

## Dedan Kimathi University of Technology

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- a) Importance of Kikuyu Culture
- b) Importance of gender awareness in African Culture

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## IMPORTANCE OF KIKUYU CULTURE

Culture is a set of beliefs, practices, and symbols that are learned and shared. These beliefs, practices, and symbols bind people together and shape a worldview. Through the process of enculture, we learn to become members of a group directly through instructions from our parents and peers, indirectly by observing and imitating those around us. However, culture is deeply affected by both internal and external factors, and some parts of culture change more quickly than others.

Kenya recognizes over forty cultures that are so rich in their customs and traditions. Not only are the African or I may say, Kenyan culture spectacular and amazing in its unique sense of fashion but also very beautiful both inward and outward. Currently, a Kenyan citizen is identified by the Maasai shuka, which is so splendid from a distance and easily identifiable. If I am allowed to say, Maasai shuka is the mark for Kenya. My focus is on the Kikuyu culture which is a land of milk and honey.

Importance of Kikuyu culture:

- a) Sense of belonging/ mark of identity
- b) Character/behavior – training center for behavior
- c) Unity/security – fight against insecurity
- d) Communism/sharing (ujamaa)- eating food together
- e) Celebration: child naming ceremony, initiation ceremony, wedding ceremony, and even death rituals.

## IMPORTANCE OF AFRICAN CULTURE.

### a) SOCIAL VALUES

Social values can simply be seen as those beliefs and practices that are practised by any particular society. The society has a way of dictating the beliefs and practices that are performed either routinely by its members or performed whenever the occasion demands. Hence, we have festivals, games, sports and dances that are peculiar to different societies. These activities are carried out by the societies because they are seen to be necessary. Some social values, especially in African society, cannot exactly be separated from religious, moral, and political values. Social values are backed by customary laws. They comprise of those traditional carnivals that individuals perceive as necessary for their meaningful survival.

An illustration is the new yam festival as practised in Ibibio land has a way of encouraging hard work and checking famine. It was a thing of shame for any man to buy yams for his family within the first two to three weeks after the festival. Doing so would expose a man as being too lazy. These festivals really discipline the society because nobody is to do anything when it is not time. For instance, new yam could not be eaten until the new yam festival has been celebrated.

## b) MORAL VALUES

African culture is embedded in strong moral considerations. It has a system of various beliefs and customs which every individual ought to keep in order to live long and to avoid bringing curses on them and others. Adultery, stealing and other forms of immoral behaviour are strongly discouraged and whenever a suspected offender denies a charge brought against him, he would be taken to a soothsayer or made to take an oath for proof of innocence. In kikuyu land for instance, **swearing** in a particular diety is very popular as a method of crime detection. The soothsayer who specialises in it sets a pot of boiling oil, drops a stone into it and asks the suspects to attempt to retrieve the stone. The guiltless can reach to the bottom of the pot and retrieve the stone without the hair on his arms getting burnt. But when the culprit approaches the pot, it rages and boils over in a manner that even the most daring criminal would hesitate to make an attempt at retrieving the stone. The fear of being made to go through such ordeal or to be stripped naked and taken round the community as in the case of stealing, adequately checks crimes of some sort. African culture has a moral code that forbids doing harm to a relative, a kinsman, an in-law, a foreigner and a stranger, except when such a person is involved in an immoral act; and if that is the case, it is advisable to stay away from such an individual and even at death, their corpses would not be dignified with a noble burial in a coffin and grave.

## c) RELIGIOUS VALUES

Religion in African societies seems to be the fulcrum around which every activity revolves. Hence religious values are not toyed with. African traditional religion, wherever it is practiced, has some defining characteristics. For instance, it possesses the concept of a Supreme Being which is invisible and indigenous. It holds a belief in the existence of the human soul and the soul does not die with the body. African traditional religion also has the belief that good and bad spirits do exist and that these spirits are what make communication with the Supreme Being possible. The worship of different deities on different days goes on to show that the African people hold their religious values in high esteem. Sorcerers and diviners are seen to be mediating between God and man and interpreting God's wishes to the mortal. The diviners, sorcerers and soothsayers help to streamline human behaviour in the society and people are afraid to commit offences because of the fear of being exposed by the diviners and sorcerers.

## d) POLITICAL VALUES

African society definitely has political institutions with heads of such institutions as respected individuals. The most significant thing about traditional society is that the political hierarchy begins with the family. Each family has a family head; each village has a village head. From these, we have a clan head and above the clan head, is the paramount ruler. This kind of political arrangement is observable in the Southern part of Nigeria. Prior to the coming of Western colonization and its subsequent subversion of the African traditional political arrangements, African societies had their council of chiefs, advisers, cult groups, and so on. It was believed that

disloyalty to a leader was disloyalty to God and the position of leadership was either hereditary or by conquest

#### e) AESTHETIC VALUES

The African concept of aesthetics is predicated on the fundamental traditional belief system which gave vent to the production the art. Now art is usually seen as a human enterprise concerned with the production of aesthetic objects. Thus, when people in their leisure time trying to produce or create objects that they consider admirable, their sense of aesthetic value is brought to bear. If we see art as being concerned with the production of aesthetic objects, then we can truly say of African aesthetic value that it is immensely rich. Let us have an example: the sense of the beauty of the Ibibio people epitomized in their fattened maidens whom they call 'mbopo'. These fattened maidens are confined to a room where they are fed traditional cuisines. The idea behind it is to prepare the maiden and make her look as good, healthy and beautiful as possible for her husband. This is usually done before marriage and at childbirth. The Western model of beauty is not like this. It is often pictured as slim-looking young ladies who move in staggered steps. This shows that the African aesthetic value and sense of what is beautiful is markedly different. Aesthetic value is what informs a people's arts and crafts as it affects their sense of what is beautiful as opposed to that which is ugly. The aesthetic value of a society influences the artist in his endeavor to produce aesthetic objects that are acceptable to the society in which he lives.

#### f) ECONOMIC VALUES

Economic values of the traditional African society are marked by cooperation. The traditional economy, which is mainly based on farming and fishing, was co-operative in nature. In Ibibio land, for instance, friends and relatives would come and assist in doing farm work not because they will be paid but so that if it happens that they need such assistance in the near future, they will be sure to find it. Children were seen to provide the main labour force. That is why a man took pride in having many of them, especially males. The synergetic nature of the African society is what made two or more individuals to pool their resources together and uplift each other economically through the system of contributions called **osusu**. Apart from this, they even cooperated in the building of houses and doing other things for their fellow members. When any of them was in difficulty, all members rallied around and helped him or her. Hence, we can state without fear of contradiction that the economic values of the traditional African society such as the Ibibio were founded on hard work and cooperation.

In conclusion, having looked at some of the values that characteristics of the African culture, it is important to state here that these values are inextricably bound together and are to be comprehended in their totality as African cultural values

## IMPORTANCE OF GENDER AWARENESS IN AFRICAN CULTURE.

Gender equality is equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all sexes. Gender awareness is the ability to view society from the perspective of gender roles and how this has affected one sex's needs in comparison to the needs of the other different sex. Gender equality started by women especially after they felt like they were unfairly treated as compared to their other sexes.

Ensuring that men and women share the same responsibilities and opportunities requires real, sustainable change – at the policy and institutional level, and in the attitudes and behavior of individuals. Here are seven ways men can become better partners and allies in creating a more equitable world for all.

Actively listen to women's perspectives. Women are the experts on their own life experiences, so seek out opportunities to hear women's stories – and take their concerns seriously, without interrupting or trying to downplay incidents of sexism. Amplify women's voices, acknowledge their experiences – and take on the role of educating other men – in a way that inspires trust and respect; these are fundamental commitments men can make.

Reflect on your own power and privilege as a man. Being an effective ally starts with self-awareness: How has your gender influenced the opportunities you've had in life? What are you able to do only because you are a man? Beyond gender, listening to individuals with different backgrounds from your own – in terms of race, sexual orientation, religion or ability – is crucial to understanding how our intersecting identities impact our lived experiences.

Credit your female co-workers' ideas fairly. Women are still underrepresented in many workplaces and paid less than their male colleagues, in part because their contributions and ideas are often overlooked. Emphasizing the good ideas of female co-workers, mentioning them in front of higher-ups, and correcting colleagues who misattribute credit isn't giving special treatment to women – it's treating them with fairness.

Advocate for gender-equitable policies in the workplace. In Promundo's study, 77 percent of men said they were doing everything they can to advance gender equality in the workplace – but only 41 per cent of women agreed with that assessment. To close this “allyship gap” between intention and action, speak up for policies that remove bias and advance equality, including pay transparency, parental leave, and confidential reporting structures for sexual harassment.

Challenge sexism, and speak up when you hear sexist language. It's hard to step in or speak up when you see someone being harassed or treated unfairly, or when those around you are engaging in derogatory “banter,” but men calling each other out sends a powerful message that sexist language and actions will no longer be tolerated.

Step up at home – take on your full share of the housework and childcare. Women’s advancement in the workplace is hindered by the disproportionate responsibilities they continue to take on at home: household labor, childcare, and all the invisible work behind the scenes that keeps everything running smoothly. While many men say they are equally involved in childcare and chores, their partners generally disagree. In addition to stepping up at home, advocate at your workplace for work-life balance measures, including paid leave for all caregivers.

Support diverse female leaders you believe in. Seventy percent of the men in Promundo’s study said they think there should be more women in positions of political power, yet women hold only a minority of these positions in the United States and in most countries around the world. How can men help that change? Support, volunteer for, and vote for diverse female candidates who align with your values in local and national elections. And share your influence and resources with women’s groups – after asking how best to support their efforts.

In conclusion, culture plays a major role in the ethical values of an accountant since people behave the way they behave because of where they come from. Gender awareness is important as when an individual feels respected, he is able to work well with everyone, and this benefits not only the individual but also the organization.