

Cultural heritage of Pokot (Promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples with respect to their cultural heritage).

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Abstract

The article reviews cultural heritage with special reference to the promotion and protection of the cultural heritage of the Pokot indigenous people of Kenya. The author emphasises that one must avoid a narrow perspectives that leads to rights to cultural heritage intervention aimed at community level factors while ignoring historical force that ultimately put Pokot cultural heritage at "risk of being at risk".

Introduction

Culture defines who we are. It shapes our identity and behaviour. Culture defines how we understand the world and our place in it , how and why we believe that some things or people are more important than others, how we see our bodies, how we form our families , how we define beauty, how we express pain, how and what we worship , how we treat our elders and raise our children, what we eat and how we prepare it, how we celebrate, how we dress , how we express love and affection, how we understand and treat illness, how and whom we school, how we acknowledge death and celebrate birth, how we accept power and responsibility, and how we carry burdens.

Culture does not always remain the same, instead, it changes with time and new conditions. All of us have learned ways of being, of eating ,of loving ,of caring for the sick, and in different ways, all of us decide how to change what we were taught to match current circumstance. Our awareness of our own power to change cultural traditions and beliefs or to bring back and re-enliven cultural practices that we believe are useful can be very important in promoting wellbeing within our own community and environment.

Pokot agro- pastoralist who number about 500,000 persons live in north western Kenya . A small section of them is also found in the south - east of Uganda .

Pokot have an untapped cultural and traditional heritage of great interest to historians, archaeologists and tourists. They have preserved a vast amount of humanity cultural history. They have inherited and passed on a wealth of knowledge, artistic forms, religious and cultural traditions.

Our cultural heritage has received little promotion and protection despite the passage of the new constitution of Kenya which states that everyone has the right to practice their culture and to form cultural associations (Art 44) and that the state must also promote culture including traditional celebrations and "cultural heritage" generally (Art II) Both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Pokot are endangered. Our ancient customs and traditions are in danger of eroding which we attach ourselves as an important element of our identity, spirituality as well as enhance intergenerational learning about nature and universe in relation to intangible culture in interaction with our history .

It is the expansion of certain dominant world cultures and disregard of the human and civil rights of the Pokot cultural heritage that is a triggering process threatening its survival. Valuable knowledge is being lost and the Pokot cultural heritage left in too precious to be exposed to disintegration. The factors which are mostly manmade are leading to breakdown of intergenerational learning within our community. We are losing unique intellectual and cultural insights. Our culture variety is disproportionately decreasing and we need to regain control and awareness about the attention of our identity and civilization.

Our cultural heritage wisdom and practices has enabled generations to meet their needs in an environment therefore it must be recognized and encouraged in school programmes and community development work.

Our recommendations include the government of Kenya to strongly influence reclamation to our cultural heritage and build a positive public opinion with a view to strengthen culture as a peoples movement and to facilitate implementation of cultural heritage education programme / project. mobilising local communities to assist with documenting the Pokot rich oral traditions, conservation of material culture, the need of specialists to assist with training, recording and documentation of pokot oral traditions and pokot language itself and support of young people to come together to learn about their cultural heritage and strengthen it.

There is no doubt that Pokot indigenous people have specific and unique needs that should be addressed by an active cultural heritage programme of research, education and advocacy in Kenya.