

## **Reconceptualising “African Culture” and “African Music”: Some Critical Issues**

**Abstract:** Culture, generally, is a concept that has pervaded academic discourse in the fields of, inter alia, ethnomusicology and anthropology. One of the persistent questions is what “culture” really means, and whose culture it is. African culture and African music/ology also grapple with these questions and issues. Various authors and scholars have emerged over the years with claims of varying degree of representative agency. Some, whose research is limited to a specific cultural group, purport to be experts in “African music”, while others claim this expertise in “African music” merely by virtue of being citizens of an African country. Others limit both their research and claim of expertise to one culture, and so on. The notion of “African Culture” has been problematised by scholars since the 1980s, yet there are enduring constructions of the concept that remain both unresolved and problematic to date. More specifically the question of “What is Kenyan culture?” regularly forms popular discourse on social media during performances at national events. Additionally, the decolonial conversations that have gained popularity over the last two decades have brought to the fore the growing and urgent need to reconceptualise our understanding of “African music” and “African culture”. This paper explores academic discourse surrounding “African Culture” and “African Music/ology”. It critically engages with scholarly perspectives and challenges certain understandings. These are presented under the broad themes of “culture”, the problem of meaning, and representation/s of African culture and music/ology. The Kenyan context is provided both for illustration and as a reference point.

**Keywords:** Reconceptualising, Culture, African culture, African music, Kenyan culture.

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**Track Classification:** Music and Indigenous Cultures