dominant element of the symbolic meaning. The shapes are balanced horizontally and vertically both in themselves and in relation to one another. The linear and long form of the object gives harmony to the arrangement of the geometrical shapes. The effect is usually a visually attractive art-form.<sup>117</sup> Such a form may now be used for a specific ceremony, celebration or ritual. For example some waistwears are used for fertility rites.

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<sup>115</sup> Frutiger, Adrian, *Der Mensch und Seine Zeichen I Band* Textbearbeitung Horst Heiderhoff Zeichen Erkennen Zeichen Gestalten, German, D.Stempel A.G., Frankfurt Main, 1978, pp. 29-55.

<sup>117</sup> Frutiger, *Ibid.*, 48-55.

More fertility symbolism in the form of fresh grass is implanted in a leather girdle around a maid's waist and for some reason also on her shoes.

"Nborro" the long blue beads are worn only by married women, except for the beaded belts where the warriors carry their knives which are gifts from mothers and girl-friends, and which signify their love and admiration for these men.<sup>318</sup>

"Ol akesena" the belt of the young unmarried woman is a symbol of the connection between the young women and the young men of the moran age grade. This belt is so important to the morans that its picture is painted across their shields. (A detailed study on shields is on pages 446 - 453).

The belt is a semi-secret thing that is partially hidden from view in the course of normal wear. It requires a great many beads and great care to make. The patterns are triangles, diamonds on a white ground executed by sewing tightly packed lines of beads to a leather backing. The colours used may be red-white-black and muddy yellow, all bordered with red. The borders around the belt are alternating black and white. The use of beads in the patterns of the Maasai indicate the availability of beads at a certain time; those (abundant patterns) made in times of hardship show muddy colours

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Frutiger, *Ibid.*, 59-69.

only bright borders which sparingly use the colourful beads.<sup>119</sup>

The Maasai rejected murky purple wire and greenish blues after the 1800s; thus the old necklaces and belts appear duller than the modern ones.

#### 7.7. ARM AND FINGERWEAR

Among the most appreciated are the art-forms for use on arms and fingers. While functions and meanings of African art in all its diversity have been often remote and less accessible to many scholars', these forms of African art possess and provide high degrees of aesthetic appreciation. For example, the Maasai artist employs skills and techniques to produce attractive and pleasing work. Formal qualities, i.e., the elements of design and composition that the artist uses were among the first features that attracted other people. By comparing these art-forms with some others from various African and non African traditional societies, viewers appreciated their patterns, beauty standards and craftsmanship, as can be seen in Figures 25 and 50 on page 364 and 417.

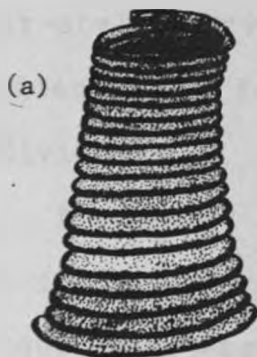
Since shape, form and colour are combined in specific ways that usually allow individual interpretation, care is taken to do this in essentially

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<sup>119</sup> Hobley, *Ibid.*, pp. 14-26.

(x) ARM AND FINGER WEAR

Women And Girls



(a)

Segengei

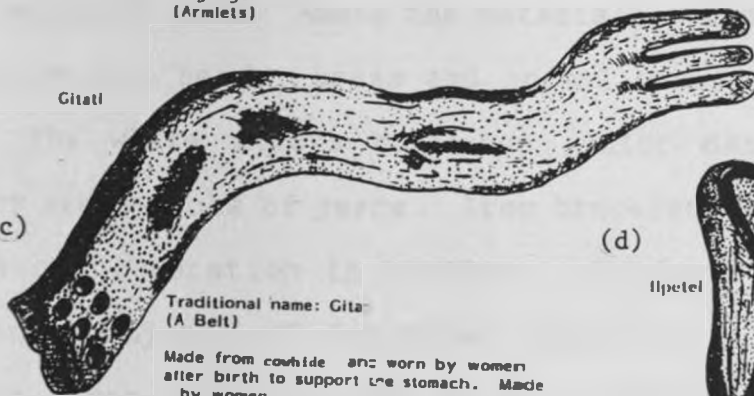
Traditional name: Segengei  
(Armlets)

Worn by circumcised girls and women  
They are wound round the arms.



(b)

Traditional name: Seseveni  
(Armlet Object)



Gitati

(c)

Traditional name: Gita  
(A Belt)

Made from cowhide and worn by women  
after birth to support the stomach. Made  
by women.



(d)

Ipetel

Worn by elders, (men of Titles).

Traditional name: Ipetel  
(Ring)

It signified wealth and prestige.  
It is made of shining aluminium  
metal from old sufurias made by  
blacksmiths on order.



(e)

Ipetel Ring of Titled Elders

-Made of brass

-Engraved with circles.

Local coiled iron wire armlet with wide played cuff. The top three  
coils themselves coiled with fine gauge iron wire. It is worn by  
SINGIKI (i.e. Circumcised girls).

traditional terms. Elsewhere in Africa, for example, figure sculptures and facial expressions tend to be unemotional and noncommittal, a dimension that is considered most appropriate for an individual public person in many parts of the continent. In this case, sculptural figures are often decorated with jewellery or cosmetics as with the real people on whom particular hair-styles serve not only as symbols of beauty, but also as identifying features of particular groups of people or individuals.<sup>320</sup>

Also, just as texture is important in most African art-forms, the same is true in making Maasai arm and finger bracelets and rings. Here texture is achieved by the material used. Among the materials employed are iron wire, metal, beads, brass and animal bone and horn.

The white sticks that the junior dancing elders carry are symbols of peace. Iron bracelets act as a link from one generation to another. A black club is the essential symbol of delegated authority. It modestly marks a man as an age-set leader. Wildebeest-tail fly whisk marks a man as an elder. An elder may also carry a beaded bamboo snuff container (a traditional gift from a first-born daughter) and a thick red blanket.<sup>321</sup> Handheld objects lend grace and even power to their

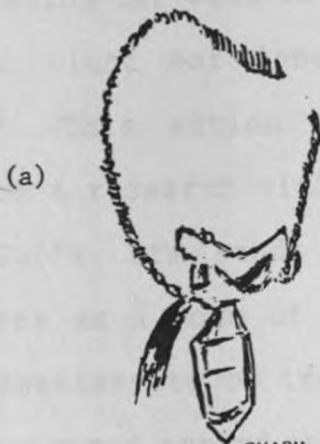
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<sup>320</sup> Rita and Grunwald, *African Art*, pp. 30-39.

<sup>321</sup> Rita, *Ibid.*, 41-52.



CHARMS:



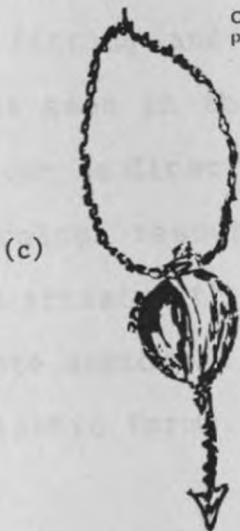
CHARM

Worn around the neck by a special Ram to protect it from thieves. If the ram is slaughtered, some of its fat is rubbed onto the charm which is then hung around the neck of another ram so that it grows as strong as its predecessor. Made of bone, hung on a plaited cowhide rope. Made by old men.

CHARM

Traditional name: Iikidog Lepua or Iikidog Leikumcau

Charm worn by small children to protect them from evil eye.



DIFFERENT CHARM

Worn around the neck by babies to protect them from the evil eye which causes fever. The charm is wrapped in a piece of cotton cloth and decorated with beads threaded on the neck ligament of a cow and with a pendant cut from a tiny can. Made by old women.

[see also the following charm]



BABY CHARM:

Worn by babies around the neck for protection. Made of beads, wood and aluminium.

owners.

A brass ornament is also given to the mother by the bridegroom as a sign that he has married her daughter and this symbolises the great respect that will be accorded to her by him and his age group. Beer will have been brewed beforehand and this is used for blessing the bride and wishing her well in her new home. An ornament is put on her right ear lobe and another one on her right leg.<sup>322</sup> This action was observed by this researcher when on a research visit at Kesames in Kajiado.

Cuffs, arm bands and leg bands have very dynamic patterns as a form of jewellery. This was the last of the jewellery to be transformed by the incorporation of beads wrapped around in colour patterns. These ornaments are different from the necklaces and earrings; they are close fitting and do not jingle. The few structural changes seen in the Maasai jewellery over the past 100 years can be directly connected to the use of glass beads as a colour resource. This resource has provided the Maasai artist with abundant freedom in the development of concrete aesthetic expressions through colour in graphic and plastic forms.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Rita, *Ibid.*, pp. 55-63.

<sup>323</sup> Rita, *Ibid.*, pp. 66-71.

Maasai sandals are a proper and interesting example of the practicability of footwear art-forms. Aesthetically, they look colourful attractive and comfortable. These practical features are common to other footwear art-forms.

Form in footwear is very important in the production of the same. The artists consider the utility value first, followed by searching out and choosing the appropriate materials to be used. After this then composition follows. If it is sandals the artist considers that they will be resting on the underside surface, as it were. This can be appreciated in Figures 52 and 53 on pages 422 and 423.

Then comes the modelling part. Here the artist has to address himself/herself to a few questions. Is the object a mass, is it linear, planar or plastic? After this the artist comes to integration - how are major and minor elements articulated? Proportionality also must be considered. This is how functional relationships between parts are arranged.<sup>324</sup>

By giving form considerable attention, the Maasai artist is able to produce very functional footwear that

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<sup>324</sup> Miller, Graig R., *Modern Design*. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1890-1990, New York, Harry N. Abrams Incorporated, 1990, pp. 40-55.

(b) FOOTWEAR



Traditional name: Nkaraben  
(Sandals)

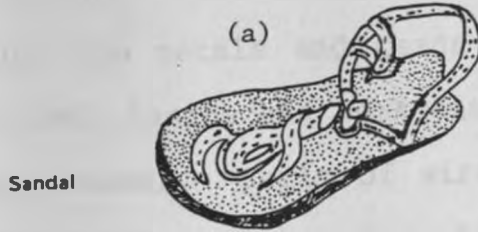
- Leather straps from tail of a bull.
- Worn by a cross section of mainly warriors.



Traditional name: en amga

Pair of cowhide sandals given to a moran when he went on a main raid.

THE MAASAI SANDALS



The Maasai sandals also have a human influence. The beauty of aesthetic value is undoubtable, being so colourful and attractive. Nowadays car tyres are used in the making of Maasai sandals [AKALA].



is user oriented. This orientation fulfils the object's function of protecting the feet. As a result, the symbolism of protection and care of the human person is portrayed by these footwear art-forms. Even in warfare, this protecting spirit is very much evident. 'For example, the two sandals given to the moran is meant to ensure that if one pair wore out or got torn, a second conveyed him quickly on his way<sup>325</sup>. Maasai sandals are light and well attached to the feet. They cannot come out while running.<sup>326</sup>

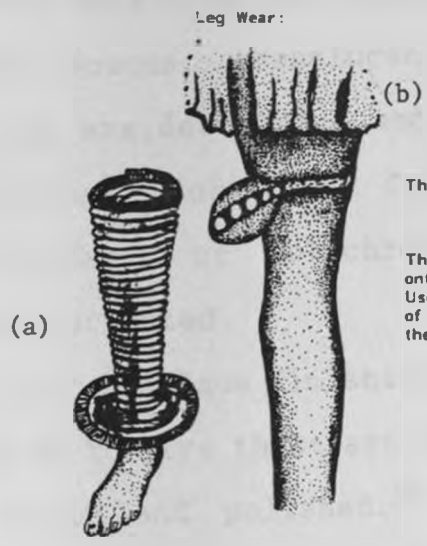
Although the metals and beads are still imported into Maasailand, design and workmanship (craftsmanship) are uniquely Maasai. Coils of wire form a decorative load in which a married woman may sheath her legs. Thus it is difficult, if not impossible, for a raiding enemy to drive or carry off a much prized wife. They are the only Maasai stockings, according to information from a Maasai source, while coils of wire on the upper arm have a definite symbolic meaning. They show that a youth has been circumcised.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Miller, *Ibid*, pp. 57-65.

<sup>326</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, pp. 67-72.

<sup>327</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, pp. 74-81.



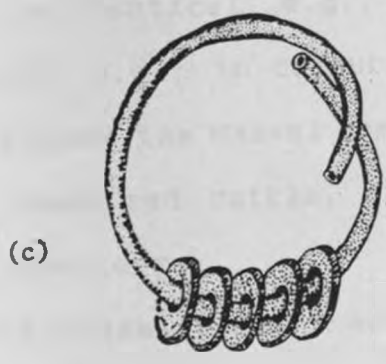
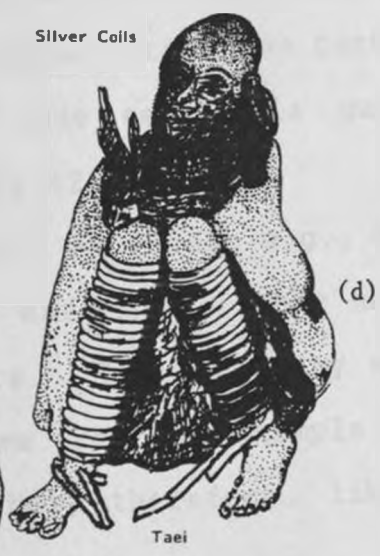
Leg Wear:

Thigh Bell

This bell is made from metal and held onto the thigh by a strap of animal skin. Used to signal the intimidating approach of the moran to their enemies. Today, the moran dons it to dance and celebrate.

Traditional name Tael  
Silver coils  
Made from silver  
Worn by women both young and old.

Silver Coils



Nkaraben anklet.  
A child's Anklet. Used by boys aged two years.

## 7.9. EAR ORNAMENTS, BEAD DECORATIONS AND RELATED JEWELLERY

These types of art-forms have a well finished surface that is aesthetically quite attractive. The materials range from bead work to strings and skin. Many of these materials are juxtaposed with each other. They may be opaque, translucent or transparent. Design patterns are decorative and ornamental in two or three dimensional forms. Colour schemes are either monochromatic or polychromatic and could either be primary or muted.

Since surface finishing is important, great skill is employed to give these art-forms attractive texture that is smooth and polished.<sup>323</sup> One sees this quality on Figures 52 - 56 on pages 422-429.

In the Maasai community, two things e.g., ear-rings cannot be identical. e.g., ear-rings. They have to be different, e.g., in colours. The jewellery worn also depicts where the Maasai come from; for example the Turka Maasai have red cattle, they, therefore, like red in their jewellery.

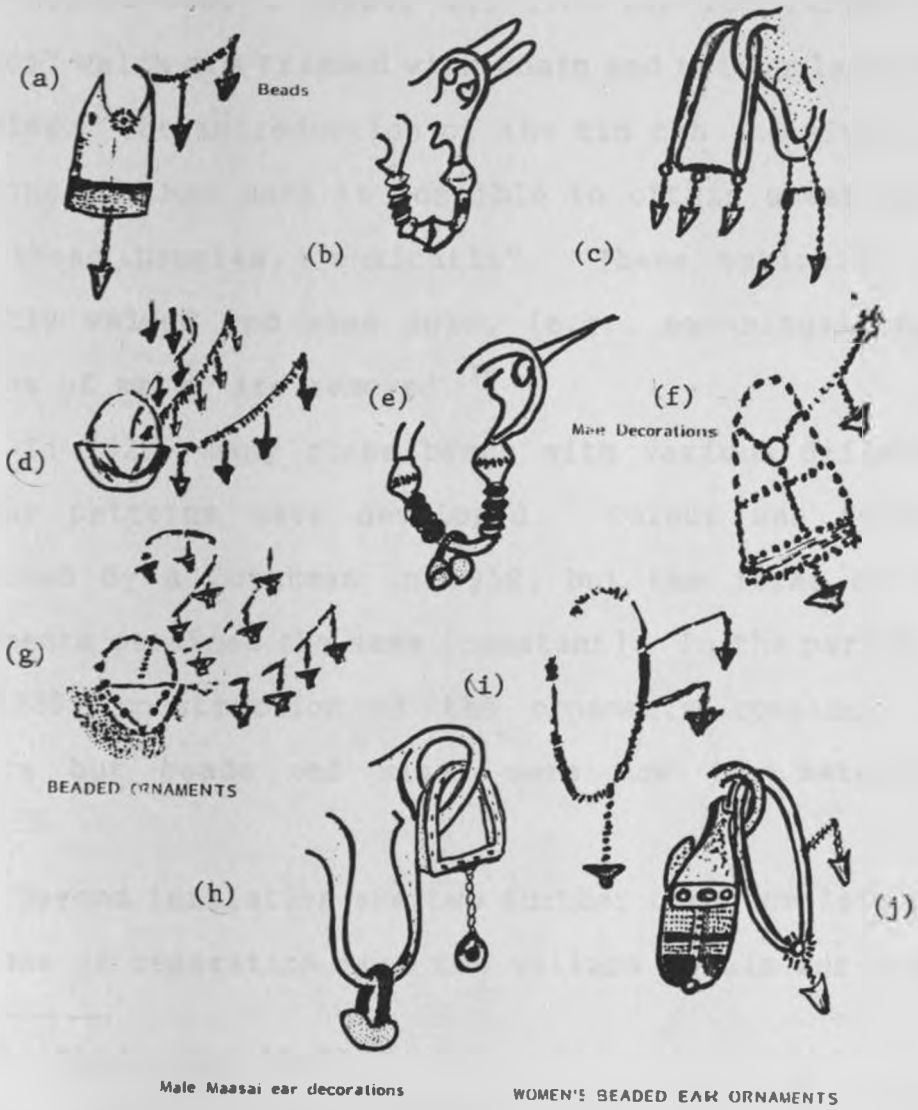
The Maasai women's ear ornaments are of different kinds and have different names. The "SURUTIA" and its

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<sup>323</sup> Miller, Graig R., *Modern Design*. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1890-1990, New York, Harry N. Abrams Incorporated 1990, pp. 30-38.



(I) EAR ORNAMENTS, BEAD DECORATIONS AND RELATED JEWELLERY



leather strap "engonito enkiyo" are extremely important symbols for the married woman. Only the mother of a moran may wear a surutia, which gives them honour for their role as mothers of warriors. All married women must put on "engonito enkiyo" before milking the cows in the morning. This indicates the relationship between the Maasai and their cows.<sup>329</sup>

Elders wear a copper and iron ear fob called "Ol mintoi" which are trimmed with chain and triangular ivory dangles. The introduction of the tin can and aluminium cooking pot has made it possible to obtain sheet metal for these bangles, "enkichili". These enkichili are greatly valued and when sold, (e.g., ear-rings) these pieces of metal are removed.<sup>330</sup>

In 1929, many glass beads with various different colour patterns were developed. Colour was further improved by a Dutchman in 1952, but the forms of the ornaments remained the same (constant). In the period up to 1980, construction of the ornaments continued as before but beads and sisal were now the materials used.<sup>331</sup>

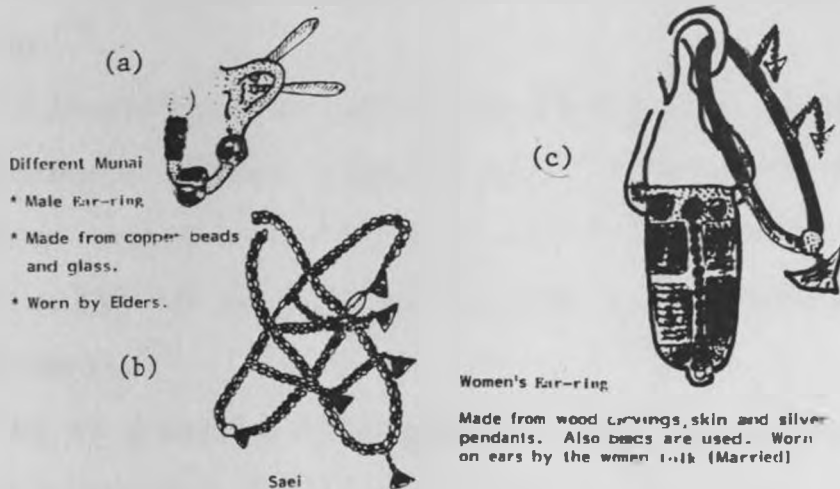
Beyond initiation are two further that complete the process of separation from the village domain for a boy

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<sup>329</sup> Stigand, *Ibid.*, pp. 11-23.

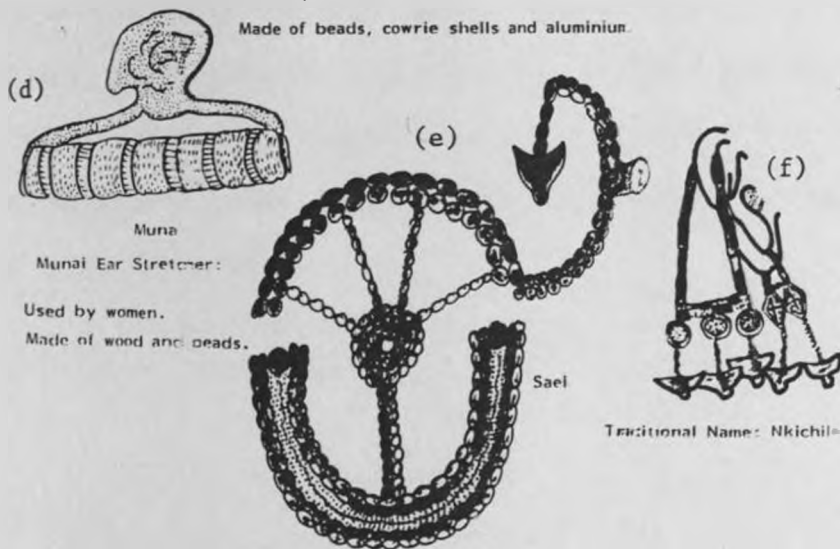
<sup>330</sup> Stigand, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-33.

<sup>331</sup> Stigand, *Ibid.*, pp. 36-41.



Saei Ear-ring Used by women.

Made of beads, cowrie shells and aluminium.



Another Saei Ear-ring Also used by women and also made of beads, cowrie shells and aluminium.

and again are symbolised anachronistically but quite consistently by reference to earlier stages of his life. The first is the goat-of-the-shrubs, which he should share with an age mate close to the village where small boys herd goats. And the second is the ox-of-the-wooden-earplugs, which is his inaugural forest feast and for the occasion he wears wooden earplugs like any grown herdsboy.<sup>332</sup>

Girls are not left out in the rich custom of wearing ear ornaments. Wooden plugs in a girl's earlobes, beaded necklace, capped and tight hair, which fetch smile are a common sight of an "entito" (young girl) tending the family goats.<sup>333</sup>

The long-beaded ear flaps show that a Maasai woman is married and the Maasai hold a belief that a man should never see his wife without them. The pendants she wears, "Surutia", proclaim that she has a circumcised son. She will have lent the sururia to him during the period following his circumcision and for the Eunoto ceremony if he was a chief warrior.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Hamilton, *Ibid.*, pp. 20-31.

<sup>333</sup> Hamilton, *Ibid.*, pp. 37-45.

<sup>334</sup> Hamilton, *Ibid.*, pp. 48-56.

## 7.10. LIVESTOCK ORNAMENTS

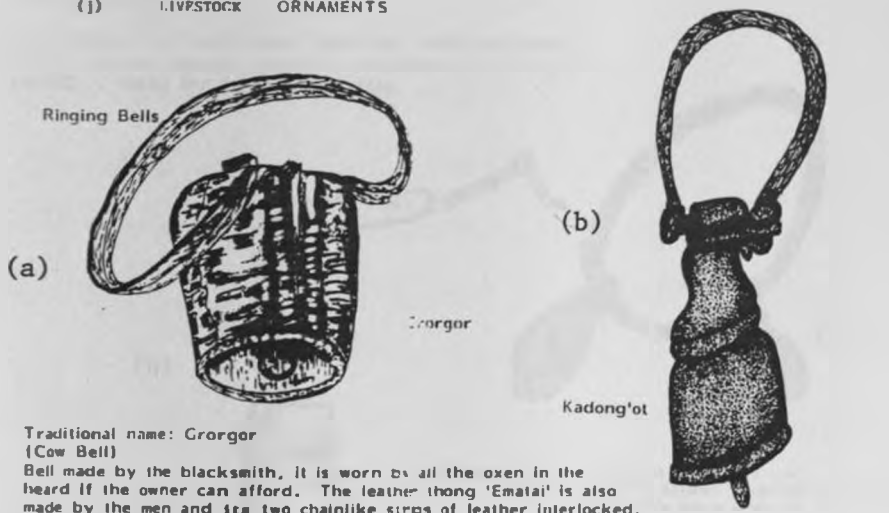
Construction of animal ornaments is an important element of design because of the nature of their usage, environmental factors and socio-cultural requirements. Craftsmanship must be durable and the overall quality of execution has to meet high standards. The designed object is made with the user in mind; only this time the user is a cow or a donkey or a goat or a sheep. The first design criteria is to consider which part of the animal body the design object is meant for: neck, leg, nostrils or ear.

The finished surface is not usually painstakingly smooth because of the nature of use. However, the underlying structure is strong, firm and secure. Also, the material is used expressively in that the innate qualities of such materials are exploited to the full. For example iron is used for constructing a bell art form, the ringing noise from the iron bell is very effective in alerting the animal owner to the whereabouts of the particular animals. In this instance the correct material is used for the correct noise; whether the material is wood, plastic, metal, or fibre, the innate quality is exploited to the full. This also goes for how the material is cut, bent, cast, woven, etc.<sup>335</sup> Examples

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<sup>335</sup> Miller, Craig, *Modern Design*. In Metropolitan Museum of Art 1890-1990, New York, N. Abrams Inc., 1990, pp. 19-27.

(j) LIVESTOCK ORNAMENTS



Traditional name: Gorgor  
(Cow Bell)

Bell made by the blacksmith, it is worn by all the oxen in the herd if the owner can afford. The leather thong 'Ematai' is also made by the men and its two chainlike strips of leather interlocked.

Traditional name

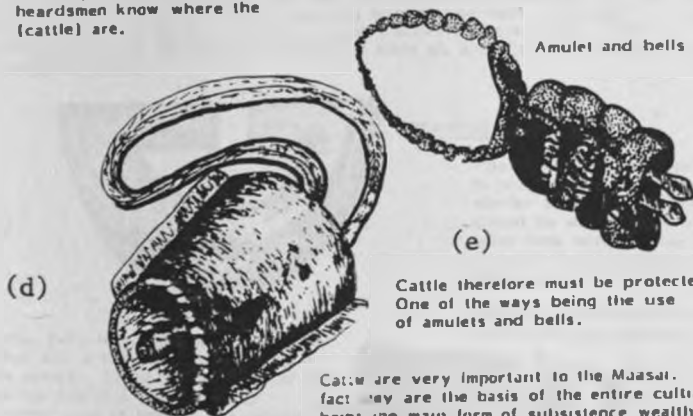
Kadong'ot  
(Calf Charm)

Put on necks of  
calves for protection.

Made of metal and strings



Used by the Maasai so that the herdsman know where the (cattle) are.



Cattle therefore must be protected. One of the ways being the use of amulets and bells.

Cattle are very important to the Maasai. In fact they are the basis of the entire culture, being the main form of subsistence wealth and power.

Traditional name: Gorgor

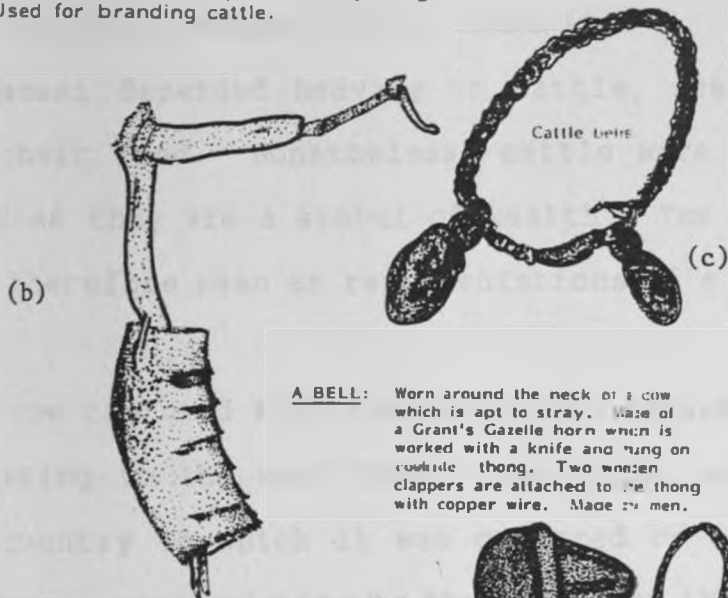
(Cow bell) of different shape:

Bell made by the blacksmith, it is worn by all the oxen in the herd if the owner can afford. The leather thong 'Ematai' is also made by the men and its two chainlike strips of leather interlocked.



**BRANDING ROD**

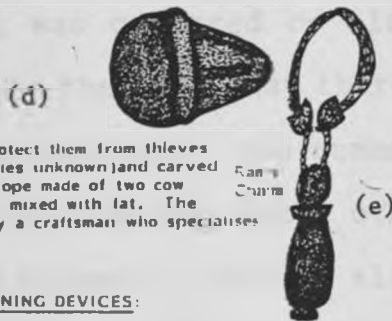
It is made of an over-bent iron rod which is fixed onto a wooden handle which is protected by a tight cowhide. Used for branding cattle.



**A BELL:** Worn around the neck of a cow which is apt to stray. Made of a Grant's Gazelle horn which is worked with a knife and hung on cowhide thong. Two wooden clappers are attached to the thong with copper wire. Made by men.

**Charm to protect cattle**

Worn around the necks of a ram and a calf to protect them from thieves and illness. Made of woods from two trees (species unknown) and carved with a knife. The Ram's charm is hung from a rope made of two cow hide thongs interlaced to produce a plaited ochre mixed with fat. The charms are made by men and the rope is made by a craftsman who specialises in leather work.

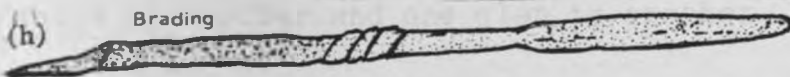


**WEANING DEVICES:**

Placed by men in calves nostrils to prevent them suckling. A warrior elder decides when a calf should be weaned, a compass which takes from seven to ten days. Made of woods from a brown olive and another tree (species unknown).

Both are carved with knives and can be made by any man.

Cattle Bells and amulets are made of metal with a simple bell-like ring in the centre. They are fastened to the cow by use of a leather strap. Another kind of amulet has pebbles in a metal causing a rattling sound and thus serving its purpose.



**BRANDING IRON:**

Used by men to brand cattle with their pattern of ownership. Irons with loops in the centre are used on ceremonial occasions. Forged from scrap iron by a blacksmith.

can be seen on Figures 57 - 59 on pages 432 to 436.

Art-forms and design patterns meant for use on animals are also made with the social-cultural norms in mind. For example there are some special ornaments that are meant only for special bulls including those to be sacrificed. This means that design forms must also conform to symbolic values of the community.

The Maasai depended heavily on cattle, sheep and goats for their food. Nonetheless, cattle were rarely slaughtered as they are a symbol of wealth. The Maasai cattle are therefore seen as representations of a way of life.<sup>336</sup>

Every cow captured from a warlike activity is given a name relating to the war; thus a cow might be named after the country in which it was captured or else it might be given a name relating to the fact that there was a high casualty list among the warriors. The commonest names are "fear me", "we intimidated each other", "squeezed them", "we scattered them", "nobody slept", etc.

#### 7.10.1. Brand Marks

Brand marks used for livestock varied from one family to another and one clan to another. There is one

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<sup>336</sup> Tucker, Mpaayei, Tempo, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-36.



principal and leading mark used on all cattle belonging to the various members of a family<sup>337</sup>. There are also small marks by which the actual owner can be recognized besides branding. Each family had a special method of splitting ears of their cattle, sheep, donkeys, etc. They, however, have smaller marks for each individual owner. Therefore a cow could be easily identified by the owner<sup>338</sup>.

#### 7.11. WEAPONRY, DEFENCE AND WARFARE

In this category of art-forms and design patterns there are such objects as shields, clubs, spears, belts, swords, sheaths, horns, head-dresses, neck wears, bows and arrows. The overriding design criteria in all these is the utility value. This means then that the object must be reliable in both design and choice of material. These criteria can be seen on Figures 60 - 69 on page 440 to 455. However, among Maasai weaponry, shields present a lot of conceptual value in colour, pattern, symbolism, balance, etc.<sup>339</sup>

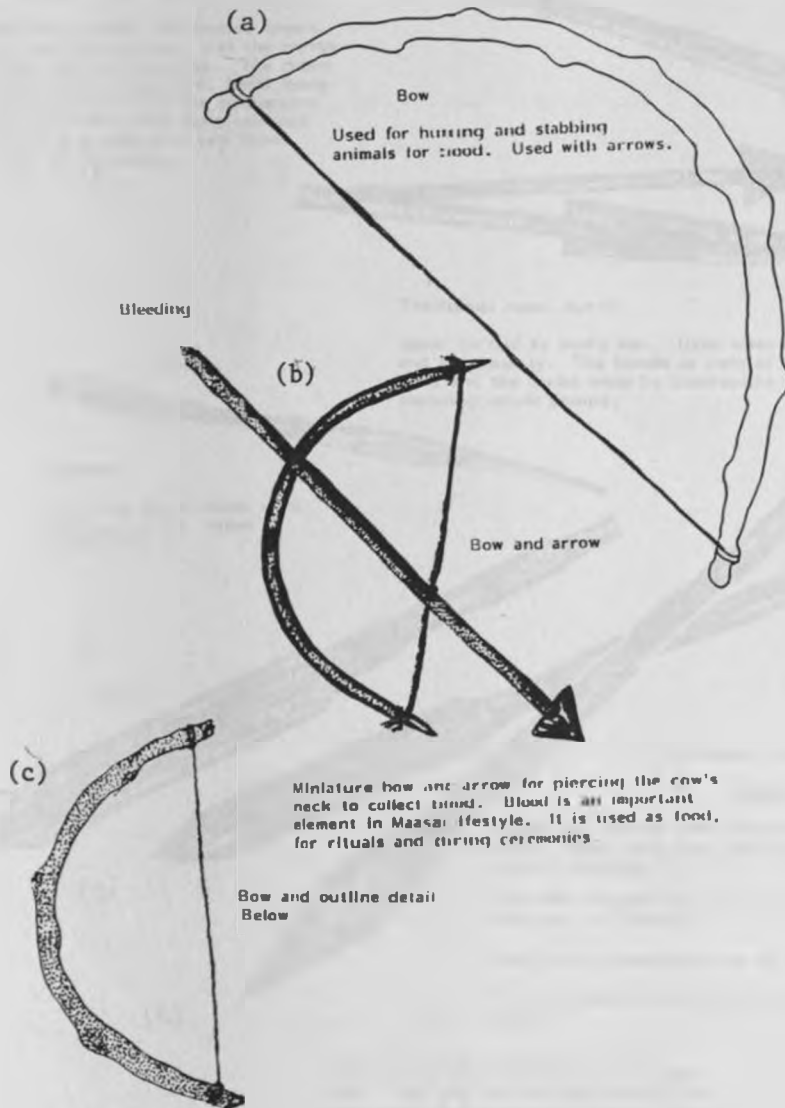
The first and most important thing that is noticed is the use of a standard set of colours, i.e., red, white

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<sup>337</sup> Tucker, *Ibid*, pp. 40 - 52.

<sup>338</sup> Tucker, *Ibid*, pp. 56 - 67.

<sup>339</sup> Payre and Gale, *Ibid.*, pp. 41-57.



(b) WEAPONRY, DEFENCE AND WARFARE

Spears

Traditional name: Embere

The thin shafted, leaf-bladed spears are used for throwing, and the narrow-bladed ones for stabbing. The colour of the shaft is important, black being more prestigious and the prerogative of senior moran than light coloured. Bought at a price of a calf from a clan of blacksmiths.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

Traditional name: Mperia

Spear carried by every man. Used when hurrying and for security. The handle is made of a special wood and the blades made by blacksmiths from the sounding ethnic groups.

(e)

A Mbere

Very long Maasai spear used during wars and other celebrations.

(f)

(g)

(h)

Traditional name: Mpera

Spears Mbere

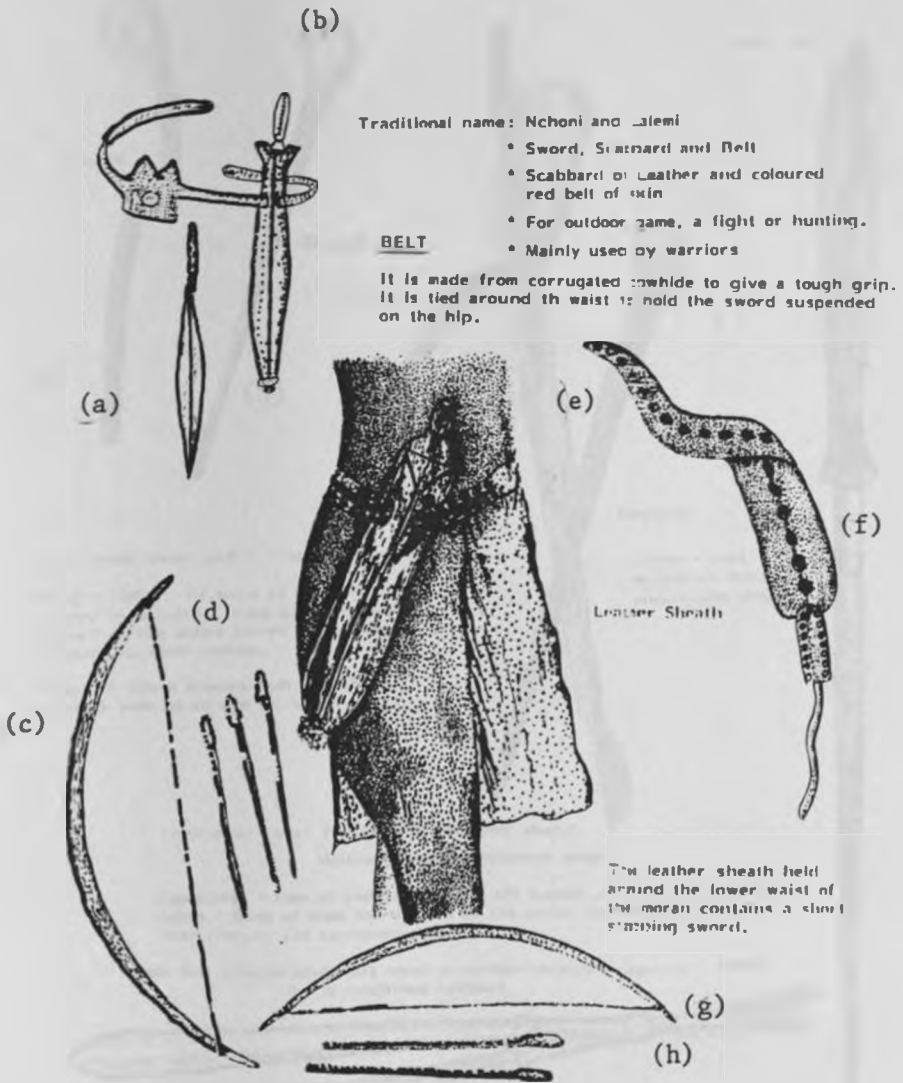
Spears are made by some particular clans. Other clans buy them at the price of one calf.

The thin-shafted leaf-bladed spears are used for throwing.

The narrow-bladed ones are for stabbing.

The war spear has a very long narrow blade.

Warriors develop a worshipful trust in their weapons and treat them with utmost care. The most important of these is the spear which is a three part weapon. It has a wooden handle in between two steel heads.



Traditional name: Nchoni and Lalemi

- Sword, Scabbard and Belt
- Scabbard of Leather and coloured red belt of oxen
- For outdoor game, a fight or hunting.
- Mainly used by warriors

**BELT**

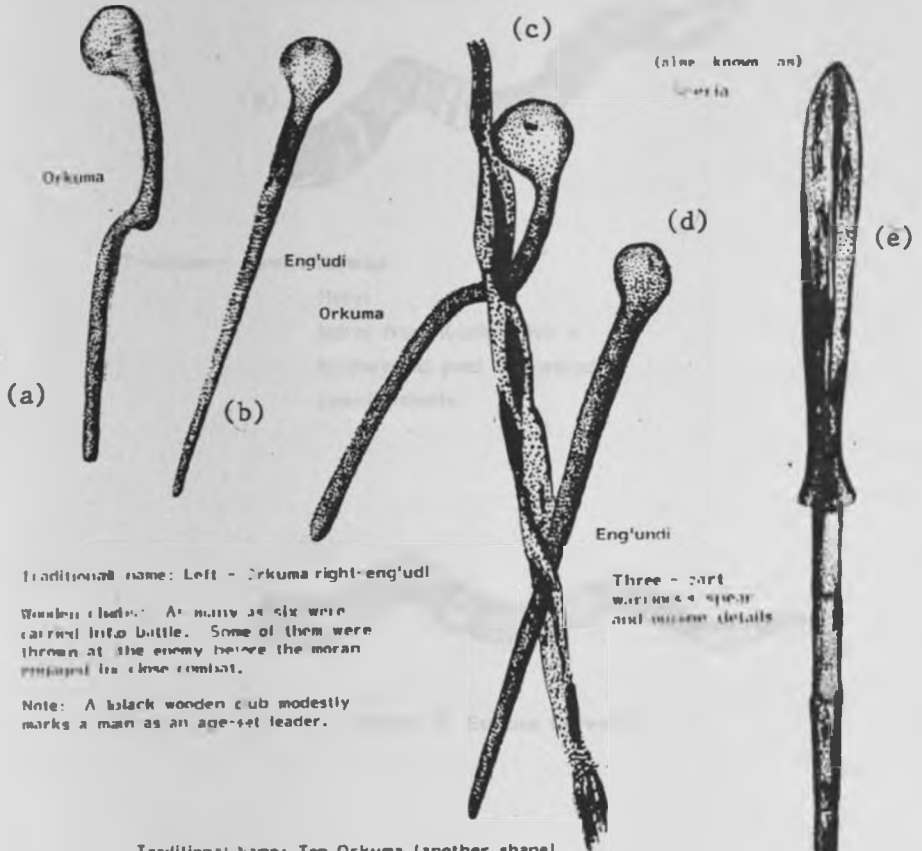
It is made from corrugated cowhide to give a tough grip. It is tied around the waist to hold the sword suspended on the hip.

Leather Sheath

The leather sheath held around the lower waist of the moran contains a short stabbing sword.

Bow and Arrows for a newly circumcised youth.

The youth will use these bows and arrows to practice important exercises that will give him the necessary qualities that a young warrior should have. Such exercises are taken very seriously in the Maasai society.



Traditional name: Left - Orkuma right-eng'udi

Wooden clubs: As many as six were carried into battle. Some of them were thrown at the enemy before the moran engaged in close combat.

Note: A black wooden club modestly marks a man as an age-set leader.

Three - part warrior's spear and various details

Traditional name: Top Orkuma (another shape)  
Bottom Eng'udi (different shape)

Especially - time of war as many as six wooden clubs are carried into battle. Some of them are thrown at the enemy before engaging in close combat. (as explained earlier)

Note that wooden clubs are used to symbolise/signify age-set leader  
Also as explained earlier)



Traditional name: Mperia

Mperia Spears: Used by young men for hunting or war.  
Made of metal heads and wooden shaft.

(g)

HORNS



Traditional name: Muwuo

Horn

Horn from Kudu with a  
leather lid and decorated  
cowrie shells.

(b)



Decorated Kudu horn blown at Eunoto Ceremony

(c)



Decoratec Kudu horn blown at Eunoto Ceremony

and black. This is a set of colours that is related to the Narok Enkai and therefore to God. It is therefore respected and is very important to the Maasai. The colours also contrast each other in that black is considered the opposite of white. This should be understood symbolically. The model of the Maasai is one of opposites in that everything has to have an opposite. In this case black becomes the opposite of white.

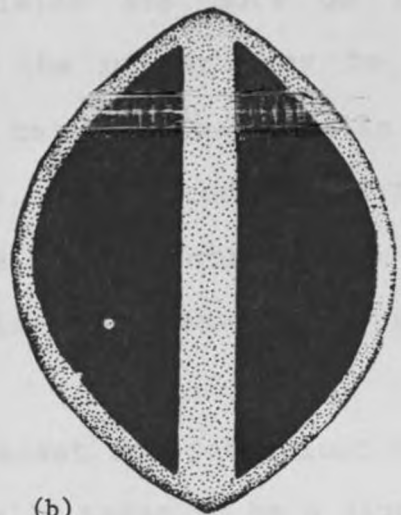
#### 7.11.1. The Shields and Their Designs

The Maasai are generally a very colourful society and the set of colours used on Maasai shields is just as striking, attractive and colourful. The shield therefore only adds to the elegance and poise of the Maasai warriors.

Another aspect that is noticed about the Maasai shields is the presence of some form of zigzag shapes. A zigzag shape must be included in the pattern. This pattern symbolises a belt or some form of ornament given to the warrior by his girl-friend and is meant to be a symbol of love between the two. The warriors decide on the symbols with their girl-friends. This also helps to form a way of keeping a historical record. It must be noted here that each age-set will have a different zigzag



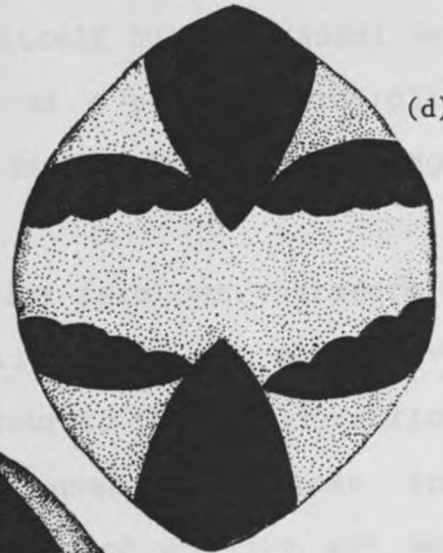
(a)



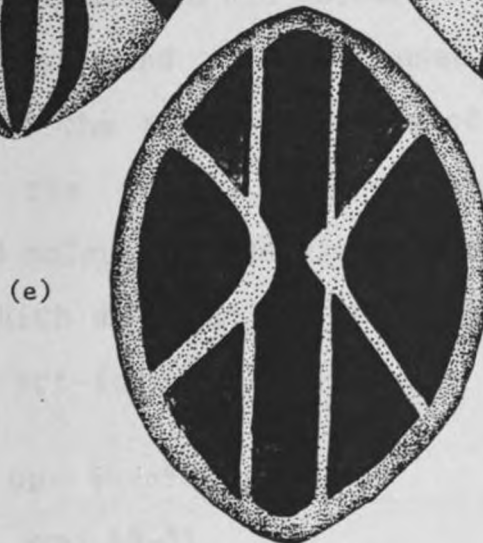
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)

Shield and Design  
Details



pattern from the others.<sup>340</sup>

The patterns on the shields are more or less symmetrical, that is to say, the pattern may be cut exactly into half. But it must be noted that this is not the case with all the patterns. This study noted that the pattern is always well-balanced according to the basic shape of the shield. It is never heavy on any side of the shield.<sup>341</sup>

A set pattern for each age-set and set colour code for the shield can be symbolically taken to be a sign of unity not only of the age-set itself but the Maasai as a whole. It may also be taken as a sign of discipline among them as the colour code is standard and each age-set must adhere to it.

The Maasai shield as an art-form can therefore be considered to be very effective. It is attractive, dramatic and manages to add colour to the Maasai warrior. The pattern(s) and colours used also take into consideration the Maasai culture of duality and more importantly the colour code of God or Enkai. The patterns and colours are well co-ordinated are thus well-balanced, which makes it all the more interesting as a significant art-form.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Payre, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-69.

<sup>341</sup> Sankan, *Ibid.*, pp. 18-31.

<sup>342</sup> Sankan, *Ibid.*, pp. 36-49.

For its function, which is to protect the warrior, the shield is designed well as it is oval in shape and effectively covers the warrior during raids or attacks. It is also easy to carry and does not hinder the movements of the warrior.

The Maasai shield is basically used by the moran (or warrior) section of the Maasai social set-up to protect themselves (tribe and clan) during attacks or raids. Together with this shield, morans carry long-bladed spears. The shields are usually made up of a strong phalanx of buffalo hide, are pointed and oval and, when used together, completely protects the army of Maasai warriors. The personal bravery of the moran was to locate the lion, surrounding him only with their leather shields and broad-hafted spears. The ring closes and spears are cast at very short range.<sup>343</sup>

The Maasai leather shield is tough and hard and is exceedingly difficult to penetrate. The shields are painted in earth colours of red, black and white. Once the morans have distinguished themselves, they would set about painting their shields with emblematic claims to warrior status. The shield marks were easily decipherable as an announcement of the owner's tribal section, special bravery and age-grade.

The marks on the shields started with black and grey

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<sup>343</sup> Loitel, T., *Ibid.*, pp. 29-36.

sectional and group devices on a white background, designed by their sponsor or a respected warrior. If one of the boys happened to be recognised for a particular act of courage, he would be allowed to add a brightly coloured medallion.<sup>344</sup>

At some stage, the newly circumcised conscripts, dressed in black clothes and wearing head-dresses of stuffed birds, would take a chance and mark their shields with a broad stripe of red paint made from laterite clay and the juice of a solanum plant. This was the coveted warrior's mark, and they would parade it outside a manyatta, taunting the junior elders that they were getting too old and feeble. The mark is solemnised by the announcement by the laibon of an age-group.<sup>345</sup>

The pattern on the two halves of the shield are often asymmetrical but always well-balanced and arranged with regard to the basic shape of the shield. This kind of fact was found to be true by this researcher due to the numerous measurements he conducted on Maasai art forms and design patterns.

Among the Maasai there is the big, sturdy battle shield, made from buffalo hide (and occasionally from giraffe or zebra hides) which is a beautiful oval armour and a source of pride to its bearer. Designs on the

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<sup>344</sup> Loitel, *Ibid.*, pp. 39-46.

<sup>345</sup> Kabasangi, *Ibid.*, pp. 37-49.

shield show the moran's section and those on the other half, his age group. (See diagrams on page 447 & 452).

The present Purko moran, for instance, the right-handed or senior age (ol Eugelishu's moran) inscribe on their shields the badge formerly used by Terere who was "Intuno" of the Nyangusi "poror" or age.

#### 7.11.2. Shield Patterns

These patterns follow the geographical not the family divisions of the tribe. The Purko for instance carry one badge while the Matapato another. Badge in this case refers to the shield.

The junior or left-handed (Kedyanye) moran generally have a different shield from the right-handed or senior (tatene) moran who belong to the generation or age called poror.<sup>146</sup>

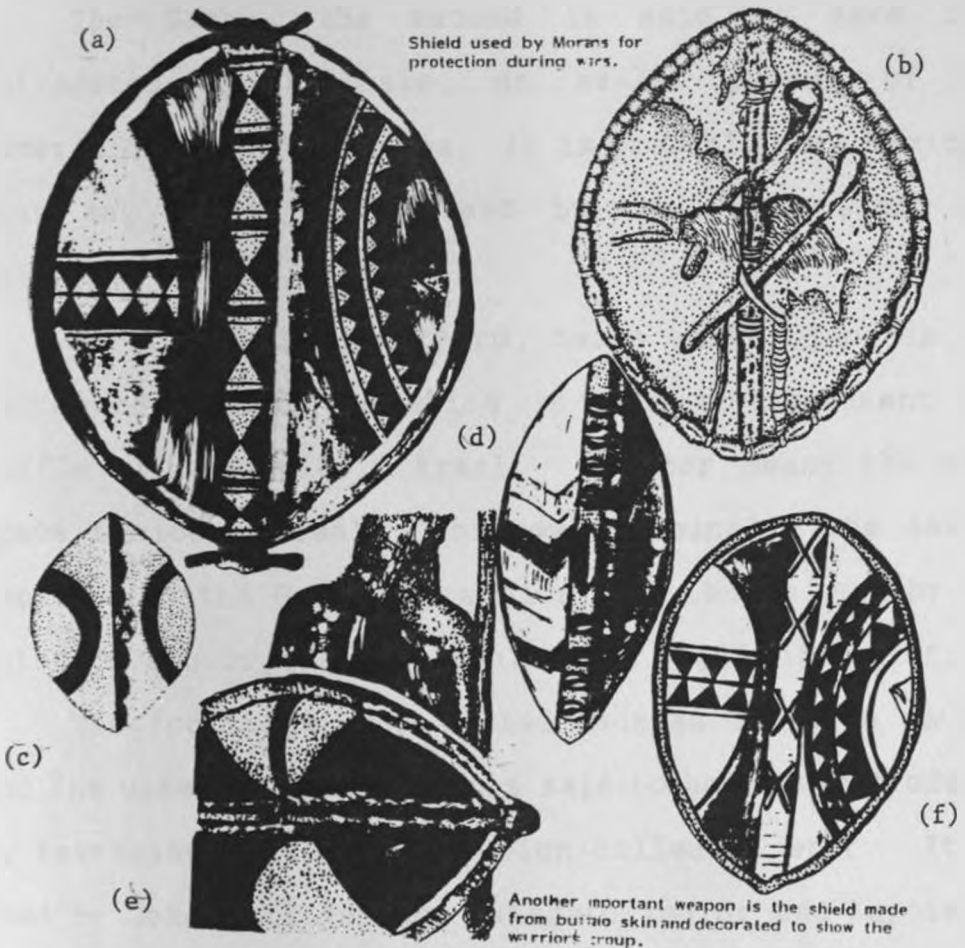
The designs or marks on a shield are called "sirate", and each has a name. The only designs in use at present among the Maasai of East Africa are:

Ol Orasha, Sambu, Ol bor, Ol Alapita Legai, Ol Olorika, El Engameta, El Langarbwali.

The first is said to be derived from the markings of a bird called Naitolya (the crested crane). which is

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<sup>146</sup> Kabasangi, *Ibid.*, pp. 65-73.



Shield used by Morans for protection during wars.

Another important weapon is the shield made from buffalo skin and decorated to show the warrior's group.

Elongo

Warriors become elders when they are old enough in the Eunio ceremony.

Traditional name: Elongo

Warrior's shield made from buffalo hide and occasionally from giraffe or zebra hides. A beautiful oval armour and a source of pride to its bearer. Designs on one half of the shield show the moran's section and those on the other half his age group. Warriors are able to at once distinguish where any one warrior comes from and to which regiment he belongs by simply looking at the shield designs. This is a very effective way of communication.

The big sturdy battle shield, made from buffalo hide (and occasionally from giraffe or zebra hides), is a beautiful oval armour and a source of pride to its bearer. Designs on one half of the shield show the moran's section and those on the other half his age-group. A distinctive circular mark may be added by a moran in the owner's absence to proclaim his bravery.

used by Sigirari Senior, Loitai Senior, Damat Senior, sub tribes.

The second Ol bor, is used by Purko Senior, Gekonyuki Sur, Dalalogotok, sub tribes is derived from the markings of the zebra.

The Sambu, the second is said to have been introduced by Laibosio, an ex-lai gwanan of the generation called Il Peles. It is probably more mimicked than any other design used by the Uasin Gishu and Agikuyu.<sup>347</sup>

Sirata Olbar, the third, has a white space in the centre of the shield which is said to represent the inside of a warrior's kraal. Ol ebor means the bare space inside a kraal. This was originally the design employed by the Gekonyuki senior, but is now used by the Matapato senior, Kapotei senior and Dogilani senior.

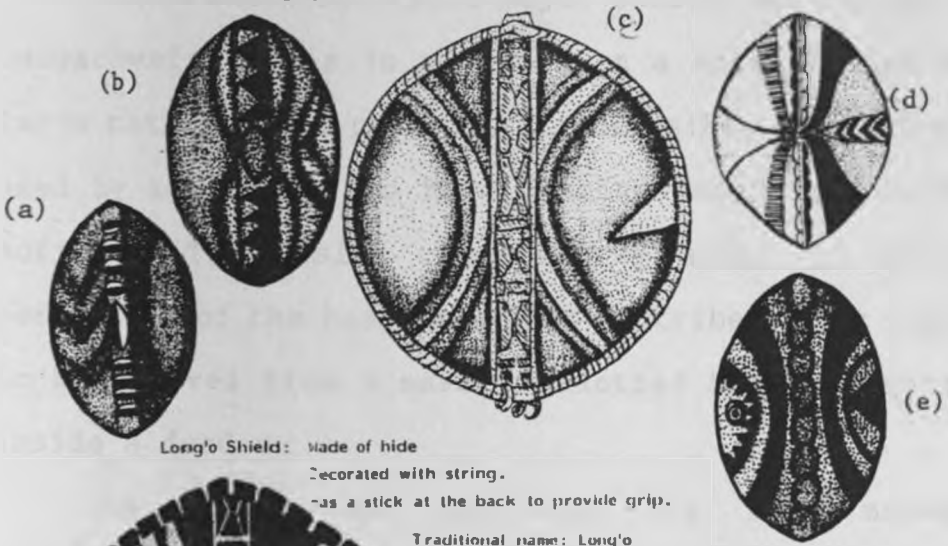
The fourth is so - called because one side is red and the other is white. It is said to have been produced by reversing half of the design called ol ebor. It is used by Gekonyuki junior, Matapato junior and Kapotei

The fifth, also called ol engerere is supposed to have been derived from a particular kind of spotted cattle. Sirata Olorika has sometimes been called " the design of the stool.", and is also possessed by Purko junior.

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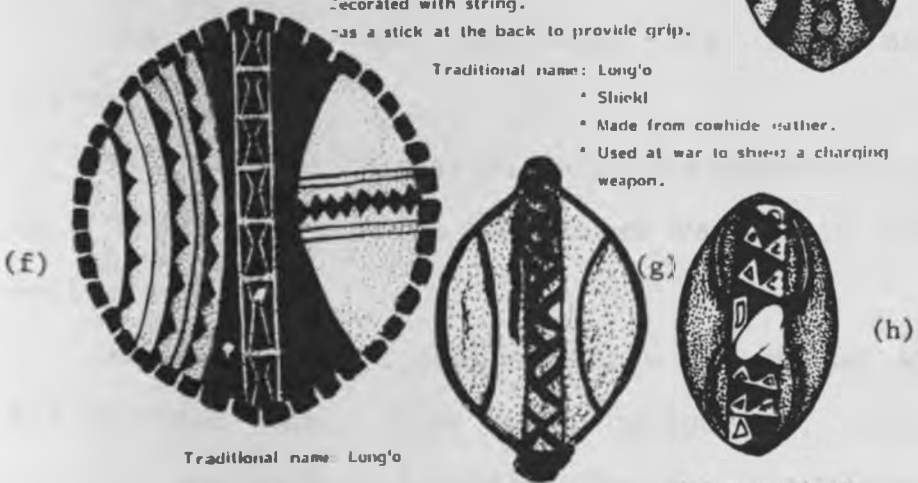
<sup>347</sup> Kabasangi, *Ibid.*, pp. 76-89.

These are made from buffalo hide and occasionally giraffe or zebra hide. Designs on one half of the shield show the warriors section and on the other half his age group.



Long'o Shield: made of hide  
Decorated with string.  
has a stick at the back to provide grip.

- Traditional name: Long'o
- \* Slied
  - \* Made from cowhide or other.
  - \* Used at war to shield a charging weapon.



Traditional name: Lung'o

It is carried by men when going for war or hunting. It is made of layers of hide and wires. It is used to block arrows or missiles hurled to the man.

Spears are designed with divers symbols, patterns and marks to signify warriors sections and age-set. The overall arrangement of these designs give Maasai armies an appearance of good organization as they march through the plains of East Africa.

The sixth Sirata El Engameta is said to be derived from conventional chevron bead dressing on the belt of an ndito or young unmarried girl. It is now only used by El Kereaio, a small group of the Purko senior.

Originally it was apparently designed by Naiterukop as was the case for sirata Ol olorika. The star shaped mark is called ol longuo and is a shield of bravery.<sup>348</sup>

The seventh and final major shield and design is El Laugarbwali. This is a design on a shield which has a large patch of red paint on its one side. The shield is used by brave men who have distinguished themselves in action. The design can only be added on with the permission of the head laigwanan subtribe and is supposed to be derived from a mass of clotted blood often found inside a dead ox.

The blotch and the star are both marks of bravery.<sup>349</sup>

Among others this shield also distinguishes its user as a brave warrior who has shown valour in raids and battles.

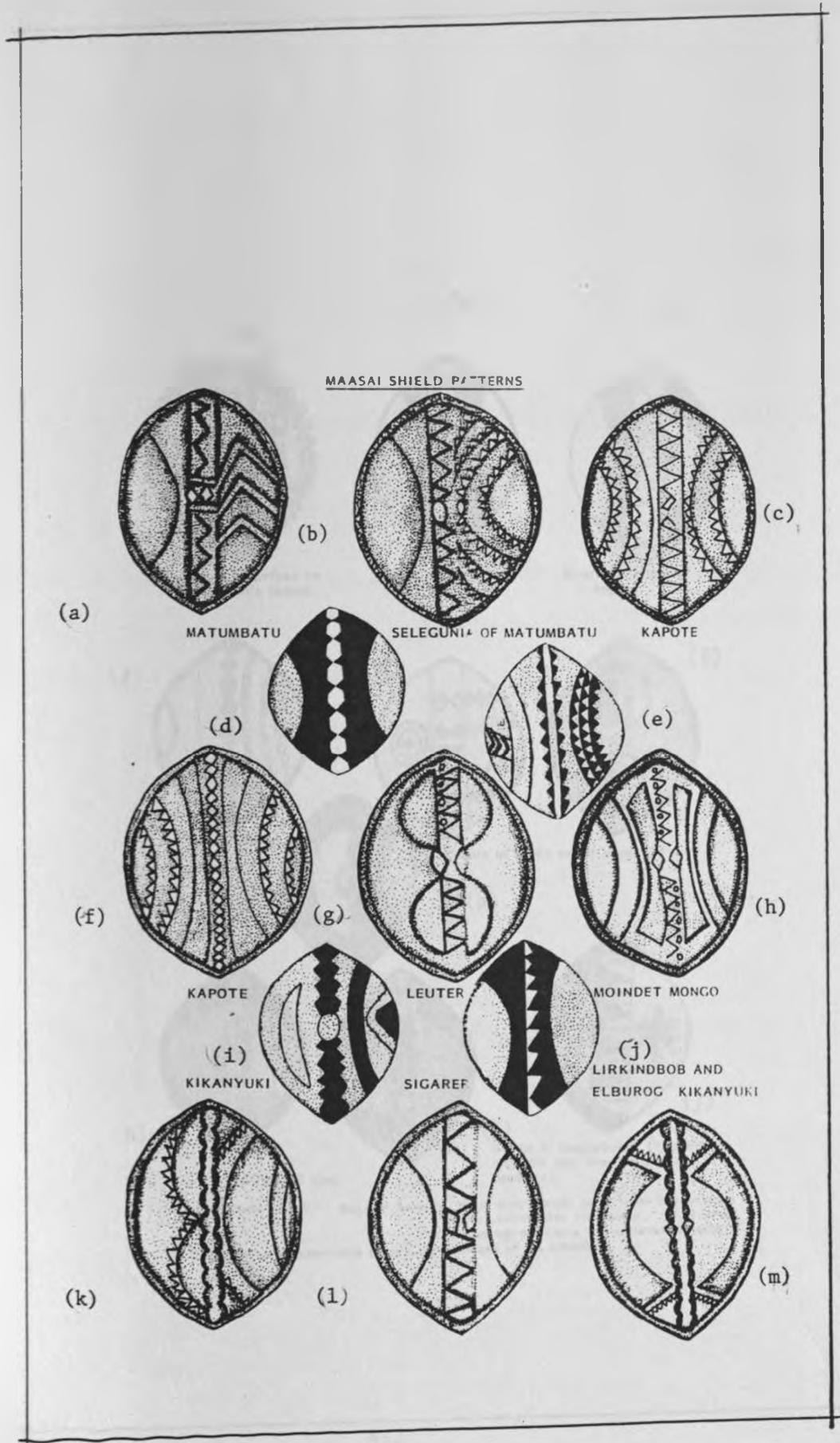
As mentioned in chapter three the Maasai warriors are divided into three main categories, namely the moroyan, senderia and pandi. Whereas the morayan wear the same pectoral ornaments as the pandi, the latter

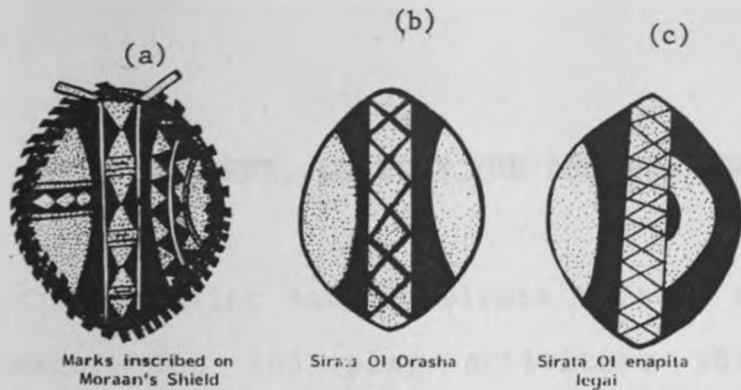
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<sup>348</sup> Mukunga, *Ibid.*, pp. 11-22.

<sup>349</sup> Mukanga, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-35.







Marks inscribed on Moraan's Shield

Sirata Ol Orasha

Sirata Ol enapita legai



Sirata Sambu

Sirata Ol orika or Ol engerere



(g)



Sirata Ol ebor

Sirata el langarbwali (The blotch and the star are both marks of bravery)

Traditional name: Long'o Warrior Shields Made from tough skin from big animals like, elephants, rhino, etc. They are used by warriors as defence objects in case of an attack.

Different characteristics of shields

carries the same shields as the senderia. Since the maasai warriors believe that looking good means having all the necessary equipment of a warrior, such equipment include the carrying the weapons that characterise each category as an accomplished warrior. For instance the Pandi ensemble includes shield, club and spear (battle equipment)<sup>350</sup>

#### 7.12. ENTERTAINMENT, LEISURE FUN AND PLAY GADGETRY

Strictly speaking Maasai leisure time is spent on entertainment, fun and play activities which are incorporated in the general socio-cultural life-style in which art-forms and design patterns play a prominent role. Figure 69 on page 454 illustrates this.

Design criteria for whatever objects that are used for these purposes are the same as for the other objects. They follow the same user-oriented criteria as for example war art-forms. Lavish use of colour is prevalent for ornamentation and decorations. This concept is witnessed in all traditional African communities.<sup>351</sup>

There are many items the Maasai use for entertainment fun and play. Among them are bao game (entertainment, club sticks, jingles (playing), spear.

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<sup>350</sup> Mukunga, *Ibid.*, pp. 38-45.

<sup>351</sup> Mukunga, *Ibid.*, pp. 78-89.

(1) ENTERTAINMENT, FIIN AND PLAY ADGETRY



Belt woven with Muamba (Boobab) thread and beads. White background with trangle similar to Giriama armbands.

Traditional game. En'geshul

**EN'GESHUL** A pebble game played by two people. For men only when not dealing with affairs of society to pass time. Made from wood.

This is a pebble game, resembling the modern day draughts. In the way of play, twelve holes are scooped on a piece of wood and stones filled (one per hole) on each side of the wood. The game absorbs attention not bestowed on affairs of state.

Bao for example is designed as a form of symmetrical patterns with high artistic finish. Visually it is well balanced. Clubs are oval in form and the rendering is aesthetically appealing.

When it came to sticks, they were selected on their design appeal. They were then properly shaped to make sure that they did not hurt someone unnecessarily.

The design and making of jingles was executed by an informed craftsman whose design and artistic concepts were acceptable. Jingles had to make the right noise, hence the right materials had to be used.<sup>352</sup> Also the design merit and artistic appeal in the making of shields and spears for play and sports were taken seriously. The size and weight had to be right for the right age. The colours had to match the age criterion and the shape must fit the aim and objective,<sup>353</sup> as two Maasai morans told this researcher.

In the African context entertainment plays a considerable symbolic significance in many artworks and diverse types of design patterns. Even to-day there is a tendency in Africa for art-forms to serve as entertainment, often in the context of masked dances. Sometimes this entertainment function has eclipsed other uses, but in many instances the arts continue to educate,

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<sup>352</sup> Mukunga, *Ibid.*, pp. 68-76.

<sup>353</sup> Mukunga, *Ibid.*, pp. 50-61.

reinforce established beliefs, lobby for new beliefs and enhance prestige of individuals. Some types of art were designed principally to entertain while fulfilling other roles, which in turn had their basic types of art, providing little entertainment.<sup>354</sup>

When it came to entertainment using such art-forms as masks, dances and movements provided highly developed symbolic rhythms and gestures that were full of inferred messages, general information and expressions of performers. This symbolic value in entertainment art, added additional significance to the art-forms and design patterns. This added significance serves as a link between art and the social economy of the African societies.

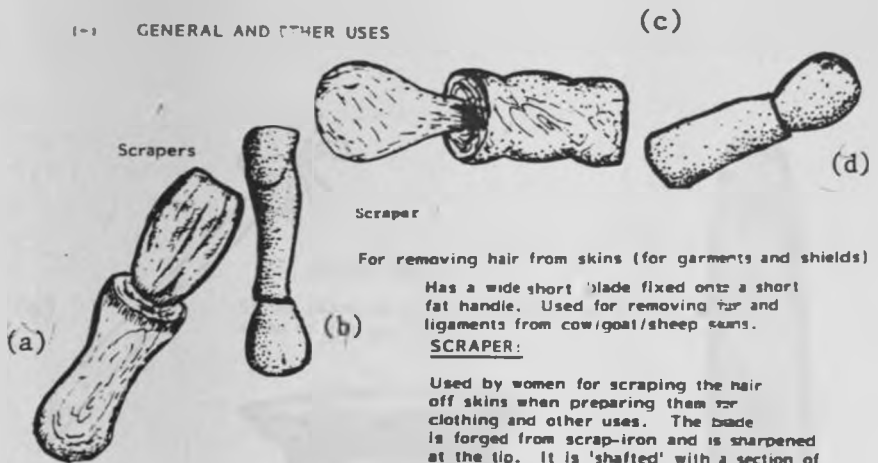
#### 7.13. GENERAL AND OTHER USES(MISCELLANEOUS)

The most important design concept in all categories of these art-forms and design patterns is utility value. Utility value is explained in terms of the function of the object, as it is illustrated graphically on Fig. 70 on page 456. The artist considers whether the object is conceived of as utilitarian or ornamental. If it is utilitarian, then the degree of comfort and usefulness is important. The traditional artist also considers the

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<sup>354</sup> Rita and Grunwald, *African Art*, pp. 19-26.

1-1 GENERAL AND OTHER USES



For removing hair from skins (for garments and shields)

Has a wide short blade fixed onto a short fat handle. Used for removing fur and ligaments from cow/goat/sheep skins.

SCRAPER:

Used by women for scraping the hair off skins when preparing them for clothing and other uses. The blade is forged from scrap-iron and is sharpened at the tip. It is 'shafted' with a section of cowhide from the leg or tail which is then stretched on when wet to ensure a tight fit when dry.

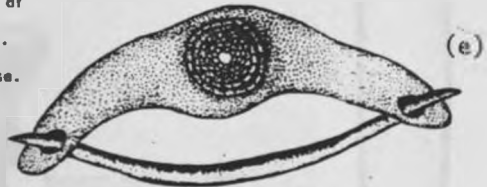
SCRAPER: IN A DIFFERENT SHAPE

Traditional name: Lmokomet

Scraper used by women for scraping the hair off skin when preparing them for clothing and other use. The blade is forged from scrap-iron and at the top. It is shafted with a section of cowhide from the leg or tail which is then stretched on when wet to ensure a tight fit. The blade is made by a Kikuyu blacksmith and is hafted by a woman for her own use.

The blade is made by a Kikuyu blacksmith and is hafted by a woman for her own use.

Stretcher



Stretch Stick: Used by women to stretch leather while it is being worked on.

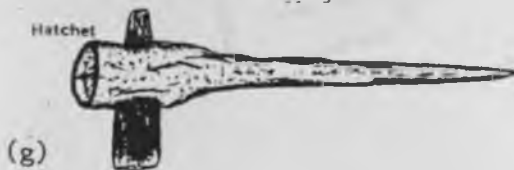
Hatchet

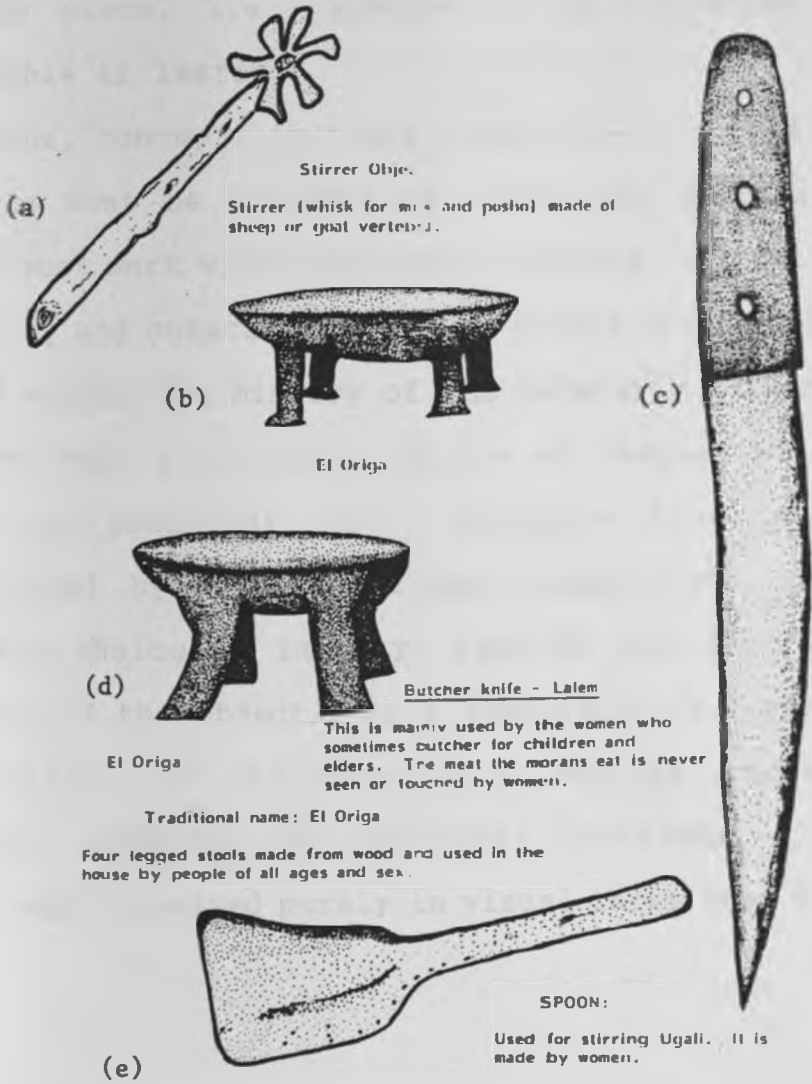


It is made of wooden handle and a blacksmith's iron blade.

It is used for cutting traditional herbs and some small logging.

Hatchet







relationship between price (in traditional context) of material, time expenditure, and the number of objects produced.<sup>355</sup>

Another aspect of design criterion to be considered is maintenance. This is the degree of care required to maintain an object in good condition. The traditional artist also considers the longevity that is envisioned for the piece, i.e., whether it is conceived of as disposable or lasting.

Thus, concepts in traditional art-forms and design patterns must be preceded by historical sources. The artist must work within the socio-cultural context of the community and consciously seek to create objects that are rooted within the history of the community. Therefore, he must make a conscious choice of imagery which has religious, political, etc., allusions that is easily appreciated by the traditional community<sup>356</sup>. Having made his choice of imagery, then he can approach his creation of the object from a moralistic or formalistic perspective. In his creation he employs traditional, economic, ergonomic or political overtones. If the object was conceived purely in visual terms then a lot of

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<sup>355</sup> Alan Jacobs, *Ibid.*, pp. 25-31.

<sup>356</sup> Alan, *Ibid.*, pp. 36-41.

decorations and ornamentation are employed.<sup>337</sup>

Various data table models and flow charts render credence to the fact that Maasai art-forms and design patterns symbolise Maasai lifestyle social philosophy and economic set-up. To interpret household items, storage art forms, shields, entertainment gadgetry etc is like tabulating the kind of lifestyle the Maasai lead. This means that Maasai art is a product of Maasai economic and other socio-cultural needs, and that it is also a product of the history of this community, and their aspirations.

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<sup>337</sup> Miller, Craig, *Modern Design In Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 1990, pp. 39-44.

## 8.0: CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research has unearthed a number of findings in the course of its pursuit to achieve its objectives and test its hypothesis.

As the study developed it has found that investigating Maasai art-forms and design patterns provides significant information on the Maasai culture and society. Also the study of Maasai art objects has shown that the various concepts of indigenous beauty, social responsibility and the significance of rituals, as well as the ceremonies associated therewith are all related and should be seen as parts of the same thing namely, the Maasai culture.

Besides it has established that traditional art concepts have been so appealing to artists and designers as to have been slowly and surely adapted and modified to the service, among others, of contemporary fashion design, tourism, curio shops, and export markets. Further, the research has found that objective criticism of art-forms and design patterns forge sound basis for appreciating, understanding and classifying works of traditional African arts. The symbolic meaning is one of the most important aspects within this objective criterion. In order to properly understand and evaluate

traditional art objects it is crucial to analyse their philosophical, psychological, cultural, aesthetic and sociological significance in the traditional sense.

Consequently, this study has revealed the ideological, functional and symbolic importance of these art-forms within the same traditional sociocultural framework. From this research it has become clear that culture plays a key role in determining the overall appearance of the art-forms and design patterns, which include, among others, colour, shape and size. There is no doubt, as it has now become clear, from this study that most of other traditional societies in Africa, including the Maasai, generally have the same design criteria that render them possible for scholars to study African culture, art and societies cross-culturally. Such a cross-cultural approach to the study of African art-forms and design patterns, makes it possible, to classify and categorise art objects in a uniform manner, especially if they, culturally, perform the same functions. However, this study focuses only on the Maasai. The other communities are only for comparison purposes so as to strengthen the Maasai case.

## 8.2. CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO STATED OBJECTIVES

The life cycle of Maasai people is like an excursion in a museum of ornaments and art-forms. Every stage of the life cycle is well categorised with its own ornaments. Rituals that are to determine in what stage of life one is are well endowed with definite art-forms and clear symbolism.

Other people have come to love these ornaments and art-forms. This is because these objects signify something that is beautiful in both themselves and the producers. These two points mean that there is much information about the Maasai which surround their ornaments and also on why there is much admiration for the community. This admiration enhances the beauty of their art without necessarily referring to the community. Consequently, when studying the Maasai ornaments the experience is also like studying Maasai culture and society. This means that Maasai art has, as it would be expected, a lot of social and cultural information on the Maasai lifestyle.

Thus, it is a cultural norm to use ornaments as reflectors of important stages in Maasai lifestyle. As reflectors of social status in one's life, these art-forms must then conform to accepted parameters of beauty among the Maasai. The parameters are basically aesthetic

and cultural, meaning that the art-forms are accepted as beautiful and appropriate, otherwise they could not be accepted or recognised. For example a bridegroom would never dream of going to his in-laws without the necessary ornamentation; or warriors would not keep shields without the correct, acceptable and recognised design patterns on them. (See Chapter 1 and 2, pages 1-152).

Likewise, an elder would make sure that he only wears and adorns those ornaments that are commensurate with his social status. During initiation, the correct ornamentation must for example be used for both boys and girls so as to give the correct significance to the occasion. Without the correct ornamentation any social status would be greatly compromised. Thus, the reason why the right ornamentation must be used during initiation is that circumcision marks the initiation of adolescent boys and girls into adulthood and serves as a kind of proof that they are prepared to endure the challenges of life with courage and dignity. Following circumcision, males become warriors and females enter married life. This researcher has seen that circumcision takes place at dawn. A boy undergoes circumcision just outside the main cattle gate of his family enclosure, a girl is initiated inside her mother's house. Following the rites, the father of the newly circumcised youth blesses his cattle in a special way spraying them with

milk and honey beer from a calabash lightly stuffed with fresh grass as a symbol of prosperity. A young sapling is planted next to the initiate's house to signify the important passage.

This shows that there is a clear correlation between culture, social status, ornamentation and beauty since the correct and proper ornamentation must be worn for the right ritual. Not to adorn with the correct ornamentation would render the ritual, ceremony or celebration unacceptable to the Maasai since they would consider such an event anti-cultural. (See Chapter 1 and 2, pages 1-152).

Maasai culture and lifestyle produced art-forms and design patterns based on traditional ideas. Many of these art-forms and decorative design forms have in these days been adapted to produce beautiful ornaments such as finger rings, wrist bands, necklaces, belts, clothing fashions, household items, dancing styles, foods, etc. One has only to walk some streets in a number of towns in East Africa to see these modern Maasai, art-forms and ornamentations. Visitors to East Africa, especially tourists from the industrialised world, cherish them if only for their originality at least in the traditional context. (See Chapter 3 and 4, pages 153 - 305).

Contemporary artists and designers in Kenya and indeed from all of Africa, have found a rich source of

art and design ideas in African traditional material culture. Such areas as fashion design, architecture, jewellery and hairstyles are particularly prominent in this realm of adaptation. In order to cater for the contemporary societies, artists and designers have gone further and woven new concepts and ideas based on the traditional ideologies. The new concepts have also adapted new materials such as precious stones, plastics etc.

The combination of old and new has also influenced many of the contemporary communities in Kenya, East Africa and other parts of the world. For example the Maasai hair-style has been modified to create new styles some of which look unique. These hair-styles generate interest all over the world and are a source of employment and income to many people. Also necklaces, bracelets and ear-rings have been modified to attract a worldwide clientele. In major urban centres in East Africa and other parts of the world, curio shops employ skilled craftsmen and women in making the articles. Thus economically these ornaments play an important role in nation building especially in tourism. Another example is the Maasai sandles whose design has been modified to suit current tastes especially among young ladies, gentlemen and tourists.

Not to be left behind some eating styles of the



Maasai have also influenced many people's eating habits. One prominent area is the "Nyama Choma" culture now prevalent in many parts of Kenya. The style of roasting a whole animal, eg., a he-goat can be traced in Maasai culture. Since food also has aesthetic values, this is an example where a combination of cultural ideology and food craft has produced a modern concept. This phenomenon is also seen in songs, dance, film, etc., as exemplified for example by Bomas of Kenya and Rare Watts singers and dancers, the famous Saikati film and other phenomena.

African art has clear communicative dynamisms. Maasai and other African artistic objects reflect their origins in Maasai lifestyles and social divisions or responsibilities. On the basis of these, it is possible to categorise African art according to the use and purpose. It is on the basis of use and purpose that African material culture derives its objective criteria. In other words the purpose determines the design form.

Purpose and design of the object would then determine symbolic significance of art-forms and ornamental design patterns. Any pattern or art-form in traditional material culture is linked to the root use and purpose. This phenomenon is evident in studies of African art from all over the continent. It is this phenomenon then that makes it artistically possible for

scholars and researchers to be able to classify material culture on the basis of objective criteria.

Maasai art-forms, as evidenced in this research, have clear objective criteria which have enabled this researcher to be able to establish their symbolic meaning. (See Chapter 4 and 5) Other African traditional art forms can also be classified thus, since they have similar social cultural and aesthetic significance as the Maasai's.

When considering objective criteria of all traditional art-forms and design patterns the following points are crucial what the object is going to be used as, the social and cultural significance of the object, how it is to be used, who uses it, how it is made, the materials it is made of and when it is made. These criteria would give meaning to the object. If, for example, the object is the spear, then these criteria would establish the symbolic significance of the object. A spear is just one example. The same system can apply to any ornamental pattern or art-form. (See Chapter 4 and 5, pages 285 - 338).

Thus, in order to fully comprehend the full aesthetic values of traditional art-forms and design patterns as material culture, it is necessary to look at the whole lifestyle of the particular community. (See Chapter 2 and 3, pages 29 - 284). So far, African art

has not been fully exploited, much still remains to be discovered about its creation and use. It is unfortunate that African art and especially its sculpture were regarded as primitive by early Europeans who came to Africa. These early "explorers" did little to aesthetically analyse criteria such as symbolism, materials, content-meaning, etc. Thus Maasai art as part of African art in general suffers the same fate, at least in traditional and cultural terms.

In making African art the following materials among others, were used: iron, brass, terracotta, bone, stones, basketry covered with clay or skin, ivory and even cloth. The artists composed such varied forms as figures, dolls, masks, stools, headrests, staffs, bowls and so on.

African figurative sculptures can almost be thought of as the private face of the community in which it originated. Some sculptures were made to be seen only by the spirit world. Some of this artwork was never seen by women and when not in use was hidden away in rafters between ceremonial occasions or was housed in shrines to which non-initiates and strangers could only be allowed to see them on certain conditions. African art is essentially a community art, for example, the form that sculpture took was on the whole very specific to the people who produced them. They used a language of shapes that was known and understood by both the artists and

their patrons. The art was produced to satisfy the needs of a community by someone who was closely integrated into that community. The art was a unifying force within each community. It reasserted community identity by using a unique language. (See Chapters 6 and 7 pages 339 - 460).

Thus, as material culture, artistic productions derive their significance from the cultural and social norms and on which basis they can symbolically be classified. (See chapter 1 and 2. pages 1-152).

This research has examined and analysed various art objects of the Maasai that cover the entire life cycle within the Maasai society. The items and topics studied are colour code and symbolism, household items and storage equipments, dresses, body decorations, head-dress and ornamentation, necklaces, waist wear and belts, arm and finger wear, foot wear, ear ornaments, bead decorations and related jewellery, animal ornaments, weaponry defence and warfare, entertainment, fun and play gadgetry and for general and other uses. These topics and items are analysed in Chapter five and six, page 308-382. The analysis is based on aesthetic, design, symbolic, sociological, cultural and philosophical points of view.

Aesthetically, Maasai art-forms and design patterns derive their meaning from social and cultural norms of Maasai lifestyle. (See Objectives 1 and 2, pages 1 -

154). Aesthetic beauty of these art objects is firstly beauty with Maasai content and meaning or more concisely, Maasai concepts of aesthetic beauty. Then to graphically show this beauty, certain crafts and skills are incorporated in the designing of these art-forms. However, these crafts and skills must conform to Maasai sociological, psychological, cultural and philosophical considerations. Psychological consideration is essentially symbolic since association of an art object with a certain meaning is based on the thinking process of the person or community concerned. All these very important considerations are therefore, key in understanding Maasai art-forms and design patterns. Even the choice of materials is based on these considerations. To understand a work of art means to come to grips with its qualities. Thus analysis of works of Maasai artifacts, in many ways has helped this researcher understand Maasai art. (See Chapter 3,4, and 5, pages 153 - 338). Consequently, appreciation of works of art follows understanding of the nature of the works. This essentially means that knowledge precedes liking, or disliking or love, or rejection, or acceptance, etc. Whatever the case may be, a person is able to evaluate works of art properly on the basis of his or her expanded and enlightened appreciation.

The above norms illustrate that social and cultural

behaviours are related to artistic creativities that produce art objects that fit in with traditional Maasai aesthetic design, symbolic, sociological, cultural and philosophical points of view. (See pages 285 and 338).

### 8.3. CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE STATED HYPOTHESIS

In order to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of African art, it is crucial to first appreciate the role of symbolism in that art. As in most of other African art-forms, Maasai art objects are very symbolic, (see Chapter 4 and 5, page 285 - 338). Symbolism is rooted in the content meaning of any particular art-form. Symbolism is expressed through the information that a particular art-form gives to the audience. In this case, within the traditional context, when the audience is responding to a particular message of an art-form, then the former is essentially expressing aesthetic values. (See Objective 3 and 4 page, 153 - 305). Aesthetic values are based on the norms and ideologies of a particular community. In other words aesthetic appeal is part and parcel of culture and could not be treated separately. (See Chapter 1 and 2, page 1 - 152). As the audience responds to a work of art aesthetically, their understanding is enhanced and appreciation may follow immediately. (See Chapter 2 and 3, page 29 - 284 and

Objective 3(c), page 11). Appreciation may be by practical use of the art-form among other responses. In most cases the practical use, or otherwise of the art object is heavily controlled by the original aims and objectives of the artist or, in other words, the ideology of the artist. This is to imply that the artist will in most cases have a pre-determined ideological function for an art-form or a design pattern. (See Chapter 4 and 5, pages 285-338. and Chapter 7 pages 381 -460).

Therefore, symbolic, aesthetic, practical and ideological functions of art-forms are all manifestations of the ideation status of the artist. The artist is the originator and the audience are the receptors. However in order to effectively reach his or her audience the artist needs a bridge. The bridge will come in the form of shape and colour among other factors. The aim and objective of the art objects conceived by the artist and the nature of the audience determines the type and nature of the bridge. Hence symbolic, aesthetic, practical and ideological functions (aims and objectives) of art-forms and design patterns determine the shape and colour (bridge) of these objects.

To illustrate the above phenomenon in a traditional context, it is clearly significant to note that the Maasai decorate their ornaments with great care. The designs are practical and all decorations relate to them

in a positive way in the sense that all decorative ornaments have a purpose, e.g., the lady's handbag that serves two functions, as a jewellery bag and a decoration in the lady's bedroom. (See Chapter 6 pages 339 - 380). Also, except for discussion purposes, it is difficult to isolate Maasai decorative ornaments from their body ornaments because their lifestyle is so rich in the interrelationship of objects and the people to art in a manner that realises a lot of decorations on both themselves and their implements. Therefore, these could be conceived as one and the same thing. Their colour code shows a great sense of co-ordination and high level of creativity. The Maasai recognise complimentary colours and the need for contrasts. Also, the idea of spiral jewellery for women and circular jewellery for men tells the viewer a lot about their social organisation and what they value. They are also fashion-conscious since they change styles according to need. (See Chapter 2 and 3, page 29-284).

Aesthetic values in Maasai art-forms and design patterns are deeply rooted in their culture and social organisation. (See Chapter 2 and 4, page 29 - 305 and Chapter 3 and 4, page 153 - 305). This has also been found to be true for other traditional societies in Africa. (See Chapter 3, 4 and 5, page 153 - 338). For example the Yoruba, the Igbo, the Bambara, the Bapende,



the Zulus etc., and other societies have traditionally produced elaborate art-forms and design patterns that conform to well articulated aesthetic values. (See page 231 and page 234). Common aesthetic values such as expressiveness, spiritual meaning, practical function, religious meanings emerge in traditional art-forms and design patterns. (See Chapter 2, 3 and 4, page 29 - 305). Many African art-forms serve as the link between the living, the ancestors and the future generations. Aesthetic values influence design forms because the form is derived from the purpose of the work of art. Whether the form takes the shape of a circle, a square, oval, a rectangle or an oblong, is a factor that is rooted in the aim and objective of the design form. (See Objective 3(c), page 11). For example among the Yoruba, carvings found in shrines and in palaces had very different functions, the first, to honour the spirits and the second, to honour the Oba or Kings. The importance of sculpture depended on where it was, who owned it and how it was used. In some societies in Africa for example once a carver had finished a mask, it was then "given" its life-giving force through paint or continuous offerings of food or oil by its owner or guardian, for without this it would be worthless. This implies that aesthetic value and design form are never complete without the symbolic meaning. A finished carving or mask

would remain just a non-entity form in the African traditional context, if it is not incorporated into the social and cultural fabric of symbolism. Symbolic meaning gives it value and acceptance within the traditional realm of African societies. (See Chapter 4, 5 and 7, pages 285 - 460).

It is then quite plausible to state that cross-culturally African societies share aesthetic, design and symbolic values. In this context therefore, traditional African artifacts can generally be studied and classified cross-culturally according to their aesthetic value, design form and symbolic meaning irrespective of the ethnic group responsible for the production of particular objects. Maasai art falls in this category too. (See Chapter 4 and 5, pages 285 - 338).

Most ethnic groups in Kenya and indeed in the whole of Africa have always possessed and practised such rituals, celebrations and ceremonies as are performed by the Maasai. Also in many of their art-forms, the African people have all recorded mythical symbols, rituals, ceremonies, supernaturalness, initiation and other social and cultural ideologies. Even at present, many traditional African societies for example the Maasai, are to some extent still practising traditional lifestyles. (See Chapter 1, 2 and 3, pages 1-284).

As it has been depicted in a number of citations in

this research, African art-forms and design patterns generally have the same criteria for appreciation. For example they are robust, meaningful, colourful and very expressive and this is always so irrespective of where in Africa the art object was produced. (See Hypothesis, page 12 Chapter 1, pages 1-29 and Chapter 7 pages 383 - 463).

Therefore any one particular art-form or design pattern that is produced by most African communities can be analysed to show that irrespective of its origin among the ethnic groups, it has generally the same aesthetic, functional and symbolic values. A good example of an art-form for this assumption and purpose is African sculpture. This has been analysed elsewhere in this dissertation research. (See Chapter 4, 5 and 6 page 285-380).

Most of African sculptures were made in West and Central Africa and a few in Eastern and Southern Africa. The finest works have come from areas where traditional political institutions, settlement patterns and social organization made it possible for several carvers to thrive and to compete for patrons within a small area. Examples include the Yoruba Kingdoms in Western Nigeria, the Kuba of Congo and Bamum of Southern Cameroun. Each carver evolved his own adaptation of the accepted community style; the most successful ones gained more commission and their fame was still known even after many

years. Among the Dogon and the Tiv, unlike other communities, for example, carving was done by non-specialists. The Asante of Ghana produced gold castings of exceptionally high quality. The Igbo and Ife of Nigeria produced bronze sculptures with strong expressive features. (Also see Chapter 1 and 2, page 1 - 154).

All these types of sculptures are rich in conceptual system, themes and are preoccupied with culture. Visual forms are very significant and offer strong visual metaphors. Such aesthetic appeals and symbolic meanings are always part of any other traditional African art form, such as ear-rings, necklaces, wapons etc. Indeed each art-form has its own particular symbolic meaning. It is this meanings that show commonness in all traditional African societies including the Maasai.

Therefore from the ongoing observations, African ethnic art-forms and design patterns that perform one or similar functions can generally be studied, classified and documented together irrespective of the ethnic group from which those art objects came from. (Also see pp. 233 - 234).

#### 8.4. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Maasai and indeed all traditional African art-forms and design patterns play very important roles in the lifestyles of these societies. Among these roles are

reflections of beauty, signifying social and cultural responsibilities, signifying the symbolic, aesthetic and philosophical concepts of the society, enhancing the cultural unity of the society and serving as a link between ancestral, spiritual and future worlds, with the present.

There is inseparable interrelationship between aesthetics, culture and function in Maasai in deed African art. In African art, form and content are scarcely separable. The artist as part of the society expresses the vision of the entire society. Thus any work of African art signifies the spirit, the culture and the environment of this society.

Consequently the study of traditional art objects and material culture reveals vast information on, among other aspects, how and why artists and designers adapt traditional art concepts, how these art-forms can be classified, how design criteria such as form, colour schemes, sizes etc., are determined, relationship and cross-cultural links of African societies and artistic skills and materials used to produce this beautiful heritage of Africa.

## 8.5. OTHER FINDINGS

In the course of testing the original hypothesis and objectives, this research has also discovered other findings that are related, significant and interesting although they had not been anticipated or planned as a part of this study.

To start with this researcher has noted that development programmes initiated by the government in Kenya have also penetrated into Maasailand, just as they have in other parts of the country. In Maasailand, these programmes include education, health care, veterinary care and water being made available to assist both people and livestock.

Consequently the Maasai have now been exposed to the dynamic world of rapid change. This dynamism is reflected in the realm of science and technology, modern communications and mass media, schools, colleges and universities, urban centres and cities. Christianity, Islam and other religions have penetrated the Maasai lifestyle. Indeed, christianity and christian missionaries have been major vehicles in bringing change in Maasailand. Mission schools have brought new lifestyle such as technology, medicine, hygiene, politics and religion.

Nowadays many people in Maasailand live primarily a lifestyle based on money economy. Indeed the Maasai people are being encouraged to become agriculturalists and to grow cash crops in order to sustain this newly evolving money economy lifestyle.

Also, whereas in traditional lifestyle the family is the centre of both individual and corporate existence, it is nowadays quite common to find within one family two totally different worlds co-existing: daughters and sons may be attending schools, colleges and even universities, within Kenya or abroad, while the mother and father cannot read or write and are simply pre-occupied with rearing a vast herd of cows, goats and sheep.

It is easy to visualise the expectations of both these sets of people. Obviously there are great differences in economic standards, adherence to cultural norms and world view.

Also this research has found out that Maasai traditional religious concepts and beliefs are unable to accommodate themselves fully to the rapid changes that are taking place. Of course Christianity does not accommodate itself fully either to both the Maasai lifestyle or to the changes in the modern world, at least from a fundamental point of view.

Traditional lifestyle of the Maasai people suited them well. However, the new changes are bringing in new

culture which is alien to traditional lifestyle. The advent of new culture has brought in individualism, mass production, economic competition, consumerism and automation ideas which are completely foreign to the traditional Maasai culture. Consequently, new problems are cropping up.

For example, the Maasai social and cultural solidarity is slowly being dissolved. Young Maasai men are now going to big cities where they experience the pressure of an unfamiliar but appealing city lifestyle. This pressure is expressed through pollution, unemployment, alcoholism, slums, traffic jams, overcrowding, personal stress, corruption, fast moving life, etc.

Lastly, the family nucleus is shrinking from the traditional extended family concept to one in which only the parents and their children constitute the family in the modern context. The respect for and authority of elders are being eroded slowly but surely. The new generation of the educated youth is challenging age-old concepts and norms.



## 8.6. SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has established that traditional artforms and design patterns are deeply rooted in the social and cultural lifestyle of the traditional communities in Africa. It has further found that the bond between culture and art gives art-forms significant symbolic meanings since these artforms reflect a peoples' beliefs and aesthetic values. Also the research has established that African art-forms and design patterns have much in common especially in their symbolic meaning. The study has laboriously studied the Maasai art-forms and design patterns in the realms of aesthetic criteria and symbolism. The Maasai are a good example of a traditional African community.

However, in the modern context this research has found out that there are a number of questions that need further classification. Such questions have been formulated as a result of various findings that this research has unearthed. For example Maasai lifestyle seems to have suited them well until the advent of Western lifestyle which encroached on the interior of East Africa. Consequently, the Maasai people, like all the other traditional societies of Africa, have been pressurised to adapt to new ways of living.

In the hurry to change and conform to the modern ways, very many good values of traditional lifestyles are being lost forever. These values include various art-forms and design patterns as studies in this research show.

Consequently, it is desirable to record the "old ways" as living history of the Maasai people. There is also need, therefore, to do more research and studies to see to what extent the Maasai should adapt new aesthetic tastes, since so far they are among the very few of the traditional societies in East Africa who *have not* completely abandoned their traditional artistic tastes. Such a research is crucial because, in this fast changing world, the Maasai might also, forever, abandon their beautiful traditional art practices. However, with proper harmonisation and careful considerations there might be a chance of preserving some of the significant Maasai art-forms and design patterns.

Once it has been established to what extent the Maasai need to adapt new artistic tastes, there is a further need to do research on how the truly Maasai art-forms and design patterns can now be incorporated into the mainstream philosophy of the art of the nation. Although there are a number of areas where Maasai art-forms and design patterns have influenced contemporary Kenyan artistic and design tastes, this is very much in

the periphery and is not particularly known. There are good indications that opportunities abound for further influence.

Also this research suggests a further research into how traditional art and principles of organisation can be most effectively adapted into the contemporary art and design practices such as graphics, industrial design, fashion design and architecture.

#### 8.7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research would greatly benefit national art and craft policy makers and the Department of culture since it has information on important aspects of Maasai art and culture. Design practitioners, professionals and teachers would also benefit through traditional Maasai theories of aesthetics, meaning and symbolic interpretations. They would also benefit from the findings that show that traditional art and design practices have their roots in the culture of traditional societies.

History of Art writers, journalists and critics would find the research useful especially in the area showing how Maasai history has affected their(Maasai) art. Also, the museums, art galleries, private art collectors and art scholars would benefit from seeing and studying many artifacts that are depicted in this

research. Students of art would particularly gain from contemplating the traditional theories that have been expounded in this research, especially the theories relating to traditional art criteria and design values.

Also, anthropologists, archaeologists and cultural researchers would find topics on traditional, cultural and religious, aspects of traditional art-forms and design patterns of interest to them, besides the subjects concerned with cultural changes.

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## 9.0. APPENDICES

### 9.1. GLOSSARY OF OPERATIONAL TERM.

- 9.1.1. **ABSTRACT:-** -A type of art in which shapes and form have no reference to the natural world. Often these shapes are simplified and are self-referential rather than three dimensionally illusionistic. Connected with or producing abstract art. -A painting, drawing, etc. that does not try to represent an object as it would be seen by a camera.
- 9.1.2. **ACTION PAINTING** - Abstract painting where the paint is put on in various unusual ways, as by throwing or pouring.
- 9.1.3. **ADORN** -To add beauty or ornament to  
-To add importance or attractiveness to
- 9.1.4. **ADVERTISE** To make(something for sale, services offered, room to let, etc.) known to the public as in newspapers, or on film or television.  
-To ask(for someone or something) by placing an advertisement in newspaper, shop, window, etc.
- 9.1.5. **AESTHETIC** -Having to do with the pleasurable and beautiful as distinguished from the useful, scientific, etc. The distinctive vocabulary of a given style. An aesthetic response is the perception and

enjoyment of a work of art.

-Of or concerning the sense of beauty, especially beauty in art.

-Having a developed sense of beauty.

-Of or concerning aesthetic.

9.1.6.     **AESTHETICS**     -The branch of philosophy having to do with the nature of beauty and its relation to human beings.

9.1.7.     **ARCH**           -The structural principle of the arch is such that it permits the spanning in stone or wood of a greater space between supporting members than could a lintel, due to capacity of curved form of the arch to divert the load - the compression of weight sustained - to the sides and downwards toward the supporting uprights.

9.1.8.     **BRONZE**        -An alloy of copper and tin, and the metal most frequently used in cast sculpture.

9.1.9.     **CASTING**       -A process using plaster, clay, wax, or metal that, in a liquid form, is poured into a mold. When the liquid has solidified, the mould is removed, leaving a replica of the original work of art from which the mold was taken.

9.1.10.    **CERAMICS**   -Objects made of clay that have been baked into a permanent form; often decorated with glazes, then fired to fuse the glazes to the clay body.

- 9.1.11. **COLOUR** -A combination of hue saturation and value. Hue is the property that gives colour a name, such as red or green, saturation refers to the purity, vividness, or intensity of a colour. Value is the technical name for shading, which gives colour the quality of seeming light or dark. Local colour is the natural colour of a subject.
- 9.1.12. **COMPOSITION** -An organization or arrangement imposed upon the component elements within an individual work of art.
- 9.1.13. **CONCEPTUAL ART** -An art object or event that in its total or essential form is conceived in the mind of the artist before it is fabricated. For some conceptual artists, the conception of the work of art is more important than its manifestation.
- 9.1.14. **CONSTRUCTION** -The process of making a sculpture by assembling and joining a wide variety of materials such as wool, cardboard, plastic paper, and metal.
- 9.1.15. **CULTURE** -The values and the system of their interrelationships that inform a society, motivate its behaviour, and cause it to be functional to the general satisfaction of its members and to have a distinctive quality and character.
- 9.1.16. **DESIGN** -The planned organization of visual elements such as line, shape, colour,

mass and space in a work of art. Also referred to as composition.

- 9.1.17. **EXPRESSIVE CONTENT** -The meaning and significance of art produced by the fusion of form and subject.
- 9.1.18. **FORM - 1** A shape or a mass, or, more comprehensively, the total configuration of the shapes, structure and expressiveness that make an art work.
- 9.1.19. **FORM - 2** That which is given the visual arts by the various physical factors such as line, plane, colour, shading, texture, shape, mass or volume, scale, space and composition, the last being the organization the artist imposes on the materials and processes.
- 9.1.20. **FORM AND STYLE** -In commentary on the way an artist works, form consists of the shapes, structure and expressiveness, the total configuration for the work of art. Meyer Schapiro has offered this definition: "Style is the constant form, qualities and expression of the art of an individual or group".
- 9.1.21. **ILLUSIONISM** -The endeavour of the artist to represent as completely as his formal means may permit the visual phenomena of the real world.



- 9.1.22. **INCISING** -Cutting into a surface with a sharp instrument.
- 9.1.23. **KILN** -An oven capable of controlled high temperatures in which clay objects are baked.
- 9.1.24. **LINE** -The mark left in its path by a moving point. Also the edge of a flat shape, the contour of a solid object and the implied axis of a shape or through a group of forms.
- 9.1.25. **MASONRY** -In architecture, stone or brick work.
- 9.1.26. **MASS** -Mass may be construed as the actual or implied physical bulk, weight and density of three-dimensional(3D) forms occupying real or suggested spatial depth.
- 9.1.27. **MODELLING** -In the visual arts, the working of soft, pliant material, such as clay, so as to give it a desired three-dimensional (3-D) form, or the depiction on a flat surface of three-dimensional (3-D) forms by means of variations in the use of such colour properties as light and dark.
- 9.1.28. **MODULE** -A basic unit of measure taken as a principle for determining the major divisions and proportions of an object, figure, building or site.

- 9.1.29. **MONOCHROME** -A single colour or the value variations of a single hue.
- 9.1.30. **MONUMENTAL** -A work of art or architecture that is grand, noble, timeless and essentially simple in composition and execution whatever its size.
- 9.1.31. **MYSTICAL** -Having a spiritual meaning or reality that can be known only by intuition, insight or similar subjective experience.
- 9.1.32. **MYTH** -A legend or story that seems to express the world view of a people or explain a practice.
- 9.1.33. **NON REPRESENTATIONAL** -Descriptive of works of art that make no reference to the world of image. Often shapes, lines and colour are arranged to exploit their own visually expressive potential.
- 9.1.34. **PERFORMANCE ART:** Works of a theatrical nature performed by the artist before an audience.
- 9.1.35. **PICTOGRAPH** -A prehistoric drawing or painting on a rock wall; a picture or image, usually stylized, that represents an idea; also writing using such means.
- 9.1.36. **PIGMENT** -Finely powdered colouring matter mixed or ground with various vehicles to form paint, crayons, and so on; also, a

term used loosely to mean colour or paint.

- 9.1.37. **PLANE** -A flat surface, measurable in two dimensions (2D), that can be made to move into depth and to give the illusion of functioning in three-dimensional (3-D) space. The picture plane is that which is assumed to be at the front surface of painting.
- 9.1.38. **PRIMARY COLOUR** -In artist's pigments these are red, yellow and blue; in natural light they are red, green and blue.
- 9.1.39. **REPRESENTATION** -The depiction or illustration by the graphic means of the visual arts (lines, values, colours and so on) of forms and images in such a way that the eye would perceive correspondence between them and their sources in the real world of empirical experience.
- 9.1.40. **RHYTHM** -In the visual arts, the regular repetition of a form.
- 9.1.41. **SATURATION** -The purity, vividness or intensity of a colour.
- 9.1.42. **SCALE** -Relative or proportional size.
- 9.1.43. **SCULPTURE, FREE** -Most sculptures either **STANDING AND RELIEF** stand free or project from a background. The latter called

relief sculptures Pronounced sculptural projection from a background is known as High Relief; modest projection as Low or Bas Relief.

- 9.1.44. **SECONDARY COLOURS** -In painters' colours, orange, green and violet, or those hues that result from a combination of two (2) primary colours. In natural light, the secondaries are cyan, magenta and yellow.
- 9.1.45. **SECULAR** -Not religious, but relating to the worldly or temporal.
- 9.1.46. **SHAPE** -A shape is an area or plane with distinguishable boundaries, such as square. It can be formed whenever a line turns or meets, as in an S shape. In three-dimensional (3-D) forms, shape is defined by outline or silhouette.
- 9.1.47. **SIZE** -The physical magnitude of objects, elements and quantities.
- 9.1.48. **SPACE** -An extent, measurable or infinite, that can be understood as an area or a distance. It can be seen as a hollow volume available for occupation by a form, but can be thought of as able to be used positively or negatively
- 9.1.49. **STONE WARE** -Ceramic ware made sometimes from natural clay and sometimes from prepared clay bodies. It is hard and vitreous and fires at a relatively high

temperature.

- 9.1.50.   **STRUCTURE**   -The compositional relationships in an artwork; a building or other constructed architectural unit; the operative framework that supports a building.
- 9.1.51.   **STYLIZE**    -To simplify, or generalize forms found in nature for the purpose of increasing their aesthetic and expressive effect.
- 9.1.52.   **SUBJECT MATTER**    -The identifiable objects, incidents and situations represented in a painting or sculpture, or, in modern abstract art, experience not actually represented but implied or referred to.
- 9.1.53.   **SYMBOL**       -A form, image, sign, or subject standing for something else, in the usual arts, often a visible suggestion of something invisible.
- 9.1.54.   **TASTE**         -The evidence or preference having to do with enjoyment and appreciation
- 9.1.55.   **TERRACOTTA**       -Baked clay used in ceramics, sculpture and architectural decoration; also a reddish brown colour similar to the colour of baked clay; statuette of this clay.
- 9.1.56.   **TERTIARY COLOURS**    -In artists' pigments,

those hues that are formed by the mixture of a primary colour and an adjacent secondary colour on the standard colour wheel.

- 9.1.57. **TEXTURE** -The actual or implied tactile quality of a surface such as smooth or rough, slick or grainy, soft or hard.
- 9.1.58. **TONE** -The general colouristic quality of an artwork; colour gradations as these might be expressed in degrees of saturation and value.
- 9.1.59. **VALUE** -The property of colour that makes it seem light, or dark; shading.
- 9.1.60. **VOLUME** -Any three-dimensional (3-D) quantity that is bounded or enclosed whether solid or void.
- 9.1.61. **WATERCOLOURS** -Pigments mixed with water soluble gum. Works executed in watercolour are characterized by the transparency of the washes possible in the medium and brilliance produced by the white paper showing through the transparent films of colour.

## 9.2. THE MAASAI CALENDAR TERMS

- 9.2.1. Alamaiyo - Formal lion hunt
- 9.2.2. Alaunoni - Selected warrior from among warriors
- 9.2.3. Embulosat - Ceremony which officially opens the circumcision period for all Maasailand
- 9.2.4. Emboshona - Excited frenzy-warriors meet victors who take part in a lion hunt
- 9.2.5. Enkaibartani - One who awaits healing
- 9.2.6. Enkayioni - Young boy before circumcision
- 9.2.7. Enkai - Used in reference to God
- 9.2.8. Enamughe - Sandals
- 9.2.9. Enshiankiki - Woman who has just been accepted into womanhood
- 9.2.10. Eunoto - This is the ceremony during senior warriors' graduation to junior elder status. This is the stage from which a man may marry. This ceremony is marked by body painting and the shaving of the warrior's beautiful long, plaited hair.
- 9.2.11. Imanyat - Manyatta-group of warriors live probably with mothers and daughters.
- 9.2.12. Isunitia - Coiled brass-like ornaments
- 9.2.13. Nangani - Special multicoloured togas worn by warriors
- 9.2.14. Ndito - A girl
- 9.2.15. Olayioni - Older boy
- 9.2.16. Oldoinydengai - Mountain
- 9.2.17. Oleng'at - Wild beast
- 9.2.18. Olmurrani - Warrior following circumcision

- 9.2.19. Ol natung - Lion
- 9.2.20. Oloosunitia - The one with insunitia
- 9.2.21. Oloing'oni - Mark of a courageous warrior on shield
- 9.2.22. Olpul - Special feasting camps in which junior warriors participate with senior warriors to increase their strength.
- 9.2.23. Osingira - The ceremonial house of the Eunoto ceremony
- 9.1.24. Sirika - Red ochre for body painting

### 9.3. THE MAASAI CALENDER

#### 9.3.1. SEASONS

There is no universal rule in the Maasai Calender. The name of a month varies from one place to another. According to the Maasai all this depends on the weather and climatical conditions.

There are spell out (i.e. three) main seasons namely:

- (a) Long rains
- (b) The drizzles
- (c) The short rains

(Source Institute of African Studies,  
University of Nairobi)

#### 9.3.2. RAINS

Each month within the season is named after the main expectations of the period as follows:

- a) Long Rains - Nkokva
  - 1) Oladalu - The hot, dry, sunny month



- 2) Arat - The month of scarcity, when slight rain might fall and cause scattered downpours of water in valleys.
- 3) Oenirng'ok - Bulls become very fierce and drive back home during the day. They have to be tied and left at home.
- 4) Olodoyionie- A very wet month, in the night the little cluster of stars known as the plough - NKokua is visible.

This leads to the next season, the period of drizzle, and it is also the rich-year season.

b) The Drizzling Season - Oloiruriyurui

- 1) Oloilepunye - Nkokua - It is still wet but the rains are abating.
- 2) Kiyorok - The whole countryside is very beautiful, green and the pasture lands are likened to a hairy caterpillar.
- 3) Morusasin - There might be hail if it rains but the hailstones are very small compared to those of the long rains.
- 4) Oloiborrane - Pools of water become very clean and this sets or prepares for the short rains season.

c) The Short Rains Season

- 1) Kustin - Little white and black birds which feed in the midst of cattle appear.
- 2) Olisan - Rain falls in the highland areas.
- 3) Pushuka - Certain herbs ripen, many trees shed their leaves and flower.
- 4) Ntungu's - This is the end of the year. Each month is divided into thirty days divided into "fifteen (15) bright ones" and "fifteen

(15) dull ones."

The eighth day of each half is known as the day of changing since it is the middle day of each half.

9.4. SIMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE: FOR INTERVIEWS TO VERIFY INFORMATION AND GATHER QUALITATIVE DATA

Name of Respondent:

Approximate Age:

Place of Residence:

Occupation:

Relation to Maasai:

9.4.1. ETHNOGRAPHY

Maasai originated from

- (a) The Sky
- (b) The Sea
- (c) Over the Hills
- (d) From the Ground
- (e) Any other
- (f) I do not know

9.4.2. HISTORY

Maasai have been here

- (a) Forever
- (b) For about 100-500 years
- (c) Less than 200 years
- (d) Less than 50 years
- (e) Any other
- (f) I do not know

9.4.3. PHILOSOPHY

- (a) How many legends and myths do you know?
- (b) Please relate five

- (c) Do you sincerely believe all of them?
- (d) How did you learn about them?
- (e) Any other view
- (f) I do not know

9.4.4. ENVIRONMENT

- (a) Maasai like cool wet grassland areas
- (b) They like dry areas
- (c) They move from place to place
- (d) They never move
- (e) Any other
- (f) I do not know

9.4.5. SOCIAL SET-UP

- (a) Please relate the social set-up of Maasai
- (b) What is the role of a child, moran, woman and elder?
- (c) Does the society expect every ageset to play it's role always?
- (d) Who oversees the fulfilment of this responsibility?
- (e) Any other related information on social role
- (f) I do not know

9.4.6. CULTURAL SET-UP

- (a) How far does culture affect people in Maasai community?
- (b) Has the community changed much in the last 50 years?
- (c) What are the cultural values that govern the Maasai society?
- (d) What is the difference between Maasai and other traditional societies in Kenya/Tanzania/East Africa/Africa?
- (e) Any other information

(f) I do not know

9.4.7. ECONOMIC SET-UP

- (a) What are the economic pillars of the Maasai?
- (b) How important are cattle/sheep/goats/donkeys?
- (c) Who/what determines the price of goods in Maasailand?
- (d) With whom do Maasais trade?
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.8. ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

- (a) Which among the following categories of Maasai art-forms and design patterns are you most familiar with?
  1. Household items and storage equipments
  2. Dress and related jewellery
  3. Body decorations
  4. Head-dress and related ornamentation
  5. Necklaces
  6. Waistwear, and belts
  7. Arm and finger wear
  8. Footwear
  9. Ear ornaments, bead decorations and related jewellery
  10. Livestock ornaments
  11. Weaponry, defence and warfare
  12. Entertainment, fun and play gadgetry
  13. General and other uses
- (b) How are they made?
- (c) Who uses them?
- (d) What materials do the producers use to make them?

- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.9. FORM AND CONTENT APPRECIATION OF MAASAI AND OTHER TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES' ART-FORMS AND DESIGN PATTERNS

- (a) Which forms and design patterns please you most?
- (b) Why do they particularly please you?
- (c) How were they constructed originally?
- (d) Why are the patterns/contents arranged the way they are?
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.10. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF ART OBJECT

- (a) What were the original objectives of (1-13) (under no.8)?
- (b) Please narrate about the ones that you know of
- (c) Have those aims changed?
- (d) Why have they changed/not changed?
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.11. PRINCIPLES OF ORGANISATION

- (a) Which among the following principles of art and design organisation were mostly used: unity, variety, harmony, balance, line, colour, rhythm and dominance?
- (b) Mostly which colours and for what objects did the producers use these colour?
- (c) Did all or most of art objects have to follow

the same principles of organisation?

- (d) Elaborate the difference between Maasai art and design and Western art and design
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.12. MATERIALS USED

- (a) Name the materials used in making (1-13) (under no. 8)
- (b) Where were they obtained?
- (c) Who brought or obtained them?
- (d) How were they prepared?
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.13. DESIGN CRITERIA

- (a) Culturally why were questions 1-13, under no. 8 important?
- (b) What role in age-sets did they play?
- (c) Why were they considered to be beautiful?
- (d) Were there special artists and designers who specialised in their production?
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

9.4.14. DESIGN CONCEPTS

- (a) Please narrate the themes of 1-13 under no. 8
- (b) Who first originates the idea?
- (c) Who verifies the idea?
- (d) What criteria are or were used?
- (e) Any other information
- (F) I do not know

#### 9.4.15. SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

- (a) What kind of skills were employed in making 1-13, under no. 8?
- (b) Who usually, taught those skills and techniques and how was it done?
- (c) Did the skills change from time to time?
- (d) Was there borrowing of skills from other communities?
- (e) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

#### 9.4.16. SYMBOLISM

- (a) Was symbolism of major importance?
- (b) How did people determine the symbolic success?
- (c) How was symbolism associated with form, skills, concepts and culture?
- (d) What was more important, the symbolic meaning or the art object *per se*?
- (C) Any other information
- (f) I do not know

#### 9.4.17. OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

- (a) What are the influences of tourists on Maasai art forms and design patterns?
- (b) How far has mass production and commercialisation of Maasai art objects affected the authenticity of these objects?
- (c) Have materials influenced skill?
- (d) Do Maasai artists and designers copy from other designs?