

## Continuity and Discontinuity of the Mau Ogiek People's Indigenous Dress, Nessuit Location, Nakuru County, Kenya

Njeru Sophia, PhD<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

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*The Mau Ogiek people are an ethnic minority forest-dwelling hunters and gatherers who inhabit and claim the Mau Forest Complex in Kenya their ancestral land. The people wear their indigenous dress to date. This paper discusses the factors that occasion the continuity and discontinuity of the people's ethnic dress. The continuity of the dress is influenced by clothing customs, values, cultural gatherings, raw materials and economic purpose. Value for ethnic identity dictates that hyrax skin remains the most important material employed in constructing cloaks, honey bags and headdress. Culture contact, technological advances, creativity, government decree, cultural authentication and abandonment of rituals and beliefs occasioned discontinuity of the dress. Due to cultural contact with the Maasai people, cowhide has replaced male bushbuck skin in constructing women's belts. In conclusion, the discontinuity of ethnic African dress is not only influenced by the western culture as it is widely believed. Rather, the discontinuity may be occasioned by diverse factors internal and external to the people. The continuity of the dress provides the Mau Ogiek with ownership of their culture and ethnic identity for posterity. Further, the dress creates a cross-cultural adaptation of theories and practices of dress to an African ethnic group.*

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**Keywords:** Continuity; Discontinuity; Dress; Mau Ogiek people

### 1 Introduction

The Ogiek peoples are an ethnic minority forest-dwelling hunters and gatherers who inhabit and claim the Mau Forest Complex in Kenya their ancestral land, as well as Mt. Elgon and Keiyo among other areas. The Ogiek peoples' history pre-dates the arrival and settlement in Kenya of other communities such as the Maasai, Bantu and Kalenjini. The peoples' social, economic and political organization was as effective as any other in Africa. One's responsibilities, obligations and duties were determined by one's gender, age and intellect (Ng'ang'a, 2006). The community has survived on *mweingonig* 'beekeeping' and hunting wild animals mainly, *inderit* 'hyrax', as well as *poinet* 'bushbuck' and various types of birds (Ng'ang'a, 2006).

The Ogiek peoples have faced several evictions from the forest which were first carried out by the colonial administration and later by successive independent governments of Kenya. In addition, the people have been acculturated by the large neighbouring groups namely the Maasai and Kipsigis. These ethnic groups refer to the Ogiek peoples by derogatory terms such as *Dorobo* or *Il-Torobo* to mean "a poor person, a person who has no cattle and who therefore lives on the meat of wild animals" (Ng'ang'a, 2006). The term Ogiek according to Ogiek Peoples' Development Programme (OPDP), (2010) means "caretaker of all" plants and animals.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Art and Design, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Maseno University, Kenya

The population of the Ogiek by 2009 stood at 78,691 or 0.20% of the total Kenyan population (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2010). Despite the discrimination, the Mau Ogiek people have held on to their culture, both material (ethnic dress) and non-material.

Dress is an element of material culture and it is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, dress is an assemblage of all outwardly detectible body modifications and all supplements added to it by a person in communicating with other human beings. The definition is gender-neutral. As a verb or process, dress refers to the act of altering or adding to appearance (Barnes & Eicher, 1997; Kaiser, 1997). Indigenous dress is personalized emanating from cultural heritage, histories and daily experiences of a group of people, and has no claims of universality (Dei, 2000). The words indigenous and ethnic are used interchangeably.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Continuity of Dress

Continuity or stability of dress can be used interchangeably to mean persistence in styles and meanings attached to dress in the cultural, social and economic setting of a community (Joshi, 1997). Various studies (Matuszkiewicz, 1999; Arthur, 1997; Billington et al., 1997; Kaiser, 1997; Fisher, 1987; Horn & Gurel, 1981) have established that the continuity of dress may be shaped by among other factors, custom, isolation, fear, values, decline in the power of royalty and the media. Clothing customs require a stricter adherence than other customs (Horn & Gurel, 1981). According to “Gifts and Blessings” (2011), the Madagascan *lamba* endures prominently due to the persistent role it plays in time-honoured funeral rites throughout the country. The cloth is offered as a gift from the living to their ancestors.

Ademuleya (2011) states that, individuals in Ondo, a Yoruba town collect or commission *aso-oke* to boost their personal wardrobes, mostly in anticipation of special events in their lives.

Social values ensure the continuity of dress. The Ondo people abroad seek for original *aso-oke*. Thus, merchants collect, recycle and sell the old cloth types. To the Ondo, the older, ragged, faded and unique the weaves, the greater the prestige, value and quality, hence the cloths are collected at great expense. Thus, the old and young people in any *ujo* ‘gathering of people’ show off their *aso-oke*. The use of old *aso-oke* types and particularly *alaari*, which has been labeled ‘*aso-Ondo*’, has become an emblem of identity for the Ondo in the diaspora (Ademuleya, 2011).

Joshi (1997) observed that Indian films generally portray women according to the prevailing mores of Indian society. The films have a strong preference for traditional dress. Heroines, deities and ordinary women all wear the *sari* and traditional dress. On the other hand, the “vamps” or “fast” girls wear jeans, shorts, short frocks and western hairstyles. The study concurs with Billington et al. (1991) that modern media, such as films can promote indigenous cultural forms. Joshi (1997) also posits that deviation from the norms of dress is held up to ridicule and criticism, thus leading to a fear or dislike of innovations. Despite the continuity of dress, dress may undergo change brought about by various factors.

### 2.2 Discontinuity of Dress

According to Ajayi (2005) culture is dynamic. Culture constantly undergoes changes, modifications or adjustments, either for better or for worse. Culture is transmutable, meaning, as it is being transmitted it undergoes changes which may be subtle or extreme (Horn & Gurel, 1981) and indigenous dress is no exception. Discontinuity or change of dress may be in the form of abandoning, adding, or altering the materials, embellishments, colour, and number of pieces or styles used in the dress, in addition to the meanings or symbolism attached to the dress (Joshi, 1997). For instance, on discontinuity of meaning, Hill (2011) states that, until recently, beadwork was lavishly applied on men’s and women’s daily wear among the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania. The dress included leather skirts, aprons, cloaks, headbands and jewellery. Today the dress is primarily reserved for special occasions like initiation ceremonies.

Discontinuity may also mean physical and psychological disintegration of material culture (Calhoun, Light & Keller, 1994) and cultural authentication (Arthur, 1997). The source of cultural change may be the internal dynamic of a society or it may originate from outside the society (Nanda & Warms, 2007). Diverse studies (Ng'ang'a, 2006; Adejumo, 2002; Matuszkiewicz, 1999; Arthur, 1997; Kaiser, 1997; Ayo, 1995; Calhoun et al., 1994; Billington et al., 1991; Fisher, 1987; Horn & Gurel, 1981) state that the discontinuity of dress may be occasioned by among other factors, culture contacts, technological advances, invasion and conquest, government decrees, cumulative nature of culture, education, raw materials, urbanization, attitudes, values and the media.

Ng'ang'a (2006), asserts that culturally, socially and technologically the Ogiek peoples have similarities with their neighbouring communities, such as the Kipsigis and Maasai. Mann (2011) states that Europe engaged in a highly lucrative trade with Africa, exchanging glass beads for such items as ivory, gold and incense. Many of these trade beads became part of costume and adornment among Africans. Dark pink Venetian glass beads dating back to 1830 found their way to the Samburu, while blue annular beads are still worn by Borana elders of Kenya.

Okoli (2011) asserts that Elizabeth Olowu the pioneer female bronze caster has produced very beautiful beads of electric wires-a new material among the people. The effort has made it possible for brides of low-income and middle-income families to be well decorated for their traditional marriage rites.

Currency imported into Africa by colonialists instead became items of dress, thus adding to the dress. Hence, the Fulani of Nigeria suspend large Maria Theresa Austrian dollars from long plaits on either side of the face. The smiths also use the currency and French franc pieces as a source of high quality silver for fabricating bracelets and hair rings (Fisher, 1987). As noted by Fisher the items of African dress are made of materials such as fibre, animal skin and wood that have a short lifespan. The humid climate of the continent and inadequate conservation measures has led to the physical disintegration of many African art works. Culture at a psychological level relates to art and artefacts being read as expressions of 'social unconsciousness'. The colonialist damaged African culture at a psychological level by emphasizing the inferiority of 'black' cultures (Billington et al., 1991). As a result some Africans abandoned their ethnic dress.

Onanuga (2011) states that the popular Yoruba dressing that have struggled to survive are the *agbada*, *buba*, *sokoto*, *iro* and *gele*, though they are mainly sewn with foreign fabrics. Indigenous cosmetics such as *laali* and *osun* among others have been replaced with tattoo, lipsticks and glosses. Hill (2011) posits that the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania have replaced leather with imported fabric, and beadwork has been limited mostly to jewellery, rather than clothing. The nomadic Fulani have abandoned the body paintings that were used during important festivities such as *gerewol*, their songs and dance display or *sharo* (Adepegba, 1986).

Cultural authentication, according to Arthur (1997) is the process of assimilating an artefact or idea external and definitely non-indigenous to a culture by accommodative change into a valued indigenous object or idea. The *holokū* was an adaptation of western dress style to fit Hawaiian women. The dress was adopted by the natives, but was never worn by the Christian missionary wives, thus effectively making the *holokū* a symbol of Hawaiian ethnicity.

Adepegba (2002) states that the nomadic Fulani are pervious to change, and they borrow. However, whatever changes they have accommodated are absorbed into their identity and character. Hence, the people only use their indigenous materials for the dress.

Joshi (1997) observes that the Hindu women's dress has changed being influenced by wider contacts, innovations, the introduction of new technology and dress material, urbanization, education, and new means of transportation. The way the *sari* is draped and secured and the way the petticoat is worn have changed from time to time. However, the changes have remained restricted within the framework of ritually pure and auspicious "prescribed dress", that is, *sari*, blouse and petticoat. The blouse worn in urban settings can be sleeveless and low-cut which is regarded as high society fashion.

Further, Joshi states that, ideally and traditionally both the petticoat and *sari* should cover the navel. However, in the urban settings a change in fashion may occasionally reveal the navel, going against traditional norms and which is criticized. More recently in India, spinning and weaving machines, mechanized printing and new chemicals from the west have influenced the availability of dress materials. The *sari* can be constructed from foreign-made fabrics from Japan and elsewhere. Different styles in footwear have been adopted without much comment except that high heeled sandals are criticized for being too western or impractical for the majority of Indian women.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

This paper is grounded on the Contextual Theory by Susan Kaiser (1997). The theory leads to the study of how people manage and perceive appearances in everyday life, considering the actual social situations, as well as the larger cultural or historical context, in which people find themselves. There are four basic assumptions of the theory, which include: Meanings of clothing and appearance arise as part of a dynamic process of historical and fashion change; Meanings of clothing and appearance are altered and enriched by the context in which they are found; Social life is a complex mixture of confusion and continuity and; Discovery about the meanings of clothes and appearance is an exploratory process of change and continuity.

Some dimensions of social life point to a sense of order, completeness, and continuity, whereas others point to novelty, ambiguity and change. The clothes worn in large organizations such as the Mau Ogiek community, point to this diversity. There are likely to be some underlying continuities, as well as dynamic processes of change, in meanings that emerge across historical, cultural and social contexts. A symbolic-interactionist perspective points to the dynamics by which meanings are socially constructed as people fit their interpretations and lines of action together. Further, it posits that some meanings are provided for people before they interact (Kaiser, 1997). From a cognitive point of view, there is emphasis on perceivers' desire not only for consistency and continuity, but also for novelty and stimulation. A cultural perspective illuminates the processes by which cultural forms emerge and change, as well as endure. The three perspectives thus focus on different levels of social organization: the individual level, the social or interpersonal level, and the cultural level (Kaiser, 1997). The cultural level is associated with dress, such as the Mau Ogiek people's indigenous dress.

## **3 Research Methodology**

The research design employed was hermeneutic discursive interview, one of the main methodologies employed in the Social Sciences (Gobo, 2008). The study area was the Mau Forest Complex which the Ogiek claim is their ancestral land and where a majority are settled (Kimaiyo, 2004) in Nessuit location with a population of 2600 adult Mau Ogiek people (Lesingo, personal communication, April 11, 2011). Judgement sampling (Nanda & Warms, 2007) was employed to select the sample totaling 84 consultants. Data were collected by key-consultant in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) (Gobo, 2008), augmented by fieldwork photography (Flynn & Forster, 2009) and observation (Mouton, 2001). Thematic analysis (Kaiser, 1997) was employed in the interviews and FGDs. Qualitative content analysis (Mouton, 2001) was conducted on the photographs and dress collections.

## **4 Discussion**

### **4.1 Continuity of Indigenous Dress of the Mau Ogiek People**

The continuity of the Mau Ogiek's dress is influenced by clothing customs, isolation, lifestyle, values, cultural defences and gatherings, raw materials and economic purpose.

#### **4.1.1 Clothing Customs**

The *tyepoosa* and *intaasatutig* FGDs reported that some Mau Ogiek's ceremonies are still considered important and observed, thus ensuring the continuity of the dress.

For a customary wedding the bride must wear *ingarepait*, *oguriet op inderit*, *kauya* and *leginjus*. The groom must don *oguriet op inderit*. In the current setting, a man may take a bride before holding a wedding. In such a case, when she is being returned to her parent's home, she is required to dress in *oguriet op inderit* and *kauya*. The *rwaganig* FGDs disclosed that at the *murereinig* stage of *tumdo op werik*, the *torusieg* must don *gariig*, *ingongonoit*, *leginjus* and *kauya*. The initiates' fathers must don *ingongonoit* during the entire ceremony.



**Fig 1: *Torusieg* 'boy-initiates' donning *ingongonoit*, *leginjus*, *oguriet op inderit* and *gariig***  
Photo courtesy of community

#### 4.1.2 Isolation and Lifestyle

The *rwaganig* reported that the isolation of the community in the Mau Forest Complex has ensured minimal contact with distant outsiders, thus the dress is generally influenced by the environment and nearby neighbours, such as the Maasai. The community still maintains their hunting and gathering lifestyle to some extent. Thus, one must wear the appropriate dress, which includes *njoriboit* 'hyrax pelt cloak worn for honey harvesting', *oguriet op poinet* 'bushbuck pelt cloak', *morogiit* 'quiver', *motoget*, *ingerut*, *pineet* and *inaing'omiit* 'indigenous match stick' among others. If one lacks the cloaks, he stays at home or borrows.



**Fig 2: *Motoget***

Photo by researcher in OPDP, Nakuru



**Fig 3: *Morogiit***

Photo by researcher in Nessuit location

#### 4.1.3 Values

Naiposhi reported that the Mau Ogiek have a high level of ethnic identity and great desire to be identified as a distinct ethnic community through their dress. In addition, they feel that wearing the ethnic dress is their cultural right. Consequently, they uphold most of the aspects of their dress, such as the materials used and the functions of the dress that have been in place since time immemorial. The older generation jealously guard their cloaks and jewellery. Naiposhi showed off her *mwenigg op itig* 'women's earrings' and *taet* 'brass necklace' that have been in her possession for very many years, and she cannot part with them. Further, she stated that 'we cannot abandon our ethnic dress. Though we are wearing western dress, our indigenous dress is in the house. Even when I grow old I will retain my ethnic dress, and my child will get one as I will pay an expert to construct one for her, especially *oguriet op inderit*'.

Hyrax skin is the major raw material used to fabricate the cloaks, honey bag and headgear.

Mesuntet a *mureret* in their FGD was wearing a multicoloured single strand beadwork *gariig*. On being probed why she wore it, she said ‘I made and wear it as I consider it ethnic and beautiful’.



**Fig 4: Woman in *mwenigg op itig***  
Photo by researcher in Nessuit location



**Fig 5: Woman wearing *oguriet op inderit***  
Photo by researcher in Nessuit location

#### 4.1.4 Cultural Defenses and Gathering

Mutarakwa disclosed that whenever the Mau Ogiek are involved in cultural defenses or attend conferences they must wear their ethnic dress. Hence, when they presented memorandums to the Prime Minister on the Mau Forest Complex taskforce and to the Committee of Experts on the Constitution, and when appearing in court during the case on the Mau Forest Complex excision in 2000, and on cultural defense of the Bushmen of Botswana they donned *oguriet op inderit* and *rosiet* ‘headdress’. In early 2010, the community attended the Kenyan-Asian Conference that brought together ethnic minority communities. The Mau Ogiek wore their ethnic dress for identity.

#### 4.1.5 Raw Materials and Economic Purpose

Naiposhi-an *intaasat* key-consultant reported that the availability of wild animals-though scarce, mainly hyrax ensures that *oguriet op inderit* ‘hyrax pelt cloaks’ are constructed for different needs. Further, non-Ogiek people may place an order for the community’s dress. The latter ensure that the dress is made as authentic as possible, focused mainly on using the hyrax skin.

#### 4.1.6 Specific Continuity of Ethnic Dress

The dress has remained unchanged as the material used to construct the indigenous dress has remained stable. The findings revealed that hyrax skin remains the major material employed in constructing cloaks, honey bags and headdress. Even with the adoption of new dress materials, the style of fastening relates to the people’s dress. Hence, the Mau Ogiek women wear the *angeet* in the same manner as *oguriet op inderit*.

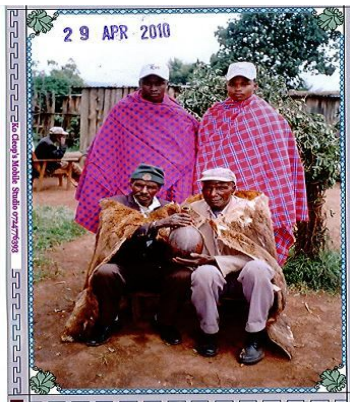
### 4.2 Discontinuity of Ethnic Dress of the Mau Ogiek People

The discontinuity of the Mau Ogiek’s indigenous dress has been occasioned by forces internal and/or external to the culture, such as culture contact, technological advances, invasion and conquest, creativity, government policy, education, urbanization, cultural authentication, social attitudes and values and abandonment of rituals and beliefs.

#### 4.2.1 Culture Contact

Saimutie an elderly *poyoon* ‘married man’ key-consultant reported that the community has continually faced prejudice from their dominant neighbours namely the Maasai, Kipsigis, and Kalenjin, who regard them as primitive due to their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and its accompanying dress. The prejudice has led to the Mau Ogiek abandoning their ethnic dress to some extent.

The *rwaganig* ‘newly circumcised unmarried males’ FGDs disclosed that acculturation of the Mau Ogiek by the dominant neighbours has led to a change of lifestyle and the introduction of new articles of dress to the community. In the contemporary setting when the *rwaganig* are leaving the shrine, their *mutiriot* ‘male teacher’ dresses them in the Maasai *shuka* ‘a checked red rectangular piece of fabric’. The *shuka* is referred to as such even by the Mau Ogiek and it has been added to their ethnic dress.



**Fig 6: *Rwaganig* donned in Maasai *shuka***

**Photo courtesy of community in Nessuit location**

Saimutie reported that due to acculturation, the people adopted farming and livestock rearing, and engage in very little beekeeping and hunting. The adoption has occasioned deforestation and changing weather patterns thus reducing the availability of honey, and the need for constructing *motoget* ‘honey bag’. Moreover, there are very few wild animals from which skin can be obtained. Interaction with the neighbours is also in the form of barter trade, thus the Mau Ogiek obtain red ochre from the Maasai and use it to dye leather. Specifically, *oguriet op poinet* which is worn by the *rwaganig*. Previously, the cloaks were not embellished. The trade also introduced the Mau Ogiek to livestock, glass beads and cowries. The community then fashions men’s *rosiet* from cows’ stomach and *kweog* ‘men’s leather sandals’ and *legetiet* ‘women’s leather belt’ from cowhide. Previously, *kweog* and *legetiet* were made of bushbuck skin, while *rosiet* were constructed from hyrax and bushbuck pelts.

Glass beads of diverse colours, obtained from the Maasai are used to fabricate and/or embellish *kauya* ‘beaded male bushbuck leather skirt’, *mwenigg op itig*, *ingongonoit* ‘beadwork headband cum necklace’, *ingarepait* ‘bride’s necklace’, *ngotiot* ‘flywhisk’, *leginjus* ‘leather skirt’ and pendants. Previously, the people obtained cowries from the Kikuyu and used them to adorn *oguriet op saamput* ‘baboon pelt cloak’, pendants and to construct *segeriet* ‘cowries bracelet’. Currently, cowries are bought from the Maasai as the latter extensively use them in their dress. Through interaction with the missionaries and other ethnic groups that had adopted the western dress, the Mau Ogiek also took up the style.



**Fig 7: Woman holding *ngotiot***

**Photo by researcher in Nessuit location**



**Fig 8: *Leginjus***

**Photo by researcher at Nairobi National Museum**

#### 4.2.2 Technological Advances

The *mureret* ‘an unmarried girl who has undergone FGM’ FGDs reported that the Mau Ogiek add bicycle light bulbs, shiny garlands and small plastic lids of different colours to *mungenig* ‘armband for girl-initiates’, *rosiet* and *ng’oisit* ‘bushbuck pelt apron for girl-initiates’ and use cardboard to construct *gelteet* ‘girl-initiates’ headdress’. Mutarakwa an elderly *poyoon* key-consultant reported that due to trade between Kenya and other countries, new materials are available. Thus, the Mau Ogiek can readily buy a sword, made in China, from any hardware store. The men then only need to construct the *chogeet* ‘scabbard’ in the prescribed style.



**Fig 9: Mungenig**

Photo by researcher in OPDP, Nakuru



**Fig 10: Gelteet**

Photo by researcher in OPDP, Nakuru



**Fig 11: Chogeeet**

Photo by researcher in Nessuit location

The *tyepoosa* ‘married *mureret*’ and *intaasatutig* ‘elderly women’ FGDs disclosed that technological advances in textiles production, has resulted in new mass produced fabrics that are thus readily available to consumers. Hence, cotton fabric is used to construct *chepkuleit* ‘girl-initiates’ headdress’.

#### 4.2.3 Invasion and Conquest

According to Naiposhi and Mutarakwa, the Mau Ogiek men were forced to wear a pair of shorts on being employed by colonialists as police reservists. Thus, they abandoned some of their ethnic dress. On the other hand, women were provided with *angeet* by the early Christian missionaries, which meant wearing the *oguriet op inderit* less often. The community has faced frequent evictions and displacement from the forest and sometimes their houses are torched. In the process they are unable to salvage their ethnic dress. The dress is thus physically lost.

#### 4.2.4 Creativity

The *mureret* FGDs reported that the girl-initiates add bicycle light bulbs, shiny garlands and small plastic lids of different colours to *mungenig*, *gelteet* and *ng’oisit*, and use cardboard to construct *gelteet* in various styles.



Naiposhi disclosed that when they encountered wristwatches, the Mau Ogiek women fashioned their own called *sait*, from leather and embellished it with glass beads, though these do not function. Further, the use of red velvet on pendants is observed which is added on women's necklaces. The top is a circular piece of velvet, which is adorned with red, blue and clear glass beads that are patterned in circles. The velvet is mounted on a soft circular piece of leather.

#### 4.2.5 Government Policy

The *rwaganig* FGDs reported that the government ban on game hunting in the forest since 1977 still exists to date. The Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) game warders therefore arrest anyone caught with wild animal skin, such as hyrax, or even a trap and the culprit is fined Ksh 50,000 or sentenced to seven years in prison, or both. Carrying a *rungut op metit* 'club' and *ingerut* 'arrows' is also illegal. The ban has resulted in the decline of raw materials specifically hyrax and bushbuck skins, thus fewer cloaks are fabricated.



**Fig 12: Rungut op metit**

**Photo by researcher at Nairobi National Museum**

The *tyepoosa* and *intaasatutig* FGDs disclosed that women have to buy hyrax skin from far off places such as Kaplelach, thus incurring production costs which never existed previously. Due to the scarcity of indigenous raw materials, the community is considering constructing the dress from contemporary materials, such as cotton fabric. The government also banned FGM. When FGM is performed, it is done secretly thus, no ceremony is held. Consequently, its accompanying dress such as *ng'oisit*, *mungenig*, *ngotiot* and *gelteet* and *chepkuleit* among others are disappearing.

#### 4.2.6 Education, Urbanization and Abandonment of Rituals and Beliefs

The abandonment of some rituals and beliefs has resulted in the discontinuity of dress. The *tyepoosa* and *intaasatutig* FGDs disclosed that the ritual of "breaking the eclipse" has been abandoned which has resulted in the particular dress for the occasion, namely *kauya* and *leginjus/moloindo* being abandoned as well. On the other hand, FGM has been abandoned to some extent, thus no ceremony or prescribed ethnic dress is required. Ritually shaving of bereaved family members' hair has been abandoned.

The *rwaganig* FGDs reported that those Mau Ogiek who are educated and some who dwell in urban centres do not wear the ethnic dress because to do so is considered as backwards. Education takes away fear, thus the people do not fear combining ethnic and western style dress, especially the younger generation. From the medical point of view, *lotet op kelegg* 'removal of at least two front lower teeth' is discouraged. As a result, the practice is now optional.

#### 4.2.7 Cultural Authentication

The *rwaganig* FGDs disclosed that the Mau Ogiek boys may join the Kipsigis' boys for initiation, and they follow the rituals of the latter. Thus, the Kipsigis' walking stick has been culturally authenticated by the Mau Ogiek and named *mukwanjit*. The Maasai *shuka* is given to the *rwaganig* during their graduation ceremony. The *rwaganig* fasten it as they do their cloaks, that is, under the left underarm and on the right shoulder. During the initiation ceremony, if one lacks *leginjus* 'vest', an *angeet* may be worn.

Thus, the *angeet* and Maasai *shuka* can be said to have undergone cultural authentication. However, the discontinuity has occurred within the prescribed dress.

Naiposhi reported that after independence, Christians, mainly the Pentecostal Church of East Africa (PCEA) went to the area. Through barter trade, the Mau Ogiek women were given *khanga* 'a rectangular piece of 100% cotton fabric inscribed with a proverb'. The women have adopted the *khanga* as part of their dress, and refer to it as *angeet*. The *angeet* is draped over the shoulders and knotted at the chest in the same way as their ethnic *oguriet op inderit*.



**Fig 13: Angeet**

**Photo by researcher in Nessuit location**

#### 4.2.8 Social Attitudes and Values

Saimutie reported that an inferiority complex among the Mau Ogiek brought about by prejudice from neighbours, may lead to individuals abandoning their dress. Thus, individuals resort to wearing an incomplete dress ensemble. The ethnic dress then mainly comprises of adornment such as *mwenigg op itig*, *ilmintoisieg* 'men's earrings', *taet* 'brass bracelet or necklace' and *kariat* 'beadwork necklace'.



**Fig 14: Taet**

**Photo by researcher in Nessuit location**

In addition, the Mau Ogiek may carry their indigenous dress in a bag and only wear it at the meeting or conference venue. Saimutie stated thus, 'I cannot even wear *oguriet op inderit* to the shopping centre in Nessuit location for fear of being labeled a mad man. Hence, we only wear our ethnic dress within the community for such occasions as *tumdo op werik* 'boys' initiation ceremony' and wedding ceremonies'. The *mureret* FGDs disclosed that they consider FGM harmful on health reasons, and associate the ethnic dress with the practice. Therefore, they have no interest in their ethnic dress. Only the older generation appreciate the rite of passage. Thus, according to Chepkemboi a *mureret* 'even if my grandmother offers me an article of dress, such as *mwenigg op itig*, I will not accept it. Look at this grandmother's earlobes. They are stretched, how can I do that? We the young generation only pierce small holes in the lower earlobes.

Can you imagine me wearing animal skin? No way.’ The young girls see no need for the ethnic dress and have developed a preference for western style dress, such as skirts, blouses and trousers.

#### 4.2.9 Specific Discontinuity of Ethnic Dress

The discontinuity of Mau Ogiek’s dress includes the introduction of new materials for constructing dress such as cowhide, sheep and goat skins, velvet, *angeet*, Maasai *shuka*, cardboard, shiny garlands and bicycle light bulbs. *Legetiet* is made from cowhide rather than male bushbuck skin, and *gesenta* ‘baby carrier’ from goat skin instead of bushbuck skin. Calf skin is used to construct *menegupet* instead of *evirit* skin, while men’s *rosiet* may be fashioned from hyrax and baboon pelts as well as cow’s stomach. The *rwaganig* don two scraped and dyed bushbuck skins or two black he-goat pelt cloaks. Sheep skin has replaced bushbuck skin in fashioning *leginjus*, while *kweog* are made from cowhide instead of buffalo or bushbuck skins. Further, the *angeet* may be used in place of *leginjus* during *tumdo op werik* and for women’s wear in place of *oguriet op inderit*. The change also includes dyeing leather, embellishing *leginjus* and *kauya* among other articles of dress with glass beads and constructing beadwork jewellery, such as *gaying’aniat*.

Cultural authentication entails the Mau Ogiek adding to their ethnic dress *mukwanjit* and Maasai *shuka* from the Kipsigis and Maasai communities respectively. The Maasai *shuka* is worn in the same style as men’s cloaks but it is referred to by its original name. Much of the ethnic dress is worn for ceremonial purposes, cultural defenses and conferences, while daily wear is limited to necklaces, bracelets and earrings. Naiposhi disclosed that the Mau Ogiek have abandoned *gempirr itig* ‘ear piercing’ to some extent such that only women pierce the lower earlobes but they do not stretch them, FGM and its accompanying dress, *lotet op kelegg*, ritually shaving bereaved family members’ hair and clean shaven heads. The women plait and braid their hair in various styles.

#### Conclusion

The continuity of the dress has been occasioned by clothing customs, values and lifestyle. The hyrax skin remains the major raw material for constructing the various articles of dress, such as *motoget* and *oguriet op inderit*. The continuity of the dress provides the Mau Ogiek with ownership of their culture and ethnic identity for posterity. The discontinuity of ethnic African dress, such as for the Mau Ogiek, was not only influenced by the western culture as it is widely believed. Rather, the change was occasioned by diverse factors internal and/or external to the people. Discontinuity is not necessarily negative, as illustrated by the introduction of new materials and styles in the people’s dress, such as *gelteet* and *chepkuleit* that was borrowed from the Kipsigis community. The dress creates a cross-cultural adaptation of theories and practices of dress to an African ethnic group.

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