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TRANSITIONAL ITINERARY OF VERNACULAR BASKETRY IN EAST AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Basketry is the oldest and most varied plant-based crafts found around the world. The skill required in the production of these objects is often associated with factors such as people's perceptions of the environment, conceptions of the self and means of economic interaction, social hierarchy, and division of labour* **(Novellino, Ertu, 2019).**

The sisal baskets produced in the Taita Taveta County of Kenya are regarded by many as regional treasures, a cultural expression and an economic enterprise. These unique baskets are produced according to the traditional art by local women who have passed down the skill from generation to generation. Apart from sisal, there are various trends in basketry coming up in East Africa. Not only do designers use the original design, they have also come up with their own 'signature' look in basketry. ***Problem:*** *These artsy baskets however face eventual extinction due to completion from cheap imported lookalikes.* ***Objective:*** *This study looked at this creative enterprise from a cultural and creative perspective. Its objective was to identify, examine and document transitive trends and style delivering the art to contemporary utilitarianism.* ***Design:*** *Using a*

case study methodology, data was collected through observation, interviews, focus group discussions and key informants.

Setting: *The study was conducted in Nairobi and Taita Taveta Counties.* ***Subjects:*** *Local traditional craftswomen, users, buyers and sellers and local administration.* ***Results:*** *the results showed enthusiastic female craftswomen, a robust design trend, increasing market and trendy new futuristic designs fulfilling contemporary market needs.* ***Conclusion:*** *A transition is surely happening, though subtly, taking the traditional basketry into the future. There is a great potential in commercialization and fulfilling of livelihoods for craftswomen, designers and artists in the basketry industry in Kenya.*

Keywords: *Basketry, Vernacular, East Africa, Design*

INTRODUCTION

It is of economic and cultural concern that an indigenous industry like basketry should be threatened with extinction in this era. Particularly so to world intellectual property organization (WIPO) who, in cooperation with the Japan Patent Office (JPO), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI), under the One Village One Product Program (OVOP) Kenya, and the Taita Taveta County Government who have identified this great threat and the possible ruin to livelihoods.

Basket weaving is the process of weaving or sewing pliable materials into two or three dimensional artifacts such as mats or containers. Craftsmen who have specialized in the skill of basket

making are known as basket makers or basket weavers (WIPO, 2019). Basketry is made from a variety of fibrous material that includes pine straws, willows, oak, vines, animal hair or grasses. People from the olden days are renowned for their basket making skills. They traded the baskets for goods or used them for religious purposes (Crowfoot, E. 1982).

According to Catherine Erdly (2007), basket weaving is classified into four types;

- ***Coiled basketry***
- ***Plaiting basketry***
- ***Twinning basketry***
- ***Wicker and splint basketry***

There are various materials used in basket weaving. Some of them may include rattan core also known as reed; it is the most popular material since it is readily available.

This include flat reed which is used for most square baskets; oval reed which is used in round baskets, and round reed which is used to twine. An advantage of reed is that it can be dyed to look like oak or hickory. Water hyacinth is also being used as a base material. Basketry in east Africa is the main source of income for many women in the rural areas (WIPO, 2019).

THEORY

HISTORY OF BASKET WEAVING IN EAST AFRICA

Basket making in Africa and East Africa in specific is an ancient skill that has survived to this day. Not only does it continue to play an integral part in modern community life but in some countries it has

evolved to a highly expressive contemporary art form (Bronwen Evans, 2020)

African basketry is a dynamic craft, altered by social changes and shaped by both environmental and economic factors. Traditionally, shapes and weaves were determined largely by the uses for what the baskets were intended. Regardless of the methods of basket making being used, the materials have significantly changed from natural fibers to include man-made creations like plastic, wire and recycled products. Historically, baskets have been used for agricultural practices such as winnowing and sifting and the collecting and carrying of crops as well as portage of produce to markets (Bronwen Evans, 2020).

Household usage included storage and serving of food and beverages and filtering beer during its production process. Spices and tobacco were stored in basket containers. Other uses for traditional basket containers include money banks, jewelry boxes and divination vessels. These normally have lids and can be quite complex in design which reflect their significance. They are often decorated or have stepped lids, footed bowls and sometimes are strengthened with leather or bark to ensure longevity of use.

For a bride's dowry in places like Guinea and Liberia, rice storage stacks were used. Woven basket fiber products include sleeping and eating mats and fish traps, hand bags and carry baskets. Figure 1 illustrates a woman making her basket out of grass.

Figure 6: woman in Rwanda using spiny grass to weave her basket

Source: contemporary-aafrican-art.com 12/11/2019

Size, shape and features of the basket are determined by the end usage. A vessel can be circular, oval, square or conical, occasionally even multi chambered. It can have an open bowl, be a tray or a pannier, and exhibit a foot, a lid, a handle or an extra appendage for hanging (Basketry, n.d.) Figure 2 illustrates a man weaving.

Figure 7: a man weaving a granary basket, Botswana

Source: contemporary-african-art.com 12/11/2019

For extra strength, the basket design can have addition leather or bark strips woven or sewn onto the walls or base. Sometimes, baskets have embellished (fig 3) rims or are adorned with shells, beads or seeds. In order to make the basket waterproof, it can be

covered with clay or packed with mud or resins and fat (Bronwen Evans, 2020).

Before the actual weaving can take place, the fiber has to be prepared which according to the character of the twine can be an extremely lengthy process. This is especially so if it needs to be dyed as well as made pliant. A fiber such as sisal needs to be stripped, cleaned and spun by hand, a process which can take up to 16 hours for a medium size basket (Folrino, 2020.)

Figure 8: Flower Design basket

Source: contemporary-african-art.com 12/11/2019

The design of the basket is created by weaving with different colours (see figure 3). Dyes are obtained from natural sources like roots, barks, fruit and berries, leaves, clay, dung or various combinations of the above. Figure 3 above illustrates a basket of different colors.

Patterning can be in the form of decorative bands or geometric shapes; lozenges, triangles, diamonds, star or flower shapes, zigzags, swirls or chequerboard motifs.

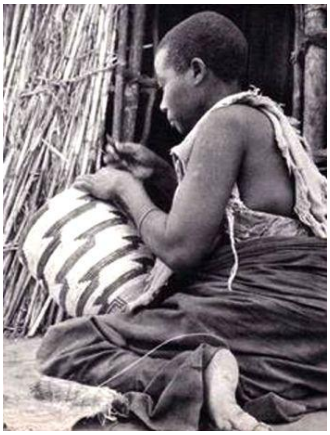

Figure 9: Hutu woman, Rwanda, 1958

Source: contemporary-african-art.com 12/11/2019

The design of the pattern can be emphasized by the use of different contrasting colours or the fiber can be left in its natural state producing lovely textural effects as shown in figure 4. Weaving an intricate design into the basket can be equally lengthy a task as preparing the fiber. A 'master weaver' in the community to exhibit the following consistent qualities, he or she will have acquired the highest skill in fiber preparation and dyeing as well as in weaving and will. Tightness of weave, intricacy and smooth transition of pattern and design, good design spacing, ability to shape large bowls, create unusual forms and most of all, pull at the same pressure ensuring an even basket (Wyk, 2015)

While a community will have hundreds of weavers, only a handful will acquire this status and they will be almost wholly female. There is hardly a country in Africa that does not have an indigenous group of people that exhibit some form of basket craft. Basketry is a form

of employment for many African women and elevates their status and power base within their social environments. There are many organized workshops and institutions that help these women successfully market their product (FAO,2020)

Basketry cooperatives bring income to rural areas and keep the craft traditions alive. Given this wide dispersal of product, bright, colorful commercial dyestuffs have been applied to widen their appeal and make them 'market-friendly'. One can argue that this takes away from the authenticity of the product but, African basketry is a dynamic thing and this is just one of the ways that it has moved forward.

Basket weaving in Kenya is being practiced in Eastern and central Kenya. One of the weavers includes the Kenya Basket Weavers of Yatta, Located in the arid region of Machakos County. This time-honored process is passed down through generation of women and remains largely unchanged today. Figure 5 and 6 shows the women from Yata-Machakos County, Kenya (https://www.acaciacreations.com/2020).

Figure 10: Elderly women from Yata weaving Baskets

Source: Googlephotos-Kenyan women weaving/12/11/2019

Figure 11: a group of women weaving baskets

Source: Googlephotos-Kenyan women weaving/12/11/2019

PRODUCTION PROCESS: MAKING BASKETS

Traditional fibers used in basketry reflect the local habitat. They include illala palm, sisal leaves and fiber, raffia (African bamboo), fibrous tree and plant roots such as makenge, vines, leaves (banana and fan palm), cane, bark wood and papyrus. Two types of vegetative fiber are normally used to make a coiled basket, one for the inner coil and one for the wrapping of the coils. For example, in Uganda and Rwanda, baskets are woven from raffia or papyrus wrapped and stitched around a coil of banana leaf stems. Grass is often used for the core of the coils (Evans, 2020.)

The parts of a basket are the base, the side walls and the rim. A basket may have a lid, handle or embellishments. Most baskets begin with the base that can either be woven with reed or wooden. The production processes of basket making include:

Coiling

Thin strips are wrapped around coils of grass and sewn together in a spiral fashion. The basket spirals upwards from a central point at

the base, the coils being held in place by the stitching material to form a basket. The coiled basket can be densely made so that they are capable of holding water. The materials swell up when wet making the basket even watertight. This technique naturally lends itself to round and oval shapes with gently curving and flowing side. Coiled baskets consist of single strand and bundled coils, around which different coiling are done (https://pacon.com/) For single stranded coiling system, wrapping of weft, knotted weft around spiraling coil, and a cycloid weaving are possible variations but bundled coils need to be sewed in order to keep the basket strong. Under this category, there are four possible variations. They are, lazy squaw sewed, sewed braid coiling, beeskep coiling and furcate or split stich coiling. The images below show some of the coiled baskets found in East Africa. Figures 7,8,9 and 10 shows how coiling is done and some of the end-products.

Figure 12: a woman using coiling weave technique to make a basket.
Source: Googlephotos/12/11/2019

Figure 13: coil-weaved basketry end-product.
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Figure 14: Coil-weave technique
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Figure 15: weaved basket.
Source; Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Weaving Technique

Stakes and weavers, also known as warp and weft, are identical materials. They are woven together at right angles in either diagonal, or horizontal and vertical orientation in plain or twill weave. The weaving can be open checker work or closed work.

The weaver use a material that is, or can be made into a long strip for example palm leaves, bamboo, birch bark or split cane. Weaving can be closed or open depending on the purpose of the basket. There are 3 types namely plain weave, diagonal weave and cross warp or hexagonal weave. Plain and diagonal weave consists of checker work and twill weave work. In checker work, warp and weft are of

uniform size and pliability, and each element passes over one and under one of the other, thus forming square or rectangular checks. Closed checker work gives compactness and strength to the baskets. Diagonal weave is a variant of plain weave, where propagation of warp and weft elements are diagonal to normal direction. When square base is made of diagonal elements, side wall tends to move diagonally, making warp and weft indistinguishable (SURABHI HEBBAR, 2015).Cross warp weaving is done using inclined warp elements interlinked by horizontal wefts passing over and under the inclined warps. These horizontal wefts can be separated co-axial rings or continuous weft spiraling forming rhombic structure. Variations could be achieved in hexagonal weaving by either:

a) ***Changing ratio between elements and spaces between them***

b) Changing the inclination of warp elements

c) Introducing additional elements parallel to basic elements.

According to Hebbar (2015), when it comes to three dimensional weaving, the technique itself makes the form. From a plain over one, under one square plaited base the same weavers can be turned vertically upwards. Extra weft strips can now be woven horizontally between them. If the corners are creased well a square box or can be made, if not the form at the top will be rounded.

For an oblong the base is extended. In a more complex arrangement the corner element cross over each other to make a diagonal weave with no extra weavers required for the sides. Long strips are needed as they have a long way to travel. In more complex diagonal plaiting complex twills and herringbone patterns are possible developments. They are woven together at right angles in either diagonal, horizontal and vertical orientation in plain or twill weave. Splint

materials are flat weavers that have been pounded from a log of a native hardwood like ash or maple (Nuss, 1999.). Materials used in plaiting include paper, birch bark, and flat reed.

Figure 11 illustrates various plaited baskets;

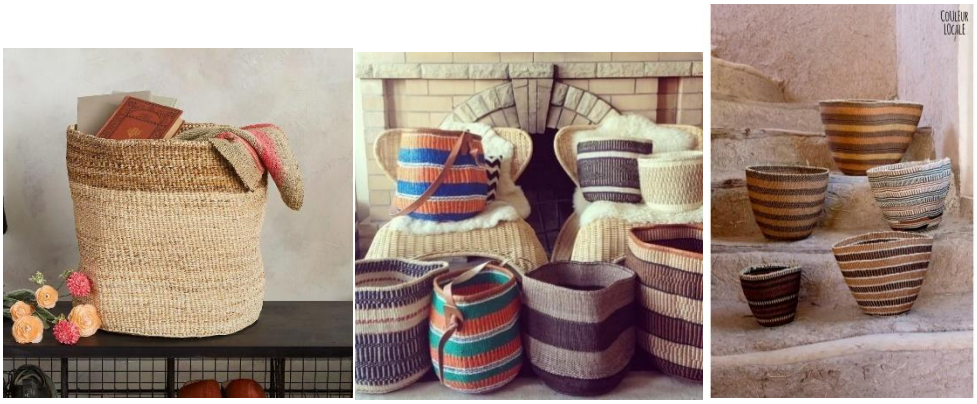

Figure 16: Variety of plaited basketries.
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Twining

This is achieved when two or more flexible materials are used to encircle another base element. When two weavers are used, the technique is called pairing. When three or more elements are twisted it is known as wailing. One can achieve variations by twining two rows tightly row upon row or leaving an open warp, crossing the warp or wrapping the warp. Materials used in twining include; cedar bark, elm bark, rabbit brush or roots. The materials are soft and the density of the weave is much greater, since the stakes are very much closer (Nuss, n.d.). The structure produced can be of similar quality, appearance and texture to a woven fabric. When passing from warp to warp these elements are twisted in half turns on each other so as to form a two-ply or three-ply twine of braid. It produces a dense weave, with ribbed and distinctive diagonal twist to wefts. In closed twining baskets, Warps usually get concealed by wefts.

Twining of basket consists of 3 major categories. They are two strand twining, three strand twining. Two strand twining can be further divided into four variations namely, plain twining, twill weave twining, lattice twining, wrapped twining and cross warp twining. Three strands consist of plain twining. Nuss, (1999) also advances that these twinings can be done open or closed depending on the purpose of the basket. When soft materials are used for items such as bags and pouches twining could be viewed as closer to a textile than a basket. The colorful imported Kenyan sisal baskets is an example, since they are all twine

Simple two strand twining are most commonly used, both "open" and "closed" depending on the spacing between the weft rows. Materials for twining usually consist of grass fibers or cane materials. In case of bamboo, it is split into very thin split so as to get the flexibility in while twining. Its fineness allows for detailed color or textural patterning as shown in figures 12 and 13.

Figure 17: how twining is done and end-product.
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Stake and strand techniques

Vertical stakes around which are worked horizontal strands. The materials used in this type of weaving need to be rigid for example cane and bamboo. The base of the basket is generally made separately, starting with two sets of sticks that are arranged at right angles, tied together with a weaver and then opened out into a circle as the weaving progresses. If the materials are flat, such as bamboo or split wood then they will be arranged to lie on top of each other like the spokes of a wheel. The base may be round, oval or square. For oval work the round base set up is elongated and there is also a version that is constructed underfoot. For square work a set of sticks is inserted vertically into a block and these are woven into a flat square or oblong using finer rods. In order to weave the sides stakes or uprights are inserted into or attached to the base. The side of the basket is then woven up to the desired height using finer graded material so as not to distort the uprights (Nuss,1999). When using willow care is taken to even out the effect of the taper of the rods. Various weaves have been developed to suit different parts of the basket and though these are common all over the world local differences make for a fascinating study.

In willow work, the 'upset' (rows at the bottom) usually consists of a strong waling (three or four strand) weave that helps shape the flow of the basket. Other common weaves are: Randing - a simple over one, under one weave. Slewing - a band of three and up to five or even seven rods worked together continuously, adding new rods on top as rods on the bottom taper out. This creates a strong

weave that progresses the work quickly. At the top of the work the uprights are bent down to form a border. For willow work the basic tools required are; a shop knife, bodkins (for making spaces in the weave) and a rapping iron (to beat the work level and close up gaps). Nowadays a pair of secateurs replaces the picking knife that was used to trim untidy ends. Willow can also be used since it provides a long, tapering rigid elements with few or no side shoot therefore suited for this technique as shown in figure 14.

Figure 18: flower basketries made from twining.
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

TRENDING BASKETRY IN EAST AFRICA TODAY

KIONDO

This is a handwoven handbag made from sisal with leather trimmings. It is indigenous to the Kikuyu and Kamba tribes in Kenya (Admin, 2020).

PRODUCTION PROCESS

Kenyan weavers begin by stripping the sisal plant's outer layer, leaving the plant still able to grow. The weaver then lets the threads

dry out for a day and then uses them in pale colored form, to make a bag.

The weaver boils the thread to be used with water and dye sets the bag's color. Two single threads are twined to form one strong thread (Admin, 2020). It is from these threads that a sisal bag is made. It takes about two to three weeks to complete a bag since most weavers are farmers and housewives. Most kiondos are exported to western countries where they continue to be popular. Below are some of the kiondo designs available in the market (figures 15, 16 and 17).

Figure 19: women weaving kiondoo
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Figure 20: a sample of a kiondoo design
Source: Googlephotos/12.11.2019

Philosophies of Kiondo

1. ***For anyone to be able to understand anything, they have to go back to the roots, the beginning. Kiondo is woven by joining several strands of sisal and thread to form the naval (Kendi, 2018). It teaches us that history is important because we get to go back to the very beginning. The beginning has a bearing on the present (Kendi, 2018.).***
2. ***Kiondoo encapsulates completeness since it is a circle. Circles are important in African Culture; they represent continuity and completeness.***
3. ***Kiondoo is woven by interdependent threads and sisal strings. T teaches us about interdependence, as expressed in the African philosophy of the Ubuntu; a belief that one becomes human amidst of others and that all of nature (human is also considered part of nature) is interconnected. It teaches us respect, responsibility and need to cultivate a peaceful co-existence.***
4. ***It is a good representation of reciprocation. In many cultures the kiondoo is used to carry gifts/offering when visiting someone. The person being visited also puts something for the visitor in the kiondoo before leaving.***
5. ***Nourishment since it is a carrier for food. The kiondoo is used in the farm and also the market place. Food production and associated practices are arenas of knowledge production.***
6. ***Environmental consciousness; the kiondoo is made from elements of the land, sisal, wool and leather.***

Basket weaving in east African today

New basket designs have come up in the recent years. The current generations are in need of classy yet pretty designed bags. For the purpoae of this study, we look at two organizations/brands; a fashion brand by the name Shkwela-Eco-friendly fashion brand located in Kenya and Rubona basket weavers association in Uganda.

SHKWELA: ECO-FRIENDLY ACCESSORIES FASHION BRAND

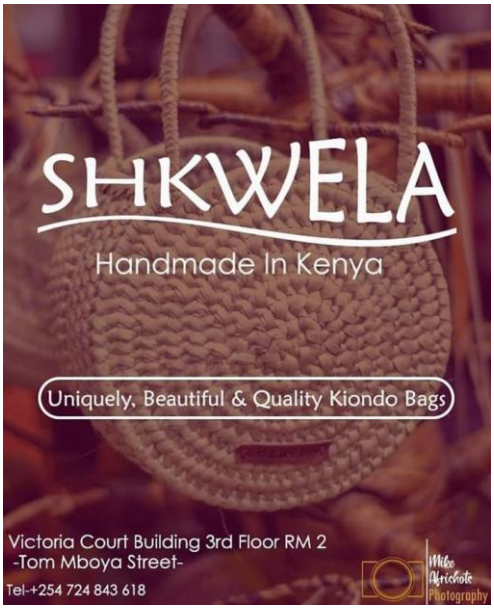

Figure 21: Shkwela Fashion Brand poster
Source: Google photos/12.11.2019

The company is run by a lady by the name Wanjiku Njenga, who was born and raised in Isiolo. She always had a passion of venturing into a business that would help the local community around her (Ambani, 2019).

Figure 22: Photo of Wanjiku Njenga at a sale.
Source: facebook,com/shkwela; 12/11/2019

Even though she studied law with the aim of heling her community, the creativity in her never left her alone. She would leave school to do voluntary work at numerous non-profit organizations. Not until 2017, when the government banned the use of plastic bags that it downed on her that she could make environmentally friendly bags for the everyday woman.

She officially launched her line in the year 2018 under the brand name Shkwela; made from sisal and leather. It was not easy for her at the beginning since Kiondos were meant for the elderly. "The modern day woman wants something chic and classy. A bag is a very important accessory for women and it has been used to make a fashion statement all around the world." (https://nation.africa/Wanjiku Njenga, 2019).

She decided to come up with new designs that never existed in the market before. Her best seller has been the round bag made from sisal that is dyed in different color. She also makes sling bags that come in two designs: one can be used as everyday bag while the other is more of beachwear. The picture below shows the sample of the round bag;

Figure 23: a picture of Wanjiku's round bag.
Source: facebook,com/shkwela; 12/11/2019

Sling bags made out of sisal are not ideal for the beach since they easily get ruined by the water. Sling bags designed for the beach are made out of palm leaves as shown in the figures 38 below:

Figure 24: a sling bag made out of palm leaves.
Source: facebook,com/shkwela; 12/11/2019

Figure 25: a sling bag made out of sisal and leather.
Source: facebook,com/shkwela; 12/11/2019

Her inspiration was to create something that shouted Kenyan and kiondo was the ideal product since it is associated with Kenyan heritage; all round the world. Also, most of the materials used are locally sourced.

Figure 26: shkwela eco-friendly kiondo bags samples.
Source: facebook,com/shkwela; 12/11/2019

She also makes household items; wall decor and laundry basket (figure 41). She also sells basket kiondo for the lovers of houseplants and loves to add an African touch.

Figure 27: flower and wall baskets.
Source: facebook,com/shkwela; 12/11/2019

RUBONA BASKET WEAVERS ASSOCIATION- UGANDA

A classic Ugandan basket coils its way into your heart. Most baskets are made from local fibre taken from a type of palm leaf called raffia; which is wrapped around long strips of banana leaf stem. Artisans also make a range of baskets that use a combination of banana fibre and raffia wrapped over coils of banana leaf stems. Some traditional baskets in Uganda include;

1. ***Ntemere-Ndiro***
2. ***Nubian Tabaga***
3. ***Nubiankuta***
4. ***Natural baskets***
5. ***Banana fibre***
6. ***Gufu***

The women at the Rubona Basket Weavers Association are well-known for their distinctive, beautiful naturally dyed baskets, made with raffia, millet straw, and banana fiber. They have a variety of weaving techniques and they also come up with their own natural dyes.

At Rubona Baskets the process of basket weaving starts with growing the materials themselves. Raffia grass is grown over several months. The grass is harvested and dried and then dyed different colors with natural dyes made of ground flowers. The dyed

grasses are then hand woven intro intricate patterns. Each basket can take 1-2 weeks to complete (Oliver, 13 april 2011).

The project began in 2005, when an Austrian man trained local women in natural dye techniques - reviving some dye practices that women had been using for years. It has grown to employ over 200 local women. An article on the dye process in the association had the following steps (Oliver, 2011):

- ***First they boil the raffia to soften it:***
- ***Then the ingredients are prepared:***
- ***For this case, the Omfoka leaves (fresh; used for making green or black)***
- ***And the Akalamata root (fresh or dried; used for making red)***
- ***Amarwa gempunu roots (fresh; used for making maroon and yellow)***
- ***The amarwa gempunu is pounded in a big mortar:***
- ***For color, Cosmos flower (fresh or dried; used for making orange and red) is added as an ingredient.***
- ***The boiled product is then mixed in wood ash:***
- ***Raffia is then let to dry:***

Their main market is the chain of Banana Boat stores, an upscale Kampala craft outlet. One aspect of Rubona's business model is their approach to design innovation. Many craft producers get ideas for new product designs from their marketers. The Rubona basket designs, however, come directly from the women.

Each month Rubona holds a design contest for all the basket weavers. Creators of the top designs win prizes, which are generally practical home and kitchen items. In this way, Rubona encourages design innovation and creativity and actively avoids the problem of

product stagnation. Their final products are as shown in figure 51 below;

Figure 28: Rubona Basket Weavers Association's basketry products
Source: Rubona Facebook page./12.11.2019

METHODS

A multiple case study research design was used. The objective was to gather data to document types and techniques found around Nairobi and online. The study applied mostly library research,

desktop data mining methods, focus group discussion and key informants for the study. A research assistant was remotely conducted to collect primary data in Taita-Taveta County, Kenya. This was due to very limited time frames and scarcity of resources to travel to all the sites. The study was therefore mostly confined to Nairobi city, Kenya and specifically conducted under the auspices of the School of the Arts and Design of the University of Nairobi. Two focus group discussions were held at diverse dates. One was to help identify a rich source of information and appropriate case to study while the other was to clear technical issues related to techniques and genres. Where available, samples were sourced and observed and documented through photography around Nairobi. The Masai market, a weekly open air market in Nairobi was invaluable towards this end.

Results were presented and discussed at the School of the Arts and Design to faculty, students, and experts and stake holders of the craft industry from Kenya. From the study it emerged that basketry in Kenya has been dwindling but is currently on revival by interests in the counties. It has been identified as a key employment and income generating sector that is bound to be mainstreamed going forward.

DISCUSSION

From the study, it emerged that more than any other craft; basketry has dominated world cultures over millennia of years. It represents the finest combination of environment, culture and technology. In Africa, commercial marketing and an increase in tourism has had a tremendous impact on the design, quality and quantities of these crafts.

Traditional fibers used in basketry reflect the local habitat. They include illala palm, sisal leaves and fiber, raffia (African bamboo), fibrous tree and plant roots such as makenge, vines, leaves (banana and fan palm), cane, bark wood and papyrus.

Generally, two types of vegetative fiber are normally used to make a coiled basket, one for the inner coil and one for the wrapping of the coils. For example, in Uganda and Rwanda, baskets are woven from raffia or papyrus wrapped and stitched around a coil of banana leaf stems. Grass is often used for the core of the coils.

The production processes of basket making include:

- ***coiling,*** ***in which thin strips are wrapped around coils of grass and sewn together in a spiral fashion***
- ***plaiting***
- ***twining***
- ***cross*** **or** ***chequerboard*** **weaving techniques**

A vessel can be circular, oval, square or conical, occasionally even multi chambered. It can have an open bowl, be a tray or a pannier, exhibit a foot, a lid, a handle or an extra appendage for hanging. The following are some of the tribes that have basket making existing as an integral part of their community for social, spiritual or functional use:

- **Tutsi, Rwanda**
- **Kuba, Pygmy, Lele, Mangbetu and Bwaka, DRC**
- **Pende, Angola**
- **Chokwe, Lozi, Tonga, Zambia**

- **Buga, Guinea and Liberia**
- **Sara, Chad**
- **Zulu, South Africa**
- **iSwati, Swaziland**
- **Barotse, Twana, Botswana**
- **Tonga (Binga), Shangaan, Zimbabwe**
- **Gurune, Ghana**
- **Tusyan, Burkina Faso**
- **Bamileke, Cameroon.**

In east Africa, Both men and women, bu mostly the latter make many kinds of baskets and mats out of plant materials such as wood, palm leaves, reeds, grasses, and roots. From the study, it emerged that they decorate their baskets with patterns of differently colored and textured materials or with leather stitched onto the basketwork. Generally, there are two basic basket-making techniques. The two are plaiting/ twinning and weaving. In plaited basketry, strands of plant fiber are soaked and then twined, woven, or twisted together. In woven basketry, a thin strip of continuous material—usually grass—is stitched onto itself in a coil. Some baskets made this way are so tightly sewn that they hold liquid.

The study also showed that the handicraft industry has an generally positive impact on individuals working in the sector, their families and communities, particularly rural inhabitants, those with little or no formal education and other marginalised people. The fact that the craft is on a revival trajectory points basically to benefits for individual producers and enterprises in rural areas that are greater than in urban areas. Consistent purchasing by formal craft

organisations or by tourists benefit the producers the most. Social and cultural benefits derived from craft activities are greater than from non-craft activities, while producers' incomes are comparable. From literature, it emerged that the craft sector shows higher economic efficiency than the non-craft sector, although the latter has higher average profitability.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that basket weaving was and is still one of the main sources of generating income in East Africa, especially in the remote areas since there is the availability of the resources and land to grow some of the materials. Over time, there is the introduction of various design styles in the fashion industry. Fashion stylists and designers have come up with variety of styles that would suit the 21st century woman. Though the original design is still in use but the need to own a design, and also the presence of competition in the design world, makes it necessary for the designer to come up with new designs and styles of basket weaving. There is also introduction of new, materials used in basket weaving. For instance, the banning of plastic bags in 2017, created an idea of weaving baskets out of the plastic bags instead of burning or littering them all over. One can easily purchase these bags in the market today.

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