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CHANGES IN LEATHERWORK INDIGENOUS INDUSTRY AMONG THE TUGEN OF BARINGO COUNTY; 1895-1963; KENYA.

This is a study of pre-colonial African technology with special emphasis on the Tugen indigenous leather industry. The position that is strongly advanced through this paper is that before colonialism the Tugen practiced indigenous industries such as pottery, blacksmithing, and leatherwork among others. Leatherwork was characterized by the provision of knowledge and skills to individuals who were supposed to selflessly serve the society by making garments for the members of the society. They learnt through their interaction with their physical environments, to cope with the changing climatic conditions by making suitable attire for the varied climatic zones and seasons. The work relied on oral traditions as a primary source. Secondary sources were utilized such as unpublished works like articles, books, and thesis. Archival source from Kenya National Archives were extensively used to supplement the sources from primary and secondary. The study described the distribution, methods and techniques and the procedure used in leatherwork. It further assessed the types and uses of leather products. This study established the forces which led to the dismantling of the industry during the early periods of colonial rule such as through taxation, forced labour, settler farming and western education. Leatherwork in the 1930s underwent re-organisations in form of labour innovativeness, cultural transformation; marketing strategies etc. The Tugen devised ways of survival so as to compete favorably with the British colonizers which led to the Tugen transformation of the leather industry from 1945. The main problem that this study advanced is that Tugenland like other African societies is regarded by some people as having not had any form of industry or organisations before the arrival of the colonialists. This paper raised an argument against this position. The study has recorded the Tugen leather industry for posterity purposes.

Keywords: Indigenous industry, indigenous knowledge, leatherwork, colonialism, independence.

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