

The Application of Non-Material Culture on the Mau Ogiek People's Ethnic Dress, Kenya

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Abstract

The Mau Ogiek, an ethnic minority, hunter and gatherer group, wear their indigenous dress to-date. African culture has faced physical and psychological destruction and demonization by non-Africans. Due to psychological destruction of African dress, African Clothing and Textiles scholars have failed to study the dress, resulting in scarce literature on indigenous dress. This paper discusses how the Mau Ogiek apply their non-material culture on their ethnic dress. The research design was hermeneutic discursive interview. The study area was the Mau Forest Complex, Nessuit location with a population of 2600 adult Mau Ogiek people. Judgement sampling was employed to select the sample of 84 consultants. Data were collected by keyconsultant in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), augmented by photography and observation. Thematic analysis was employed in the interviews and FGDs. Qualitative content analysis was conducted on the photographs and dress collections. Folkways dictate men to fasten oguri et op poinet on the right shoulder. Mores require women to conceal their bodies, thus leginjus extends from the chest to the calves. Clothing customs distinguish the genders through mwenigg op itig and ilmintoisieg. The economic value entails constructing oguriet op inderit from hyrax skin. Belief in the 'evil eye' occasioned pirir orog. White signifies youth and is extensively used in beadwork. Rwage op lakwet symbolizes a child's entry into the world of kin. Indigenous knowledge dictates that the motoget is made from scraped hyrax skin, as it is light and durable. A diffused authority requires a girwogindet to wear oguriet op saamput and rungut op metit. The people's ethnic dress provides a cross-cultural view in adapting concepts, theories and practices of dress to an African ethnic group.

Index terms— dress, material culture, non-material culture, mau ogiek people.

1 Introduction

The Mau Ogiek people are an ethnic minority forestdwelling hunters and gatherers who inhabit the Mau Forest Complex in Kenya, their ancestral land (Ng'ang'a 559). The community has faced several evictions from the forest, first by the colonial administration and later by successive independent governments. Some Kenyan ethnic groups refer to them in derogatory terms such as Dorobo or Il-Torobo or Wasanya 'a poor person, a person who has no cattle and who therefore lives on the meat of wild animals'.

However, the people identify themselves as Ogiek 'caretaker of all plants and animals' (Ogiek Peoples' Development Programme ??OPDP]). The population of Author: Department of Art and Design, Maseno University, P.O.BOX 333-40105, Maseno, Kenya. e-mail: sophianjeru2010@gmail.com the Ogiek by 2009 stood at 78,691 or 0.20% of the total Kenyan population (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics ??KNBS]). Despite the challenges, the people have held on to their culture, both material (dress) and nonmaterial.

2 II.

3 Literature Review

Material culture includes all the physical objects, or artefacts, that people make and attach meaning to (Calhoun, Light and Keller 87), such as dress. Dress is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, dress is an assemblage of all outwardly detectible body modifications and all supplements added to it by a person in communicating with other human beings. The definition is gender-neutral. As a verb, dress refers to the act of altering or adding to appearance (Eicher and Higgins 15; Kaiser 163). Non-material culture entails human creations, such as social habits, customs, values, attitudes, beliefs, meanings, symbols, knowledge, language and systems of government within the community that are not embodied in physical objects ??Calhoun, ??t al. 87). Non-material culture influences dress in diverse ways, such as the patterns; types; construction; functions; discontinuity; continuity; conservation and preservation. a) Social Habits Social habits such as normative order for dress are the standards which specify how people should or should not look under given circumstances ??Workman and Freeburg 91). These dress norms are folkways, fashion, mores, taboos and laws (Horn and Gurel 87). People dress, as they are expected to in a given situation as they have internalized the norms of the society ??Billington et al. 50) and due to the existence of a process of social control (Workman and Freeburg 91). The norms influence the construction of dress such as the colours, materials and styles, who wears what dress and dress for the two sexes. Dress norms vary with place and time (Horn and Gurel 68).

4 i. Folkways

According to Horn and Gurel folkways generally are accepted as the conventional ways of doing things, but people do not usually insist on them. Folkways of dress are usually very persistent without ever being strongly enforced (102). The Samburu tradition dictates that all the eight colours of the community must be used in the njili 'beaded headband' worn by the young girls and women ??Mann 34). Leslie asserts that the Orthodox loins. The end is passed between the legs and tucked in at the waist so that the material hangs down to the knees. The end should be tucked in at three points; near the navel, on the left side and at the back (202).

ii. Taboos and Mores According to Horn and Gurel, clothing habits that are somehow associated with the control of sexual relationships in society are, by and large part of a group's mores. Violation of modesty in dress is usually regarded as a threat to the welfare of society, and results in more severe penalties than the violation of either customs or folkways. Taboos are merely negative mores that are believed to spell doom (120). For instance, "Okho-ise-eronmwonvbe Edo" 'a woman does not cast bronze'. In Benin there was a taboo for any woman that built the courage to attempt bronze casting a male preserve associated with prestige, royalty and enduring power ??Okoli 162). Adekola asserts that osun 'ornamental stick' for the babalawo 'diviners' in Yoruba is always placed in an upright position in the room of a reputable babalawo. It is a taboo that it should lie down flat (256).

iii. Laws Laws are social rules enacted by those in political power and enforced through the machinery of the state. Although laws pertaining to clothing were quite common in bygone eras, today many states only maintain statutes against indecent exposure (Horn and Gurel 123). In a traditional African homogeneous group the authority may be a council of elders or age-set.

5 b) Clothing Customs

Clothing customs have strong emotional or spiritual content and require a strict adherence to prescribed form ??Horn and Gurel 123). Dress worn in funerals, weddings and religious ceremonies has specific form. The most important clothing customs are habits that serve to distinguish the sexes. In ethnic societies, the differences in dress for the two genders are often very clear and distinctive ??Synder 85). Joshi established that Hindu women in India wear the traditional sari, blouse and petticoat. On the other hand, men in the rural areas wear the dhoti sakaccha-style. The dhoti nvariably of thin white material, shorter than the sari and lack the lavish decorative border and designs characteristic of women's sari (221-223) ??Kaiser 106). Fisher states that the Tuareg people of the Sahara have adopted Islam, which teaches that all desert people who can afford to do so should wear silver, 'the pure metal blessed by the Prophet' in preference to gold 'the metal of the devil, which is feared and believed to bring bad luck' (64). Values are expressive and individuals are motivated to communicate them to others (Kaiser 108), for instance, by the use of dress. Many societies respect their elders a social value. The Hindu woman by covering her head and sometimes veiling her face using the sari is able to express her respect for her elders. Change in social values may bring about discontinuity of ethnic dress.

Hence, the length of the sari has increased from four to eight or nine metres. The change has been accepted as a symbol of high culture ??Joshi 221). On the other hand, adherence to values results in the continuity of ethnic dress. In Yirrkka, the Aboriginal artists decided to uphold strong cultural values that include painting on bark with indigenous media (Matuszkiewicz 3).

6 d) Attitudes

Attitudes are individual clusters of beliefs oriented toward specific stimuli, such as dress. Three elements of attitude are, cognitive, affective and behavioural. The behavioural element has the most implications for social

action and interaction ??Kaiser 170). Conformity to clothing behaviour results in continuity of dress. Attitudes may also bring about change of dress and variation of dress within a culture.

Joshi observed that the pallu 'the floating end of the sari' has moved from the right shoulder to the left. The change has been accepted as a symbol of high culture (221).

7 e) Belief

Belief is the feeling that something is true or that it exists. A community may uphold many beliefs, collectively expressed in rituals ??Kaiser 173) such as religious festivals common among Africans, which require appropriate dress for the facilitator and worshippers. Belief in the "evil eye" among Africans (Orobator 63) has led to many communities constructing and wearing dress for psychological protection, for example, of the genital area (Horn and Gurel 65). According to Fisher Africans have beliefs and superstitions that give to jewellery significance that may be difficult for an outsider to appreciate. Talismanic objects are seldom shown to strangers, their secret stories rarely revealed and photography is not allowed (103). Even commonly worn or carried articles of dress may have a profound meaning. Thus, the ever present betel bags of the West Sumba reveal, in their design and quality, the status, age and gender of the owner (Barnes and ??icher 6). Meaning may also refer to words used to describe dress. Joshi asserts that in India, "fashion," denotes a deviation from the norms of dress. In the feminine context, fashion means the adoption of alien dress, while in the masculine context it means the wearing of western dress (220).

8 g) Symbol

A symbol is an object such as ethnic textiles and jewellery, image or design that represents something other than itself (Horn and Gurel 125; Kaiser 87). A symbol may represent status, love, peace, economic position and ethnic background among other factors. Although most symbols are communicated verbally, some are transmitted non-verbally through sight, such as dress (Horn and Gurel 125). Symbols have a shared meaning within a culture. Hence, in different cultures diverse symbols are often used to represent the same concept ??Calhoun et al. 74). Adekola asserts that owo ero 'ritual cowries' symbolized wealth, as they were generally used as means of exchange before the introduction of European currency. Thus, the quantity possessed symbolized one's wealth (256).

Wasike illustrates the symbolic shaving of hair among the Babukusu of Kenya. In lufu 'reincarnation' which is the third or fourth day after the burial of omusecha owekiminie 'a man of means', the relatives and friends of the deceased ritually shave their hair to symbolize rebirth and continuity of life after death (59).

According to Ojo the Yoruba make incisions on the bodies of the initiates to show that they had been united with their people, and are identified as adult members of their societies (177). Adekola asserts that certain numbers are very significant due to the symbolic connotations attached to them. Number four is sacred in Yoruba divination as the people believe that the world has four corners with four mythical gates dedicated to Orunmila, Obatala, Ogun and Oduduwa (256). Designs for ornaments have symbolic meanings, whereby the Bamun notables of Cameroon wore rings, with animal designs; the mudfish represents help, nourishment and protection (Fisher 43).

9 h) Knowledge

According to Dei knowledge, specifically indigenous knowledge (IK) means knowledge consciousness arising locally, in association with a longterm occupancy of a place and from the cultural heritage and histories of peoples, daily human experiences and social interactions. The knowledge is thus personalized, that is, there are no claims of universality. Ethnic also accords a broader identity to local subjects (114). Indigenous knowledge influences ethnic dress. Olaoye asserts that among the Ilorin people of Nigeria the dyers and designers used adire alabere 'stitch-dye technique' to dye fabrics. The thread was obtained from raffia, jute or other fibrous material.

Abere-ilu 'indigenous needle' was used to stitch as it could accommodate the thickness of the thread (123). Dei adds that an anti-colonial discursive approach would also point to the relevance of using local languages to create social understandings (117).

10 i) Language

Language is very important in the development, elaboration and transmission of culture (Kirui and Mbugua 6; Calhoun et al. 56), which ensures the culture's continuity. Hence, Dei encourages indigenous writers in academics to produce works in local languages (117). The reason is that with a local language such as Kikuyu some of its words like thingira and thahu do not have easy English equivalents (Mwangi 4). Olaoye states that the Ilorin people have 'to tie and dye' and adire elelo 'resist technique of twist among others (122).

11 j) System of Government

In the African context traditionally people were ruled by a council of elders or monarchy. In the contemporary setting democratic governments exist. The government may bring about discontinuity of or may help in the conservation of indigenous dress. Fisher writes that in the mid 20 th century the Liberian government forbade women from wearing the heavy anklets as they made them look like slaves, a past people wished to forget.

Thus, lighter, removable designs were adopted and the large anklets are now valued only as currency (142). The government may establish museums, such as the Nairobi National Museum which has a collection-though scarce, of the Ogiek peoples' dress that was collected in 1969 and 1970.

III.

13 Methodology

The research design was hermeneutic discursive interview (Gobo 61). The study area was the Mau Forest Complex, Nessuit location. The population was 2600 adult Mau Ogiek people. Member-identified categories and judgement sampling were employed to select the sample of 84 consultants. Data were collected by key-consultant in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), augmented by photography, observation, museum collection, the people's extant ethnic dress and publications. Two intaasatutig 'elderly women who have reached menopause and qualify to be traditional birth attendants' and two elderly poisonig Leginjus may also be worn as a wrap round skirt, overlapping right over left and it is secured by a thin legetiet 'women's leather belt'. The females also wear kauya 'beaded male bushbuck leather skirt' in the same style as leginjus. Oguriet op inderit 'hyrax pelt cloak' is then draped on the shoulders and is fastened at the chest. The length is the same as the leginjus.

The women who have recently given birth tightly tie a wide legetiet to make her abdomen firm and retain her curves. The mureret when graduating wore tuoleg 'a series of four or six bells'. The latter number is stressed upon. The tuoleg must be suspended on the right shoulder and underneath the left hand. In addition, the mureret donned ingongonoit 'beadwork headband', which must have a visor of four beaded strands.

Ingarepait 'a bride's necklace' must have four or six beadwork strands. The latter is preferred, whereby three strands to the left and to the right have the same colours respectively. The even numbers are preferred for a symmetrical balance and aesthetic appeal.

The men's cloaks, both oguriet op inderit and oguriet op poinet 'bushbuck pelt cloak', are passed under the left arm and are fastened on the right shoulder, thus the opening is on the right hand side. The elderly poisonig may also wear menegupet 'scraped sheep or dik-dik skin vest' in the same manner as oguriet op inderit. The same style applies to kecher 'boys' and rwaganig cloaks. The cloak overlaps back to front and is secured by annuet op choget 'men's leather belt'. Annuet op choget (men's leather belt) is worn specifically for suspending a choget 'scabbard' and securing the cloaks. The choget and rungut op metit 'club' are suspended at the waist on the right side. The motoget 'honey bag' and morogiit 'quiver' are suspended by straps across the chest from the right shoulder, thus they lie on the left side. The quiver's top must face downward for ease of opening the lid and removing the arrows. For hunting, the men must wear oguriet op poinet as it is harder and stiffer than oguriet op inderit thus, provides better protection to the wearer in the rough forest environment and carry all the hunting tools.

Men's ingongonoit 'necklace cum headband' is only worn during the entire initiation ceremony, such that during the day and at night it is a headband and a necklace respectively. If two people had a fight, and one was injured, segereg 'cowries' were used for medicinal purpose. The uninjured party strung the segereg together and strictly tied it on the right hand wrist of the injured person.

ii. Taboos and Mores Taboos among the people state that a child's taet 'brass bracelet' is never thrown away. If one outgrows it a new one is constructed and worn, and the old one is kept away for use in future. A son may inherit his father's taet. The poisonig and rwaganig construct dress for their gender role of hunting and gathering. To construct the dress, they gather together in a secluded place in the forest. It is a taboo for women to visit the site because it is believed that if the women touched the tools, the men would fail to make a kill if they went hunting. The community also strongly forbids men from wearing women's dress anyhow to help to maintain social order. It is only during the murerenig stage of tumdo op werik 'boys' initiation ceremony' that the initiates don girls' dress namely, kauya, leginjus, gariig 'beadwork necklace' and ingongonoit.

The men when on their own lack the shame of nudity or body exposure. This is because men generally stay on their own thus they have limited interaction with their girls or women. However, women are not allowed to expose their bodies, and especially the legs. Thus, the lengths of oguriet op inderit, kauya extend to below the calves.

14 b) Customs

Clothing customs are used to distinguish the sexes and specific dress is worn in funerals, weddings, rites of passage and religious ceremonies. The men wear ilmintoisieg 'brass earrings' and ingongonoit while the women don mwenigg op itig 'beaded leather earrings', taet 'brass necklace' and gariig. The earrings were strictly worn by initiated individuals until one died. For a customary wedding, the bridegroom must don oguriet op inderit and the bride in kauya, leginjus, oguriet op inderit and ingarepait. During tumdo op werik the mutiriot 'male teachers in the boys' initiation rite' must don oguriet op inderit. A woman upon losing her husband removes her mwenigg op itig and gariig-a widowhood ritual. A date is set on when she can wear them again in the presence of her brother-in law. of dress. The Maasai shuka 'a checked red rectangular piece of fabric' is given to the rwaganig by their mutiriot during their graduation ceremony. The Maasai taught them how to dye leather using red ochre. The people learnt from the Maasai and Kikuyu how to embellish dress using glass beads and cowries

respectively. The Kipsigis introduced the mukwanjit 'walking stick' and rungut op metit to the Mau Ogiek during joint initiation of boys, in addition to gelteet and chepkuleit 'headdress' worn by girl-initiates.

ii. Economic Value Hyrax is very valuable to the community as it the main raw material, that is, skin used for constructing oguriet op inderit, kerepeita 'scraped hyrax skin apron worn by tiet 'girls' to cover genital area', motoget and rosiet 'general term for headdress' among others.

Further, sinews are obtained from its tendons and are used in patchwork and other dress construction techniques. The same economic value applies to bushbuck, giant forest hog, cattle and birds. The feathers of hawks and eagles are attached at the rear of arrows to provide a propelling force when they are shot. Worn out cloaks are mended by the women. If one outgrows a cloak it can be expanded by adding animal skin patches to it. Lepelo 'type of arrow used to kill animals' has no spikes thus when it is used it does not remain stuck in the animal and it can be easily retrieved and reused.

15 iii. Aesthetic Value

The people embellish the cloaks, headgear, women's vests, skirts and aprons. Small glass beads of different colours and segereg are attached on the necklines of oguriet op inderit and oguriet op saamput 'baboon pelt cloak' respectively, while bicycle light bulbs and shiny garlands are fixed on gelteet, mungenig 'bushbuck pelt armband for girl-initiates' and ng'oisit 'a big bushbuck pelt apron worn by girl-initiates on the rear'. Leginjus, kauya and ngotiot 'flywhisks' are elaborately decorated with glass beads of diverse colours.

16 iv. Social Values

The women express their respect for people through dress. When breastfeeding in public, a mother covers the baby with oguriet op inderit. Respect for elders is crucial, thus women use dress to conceal their bodies. The members use the dress to identify their ethnic background thus they don the dress even in public, especially oguriet op inderit and rosiet.

17 v. Political Values

Political values are expressed through organizations such as the OPDP. The organization champions the rights of the community by advancing and lobbying for policies, laws and practices that advance the peoples' position, for instance culture and their right to ancestral land. Whenever the community attends court cases related to the Mau Forest Complex they mainly don oguriet op inderit and rosiet.

18 vi. Religious Values

The people still uphold their traditional religious beliefs, such as praying to appease God to "break the eclipse" and give light. The darkness that is occasioned by the eclipse is believed to be evil. For the ritual the intaasatutig must wear kauya or leginjus 'vest'. The women also don kauya and leginjus to sing ilamalit 'a prayer sang by elderly women for the rain to fall in times of famine'.

19 vii. Exploratory Values

The exploratory value influences the dress whereby the people observe the Western items of dress and materials and copy or integrate them in the ethnic dress. The women construct sait 'indigenous wrist watch' whose style resembles the conventional ones but they do not function. Sait is made from leather and adorned with multi coloured glass beads that are fashioned in diverse patterns. Velvet is used in constructing a pendant. From the Waswahili the women borrowed the khanga 'a rectangular piece of 100% cotton fabric, inscribed with a proverb'. Gelteet is fashioned from cardboard in diverse shapes such as tusks and birds.

20 d) Attitudes and Belief

Hyrax skin is the main material used in constructing cloaks as it is the only material the community is identified with. Other articles of dress specific to the community include honey bag, earrings, necklaces, armbands, headbands, headdress and aprons.

In earlier days, the people believed in curses, witchcraft and the "evil eye" which caused death or diseases among young children. In case a mother lost her first child, the next child she bore needed to be protected from death. The new born was thus dressed in pirir orog 'red wooden pieces necklace, obtained from a tree called pirir' or taet.

The community believed that death may lurk in the family, upon a family member's death. Thus, to protect the family from future death, the entire family, except the young children, ritually shaved the hair round the head in portions. The practice has been abandoned.

Further, the community believes that the right hand is for men, thus it should be left free to tackle any eventuality, such as fighting their enemies and wild animals. This belief dictates how men drape and fasten oguriet op inderit, oguriet poinet and menegupet as earlier discussed. The people believe that lotet op kelegg 'removal of at least two front lower teeth' enhances one's beauty or aesthetic appeal.

21 e) Meanings

The people are proud of their indigenous dress as it gives them recognition as a distinct ethnic group. It takes about three days for the women to construct a cloak, and no other work is done during that time. The duration shows that great importance is attached to the dress. The ethnic dress is mainly worn for covering one's body to some extent, depending on the gender and age. White means the joy of youth and it is extensively used in beadwork while red signifies beauty and youth and it must be used in constructing choget.

22 f) Symbols

A father wears ingongonoit to symbolize that he is initiating his child or children, irrespective of the gender, as he is the only one who gives permission for the children to be initiated. During the murerenig stage in tumdo op werik, the initiates wear girls' dress as a symbol that they have left behind the childhood stage and entered adulthood. When leaving the shrine, the mutiriot dresses the rwaganig in oguriet inderit, rungut op metit, imurait, long'et 'shield', rotwop chok 'sword' and mukwanjit as a symbol of maturity and being depended upon by the community to provide security.

Rwage op lakwet 'first shaving of a child at between one and two years' symbolizes that the child has entered into the world of kin and neighbours. During tumdo op tipiik 'girls' initiation ceremony' and tumdo op werik, the initiates' hair is ritually clean shaven by their mothers or selected women as a sign of cutting off childhood and becoming new persons; men and women respectively.

In the olden days, the mureret wore ingongonoit and tuoleg daily until one was accepted by a husband. During her goito 'wedding' she went back to her parent's home for four days. On the fifth day she removed the two articles of dress and gave them to her mother. The bride's hair was also ritually shaved by her mother. Both actions symbolized that she had broken ties with her mother. In the same goito the bride's mother applies oweyet 'jelly produced from bushbuck, rhino or buffalo fat' on the groom's forehead to symbolize that he has been given the bride. Further, all the people attending the goito from the groom's family irrespective of age are also applied oweyet to symbolize that they have been joined to the bride in matrimony.

23 g) Knowledge

The people are experts on where to and how to hunt wild animals, especially the hyrax, constructing the ethnic dress using various animal skins, impiniit 'indigenous awl' and sinews and the conservation and preservation of the dress. The community is also highly knowledgeable on the characteristics of the materials which influence their use in constructing dress. The materials used to fabricate leginjus and menegupet are known to be very soft, smooth and pliable, thus comfortable and warm to wear. Oguriet op poinet was used for camouflage which confused the bushbucks thus men could easily kill them. Male bushbuck skin is the only material used to fabricate legetiet, annuet op choget and choget as it is heavy and stiff. Buffalo skin was previously used to construct kweog 'men's leather sandals' as it is very hard, thus, it provided maximum protection to the wearer.

The motoget is made from scraped hyrax skin, as it is light and durable, hence, appropriate for ferrying harvested honey home and long travel. A honey harvester needs pineet and inaing'omiit 'indigenous match stick' which are kept dry in a morogiit, which is also used to store and carry ingerut 'arrows'. Indigenous knowledge is used to construct sewing equipment and notions such as impiniit, mecheita 'a thin metal rod for boring holes in wood', ayuet op kusiet 'hide scraper', gisienjot 'indigenous chisel' and sinews which are then used to fabricate the various items of dress.

The people practice gempirr itig 'ear piercing' whereby thorns are used to pierce both the upper and lower earlobes. The holes in the lower earlobes are enlarged by increasing the sizes of nguloleit 'round wooden discs' to enable one to suspend from them ilmintoisieg and mwenigg op itig due to the earrings' shapes and large sizes. The people smear animal fat on the animal skins to soften and preserve them. V.

24 Conclusion

The Mau Ogiek's non-material culture is greatly applied on their ethnic dress. According to the cultural perspective, there are cross-cultural variations. The people's dress has contributed to the variation as it is a distinct African ethnic dress. In addition, the dress provides a cross-cultural view in adapting concepts, theories and practices of dress to an African ethnic group. Specifically, it is the application of non-material culture on dress. African culture has made and continues to make immense contribution to the world culture and civilization. The contribution may be

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Figure 1:



Figure 2: 'Global



Figure 3:

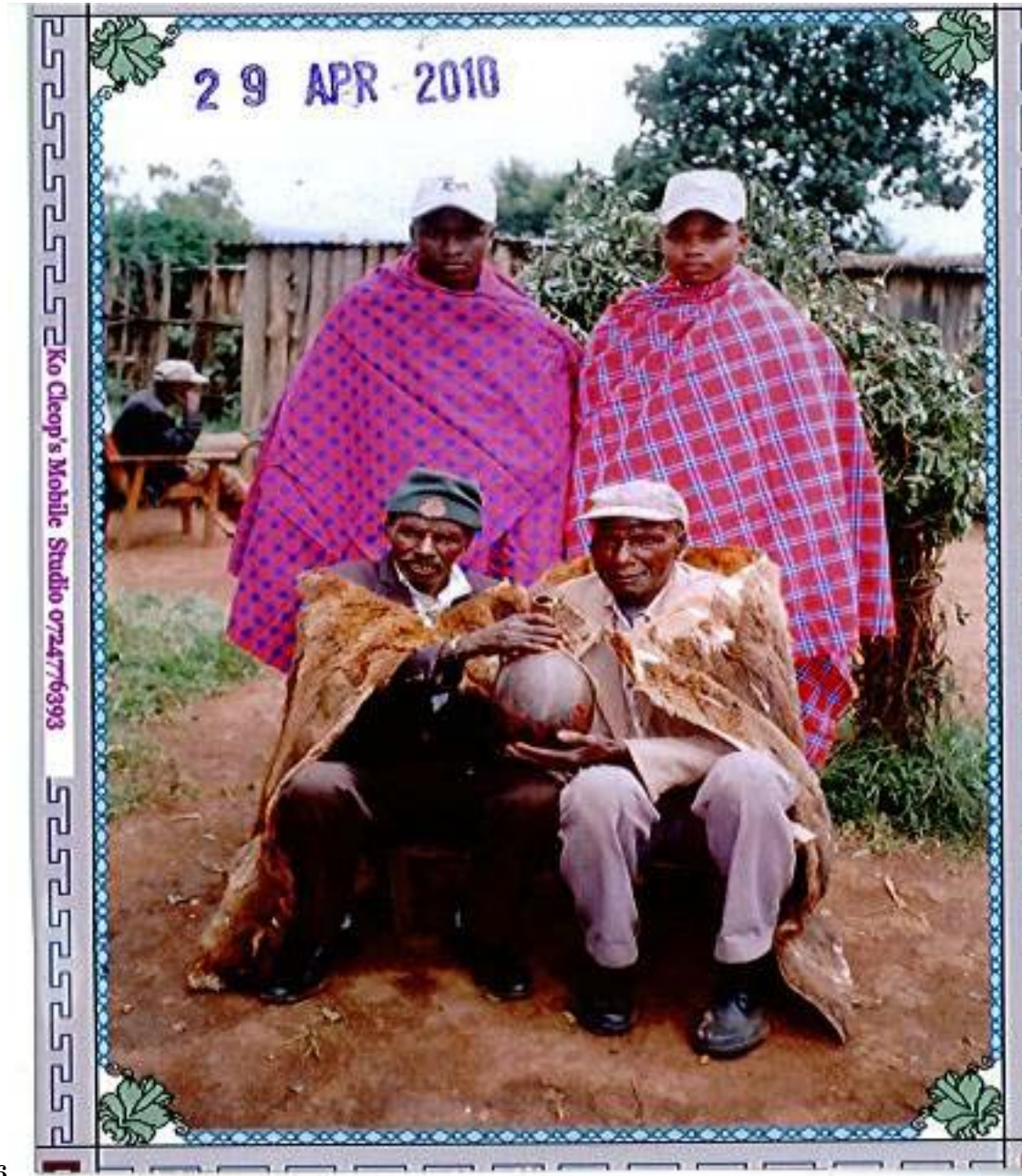


Figure 4:



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Figure 5: Figure 5 :



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Figure 6: Figure 6 :



Figure 7: Figure 7 :



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Figure 8: Figure 8 :



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Figure 9: Figure 9 :



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Figure 10: Figure 10 :



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Figure 11: Figure 11 :Figure 13 :



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Figure 12: Figure 15 :

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