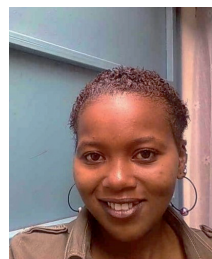


In all ages, far back into pre-history, we find human beings have adorned themselves. Classic texts show that body decoration or body modification has long been associated with rebirth and creation. The human body is an ideal canvas for individual creativity and self-reinvention. With ages certain aspects of culture change as man adopt modern technology. This book is a historical perspective of cultural changes such as hairstyles, shoes, handbags, cosmetics, beads use, lingerie and colour symbolism use in Africa and globally.

A Historical Perspective



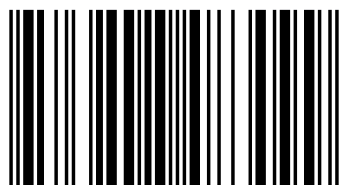
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# Fashion and Beauty

A Historical Perspective

Ruth Njoroge  
Tom Nyamache  
Isaac Tarus



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Ruth Njoroge, T. Nyamache, I. Tarus



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**Fashion and Beauty**



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**RUTH NYAMBURA NJOROGE**

**CULTURAL TRANSMISSION, FASHION AND BEAUTY**

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## **PREFACE**

Self-ornament and decorations play a significant role in ensuring the continuity of the political, socio-cultural and ethno-moral principles of a community. Adornment is considered one of the fundamental human needs. This volume is a historical perspective of cultural changes such as hairstyles, shoes, handbags, cosmetics, beads use, lingerie and colour symbolism use in Africa and globally. Culture has grown through a combination of the processes of invention and diffusion. We are the only species who deliberately alters our appearance and surroundings. Customizing of our bodies goes far beyond the clothing which we wear as a second skin.

**APRIL, 2012**

**Ruth Nyambura Njoroge  
Researcher/ Scholar,  
Egerton University, Kenya**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my brother Emmanuel Wang'ombe who has been my love, and inspiration.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **HAIR AND BEAUTY CULTURE IN AFRICA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **Abstract**

*Hair is a very important expression of who we are. It is often the first thing you notice when you meet someone. It can signify youth, health, strength and vitality. The manner in which people care for their hair varies greatly as the hair we are born with changes several times during our time on planet Earth. The remarkable head hair of humans has gained an important significance in nearly all present societies as well as any given historical period throughout the world. Beauty can be natural or enhanced by use of make ups, perfumes and jewels. The objective of this paper was to look at the evolution that has taken place in the hair and beauty culture and significance of these changes to development in Africa. Data was obtained through literature search in libraries.*

**Key Words: Hair, Beauty, Culture, Africa**

#### **Introduction**

Since the beginning of African civilization, hairstyles have been used to convey messages to greater societies. As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, different styles could 'indicate a person's marital status, age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth and rank within the community. "Unkempt hair in nearly every West African culture was considered unattractive to opposite sex and the sign that one was dirty, had bad morals or was even insane. Hair maintenance in traditional Africa was aimed at creating a sense of beauty. "A woman with long hair demonstrated the life force, the multiplying power of profusion, prosperity... a great thumb for raising bountiful farms and many healthy children," wrote Sylvia Ardyn Boone, an anthropologist specializing in the Mende culture of Sierra Leone (Arnold, 1995).

Hair reacts to our state of well being. This includes our physical, spiritual and emotional bodies. Emotionally, if we are in balance, our hair grows and looks beautiful as personification of our inner self. Under stress many people have hair loss or the hair loses its texture and sheen. Some people just wash their hair and let it dry naturally, others spend hours blow drying and styling it. We all seem to find a style that is 'us' and keep it until something in our lives changes- and we change our hair style along with it. Long hair is primal as it stirs and arouses something within us, from sexuality to the goddess, priestess look, subconsciously; long hair references a return to

the creational source-water-the flow of the collective unconscious. In many places women style the hair in 'snail shell' curls turning to the right.

The remarkable head hair of human has gained an important significance in nearly all present societies as well as any given historical period throughout the world. The haircut has always played a significant cultural and social role. Some of the earliest known works of art are statuettes of women, thousand of years old (the statuettes not the women), showing elaborate hair styles. Hair styles are both a display and can be a communication revealing social status and membership of a tribe or group (Harris, 2001).

### **Pre-colonial Hairstyles**

In Yoruba culture many people braided their hair to send messages to the gods. The hair was the most elevated part of the body and was therefore considered a portal for spirits to pass through to the soul. Because of the cultural and spiritual importance of hair for Africans, the practice of having their heads involuntarily shaved before being sold as slaves was in itself a dehumanizing act. In ancient Egypt head hair was often shaved, especially amongst children, as long hair was uncomfortable in the heat. Children were often left with a long lock of hair growing from one part of their heads, the practice being so common that it became the standard in Egyptian art for artists to depict children as always wearing this side lock. Many adult men and women kept their head free of lice, while wearing a wig in public. In their graves we find combs and hair pins, they thought thick hair was best and used hair extensions and wigs made of real hair and sheep's wool. They dyed their hair using variety of colours though black wigs hued by Indigo were the favourite. Wealthy Egyptians had personal barbers who would come to their homes. They also used cosmetics and body oils, Women's wigs were often long and braided adorned with gold ornaments or ivory hair pins. Men's faces were generally clean shaved, but stiff false beards were sometimes worn. Hair was also associated with the goddess, she was portrayed as tall, slim, with flowing long hair (Otto, 2001).



**Egyptian Queen/goddess**

Hair styles in pre-colonial Africa had cultural significance attached to them. The bad spirits could only be driven out of the individual by cutting their hair, thus various fashions of hair cutting were practiced by different tribes making the barber the most important man in the community. In fact, the barbers in these tribal days arranged marriages and baptised all children. They were the chief figures in religious ceremonies. During these ceremonies, the hairs were allowed to hang loosely over the shoulders so that the evil spirits could come out. After the dancing, the long hair was cut in the prevailing fashion by the barbers and combed back tightly so that the evil spirits could not enter the person, nor the good spirits get out (Cagnolo, 2006).

Hair had a symbolic meaning in dreams. Among the West African communities to dream of gray or silver hair could suggest wise thoughts. For a woman to dream that she had beautiful hair when in reality she did not, denoted carelessness in her personality. For a man to dream of losing his hair suggested too much generosity which would put him in the poor house. Magic and occults were a common practice across African communities. The practices sometimes included pieces of hair while performing spells. Thus Africans were advised to dispose their hair cautiously after a shave (Ettagale, 1999).

Before circumcision in Luhya and Agikuyu land the boys were smeared with fat and ochre. He wore a long thick hair reaching his shoulders. Sometimes it was left flowing but was always done upto many little tresses carefully arranged like a bundle of strings and painted with ochre

and fat. Generally the circumcised boy added false hair to his natural one to attract attention to him and a quantity of tiny strings were worked in with the natural hair. The whole being was disguised with ample fat and ochre such that it looked like genuine hair. Some adopted a cut commonly known as “Gutema rori.” Others shaved their head round from the forehead to the nape of their necks, others preferred to bind the back part of their hair into a narrow compact bundle like a cabbage stalk or pigtail. Those who followed this fashion usually added two more bunches of hair to their temples, others attached to hair one by one a considerable number of black feathers which were brought together at the nape with a light fan shape binding. Head shaving is common at many rites of passage, representing the fresh start that will be made as one passes from one to another of life’s chapters. Warriors are the only members of Maasai community to wear long hair, which they weave in thinly braided strands. Upon reaching the age of three “moons”, the child is named and the head is shaved clean apart from a tuft hair, which resembles a cock’s comb, from the shape of the neck to the forehead. The cockade symbolizes the “state of grace” accorded to infants (Schurz, 2000).

A woman who had lost a child in a previous pregnancy would position the hair at the front or back of the head, depending on whether she had lost a boy or a girl. Two days before boys are circumcised, their heads are shaven. The young warriors then allow their hair to grow, and spend a great deal of time styling the hair. It is dressed with animal fat and ochre, and parted across the top of the head at ear level. Hair is then plaited; parted into small sections which are divided into two and twisted, first separately then together hair. When warriors go through the *Eunoto*, and become elders, their long plaited hair is shaven off. As males have their heads shaved at the passage from one stage of life to another, a bride will have her head shaved and two rams will be slaughtered in honour of the occasion (Cagnol, 2006).

Married Swahili women of East Africa traditionally shaved their heads completely to highlight large earrings, while Akan queen mothers in West Africa partly shaved the hair around the nape and forehead to distinguish their regal stature. Sometimes several techniques, including threading, braiding, twisting, cutting, and shaving, were combined to create unusual coiffures for special occasions. An example is the Mangbetu of Central Africa who prized cone-shaped heads as signs of increased intelligence. An infant’s cranium was molded with tight bands of hide and

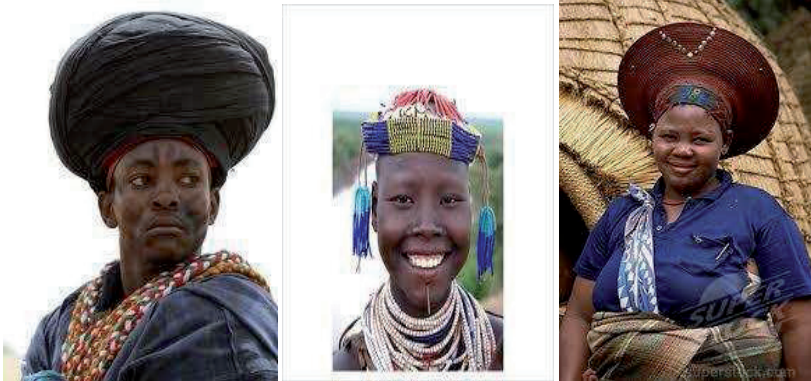
tree bark, a process repeated at regular intervals until the child reached adulthood. Mangbetu women designed special hairstyles to complement the conical shape. They braided the hair in a spiral around the scalp to the apex, attached hair extensions, and wove these into disc-shaped crowns (Otto, 2001).

Many communities dyed their hair with red earth and grease-some even stiffened it with animal dung. The complex style of the Mangbetu women involved plaiting the hair thinly and arranging over a cone-shaped basket frame, flaring the top then adorning the whole thing with long, bone needles. Other communities such as the Miango took a more simple approach, covering the long ponytails with a headscarf and adorning with leaves. The traditional hairstyling in some parts of Africa also gives interesting examples of how people dealt with their head hair. Among the Temne people of Africa, it took hours or days to fashion a hairstyle.



### Samples of pre-colonial hairstyles

The hats were composed of wood, cloth, animal hide, metal, shell, gourd and braided hair. For example the horned headdresses, or *ipiedza*, were worn by male hunters and warriors of the Somba of Northern Ghana. Title holders among the Kuba in the Democratic Republic of Congo wear prestige hats covered with glass beads and cowry shells in public appearances and ceremonies. The adult Bamileke men of Cameroon wear a cotton hut, *asheru*, which has a multitude of projecting cylindrical elements or burls, reinforced with wood to give a three-dimensional effect (Banks, 2000).



**Various African headgears and hat**

### **Contemporary Hairstyles**

The shaved head was the first step the Europeans took to erase the slaves' culture and after the relationship between the African and his/her hair. Africans on the other hand copied the western way of life and beauty and hair was among them, wigs and make ups were and have been adorned (Sims, 1992).

However Africans realised that they had lost much in terms of culture and formed parties to resist colonialism. The famous quote "Black is Beauty" became popular in Africa and was symbolised by afro. The afro which hit its stride in the 1960's was an expression of pride, connection, power and revolution and differentiation. The afro first gained popularity with performers, artists, activists, gang members, youth and nationalists. Some young people who did not adopt this trend were judged disapprovingly and subject to "blacker-than-thou" policing by their peers. African Americans began using the hair as the way to showcase a link to their African ancestors and Blacks throughout the Diaspora. The afro in conjunction with civil rights movement was helping to define black identity. Similarly combined with the shrine presence in the men's coats, the paintings conveyed the spiritual aspect of trans-African culture. These men were seen as angels and not only for their place in the Rights Movement but also because of their naturalism and portrayal of black heritage (Banks, 2000).



**The 1960s Afro**

The time between the 1970's and the 1990's could be described as open and experimental. Despite occasional political flare-ups, individual choice would increasingly dictate African-American hair styles in this era. Trendy styles like braids were even adopted by whites especially after the white actress Bo Derek wore them in the movie 10. Although braids, cornrows and dread locks were becoming mainstream, they stirred up controversy when worn in the professional sphere. After the 1970's men and women tended to turn away from all the natural looks and began creating their own variety of individualized looks (Howell, 1996).

Hip hop culture in the 1980's created a slew of trends, one being the "fade" for men. The fade is a hairstyle worn predominantly by black men in which the hair starts off short at the bottom and lengthens as it reaches the top. This style afforded the wearer and opportunity for individuality, as people often cut designs into the back and sides or added different colours to the top. Hip hop also had an influence and young black women, who could now look to the popular musical artists on Television and album covers for inspiration. Symmetric cuts like wedges, stacks or finger curls were popular during this time. Interestingly, all of these styles required some form of hair straightening.

Hairdressing continues to be important in African societies. Many traditional hairstyles continue to be worn by groups living in remote regions and by others for ceremonies and special occasions. However, many Africans living in cities have adopted Western hairstyles and hats.

Other groups completely cover the head. Many women throughout Africa, including the Xhosa of South Africa wrap scarves around their heads. Berber women in North Africa and other followers of Islam cover their heads and faces with scarfs and veils. Married Zulu women of South Africa wear large flat woven hats decorated with beads. The hat has been worn over the years in African communities by men and women. It serves a religious or ceremonial function or indicates the occupation or office of the wearer in civil, social or secret society. It may indicate the marital status of the man or woman. These forms are embellished with dazzling colours and an amazing array of materials, including animal horns, cowry shells, feather plumes, elephant air, boar tusks, shirt buttons, coins glass beads, metal appliqués and tassels were a symbolic representation of the cultivation of the land and thus indicated civilization (Oliver, 1999). Africans have copied the American and European styles and at the same time they have maintained some African styles. African American hair is typically composed of tightly coiled curls of different colours, showing intersecting triangles, circles and other geometrical figures.

Many women keep the same style most of their lives, while others change style and colour with mood and events in their lives. A woman letting loose her long tresses- that have been tied or pinned back, suddenly is seductive and alluring. Her energies are strong as she shakes loose her lion mane of hair (Arnold, 1995).

### Contemporary hairstyles



### Pre-colonial Beauty

Schraff (2010) reveals that the practice consists of removable substances such as paint, powders, and dyes applied to enhance or transform appearance. Commonly part of regular grooming, makeup varies according to changing definitions of beauty. For vanity and social acceptance, or for medicinal or ritual purposes, people regularly transform every visible part of their body. They have tanned or whitened skin; changed the colour of their lips, eyes, teeth, and hair; and added or removed “beauty” spots. From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Japanese married women and courtesans blackened their teeth with a paste made from a mixture of tea and sake soaked in iron scraps; black teeth were considered beautiful and sexually appealing. Makeup can accentuate the contrast between men and women, camouflage perceived imperfections or signify a special occasion or ritual state. Makeup, like clothing and hairstyles, allows people to reinvent themselves in everyday life. Rituals and ceremonies often require people to wear certain kinds of makeup, clothing, or hairstyles to indicate that a person is taking on a new identity (representing an ancestor or a spirit in a masquerade, for example) or transforming his or her social identity as in an initiation ceremony, wedding, graduation or naming ceremony. Male Japanese actors in Kabuki theater represent women by using strictly codified paints and motifs, and the designs and motifs of Chinese theatrical makeup indicate the identity of a character. In Scotland, as explained by Wright, the bride faced a whole different body make up practice before she could

walk down the aisle. The practice of “blackening the bride” involved covering her with some nasty smelling things like eggs, mystery sauces, molasses and flour. It was the duty of the groom to make her clean in order to take her as the wife. While among the East African communities a mixture of eggs and maize flour was applied on the skin, especially the face to make the skin soft and shiny (Page, 1999).

Jacksons (2008) expounds on the place of beads as a common object of material culture for most African societies throughout history. Each culture has used beads in their own cultural meanings and functions. Fernandes (2009) too display similar view stating that beads have played an important role in the personal lives of Africans. For example, the maidens of the Iraqw of Tanzania, during their seclusion in the bush, while learning a woman’s duties, made back skirts of beaded leather, which are among the most spectacular examples of beadwork from eastern Africa. Beads were used as protective charms originated from a belief system in West and Central Africa that people could be harmed or become sick through natural illness, curse or evil spirits or ghosts entering the body. Thus if one became sick, the healer would prescribe both herbal remedies and a protective charm to wear and also perform a counter curse (Martha, 2011).

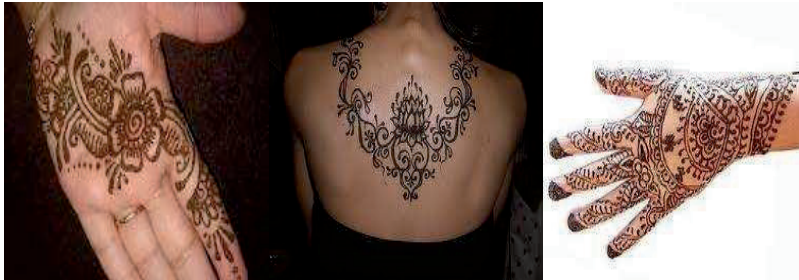
Among the Akhan, beads are worn by political and religious office holders to indicate their status in the community. Beads are worn on the right hand wrist in the case of a chief or on the wrist of either hands in the case of a traditional religious priest and priestess. Among the Maasai and Turkana of Kenya beads were stitched, masking the stitches in the leather so that nothing could be seen of them on the reverse and with colours well arranged. On this neck band was a huge bundle of little chains hangings made of tin or ostrich eggshells, or copper ornaments and even empty cartridges. They also hanged many white bead necklaces round their necks. In addition they carried numerous bracelets or brass wire which they bound twice over their wrists and elbows, leaving free movement of the arms (Singleton, 1996).



**A Turkana woman with examples of body modification**

The word Henna has its origin in the Arabic word *Al-Hinna*. In botanical terms it is *Lawsonia* *Evermis* a plant which grows to be 4 to 8 feet high in hot climates and can be found in Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Persia, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen, Egypt, Uganda, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Senegal, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea and India. The leaves, flowers and the twigs of the plant are ground into fine powder containing natural dyeing properties called *tarmins*; the powder is then mixed with hot water. Henna has been used for centuries for body decoration. Ancient Egyptians used Henna prior to mummification. Many working class citizens had their hands and feet dipped in henna to produce a solid covering, which differs from the common decorative design that is usually applied for wedding and other celebrations. As a healing plant Henna conditions, cleanses colours and cools the skin. When applied to hair, it has the same effect. Millions of Asian and African people regularly apply henna to the hair. Throughout the time henna has been associated with special celebrations: betrothals, weddings, pregnancy, birth, the 40<sup>th</sup> day after a woman gives birth, naming and circumcisions. Eids, and other religious holidays are also occasions to be hennaed. There are also some healing ceremonies like the Zar in North Africa, which include its use. A common practice seen in India and in Islamic world is the pre-wedding tradition “Night of Henna.” The varying designs have different meanings for members of each culture, such as good health, fertility, wisdom, protection and spiritual enlightenment. While Arabic henna designs are usually large, floral patterns on the hands and feet, Indian Mehndi

involves fine, thin lines for lacy, floral and paisley patterns covering entire hands, forearms, feet and chins. African henna patterns were bold, large geometric designs (Bonner, 1990).



#### **The Arabic, Indian and African henna patterns respectively**

Somerkin (2009) illustrates that body piercing has been used as an art form for thousands of years. Everyone from ancient cavemen to ancient cultures and civilizations has used body piercing to express a variety of thoughts. Some cultures, including the ancient Aztec, use body piercing to commune with the gods, whereas other cultures, including those in several African tribes, use body piercings to express beauty, status, or wealth. Fisher's (1984) study of jewellery and body decoration across African continent reveals that jewellery was not used to illustrate beauty but as symbolic on the status of the family-whether rich or poor love between the couple, vitality and health.

Girls in Kikuyu land were fond of personal adornment, necklaces; beads and small shell hang from her neck, earrings in the form of pendants, rings and cylinders. The piercing of the ears was done with a wooden bodkin, with which a hole was made into the auricle and lobe of the ears. Pieces of wood were often introduced into the holes. This would successively be replaced by large ones. They covered their forehead with a pretty band of beads, some of which were long and hung down some way. The man adorned his ears with a wooden ring fitted into the hole in the ear hole, reeds, bead earrings, chains and drops were also suspended from the holes. Round his neck he bound a little leather collar, which was a mosaic of beads on their legs and arms were fastened numbers of bracelets. They also painted their bodies with ochre and fat and shaved their heads circularly. This was similar to the Maasai, Turkana and Karamojong who up to today coat their

hair in clay to create elaborate hairdos, some of which are adorned with feathered plumes (Ettagale, 1999).

### **Contemporary Beauty**

Maintaining facial hair also has become part of beauty. Among the practices include- waxing, tweezing and threading. Waxing is a method of semi-permanent hair removal which removes the hair from the root. New hairs will not grow back in the previously waxed area for two to eight weeks. Almost any area of the body can be waxed including; eye brows, face, bikini area, legs, arms, back, abdomen and feet. There are many types of waxing suitable for removing unwanted hair, waxing is accomplished by spreading a wax combination thinly over a skin. A cloth or paper strip is then pressed on the top and ripped off with a quick movement against the direction of hair growth. This removes the wax a long with the hair. Threading is an ancient method of hair removal. It is popular in Persian culture where it is called *Bande Abru* (“Abru” means eyebrows, and “Band” is the thread). Threading the entire face is widely spread amongst Iranians, but it was originally practiced when a woman was getting married or during special occasions. In ancient Persia, threading was a sign that a girl had reached adulthood and becomes a woman. It has also gained popularity in Western countries. Practitioners use a pure, thin, twisted cotton thread which is rolled over untidy hairlines, moustaches and so on, plucking the hair at the follicle level. However, due to a larger area of hair being removed at once, it can be quite painful for some. In tweezing a metal forceps is used manually to pull hairs out by the root, one or a few at a time. It is very useful for eyebrows or stray hairs on the face (Banks, 2000).



**Eyebrow threading and tweezing**

Apparently in the concept of change and beauty in Africa, barbers, saloons and beauty shops have opened. Training institutes on beauty have been established. Consequently fashion and modeling industries are thriving as a result of the hair and beauty culture in Africa.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### COSMETICS USE AND EFFECTS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH IN KENYA: A CASE OF NAKURU TOWN

#### Abstract

*With the range of beauty products available today, there is a remedy for every problem. Natural cosmetics have lost their worth and relevance today amidst the flooding of synthetic cosmetics. The aim of this paper was to investigate the effect of cosmetics in Kenya. This was drawn from the hypothesis that billions of shillings are spent by both women and men on cosmetics to increase their beauty quotient. The study was carried out in Nakuru town. Data was collected from three sources: An interview schedule was administered to the respondents. Secondly was through literature search in the library. Lastly, through the researchers' personal experiences and interactions with the people within Nakuru town. The study established that cosmetics have a wide range of negative impact especially among women in Kenya. The findings of this study will assist in creating awareness on the use of cosmetics in Kenya today.*

**Key Words: Cosmetics, Beauty, Women**

#### Introduction

Cosmetics are substances used to enhance the appearance or odour of the human body. Cosmetics are applied to the human body for cleansing, beautification, or alteration of the appearance without affecting the body's structure or functions. The word "cosmetae" was first used to describe Roman slaves whose duty was to bathe men and women in perfume (Cash, 1982). Cosmetics include skin-care creams, lotions, powders, perfumes, lipsticks, fingernail and toe nail polish, eye and facial makeup, permanent waves, coloured contact lenses, hair colours, hair sprays, gels, deodorants, baby products, bath oils, bubble baths, bath salts, butters and many other types of products. A subset of cosmetics is called "make-up," which refers primarily to coloured products intended to alter the user's appearance (Cox, 1989). Women from all cultures have tried to beautify themselves and look more attractive by using any materials available to them. Women today are no different. In fact, today's woman is spoilt for choice with the variety and innovation in the beauty industry. Today, it's not just women, but also men who are conscious of their looks and use beauty products. Both men and women now spend a good amount of money on skin care and beauty products. To a large extent therefore, the cosmetic industry has grown to be one of the most flourishing industries in the world. However, less attention has been put on negative impacts of cosmetics to the users (Graham, 1981).

## **History of Cosmetics in Africa**

The first archaeological evidence of cosmetics usage was found in Ancient Egypt. For instance the eye shadow was used in Egyptian burials as early as 10,000 BC. Ancient Greeks and Romans also used cosmetics (Robins, 1993). The Romans and Ancient Egyptians, not realizing their dangerous properties, used cosmetics containing mercury and white lead fragrances. Frankincense and myrrh are mentioned in the Bible: Exodus 30: 34, and Gospel of Matthew 2:11. Ancient Egyptians had a wide extent of make-up utensils. Among this is kohl, which was used to outline the eyes. It was made up of lead, copper, burned almonds, soot, and other ingredients. It was believed that eye make-up could ward off evil spirits and improve the sight. Egyptians found out that kohl darkened the eyelids but made the eyes rounder and attractive (Silverman, 2003).

Egyptians used cosmetics regardless of sex and social status for both aesthetic and therapeutic reasons. Oils and unguents were rubbed into the skin to protect it from the hot air. Most frequently used were white make-ups, black make-up made with carbon, lead sulphide (galena) or manganese oxide (pyrolusite) and green make-up from malachite and other copper based minerals. Red ochre was ground and mixed with water, and applied to the lips and cheeks, painted on with a brush (Robins, 1993).

Egyptian perfumes were famous throughout the Mediterranean region. Perfumes were mostly based on plants: the roots, blossoms or leaves of henna, cinnamon, turpentine, iris, lilies, roses and bitter almonds were soaked in oil and sometimes cooked. Essence was extracted by squeezing, and oil was added to produce liquid perfumes, while creams and salves were the result of adding wax or fat. Many perfumes had more than a dozen ingredients and were kept in stone or glass vessels. During the New Kingdom in Egypt nobles applied minerals to their faces to provide colour and define features. In addition people were depicted carrying little cones in their hair, which are generally interpreted as having been made of solid perfume (Robinson, 1998).

Pleasant smells were associated with the gods. For example, Amen and Queen Ahmose, wife of Thutmose I, seems to have had a special relationship according to inscriptions describing the conception and birth of Hatshepsut their son:

*He found her as she slept in the beauty of her palace. She woke at the fragrance of the god, which she smelled in the presence of his majesty. He went to her immediately and slept with her, he imposed his desire upon her, he wished that she should see him in his form of a god. When he came before her, she rejoiced at the sight of his beauty, his love passed into her limbs, which the fragrance of the god flooded, all his odours were from Punt (Robins, 1993, p. 65).*

For soap, Egyptians used natron, *swabu* (clean), a paste containing ash or clay, which was often scented, and could be worked into lather, or the like. The Ebers Medical Papyrus, dating from about 1500 BCE, describes mixing animal and vegetable oils with alkaline salts. The soap-like material was used for treating skin diseases, as well as for washing. The Egyptians had wash basins and filled them with natron and salt solution from jugs with spouts and used sand as a scouring agent. They washed after rising and both before and after the main meals, but one may assume that their ablutions were mostly perfunctory (Robins, 1993).

For mouth wash they used another solution called *bed*. If washing or perfumes did not help to get rid of body odours one might seek the advice of a physician who had a number of recipes at his disposal. For example; incense, lettuce and apple fruits were mixed and a patient was rubbed with it. Wrinkling of the skin which was an effect of excessive exposure to the sun and not just of old age, was treated by applying a wax- based remedy containing gum of frankincense, moringa oil, ground Cyprus grass and fermented plant juice ( Silverman, 2003). In Ghana, soap was made from roasted coconut shell ashes mixed with palm oil and shea butter. The soap was used to relieve acne, blemishes and oily skins (Angeloglou, 1970).

Among ancient African communities, monthly periods were apparently seen as a time of cleansing. Men abstained from intimate contact with women who were menstruating and were considered unclean during their periods; women avoided the company of men of their own accord. Among the West Africans, sanitary towels consisted of folded strips of linen which were washed and reused. Oil was the base of most cosmetic products. The finest oil was pressed from the fruit of *Balanites Aegyptiaca*. *Behen*, oil from Moringa nuts, and a kind of almond nut oil were also used. These oils were mixed with organic and inorganic substances finely ground up serving as pigments (Shillington, 1989).

The Western part of the World was a late entrant into cosmetic history with the use of cosmetics starting during the middle ages. Here too cosmetics were an elite affair. The church ultimately banned its use. Queen Victoria extended her support for the Church's position. Thus, cosmetics found new lovers in the brothels where it adorned the faces of prostitutes (Robinson, 1998).

Hitler declared that cosmetics were better suited for the faces of Clowns and women belonging to the master race should shun its use. The next two hundred years witnessed a rapid growth in cosmetic usage and even women belonging to the lower strata of the society started to use cosmetic products. The 18th Century was very significant in terms of the changes in technology for the production of cosmetics. The French started to use new methods, chemicals and natural ingredients. Safer chemicals like zinc oxide were used as the base and use of lead or copper was abolished. At the end of the 19th Century, the first beauty salons were set up. Rapid use of makeup cosmetics started from the early 1930s to the 40s (Winter, 2006).

During the 1960s and 1970s, many women in the western World influenced by feminism decided to go without any cosmetics. Cosmetics in the 1970s were divided into a "natural look" for day and a more sexualized image for evening. Around this time, at least few companies started creating makeup for African American females. Before the 1970s, makeup shades for Black females were limited. Face makeup and lipstick did not work for dark skin types because they were created for pale skin tones. These cosmetics that were created for pale skin tones only made dark skin grayer. Eventually, makeup companies created makeup that worked for richer skin tones, such as foundations and powders that provided a natural match. Popular companies like Astarté, Afram, Libra, Flori Roberts and Fashion Fair offered reasonable prices for their products. With the introduction of electronic media especially television and radio, cosmetics became a part of every woman's life. To date the significance of cosmetics has not reduced, but in fact, increased in the life of women. It is now over a 50 billion dollar industry (Cox, 1986).

### **Role of Cosmetics in Skin Care and Beautification**

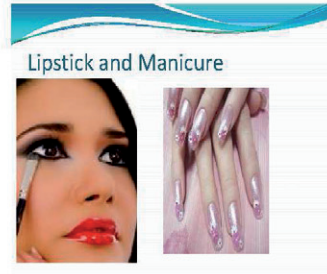
Ageing presents several problems for skin health. Acne breakouts during puberty tend to affect self-confidence; the appearance of stretch marks during and after pregnancy destroys the flawless beauty of the skin; and as one ages, the appearance of wrinkles on the skin is defeating. The use of skin care cosmetic products like lightening cream or lotion, moisturizing cream, anti-wrinkle cream, beauty masks, and many more has become a need rather than just a luxury. Cosmetics have been found to enhance some factors associated with greater attractiveness for men in dating relationships. Specifically, foundation creates an effective mask that increases facial symmetry and improves skin texture; variables associated with greater female attractiveness for males (Fink, Grammer & Thornhill, 2001).

### **Types of Make ups**

Make ups are named according to the part of the body to which they are applied, including: lipstick, lip gloss, lip liner, lip plumper, lip balm, lip conditioner, lip primer, and lip boosters. Those applied on the face are foundation and concealer. These two types of cosmetics differ in that concealers tend to be more heavily pigmented, are applied on small areas and cover any imperfections of the skin. A foundation is usually applied to larger areas and is used to smooth out the face and cover spots or uneven skin coloration. It is usually a liquid, cream, or powder. A powder is used to set the foundation, giving a matted finish, and also to conceal small flaws or blemishes. Rouge, blush or blusher, cheek colouring is used to bring out the colour in the cheeks and make the cheekbones appear more defined (Cash, 1989).

A Bronzer is used to give the skin a bit of colour by adding a golden or bronze glow. Mascara is used to darken, lengthen, and thicken the eyelashes. It is available in natural colours such as brown and black, but also comes in bolder colours such as blue, pink, or purple. There are many different formulae, including waterproof for those prone to allergies or sudden tears. An eye liner is a cosmetic used to define the eyes. It is applied around the contours of the eye to create a variety of aesthetic illusions. Although primarily aimed at females, it has broadened its appeal to the male market, known commonly by the guyliner (Fink, 2001). Nail polish is used to colour the

fingernails and toenails. There are Supplements such as hip boosters, breast enhancers, testosterone enhancers, slimming pills, lighters, soaps and sunscreens. (Graham, 1981).



### **Methodology**

The study was largely qualitative. Primary data was obtained from direct communication with respondents during the interviews. An interview schedule prepared before going to the field was employed to interview informants of the female gender. All interview responses were tape recorded for accurate retrieval after the interview sessions. The interviews covered the role of cosmetics on the women's health and solutions to the negative effects. Open ended guiding questions were used so as not to restrict the informants in the discussion. The researchers, however, guided the interviewees in case they delved into irrelevant issues. The interviews covered the main areas on which the respondents were knowledgeable. Interviews were conducted at both the individual levels and group levels for authenticity and objectivity. Purposive sampling method was appropriate for this study because it was readily available, less costly and a lot of data could be acquired within a short period. A sample of thirty informants from Nakuru town was interviewed. The informants were interviewed from saloons, beauty shops and dermatologists from the town. The researchers were interested in answering the following questions:

- a, How do women learn to use cosmetics?
- b, What are impacts of using cosmetics on women's health?
- c, Are there remedies for the negative impacts?

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Negative Effects of Cosmetics**

Most women confessed to have been introduced to cosmetics by friends, family members and observation from the media. However from the respondents the researchers found out that most women did not know their skin types nor the best products for their skins. Economic status and peer pressure are other factors that expose women to use of diverse skin care products. A lot of beauty products today have caused several skin disorders and health related illnesses. Many skin whiteners contain toxic substances such as mercury (II) chloride or ammoniated mercury as the active ingredient. However, mercury has been banned in most countries because it accumulates on skin and could cause systemic absorption that leads to tissue accumulation of the substance (Malkan, 2006). Hydroquinone is a chemical that is a component of most cosmetics and inhibits melanin production. Its components have potent antioxidant abilities. Hydroquinone is a strong inhibitor of melanin production, suggesting that it prevents skin from making the substance responsible for skin colour. Hydroquinone does not bleach the skin but lightens it, and can only disrupt the synthesis and production of melanin hyperpigmentation. It has been banned in some countries because of fears of skin cancer risk (Winter, 2005).

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) a research company based in America- presented its findings in 2005 with the mission to protect children from the effects of toxic chemicals in the foods, water, air, and products we use daily. Their findings were as follows: Women, on average, use 12 personal care products daily that expose them to 160 toxic chemicals; 10 babies, still in their mother's womb, were tested for chemicals in their bloodstreams with these results; 287 toxic chemicals were found of which 134 were linked to cancer; 151 were linked to birth defects; 186 were linked to infertility; 130 were linked to the immune system. In addition, there has been an 84% increase in Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia in children from 5-10 years of age, a 57% increase in brain cancer during the same period; a doubling of Hypospadias (birth defect of the urethra in males) in infant males in the same period; sperm counts in men are dropping at a rate of 1% per year; 1 in 8 women will get breast cancer; 1 in 3 women will experience some form of cancer in their lifetime; 1 in 2 males will experience some form of cancer in their lifetime (Malkan, 2006).

It was proved scientifically that chemical based cosmetics are linked to disorders like dermatoid allergies, cancer and birth defects (Winter, 2005). One of the most harmful ingredients present in cosmetics is a sort of industrial plasticizer called phalates. Surprisingly, phalates are not listed by manufacturers in the ingredient chart of products as they are banned in a majority of countries. An average consumer is totally unaware of the presence of phalates in the products they buy; phalates are more prominently found in nail polish, tanning agents and hand rinse solvents. The accumulation of phalates in the body will eventually lead to mutation, hormone disruption and abnormalities in the reproductive tracts. An overuse of phalate induced cosmetics by an expectant mother can cause abnormalities in the reproductive system of the foetus, undescended testes or relatively smaller penises and demasculinisation of the male reproductive system (Winter, 2005).

Another hazardous ingredient is Para Hydroxy Benzoate, better known as parabens. Parabens are used in cosmetics as a preservative to prevent microbial growth; paraben traces are found more in deodorants and nail polish and are classified as a direct carcinogenic agent, cancer causative. The presence of parabens was confirmed recently in breast cancer tissue. It is not only parabens, but other cosmetic ingredients like formaldehyde and toluenes, which are also classified under the genre of carcinogenic agents. Thickening agents like Propylene Glycol and Polyethylene Glycol are broadly used in beauty products to alter their stability. These polymeric derivatives are widely used in the preparation of hair gels, anti-perspirants and aftershaves (Malkan, 2006).



### **How to Counter Negative Effects of Cosmetics**

Beauty therapists recommended a visit to dermatologists to assist in assessing the skin and the best products to use. However the therapists only give such advice when their consumers become inquisitive about a certain product. Selecting a suitable cosmetic product is the most important step towards achieving healthy and radiant skin. In addition to the skin type, there are many other factors, such as stress, hormone disruption, air pollution, unhealthy diet, poor liver or stomach condition that affect the condition of your skin and therefore the choice of your skin care cosmetics. One of the key considerations in selecting a cosmetic is its ingredients. It is helpful to look for the ingredients that are used to prepare a particular cosmetic. It goes without saying that 'natural' products are unlikely to adversely affect your skin as compared to other chemical based formulations (Kay, 2005).

It is also important to buy skin care cosmetics from reliable stores. Reliable stores guarantee one of real cosmetics and duration of use. A cosmetic from a reputed retail store where sales transfer is high ensures you unsullied products. Long shelf life of cosmetics can cause increased carcinogenic reactions therefore strictly use the products before the stipulated time (Kay, 2005).

Home-made products such as yoghurt, unless your skin react to milk, plenty of water, citrus fruits, raw vegetables like stinging nettle, spinach, tomatoes to make the skin supple. Products that contain green tea, cucumber and aloe Vera by their nature are soothing and anti-inflammatory and harmless to the skin (Odero, 2011). Wash your face off makeup and camouflage applications thoroughly with water to keep the skin pores open before you go to sleep. Moisturizers' include any cream, lotion or oil applied on the skin. It hydrates the skin preventing surface dryness, peeling and improving the overall appearance of the skin. Keep your hands away from your face during the day or evening-you may be wiping off make-up without realizing it. (Njoroge, 2011).

### **Recommendation and Conclusion**

The rise of products in Africa that cater to skin has led to dozens of women believe they are a remedy to every skin problem. However this paper recommends that every woman should visit a dermatologist regularly to have a history of her skin and the best skin product to use. Similarly

the paper recommends the use of natural additives like fruits, water, milk and water and enough sleep to improve the skin and life of a being.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### EVOLUTION OF SHOES CULTURE IN AFRICA

#### Abstract

*Shoes have always held a special status for humans. The design of shoes has varied enormously through time and from culture to culture. This not only denote creativity of the human being but also appreciation of modern technology. The objective of this paper was to highlight evolution of women shoes from pre-colonial culture to the present. Women's shoes come in more varieties and shapes in comparison to those for men. This study was based on secondary data and observations. The findings reveal that as time goes by resources for example leather, become scarce and this calls for more innovation in production of alternative materials like synthetics. Shoes are important in order to give unique and stylish look to the outfit. Similarly historical period, status, age and profession determine the shoes to be worn.*

#### Key Words: Shoes, Designs, History

#### Introduction

Shoes have served as markers of gender, class, race, ethnicity, leisure, sophistication and a period in history (Beazley, 2009). They tell alot about the wearer, they provide a clue about the personality and sometimes the career of a person. Shoes might tell us whether a person is wealthy and we could make an estimate of a person's height by the size of the shoe. Over time, the shoes might tell us something about the wearer's foot structure and how he walks and stands. They are also used as an item of decoration. In the book of Exodus, 3:5, when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, his first command was "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Beazley, 2009).

Conversely, going barefoot has often demonstrated humility and piety in the presence of God. Hindu documents and Muslim traditions thousands of years old, warned/warn worshippers to remove their footwear before entering a shrine or place of worship (Straus, 1999). Thrown shoes hold a particular significance in the Arab cultures of North Africa and the Middle East. Shoes are generally taken off before entering a home and are considered very dirty. To hit someone with the sole of a shoe is not only an insult but equates him with the dirt and filth on the bottom of a shoe (Blauer, 1999).

Footwear has figured widely in mythology, folk stories and superstition. For example, it is a tradition among the Greeks to tie a boot to the back of the newlyweds' car as a good luck token

(Straus, 1999). Aristocratic women owned as many as twenty pairs of shoes, with a style to match every occasion. Slaves were employed solely to carry a supply of their lady's shoes when she left home; assuring that she would be appropriately shod throughout her travels. The Chinese custom of binding women's feet to keep them small is many centuries old. Bound feet were thought to ensure faithfulness, since with such deformed feet the wife would supposedly find it difficult to travel very far on her own. In addition, people wear new shoes in New Year, meaning a new beginning of life. In Holland, if a man is struck by lightning, his relatives must bury all his shoes as soon as possible. This is the only way to prevent spread of supernatural power. However, the ancient Greek declares that the best treatment for stomach illness is to eat an old shoe's tongue. In Madagascar, people believe wearing shoes made of monkey's skin can cure any disease (Wilson, 1969).

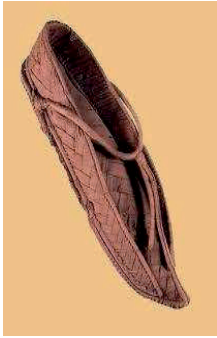
In the West, shoes have had a place in marriage ceremonies for many centuries. In some cultures, the bride's father threw his shoes at the newlyweds to signify the transfer of authority from father to husband. In Anglo-Saxon ceremonies, shoes were as indispensable as the wedding ring is today. Instead of exchanging rings with her betrothed, the bride customarily passed her shoes to her husband, who then tapped her on the head with a shoe (Hall, 2000).

### **Shoes in the Early Civilizations**

Sandals were the very first shoes to grace human feet. This is way back in the Ice Age, 5,000,000 years ago, when the first people were still wearing animal skins. Ancient civilizations such as Egyptians, Chinese and Vikings made simple shoes to provide protection for people to move over rough terrain. Egyptians were the first civilization to create a sandal. Most ancient Egyptian sandals were crafted from intricately woven and braided papyrus leaves. The sandals were initially made from a footprint in wet sand. Braided papyrus was then molded into soles. The soles were made of cowhide and the shoes were filled with grass to keep the feet warm. Lengths of fur were attached sometimes to the leather soles and worn to protect the legs from the weather. The design of the men's shoes was given more attention than those of women. Women's feet were often hidden beneath long skirts (Bronwyn, 2000).

In Egypt the sandal demonstrated a person's rank in the society. Slaves either went barefoot or wore crude sandals made from palm leaves. Common citizens wore sandals of woven papyrus, consisting of a flat sole tied to the foot by a thong between the toes. But sandals with pointed toes were reserved only for the nobles like the Pharaohs, queens and princes. Red and yellow coloured sandals were reserved for this rank (Yue, 1970). Slate tables from the reign of Pharaoh Narmer (3000 BC) depict that the Pharaoh followed by a slave bearing his sandals. Both figures wore sandals; however a peaked toe on the Pharaoh's sandals marked the difference between the master and the slave. Egyptians often dyed the soles of their sandals and crafted right and left foot models (Bronwyn, 2000). Wealthy Egyptian women often adorned their sandals with jewels. Later Egyptians adopted new shoe styles which were brought back by travelers, traders and warriors. By around 1300 BC most Egyptians were wearing shoes and it was improper to walk barefoot outside and no upper class man or woman appeared barefoot in the streets. Similarly India, China and Japan introduced rice straw sandals. South American populations wore sandals made of sisal plant twine (Yue, 1970).

Jesus is known to have preferred particular type of sandals that enabled him to walk long distances in his mission during the Roman era. The sandals came to be known as "Jesus Sandals" These sandals have been in fashion to the present (Brooke, 1971). Elsewhere in Africa, communities made sandals using animal skins and adorned them with beads. For example, *akala* sandals made of rubber from worn out tyres were common with pastoral communities like Maasai. They were famous for their durability and toughness and were capable of surviving all climatic conditions (McDowell, 1994).



**Egyptian sandal**



**Jesus sandals**

### **Shoes in Pre- independent Africa**

When Europeans established trade routes with Africa in the fifteenth century, European products, including shoes, entered Africa and many Africans began wearing Western style foot coverings. Africans also created their own slippers and leather sandals modeled on Western examples. Shoes were available mainly to the wealthiest Africans (Blauer, 1999). Among them include pumps, ballet flats and modern sandals. The name pump was first used in the 1500s, when strapless shoes without heels were worn by men and referred to as "pompes." In the 1500s, when the shoes were first worn, the easy-to-wear style was often seen on the feet of servants because they did not have the time or money for fussy buttons and laces. By twentieth Century however, things had changed dramatically and the classic style had become associated with style and glamour for women. Pumps are designed to be worn with almost anything, although they look best when worn with skirts, dresses or dress pants, and of course they accentuate the graceful curves of high arches (Linda, 1996).

Ballet flats are shoes with a very thin heel or the appearance of no heel at all. The style usually features a ribbon-like binding around the low tops of the slipper and may have a slight gathering at the top-front and a tiny, decorative string tie. Ballet slippers can be adjusted and tightened to the wearer's foot by a string. The ballet flats co-existed with the pumps. They were popular with both men and women. They only came out of fashion in the 17th and 18th centuries when the

high-heeled shoe came into fashion. Today flats are of different colours for both men and women (Linda, 1996).

Sandals are still very popular today, with hiking sandals, flip flops, polo sport sandals, and lots of different women's and men's sandals. Sandals were not considered fashionable until the twentieth century. Today's sandals are designed for just about every purpose, including fashion and exercise. They have been modified and are made of soft materials at the top and the rubber as the sole. Here are samples of modern pumps, ballet flats and sandals respectively.



**Pumps**



**Ballet Flats**



**Modern Sandals**

Platforms also known as Disco Boots were worn in various cultures since ancient times for fashion or for added height. They were first worn in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Platforms enjoyed some popularity in the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom in the 1930s, 1940s, and very early 1950s, but not nearly to the extent of their popularity in the 1970s and

1980s, when the biggest, and most prolonged, platform shoe fad in United States of America history began at least as early as 1970 and continued through the late-1980s (Swann, 1982). At the beginning of the 1980s, they were worn primarily by young women in their teens and twenties, and occasionally by younger girls, older women, and particularly during the disco era by young men. Although they did provide added height without nearly the discomfort of spike heels, they seem to have been worn primarily for the sake of attracting attention. The entire sole of the shoe can be completely elevated, having a rubberized or cork bottom, or merely the toes and heels have a platform base. Heel sections are generally quite wide. Here are illustrations of a platform in the 1930s, 1960s and the current platforms respectively.



The word "moccasin" comes from an Algonquian word, also spelled mocasin, meaning a sturdy slipper-shaped type of shoe sewn from tanned leather. Moccasins were traditionally worn by Native Americans as early as 1900 (Brooke, 1971). They were originally made of soft leather stitched together with sinew. Though the basic construction of Native American Indians moccasins was similar throughout North America, moccasin patterns were subtly different in nearly every tribe, and Indians could often tell each other's tribal affiliation simply from the design of their shoes. Tribal differences included not only the cut of the moccasins but also the extensive bead work, quill work, and painted designs many Indian people lavished on their shoes.

In some tribes hardened rawhide was used for the sole for added durability, and in others rabbit fur (or, later, sheepskin) was used to line the leather moccasins for added warmth. Indian women also wore moccasin boots sometimes, which were basically thigh-length. In Mesopotamia, (c. 1600-1200 BC) a type of soft shoes were worn by the mountain people who lived on the border of Iran. The soft shoe was made of wraparound leather, similar to a moccasin (McDonald, 2006).

Similarly Heavier-duty boots called mukluks were the invention of the Eskimos, who made them of sealskin, fur, and reindeer hide. Mocassins were modified to loafers/slip-ons in the 1930s. They were originally worn by Norwegian farmers in Europe living in a cattle loafing area. Cobblers started making shoes based on this design and named them loafers. They began as casual shoes but have increased in popularity to be accepted as part of official wear (Hall,



2000).

Boots are shoes that cover above the ankle. They were worn in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by American Cowboys. They vary from length to shapes and even designs. This includes: Ankle boots, Full length boots, flat boots, Cow boy boots and hiking boots. They are more often worn in rainy seasons (McDonald, 2006).



Slide is a common term that refers to a shoe that is backless and open-toed. Slides originated in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Generally all slides are a type of sandal. However slides can be high heeled and may cover nearly the entire foot from ankle to toe. It may have one or two straps. The term is descriptive in that this shoe is easy to slide on and off the foot when the wearer wants to do so. Slides are the best shoes to show off the perfect set of nails (Straus, 1999).



### **Slides**

After Second World War natural textiles were replaced by man-made materials in the world since resources were scarce. The new materials were advertised as “miracles” because of how easy they were to care for no shrinking, no ironing and no staining. Plastic shoes were among the items made from these man-made materials. They mainly formed as sandals. A popular style called the ‘peek a boo’ featured a wide plastic strap over the front of the foot with a small opening at the front to show some of the woman’s toe. By the 1980s both children and women wore soft plastic sandals called jellies or sandak. Plastic shoes have remained popular into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Straus, 1999). Jelly shoes are an almost nationally recognized nostalgic symbol for childhood, particularly for people who grew up in the 1980s or 1990s. The shoes became significant for many because they represented a childhood memory or played a part in the growth of an entire generation (Blauer, 1999). Below is a contemporary jelly.



### **Shoes in the Contemporary Africa**

With the coming of the missionaries in Africa, modern education was one of the benefits to the Africans who had to attend modern schools and acquire skills. Mary Jane which is round-toed, low-heeled shoe was/is worn by children to school (also known as Back to School). A distinctive feature of Mary Jane is the single or double strap that crosses the middle top of the foot. It comes in varying heights, colour and styles.



A high heel is footwear that raises the wearer's foot significantly higher than the toes. High heels are considered to be between 1 and 3.5 inches. The high heels originated from ancient Egypt dating back from 3500 B.C. They were worn mostly by the nobles. In addition, Egyptian butchers wore heels to help them walk above the dead beasts (McDowell, 1994). In ancient Rome where sex trade was legal female prostitutes were identified by their high heels. During the Middle Ages both men and women wore patterns of wooden soles to keep them out of the mud. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, men's heels were commonly between three to four inches high while women wore four inches. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries heels became synonymous to wealth and nobility. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the practice of wearing heels fell into decline in the world due to its association with wealth and aristocracy. Flat shoes and sandals were worn by both sexes. The heels resurfaced in fashion during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century among women. This went on and by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the shape of the heel changed from blocks in the 1970s to tapered in the 1990s.

Today high heels are typically worn by women, with heights varying from a cone: which is a round heel that is broad where it meets the sole of the shoe and narrower at the point of contact with the ground; a kitten is a short, slim heel with maximum height of 2 inches or less. They are not necessarily attractive on the foot though (Njoroge, 2011). A prism is three flat sides that form a triangle at the point of contact with ground. A sling back is backless, has a strap that crosses behind the heel or ankle and has a height of 1 to 2 inches, French heels are shoes with a medium height, having a curved heel that is somewhat chunkier than a Kitten heel (McDowell, 1994). Clogs are excellent way to wear the maxi dress or skirt over the weekend (Njoroge, 2011). Heels make the wearer appear taller, make legs appear longer and make the foot appear smaller. However they can cause foot pain, increase the likelihood of sprains and fractures, make calves look more rigid and sinewy, can create foot deformities, shorten the wearer's stride and can cause unsteady gait (McDonald, 2006). The comfort of the heels mainly depends on one's

feet. Most women complain that the heels they have cannot walk for long distances. Diversity is the key when you want to look good and comfortable in heels (Mwai, 2011). Here are examples of the heels.



**Kitten**



**Prism/Spool**



**Clogs/Mules**



**Cone**



**Sling back**

Wedges have been around since the 1930s. The first wedges did not have a distinct heel and had cellophane straps they were designed by an Italian designer Salvatore Ferragamo. He designed the orthopedic wedge in 1935 and the wedge heel in 1936 (McDowell, 1989). Ferragamo used cork and wood because of a leather and rubber shortage. Cork was more popular than wood because it was lighter. The cork sole was also sturdy and durable. Wedges grew in popularity during the Second World War because of the lack of leather and rubber available in the United States. Leather and rubber were needed for the war effort. Wedges then were popular for women and reached up to 5 inches during this time period. Wedges resurfaced in the 1970s. Designs were rounder, more colourful and outrageous. One design even allowed for a goldfish to live in the heel. Men and women wore platform wedges, unlike during World War II when it was strictly a women's fashion. Wedges came back in style in the 1990s. Wedge sneakers first appeared in parties and entertainment joints then moved on toward the rest of the world. Currently wedges range from boots, high heel and sandals. Wedge heels offer more support than stilettos or high heels. Balance is easier on a wedge, reducing the number of falls that accompany high heels. Wedges offer more arch support, reducing foot and ankle problems (Ambrose, 1999).

#### **A contemporary wedge**



The word stiletto is derived from *stylus*, meaning a pin or stalk. It is also the Italian word for small dagger with a slender, tapering blade (Mitchell, 1997). The design of the stiletto heel originally came up in the late 1950s. It was designed by an American; Roger Vivier. The stiletto heel came with the advent of technology using a supporting metal shaft or stem embedded into the heel, instead of wood or other weaker materials that required a wide heel (Beazley, 2009). As time went on, stiletto heels became known more for their erotic nature than for their ability to make height. After an initial wave of popularity in the 1950s, they reached their most refined shape in the early 1960s, when the toes of the shoes which bore them became as slender and elongated as the stiletto heels themselves. As a result of the overall sharpness of the outline, the

whole shoe was referred to as a "stiletto", not just the heel. Although they officially faded from the scene in the 1960's a version of the stiletto heel was reintroduced in the 1970s and 80s which were round-toe shoes with slightly thicker semi-stiletto heels, often very high in an attempt to convey slenderness. They were frequently worn at the office with wide-shouldered suits (McDowell, 1994).

The style survived through much of the 1980s but almost completely disappeared during the 1990s, when women took to wearing shoes with thick, block heels. However, the slender stiletto heel staged a major comeback after 2000, when young women adopted the style for dressing up office wear or adding a feminine touch to casual wear, like jeans. Stiletto heels are often considered to be a seductive item of clothing, and often feature in popular culture. Stilettoes give the optical illusion of a longer, slimmer leg, a smaller foot, and a greater overall height. They also alter the wearer's posture and gait, flexing the calf muscles, and making the bust and buttocks more prominent (Linda, 1996). Here is an example of a stiletto heel.



The history of gladiator shoes date back to ancient culture of the Greeks and the Romans. Primarily loved and worn by women and were essentially flat. They were known for their comfort and were designed to be worn in warm or pleasant climate. Their many straps formed a distinct 'T' and came to be known as gladiator shoes. Romans and Greeks used them while working and even during wars. With modernization, the gladiators too changed and are now available in a lot of variations that can be no longer associated with the gladiators used in the ancient years- for example high heeled gladiators and gladiators with zippers (Wilson, 1969). There has been a variation even in the basic material used. Whereas, in olden times,

gladiators were made of leather, the modern ones are made of leather, synthetic leather and plastic. While the focus of the ancient gladiators was more on comfort, today's gladiators are trendy, in addition to being comfortable. In the year 2008, gladiator shoes topped the fashion charts and have been a rage ever since. The intricate designs which the criss-cross straps form on the legs, add enormous beauty to the legs of the wearer. The outfit that goes best with gladiator shoes is a short flowing skirt, pencil skirt or trouser (Christdean, 2008).



## **Conclusion**

Shoes have a long history in Africa. Beside their actual purpose of shielding the feet, it is the shoes of an individual or group that we get to learn the monetary value, fashion and style. Shoes tell a story of the journey through which they have travelled. They link us to the period from which they come from and help us compare periods of history.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVOLUTION OF HANDBAGS CULTURE

#### **Abstract**

*The variety of handbag and purse designs keeps getting bigger, more unique and interesting. The recent trend is away from backpacks style to oversized handbags. Women want a more fashionable handbag that can also be used as a briefcase, laptop case and even baby bag. Handbags go back to the beginning of time and have become a practicality and a fashion statement for women of all ages. Thus this paper analyses the history of the handbags from ancient trends to the present. The study was based on secondary data and observations. The findings revealed that bags are getting bigger and bigger to meet all of the needs, and carry all of the stuff. This means of course, that carrying a bag is getting more problematic as the bags get heavier.*

**Key Words: Bags, Women, Symbol**

#### **Introduction**

Handbags play an important role in a woman's life. It is hard for a woman to go without the company of a handbag. Many women may never think of the reason why they carry handbags (Critchell, 2000). However, handbags reveal a person's personality, People can tell your social status, taste and personality. Whereas the inside of one's bag is supposed to be personal and intimate, the outside is practically a billboard advertising one's place in the world. An inventory of a woman's handbag can reveal her age, a glimpse of her soul and completes her beauty. Not just a fashion statement any more, handbags must be large, sturdy and functional to support the many needs of today's lifestyles. Another revolutionary change is that many women carry more than one bag. This has become a vital necessity (Roseann, 1999).

Judging from archaeological excavations, our ancient ancestors used the bags sewed out of leather or fur, and they served to carry weapons, flint, tools, food and eventually money. Double handled handbags designed to be suspended from sticks, as well as bags made from linen and papyrus were found in Egyptian burial chambers of the Old Kingdom (2686-2160 BC) (Roseann, 1999). The ancient Greeks used leather bags to carry byrsa as coin pouches and this is the English word "purse." The rise of coin currency gave birth to the drawstring purse which was either worn close to the body mostly suspended from the belt or secreted within folds of clothing. Judas sealed the fate of Jesus with a purse full of silver coins (Barbara, 2000).

In New Guinea, centuries ago, both men and women carried large knit bags which looked like nets decorated with feathers, seashells and other mementos. The more shells a person had was a sign that you knew people on the seashore, and you had a lot of social relationships, and all your friends were willing to give shells to you (Critchell, 2000).

### **Handbags in early Civilizations**

Handbags have evolved through the years from the pre-colonial technique of basketry. Basketry is one of the most ancient crafts. The raw materials widely available were grasses, sedges, reeds, stalks such as flax, twigs, animal hide, bamboo, leaves, most frequently of the date and palms, and occasionally leather. There were various techniques used like weaving, coiling, twining, plaiting and tying together strands of materials. Such techniques were predominant in Ethiopia, Burundi and Rwanda (Margaret, 2000).

Early civilizations in the world used the basket for various purposes. For example, the few possessions an ancient Egyptian family had, were therefore mostly kept in baskets. The baskets were decorated with beads and a bronze ring. The basket was oval or rectangular shaped with woven patterns on the sides and a ridge lid (Wilcox, 1999).



Ancient Egyptian Basket

Baskets were used to as a decorative item. This was done through additive materials like leather, beads, cowries shells and metal wire. Marriage customs of the Agikuyu for example dictated a bride's mother to give her daughter a large basket to symbolize the new role of a caretaker. A basket played a crucial role in divination. Among the most West African communities a basket full of first harvest was dedicated to gods to appease them. Apparently, the basket still illustrated

the 'tribe' to which the owner may have belonged. For many it was an item behind which they could hide, the basket provided a mask to hide behind or a symbol of success or cultural belonging (Wilcox, 1999).

Handbags were created as essential component of human transit since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. For example in Egyptian hieroglyphics show the ancestors carrying bags attached to the waist called "pockets". They were used to carry flint or money. The bags then were made from provisions of skin and hides. These bags were used by males than females. The purses were fastened to belt like girdles and embroidered with jewels, which just as today's designers' fashions added a sense of prestige to the bags. Similarly, during the pre-colonial caravan trade in Angola, porters carried provisions and goods in woven bags (Donald, R. 2001).

By the 1400's both men and women were using handbags, which gradually became a status symbol. People would adorn their handbags with jewelry or embroidery to reflect their wealth, and use expensive materials such as silk. Then it became fashionable for women to wear their handbags under their skirts, and handbags literally disappeared for several decades with little development in design. Embroidery and jeweled accents were abandoned for practical, everyday materials like leather. Men also abandoned using handbags because of development of built-in pockets in pants (Roseann, 1999).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, handbags took on more of an air of practicality with the use of everyday materials such as leather with a drawstring fastener on top. During this period, cloth bags were used that were made larger and used by travelers and carried diagonally across the body. We also have emergency of purses with complex shapes. Young girls especially in the Caribbean were taught embroidery as a very necessary skill to make them marriagable and we see the rise of beautiful and unique stitched artwork in handbags. Pockets, called bagges were also introduced into clothes around the same time and allowed people to carry small personal belongings (Critchell, S. 2000).

Neo-classical clothing became popular in the 18th century with a reduction in the amount of underclothing worn by women. Wearing a purse would ruin the look of this clothing so fashionable ladies started carrying their handbags which were called reticules. Women had a

different bag for every occasion and every fashion magazine had arguments on the proper carrying of these purses. In reticules one would find rouge, face powder, a fan, a scent bottle, visiting cards, a card case, and smelling salts (Cox, 2007).

In the 1900's, more varieties of handbags emerged in terms of designs, materials, accents and colours. In fact, some of the most popular handbags from that period reflected Egyptian art, a tribute to the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun. When it became fashionable for women to carry dolls wearing miniature versions of their outfit. Designers of handbags would make two sizes of their designs capturing even the smallest detail in the dolls' tiny handbags. During the Second World War there was a shortage of metal and leather, manufacturers of handbags began using plastic and wood. It was the beginning of many decades of exploring non-conventional shapes and material (Wilcox, 1999).

The 1920's saw a revolution in fashion with varying hemlines and lighter clothing. Bags no longer needed to match the outfit perfectly and the rage was for the stylish lady to carry a doll dressed exactly like herself, complete with matching bag for her miniature companion(Ann, 2002).

The 1940's saw new austerity in clothing, including handbags with the war effort in mind. Metal frames, zips, leather, and mirrors were in short supply so manufactures used plastic and wood. The 50's saw certain designers gaining reputation for creating bold, beautiful and elegant handbags. This signaled the emergence of important designer houses including Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Hermes. Up to this day, handbags carrying their labels command a higher price. The last half of the century saw a leap in technology and the introduction of new materials and textiles for handbags such as waterproof canvas, synthetics and faux reptile skin (Cox, 2007).

The 60's saw the breakdown of old notions of the classical and the rise of youth culture. Handbag fashion went through a short slump in the early 1960's when the hip new youth culture rejected handbags as too formal for the new swinging style. Ever versatile, designers soon came up with funky new designs, using modern materials and bright colours and the handbag's new casual interpretation evolved with the times, regaining its special place close to the heart of every woman, young and old (Wilcox, 1999).

As time passed from the 20th Century and the use of staff, both personal and professional declined, the need for more personal (and lightweight) luggage arose. This combined with the advent of air travel and the associated weight restrictions begat a universal reduction in the weight, size and structure of luggage. Louis Vuitton a British Prime Minister had a bag designed in his name. The material included vulcanised fibre, raffia, and reptile skin. The early 80s saw a vogue for clutch handbags in many colours with matching shoes. But the bags with style were the quilted Chanel bags or Louis Vuitton luggage. Millions bought copies of the quilted Chanel shoulder bag with its golden chain. Alternative street wear day bags were the bum bag and the Prada nylon bag. None would have been complete though without a Filofax filling it (Cox, 2007).

### **Role of Handbags in Women's Lives**

There are fundamental reasons why handbags have remained so important in women's lives. Change in the world of style, technology and culture have greatly influenced what you might find residing in a handbag today. Today, as E-mail replaces letters it becomes ever apparent how much society and the world around us has changed. As hair nets and embroidered handkerchiefs disappeared from the handbag, credit cards and electronic devices have taken its place (Roseann, 1999).

A handbag plays a number of roles in a woman's life. In the earliest stages of passage a young girl carries a small purse with a shoulder strap. It is for style than functionally. Inside you will find a brush and some sweets. By the time she is an adolescent, the purse changes in size to the fancy type. Inside you will find the sunglasses, lipstick and a tiny address book with telephone numbers of all her friends and a change purse. When she is in college, the purse has a wallet inside that holds not only money but photographs of her friends and relatives. No credit card or checkbook yet. More cosmetics are added to the purse. When she is on her own, the fancy sort of purse slowly begins to change and enlarges in size. Now there is a checkbook, credit cards, laptop, notebooks, car keys, medicine, tissues and pens (Critchell, 2000).

Along with motherhood comes further transmutation of a woman's bag. Inside can be found a diaper, more tissue, rash ointment, water bottle, books, wallet and laptop, by now the bag is

heavier and similar to a suitcase. When her children grow to teenage the bag shrinks slightly. The keys and wallets are there and the makeups. Finally, the mature woman carries the smallest bag of all. Inside there is a small note book, few tissues and a key. The checkbook stays at home. When she travels she never carry an extra bag at all. A woman's bag thus is a measure of her personal growth. In each stage of her life she puts inside all the things she thinks are necessary to carry (Wilcox, 1999).

Handbags can also reveal the owners' personality and personal style in some way. People tell your social status, taste and personality from the handbags you are carrying. Handbags which are smaller and fit tightly underneath the shoulder indicate class and sophistication. A woman working in an upscale office or someone of high stature would choose this form of handbag. Big, bulky and oversized bags are casual and are often associated with younger individuals. These are used for individuals who carry a number of things like binders and books and require a lot of space. Down-to-earth, lower-maintenance women would carry this type of handbag. Designer handbags often expensive and therefore are usually associated with high-maintenance females. Women who carry a cigar box purse like to be unique and stand out from the crowd. These women have minds of their own and cannot be told what to do. They are comfortable in their own skin and tend to be very independent (Cox, 2007).

Women who choose leather purses with lots of buckles and zippers are leashing out their wild sides. These women tend to act before they think and are always ready for a good time. The extra buckles and zippers tend to signify a "bad girl" image. Bright coloured handbags like pink, purple, bright blue, orange, yellow and green indicate that the woman is fun, friendly and approachable. Women who are out-going and sociable will tend to choose these colours. This is the type of woman who will strike up a conversation with a complete stranger. Women who choose black or brown handbags tend to be more reserved and are often mistaken as being snobby or restricted. These types of handbags are often associated with down-to-earth women, who are shy at first, but open up after a while. They tend to exude a shy confidence, which is sometimes mistaken as someone who thinks she's better than others (Steele, 2000).

### **Types of Handbags**

Handbags come in different types and shapes, styles, fabric and colour. Shoulder bags are large to hold cell phone, books, note pads, cosmetics and much more. They are designed to be worn over the shoulder. Sometimes they have compartments and different pockets inside and outside.



Shoulder Bag

Wedding bags are a long, rectangular shape, small easy to carry and often made of satin material along with crystal. Wedding purses were a traditional gift from groom to bride through the 15th century, in the Greek Culture. The bags typically were elaborately embroidered with an illustration of a love story (Foster, 1982).



Wedding bag

The Bucket bag as its name implies, is shaped like a bucket with four rivets for two short straps so that the purse sits just under the shoulder. This is a roomy, slouchy style. They provide a lot of room and have pockets (Cox, 2007).



Barrel or duffle bags are elongated, stretched out style with lots of horizontal room. The style usually has long handles to hang over the shoulder. The hobo bag is one of the most popular styles out there today. It is defined by its oval shape and small handles which are just big enough to carry by shoulder. A top zippered style, these are popular for their ease of use for any occasion for they are designed to carry everything you need for the day, plus what you might buy along the way. This bag can actually be used as an overnight or weekend bag as well (Ann, 2002).



Barrel/duffle bag

A clutch purse is a small purse designed to be carried or "clutched" in the hand. Some have a detachable chain or leather strap so they can also be worn hanging from the shoulder. It is also known as evening bag (Kaminsky, 2010)



Clutch Purse

A Hobo bag is a style of handbag or purse that is typically large and characterized by a crescent shape, a slouchy posture and a long strap designed to wear over the shoulder. Hobo bags are made out of soft, flexible materials and tend to slump, or slouch, when set down. There are many different sizes and shapes of this popular woman's fashion accessory. This style of purse is called a hobo bag because it resembles the shape of the bundle on a stick that hobos are portrayed as carrying over their shoulder in drawings and cartoons (Donald, 2001).



Laptop purse is a large and contains a padded interior compartment or sleeve for protecting a laptop computer. The Envelope bag as the name implies, is shaped like an envelope and is a popular, basic purse that is smaller, neater and feminine, often used for more formal occasions though these are available in casual designs also (Wilcox, 1999).



Envelope bag

Messenger Bags are more like backpacks, and in fact many students now use these instead of the traditional backpack for books and school supplies. This design grew from the actual bags that messengers on bicycles in the cities of Europe and America used. This design is also popular with men as an alternative to a traditional briefcase (Ann, 2002).



Messenger bag

Cosmetic bags are a small and convenient and one that you can carry around makeup and beauty products. They're often small enough to be carried inside of another larger bag, and are great to take when on vacation (Cox, 2007).



Cosmetic bag

Currently we have different companies designing handbags. Examples include Marc Jacobs, Chloe and Miu Miu companies. Below is a sample of a contemporary handbag:



### **Conclusion**

Today handbags are not just a fashion statement and they are not just for practical purpose, the need to be both. Sometimes, women carry more than one bag at the same time, especially those with a long day ahead and a need to be prepared for the office, class, the gym and a dinner party all by the time they leave the house in the morning.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### BEADS AND BEADWORK IN AFRICA

#### **Abstract**

*Since ancient times, Beads have been a common object of material culture for most African societies; but each culture has used them with their own cultural meanings and functions. Nonetheless, Beads have played an important role in the personal and communal lives of Africans. For instance, they have been used in the courts of ancient kingdoms. They have been valued as currency, identification of status and as an artistic medium. This paper focuses on how beads are produced, their uses and symbolism in the African culture. The method applied in the study was largely qualitative research. This was done through library searches, internet sources and observation. Based on the findings, it is evident that beads are used in all aspects of African lives and actually vibrate the culture. This study will be of help to historians, artists, ethnographers, anthropologists and the general public as a body of knowledge and reference material on the uses and symbolism of beads among Africans.*

**Key Words: Beads, Symbolism, Culture, Africa**

#### **Introduction**

Beads are small, perforated, and often rounded objects found throughout the world. The word 'bead' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *beade* or *bede* meaning "prayer," and was originally applied to prayer beads. Prayer beads are aids to prayers. They enable a worshipper to count the prayers he or she is praying. The use of beads to count prayers started with the Hindus of India in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. As religious artifacts, they are also used in the Christian and Islamic faiths (Encarta, 2009). 2.5 million years ago, the *genus homo* were distinguished by their ability to fashion stone tools. These beings were nomadic pastoralists and hunter gatherers. They literally carried everything they owned with them. This included tools and large numbers of decorative and beautiful ornaments. Archeologists have found evidence that as early as 20,000 years later people did not just exist, they were living well. This was referred to as "Upper Paleolithic Revolution." By this time, man had stopped concentrating on obtaining food and turned to production of ornaments. As Fernandes, 2001:1 writes:

*One reason is that they now had enough time on their hands....could obtain enough food for several days within five or six hours. This gave them time to think and dream and a desire to give those dreams form in tangible objects....Needles and pins were needed for sewing, blades were used for carving, cutting and shaping. Those with the talent to do so could now create objects like strings and hang things whose sole purpose was aesthetic beauty....*

Evidence proves that the oldest beads discovered in Africa were drilled ostrich egg shells from Southern Africa, carved bones, seeds. These have been dated to the Middle Stone Age 280,000 to 45,000 years ago (Carey, 1986). In addition to ancient beads in Southern Africa, prehistoric paintings of humans wearing elaborate beadwork adornments made from natural materials like shells, plant branches, bones and stones have been discovered on cave walls in Egypt. These materials were strung with the thread of plants like flax and the hairs of a cow and worn around the neck (Imran, 2005). These ancient beads were not only a means of adorning the human form but also an expression of social identity or religious practices. For example there are beads carved into the form of a woman's breast as a symbol of motherhood (Francis, 1993).

Africans later learnt to make beads using other materials. For example, stone beads have been found in several places in Africa. Some, dated to the first millennium B.C., have been found near Nok, Nigeria; others, dated from the fifth to fifteenth centuries A.D., have been discovered at Djenne', Mali. There is conclusive evidence that among the Yoruba, a bead making industry flourished in Ilorin, Nigeria, beginning in the 1830s. The bead-makers acquired agate, carnelian, and red jasper stones through the Trans-Saharan trade and shaped them into beads (Francis, 1993). Jackson (2008) States that, clay was also used to make beads. Bead makers of the Baule in Cote d' Ivoire modeled and fired clay to create exquisite terra cotta beads. The artists impressed the entire surfaces of the beads with regular, parallel grooves. Metal was locally obtained and used to produce beads. Tin beads in the shape of cowries shells have been found at Nok. To this day, the Akan of Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire wear gold beads, which their artists cast using the lost-wax method (Morris, 1994).

Glass, originally in the form of imported beads or bottles, is another important raw material in African bead making. The bead makers ground up or broke the glass, melted it, and produced new beads. At Ife, Nigeria, the spiritual home of the Yoruba, a major glass bead industry developed by the ninth century A.D. Glass for this industry was obtained in large quantities from medieval Europe and the Near East (Alden, 2008). A bead industry also existed in Mapungubwe, South Africa, from A.D. 600 to 1200. It is not known whether the glass for these beads was produced locally or imported (Francis, 1993). Glass beads became a precious commodity in their own right and became a symbol of the status of the people who crafted them into a variety of objects worn according to custom. These glass beads were transported by the Phoenician

mariners who carried cargoes to every port along the North African coast and the ancient kingdoms of West and Central Africa (Jackson, 2008). Glass beads, in particular, are a common element of African adornment today and are widely used in African clothing and regalia (Carey, 1991). In Egypt sand (silica), soda and lime, cobalt was added to create a blue shade, copper for green, tin was used to produce a milky white colour while the addition of gold created red. Incorporation of gold indicates that glass was not merely considered a substitute for something precious but valuable too (Shafrin, 2008).

Africa's "Golden Trade Era" stretches from 1700 to 1920; a period which saw the highest levels of trade and economy in history. In this period, other kinds of materials and beads were imported that extended the bead workers' palette to include amber from the Baltic; ceramic glazed beads from China; agate and carnelian from India; and glass beads from Rome. Brass, imported from Europe beginning in the fifteenth century, was a precious metal used in bead production that continued for centuries in West Africa. By the sixteenth century, spun, drawn and molded glass beads from the famous Murano glassworks in Venice found their way to Africa. In the late nineteenth century, beads from Moravia and Bohemia, now the Czech Republic, flooded the west, central and southern African markets. These kinds of imported beads were acquired at great cost and regarded as signifiers of wealth and prestige (Appiah, 2009).

### **Beadwork Techniques**

The techniques of African beadwork vary. Beads may be strung on fiber cord or metal wire to create bracelets and necklaces. Beads may be stitched to a backing of fiber, canvas, or leather as among the Ndebele. Apprenticeship is the only primary source of education for Africans who wants to enter into the bead industry. There are few formal educational institutions for studying beads in Africa. Apprentices learn through observation and instructions from their mentors and masters (Appiah, 2009). There are two types of beadwork specialists; bead makers and bead workers. Bead makers produce beads from various materials. Depending on the culture of the ethnic group concerned, bead making was structured along gender lines. In making stone beads, men did the main part of the work in West and South Africa, leaving the finishing touches of polishing and threading to the women; likewise, with metal beads. In contrast, the ostrich eggshell beads made by the San (Bushmen) were made by women (Stevenson, 2000).

Bead workers are artists who create jewelry, garments, and regalia from beads that are made locally or are imported from Europe, the Near East, and India. Artists must carefully consider the materials, colours, textures, shapes, and sizes of the beads so as to choose those that complement or contrast with one another. Bead working tends to be carried out according to the complexity and the prestige value of the work involved. In Yorubaland, Nigeria, professional male bead workers were employed to make the beaded crowns, robes, and other regalia worn by the city kings. This skill was the virtual monopoly of one extended family, whose members traveled about the country to carry out their commissions. Men also made ritual beadwork such as diviner's bags and necklaces, since things to do with royalty and religion were generally a male preserve. Bead working was usually a social activity, during which designs were shared and taught to the younger headers (Francis, 2003).

## **Discussion**

### **Symbolism of Beads**

Culture is partially based on symbols which represent certain ideas, beliefs or behaviours that people of a particular culture understand and are able to communicate effectively with. Wearing a certain kind of bead can tell whether a person is happy, their social status, beauty, spiritual status within the community. Beads can also be associated with a particular group or tell a period of life of an African (Orser, 1996). Additionally, beads define the concept of a woman's beauty. Generally, a beautiful woman in Africa is one with a well defined figure, protruding buttocks and hips. The only way to achieve this is to wear beads from infancy to old age.

In Eastern Africa, men wore relatively little beadwork, while women would wear beaded ornaments on their heads and around their necks. Also, their leather garments were usually embellished with beadwork. When a girl reached puberty, it was an occasion for celebration, as she was now of an age to marry and bear children; her most important role. The maidens of the Iraqw of Tanzania, during their seclusion in the bush, while learning a woman's duties, made back skirts of beaded leather. These skirts are among the most spectacular examples of beadwork from Eastern Africa (Carey, 1986).

Among the Kalahari, girls attend a “coming out” ceremony at which they wear numerous massive coral beads, which may have to be borrowed from members of the extended family. Something similar still happens in Ghana, where, at the *Dipo* coming of age ceremony, girls of the *Krobo* and *Ga* ethnic groups wear almost nothing but a mass of beads. This is designed to enhance the girl’s charms and to improve her chances of finding a good husband. If the family does not have enough beads, extra ones will be rented from another family that has the beads, but doesn’t have a girl of the right age (Stevenson, 2000).

The use of beads as protective charms originates from a belief system in West and Central Africa that people could be harmed or become sick through natural illness, curses or evil spirits or ghosts entering the body. Thus if one became sick, the healer would prescribe both herbal remedies and a protective charm to wear and also perform a counter curse (Martha, 2011).

Personal charms were worn underneath a woman’s cloth for only her husband or significant other to see. Waist beads were believed to make a woman feel feminine and beautiful. They were made of fragrant materials like sandalwood or anointed in oils. Traditionally, waist beads were constructed in the “fattening houses” of the Old Kongo Empire which were female initiation lodges. The waist beads were supposed to symbolize the beginning of the reproductive cycle of womanhood and admitted young girls into the lodge of female mysteries. African folklore also attributes the wearing of beads to the waist, meaning that it helped a female to “hold” their figure or shape (Kinmore, 2011).

African waist beads were the source of the belly dancers adornment in Mijikenda. Some beads were adorned with a bell, which were a signal to let the man know that the woman was clean (at the proper stage where sexual intercourse was allowed in that culture) (Djenra, 2006). West African men were believed to enjoy sex with a woman who had waist beads. Among the Central Africans, waist beads were a symbol of a woman’s confidence in her body and her sexuality. The waist beads give the waist a round and oval shape which is characteristic of beauty in Central Africa (Kinmore, 2011).

Similarly, in Tanzania, even after a woman has married, she may wear a string of beads round her waist. Such beads are private between her and her husband, and she may rattle these beads as

a “come on” signal. Prostitutes in parts of Western Africa could also use the same signal as an advertisement; while in Zambia, a woman who wore her string of waist beads visibly round her waist was regarded as a loose woman (Djenra, 2006). Krobo women of Ghana females used the waist beads to check their weight. Women wore waist beads and any time the beads became tight, it meant that they had gained more weight and that their body had become bigger. On the other hand if they realized that the beads were slipping off, it meant the woman was losing weight and had to do something about it (Appiah, 2009). Dynamic strategies of beadwork communication used in and across cultures are traceable. This is most clearly seen in Zulu beadwork used to convey messages to lovers as an important form of marriage negotiation. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this form of negotiation had developed into a highly sophisticated courtly art. The beaded panels, commonly known today as “love letters,” were originally composed of geometric abstract shapes in various configurations but by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, this visual system gave way to using written text (Vessel, 2009).

In African societies, marriage is considered an important part of the initiation rites that usher one to adulthood. Beads are useful and symbolic. Among the Krobo of Ghana, beads are presented to the wife - to - be as her wedding gift by the husband - to - be (Appiah, 2009). Among the Maasai and Samburu of Kenya, the wedding ceremony itself is symbolized by coloured beads. A variety of beads are worn around the neck and wrist. Beads of different colours are worn by both the bride and groom as well the family representative present. The colour of beads that the couple wears matches the colours of their dress (Kyoko, 2005). Traditionally amongst the Ndebele certain beaded items were worn to distinguish young girls from their more senior sisters, to identify girls engaged to be married, or to adorn brides and young mothers after the birth of their first children. Among the Xhosa of the Transkei, special beadwork marks off peer groups of different age-sets while distinctive regalia is reserved for the bride and groom at weddings and for guests closely associated with them (Morris, 1994).

Beads were/are used to decorate the corpse of a dead person. Among the Krobo of Ghana, beads are placed on the corpse as decoration during the funeral rites, especially when the dead person is laid in state. The beads were not buried with the corpse but were kept in the family of the dead person to be used for another occasion (Appiah, 2009). In addition, a deceased wife of Aawambo, in Namibia removed all the beaded ornaments she wore. She had to stay with a bare

neck and waist until the dates for mourning the husband were over. This was an expression to indicate that the husband who by tradition must dress and provide the wife with all the precious ornaments was no longer there (Shigwedha, 2004).

For the Akhan, beads are worn by political and religious office holders to indicate their status in the community. Beads are worn on the right hand wrist in the case of a chief or on the wrist of either hands in the case of a traditional religious priest and priestess. The beads are believed to protect them against evil and also give them power to perform their spiritual duties. During festivals, chiefs, queen mothers, priests become the centre of attraction because of the kind of beads they wear and the colour of the beads worn around the neck, arm calf and ankle. Yellow or gold depict wealth and high social standing. The queen mothers wear small and big beads around their necks and wrists (Francis, 1993). The West African kings of Ghana, Songhai, Mali and Nigeria are known to have worn beaded regalia so heavy that they had to be supported by attendants when rising from their thrones to move about in the course of their duties (Carey, 1986). A Maasai warrior wears strings of beads across his chest and back plus bands of striped beadwork around the neck. When a warrior becomes an elder he surrenders his beaded attire, but he may still use beaded objects such as a tobacco container or the traditional *rungu* stick as a symbol of authority (Carey, 1986).

Among enslaved blacks, beads were culturally dynamic objects typically made of glass, metal, precious stones and shell. They were strung, sometimes singly, and worn on various parts of the body, including the ears, hair, neck, wrist and waist. On occasion, beads were used as barter, gaming pieces, sewn to cloth or hide as part of a garment, or grouped together with an anomalous assortment of objects into a spiritual cache or ancestral altar. The use of beads among the enslaved blacks can be traced to their ancestral origins in West and Central Africa, where beads were interlaced with nearly all aspects of society, including beautification, age, kinship, marital status, gaming, rank and religious beliefs. Beads were worn around the neck of many enslaved individuals or used in other decorative ways. When the Trans-Atlantic slave trade began in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, European made beads, particularly from Venice, were already being commonly worn by women in West and Central Africa. They were used in daily adornment and was rarely removed except for re - stringing. They served as an under belt to tuck and secure a wrapper, a style of garment in West Africa worn around the woman's waist to conceal her body

shape. This specific waist strand may have travelled with her during the Middle Passage and may symbolize cultural ties to kinship and ethnic African identity (Rawick, 1978).

## Conclusion

African beads still continue to be used and to be held in high esteem. In East Africa, beads are made of ostrich eggshells which are common around the Kalahari Desert. In West Africa beads are made from gold and these are known as soul money and they are used in different ceremonies of child naming, adolescence rites and funerals. One other popular substance for beads is glass. Bottle glass is melted and recycled into a variety of colors and patterns. These types of beads are irregular and signify a sense of luxury for the individual wearing it. In North Africa the Berber tribal women make large numbers of colorful beads. The beads function as a family possession. When the family earnings are bad then the beads are sold. The price of the bead is established on its weight. Bead materials provide amber, coral, amazonite, silver and glass. The various kinds of beads convey various meanings. Amber safeguards against illnesses while coral and silver are good luck charms. Beading is a strong part of the African heritage and is used not only to create useful or decorative items but also as a means of communication. Beads unite African communities, thus reinforcing common understanding, handed down through generation

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## CHAPTER SIX

### COLOUR SYMBOLISM IN AFRICA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Abstract

*Africans have visibly continued to embrace colour for various symbolic meanings, particularly with regard to clothing within a variety of settings. Clothes bearing varying colours are often the most visible elements during ceremonies. The colours of these clothes often reflect the occasion and define an individual's participation in the ceremony. This paper aims to reveal some of the general functions of colours in diverse African rituals and ceremonies. Data was collected from three sources: observations, secondly was through literature search in the library. Lastly through the researcher's personal experiences and interactions with the people within Nakuru town. The findings established that colour plays a prominent role as a visual symbol for African ceremonies or ritual occasions, establishing identities of individuals and defining relationships.*

**Key Words: Colour, Symbol, Africa**

#### Introduction

Colours across various cultures are identified with regard to the meaning or feeling connected to them. Colours are normally loaded with symbolic meaning; the significance of some colours is universal while others have meanings that shift depending on culture. A symbol is something that represents something else, mostly an abstract idea, either by association or by resemblance. It can be a material object or a written sign used to represent something invisible. Colour has symbolic meaning in African culture; and each colour conveys peculiar information when worn or displayed at significant places or situations. Africans incorporate symbolic display in their ceremonies, ritual and everyday life. Throughout much of Africa, the primary colours are red, white, black, green and gold commonly identified with symbolic ritual usage (Isiguzo, 2000).

Colour (Ancient Egyptian name 'iwen') was considered an integral part of an item's or person's nature in Ancient Egypt, and the term colour could interchangeably mean appearance, character, being, or nature. Items with similar colours were believed to have similar properties. Colours were often paired. For example, silver and gold were considered complementary colours (they formed a duality of opposites just like the sun and moon). Red complemented white, green and black represented different aspects of the process of regeneration. Where a procession of figures is depicted, the skin tones alternated between light and dark ochre. Purity of colour was important to Ancient Egyptians and the artist would usually complete everything in one colour

before moving on to the next. Paintings would be finished off with fine brushwork to outline the work and add limited interior detail (Onyewuenyi, 2001).

It is on record that Egyptians had already begun using colour to cure various ailments as early as 1000 BC. They worshipped the sun and knew that without light there can be no life. They observed nature and emulated it in many aspects of their lives. The floors of their temples were often green as the grass which then grew alongside River Nile and signified the possibility of life in the desert. The present methods of colour and light therapy could be related to this ancient practice. Ancient Egyptian deep knowledge and understanding of the healing powers of the colour rays was so nearly lost when, later on in history, the Greeks considered colour only as a science. Hippocrates, amongst others, abandoned the metaphysical side of colour, concentrating only on the scientific aspect. Fortunately, despite this, the knowledge and philosophy of colour was handed down through the ages by the likes of Aristotle, Plato, Pythagoras and Isaac Newton (Robin, 1988).

### **Colours and their Meanings**

White colour (*hedj* and *shesep*) was produced from chalk and gypsum in West Africa and from clay in Egypt. White colour has served to establish ceremonial, ritual, sacredness of place, purity, spirituality, virtuousness, joyfulness, cleanliness, simplicity and victory among various African communities. Among West Africans, after recovery from illness, an individual and the family wear white clothes for a period of time to reflect their joy at the recovery of their family member. In this case, white symbolises happiness and celebration of life. Among many African communities, the white colour may signify the spirit world of the ancestors as well as the procreative power of sperm and the nurturing quality of a mother's milk. A woman, who has recently delivered a baby, dresses in a white cloth to recognize a successful delivery and to celebrate her new child. White serves to portray the purity of souls, as individuals who have been absolved of guilt in a court case (Pastoureau, 2008).

Stools belonging to royals and family elders of West Africa are cleaned and whitened with clay on festive days to acknowledge the purity of the owner's soul (*kra*). And newly named chiefs and their followers wore white and brightly coloured cloths to demonstrate their happiness and

celebrate the coronation of the new chief. Similarly, Egyptian Pharaohs wore white (Ancient Egyptian name ‘*hedj*’) crowns. Most of the sacred bowls and other objects connected to embalming were made of white alabaster. Clothing including the gowns and footwear were white. Tools, sacred objects, and even priests’ sandals were white. Sacred animals were also depicted as white. Clothing, which was often just plain linen, was usually depicted as white ( Manatt, 2007).

Among the Akan of West Africa, shrines are painted white and their priests ceremonially sprinkle *hyire* (white ashes) on the ground and on themselves to sanctify rituals and establish contact with the spirits of the shrine. Priests dedicated to Nyame (the chief deity) are known by the manner in which their hair is shaved and by the use of white clay markings on their bodies. Three parallel lines of white clay are drawn from the crown of the head extending down the forehead and continuing down each cheek. Similar lines are drawn on each shoulder and upper arm and across the chest. As the lines are drawn with three fingers, the priest recites a dedication that equates the divinity to the white clay. Therefore, white in this usage serves as a badge of office reflecting priestly devotion, as well as acknowledging the spirituality of God and innocence (Peek and Yankah, 2004).

During funerals for elderly relatives, family members reverse tradition and wear white to celebrate the new ancestor rather than the dark cloths normally worn. The cycle of grieving for widows or widower’s ends when dark clothes are cast off and a white cloth is put on during the *Kunyae* ceremony, which ends the traditional, yearlong period of mourning. Funerals of priests are celebrated by their family who wear white cloth and dust white powder on themselves to acknowledge the priest’s spirituality. Shrines and chiefs’ houses have white walls while women who whitewash the local shrine house, where the spirit (*obosom*) lives, spread some of the white wash across their breasts to show their participation during the repairing of the spirit’s house ( Kahan, 2009 ).

Retainers at court, known as *akyerefo*, are responsible for ensuring the ongoing purity of the king’s soul; they often wear white cloths or mark their bodies with *hyire* during state ceremonies such as the Odwira and Adae. Other court attendants (*akonuasofo*) who carry the royal stools

are dressed in white cloth, and the state sword bearers (*afenasofo*) spread white clay on their arms and necks or draw patterns on their foreheads and temples to indicate their ceremonial office and spiritual duties. Stool bearers also whiten their left hand and put white clay on their eyelids. The left hand, which is normally associated with body functions, is used to hold the stool on the stool bearer's neck and needs to be symbolically cleansed to hold the king's stool. The white clay on their eyelids reflects their bedazzlement by the king's glory (Anubam, 1963).

During the Odwira ceremony, an annual festival of renewal and ritual cleansing, when shrines would be freshened, earlier kings remembered, and the nation cleansed, the Asantehene would first wear a barkcloth (*kyenkyen*) that was naturally white gray reflecting the archaic nature of the ceremony as well as its spiritual function. Later when addressing the blackened stools of his predecessors, the king is dressed in old dark cloths, reflecting the presence of the royal dead and the seriousness of ritual offerings made to them. Afterwards the king wears rich and brightly coloured cloths to celebrate and complete the Odwira ceremony. By these acts, ceremonial sequence is symbolically marked by chiefs wearing different coloured cloths and changing them as new cycles were Initiated (Anubam, 1963).

Black, on the other hand, is almost a universal symbol for funerals in most parts of Africa. The colour of official mourning cloth at funerals especially the ones that involve a person who died at unripe age (Isiguzo, 2000). Black colour (*kem, kam*) was created from carbon compounds such as soot, ground charcoal or burnt animal bones among West and North Africans. Black was often depicted as being evil and as a symbol of death in Egypt and items associated with mourning were mostly black. However, it was also believed that black cats had divine powers and black was the colour of the life-giving silt left by the Nile inundation, which gave rise to the Ancient Egyptian name for the country: '*kemet*' the black land. Black symbolized fertility, new life, and resurrection as seen through the yearly agricultural cycle. It was also the colour of Osiris ('the black one'), the resurrected god of the dead, and was considered the colour of the underworld where the sun was said to regenerate every night. Black was often used on statues and coffins to invoke the process of regeneration ascribed to the god Osiris. Black was also used as a standard colour for hair and to represent the skin colour of Nubians and Kushites (Pastoureau, 2008).

People in the African Diaspora have used black as the colour of mystery and rebirth. It refers to the deeper mysteries or deep waters. These deep waters refer to the mysteries of the woman's womb; no one knows how a child is born, because it is a mystery. No one knows how many stars exist in the night sky because it is a mystery. No one knows how many ancestors one has, because it is a mystery. No one knows what happens after life because it is a mystery. Everything that exists in the dark is a mystery requiring that one use their inner eye (Isiguzo, 2000).

Among the Akan Symbolic transformation through colour takes place when a king's white stool is blackened at the time of his death. It then is placed in the royal stool house joining those of preceding kings and where it is also venerated. The stools of previous kings are blackened as a sign of respect and age and as recognition that they belong to the 'other world' of ancestors. Issues of history and articles of great age are conceived of as being black. In addition objects taken as spoils of war are blackened and placed in the stool house near the stool of the king who captured them to honour that king and the nation. The personal possessions and badges of office of important elders or notables are blackened and kept in the matrilineage house as objects identified with their office and good works. During the repair of royal tombs, a dark russet cloth known as *kuntunkuni* is worn to indicate the sorrow of those working when they think of the great deeds of their kings and in honour of the dead (Anubam, 1963).

Black plays an active symbolic role in Akan political statecraft. As a nonverbal statement of power relationships, colour can symbolically address issues of polity between states through colours worn by the king or displayed on state umbrellas. When issues of grave national concern, such as war are to be discussed, the king and other chiefs sitting in the council wear black cloths known as *kuntunkuni*, a cloth normally worn at funeral to reflect the solemnity of the occasion. The dark cloth also symbolizes the ultimate power and authority of the king to act decisively for the state. Correspondingly, a combination of colour and the cognate proverb of an *adinkra* symbol stamped on the cloth express the position of the state upon an issue. When sitting at court hearing cases, the king dresses in dark cloth to indicate the seriousness of the issues addressed and his responsibility to render justice and where necessary assign penalties as judged (Peek & Yankah, 2004).

Red colour on the other hand, bears a number of symbolic essences among African communities. In West African cultures, it is spiritual and has a very powerful religious significance. It is the colour of the cloth used to adorn the table in the shrine. Among the Igbo, the Benin and Yoruba in Nigeria, red is worn by the chief priest of the local shrine whenever he is at the shrine perfuming his duties or at the King's palace or at any public place where he is called upon to perform rituals or sacrifices to the gods for one purpose or the other (Awolalu, 1979). This colour is significantly marked out for the *Eze muo* or *Dibia*, 'the spiritual king or the native doctor' respectively (Anubam, 1963).

To the Wadaabe of Niger, red means blood. It symbolises violence, war and death. Red was worn on special occasions. Among the Maasai, in East Africa, *Kobene*(red) is broadly identified with danger, warfare, blood, anger, heat (emotion), unrest, melancholy, bereavement and death. It reflects the seriousness of an occasion and can define a personal state of being or mark a national catastrophe (). Maasai men smeared their bodies with red ochre during the performance of war dances to signify the danger inherent in war. Men also wear red cloth and smear red clay (*ntowma*) across their shoulders, arms, and forehead to indicate defiance, anger in the face of death or danger. A well-known saying captures and describes this frame of mind: "*M'ani abere*" (My eyes are red). This indicates sorrow and anger at the loss of a family member or the individual's spirit during a national crisis, such as a call to war. In the past, combatants in a battle would wear red to reflect the fierceness of the struggle and their anger. Members of the Akan army's rear guard (*kyidom*) conspicuously wore vermilion or red cloths as they protected the state stools and chiefs who themselves were dressed in dark brown cloths sometimes stamped with *adinkra* symbols (abstract stamped symbols with proverbial cognates) ( Manatt, 2007).

Funerals provide an important occasion in the Akan society and life. They are conspicuous in part due to the prominent play of different hued cloths, headdresses, or the markings found on arms, shoulders, and face displayed by family and lineage relations during funeral ceremonies. It is in this context that colour serves to define kinship and the various temporal segments of funerary rituals that can extend over a year. Through the different coloured cloths worn at funerals, a visual code of relationship to the deceased is given. Family relations are signified through the red cloths worn by members of the matrilineage (*abusua*), while black (*tuntum*) was worn by non matrilineal family and friends. The symbolic appearance of red in this usage

extends the bond of blood to both living and dead members of the matrilineage and serves to distinguish blood relations from other mourners. This is seen in the clothes worn by the *matrikin*; red or russet-brown for men and a red upper garment and a black skirt for women. Contemporary women's clothing may be stylish and up-to-date, but it continues to conform to customary colour usage (Hagan, 1970). Bands of red cloth worn around the head known as *abotiri* often have red peppers placed in them so that both the colour and hot taste of the pepper serve to remind the wearer of their loss. In addition to the red cloths and headdresses, designs known as *kotobirigya* are worn by women of the matrilineage and daughters of the deceased. Painted in a red dye (*esono*), triangles, semicircles, or simple parallel lines will be applied on temples, cheeks, and foreheads. Blood relations will also mark their upper bodies with red clay (*ntwuma*) in broad wipes of color, known as *asafie*, placed on the arms, shoulders, and chest. This use of colour symbolically confirms membership in a common bloodline, the *abusua* (Hagan, 1970).

Red (Ancient Egyptian name '*deshr*') was primarily the colour of chaos and disorder. Similarly, it was also the colour of the desert where people were exiled or sent to work in mines (Ancient Egyptian name '*deshret*', the red land). It was considered the opposite of the fertile black land ('*kemet*'). One of the principal red pigments, red ochre was obtained from the desert. (The hieroglyph for red is the hermit ibis, a bird which, unlike the other ibis of Egypt, lives in dry areas and eats insects and small creatures.) Red was also the colour of destructive fire and fury, and was used to represent something dangerous. Through its relation to the desert, red became the colour of the god Seth, the traditional god of chaos, and was associated with death. The desert was also regarded as the entrance to the underworld where the sun disappeared each night. However, this most potent of all colours in Ancient Egypt, was also a colour of life and protection this derived from the colour of blood and the life-supporting power of fire. It was therefore commonly used for protective amulets (Onyewuenyi, 2007).

Green (Ancient Egyptian name '*wahdj*') was the colour of fresh growth, vegetation, new life, and resurrection. The hieroglyph for green is a papyrus stem and frond. Green was the colour of the 'Eye of Horus', or '*Wedjat*', which had healing and protective powers, and so the colour also represented well-being. To do 'green things' was to behave in a positive, life affirming manner (Isiguzo, 2000).

Gold (Ancient Egyptian name 'newb') represented the flesh of the gods and was used for anything which was considered eternal or indestructible. (Gold was used on a sarcophagus, for example, because the pharaoh had become a god.) Whilst gold leaf could be used on sculpture, yellow or reddish-yellows were used in paintings for the skin of gods (Robin, 1988). Among West Africans, Gold (*sika*) as colour and material was reserved to the king and those he honoured. It had no absolute value but had great symbolic value indicating richness, royalty, high social status, wealth, and financial rank. Gold jewellery is never worn at funerals; instead, wooden carved bracelets are painted with black enamel to reflect the seriousness of the funeral. Spiritual and symbolic significance is attributed to gold as the king wears round gold disks (*kra sika*) that symbolized the purity associated to his soul (*kra*) with the subsequent well-being of the nation. Gold was reserved to the Asantehene and only his wooden stool (*dwa*) was permitted to have gold medallions or panels attached to it ( ). Perhaps the most prominent symbolic motif among the Akan is the Golden Stool of the Akan. Cast in gold, the Golden Stool (*Sika Dwa*) serves as symbol of the collective soul of the people, and functions as a locus of political union of those states that make up the Akan nation (Anubam, 1963).

## Conclusion

Although some ancient African traditions are changing due to increased contact with different aesthetics and cultures, colour as a marker of individual status continue to be used.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HISTORY THROUGH A REVIEW OF LINGERIE STYLES

#### Abstract

*Dressing fashionable is not just about what you wear on the outside. What you wear on the outside is an appropriate projection of what you wear on the inside as well. The clothes that we wear closest to our bodies tell a lot about the way we think and the values and ideas that are important to us. The undergarment keeps the outer garment from being soiled by perspiration, shape the body and provide support. Undergarments commonly worn by women throughout history include: corsets, girdles, pants, bloomers, garters, petticoats and brassieres. As the society embrace modern science and technology so does the popularity in style of the undergarment change. The change is synonymous to the social, economic and political role of women in the community. This paper focuses on different styles of the lingerie, factors to consider while choosing lingerie and their symbolic meanings in women lives. Equally the motivations behind the choice of lingerie will be addressed. Data was collected from library search, internet sources, observation and personal experiences of the researchers and interactions with women within Nakuru Town.*

**Key Words: Lingerie, Women, symbolism**

#### Introduction

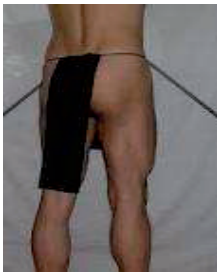
Lingerie is a word which has come to mean women's fashion undergarments. The term lingerie derives from the French word 'lin' for linen. But though the term is French in origin, Lingerie in French applies to all undergarments for either sex. On the other hand, in English lingerie mainly connotes to the undergarment worn by women (Kathryn, 2011).

Bellis (2002) states that it is not certain when people first started wearing clothes however, anthropologists give estimates that range between 100,000 to 500,000 years ago. The first clothes were made from natural elements: animal skin and furs, grasses and leaves, and bones and shells. From a biblical perspective (Genesis 3:7), Adam and Eve may have been the first to wear clothes "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

Bellis adds that clothing was often draped or tied however; simple needles made out of animal bone provide evidence of sewn leather and fur garments from at least 30,000 years ago. When settled neolithic cultures discovered the advantages of woven fibers over animal hides, the

making of cloth, drawing on basketry techniques, emerged as one of humankind's fundamental technologies. Humans had to invent weaving, spinning and other techniques and the machines needed in order to make the fabrics used for clothing. Before sewing machines, nearly all clothing was local and hand-sewn, there were tailors and seamstresses in most towns that could make individual items of clothing for customers. After the sewing machine was invented, the ready-made clothing industry took off. One of the clothing was the underwear (Bellies, 2002).

The loincloth is the simplest form of underwear; it was probably the first undergarment worn by human beings. It was simply a long strip of material which was passed between the legs and then around the waist. Though it is impossible to say exactly when its history started, but it seems that the first record comes from ancient Egypt around 3000 B.C. In general, clothing was a status symbol for the Egyptians. Any garment worn against the body was considered as underwear and was basically meant for utility rather than comfort or any other reason. Thus higher-ranking women would wear narrow tunics as undergarments that started below the chest, extended to the ankles, and were supported by a crosswise shoulder strap. Sometimes they would draw tunics around to the front of the body to mold the waist. Slave and servants wore no undergarments; they wore only simple loin cloths or went naked (Lorabella, 2006). From the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, diverse lingerie appeared in market in different styles and shapes.



Loincloth

## **Discussion**

### **Types of Lingerie and Personality**

Women have always had a special relationship with their underwear. On the other hand, research indicates that men have had different experience from observing or handling certain types of underwear worn by women. Some experience sexual excitement from watching certain types of underwear worn by a woman, or watching her putting the underwear on, or taking it off. Thus there is a relationship between lingerie, the female body, behaviour and sexual matters.

### **Petticoats**

Pettiskirts often referred to as petticoats, have been used a long time. In the 16th Century women used pettiskirts to give the illusion that they had a smaller waist than they actually had because the underskirts would make their dress stand out fuller around their hips. Many women during this time also wore open-fronted dresses, so many pettiskirts needed to have beautiful designs on them as well. Petticoats were popular during the Renaissance period as well. Many women wore multi-layered dress style designs as part of their ensemble. In the 1700s pettiskirts were usually made out of wool to add warmth. Women during the 18th Century, both in Europe and America, often wore lacy petticoats. These elegant designs were worn by the wealthy class. Often these lacy pettiskirts were worn with corsets, and separate underwear. The weight of the clothing worn, the tight corsets, and the bulk of the underskirts were often a cause of women fainting. In the 1800s pettiskirts began to be used for the Opera. Extended frames were built for Opera singers to fit large, full pettiskirts. This allowed the singers a wide, full bodied effect which quickly became recognizable. Opera styled pettiskirts began to make a fashion trend in America with in a few decades (Cunnington, 2000).

In the 19th Century, American women wore full framed petticoats to give their dress or skirt a wide, full effect. Examples of this type of pettiskirt style can be found in such movies as *Gone with the Wind* and *The King and I*. During the 1920s the flapper movement started. Smaller pettiskirts were worn to work with more slender dresses and skirts. Sheer underskirts were popular during this time. With the Great Depression and the shortage of materials during World War II, pettiskirts fell out of favour again. Petticoats were brought back to popularity during the

1950s. Multiple layers of petticoats were worn again to add movement to poodle skirts. Normally three single petticoats were worn underneath the poodle skirts, until double and triple layered petticoats were manufactured. During the 1970s ruffled petticoats were worn with prairie skirts, and have remained a popular item of western wear. Although they are not popular in day to day usage, petticoats have made a comeback with bridal and formal wear. In contemporary times the word petticoat has been used to refer to a skirt when separated from the bodice and to also refer to an undergarment (Scribner, 2005). Petticoat designs illustrated below:



### **Chemise**

This is a short gown worn inside clothing that falls just a little above the knees. A chemise often considered a precursor to the t-shirt was worn between the skin and the outer garment during the Medieval times in Europe. This was often considered the era of sexual denial, lingerie were designed to flatten the breasts to the point of non-existence. The chemise was worn to protect the woman's clothing from sweat and other forms of bodily secretions. The outer garments were seldom washed but the chemise was washed regularly. Today the chemise can be worn under a sheer evening gown, giving the body a smooth silhouette without any lines or wrinkles showing.

This is used as a turn on by a faithful wife who feels neglected by her husband sexually (Entwistle, 2000).



### **Corset**

During the 18th Century, the cleavage came into fashion and lingerie was designed to emphasize its beauty. Push-up corsets were lavished with lace, embroidery and ribbon. The corset was designed to display the cleavage at the same time shape the upper part of the female body.



## Camisole

During the First World War, women found themselves the breadwinners of their families. Their new identities beckoned the demand for more practical undergarments. Brassieres had to be light enough to be worn in just about any industrial work condition. This led to the use of lighter and more breathable fabrics. Boyish physiques were popularized with short bob hairstyles and flapper dresses. The female physique was supposed to be smooth and free of curves, and women wore light camisoles, bloomers, and bodices to help achieve that look (Entwistle, 2000). Similar to the chemise, the camisole only stops at the waist. A Camisole is used as an inner garment as it is also used by women underneath their business suits in place of the traditional shirt. When made with fancy fabrics and containing trimmings, a camisole can be used as eveningwear over a skirt or pair of trousers (Lorabella, 2006). An illustration of the camisole and bloomer:



## Girdles

A girdle is an elastic undergarment designed to shape and smooths a woman's figure from the waist or neckline to the thighs. It is made to aesthetically mould a woman's figure and may consist of garters. A girdle is designed with a rubber like fabric which is tied with hook and eye closures. Most fashion historians agree that a girdle was invented around 1910 by the French designer Paul Poiret, to be worn with the clothing he was designing. Compared to the fashions of the period 1830-1910, Poiret's revolutionary designs placed much less emphasis on the waist, and fit much closer to the body at the hips and derriere. Poiret's revolution became permanent in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His new understanding of the way in which women's bodies should interact with their clothing and his invention of the girdle were major reasons why the corset, which had determined the shape of women's clothing for most of the previous five Centuries went out of

fashion. Girdles were worn by most women throughout the period 1920-70. They were an important part of the fashion aesthetic of these decades. A woman needed to be smooth and sleek if she were to look her best in most of the fashions of this period.

Today's girdles are generally classified as "light control", "medium control", or "firm-control". The difference in the degree of control usually indicates the weight or thickness of the girdle material, or the degree to which a girdle is paneled. That is, a firm-control girdle will have a greater number of panels in which the fabric has been doubled or tripled for a design that has more contour or "control" power. Although most are relatively light-weight pull-on garments, it is still possible to find girdles that contain boning, or which must be hooked and/or zipped. Many styles also incorporate materials like rayon, cotton, or satin. Girdles have almost completely replaced the corsets in usage and popularity as they are more effective in making the figure of a woman attractive, smooth and pleasing to the eye (Phillips, 2004). Below is a contemporary girdle:



### **Garters**

These are narrow bands of fabric fastened about the leg, used to keep up stockings, and sometimes socks. Normally just a few inches in width, they are usually made of leather or heavy cloth, and adorned with small bells and/or ribbons. In the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, they were tied

just below the knee, where the leg was slenderest, to keep the stocking from slipping. It was a tradition among European wedding in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries for a bride to wear garters in her wedding. As part of this tradition, towards the end of the reception, the groom would remove his new wife's garter, which he tossed to the unmarried male guests to symbolize his new status. Historically, this tradition relates to the belief that taking an article of the bride's clothing would bring good luck. In the Middle Ages, the groom's men would rush at the new bride to take her garters off her as a prize. Garters were popular in the 1930s and 40s, and were a convenient way for ladies to carry small valuables, in place of a small purse. In the 1940s to 60s, suspenders became a common, popular alternative to the girdle, especially among teens and young women. Suspenders were simpler and more practical than the girdle when used only to hold up stockings. It was considered more comfortable than the larger girdle. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century garters are worn by both men and women.



### **Negligee/ Peignoir**

Used for sleeping purposes, the negligee is not a nightgown. The major difference though, lies in the construction and fabric used. While the nightgown can be made of cotton or wool, a negligee is typically made from sheer fabric like silk or natural bamboo fabric. Although it is still possible to get modest negligees, this piece of lingerie is often revealing and skimpy. There are negligees that go beyond the knees but most stop well above (Lorabella, 2006).



### **Bra/Brasserie**

The bra does not only cover, support and elevate the breasts, but also shapes the wearer's figure. The degree of which the bra frames the breasts varies between style, functionality, fashion and fabric. Most of the bras today fall into more than one category mentioned below:

Adhesive bra is one which adheres to the breasts. It has no straps or bands of any sort and provides little support to the breasts. This type of bra is intended for backless and strapless fashions. There are two types. There is the disposable paper ones that use a strong adhesive and the reusable ones that use silicone that can be washed and reused (Phillips, 2004).



Bandeau bra is derived from the French word band. The bandeau bra is a band of material that is wrapped around a woman's breasts. Bandeau bras generally have no opening so are put on over the head and are sometimes called tube top. In addition, it promotes good posture and can be more comfortable as the weight of the breasts is carried by the whole corset rather than the brassiere's shoulder straps. Adolescents prefer this kind of bras. They are also great for new mothers to use as nursing bras (Phillips, 2004).



Built-in bras are brassiere-like structures on the inside of another garment, such as a swimsuit or tank top, which provide support for the bust without the need for a separate bra. In most such garments, these built-ins consist of a horizontal elastic strip, although some do have cups and underwire as with other bra types. In some cases these may easily be removed, if desired (Phillips, 2004).



Nursing bra is designed to help make breastfeeding simpler by allowing the baby easy access to the nipple. Traditionally, the cups of nursing bras are covered with flaps of fabric that can be unclasped at the top and pulled down to expose the breast (Lorabella, 2006).



Padded bras are designed to provide a fuller shape for small breasts and are an alternative to bra stuffing, a practice among teenage girls in which ‘falsies’ like tissues, sugar packets, cotton balls, or socks are placed inside a bra to simulate larger breasts. Unlike push-up bras, however, most padded bras support breasts but do not significantly lift them (Fields, 2004).



Padded bra

Lacy bras are designed for women who opt for comfort or feeling pretty. These women want real romance and, although not overtly sexual they have a quiet, confident sensual energy. They use their girly charms to beguile their partners with total success (Kathryn, 2011).



Lacy bra

A half-cup or demi bra style with wide-set straps and a horizontal bust line. Often seamed or boned, they give great cleavage and a frame-like effect. These offer less support, but enable low cut garments to be worn without the bra being seen. Demi bras may be designed to provide lift as do push-up bras. Women who favour these styles are confident with their bodies and want to show off their 'goods.' They love feeling sexy, sensual and making their partners aware that they are women to the full extent. Such women are often mistaken as loose sexually (Entwistle, 2000).

A Full cup is bra is designed to offer good support for the whole of the breasts and, as such, is a typical, practical bra for everyday wear. Women who opt for full cup or t-shirt bras are practical, down-to-earth and choose to express their character with colours and patterns rather than frills, lace and daring cuts. They believe that bras were designed to sit under clothes, and if somebody is lucky enough to get a peak, he'll see the full force of their personality (Entwistle, 2000).

Below is an illustration of half cup and full cup bras respectively.



Push-up Bras are structured so that the breasts are lifted and placed closer together to enhance the cleavage. The best known brand of push-up bra is the wonder bra. Many push-up bras contain padding, typically made of foam or rubber, but some contain gel-filled pads. The main distinction between padded bras and push-up bras that incorporate padding is whether the padding is centred under each breast to simply lift them, or is centred outside the centre of each breast such that the padding pushes the breasts inwards. Women who are not very confident of the sizes of their breasts prefer this kind of bra (Lorabella, 2006).



Strapless bras on the other hand have no shoulder straps. They are designed for wearing with clothes that reveal the shoulders, such as halter neck tops. Novelty bras are designed more for show and sensuality than for function. They may include unusual materials, such as leather, coconuts and beads or be unusual in design (Fields, 2004). Below is an illustration of a novelty and strapless bra respectively.



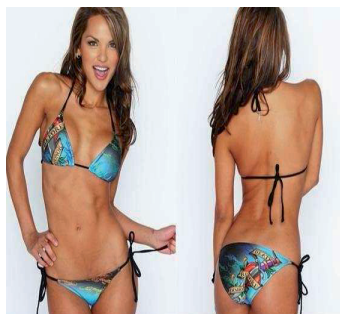
A racer back bra has shoulder straps that come over the shoulder in a V pattern very close to the neck. This design is sometimes worn under strapless dresses or tops where straps would be very exposed. Many Sports women use the racer back.



Racer back

## **Pants**

The bikini panty is probably the most popular of all the styles. It's been around the longest and was made even more popular with the advent of the swimsuit bikini. This panty has a snug fit, but doesn't come up to the belly button. Instead the bikini sits much lower, but does usually provide full coverage for the bottom. Bikini pants are favoured by women who do not want to compromise on comfort but still want to feel sexy. They are responsible but maintain a fun core (Fields, 2004).



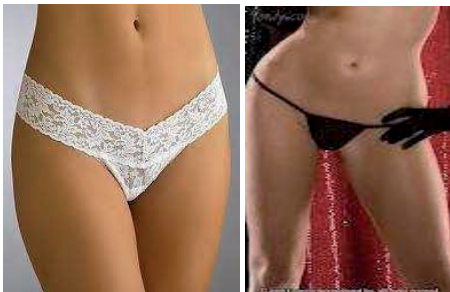
Briefs rise to the waist or just below the navel and have full coverage in the rear. They are of four types: Classic (or full) where the sides extend below the hip, High-cut (French cut), here the sides are somewhat narrower. Boyleg (boy shorts) styled after men's briefs and may have short legs extending below the crotch. Control panties (or control briefs) designed to offer support and give a slimmer appearance; these usually contain a stretch material such as spandex and may extend above the waist (Phillips, 2004). See respectively illustrations of classic, highcut, boylegs/boy shorts and control briefs



Tanga panties basically start off with the same squared off design as the boy short panty. However, most tanga panties have a deep v style in the front and back, to reveal the belly button and lower abdomen. The tanga also have a higher cut on the behind and allow your bums to peek out.



The thong is a garment generally worn as either underwear or as a swimsuit in many industrialized societies around the world. It may also be worn for traditional ceremonies or competitions such as sumo wrestling. The thong continues to be worn as everyday wear, as it has for hundreds or thousands of years mostly by men, in many indigenous societies, particularly in Africa, South America, and Asia. One type of thong is the G-string, the back of which consists only of a typically elasticized fabric string. The two terms G-string and thong are often used interchangeably; however, they can refer to distinct pieces of clothing. Thongs come in a variety of styles depending on the thickness, material, or type of the rear portion of fabric and are available for both men and women throughout most of the world. The normal association of the difference between a G-string and a thong is the width of the back section that passes between the wearer's buttocks, the string being more string like and narrower for a G-string. Women who love belly dancing and strip joints prefer the two types of underpants (Bellis, 2002). Below is an illustration of a thong and G-string respectively.



Biker shorts are elastic garments worn by both men and women over their pelvic area, circling the waist, and covering the upper part of the legs, sometimes extending down to or even below the knee, but not covering the entire length of the leg. Initially they were used by motorbike cyclers in medieval Europe during competitions but today they form part of the undergarment (Lorabella, 2006). Hot pants are very brief and usually tight-fitting shorts for women and girls, first popularized in the early 1970s.



Hot pant



Biker shorts

### **Factors to consider when buying Lingerie**

One important measurement that needs to be kept in perspective before selecting the right underwear is the waist or hip size in relation to the pattern of the underwear. Since various types of underwear are worn and fit at different heights on your body, the size would be determined by the type and pattern of underwear you are buying. Ensure that you relate the size to the pattern and type of underwear (Fields, 2004).

Apart from size, the next important thing to be considered is the elasticity and comfort. Different occasions and garments call for a different undergarment to be worn for/ under them. Formal wear calls for more comfort under them since they are a little restrictive themselves. Hence the undergarment under the formal wear should have good elasticity and preferable should not have an irritant like the brand tag attached to it. Elasticity, especially at the waist or hip, is of

relevance. Constant itching, irritation or restrictive feel due to or within the underwear can lead to rashes, infections or a long term health problem (Phillips, 2004).

Colour and texture are also very vital. One should know what goes well with her body complexion. Pink is feasible option, universal for all women and goes well irrespective of the body complexion. Black is also another option which stands out among everything else. White displays playfulness and energetic. Red is considered passionate, romantic and sassy, purple sensual and seductive, nude practical and confident. Brown is shown to be an earthy, business like colour. Animal print indicates provocative, quirky, easygoing but sexual (Kathryn, 2011). Texture contributes to comfort and confidence. It is basically built upon the fabric you chose to pick. There are diverse fabrics from feminine lace, sexy satin and silk to flirty mesh (Kathryn, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

From the study, it is clear that lingerie creates space for women to redefine their thinking, understand their lives, question, challenge, criticize and at times resist external authorities which bind and direct their lives. Apparently, there is a symbolic association between lingerie, individual woman's class distinction, modesty and social status. Lingerie has helped define what it means to look beautiful while at the same time revealing a great deal about a society's cultural and political values. The history of lingerie, then, is a history of gendered fashion, power, and sexuality.

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