

**Crossing Boundaries: Context and cultural transformation  
with reference to the Giriama *Vigango* of Kenya**

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Details of Giriama society, trade and history have been well documented by various researchers (for references see Willis, 1996), as have their age-sets, their rituals concerning burial and sacred burial grounds or *Kayas*, and their cultural origins as one of the nine Mijikenda groups (Spear, 1978). Parlin (1991) has described in more detail the rituals of burial in relationship to age-sets, power and wealth and discussed aspects of Giriama religious values and practices. Brown's study (1980) provides more specific descriptions of *Vigango* among the different Mijikenda groups. However, none of these sources deal specifically with the aesthetic aspects of the commemorative grave posts, or their makers' intentions in the work in relationship to their religious and aesthetic values, or craft skills. An exception was the study by Wolfe III (1986), which described the making of *Vigango* for *Gohu* society members in some depth. However, Wolfe's information was not totally reliable, as some of his photographs could possibly have been reconstructed (and as a consequence are inaccurate), since some depict a woman present at the installation of one of the commemorative posts - which would be considered taboo by Giriama (pers comm Kalume Tinga, 1999, Fort Jesus Museum). Also, according to the elders at Kaya Fungo there should only have been seven people present, the client (male), three *Gohu* members and three uninitiated males, who may at this time be initiated into the *Gohu* during this secret ceremony.

Therefore the field trip in 1999 was designed to address these shortcomings and to focus on the *Vigango* themselves and their environmental context.

*Vigango* are the posts made to commemorate *Gohu* secret society members (see Plates III and IV). *Vibao* are the replacements for the *Vigango* placed in the homestead shrine, and the *Koma* are sticks representing the wives of the *Gohu* members; although they could also stand for uninitiated males within the family (see Plate IV). There was considerable emphasis on the rituals surrounding the *Kigango* too. These rituals included the actual cutting down of the selected tree, the carving of the post, the erection of the post, and the continued libations paid to the post in times of trouble or difficulties or for purification purposes. As an outsider visiting the shrines, they would consider me to be a contaminant, and therefore would perform a cleansing ritual after leaving. Unlike the artists of the West during the 1920s who were influenced by African artifacts in museums and galleries for formal and aesthetic reasons, I became very much more aware of the physical, social, cultural and religious contexts of these artifacts and the sense of the surrounding natural environment. The basis for the field trip lay in the experience of the context as a result, rather than the posts themselves, which seemed rather repetitive as three-dimensional forms. In consideration, I would not have obtained this information and gained this particular response from merely studying the appearance of the *Vigango* in museums or galleries or from books alone, as the literature did not appear to confirm or enlarge on certain aspects of the '*Koma*' (also plural name given to all three types of

post) coupled by the fact that this society was experiencing rapid changes. Therefore in this respect my research was building on previous anthropological knowledge in this area, as well as contributing to cross-cultural aspects of contemporary art by focusing on the context as central to the interpretation of the objects.

A considerable amount of information was gathered about the rituals and functional aspects of the posts in relationship to the ancestors. This was generally consistent from informant to informant, and could be confirmed by cross-referencing provided by the questionnaire and notebook diaries - see Appendix V, Part One and Part Two respectively. The philosophical aspects of the posts, which information were often scant, were described to me principally by the elders of Kaya Kaume. Although, this information differed from that provided by some of the Giriama *Gohu* or craftsmen I interviewed, or was not acknowledged by them, or indeed, it may have been secret information considered taboo for a woman or 'outsider' to hear. I was made aware of this when visiting Kaya Kaume, when one of the men was stopped from telling us something, and another time in Kaya Fungo, the rhythm of the friction drum on entering the ground was reversed, which indicated the presence of a stranger, which Tinga recognised - refer to the diary entries of 1999.

Lack of information was possibly also through loss of historical detail, particularly as regards to the triangular decoration, which may have derived from scarification markings, specific beads (*Tungo*) worn by young men or even environmental influences – reference Plate 18 Scarification on respondent's wife chest in National Museum of Kenya (NMK) Interim Report of 1999. The general consensus of those interviewed was that the posts must be attractive to both the living and the dead, and that carving on the back of the post was dependant on the skill of the craftsman; but in spiritual terms, where a person was known to be diseased all carved decoration would be absent - Plate 16 Uncarved post at Gedi in NMK Interim Report. Where knowledge had been lost or not known, the interviewees would sometimes give answers that were intended to be helpful but perhaps not accurate, or based on real information. The research, nevertheless, revealed that the spiritual beliefs and concepts behind *Vigango*, *Vibao* and *Koma* were central to the Giriama therefore implying that formal aesthetics as we know it in the West would not apply to these objects as a primary concern. As Mzee Kapombe, a spiritual elder, told me that a *Kigango* would only be considered 'beautiful' if the correct rituals had been paid to it, the shrine over it was in good condition, and that the man had been a good person. The actual carving of the post was irrelevant, as he pointed out that if none of these things were in place even if the carving was considered to be well executed, it would be deemed ugly by the community.

The decoration of the *Vigango* seemed to have no spiritual significance beyond being attractive to the ancestors, as well as to the living. It was mentioned that stylistically the *Kigango* changed very little as there was definite criteria to be followed in the making of them that also reflected the Giriama identity. However Mzee Kapombe had seen one with coins in its eyes, which may have been influenced by Christian funeral practice where coins were put over the eyes of the dead body to prevent evil spirits entering the corpse. This would therefore indicate a reciprocal influence from the West on their

traditional style, although not taken up by many. It was said that this craftsman may have wanted to make it slightly different and more attractive than the others, to entice more clients to use *his* services.

My previous work also showed similarities to aspects of the research in the incorporation of fabric tied to the sticks and amulets, which was the case with the '*Koma*'. In the '*Koma*' the coloured fabric was used symbolically to represent different spirits according to the different colours tied on to the waist and neck of the *Vigango*, *Vibao* and *Koma*. The colours used were red, white and blue and even the placing of one cloth above another was crucial and bore a relationship to Giriama clothing worn at different levels on the body. The blue drape called AMBA was worn by a person over the chest and shoulder, but could also be worn at the neck; blue being a ritual sign, and had associations with the sky and the MBENGU spirit, or heavenly spirit. The MSUMBIJI, which is dark blue, also had a spiritual meaning and was assigned to the *Kigango*.

By living in Africa as opposed to merely visiting it, this experience for me became all the more poignant for subsequent artwork. Paolozzi (1995) in 'Lost Magic Kingdoms' suggested that in order to invent something new from ethnographic material in the West, it could be an advantage not to know too much about the cultural context of the artifact. However, as a result of the field trip, I became much more aware of the physical, social, cultural and religious contexts of the *Vigango* and the sense of the surrounding natural environment. Consequently, I believed that the context of production was more interesting and of greater relevance to an understanding of *Vigango*, than their physical appearance, which ultimately led to my increasing interest in the architectural features of the homesteads, often adjacent to the posts or shrines containing the *Vibao* and *Koma*.

Visually the *Vigango* were repetitive in form, which was to a large extent dictated by unwritten rules of form and design. However the slight variations appeared to be more by accident than intention and often looked as if they depended on the skills and tools for the craftsman. Therefore it would appear that there was no one specifically assigned as a master craftsman.

Therefore, thinking that the ethnographic material alone set in its original context would provide the source of inspiration for the artwork, I found that it was the peripheral environment that then became the main focus for my sculptural research. The posts for me did not become more imbued with aesthetic qualities as I studied more of them, although the philosophical aspects of the posts fascinated me. These concepts were described to me by the spiritual elders of the Kaya Kaume. They informed me that the posts, being human height, were buried from the waist down in the earth, which was considered to be the spiritual world, but seen above the ground and therefore in the physical world and a visible reminder to the living that the ancestor was omnipresent. Therefore the posts were both concealed and revealed at the same time.

In Kenya the earth houses were constantly undergoing repair to abate decay which was like a regenerative process, much like the rituals surrounding death of a man which involved ritual sexual intercourse between the recently inherited wife of the man and his

eldest brother, the benefactor, therefore symbolising procreation and regeneration of life.

By using terracotta clay as a material in my work I symbolically represented the earth and the environment of Kenya, reminiscent of the shelters / houses which were made from the earth, coupled by the fact that most of the objects in the environment were dusted with it. Earth or clay being a formless substance could represent chaos and disorder likewise the notion of dirt but from a relative stance could be indicative of construction and order too - so that it had the potential of being a material that could be constructed but also decomposes freely symbolising birth and death creation or decay. As Douglas (1966:162) said 'Formlessness is therefore an apt symbol of beginning and of growth as it is to decay'. This can be secular or have religious significance. The sticks used in housing have a significance for me both from the point of view of being part of a framework or construction in a formal sense, using verticals and horizontals, but also can be representative of life and death, if man in life is seen as vertical and in death as horizontal.

Linking in with my previous art work where I wrapped boot laces, ribbons, cloth, string and strips of bark and leather around the sticks, I noticed how the framework of the houses also made use of both sticks and bark in their construction from the Mkone tree; and having symbolic significance, akin to my initial work prior to the research I constructed symbolic coding for indigenous UK woods from the Celtic tree alphabet. I also saw an earth walled house that made use of pillar constructions (see Plate VI, Figure 13) near Ganze, which linked in with the series of columns I had made before the field work, in which I was emphasising a sense of mortality through their organic disintegration.

During the field trip the sense of instability engendered in me was personal in terms of physical vulnerability, linguistic isolation and dependency, susceptibility to new and fatal diseases. The environment and people also reflected this, with shelters made of organic and temporary materials such as mud or grass, and they told me that it would not be unusual to go without food for two or three days at a time. This sense of vulnerability I translated visually through the vertical structures, which diverge from this upright position by leaning or decaying which symbolised an uneasiness, literally out of balance and vulnerable. In the previous columns I presented a group of objects which collectively showed their vulnerability, and relatively, by contrasting their similarities and differences which was evident in their leaning from the vertical, and their intentional decomposition from the original column which conventionally represents technical perfection and uniformity in its beauty. The *Koma* also leaned at varying angles which created interesting negative space, however if a *Kigango* was not totally vertical, or it cracked in the installation, the Giriama would replace it to restore a sense of balance and order to invoke the ancestral protective powers. A cracked or leaning *Kigango* would be a bad omen usually, it was believed, as a result of an improperly performed ritual at the installation stage or that the ancestor was displeased with the *Kigango* itself. Some of the sticks I have made in the past were hung diagonally and some later works have leaned against the wall, thus creating a sense of tension with the vertical.

From the anthropological view of the field work research, many of the answers concerning the formal aesthetics of the *Vigango* were rather ambiguous and treated with less importance than the spiritual impact of these structures on the people who had commissioned the *Kigango* or *Gohu* members. The clients and community of these posts felt it a necessary intermediary object between the living and the dead for ritual practice, as Mumford (1966:67) cited,

‘The creation of this realm of the sacred, “a realm apart” serving as a connecting link between the seen and the unseen, the temporal and the eternal, was one of the decisive steps in the transformation of man’.

It might be pertinent to establish here that the notion of aesthetics as a critical concern was developed as an academic discipline in the West. However Nigeria and South Africa have recently been building up a formal critical basis to their work in contemporary art practice - reference Courtauld Institute conference of 1997 ‘*Art Criticism and Africa*’.

Through this research trip to Kenya I found that the resulting response I had to the *Vigango* could not have been anticipated prior to the field work and the context for these objects made these commemorative posts seem more alive and important because in the context they still had a function. This function of religious protection, status, group and individual identity, and most of all, spiritual significance cannot be fully realised from the artifacts taken out of the context and shown in a neutral or alien environment such as a museum or gallery setting. Through the literature on these commemorative posts it was made very clear to me how important field work was in order to obtain a more realistic and true picture of the real significance and value of these artifacts to the people that commissioned them, made them and invested spiritual value in them. It was through this meaningful relationship that the Giriama have with these *Vigango*, *Vibao* and *Koma* that made me feel an empathy with the artist’s relationship with his/her work and particularly the creative processes which consolidated these more ephemeral qualities into a collection of physical forms and objects which for me represented the transformation of material existence into symbolic form.

In conclusion, my experiences within the culture became central to the research as I became increasingly aware of the context surrounding these objects. I saw these artifacts from the inside looking out, whereas the European artists looked at these types of objects as outsiders looking in on them. However I was still aware that I was a person not familiar with the nuances of the group, coming from a different cultural background, conditioning and education which ultimately cannot but effect the interpretation of the data on a personal level, through the aspects of the culture that I selected visually and philosophically. Approaching the research with an open mind though, I became in and part of the environment and the people that created these artifacts. I empathised with these peoples belief and acceptance of their own existence in what was quite a harsh environment and sensed their vulnerability, which in turn reflected my own sense of insecurity, being subject to similar external forces.

For more in depth reference to the anthropological aspect of the research, please see the

following published articles, 'Crossing Boundaries' in Msafiri Issue 33, 2000/1; 'The Aesthetic and Spiritual Contexts of Giriama Vigango in Kenya and their relationship to Contemporary Sculptural Form', in Azania XXXV 2000; 'Crossing Boundaries' in Kenya Past and Present no.32, National Museum of Kenya, Museum Society Journal 2002; 'Crossing Boundaries: Art, Context, and Cultural Transformation' in the Journal of Museum Ethnography no.14, 2002; 'Face to Face' by Dr. Tania Tribe for the exhibition catalogue 'Concealed/Revealed' at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London 2003.

It was this fundamental information, gathered on this first field trip to Kenya, that confirmed the importance of the context to a more comprehensive and conceptual understanding of the posts. Experiencing the context and natural environment provided the subsequent interest and appreciation of the local earth built homesteads and surrounding architecture, which lead to the fundamental influences in the production of the artwork. This is evident in the use of red clay, sticks and sisal in the process of making the sculptural piece, titled *Shelter*, which was a very significant work for later creative developments, as outlined in the main text.

## APPENDIX V

### Field Work Questionnaire and Diaries whilst in Kenya

- Part One:**            **Field work questionnaire**
- Part Two:**           **Field work diaries in Kenya from 14 July to  
2 September, 1999 - *Giriama* coastal regions**
- Part Three:**        **Field work diaries in Kenya from 22 March to  
18 April, 2001 - ‘*Crossing Boundaries*’ exhibition,  
National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi**

In Part One, the questionnaire offered a preliminary framework for gathering information about the meanings and symbolism behind the visual appearance of the *Vigango* from an aesthetic perspective. It also then prompted more complex enquiries into social, religious, historical and educative values of the posts. The questionnaire was used as a guide to these semi-structured interviews with the clients of the posts, craftsmen and spiritual leaders. These interviews had to be kept focused as the respondents had a tendency to digress, however sometimes this would lead to valuable information. Time factors were a consideration here, because the respondents would tire if the interview went on for more than an hour to hour and a half. I also had limited time in the field on a daily basis before night fell, and the posts were difficult to find as the interpreter, Tinga, and I had to rely on local reports. In the meantime the posts had often been stolen, or taken off and burnt, by the time we arrived at a location.

The two sets of field work diaries from Kenya, the first in 1999 (Part Two), and the second in 2001 (Part Three), consist of ‘thick description’ from which the analysis and evaluation for the artwork was later drawn, in conjunction with the practical research.



The initial stages of the information gathering process were established through the first research trip to the Giriama coastal regions. The field trip diaries of 1999 describe in detail the essence of the posts, their visual appearance, social, and religious function, the philosophical ideas behind them and the perspective of the people involved with them. They also indicated the contextual value and the environmental, as I was experiencing them, through the impressions of climate, transportation, economics, security, food, natural terrain, relationships with people, time factors and story telling episodes. This first set of diaries (along with photographic images) also served as archive material for the National Museum of Kenya.

The second group of diaries dealt with the working relationship between myself and the Kuona Arts Trust artists, and their responses to the artwork I had produced, after the first field trip to Kenya. I gained a more direct and in depth response from them through the reconstruction of three of the *Panels*, and with the assistance of museum staff, than I would have by merely exhibiting the work. This meant that the verbal exchange could be informal and could last an indefinite period of time. The artwork caused a lot of discussion and debate about house building which was very useful information, as it drew out contrasts between tribal groups and locations. This assisted clarification of the processes of making, meaning and function connected with their regional styles; as for example the delicate textural outer layer the *Kikuyu* applied to their houses, had religious significance in the white material incorporated into the mixture they used (see main text and diaries in Part Three of this Appendix for more detail).

This experience of the *Crossing Boundaries* exhibition, at NMK, documented in the diaries of Part Three, made me reassess the intentions in the artwork and what I was conveying to an outside audience. It affirmed the sense of vulnerability, that I had intended to communicate through the work, as a more general concept, and helped clarify others that, at that time, were not apparent to me. I realized that certain visual messages that seemed evident to me, were not to another audience such as this, in that I assumed that the Kenyans would associate the earth and sticks with house building. However they did not because these materials were used and displayed out of their natural context,

being indoors, had no relationship with the ground, had too many holes and thus would have presented a security risk. Although when I told them that I associated the *Panels* with this (and a UK audience certainly did), in conjunction with the natural environment, only then did they realise how familiar these materials were to them albeit in a more usual context. This led to the insight that materials and processes were culturally recognized, and therefore had their own intrinsic symbolism often defined by the context they were formed and presented in. My subsequent artwork, therefore, adopted a semiotic approach to the materials and processes, in order to integrate and transform the information gathered through the practical research and from the responses I gained from showing the artwork in Kenya. Then later, I evaluated the next body of artwork through the exhibition titled *Concealed/revealed* for a response from a UK audience; which confirmed a successful integration and transformation of the two cultures through the artwork, and an affirmation that it was recognized and accepted by this audience as a form of contemporary art practice, as they would perceive it.

## **Part One: Field work Questionnaire**

This was the initial list of questions used in the field work research to interview craftsmen, spiritual leaders and clients commissioning *Vigango*. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for unanticipated responses and expansion of these.

- 1) What wood is the *Kigango* made of?
- 2) When was it made?
- 3) Does it have a symbolic meaning?
- 4) What do the various shapes/patterns mean or are some purely decoration?
- 5) Why is it this size? Shape? Can it be any size/shape?
- 6) Why are some carved on the front only?
- 7) Why are some carved on the back as well as the front?
- 8) What tools do you use?
- 9) What are the techniques and processes used?
- 10) What do the colours mean?
- 11) Do the numbers of things have any significance?
- 12) What do the colours of the different cloths mean that are tied to the neck and waist and do their positions on it matter?
- 13) Does this artifact relate to the environment in any way? (e.g. plants, body markings, patterns leaves, animals, houses, etc)
- 14) Should the *Kigango* face a certain direction?
- 15) Is this anything to do with the sun/moon or some spiritual meaning?
- 16) Who makes the *Vigango* - one man or several? Altogether or separately?
- 17) How do they see their past, present and future in relationship to erecting *Vigango*?
- 18) What makes a 'good' *Kigango*?

- 19) What differences have outsiders (tourists/researchers/religious sects) meant to their lifestyle? How has it changed? Over how long?
- 20) Have their religious values changed and how?
- 21) Has this affected the meaning of the *Vigango* and its continued manufacture?
- 22) Are some craftsmen better than others at making these items?
- 23) If the craftsman travelled to different places would their carving be changed at all as a result of seeing other *Vigango* of other Mijikenda groups?
- 24) Have you (craftsmen) incorporated any other ideas/designs from others you have seen? Describe who, what, where, and why?
- 25) Do other people from the same ethnic group (Giriama) recognise the signs or patterns still on the *Vigango*?
- 26) Do you think these matters should be taught in schools as part of social life, culture, religious values or citizenship?
- 27) Do you see any beauty in ugliness or vice versa?
- 28) Do you ever repair a *Kigango*?
- 29) Does it matter that the *Kigango* is not permanent and made of something stronger like metal? (Or is it a matter of expense, or spiritual content of the material itself or accessibility of the wood?)
- 30) How long should the *Kigango* last? Does it matter how long it lasts and is it important?

**Part Two: Field work diaries in Kenya from 14 July to 2 September, 1999 - Giriama coastal regions**

**DIARY 1**

15.7.99

Arrived in Nairobi

Went to the National Museum and Art Gallery. Looked specifically at the Giriama artifacts on display among which were as follows:-

A rat trap baited by maize under the baobab 'cup' and the rat is then strangled by the sisal noose. Rats are regularly eaten by the Giriama (see slide of traps at the homestead of Changawa Kidenge at Chalani, Kaloleni). Earplugs made of wood but also use aluminium earplugs worn for ceremonial occasions and dances (see slide: Nairobi Museum). Winnowing grain pan made of Doum palm with natural colours used to create the patterns. A charm for coughs associated by a bad spirit which consisted of brass and copper wire and two cowrie shells mounted on cow hide. This was sold and prescribed by a medicine man, but made by a craftsman. Side Blow Flute made of bamboo with holes made with hot awl, and played at dances. Rattles: a) made of wood (carved) with porcupine quills and b) made of wood, string and straw - KAYAMBA: saw in use at a homestead in Chalani area of Kaloleni. An ivory bracelet called a LUKOSO worn by elders of a secret society. Introduced myself to the Acting head of Ethnography, Mr. Kiprof Lagat who went through the terms and conditions of the fellowship and also tried to charge me for taking each photograph of each artifact - had to negotiate this! Fredrick Omondi, one of the staff there showed me a few artifacts quickly and his opinion of the different Mijikenda groups was defined by language differences rather than aesthetic characteristics of the material artifacts - this was not strictly true as found in the field, according to a craftsman at Kaya Kaume, Barisa Mbaruk who made some distinction between Giriama patterning and his own, however it was found that rather than regional differences there seemed to be individual differences between craftsmen themselves (see fieldwork sketch books for drawings of the *Vigango*).

The museum's policy in the regional museums is to show artifacts from that particular region rather than an eclectic mixture of items from differing tribal groups. Therefore the educative value of this arises in terms of possible isolation of knowledge by limiting items to what local people already know about and have seen (as I found in the field that craftsman knew little about other designs from other localities and believed that their tribe was the only one to produce such objects as *Vigango*). On the other hand by exhibiting these objects in a relative place of importance may make the local people re-evaluate the significance of these objects in relationship to history, heritage and time - as people seemed ambivalent about time as we see it in the West. Specific times or dates were recorded in peoples minds by events that occurred at the same time rather than by

number e.g. an eclipse, drought, famine, etc. this happened in regard to birth dates (since independence have been officially estimated and documented by issuing identity cards which people showed me when asked what date they were born). Again dates of the erection of the *Vigango* were very ambiguous and people had to recollect through association with relatives or events. Locations, although, intuitively mapped by local people were again vague when I needed to document more precisely, so that two places in Dida became Dida: place of the red soil (MUTSARFIA MUTHUNE) and Dida: place of the black soil (NGAMANI).

Visited the current exhibition of Kenyan artists who were affiliated to the KUONA Trust who are based at the museum and are part of the Triangle Arts Trust in London originally set up by the sculptor Antony Caro and partner Robert Loder. Salim (Peter) Nyansui Mbuvi became one of my main contacts with the artists as he came from Limuru where I used to teach and Morris Foit seemed a designated co-ordinator within the group being more senior.

Historically it is not known exactly why the Mijikenda started making these *Vigango* or commemorative posts in the present form found and collected to date. The origin of the Mijikenda tribes initially six groups, but later became nine, migrated from Sungwaya in Somalia to the coastal region of Kenya in the 16th century although some sources reckon earlier than that in the 6th century. The *Giriama* were one of the first tribes to settle and establish a Kaya on the coastal ridge. However some of the Bantu speaking peoples migrated to East Africa from the Congo in West Africa and there appears to be a link with the language used by both these sets of people and there has been some tradition of making grave posts in the Eastern part of the Congo.

As I walked to the Museum the Maize roasting stands attracted me in terms of their forms that were made up of natural elements, usually large slabs of stone with a round stone on the top on which is a moulded clay covering and a charcoal fire started in the middle of that. The individual differences were also an interesting element as one stand I saw had an up turned metal dustbin as the base structure and yet others made use of old concrete rubble/blocks retrieved from road renovations. All were however about human waist height and vertical structures built out of various large blocks.

#### 16.7.99 Nairobi

Yesterday found the Kwale, Kilifi and Taita District Socio-Cultural Profiles in the small research library at the museum - maybe useful for Giriama witchcraft and material culture, but also Occasional Paper, books and a pamphlet, may give some useful definitions.

Noted the contrast of the modern blocks using glass and steel as materials with the other types of building using strips of wood and mabati (corrugated iron) as roofing material.

Had a further conversation with Salim about the nature of art. He concentrates on selling to the tourist trade which he says is very seasonal and 'so has other jobs as well' like working on the shamba to sell fresh produce, and therefore makes art to sell rather than to

exhibit or works to commission. He uses different woods, Eucalyptus (hard but light in colour) and other local light woods but also the ends of palm fronds which he coats after carving with polyurethane varnish. He also works with school children involving them in singing, dancing and music so that would suggest that he is more versatile rather than being a specialist within a particular field of art as with quite a number of artists at the Trust. He said that Germans and Italians bought the most artwork followed by Americans. He has exhibited at the Gallery Watatu in Nairobi, which was run by Ruth Schaffner (died 1996) but now it is rather run down and owned by her husband. One of the new artists was a former street child (Ebrahim Kariuki) who found that he could make some money producing sculptures.

Went off to lunch to eat goat at a restaurant (Nyama Choma) with Salim and then on to Limuru by matatu to seek out old friends. Noticed various mabati house structures at Rwara on the way, which were covered with a layer of red earth dust from passing traffic. Some car doors were used as decorative features on walls or fences and buildings made of grey hand-hewn blocks were cemented rather liberally together like layers of butter icing between a sponge cake.

Overall I felt more at ease in the rural area accompanied by someone I could trust, however I still felt a bit vulnerable as a white woman on my own in what is now a poorer country than it was ten years ago and relatively very few white tourists around now because of bad security.

17.7.99  
Nairobi

Visited Gallery Watatu, PO Box 41855, Nairobi which ten years ago was at the cutting edge of local art but now looked rather run down which was reinforced by the local artists including David Kimani one of the painters taken on by the gallery some years ago.

Began to realise that my previous memory of these places on my return to the UK was rather romantic and what I had absorbed from my contract in Kenya was subconscious imagery from the environment in terms of the materials used for building, trees in the natural environment and general struggle for survival by those around me but more emphasised now with increased poverty and population since I was last there.

18.7.99  
Nairobi

Met Dr Paul Lane at the British Institute of Eastern Africa. Talked of concepts of space and spatial relationships within homesteads briefly. Reference Jacobson-Widding, A (1991) 'Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience'. Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology no.16 Stockholm, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis Distributed by Almqvist and Wiksell International. Spatial concepts may include right (female) and left (male), high and low, centre and periphery, but also spatial concepts can represent divisions and partitions whereas the

body represents a whole or unity - perhaps further spatial concepts are represented by hiding (burying something) and revealing something to be seen therefore publicly - this I found to be true of the *Vigango* which are half buried but the top part on view is a reminder to the living of the dead ancestor. In Giriama life male activities are often associated with the centre and the female with the periphery or public and private activities: Females are often not included in rituals because they cannot be initiated like the men to secret societies or cults, and an uninitiated man is considered to be 'female' and represented as such by being given *Koma* at death not *Vigango* or *Vibao*. In secret fertility cults and other ritual practices these rules or concepts can be transposed or reversed e.g. when entering the *Kaya Fungo* the rhythm of the sacred friction drum was played in reverse on my arrival to give out the message that an 'alien' had arrived in the compound (see diary entry 13.8.99). Therefore the centre/periphery model could be transformed into the female symbolising a vessel (in fact as well as the sacred drum which was kept in the centre of the *Kaya* representing male power, a large pottery vessel was also kept centrally and represented the females of the *Kaya*), womb and subordinated periphery equates with the encompassing container (central). Therefore "The shift of emphasis takes place via a switch of symbolic codes, from spatial symbolism to a metaphor derived from the body" (Jacobson-Widding 1991:18). The house can represent the human body and often the main part of the living area is referred to as the stomach of the house. Also what happens inside and what happens outside may be of importance e.g. inner perhaps irrational, and outer maybe rational boundaries.

19.7.99  
Nairobi

Started to photograph and document Giriama artifacts by drawing diagrammatically along with written information already catalogued in the big sketchbook. The patterns/symbols on the beaded armbands were often shapes related to the house such as the windows, roof and a 'patch' (or repair?). However when asked whether the patterning on the *Vigango* related to anything in their environment, including body scarification, it appeared not to be so, the only explanation given was that it should represent the human body and sometimes alluded to the interior organs of the body as well as the external appearance by way of facial features, otherwise no other explanation was given in relationship to the environment and they indicated that this was the traditional practice. (Maybe this could be so conceptually because the post represented a spiritual force rather than anything seen in the real world?)

Repair and replacement is an interesting theme. An example was a chain repaired and joined by wrapping a piece of black elastic around the two strands; black elastic had been used on a breastcloth to replace the broken string tie; a rubber section had replaced an aluminum one in a waistbelt, and cooking pots (*surfrias*) had been recycled to make earplugs, belt clasps, necklaces, etc. A lot of things made of glass, such as beads, were now replaced by plastic or synthetic materials. Old currency was also used for decoration on aprons, but also found on *Vigango* as a decorative feature too (see diary entry 2.7.99 interview with Ngala Kalombi Dadu, and fieldwork sketchbook *Kigango* at Mombasa Museum).



Environmental influence on pattern on armbands included house structure, arrows, windows, patch, and man. The idea of the woman's waistbands being highly decorative and yet secret/hidden from public gaze was an interesting concept - could tie in with themes of burial, not seen. However, it was linked with a woman's' sexuality in that their husbands found it exciting when they saw it under the clothes where it was traditionally worn.

Thought of some recommendations for the museum:- 1) Urgent need for oral archive material from older people who still remember traditions as third generations have no knowledge of these customs. 2) Conservation - packed separately in boxes in trays or tissue paper (acid free?) 3) Handlers to wear cotton gloves 4) Closed boxes to prevent dust 5) Less arbitrary classification into boxes (body jewellery in with witchdoctors containers) and dates recorded accurately 6) Take photographic records of artifacts with measurements therefore preventing less handling 7) Photographic record of how an item is used/worn in the field ) More technical detail perhaps.

20.7.99

Spent morning at the British Institute library looking at books on house structures and was given some research recording forms for surveying homesteads and their structures from a Swedish research project in another African country (Botswana).

The afternoon was spent at the Nairobi Museum documenting the artifacts. Found the *Kigango* interesting as the decoration after looking at it closely resembled a visual map and various directions indicated by arrows. Also photographing it next to a tree brought it out clearly that the colour used for staining was probably the soil as the termite traces in the tree were matching in colour.

21.7.99

Thought how the materials used reflected the environment they lived in e.g. beeswax (inlay) and also using seeds in the gourds as rattles - I have also used seeds but for symbolic purpose in my previous work. Also perhaps I should be more aware of my own environment in UK - although I prefer the natural to the built environment. However building materials here in Kenya tend to be more natural whereas in UK they are more industrial (bricks, concrete, plastic foam, etc.). The way things are repaired or fitted/joined is still quite different between the two cultures if made/repared by hand.

Another goat lunch at Chewi restaurant!!! - "Careless mistakes are always done by others. Here at Chewi we only make unavoidable ones" - hands smelt of goat (as it is usual to eat with your hands having washed them before and after the meal). Eucalyptus is also a very evocative smell, likewise charcoal burning and fires.

22.7.99

Driving licence arrives from UK so off to Mombasa by train today. Collected grant from the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

The Mombasa museum according to Mr Kiprop Lagat has ten *Vigango* - so will document them and speak to Mr Tinga to arrange an itinerary to the hinterland. Hope to get transport soon. Noticed that the Swedish research on homesteads was done with a team of at least four people over a period of three full days to record one house and they said that their research was limited. (See documents) However, their research tended to be very factual, and their questionnaires very prescriptive - therefore not allowing for "unknown" or unpredictable factors to occur.

The train from Nairobi to Mombasa was an hour late starting as they were waiting for an engine! - this was the train that had a derailment recently which resulted in a number of deaths and locals then boycotted going by train and still remain a bit wary of it. During the night the train was a bit shaky intermittently and even my fellow carriage mates had been a little apprehensive.

Signs in the train seemed to be very numerous - some of them humorous - at the station "2nd.class Ladies Lavatories".

Salim told me that there is a new language among the young people called 'Shane' which is a new language made up of a mixture of English and Kiswahili which is an interesting development from Kenya's Independence in 1963. Salim was saying that he made art about social comment but what he meant by that was that he made artifacts that he could see in the environment. He had been given a job of repairing someone's awful sculpture (driftwood which was supposed to be a donkey) to get a bit of money but was doing it free, because it was for their daughter's birthday - he felt a) like me it wasn't artistically worth repairing although he "didn't want to disappoint them" b) that he didn't have enough time to repair it well, and c) he hated doing a shoddy job (a matter of pride). Elements of craftsmanship, but also aesthetic awareness perhaps? Will be interesting to show my work to them on my return to Nairobi - going to be in the lecture theatre on Thursday 26th.August "Sticks 'n' Bones: a Cross-Cultural approach to Sculptural Form". Perhaps tape the feedback?

23.7.99

Passed **Mwenbini** out in the dry bush - getting nearer the coast it is beginning to look more green and patches of maize cultivation. **Manjewa** then **Maji-Ya-Chumvi** - start of the palm trees. Landscape shows a lot of verticals - trees/scrub. Also bundles of sticks left possibly for collection later. Workmen holding 'walking' sticks. Females collecting water on their heads in large plastic drum containers. Much more fertile now with green grass and more ground-cover. Now first Baobab tree. Building is a mixture of grass thatch (often with metal plates on apex) or corrugated iron. One corrugated roof had a gap between wall and where the roof met, for ventilation perhaps. Some roofs are made up of pieces of corrugation with mud and stick walls. Plastic bags are also used to cover up and protect from wet, etc. More houses here made of concrete with mabati roofs 'tiled' in sections - one or two roofs are actually tiled with Spanish type terracotta tiles. **Mariankani** - double Kangas worn more on head and round waist - totos wear over one shoulder knotted across the body. Start of industrial factories. Palm belt again - traffic - lean-twos made with palm leaf thatch roofing material (makuti). More fruit trees, mango

and pau pau. Ibis - steps cut into palms. Lilac breasted rollers (birds). Some walls appear to be applied with tennis ball size pieces of mud and therefore more compacted perhaps? **Mazeras** - quite a community. **Miritini** - almost there. Some wash-houses, square or round, with synthetic sacking tied to side leaving top open.

Eventually arrived in Mombasa - no Geoff Turner to meet me - station telephone didn't work - got hassled - got taxi to Southern Cross Safaris - offices moved! - eventually arrived - waited one and a half hours for Geoff who was in a meeting and then got delivered to this hell hole - mosquitoes everywhere - windows that don't close, smashed/missing - cockroach waiting for me on the bed approx. 2" long - cockroach dirt everywhere - centipede - gecko in the cupboard without a tail - spiders (the least of my worries!) and what looks like mouse or rat droppings. Water is off 'till Monday so using plastic drums of water (turned out to be off all the week I was there and had to recycle washing water into the loo). Luckily there was a small fridge and two electric fans which could keep the mozzies down a bit - dingy light bulbs in the ceilings except the sitting room where there was none at all, used candles. Whole place disgustingly dirty. It was also in a run down area of Mombasa near the Likoni ferry area, which GT assured me was safe - little did I know. Couldn't stand it so went out to get some food at the local supermarket (thank God there was one! but alas no matches or cigarette lighters - they had sold out! So next crisis - was told I would be robbed if I went to a Duka (great, just what I want to hear!) but luckily this man in the grocers sold me some - so a cup of tea was on the menu after all! Felt a bit fed-up and a bit apprehensive about security at this point.

Will try and 'phone Anne Taylor tomorrow about accommodation in Kilifi - not getting a vehicle until Thursday!

Will try and take some photos of the structures up the road tomorrow with their fraying flour sacks/tin, etc. Then might go towards Fort Jesus just to time myself for Monday morning's meeting with Mr Tinga.

Been thinking about the politics of dirt and the level of dirt, dust and earth, which is tolerated here. Also the act of cleaning and purification.

24.7.99

Went to find Hassan Wario's (Head of the Ethnography Dept. Nairobi Museum presently doing his own research in UK) friend at 'Lamu Antiques' in case I needed their assistance, as GT was obviously unreliable. The man was not there but I talked to his younger brother in the business. He told me the wood used for making furniture is the same as the Lamu doors - Mbambakoffi (coastal) and Mvule Campher (up country wood) These were indigenous hard woods but they also used teak and ebony imported from India.

Set out to contact Anne Taylor and arranged to meet her at the GPO Kilifi on Thursday at 11.30 am. - public 'phone gobbled up money and cut me off once - anyway managed to get through to her which was a relief.

Took some photos of some of the *Dukas* but was a bit wary of doing so as people did not seem over friendly - in fact I feel uncomfortable carrying food back to the 'maisonette'.

When I got back at approx. 3pm there were a lot of men parked right outside the flat obviously selling stolen goods (radio cassettes and sound gear) as they looked at me shiftily - so I had to decide whether to retrace my steps or go on in - decided on the latter as they looked there to stay and I had nowhere else to go. However I sneaked around hoping they would go.

Earlier in the day I was shown around Mombasa by this man called Sultan who acts as a guide (really people on the make) and tended to be a bit of a pain but I suppose needed to make money out of tourists and there were not many of them around! Lots of Somalians live in Mombasa now and wear the yashmaks over the nose with only the eyes showing whereas the Swahili women only have their buibui up over the chin but you can see their face.

It was now raining heavily (4pm) having rained hard in the morning from about 7.30 to 9 am. The long rains are supposed to stop at the end of this month.

Went to visit the old church near Fort Jesus and found it rather a sanctuary away from people and feeling safer. If nothing else I suppose Christianity may have given some sense of order in terms of killing and stealing - but this also is an economic issue as I am perhaps to find out.

I was thinking about my perceptions this time and realise how romantic one can be if removed from the poverty they experience - however I think living in a mud hut is better than this smelly, dirty, place (stinks of urine where people have urinated behind the block and in the corridor outside.

Our two cultures show sharp contrasts and the divisions in terms of economics seems to be growing. When I was out here last I was lucky enough to have transport which again protected me from the 'outside' and also the outings into the bush were with a group of, usually men, and so was relatively safe - also we tended to go where there were not many people and sometimes a guide was hired too.

People tell me that by the end of the rains there is a lot of sickness around (malaria) - I suppose because the water acts as breeding ground during this time. Everyone talks of government corruption - again today.

Forgot that the earth stains socks - candles that say non-drip are completely drippy - the loo deodoriser is called "Climax" disinfectant - and the matches advertise 'Panga Soap'! Panga being a machette- thank goodness for a sense of humour!

Sunday 25.7.99

The electrical goods sellers didn't go until nearly 10pm last night and are here again this morning - still feel very vulnerable. Will sort out my slides again, do some reading and maybe venture out to take more pictures of the dukas. I am not sure of the pattern of most peoples day on a Sunday so will have to have my wits about me. Forgotten how much one depends on ones wits out here and cultivate acute observations - maybe I am getting a bit paranoid?

Looking through slides of my work begin to recognise the significance or emphasis placed on some the sculptures - e.g. Protective Charm - against people and illness (Malaria and Cholera) - government banned cooking outside in old town Mombasa because of cholera, end of the rains brings more 'sickness' - (malaria according to 'Sultan'); patched up or segmentation/fragmentation of materials put together to make a whole - flour bags, polythene bags/sheet, corrugated iron, timber pieces; sticks or trees used for building constructions NOT sawn timber; colour not necessarily an issue in built structures - but dress yes and some of the designs link to the house structures - so anthropologically there is a connection with the artifact and the life style.

The context of photos I am taking now seem to tie in with the columns I have already made - the sticks on the outside and corrugations on the inside - these structures are built using sticks for the framework and clad with the corrugated iron. The 'patched' column was using fragments of corrugated iron put together to make a whole.

Grills seem to be more oppressing this time and evident in most structures basically to keep out people /thieves.

Insecurity could be a theme represented by imbalance - uneasiness. Glass shards cemented on top of the walls.

After braving it out and taking quite a few photos of the dukas I returned home about 3pm. Met a bloke who lives in the next block who introduced me to his sisters and nieces and said if there was anything I wanted to ask. Felt a bit better. However he told me that the blokes selling the electrical stuff were from Uganda and the goods were ex-European stock! - sold very cheaply - so wondered whether this lot were no good.

Then later I got a knock at my door - hesitated then on 2nd./ 3rd. knock decided to open it - there was a bloke there asking 'about a house' - didn't know whether he meant he was looking for a particular house or looking for a house to live in - I guessed just generally nosey as he looked both ways over my shoulder into the room. Anyway said he must have the wrong house and shut and locked the door firmly. So I am now dreading a revisit! Feel like I am writing my last will and testament.

Going back to the woodwork shop yesterday - it was interesting that the designer asked my opinion on the placement and number of emblems on a 'Lamu box' he was making for a client (the Sheik of Oman) and he insisted on one thing, that the box was not carved on one of the sides as he said it was traditionally put against the wall (and therefore wouldn't be seen) however the client rather wanted it carved all around because he was going to

put it in the middle of the room. Interesting debate of two cultures - not sure whether the designer (a so called traditionalist) was so consistent in his argument and the client looked quite bewildered that he had to argue for what he wanted!!! (acting on behalf of the Sheik presumably).

Interesting fencing with lines of trees used as uprights to string chicken wire type netting between- in other words used what was already there and adapted it- a 'ready made' fence - resourcefulness.

Since I was last in Mombasa there appears to be an influx of Somali people who are not really trusted or perhaps respected amongst the local community. Likewise where I am staying the woman I talked to, said that some of dukas were run by locals but there were 'outsiders' and maybe not to be trusted.

Monday 26.7.99

Met Miqdad's younger brother again today at the antique furniture workshop and will go back there later.

Looked at the 'art exhibition' in the old museum building - noticed Julian Skinner had done a painting of Giriama water well which looked very rural. A lot of the paintings are a romantic view of life and do not either reflect the struggle of life or the dirt - particularly in the streets of old Mombasa town by one of the artists which was however done in 1991 when perhaps the streets were a touch cleaner. Does time and distance romanticise things or can it be that even living in the present can be unpleasant and therefore needs to be romanticised to be bearable?

Meeting with Tinga

Bajuni woodworkers are indigenous Swahili (Lamu Wa gunia) - design windows and doors very similar to the *Vigango*. There is a possibility that Mugow, in Somalia, is the place called Sungwaya where the Giriama were supposed to have migrated from - contact Atman Houssein at the Swahili Cultural Centre for more information on this. There is some debate about diffusion from the Congo or Sudan as the roots of the Giriama/Mijikenda tribes.

*Vigango* shrines at Gedi - said that the Mijikenda are quite mixed now but he can distinguish between each sub-clan still by the hair styles, dress, behaviour, etc. - so naturally the difference is still important to a large extent (linguistics also plays a large part in recognition of different dialects, clans and locations). Not much investigated about the meanings of the designs as he says they are so familiar to him that he doesn't even question what they mean! He says that there is quite a bit of documentation in USA but not some much in Kenya - ref. Thomas Spear - recent works/books at University of Wisconsin at Madison - although he has recently died. Also an Italian at Malindi has a number of *Vigango* lining his drive.

*Vigango* tend to be more in the homesteads rather than in the Kayas (born out by the research done in the field by myself), which were their original place. One stall in the USA had as much as 5000 *Vigango* on it (1993) so that must mean that the trade has continued. Some *Vigango* have been cemented into the ground 1 and a half metres down and others have been burnt as people have been converted to other religions within their own tribal group (confirmed by the fieldwork). Tinga also reckoned that the Giriama were more aesthetic than other sub-clans but gave no evidence for this (this opinion tended to arise because the Giriama had not seen *Vigango* made by other Mijikenda tribes and so assumed their work to be the best). Ivory or 10 cent coins placed in the navel of the *Kigango* symbolised wealth (although in the field this process was often to please and attract the ancestors).

Different craftsmen produce different stylistic features in different localities (this was not strictly true as most of the individual craftsman had individual idiosyncrasies and materials altered fractionally from one area to another).

Clothes wrapped around the waist and neck of *Giriama* people were significant. The red cloth around the waist was called MKUMBUU, which is a sign of seniority. The white cloth is equivalent to a loin cloth. The blue drape called AMBA is worn over the chest and over the shoulder - can be used on the neck and tied like a tie. The HANDO skirts worn by females are also evident on the *Koma*. These types of cloth are seen on the *Vigango* (but also *Vibao* and *Koma*). Blue is a ritual sign and is associated with the sky and the MBENGU spirit or heavenly spirit. MULUNGU is the word for God and the first song sung at a funeral is a slow song to invoke the God spirit. White is the BAFUTÅ spirit related to purity. Also white is the SARUNI which has no spiritual significance is worn by females over the shoulder (there was no evidence of this dress seen in the field now 1999).

The NEEM TREE (?) cures more than 40 different diseases - not used for carving but for medical research. Found all over the coastal area.

The woods most used for making *Vigango* are:-

- 1) MUHUMBA - used for ritual and medicinal purposes
- 2) MWANGA - Mainly used for permanence
- 3) MKONE - Used for uninitiated males and females (*Koma*). This tree is also known as a COOL tree (Mihi-Ya-Peho) [of which there are quite a few such as the Baobab and Neem trees). PEHO means wind /shade which the tree affords however the Neem Tree often has quite a few snakes in it in rural areas according to Tinga.

The Baobab or Mkone tree is used in a ritual as a consequence of an abnormal birth whereby the child is drowned in a grave filled with water dug at the foot of the tree, and the baby put in it. Leaves of the Baobab and Mkone tree are used in herbal concoctions. The former tree can also be used for other ritualistic purposes.



Ref. Birth. The baby stays in the mother's house for a period of time (10 days for a boy, 4-5 days if a girl) and is considered part of the 'female world' and is only amongst females. Then it is taken to other houses and given gifts - this is recognised as the 'outer world'. If the baby dies in the first ten days it is buried IN the house and a cleansing ritual proceeds to prevent this happening again. The third day after the death a healer makes up a herbal concoction in a gourd and the parents must cleanse themselves under a Baobab tree at dusk. This involves placing the gourd between the couples legs while they have sexual intercourse in a certain position and then the couple have to stand up and step back onto the gourd crushing it and not looking back then walk away from the tree.

The baobab tree can contain good or bad spirits, which can inhabit passers-by. Water is a very important part of a lot of ceremonies including divining.

Rattles are made and used for invoking the spirits, as well as entertainment. Water is used with Divinations a) by master healers and diviners - to find a 'mystery or thief' and who will see the face of the culprit in the water, b) by witches or wizards to put to bad use by summoning the image of a person and 'cutting' the image in the water with a razor blade and often used in conjunction with a noose attached to the witch's gourd which is filled with the water. The razor blades equate with a double-edged sword.

Water is one of the five means of survival - shelter, food, fire, sun, water.

Other links to *Vigango* to look at maybe tattoos, combs, scarification, links with Muslim, Swahili and Christian cults.

Ref: Bristol University -Mark Horton - biography on the areas. James Allen and Howard Brown PhD thesis.

Athman Lali Omar = Head of Coastal Archeology at Fort Jesus  
Ali Abubakar = Chief Curator

Tuesday 27.7.99

- 4) MWAMBA (Mbamakofi) also used for making *Vigango*. This was used for making contemporary replicas of *Vigango*.

The Mango tree (MWEMBE) is also known to be a Cool Tree.

Met Tinga first thing to try and arrange for company and introductions - he said he might try and spend two days a week with me going around to some of the Kayas - Kaya Giriama, Kaume, Chonyi, Kambe which were mentioned in Wolfe III (1986). Tinga was surprised to see the articles I had on the grave markers and didn't know and hadn't seen some of the other sub-clan types - this surprised him as he has only seen sticks for Koma instead (possibly in recent times which may mean that the other clans stopped making them before the Giriama or that at that point he was not so interested in them and didn't notice them perhaps).



At lunch we talked a lot about his religion (Pentecostal) and how he prays about three times a day which I can see almost acts like a ritual in itself - Friday seems to be the 'holy day' much like in Islamic religion which makes me wonder how much it is influenced by a Swahili culture.

Made photocopies of the articles for the library to keep.

Carried on documenting the *Giriama Vigango* and the artifacts. As I started to get a bit bored with the routine of this I started to see other things in the objects, as for instance their relationship to other materials around them - this became quite interesting and perhaps a bit of a breakthrough.

As I walked home tonight I began to feel that I settled in better and less paranoid about walking down the street with people looking at me - began to feel more at home - maybe too it was because I felt I had a job to do and 'looked like it' with my books/folders and rolled up newspaper.

As I was walking it was growing darker and the skies were really beautiful pinks and the moon was full and seemed bigger and nearer than at home - it really was up lifting in the midst of what could only be described as poverty. So it seemed that even nature can overcome the grotty and lift one's spirits.

Found out where the water was today and filled one of the huge containers tonight so that I can wash and pull the loo without too much recycling - bit of a relief!

Bloody vehicle is not going to be ready until Thursday evening WOW! - so I just hope Geoff can hassle it along. Therefore will have to replan going to Kilifi and reschedule meeting Anne Taylor at the GPO on Thursday at 11.30am! Managed to get stamps and post off letters and pc's today too - this seems like the only way to communicate with people - the BT. charge card does not work from public phone boxes here in Mombasa.

These non-drip candles are a joke - the table is now awash with candle trails like molten lava.

Braved it on the Matatu tonight - lucky I had the right change! - otherwise, there is a danger you do not get any change back.

Started to notice that some of the *Vigango* shapes were coming out in different artifacts, such as the pliers, when open reminded me of the cross shape formed by the two sets of triangles going down the sides of the markers - also colours in the bead work were coming out as being similar e.g. white, blue, red - which have spiritual significance (as noted 26.7.99).

Became interested in playing with scale/measurement of these artifacts - some actual size and shape as I traced around them and others I drew not to scale but actually measured

and recorded. Which is more real, the visual or the measured??! - or to be really accurate should a scaled drawing be the final solution, but this still somehow not realising the full impact of something visual or as it is?

It's 8.50pm now and I am feeling knackered so will retire.

28.7.99

Yesterday was told how Mombasa got its name by one of the staff (audio-visual) he said that an English ship arrived and one of the sailors told the captain "Mwamba Sir" meaning 'Rock Sir', which got reinterpreted as 'Mombasa'!

Whilst documenting the items this morning got interested in the witchcraft - healing mixtures and talismans. The idea of burying things crops up again.

Brian told me that there were many snakes in Kilifi - one small snake expands when threatened and can throw itself at you before you attack it if it feels threatened. It is small and black - it is so strong (emphasising its level of expansion!) that it can turn a car over (as when it expands under the tyre it pushes the car over or imbalances it!) Great! Hope I do not meet one! Some of them have colourful stripes too.

After telling me the 'story' of how law and order is kept in the Taita village yesterday recalling the final resolution of the elders on matters of adultery or getting a baby before marriage Brian seems to exhibit a rather interesting tendency for doom and gloom!!!

## DIARY 2

28.7.99

Sunny day arrived at 8.30am at the museum. Spent the day documenting mostly witchdoctors / healers items which were very interesting. In fact one of them that was considered to be quite powerful (8F also contained THE black powder, which was supposed to be lethal in another charm) still seemed to smell quite pungent! Mr.Tinga came in to the conservation department and we discussed this - he said that even *he* felt that after handling this type of charm he started to feel itchy but realised it was 'in the mind' - perhaps fear of the unknown? Brian, the assistant in the lab. said he thought his hand was going to start shaking but 'of course thought better of it'. I must confess I washed my hands after some of the black sooty stuff got on my hands in case it was poisonous. (Purification ritual?) He also told me (Tinga) the story of the snake charm (or Pengu) No.28 which I have documented in the large sketch book [However Jimmy Charo, from the Dida area, who is going to assist me on Saturday reckoned that his charm was to *prevent* snakes and was tied around the leg (demonstrated this on his own leg)- so there is perhaps some inconsistencies in the information *or* maybe it can be used for good or bad!

Brian told me that in Taita they ground a snakes head up into powder and put it into a

piece of cloth and stitched it up and then put it into the pocket to prevent snake bite.

I am finding that I am probably getting more information by informal unstructured interviews (really conversations) with people than perhaps I would otherwise - as a more formal approach may inhibit information because of pressure to 'perform' and so perhaps one would be told all sorts of stories to 'please'. Generally the way things work here is to accept things as they are and work around them - as for example the car 'nightmare scenario'!

Geoff Turner (GT) had still not got the car 'put together' literally and so the only solution was to hire a vehicle for the next six days, which was rather pricey but I have no alternative! So Tuesday hopefully I will be able to pick up the other one - gave him a down payment so that they can buy a part for it!

Packed up my things ready to go to Kilifi and meet Anne Taylor as previously arranged before she went off on safari - cannot wait to get out of this dump.

Brian walked me home tonight which was nice as I got hassled on the way to the museum again this morning!

29.7.99

All ready to go - tidied the dump and waited - surprise, surprise GT was not too late arriving and drove me to see the husk of the car I was supposed to be hiring (quite a joke really, literally a set of wheels, a body, nearly all the engine, no seats or windows or door panels!!! - needed a part apparently! So maybe ready Monday - hope GT gets his friend (a musungu) in gear! Then I picked up the red Suzi Jeep and drove to Kilifi. Parts of the road were not very good at all but better than I had started imagining - it only took me about an hour (as opposed to the one and a half hours that Anne had reckoned on).

Felt a slight relief leaving Mombasa behind and entering relative countryside with palm trees and sisal fields and eventually a few Baobabs. Found Kilifi town OK and did some photocopying at a duka of the documents from NMK for the local chief where Mr. Tinga will be taking me on Monday. Then met Anne at the GPO and arrived here at this WONDERFUL HOUSE right on an arcadian beach- white sands, blue/green clear sea, palm trees, Baobab and Neem trees in the compound. Oh joy to have running water! However cannot have everything the electricity does not work!

The houseboy (man or Mzee) accompanied me on my first shopping expedition and in true Kenyan fashion picked up his mate too and gave him a lift to town!!!

Embarrassingly enough he carried my shopping around for me and again like most Kenyans if he did not have to walk a few yards he was better pleased and would rather take the car.

Met Jimmy Charo tonight whom Anne suggested I had to accompany me into the

villages. I showed him the work I had been doing at the museum which seemed to interest him and he thought the healing /witchcraft stuff was quite amusing and knew it well it seemed and had seen quite a lot of it before. He also seemed to know where to find the *Vigango* still standing in various places which surprised me but he did not seem surprised. When I asked him where these places might be he said around DIDA, GANZE and SOKOKE area- DIDA being where his father lived. His English is not too bad but his local knowledge I think will be invaluable, so hopefully I will gain the right information but double checking the questions and answers, and perhaps rephrasing the same question to see whether the answer is still consistent to get the 'right end of the stick' as it were! We arranged to meet at 8.30am on Saturday to visit these places - he seems a nice bloke and has a sense of humour.

Well feeling a bit more at ease in this place tonight, although one can never count on it - apparently there are some Tanzanian fisherman up the beach on the left that could be dodgy according to Anne Taylor - so will not venture in that direction. In fact if I go down on the beach I will not go far from the house, just basically sit in the cove perhaps, although I would be just as happy here at the house which is nice - unlike the other place that gave me the creeps.

Anne reckons that the locals are better towards white people here although a lot of them now resent the native white Kenyans which must be a bit unsettling for them, to say the least. She also said that she felt very threatened by people in Nairobi now and that Mombasa was not very much better either. I told her I had not seen many white people at all in Mombasa - in fact today I have seen more white people in Kilifi in one day than I have in the previous two weeks. She asked why I had chosen to come out to Kenya when it was still quite unsettled - now she tells me! - but needs must and I had to find out for myself! Anyway I shall certainly *try* and avoid any unnecessary risks.

I can hear the sea roaring outside, the crickets doing their thing and the swishing of the palm leaves - some sounds of course strange and will have to get used to what is *normal* sound for this particular place to feel totally settled again.

Documented what Tinga told me yesterday in large sketchbook ref:collected witchcraft items in 1996. He started collecting for the museum in 1994. He was told by healers that they still used their equipment, so that he could not obtain them directly from them.

30.7.99

The day started out really well, decided to unwind and so some letter writing and reading and decided to go down to the beach to look around. The cove was lovely and luckily the fishermen seemed to be content with catching fish rather than pestering me which was a relief - so I decided to go a bit further down the beach but one bloke looked like trouble so decide to back track to the cove and he did not follow me thank goodness - so stayed and read a book. Later got petrol for tomorrows trip with Jimmy and found the CFCU place and met up with one of the guys that Antony Githitho recommended who seemed to be co-operative to an extent, but remained a bit suspicious - he is the expert on trees

apparently. So have told them I will try and contact them again on Monday at 8am.

Having felt pleased with myself that I had arranged what I wanted to, I had a message from UK to 'phone home as soon as possible! Great! Worry! More Worry! No message of course! - so wondering what it is and cannot get through by 'phone.

There is still no electricity today - so sitting here by candlelight to save the batteries in the head torch.

Looks like an early night!

By talking to the guys at the CFCU I found out that Jimmy is another expert in the field, so I am lucky to get him - useful to know in advance. (However on reflection may have got the wrong end of the stick here, as it later transpired that it could have been another man by the same name working for the Museum in Mombasa).

31.7.99

Jimmy is late - do not know whether he will turn up after all!

Going back to what the CFCU were saying yesterday it seemed that Christianity and Islam have had a tremendous impact on the Giriama religious values and converted a lot of the younger people away from the traditional beliefs. This has caused a disregard for these artifacts as spiritual objects and some have been burnt by the younger generation, others stolen to get money. (Suggested education in schools to prevent this).

Religions seem to be very intolerant of other religions it seems. Amini Tengeza was saying how he heard that one old man had been carved a *Kigango* recently but they were keeping it hidden in the homestead for fear that it would be stolen (so the tradition still operates against the odds) but nobody has been told where it is. There was some debate about this amongst the other staff - Lawrence and the student Kibet - saying that it was not fulfilling its spiritual purpose being hidden away where the rest of the community could not see it but Lawrence thought that its whereabouts could not be kept a secret as totos would find it or stumble across it and tell others.

Jimmy has turned up!- the matatu had a puncture! We set off for Ganze district and visited various sites documented in the large sketchbook (IN THE FIELD: DAY 1. 31.7.99) It appeared that people were more intent on selling anything to a white person thinking they are either a tourist or maybe more suspiciously a 'collector'. People were a bit more amenable once they were told I was doing some research for the museum but even this was not entirely respected, either as museums are really outside most peoples understanding in the rural parts or as having any relevance to them whatsoever. Jimmy's understanding of English and particularly spoken English is rather poor so the explanations are rather limited as expected. However it is also coupled with the fact that the people themselves do not analyse and give things the meanings we might expect them to have, either a) because the artifacts or aspects of them have no meaning in the first

place or b) the people have not been handed down the previous knowledge - the stock answer was well "it's our culture" with no further explanation. We were accompanied by two young boys, the first came with us most of the journey, the second took us to the *Kigango* - DICKSON NZARO. When I asked Dickson about the arrow directions on the *Kigango* in his homestead he said they were merely decoration and even he had not noticed that they pointed in different directions although this was not entirely clear as the carving was rather cruder than previous examples in the museums.

It was interesting that these *Vibao* and *Vigango* were separated from the houses, whereas the other shrines tended to be in the *centre* of the homestead. Maybe this homestead had been abandoned, as there were only a couple of houses?

The inlay was ground up snail shells and some other 'mixture', which altogether looked like mortar (coarse). Jimmy reckoned it was a type of white wash used to infill - maybe like the coarse plaster you can buy here that does not set for ages.

Took a slide of the notches in the palm trees as these are tapped for palm wine, this is like a spirit.

On the way home stopped off at Jimmy's house and met his family - his wife and four totos (Naomi 10yrs, Irene 8yrs, Benson 6yrs and the little one 1yr.). In the homestead lives his mother in one house, next to her his uncle, then himself, then another brother, and then his sister. Schooling for his children in a church school (government) costs 500/- for two months! Looked at the exercise books, which looked very repetitive and pretty useless in terms of essential information - rather basic maths. Felt saddened by this. The mother was showing the two eldest girls how to winnow the maize and dry it on mats - she also wanted a new water container as the other one was pretty useless now but she really needed two. Jimmy wanted to build a more permanent house out of white coral bricks, which he was buying at 6/- each and had only got very few. He said that he had to repair the mud house every two days as it stood. It had a makuti roof. The house had two rooms, basically 'L' shaped. The short cuts through the bush home tended to be for walking rather than vehicles, which proved rather interesting at times and was thankful I did not get a puncture.

Enjoyed today - felt safe too.

Jimmy also said he made up stories to tell the children, their favourite being one about the mouse and the other about monkeys (he pointed to a 'T' shirt which showed the evolution of man from ape and had a text on it explaining that this was not true as man was God's creation - rather a pity!

Also remembered what CFCU related to me about exposing a lot of con artists who profess to be witchdoctors. e.g. this particular witchdoctor stayed the night in a Kaya on his request and then the next day shows CFCU where he had previously buried the clay figures or pots - however he was seen planting them in the ground the night before.



Apparently these witchdoctors can charge clients as much as £30 for a consultation now which is wicked, as a lot of poor people rely on their skills to help them and therefore will almost pay any amount of money. Marriage for a girl now is usually at 19 or 20 years old.

1.8.99

Thought that the locals only really know the general meaning of the *Vigango* and perhaps only the artists/artisans know more about the actual carving of the pieces. Therefore the symbolism may not be entirely universal beyond a certain point - other problems or limitations maybe of course 1) communication difficulties and/or matters of 2) secrecy to an 'outsider' whether they be a) a foreigner or b) not the right sort of initiated person perhaps.

These initial two days with Jimmy are a sort of pilot study to see how the best way of getting information in the field is - think I will have to try and interview a craftsman to find out more symbolic and aesthetic content.

Started at MGUMBAO MKARE MLEWA's house which we visited yesterday - we were sent away to get permission from the chief which I heartily agreed with - as it would seem that this could prevent intruders into the area not on official business - Jimmy seemed not to recognise this etiquette! The chief then gave us a letter. So back we went and then it was agreed that we could take the photos of the *Vibao* and the old man took great delight in the end about telling us who the different *Vibao*'s represented *when asked*. He went inside afterwards and dressed up for a picture to be taken with his relative and two small totos. He could not write his name and on his identity card he had his thumb print and three crosses for his signature - so in fact the letter from the chief had to be read to him. On visiting his brother, who also had *Vibao* in a shrine, we found him a bit drunk and unco-operative and so we left, as he wanted a lot of money. MGUMBAO MKARE MLEWA was a GOHU recognised by the forked stick!

We then left for Dida, Jimmy's father's town. This was in the Arabuko Sokoke Forest area. We wandered through various homesteads and maize fields - we passed a homestead which had a traditional grass house in it but there nearly always seems to be only one of these in each homestead, the rest seem to be made of mud and the oldest person seemed to inhabit it. (The grass thatch seems to attract rats too).

When we reached his father's house he was out, but a                    of his uncle's was there who knew a bit more about the *Vigango* and said he could make one. His name was CHARO KITSAO. He said that the numbers of 'arrows or zig zags' had no significance and that they were just decoration. He demonstrated in the soil a zigzag pattern rather than separate triangles. He said that they infilled the pattern with a white wash type of substance and painted the red ochre on it in the way that he demonstrated to us. He rubbed the lump of ochre on to another type of stone (like York stone - abrasive) and added water to it to produce the pigment (see large sketchbook) and then started to dip a small stick slightly bigger and longer than a matchstick and then applied the pigment to

one of my drawings. He seemed confused by my drawing which was drawn in three dimensions as he took the outside line on the left, not to be the thickness of the *Kigango* but the outside edge, which he proceeded to 'decorate' - is perspective and drawing in 3D a western conception? - or does this man conceive in 2D alone, being a stylistic feature perhaps of the area?

Started to recognise today that local knowledge was kept quite local and beyond certain boundaries they did not know much at all - unless they had travelled further - so their knowledge seems to be restricted by the means or capacity to travel.

The danger of having someone translate for you is that the 'translator' starts interpreting the information for you - as happened today, as when I asked a question instead of asking Charo Kitsao he answered for him when in fact he was just guessing! I really need a) someone whose English comprehension is better b) understands some of the issues connected with historical research and c) knows the relevant people to contact. However it is an experience that is beyond research and verges on friendship and I feel very privileged to have his company and introductions to his people - in spite of the fact he does not always know the right way to go about it.

Charo said that the *Vigango* are carved by one, or perhaps two men at night at about 3am or sometimes dependant on the time of death of the person - usually takes two 'days' to complete. The wood he uses is MWANGA a hard wood. Inlay is with a type of whitewash - gave up asking about beeswax. MBVU is the pigment used for making the *Kigango* red. He said he has been making *Vigango* since 1963 but he reckons they have been made for about 600 years. When asked about dates or how long ago something was made or happened they find it very difficult to pin point a date or number and sometimes therefore make wild guesses - this idea of time past and future seems quite alien perhaps and the NOW or present seems to be what really matters. We left with a piece of stone and the red ochre as a sample. A cockerel came into the compound with a bell attached to its leg so that it could be caught easily - this bell was just like the one that witchdoctors used (see large sketchbook) but smaller.

We then went back to the car, which was about 3km away and drove to another homestead, where the 'red soil' was. This was interesting that a particular homestead was identified within an area by the colour of the soil - therefore the natural environment is here linked with identity of a particular house/homestead. Another area was named after the pumpkins, which grew there. When we got there the ground was almost brilliant red and the homestead very clear of debris and quite a few people in it - the houses were larger than I had seen before and there was a large central area which 'housed' several trees under which were burial mounds with pieces of flat wood as head markers. Near to that was a separate rather overgrown 'shrine' of three *Vibao* without cloths and were being slowly eaten by termites at the bottom. The three *Vibao* were all facing the same way as the other graves were and they were set at the end of quite a large enclosure which was made up of poles made of the same wood as the *Vibao* - this was MUHUHU wood. These posts were roughly human height ranging from 87" through to 73" (most) down to 67 and a half inches. The head of the household JAMES NGONYO KAMBI named all



three *Vibao* (see large sketchbook) and said that they were planted there about 120 years ago. One of the graves amongst the trees in the central area was quite elaborate and was made of concrete with a date on the end. Will revisit this homestead perhaps on Wednesday (unfortunately this was not to be because of the lack of car saga). It also had one traditional house. Women tend not to want to be photographed (although one old lady definitely *did* want to be in the photo at the homestead I went to yesterday).

Interesting combinations of kitsch with mud huts - eg. photo of fluffy white kittens on the wall inside a fairly neat house or pieces of photographs, cartoons, etc. taken from the newspaper and stuck on the outside wall of the house under the roof bit. The maize I was given today in newspaper reported how the whites were 'living it up' in Kenya - tend to feel that there is an anti-whites campaign going on at the moment here which the press are exploiting in relationship to the 'Happy Valley' crowd.

Feel completely knackered today with trying to communicate and get the relevant information I need for the research.

2.8.99

Reference-marriage: senior wife takes a ritual oath to be faithful to her husband which involves washing each others genitals and then an exchange of water takes place, and each has to drink it. On the husband's death the wives often die soon afterwards as this is 'customary'. The senior wife mourns at the head end while the others sit/stand around the sides and bottom. The husband's brother then inherits the wives, the latter having to mate with the senior wife as a ritual part of the funeral. If the brother cannot perform the act under the influence of drink, a younger male is asked to perform this rite/ritual.

Interview with NGALA KALOMI DADU (craftsman: Gedi area)

Preamble: he made a *Kigango* for Jimbe (relative of Tinga's) and became well known. Then he made another one for a neighbour twenty years ago but it got stolen recently.

He also worked for clients in the hinterland at DAKACHA as they had seen some he had made in Gedi and thought that his workmanship was good and therefore commissioned him.

He made a *Kigango* for the Gedi Monument Museum - then a white man came and wanted to take him to Malindi to provide him with a studio in order to make *Vigangos* but he did not turn up again! He was commissioned a *Kigango*, *Kibao* and *Koma* after Jimbe's death (approximately 1978).

1. He uses MWANGA wood as it is durable and hard and believes that MUHUMU wood develops cracks and therefore not so good and prefers Mwanga.
2. The *Kigango* is not attractive without decoration therefore its first function is that it's attractive to the living and the dead.

When he was born in about 1922 no western clothes were worn just a shuka, facial marks and earrings. In the 1930's Lady Deed / Lady Boucher who were Christian (Anglican) missionaries came spreading the gospel - schools started up in this area and the missionary movement is still strong! The decorations show the *identity* of the Giriama - modern Giriama have no face marks, whereas the traditional people had marks. Originally the bodies of men had markings down to the waist like the *Kigango* borders/ and also women.

Facial marks present at youth stage. For females (young girls) the face and stomach are marked and two lower teeth removed and the two front upper teeth filed into an inverted 'V' shape.

The shape of the stomach is similar to the *Kigango* markings (although no one could confirm this in the field). Also similar shapes on the body could be equated to the shape of the Giriama mat, which is the shape of the plan view of the grass houses. His snuffbox also shows similar scratch markings to the body markings. He finds that other things he makes show similar designs as the *Kigango* but he says he makes them like this because it is his identity - if it gets lost people know it is his. (Therefore there appears to be some individual pride in his own design and interpretation)

When the culture was at its peak - young males would wear strands of beads called TUNGO in a cross across the chest. The body scarification would be on both sides of the torso or just one side (depending on the region). There would also be a belt of beaded cow hide which was decorated in three horizontal layers worn on the waist. Decorations on the back of the *Kigango* were supposed to represent the Tungo beads viewed from the back. Some craftsmen did not carve on the backs because they were not good carvers - not because they did not wear the beads (this aspect of carving on the backs only, if you were a good craftsman seemed to be supported numerous times by various respondents). It represents a generation of Giriama life gone by.

The initiation ceremony matters a lot and therefore the *Kigango* would have to be decorated e.g. the decorations are the carver's sole responsibility but must be attractive to the living and the dead - the dead communicate their dislike for a design by communicating this through dreams to their relatives who will tell him (the carver). If the owner or ancestor is not satisfied with the *Kigango* it may even lean from the up right position thus showing a dislike - it must be straight. If it is no good it is uprooted and cleansed and a new one made to replace it. The Mwanga *Kigango* (left in Ngala's yard) developed cracks and problems and so it was abandoned. This occurrence developed as an argument between himself and a neighbour, who was helping him with a commission but he stole all the money for the *Vigango* he made when Ngala went away. Then he told Ngala to make his own, and so because of this he was angry and therefore he just left it.

The panga is used for shaping the *Kigango* initially to make it flat. He uses red ochre and blue dye (BULVU) and plaster chalk (Lime). In the past 'Land' snails were burnt and crushed as the white inlay, but were not considered as glossy, were dull, and plaster was

considered more attractive. On top of this was put the red ochre and then the blue pigment. MBVU (red ochre) and KAMA (mixture of egg white and lime made into a paste) was used for the decoration. The blue pigment is also mixed with egg white to form a paste, which is then put on top of the lime. Its brightness lasts for twenty years but only in an enclosure. Before blue dye was used, charcoal and snail shell powder was mixed with egg white and applied to the inlay forming a black inlay. Now this has changed because the blue pigment is much better quality.

In 1972, in Kaya Fungo, Ngala went to seek justice for his murdered son. Here he saw some craftsman had made and installed some *Vigango* there but he considered them not so well made. So recognising this, the elders there asked him to decorate one which took him two weeks and then they wanted to commission more - however he is still waiting! He demonstrated how the BAKHARI (or compass) making utilised a plank of wood and two nails to form the shape of the head (also shown in Ernie Wolfe III 1986:44).

MUVILA (the sap from a tree or from cactus leaves - milky substance but not very durable) is sometimes used in the inlay but not beeswax (as I thought at first from looking at the *Kigango* in the Nairobi Museum). The *Kigango* should last about seventy years in total.

There are no environmental elements in the design, as it must relate to the human being and human life. Longevity depends on how the people care for it and how responsible the people are. They should build a shed over it and the longer it lasts the more it signifies the spirit's satisfaction. The LUDHUWA (half a gourd used to give libation to the *Kigango* and is used at different times to appease the ancestors) has a mixture of seeds, maize flour and water, which is sacrificed to the spirits for the crops. This ritual is performed before and after the harvests. Another ritual is performed for the daughter-in-law when again sacrifice/libation is paid to the spirits, and in fact this ritual is carried out at most events.

Ngala made one *Kigango*, nine *Vibao* and *Koma* for an uncle who died six years ago. The *Vibao* are erected for a 'dead' *Kigango* to replace the other *Vigango*, which were either stolen or destroyed through age or neglect.

The Mkone Tree bark is used to bind the house structure together - and symbolises spiritual well-being.

Takes pride in his workmanship.

The *Kigango* faces westwards (sunset) on north/south line in relationship to the orientation of the dead. The feet of the dead body face the sunset in the west and the head faces the sunrise in the east. They are believed to go towards the sun at death. Traditionally the face of the dead body is looking northwards towards Sungwaya and laid on its right side. (In Islamic culture the face looks north towards Mecca - or Sungwaya - the Kibla - Mihrab is the structure on top of the mosque, which is built to face northwards.

Only one craftsman will make a *Kigango* if a) there is enough time b) there are not numerous to make - otherwise there will be about 3/4 people. One man will have an assistant to help hold things though.

The reasons given for the commission of a *Kigango* initially can be various. It might be that strange things happen in the homestead such as a duck and a chicken mating, or a goat with a ram or something is mysteriously lost. When there is a problem or something strange in the compound which happens to the family they will consult a diviner. Therefore they will have to give sacrifice to the spirits. The ancestor may call for or need a shed, because 'they are cold' and do not have a house to go to - this is called "BRINGING THE SPIRITS HOME". If the structure disintegrates the spirits come again and say they need to be sheltered and so sacrifices and libations have to be made again.

Then came an anecdote: childrens' clothes cannot be worn by adults, and adults' clothes cannot be worn by children, by this he meant it was a dying tradition. He was told to forget his own ways by Islamic and Christianity missionaries but he found that the new religions were not compatible with traditional beliefs as he felt that contemporary lifestyles were not good for the Giriama people and many are returning to their old traditions. He explains that the literate people maybe 3/4 year religious converts, end up with problems later which might lead to death, or madness, as the spirits are not happy with this change in religion and therefore they have to appease the spirits to get peace in their homes again.

He then relates a story - An old man who lived 5km away called Simba Banzi, had not been initiated into a cult but his brothers had and he was told to 'bring home the spirits' of his late brothers - but as he had converted to Christianity he did not do this. However when Banzi died chaos reigned after the burial in the compound and they then asked themselves why did they fight for no apparent reason, an investigation ensued and they were told that the spirit of Banzi was chased away by the ancestors, who had possessed the relatives because he was of a different religion. More investigations followed - the late son of Simba Banzi also lost a whole herd of cattle mysteriously. Later the cattle were found in a thick forest two weeks later and they became mute and were not grazing or anything. After consultation with diviners they said that Banzi was unhappy where he was and wants a traditional funeral, with all the traditional rites, and with it 'bring home' all the spirits of his brothers that he should have 'brought home' before and so a lot of the relatives then converted back to the traditional ways from Christianity. This story had impacted on Ngala's own personal circumstances as his eldest son has converted to Islam and the children to Christianity, after being Muslim, and the spirits are unhappy as the children are now sick and also the eldest son (who is a fisherman) is also now ill - so he considers the homestead to be 'cursed'.

Tourists also affecting the homestead - his neighbours are Asian and Italian and he feels that their beliefs could effect more change.

He relates that he has six families in the Vitengani area that he has responsibility for and

therefore will not convert to any other religion as he is the figurehead for the traditional values there and he has to make the *Vigango* for them - to bring the spirits home.

The missionaries are still very strong with the New Apostolic Church along with Islam, which has a lot of money to build churches with and bribe with clothes and money according to one respondent.

To make a *Kigango* the craftsman needs 1 week to make it - every day he has to have palm wine at 120/- (1 unit) and then when the *Kigango* is ready 200/- is given a lump sum. Meanwhile for lunch he should get 1 whole chicken at 150/- minimum and Ugali (50/- per packet) totalling 2195/- (approx. £27) per week.

120 x 7 = 840  
200  
150 x 7 = 1050  
+ Ugali 150

If there are *Vibao and Koma* to be done as well this would take two weeks and cost 4400/- in total.

As to whether his designs had changed over time he answered in his usual rambling way. His style has not changed at all over the years - it depends on their masters work - the 3D heads (from the articles: Brown) are he thought more recent and there are not many - he thinks that if he saw it it would be embarrassing because it is not traditional. He had an apprenticeship from 1946 to 1949 when he came to Gedi. In fifty years he has only made six *Vigango* within the Gedi area (inclusive of *Vibao and Koma*) GOHU MRAMBA KALUMWA was his apprentice at Vitengeni.

A neighbour had one made and the relative put coins in the navel and the eyes and soon after it was stolen - which may have been the reason it was stolen because it was too attractive - nothing to do with the spirits however. Others (carvers) are considered by him to make a lot of mistakes but he has not had complaints about his work - few people are coming to him because people in this region are not initiated into the senior cults, etc. and he waits for them to come to him rather than asking them. He only does them "when the need arises." More *Vigango* are made in the interior as more men are initiated into the various cults or elder age-sets eg. Kambi, Vaya, Gohu, etc.

His full name is Ngala Kalombi Dadu and he was born in 1924 in Malindi. He signed himself by thumbprint.

Prices for a Basket 100/- (male [squarer] or female [opening out at the top] design) - Knife 150/- and for a *Kigango* 1500/- (£15)

Tinga told me about a funeral he went to where the man, just before his death, converted to Christianity and wanted a coffin covered with velvet. Only his face was showing, but the body could not be touched by the elders in the way that it would normally have been,

alone and in secret. This funeral was open even to other tribal groups to see which was not usual. The elders felt the velvet coffin and shook their heads. When the body was taken into a room with the elders present they were later seen to be pulling the ear and talking into it saying, why had he let them down by converting to another religion and that if on the 'other side' the ancestors were not pleased with him he must take full responsibility, so that the elders and family were not to blame for this and the living should not suffer because of his conversion - one elder was very angry about it, as this man had stood for the Ribe identity and he had let them down. Also a horn is usually sounded at a certain point in the ceremony to signal that the mourners can now weep but this did not happen, as it was said that it was *not* a traditional funeral and one old man insisted that the oryx horn did not sound. However the mourners started wailing, as they had never done before according to Tinga. Tinga felt as if they were mourning the loss of the culture and an end of an era. Tinga was present at this funeral although not considered a relative and therefore he was conscious that he had certain boundaries to keep to.

I thought it would be interesting to try mixing egg white and charcoal and also with the red ochre for doing some drawings with later - black, red ochre and white paper being natural colours.

Got a really sore throat and feel a bit feverish - turned in early.

3.8.99

The car saga to sort out today - phoned and the car in Mombasa is still not ready - brake problems now - will be ready at 4.30pm but it has to be test driven and I am hoping to get back here to Kilifi before dark! Great! On the edge again!

Woke up also to find that I had a puncture in the hired Jeep - great! Lucky Kizungo noticed it and helped change the tyre. I managed to get it repaired at the Kobil petrol station in Kilifi at 100/-. Another thing that makes you realise how vulnerable one can be - suppose it had happened in the bush! As it was I had to bump start the vehicle yesterday as the battery had gone flat because I left the lights on without knowing I had.

Decided after all the hassle to take it easy until I have to go back to Mombasa, as Wednesday and Thursday look like busy days too - Wednesday with Tinga and Thursday to a couple of Kayas with Tinga/CFCU. Also going back to the *Vigango* maker (Ngala) to pay for the commission and maybe ask a few more questions.

The best approach perhaps to the research on a theoretical basis is to interview several artists/craftsmen about the aesthetic function and ideas from about three different areas to make a relative comparison.

Interesting how 1) informant stressed not only group identity, but also individual identity a) Giriama tribal identity in the patterns chosen reflecting body markings and b) his snuff container being a personal item would be recognised as his own because of the shape.



The former is prescriptive and changes little in design and the latter is invented and personal although unconsciously influenced by things around him which he maybe does not recognise as he denies any natural environmental influence and personalises the items he makes for himself - feel there maybe some ambiguity here. The car saga: went to Mombasa early at 3.30 - chased the car up which eventually arrived at about 4.30 with driver, who was supposed to be a mechanic but was not. First the back brakes were supposed to be binding and I assumed they had done that by the time it arrived. What a banger it looked and it was a soft top that had little in the way of fixings. Great NO SECURITY yet again, either for myself, or my belongings! First of all it would not start properly, then the back door handle came off and in fact dropped right off on the way to Kilifi. Yet more hassle from the 'driver' and the vehicle developed a serious problem. So it may turn out that the wheel bearings are hopeless in one of the back wheels - so that is another day lost, more hassle and expense let alone whether the bloody thing will ever go! Feel a bit despondent about things tonight after things had been going quite well. I got totally ripped off on the mileage on the rented vehicle, cost a packet, and so could not possibly have kept it.

Well - what next?

4.8.99

Noticed the natural form of the coconut tree forms a zig zag like some patterning/ carving in other African artifacts.

Site 2. Interview with KAPOMBE KINEWA who was born approx. 88 years ago as it was reckoned that he was 52 in 1963, which is 36 years ago. His wife died two months ago and was a master diviner and he showed us some of her ritual vessels. The *Kigango* was made by Ngala's neighbour, the craftsman MZEE GURUJO MWAMURE, who is blind now.

This is made of MUHUHU wood - dates are still a problem but possibly in the early/mid 1970's - He was initiated into one of the senior cults that wears the ivory (or Warthog teeth) bracelet. This *Kigango* tends to be deeper cut and perhaps a better example than the last one. The body markings MAKASHA were different according to each age-set. Decorations on the back of the *Kigango* he linked with the MASHIBIRI beads which were bigger than the beads made as TUNGO. The maker was in the Vaya cult. The decoration denoted physical features such as the backbone indicated here, and then lower down, the belt - this indicated seniority even within the VAYA cult like the class system, who also wore big beads. Gohu were the most senior cult and a LUVOO was worn (bracelet made from buffalo horn signified this cult). The Vaya wore the ivory bracelet. Mashibiri were rare, although anybody could wear them, but they tended to be upper class people who wore them at ceremonies.

The reason for carving on the front only depended on the craftsman ability and on the client as for instance if the client is initiated and knows what he wants he can instruct the craftsman with what to do eg. to decorate on the back and front. If the client is a

craftsman he cannot make a *Kigango* or anyone in their own family (but can instruct). It is uncommon for a *Kigango* not to be decorated however (Jimbe's grandfather's brother) was not carved because he had no funeral (HANGA) ceremony because in this case he had leprosy. The spirit is talked to at the erection of the *Kigango* to tell him that his *Kigango* was not decorated because it was God's wish as he had leprosy. The ancestor has to understand this, and so the spirit should then be appeased, and as a result should not bother the living left behind.

The cloths usually consist of 3 colours, blue, white and red. The Gohu has 2 pieces of clothing. One a light blue with red strips on the ends called KITAMBI and then another one called a MSUMBIJI (spiritual meaning - also blue KATSUMBA KAZI spirit) and then there was a red piece of cloth called a MKUMBUU (if it is plain) but if it has beads on the edges it has spiritual significance and is called MBARAWA spirit from Brava.

The informant's senior wife was a diviner and had a gourd that was an AKAMBE spirit - milk was put in it like the Akambe do traditionally and spirit exorcism (dancing) ensued when various spirits could possess her during the dancing.

Colours are used mostly decoratively. Gohu elders often use white, red, blue in their clothes and *Vigango*. A female cannot be a Gohu but has to respect and support to her husband - Gohu have to have a wife otherwise they cannot be a Gohu. The Gohu initiate has to have sex with the senior wife to be initiated fully into the cult whereby the wife, during intercourse, then pushes the bracelet on to the man's arm. If the first wife died then the second wife would do that.

Permanency. The *Kigango* can last over 50 years but can be longer if kept sheltered.

MHAMBA wood is put on top of the body laying in the grave of the Vaya and Gohu only (other burials use other woods) and then a cow/buffalo hide is placed on top of this.

As regards environmental influences, he said that *Kigango* symbolise people not the natural environment. He referenced 'walking sticks' being the name given to a *Kigango* to represent the ancestral spirits, as spirits could ask for their walking sticks to 'come home'. The Gohu have a "Y" shaped stick as a sign that they are Gohu.

It is the responsibility of the owners to look after the ancestors which should be 're-dressed' and palm wine given to them for libation. If this is done the spirits would be pleased and so the *Kigango* lasts as long as possible because of the shelter, and proper rituals being performed.

- 1) If it cracks while making it the spirits are deemed to be unhappy and so the craftsman would leave it and make another.
- 2) If the *Kigango* develops a crack later that's OK and won't repair it. You cannot do repeat work on the *Kigango* and if it falls down they will make a *Kibao* to replace it. Because we have only one life it is not touched again.



The *Vigango* has a long history. At death the body is buried to face Sungwaya in the north but the head in the East and feet in the west, which is opposite to Christians' burials.

It is important to continue making *Vigango* if people who are part of the Gohu cult still exist, and believe in these spirits.

He cannot see an immediate end to this tradition as long as the Gohu are still being initiated or alive. (Future of the Gohu) - there are still some men of 40 being initiated into the cult locally - Tinga's uncle has been recently initiated in the Gedi area.

Initiation into the Gohu often happens at the time of *Vigango* erection, but can happen at any other time. The shrine is considered to be a source of life and therefore they are often initiated around the shrine and therefore birth and death are related.

Reference outsiders: tourists come to discover the shrines and take photos of them but he does not know what effect it brings. Westernisation in terms of Christianity and Islam and clothes style are favoured by the young but he knows that even with the influence of these religions they often still have *Vigango* as well - so the effect seems to be a gradual one but sometimes the younger generation may burn the *Vigango* in the homestead. Only two fundis - the best is GURIYO and the second best is NGALA. Guriyo is experienced and initiated, but Ngala is not initiated and therefore a mere craftsman whereas the other *Kigango* has more spiritual content (e.g. talent - he expresses an aesthetic evaluation here on spiritual grounds).

The person who has the *Vigango* made by a craftsman from another area, would have to have the local style in keeping with his/her position, therefore styles would not change. They do incorporate other ideas over time from others he has seen and says the better the decoration the better you earn a living so it is in the craftsman's interest to sometimes innovate.

The standard daily rate of pay is that the client must provide Ugali, chicken, palm wine but also on installation there is a payment to be given - one big goat for every *Kigango* and (1 goat for *Vibao and Koma* together) 240/- for *Vibao* and 240/- for each *Kigango* and 1 *Kigango* = 2 Kadzama 240/- (1 KADZAMA = 8 litres of palm wine (120/- for 8 litres) and *Vibao and Koma* similar amounts.

1 big rooster has to be slaughtered on erection of the *Kigango* if you did not slaughter one on the burial day on the grave of that person and it has to have big spurs. Another chicken can be killed at the installation as well as the burial though. However there has to be a witness to the slaughtering in the first instance.

Before the cutting down of the tree for making the *Kigango* the wood is given the name of the person and given libations - some bark is then stripped off and given to the client. The client then blesses it by making sexual intercourse with his senior wife. So again

birth and death go hand in hand - sexual intercourse seems to accompany most of the rituals it seems.

He doesn't think it should be taught in schools as he feels traditionalism will always be there and so he appears to be very optimistic about it continuing. Therefore it would seem from the artists' point of view (Ngala) there is a threat to the craft but to the spiritual leader there is no problem.

Beauty is socially constructed. According to Tinga traditional females as opposed to modern females are more attractive in that the modern female has foreign smells such as perfume from the West, not a natural smell of coconut oil put on the hair/body and other artificial aspects of superficial appearance. He says if the *Vigango* is looked after well, and the person was pure, etc., it would be considered beautiful even if the *Kigango* was poorly carved but kept properly. *But* if the *Kigango* was well carved but the rituals etc. not fulfilled properly or the person not good it would be considered ugly.

### DIARY 3

4.8.99 (continued)

Coins are sometimes used to make the *Kigango* more beautiful. His father was a craftsman and did this (inserting coins), which attracted a very wide market because of it. But it was not significantly important symbolically although it could be construed as prestigious and represent wealth.

The *Kigango* must face West 1) nobody can ever cut down the chosen tree on their own as they have to have two members of the Gohu society at least from two different clans to witness that the ritual is performed properly and 2) also on installation there has to be at least 3 Gohu members from different clans or more. Someone he knows turned the *Kigango* to face east and as a result then went crazy. This person wanted to convert to Christianity, and so Kapombe felt it was just arrogance on behalf of the man to do this and therefore he was punished.

Visited Tinga's uncle's homestead, where the *Koma* had sprouted into trees. These *koma* were not made of Mkone wood but Mhumba wood, which according to Kapombe is not usually used for *Vigango*, etc. but a plank of this is used only during a Gohu funeral to lay over the body in the grave. These must have been strong women he commented. It is taken to mean that the spirits liked the place very much and therefore flourished. One of the *Vigango* here was made by a Giriama /Muslim which was unusual.

Often trees become planted instead of the *Kigango* or in this case the wood actually sprouted from the *Koma* and grew into trees. It is taken to mean life and so here was another example of life associated with death.

The next site to be visited on Monday with Tinga is with a man who is both a craftsman but also commissions *Vigango* - so perhaps he too is a member of a cult?

On the way home we had stopped off to say hello to everyone in each homestead where Tinga knew people or in essence extended family and so it took a long time to get home and it became dark. Got nervous about malaria and getting home safely without transport from Kilifi town to home base. However managed to bump start the banger from the garage to home thank the lord.

Will have to 'phone GT yet again about the car as nobody has touched it today! What a pain it all is and what's more what a racket!

Feel knackered after it all but pleased with the information - yet more dishing out of money to various people.

5.8.99

Went to KAYA KAUMA - sacred burial ground of the Kauma today. Latin names of some of the woods they use:-

MWANGA = *Termilia carpata*

MUHUMBA = *Cassia Abbreavata*

MUHUHU = *Branchylema Huilensis*

They use Mwanga, Muhuhu and Muhumba for both *Vigango and Vibao* but Mkone for the female Koma. There was a committee of 7 members one of which is a *Vigango* fundi and the other two may be assistants. Several of the men we initially met had large beads around their necks but none of the seven members of the committee were wearing them. Usually there are 12 committee members here including a Chairman who is a spiritual leader and leader of the group. He was about 70 years old.

The burial area is in the Kaya proper. The gates were made of Muhuhu and it had 3 gates. To enter the Kaya proper several rituals have to be performed. The Kaya proper housed the fingo (protective charm), which is also the burial area. I had to pay 500/- for cleansing material after I left as being an outsider I was considered to be a contaminant. The Cool trees or MIHI (Tree) YA (of) MAHOZA (Cleansing) Trees for cleansing were very evident in the Kaya.

After a longish walk we came to the first shrine to indicate the beginning of the Kaya proper known as God's house.

During a burial a man is brought to this spot on a board on the head of the bearers to indicate being 'outside' the Kaya and then put on the ground at this point and songs were sung.

Then we went on until we reached a round area with trees called CHERONI or 'shed' area. Here the body was carried on a local bed by 4 people only and carried lower down - then the body entered its final home The significance of the body being carried higher up

initially meant not belonging to the Kaya (drawing a parallel to carrying water on the head by females, which is an everyday mundane task in the real world).

(The second area is also a burial area where I saw a Koma post put at the head of a grave).

At the first gate I was told that if you stumble you have to be cleansed which could take some time.

When calamities happen (illness, misfortune) in the Kaya a charm is often put above the first gate, as it was here, consisting of a Baobab pod stuffed with various things.

The third gate led into the sacred area and no photos were allowed. Just the other side of this gate was a fingo, which represented sacred knowledge. When I asked more about this, one person was stopped from saying any more about it as it was considered to be secret to a person like me. Each entrance had a fingo.

The MORO area is approximately 80 metres to the left from the first gate - this is where meetings are held to discuss 'governmental' matters.

The eldest Kaya elder died three years ago (at the age of 90) now the eldest son lives here.

Then we all came to a Baobab tree and sat down in this clearer area. We were shown a cannon ball-like object made of iron ore. In previous times it was used as a test of strength and thrown 10 metres in the air with the intention of throwing it over the house. The Kaya was used as a testing place to prepare for fighting but when war broke out the elders would make bows and arrows in these houses. The cannon ball was approximately 10 kilos. and made by blacksmiths about the same time as the gates. In 1880 the Kaya was abandoned as there was warring between the West and East of the Kaya.

The grave inside the first gate indicated that this person was not initiated because of being placed here.

Each clan would be buried in a specific place. Five clans to each Kaya - each had 4/5 sub-clans and each sub clan had its own burial ground.

They said that the decoration as related to the body markings was *not* linked to the different clans and sub-clan markings - it was purely the style of the craftsman, whether they be Giriama, Duruma, or Kauma. The Kauma adopted the designs from the Giriama according to BARISA MBARUKU (the craftsman) who was taught by his master KAZUNGU THOYA (who was a Giriama craftsman not a Kauma) and so he incorporated designs of the Kauma, which he claimed he invented from his head and did not see others to copy from. He cannot work alone and so he has to work with BENJA SHOKA. He uses colours to make the *Kigango* more attractive - white (sap of a tree called CHATSA, a euphorbia, which is poisonous), the blue which is a dye mixed with

water (sometimes charcoal) is then applied with the sap to bind or act as a sealant and then red ochre is put on the top. There are three craftsmen and the master in this area. Some people are making them for commercial purposes - fundis arise when someone is interested in making a *Kigango* and learn by assisting, but he has to be initiated into being a craftsman. May have to be a Gohu before you can become an apprentice.

CHIKUPA is the Kauma name for *Vigango*. Regarding the type of wood used their main concern is that it is a hard wood and secondly that the colour is right (Mwanga [Muhuhu], Muhumba, Meiyo). It has to be the centre of the wood, has to be the heartwood- made into the centre of the *Kigango*. The heartwood signifies the centre of life because it is the centre of the tree - described as fully developed phloem part of the tree. The selection of the tree is very important. It represents the blessing of the spirit of the person. As long as the wood does not crack it is OK. The ritual has then to be performed.

The client and craftsmen have to agree on the tree.

They do not usually put coins in the *Kigango*. Sometimes cow hide will be put on the neck of the *Kigango*, if the cow is slaughtered as requested by the spirit (or person who has died). Some *Kigango* are better than others and he gives the example of the parent who has some children who are nice and others are not. The designs on the face matter and proportions are considered important - if the features are not in the right place it is not good. Measurements - do not use standard measurements as with the use of a ruler but usually appraise. The bigger the wood the bigger the *Kigango*. The *Vigango* are supposed to be human size but the legs are buried in the ground. Half body is buried in the ground- half dead and half alive - symbolic.(Theme buried ground important)

The *Vigango*: Mkone and Muhumba wood can regenerate. The spirits are considered pleased if this happens and you are blessed (Gedi homestead - other areas not necessarily so - see Kaloleni diary entry 14.8.99 Mackenzie Karisa Ngala).

Measurement: if you have a ruler you can use it, but you can use any object as a measure however he measures by eye using an intuitive process and what looks right.

They use *Koma* to mark the initial death of the person and often a stone is used as a grave marker. *Koma* are put there initially by 'demand' from the ancestor and then a dream might then bring the necessity for the *Kigango*. It might also then ask to be dressed. The stone has no spiritual significance. If the spirit wants a goat prepared but the *Koma* cannot be given food when it (they) is naked, then it has to be dressed. Slaughtering then commences. The *Kigango* is talked about as if it is a real person only *after* it has been erected before then the wood is treated or talked about in terms of the tree spirit not the ancestral spirit as yet.

If the *Kigango* is stolen it does not matter to the spirit so much if the spirit knows that the ritual has been done properly. However if it is stolen and the spirit says it is feeling very cold, the relatives therefore have to 'bring the spirit home' in the form of a *Kibao*. The Cool Trees have spiritual significance such as the Mkone and Muhumba and therefore the

spirits like these and feel secure and cared for if the shelters are constructed with these woods.

Beauty depends on the individual craftsperson and they will get a person from another tribe (Giriama) or somewhere quite far away to get a good one - but he did not define this further. However he looked to the Giriama as being a major influence.

At Kaya Kauma the elders were as follows:-

1. CHAI MANGUYA - Chairman and spiritual leader.
2. MZUNGU MUDUGA
3. BENSON MBARUK (Vice Chairman)
4. RODGERS KUDZA
5. BARISA MBARUK - the craftsman of *Vigango*
6. MWASHE CHAI
7. MKOKA CHAI
8. DZOMBO MBITSI
9. KIRINGI DERI
10. CHARO MWAGONA

Tinga told me that they got rather tired of me asking them questions at a certain point so after this 'group interview' I had to call it a day. They honoured us by saying that the questions had been interesting (and obviously quite testing I think, as they looked as knackered as I felt) and said that if we were to die within the Kaya that they would bury us there in the sacred ground. Have to say that I was relieved we did not die in spite of this seeming honour! Apparently if we had stumbled at any of the gates we would have to be cleansed - so luckily we did not waste time having to do that.

After this we went on to **Kaya Fungo**, which was out west right in the bush and the roads were well dodgy. The walk from the first shrine to the first gate was quite a long way, longer than at Kaya Kaume and the walk between the gates as no longer there, although there were some big rocks and some quite large trees, which were almost like markers. Again we took off our shoes at the first shrine as we did at Kaya Kaume. Eventually we got to the clearing, which was quite circular and we met the spiritual leader who was still there in spite of our late arrival (at least 4 hours too late!) - paid 600/- for a return visit which we had to renegotiate. Then a long prayer was made blessing our visit and saying that any homestead that did not welcome us would be an unhappy one. The ending apparently was 'Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ' which was, as Tinga pointed out, not exactly in keeping with the traditional religion!!!

This Kaya although seemed to be bigger was not as well kept (or even perhaps used) in spite of a Giriama elder living there (uninitiated though). The spiritual leader here was also Gohu.

Going to try and return next Friday.



The journey home was rather bad across country to Mombasa and then up to Kilifi with CFCU who kindly dropped me home as the vehicle saga continues - wheel was missing tonight and still not fixed - will return to it tomorrow.

6.8.99

(At KOMBE HARE homestead at Gedi)

KAKA KI BASHA who was interviewed here was a Gohu member and knew about the *Kigango* at this homestead.

When the trees, which had sprouted from Koma and overhung the *Vigango* need to be pruned, it has to be a Gohu member who does the pruning otherwise the people in the homestead would go mad. First palm wine is drunk and put on the tree before it is cut as the necessary ritual practice.

The wood used for *Vigango* was Mwanga and the other Muhuhu.

He is not sure of the date of the *Kigango* but thought it was put up in 1983 for HARE KIDANGO father to Kombe Hare (uncle to Tinga).

The meaning of the decoration is to be attractive and has no other meaning. The one that is the tallest is the head of the family. The height of the *Kigango* does not matter, as it does not link to real human height he said in reply to the comment made about this from the Kaya Kauma interview.

The carving on the front identifies the front from the back by the designs.

Only witchdoctors wear the Mashibiri - in females they are only worn by a female diviner. The Tungo beads are worn by both males, and females.

The body of the female is decorated with tattoos either for decoration or when they first get pregnant.

(Some ambiguity here)

The colours are just used to decorate and have no significance. However the age of the man depends on the colours of the cloth e.g. if an old person dies they use colours but if a young person dies no colours for cloth are used. The KAMBI cloth is used at the neck which is a black and white striped cloth. NGUO NYARUHE is the waist cloth which is white - burial materials are used for any age. Another waist cloth MSIMBIJI which is blue is put on with the white, but below the white. White = upper part of the body and the blue = the lower part of the body. The cloth is put on to hide the nakedness - the ancestor asks to be brought back from the cold - the waist cloths are more important as they 'hide' the genital region.

Tools used for making the *Kigango* are chisels, panga, axe and adze, sandpapers but no files. Use small hammers (metal).

Often two years after death the *Kigango* is made however they can make the *Kigango at any time* that the spirit requests - only the Gohu are involved with the making of the *Kigango*. The Gohu members will carry the wood to the place where the carpenter will work on it after libations are made. The celebration of the erection is most important and the slaughter of a goat and palm wine is required for the ritual (after selecting the tree and paying the tree spirit for its sacrifice) but if no palm wine available they use honey. Believe in life after death as the ancestors look after the homestead. Ancestors are considered most important.

They only erect the *Kigango* at night at 3am usually because most people are asleep at that time - as this adds respect not to be seen by others who might also bring bad luck to the spirit.

If there is a Gohu in the family then there will be a *Kigango* made and the tradition will carry on, but if there are not any initiates then he feels it will not be important any more. He does know of new initiates into the Gohu and he is still optimistic about it continuing. How does he know whether the *Kigango* is good or bad? - the craftsman does not have to be Gohu to understand what is required to make it good as the craftsperson has to listen to the elders or Gohu members involved in order to conform to certain criteria which are in the main ritualistic ceremonies. He has to have experience in making them and basically be a good carpenter.

He thinks it's a good idea to learn about the tradition in the schools but also to be able to actually make them.

Whilst sitting having a passion juice waiting for the bus to Kilifi (Gedi Junction) noticed the supports to the roofing were improvised (see diary sketches) - 'Necessity is the mother of invention'.

7.8.99

### Thoughts

There appears to be some consistent information, usually about spiritual matters - although the aesthetic value tends to change with each craftsman within a limited range of patterns /designs and sizes.

Each informant seems to add another element or piece of information that is interesting sometimes linked with ritual practices or conceptual notions of life and death and recreation.

To be consistent I have tried to use the same questionnaire, although through using it as a structure for interviewing has meant that other questions have arisen as a result of



unanticipated information- often leading to some interesting conceptual knowledge.

Religious values in this society seem to be very strong even if they are of a different domination eg. Christian or Muslim - and in fact although very clear about the traditional religion there seems to be some ambiguity about whether they would like to impose it on others - unlike the missionaries who tend to bribe to convert. Not much critical appraisal amongst the young too perhaps.

Realise too from my own feelings of insecurity (personal existence re-violence or disease) that night time becomes much more threatening than day light which comes as a happy release - like death is linked with night and life with day. In this respect the posts are carved at night, often at a time when most people die naturally, and then it is erected before daylight simultaneously assuming a 'living persona', vertical, for everyone to see and venerate.

Realise how much the environment and the events around me have an impact on my work, and the way I feel and exist in this place. I can understand the reliance on religion in this community when the rest of their lives are so precarious it provides some stabilising force - as even their family is constantly threatened by disease and death and the homestead vulnerable to outsiders. It was interesting that Tinga said that if an educated person (or person who has a respectable job) and therefore it is thought earns quite a bit of money, were to go back home to a rural area they would be afraid of being bewitched - as often witchcraft seems to be linked with jealousy. This idea of the unknown still seems to be threatening - and perhaps there is a real fear of actual murder rather than 'murder' as a result of some ritual - a) is it a psychological fear that ends up killing them or b) are they 'got rid of' behind a bush!?

8.8.99

Thought of how there can even be some beauty in the midst of adversity - something considered beautiful by society's definitions amongst something society considers ugly or not nice e.g. a formalist structure, crisp, clean made of a reductive material surrounded by earth and detritus?

The evidence of Kizungo (the 'houseboy' where I was staying at Kilifi) is the green flip-flops outside a door - quite amusing and endearing.

9.8.99

Interview with KATANA CHARO born in 1939 and living in Gedi.

These four *Vigango* were the first he had made. He grew up in the Sabiki River area - because he had seen so many *Vigango* there and he needed some for his family living here he thought that he could make them better than anyone in this district (Gedi), so he decided to make them for himself.

These were made approximately 10 years ago (1989?). Msabaha who lived 7km from here and was the nearest craftsman was not (in his estimation) skilled enough to do the job.

There are four in the homestead but one is not carved because this ancestor had TB - (in keeping with other informants). His experience in carving is just making beds - he says that the skills are linked.

Inspiration was from the tradition of *Vigango* making at his home place (Sabaki River). He went to look at others before he made these. He looked at Kampombe's but did not copy it directly. He would also watch people making them at home (late grandfather in early '60s). He did not copy the designs at Kampombe's home because he wanted to use the designs from his home place. He wanted to get the measurements from the one here but using patterns from his home place, as they are relatives of his. Because he had not made them before he felt he had to take measurements - the patterns he remembers from childhood.

He used Mwanga wood, but he would have used Muhuhu as the latter he considered more durable and Muhuhu does not crack when carving and it is also used for making fencing because of its durability. Mkone is not very durable but has spiritual value and is used to replace *Vigango* with *Vibao*. Mwanga and Muhuhu represent durability of the spirits - but also used for medicinal purposes. Muhumba not as durable as the Mwanga and Muhuhu, but the Muhumba and Mkone regenerate although the Mkone (*Koma*) is more likely to regenerate. *Koma*, representing females only then regenerate but even males can as well as some males initiated into a junior cult have *Vibao* made for them and Gohu have to have *Vigango*. However if the male is non-initiated he is considered to be a female and therefore has a *Koma* erected the same as the female in spite of seniority in age alone. It is possible for a father not to be initiated but his son could be, and therefore the father is considered as a junior or a female. The reason is not a matter of looking down on them but the fact that only men are initiated.

The *Kigango* 1) has to be decorated 2) body marks - those patterns are related to this structure.

The patterns are not exactly the same as the body marks as the *Vigango* is made of a dead person not one living and would be a representation only.

He has not made any others since in spite of having been approached a few times. It was an artistic issue as he would not be paid enough for the amount of time put into making *Vigango* and besides which palm wine is also drunk by the elders which takes away his profit and the job takes a long time. He cannot be paid money as the elders would feel exploited (done out of the palm wine) so he pragmatically says that he can earn more making beds. With regard to the size, it must be human size as if it was smaller it would be considered to be a *Kibao* even if decorated - again says about the burying of the lower half of the body in the ground as being significant.

With reference to carving on the front he feels that decoration must be on the back too, according to tradition. As there should be shoulders at the back, and the belt - no carving on the back is considered to be not a very good craftsman although he does not really know why there are some *Vigango* not carved on the back. There could be a regional difference here in that the back only has the shoulders and belt indicated, not the curves or spine shape.

Tools used are chisels, hammer, pencil and ruler, following pencil marks and in the past may have used charcoal to draw out with.

Blue and white are used alternatively. They mixed chalk with water to become hard like plaster and the blue pigment with water. The spirits would be unhappy if the colours were different - and if he needed to pay libation (because he is uninitiated himself) he has to get someone who is initiated to help him by holding his right hand.

The cloths (MAKOMBA) are as follows:-

1. NGUNDU - red
2. MSIMBIJI - dark blue
3. NYARUHE - white
4. KITAMBI - light blue for *Vigango* only

The main colours for Mijikenda clothing which have spiritual significance are:-

1. MBARAWA Spirit
2. KATSUMBAKAZI Spirit
3. BAFUTA MWALIMU - white - not representative of any spirit

The numbers of triangles are not relevant and has never seen names on the *Vigango*, and would be considered untraditional anyway. According to tradition females are not allowed to be present because they are not / cannot be initiated only the initiated can erect these. (Therefore, the photograph in Wolfe III 1986:44 is not authentic according to Tinga, but 'stage managed'). The cutting was initiated by the Gohu - pouring of sorghum onto the wood before it is cut and then after the first cut he (the Craftsman) can do the rest.

Traditionally the *Vigango* only relates to the human being not the direct environment - the patterns change very minimally as its important that the traditional patterns are retained.

Body markings were more important than beads, for representing the Giriama *Vigango*.

Durability one of the main prerequisites - depends on soil types too in terms of preservation as clay preserves - if buried in quick sand the *Vigango* gets easily destroyed. The *Vigango* is unaffected by fire in the bush because of the wood it is made from.

The *Vigango* that are initiated properly are very powerful and those who have stolen them will undergo psychological problems.

The *Vigango* must face west, towards the Kaya Fungo symbolising death, conceptually repeated in the setting of the sun, the soul going towards the sun at death. The burial position is the same, on the right side head in the East and feet in the west with the head looking north.

He made these himself although there were Gohu elders present (to advise if necessary). It is still important to make *Vigango* as the Gohu have to have *Vigango* and Gohu are still being initiated. However outside religions have an impact but their family still have to have a *Vigango* even if the sons are not of the traditional religion - and is called upon to bring the spirits home. He says he does not want his family to suffer under the ancestral spirits as he did when a family member (1948 total eclipse time) caused a lot of problems in the homestead and so he had to make this *Vigango*. Big snakes were coming into the house and a lot of termites and more ailments than usual which could not be treated by hospital / healers occurred but since erecting the *Vigango* things have become much better now.

A good *Vigango* has got to be made of a good wood. It should have decorations (Giriama), but should not have hands, as that would be 'over doing it'. During installation on the erection night of the *Kigango* all the family have to abstain from sex except the senior member of the family, otherwise the *Kigango* leans the next day and another one has to be made.

The widow has to have intercourse with the husband's brother who has inherited her or otherwise she is chased away as she has to remarry. He wryly commented at this point that 'women do not get older' meaning that if the man who has inherited her cannot do it he gets a younger brother to do it - they often take drink first!!!

He has not seen *Vigango* from any other *Mijikenda* as he does not travel much and would only go somewhere to obtain something, or for a particular reason, and does not travel for the sake of it.

Giriama culture has changed drastically and he adds that there are a lot of people of his age and even older that could not answer these questions as he has. It was only because he came from this background where he saw them being carved as a child that he was able to answer these questions.

He sees the tradition as dying because his father died and the rest of the family turned to Christianity (Saved) and so the spirit has nowhere to go, and so he sees the traditional values dying out as all the family have to be involved either financially and/or do the dances at the ceremony. People have become very individualistic, he feels it has to be a corporate group coming together to help. He sees a break down of the family unit in this respect as his father and brothers did not worry that he was having problems.

He does not feel that it should continue, in spite of him not being of any other religious sect as he sees it as a drain on the finances.

He makes a living from growing Cassava and other things and has not the time to do carving.

The rituals are imperative to the beauty of the *Vigango* as if it leans (there is a sexual problem) or there is a sign of it splitting this indicates that the ancestor is not satisfied. When a shed falls down it has to be rebuilt and redressed in order for the *Kigango* to be enlivened. The coins make the *Kigango* more active and even a silver 50 cent piece can be put in it but its not as traditional as other designs.

*Koma* regenerate means the ancestral spirits are happy with the family members and considered a blessing. They are never cut down however if pruned the family have to give libations and a Gohu member has to be present there to assist pruning.

He fears the *Kigango* being stolen and feels insecure because of concerns with the money invested in it through the costs of the various rituals involved (slaughtering, palm wine etc.) and wood and continual attention, which the spirits demand.

Watched how the makuti for the roofing was stitched and had a go. Each segment costs 5/- to buy and the makuti is 2/- a bundle to make up into the sections. Hotels use it on top of corrugated iron to keep it cool and possibly look more appealing to the tourist. The locals use doubled strands of makuti when making their own roofs to provide more strength.

Sent the 600/- to Ngala via the headmaster of Gedi Primary School to make the *Kigango*, knife and basket to be collected on 20.8.99 (on my return only the knife was available as the money did not get to him for various reasons)

Got back to the garage tonight alone so had to sort the bloody mechanics out myself and showed I was pretty fed-up and cross about it all and demanded a lift home and said I could get very cross if it was not fixed tomorrow! Losing my rag at this point. Plan to sit it out tomorrow and give them a hard time. This of course wrecks the next two days that were planned! However the sky when I got off the bus was *beautiful*. Got home and had to hunt down the keys to the house as the landlady had hunted me down in town this morning for them on the pretext that Kizungo needed to open the windows otherwise they got stuck! - I expect she wanted to look inside which would be the normal run of things here. Feel a bit jaded about the car again - going to cost £50 now.

10.8.99

'Hi-Tech Wood Works' just went by with a man pulling a cart, with some pre-fabricated 'patio type brick fencing stuff in it - (contrast). Reality and illusion, or delusion? Tinga is late again today and the car is still awaiting a new starter motor. Another cart was called 'Rotten Tribe'.

Spent the day at the garage with the exception of meeting Tinga as I was walking into town to the bank so we went for lunch at the 'New Kilifi Hotel' - the best dive Kilifi can offer, however the meal was welcome after both feeling a bit more than jaded about the car. In the afternoon we decided that Tinga would go ahead to Vitengeni and try and get some informants together and hopefully we could get there tomorrow, whether we have to bus it or not. It's now 3.40pm and the mechanic left by bus for Mombasa at 9am this morning with the 5000/- for the part - should only take 1- 1and a half hours max to get there - 6 hours later ... TIA (This is Africa) strikes yet another day!

Noticed welding repairs to lorry arches, as patched as the houses and great welts.

Noticed too that the female in front of me in the bank had to be assisted with her thumb and finger prints as signatures and therefore had to go with a helper - interesting notion of black finger prints on paper with text.

11.8.99

VITENGENI, at Matano Mane area, is now devoid of *Vigango* because there has been an Evangelist crusade - Christian crusade - which has meant that these items have been burnt. KAZUNGU MRAMBA was acting as an agent for antique collectors. He is about 60 years old and highly respected in the village. He is licensed to get dead wood from the forest and sells charcoal and so is in a good position to track down *Vigango*. Issue of money, versus ancestral tradition here.

Kaya Fungo area all stolen too. They fetch about 3-4000/- per *Kigango* in the Vitengeni area. A wife would cost 20,000/- so if he has 1000/- commission per *Kigango* he can get another wife if he sells 20 of them.

Tinga tells me from what he found out yesterday that Mwatsa and Muvila (*Euphorbia Tirucali*) are used for mixing and binding with the pigments for inlaying into the *Kigango* - re: Mzee Ngala interview)

Went out with CFCU to investigate an extension of the Kaya Fungo - a sacred forest where ritual practices also took place. Here I took slides of the sap giving plants used in the inlay of the *Vigango*. Also took a slide of a cactus that showed some vague resemblance to the *Vigango* patterning.

The Kaya Fungo elder who lived in the Kaya came with us and whilst resting told us that with the blessing of the tree (to be cut down) the Gohu member has to be of the same clan as the dead ancestor. The Gohu member has to name the tree but the craftsperson does not need to be of the same clan as the dead ancestor. The old man said he could not make the *Vigango* for his own relative, although he can bless the tree. He cannot dig the grave as a family member either.



12.8.99

Another wasted day on the car - went to Mombasa back to GT with Badi the mechanic from Kilifi, next door to the garage who CFCU use from time to time, but never said in the first place to me that they used this bloke even after asking who they used to service the Landrovers! Anyway by the end of the day and GT paying £200 for a starter motor it went - just got to get the exhaust welded between tonight and tomorrow morning early. Arranged with CFCU to follow their vehicle to Kaloleni to pick up Tinga tomorrow - plan to stay the night in Marikarni so that I can spend 2 days around Kaya Fungo. Perhaps Sunday I will go to Leisure Lodge at Diani south of Mombasa to see the *Vigango* there and take photographs of them and make a comparison.

Had a note from Graeme today saying that Ulf Carlson the new chairman of the Mountain Club had been killed in a climbing accident - very sad - it's incredible how much death plays a part in people's lives here. A so-called witch was pangaed to death recently, a policewoman murdered a colleague, a whole family were shot in a village, and a child of three was 'raped, killed and eyes gouged out' - 'The Nation' is full of it. Numerous Africans have said how cheap life is out here - often on the roads but also as regards disease.

The sunlight over the sisal plantations and the baobab trees was beautiful tonight - lifted my spirits a bit. Hopefully tomorrow and Saturday will be fruitful days.

Friday 13th. 8.99 Kaya Fungo

Car conked out on the way out - so decide to give up on it now. Met Celia a Prof. from USA married to a Kenyan who recommended reading an article so will follow this up.

The initial shrine on entering the Kaya Fungo can also be used as a rain shrine. The hut at the side of the central clearing is considered sacred and also used as a rain shrine, which was a rounded grass hut with central door. Can hear the friction drum which has apparently been playing a reverse rhythm since I came into the Kaya - we are waiting for the other elders to arrive. Have this feeling that things may not be going the way we planned.

(Other areas to visit could be KITUNU and MWIJO with *Vigango* perhaps tomorrow). 15 people now present - headed by the Vice Chairman who tended to be bit arrogant. The custodian, the Vice Chair, and one of the senior Gohu members sat on wooden three legged stools whereas the rest of us sat on long logs opposite. The VC was going to give us 30 minutes only for the interview. KATANA UNDA and PONDA KADZEHA were the two craftspeople on this committee.

There are lots of craftspeople in this district who make original *Vigango*. On asking about the origin of *Vigango* making we did not get very far on this matter.



The *Kigango* is installed for a person who is initiated and wears a VULU (a horn bracelet). At the burial of a Gohu member the Gohu fill in the grave half full and then the remaining earth will be filled in by the VAYA at dawn (3am).

### **Ceremony for installation of Koma**

*Koma* are used for those not initiated. Ancestral spirits are 'brought home' and specific people pay libation to the tree and give it the ancestral name before it is cut down - the same information as before. A Gohu member chops tree three times and then leaves it for the craftsman to carve. Sorghum is the bride prize, and so that is why the male gets the sorghum and not the female (sprayed at the *Koma* from the mouth). As libation they pour sorghum for the uninitiated male but not for the female *Koma*. The Male *Koma* is longer. The ritual involves dragging them to the installation place then a trench is dug (*Kigango* positioned with wife on left hand side) Male *Koma* (not necessarily part of this installation) will also be with wives, male dressed in white loin cloth (not initiated) on the waist and a BAFUTA (white) tied on the neck with the AMBA (bed sheet white). The female has a HANDO (like the Hando skirt that women wore) and a black KANIKI and a cotton cloth tied above it, which is red LUKOBO (like the belt). This is still done, but on other examples they have worn off. On the neck they have the white BAFUTA (bed sheet). Then a goat is brought to the female *Koma* and then they address the ancestor and pour all the blood in front of the *Koma* telling the ancestor that this is his food. Meat is prepared from the thorax, liver, thigh and boiled and Ugali. In all there are 7 pieces of Ugali and 7 of meat, followed by an address to the spirits saying here is your food. It is now blessed in front of the ancestor so that then the *Koma* are accompanied by the elders in the dinner / ritual. When the Gohu elders finish eating, then the ancestors will ask for water so then comes the pouring of the water over the 7 pieces of meat and 7 pieces of Ugali because they consider that whoever eats this will need water. Following this comes some tobacco snuff, which is put in front of the *Koma*. Then the palm wine is brought along - more talk to the ancestors again telling them what they have done for them listing the food. They give the ancestor all the foods that the dead would eat in real life and spill the palm wine in the same place as the other things (meat, etc.) The goat is now eaten by everyone - this ritual is called SADAKA YA KOMA. Now this signals the end of the ceremony and people can celebrate by dancing, singing, etc. Females are not initiated into the Gohu therefore do not get libations. The Gohu spit the sorghum on to the *Koma*.

The male is superior to the female (the custom). Male got to be superior and lead but also because of the physical nature of the male being biologically taller than the female. Sexual positions: male has to be on top and female underneath. *Koma*: clothes for female are three pieces whereas for the male only two pieces. The *Kigango* has an extra piece of cloth. The ritual is slightly different for these rather than the *Koma*.

Mwanga tree is used for making *Vigango*. When there are calamities and dreams that signal the installation of a *Kigango* a Gohu member is contacted. He then approaches two different Gohu clans to get two more members. Then they go to the bush where Mwanga grows taking with them water, a ladle for libations and 7 members in all. The 7

members consist of the client, 3 Gohu members and 3 uninitiated males. The client will give sorghum seeds to all 6 and mixed with water in the mouth they spit on the selected tree. Then will take an axe and chop the tree 3 times, this is done by a Gohu member and then the craftsman gets on with the job. This wood must fall down slowly therefore will not crack, so it is eased down. Before the start of carving some bark is taken off and kept and then the drinking starts. They take the *Vigango* at the same time as singing and mourning songs to the homestead. The carving is done in daylight and taken close to the homestead or PALA area used as the workshop. Now at this point they address the wood as a person not as a tree. The craftsman will now demand - Ugali (2 containers) and a rooster - all 7 members are present ( but the 3 Gohu members will eat separately from the uninitiated). Once they have finished eating they look for the craftsperson. The craftsperson has a time limit given by the Gohu and in return he expects as payment 1 chicken, 1 bowl of Ugali and will have to make some *Koma* for the dead wives - *Koma* can be made for uninitiated people too – ‘wives’ are placed on the left hand side of the *Kigango*. They will not erect a *Kigango* until the ‘wives’ have been cut and added to the *Kigango* - the *Kigango* is told to sleep until joined on the ground by the *Koma*. The Gohu are offered 2 Kadzama for its erection at 3am. - now they dig the holes which are referred to as graves. Senior wife is put next to the *Kigango* in line - sorghum is put into each hole - after this they take a LUDHUWA (half a gourd) put maize flour and water into it to make porridge and offer it to the *Koma* as food. Then they talk to the *Koma* etc. about the food as they want the homestead to be peaceful and happy as well as the livestock, fields, crops etc.

Now they bring the big goat with a long beard for the *Kigango* and similar ritual to the former *Koma* ceremony. This goat is slaughtered and the ancestor addressed as mentioned above. The 7 pieces of meat are cut off once the meat is boiled. A cow or bull is then slaughtered for the *Kigango* and for the public but the goat is just for the Gohus present (and the dead Gohu / *Kigango*). The KITAMBI (blue cloth) and the MKUMBUU (red cloth) is tied like a belt around the waist then the white AMBA tied on the neck.

The goat meat the Gohu take home but the Gohu can also eat the meat meant for the public (cow or bull) as well.

They can initiate a new Gohu at this point too, in front of the *Kigango* etc. and then the new initiates get sorghum spat at them by the Gohu members. The new initiate will have the bracelet (LUVVOO made from buffalo horn) put below the elbow and then later the wife will put it up above the elbow when making love.

The *Kibao* are put in the homestead to match the *Kigango and Koma*, which may be put elsewhere.

The figure 7 is significant as the healer will also draw 7 lines on the ground and the client is asked to walk over these 7 lines 7 times - goes back to the beginning of time historically. The funeral lasts 7 days in all and there is a ritual of walking around the Kaya 7 times before a ritual begins perhaps leading a bull for a particular ritual.

3 they associate with the three firestones and equates with the female as it symbolises the hearth stones in the hut which she cooks on.

5 is associated with the male - no reason given except that it is the custom.

7 if you do not have 7 pieces of meat you can use 3 or 5.

The decoration is associated with human anatomy - mouth, nose, eyes and also the triangles symbolise the ribs so that the internal form is rendered too. Theme: internal and external decoration.

Paint colours and cloths equates with beauty. Female has to take care of herself. Body decorations and ointment, etc. will be beautiful, but if the body is naked it will not be beautiful. You can admire a beautiful body even if naked but an ugly person is disproportionate and even if clothes were to be put on it they will not hang properly. So proportion and decoration matter in terms of beauty - ref. Kapombe's response to beauty and ugliness (4.8.99).

The elder Katana Unda who was explaining the rituals got rather carried away with the blow for blow accounts thinking that was what we wanted to know (however because it interested Tinga himself Tinga kept pursuing this) and so it seemed this elder had his own agenda or performance well acted. Tinga could not see the urgency of my own questions and was a bit phased by the elders altogether - first by the VC saying that he was only going to give us 30 minutes and before that we waited for him to turn up and we had to get Amini (CFCU) to drag him out of bed after a meeting last night in Mombasa (booze up more like) and I just knew that they would get fed-up with loads of questions and listening to this elder go on, which eventually did happen. So I felt a bit frustrated with Tinga today - the interview was also a bit muddled in the feedback to me. So we had to finish - also one of the elders seemed to be quite rude to Tinga, which made him look very embarrassed and ashamed, which I did not understand fully. They also would not let me take any photographs, which was a pain. Not an over friendly bunch really.

It has been said about taking a photo of something (at Kaya Fungo) that it would provoke fire as a result of the ancestors displeasure - ancestors do not like photos being taken they obviously have powers to see or /and hear and therefore are active.

Later took some photos of constructions on a school site at Gotani which was interesting as one old Baptist house, which was derelict was made using casting techniques - double walled using a wooden frame, cement and small holed chicken wire but you could see that it had been cast against flour/maize sacks sewn together like the structure I photographed in Mombasa - really good - obviously assembled in sections and cast on the ground. The choos (lavatories) were made with cement mixed with sand either from a riverbed or somewhere else, which changed the colour. Corrugated iron was fixed to sticks and tree trunks using galvanised nails, which were obviously hammered through the iron (not drilled first) because the holes were irregular and torn - the wooden frame

was nailed together with large nails.

Took photo of football post for Neville Gabie.

Tinga told me that Neem trees in the wild harbour lots of snakes e.g. green mambas, and birds also like settling in these trees which the snakes eat, as he used to shoot small birds as a child.

Tinga was telling stories again today but actually based on disturbing dreams he has had, and, is having now. Although he admittedly believes in being saved as a born again Christian he still seems very superstitious, particularly about dreams being omens of some sort but he also related an incident at Bamburi Nature Trail with his son. A hippo instead of going to its food (feeding time) came straight towards his son, who he passed to a man behind him. As the hippo, came towards Tinga he prayed and cursed the hippo who went completely flat and disappeared (a vision?) Also used to have dreams of snakes trying to bite him until he was 'saved' and then they would burn in a fire in his dreams.

#### DIARY 4

13.8.99 (Continued)

The elders present at Kaya Fungo were:-

1. TAYARI MWARINGA v/c one of the speakers
2. DATANA GONA
3. MUNGINARI MWAGAHA - spiritual leader originally sacked for a deed he did not ask the others permission for - but because of spiritual concerns he was asked to return.
4. PONDA KADZEHA - craftsman
5. KAZUNGU MWARINGA
6. KITSAO KULO
7. CHARO BANI
8. KATHENGI GANJE
9. FUNDI KAPINI
10. CHENGO KARISA
11. KAHINDI KATANA
12. RAJABU POLA
13. PIUS KAZUNGU
15. MFUKO JUMA
16. KAPESA CHANGAWA
17. KATANA UNDA - craftsman who related the ritual processes.

KATANA KAJAUBO the headman was not present - he had a skin disease that he had to sort out in Mombasa - the old man we met the other day and who recited a prayer for us before we left.

Initially paid 600/- to the old man for today's event/interview but today I was asked for 300/- more and even then they asked for more, which we refused. It seems that there is a bit of corruption in this Kaya as apparently the Gohu members of the Kaya that come from the north-west of the Kaya for ritual purposes now refuse to come for the rituals! They say that whenever there is money to be had as a result of something in the Kaya they so not get invited or a message relaid to them to come.

Look up Elisabeth Orchardson - Mazrui at the Fine Art Department Kenyatta University - article on Vigango.

14.8.99

Yesterday Tayari said he remembers as a child, 3D *Vigango* and that he thought this type was perhaps more traditional than the flat ones (approx. 40 years ago).

Site1) The first place where there was a *Kigango* (and 4 *Koma*) the woman seemed a bit aggressive - she thought we were missionaries - Evangelists. She seemed very suspicious of us but not at all intimidated. There was a long discussion and then they said that the oldest son was not there and he may not like us to take photos. Then the question of money was mooted for a long time. Meanwhile I was surrounded by totos - counted about 20 visible in this homestead - but some maybe arrived from other homesteads out of curiosity.

The *Vigango* is in the maize field near the homestead - not very well carved and no carving on the back. It was also coloured with black paint, however looks as if its scraped off the sides. It has a nose, eyes and mouth and separate triangles down each side facing outwards towards the edges, with a triangle roughly half way down its length and a circle between that and the waist. The triangles are white and a dirty orange - white possibly paint, orange maybe earth mixture? But possibly paint. Cloths still on the *Kigango and Koma*, so fairly new - 4 *Koma*.

Then we went to the funeral to collect the councillor whose permission we apparently needed before we could document this *Kigango*, who was quite drunk on palm wine and tried to say we should come again, another day. So had to say that we could not come back again and it would be his loss financially and even offered to take a photo of him to send it to him, but he really wanted a lot of money.

The name of the dead *Kigango* was KITUNU MWADZARI who died on 11.5.76 - during his funeral 13 bulls were slaughtered and numerous goats which would indicate that he was well-off. Date of *Kigango*? Last year 1998, or 1997. No reason for black paint put on it, made up some reason which was unlikely - thought it had had red ochre underneath the paint! Can get 4-5000/- per *Kigango* and knew people who stole them! He wanted 3000/- for taking a photograph so left it - had to take him back to the funeral - time waster.



The councillor's name is NGALA KIBANZU.

Site 2) This is the tallest *Kigango* seen yet and made of Muamba wood or other name Mbambakoffi (Latin: *Afzelia Quanzensis*). It was installed in April 1997 for KARISA GOWE grandfather to KAINGU CHENGO KARISA who was interviewed. Also had palm wine here, sucked through a stem-like 'straw' with filter on the bottom and put into a small long gourd - flies floating about in it.

The size is taller and bigger overall than normal *Vigango* and the same depth is put into the ground, plus in this case a fingo was put into the hole first by a medicine man to stop it being stolen, unlike the other two that were there which were stolen 4 years ago. His grandfather was very tall and so it was personalised to his physical / visual appearance. Does not know why it is not decorated on the back. Used paint on it but does not know why - probably used because more accessible and more contemporary but being more expensive too perhaps giving it more prestige and status? Although the colours chosen are as near the traditional colours as possible and therefore intentional not just used what paint they had left over, so it seemed an intentional decision.

It should last about 50 years. The two stolen ones were put in over 23 years ago (which is the age of the boy interviewed and he remembers them there as long as he has been alive.

The longer it lasts the more blessings the family get therefore the ancestors are pleased at this present moment, and even if it gets stolen now, because of the correct ceremony having been done the family will not be pestered - only the thief who will probably go 'crazy'. The family would only be pestered if it was a family member that stole it.

His grandfather was older than the number of triangles on it therefore he thought that number of triangles did not relate to age.

He told us about variations in patterns - the older ones stolen were thinner and only had one round 'navel' as opposed to two - so some variation in pattern and measurement over time here. Thinks this new one was better than the previous one because the previous ones had oval shaped eyes and pieces of glass shards put in them, that fell out - but the new eyes will not fall out and therefore are better. Asked if eyes are particularly important, he said, but how would you tell which is the front of the face without the eyes? Has not seen other *Vigango* from other Mijikenda groups therefore he does not know whether it shows Giriama identity specifically in spite of travelling to other areas however. Possibly because a lot have been stolen not seen many, and also shows little interest in them. He said he can only try and answer the questions as best as he can as he did not know a lot about it.

Site 3) Here there were 2 *Vigango* and *Koma / Vibao*. Used paint not natural materials. He said that they must have all the features. The natural shape of the wood was used therefore there were lots of curves. Painted red parts were used as a border, not painted all over. Interviewed assistant craftsman MACKENZIE KARISA NGALA - other

craftsman not present was a man called GANDI NGALA. The first one was made for KANINA NGALA and his wife KABEYU and the second for GANDI NGALA and his wife DAMA. These were MacKenzie's grandfathers who died a long time ago, over 100 years ago. They were erected because of recurrent diseases and appearances of snakes in the homestead and recurrent nightmares.

The trees used were Mwanga. Both were installed in November last year (1998).

The first set of *Koma and Vibao* are an older generation - (and the *Vigango* got stolen, so were replaced with these) - that is why they are separated by a gap from the other generation.

*Vigango* are taller than *Koma* because they are superior - *Vibao* here are the same size as the *Koma* but not in most places, which is not significant in terms of height according to informant - did not really give a reason for this.

He did not really understand about the lower part being buried in the ground as being symbolic of legs - difficult to get any conceptual answer in spite of being Gohu.

Gohu must have buffalo horn bracelet and a metal bracelet worn above the elbow once initiated - but do not wear them both together. The installation is a remembrance and spiritual security of the ancestors, which are now alive and active and can protect, as they have been 'brought home'. If you do not appease them the usual calamities happen.

*Koma* - if they sprout then they consider it to be a curse and have to be uprooted as they symbolise that the ceremony was not done properly. The sexual connection is not done properly, was in this case given as an instance/reason.

Women defer to men of the homestead for decision making in public - however they may assist with decisions but do not get any credit for it as males are considered superior and must be seen to be so - Tinga. This was evident from the homesteads we have visited so far, in that we have had to wait for the headman to be present and get his permission - basically for negotiating a fee or kazama.

On the way home Amini related a conversation he had heard about a witch - who apparently went to the Kaya Jilore with the intention of getting some herbs to do witchcraft with it - on leaving the Kaya (knowing full well that anyone entering the Kaya for ill intent would be punished by death or would go crazy) he saw two very small totos, barely babies, which to him was a sign of the ancestors as this was an unusual occurrence and the two totos would not be normally entering the Kaya a) at this time of the evening /night or b) be without someone older. After this he dropped the herbs and ran home where upon after telling the tale in full and even confessing why he had gone into the Kaya, he dropped dead! Amini really believed the man had dropped dead because of this, but maybe the story was just hear-say - it seems that in spite of a veneer of rational thought there are still strong beliefs in jinis and witchcraft. In fact witches often seem to be hacked to death - as reported in the newspapers - The Nation / The Standard.



15.8.99

Day of rest - got up at 9am today having gone to bed at 12 - bliss! Spent some time on the beach - collected 'heap' (car) again - exhaust bloody noisy - still not fixed properly! otherwise staggered back to the house with it! Will not take it to Kaloleni tomorrow that is for sure - and if I take it back to Badi to weld I will have no petrol at all! So ... decided to leave it the way it is! Transport can be a means of making money out of you I have finally decided!

16.8.99

Kaloleni

The homestead head was CHANGAWA KIDENGE who was interviewed here.

The *Kigango* was installed less than 10 years ago and made of Muhuhu wood. It has a protruding strip of wood down the centre of the nose / face.

As regards the symbolic meaning of decoration he feels that the triangles are not ribs but linked to the Gohu initiation ceremony. When a man is initiated into the Gohu, the head would be shaved and then sorghum put on to it followed by red ochre and then patterns were drawn into it to look like female plaits. He also relates the triangles to body cut marks you get when initiated into the Gohu, down the front of the chest. The reason the *Kigango* is not decorated on the back is the personal choice of the craftsman and if it has decoration on both sides it shows the craftsman is talented.

The red on the main trunk is red ochre. Originally sap from the Eucalyptus was used and mixed with ground land snails, for the inlay and by mixing paint with the sap it makes it stick better. He does not know why this light green colour was chosen or why a 'household' paint was used. It was the craftsman's choice not the clients in this case.

The direction it faced he could not verify. The craftsman who made this *Kigango* was KIRAO MAKEMBA - who has died now, but he was assisted by others. There are still Gohu being initiated locally - more than 20 in this area who are a mixture of ages. Therefore there will still be a need for *Vigango* when asked why is it such a long time afterwards that he had problems in the homestead when he could not even trace which ancestral spirit it was who was causing the trouble, he just felt by erecting a *Kigango* these problems would subside. He really does not know why he was disturbed by the spirits and yet his father, uncles and grandfathers were not, who were naturally more closely related. The problems he experienced were that his second son had health problems causing stomach aches. They consulted diviners because he had tried being treated by normal doctors which did not work and so the diviner told them it must be because of the ancestral spirits that these things were happening. After the installation of the *Kigango* all the troubles ceased.

The person having made this *Kigango* was not very good, but the other craftsmen that

were better had all died - so he had his neighbour do it as he had been a craftsperson for sometime. If the craftsperson carves on the back they are considered not to be lazy and they have more talent. His grandfather had a *Kigango* made which was carved both sides some way away from here but feels this is not a regional difference but dependant on the individual craftsman.

He has seen a Chonyi *Kigango* but did not look carefully at the decoration so he could not comment on any regional difference.

He views ancestral spirits a blessing but if you do not appease them they can be destructive in the form of bad crops, disease, trouble on the farm. When asked why the *Kigango / Vibao* are in such a state (neglected) and could therefore cause trouble he replied that he will have to care for them and put up a shelter, and he has decided he will not wait for there to be more trouble first such as his son to be ill before doing so.

In reference to the sprouting *Koma* he said, west of here by 3km the *Koma* sprouted into a thick bush. This he considered a blessing, but to the East of here they considered it a curse and so would have to make a sacrifice to it.

The measurements of the *Kigango* really depend on the dimensions of the tree not the physical height of the person.

They never repair it and gives the example of a photo that fades you cannot reproduce it as it only has one life. The *Vigango* are like gods and take on a priest like role being the mediators. Basically the ancestors live on earth and God lives in heaven.

You cannot make it from any other material other than from trees but they have to be special trees like Mwanga, or MUDUNGU - because it is very hard and durable and resistant to pests. If you wanted to make a *representation* of these you could use any material but otherwise to make a genuine *Kigango* you have to use these woods.

The reason its made of wood is also because it is accessible and within their financial means, whereas the West has more money to make things permanent and in any case the *Vigango* only has one life and therefore no other material would be appropriate.

Site 2) KALAMA NZARO was the old Gohu informant here. He said that they use household paints now as they can be obtained from the shops. During the initiation ceremony into the Gohu he described the head 'dressing' with red ochre with patterns drawn on to the head into which castor oil was put in between these plaited patterns. He equated this ceremony with the red ochre of the *Kigango* with the initiation ritual and installation of the *Kigango* whereby everyone has to be silent while the initiation is going on at both the Gohu initiation and the *Kigango* installation where both have things passively done to them. This *Kigango* in a nearby field had rotted away and the old man could not even see the waist end from the head end, although it was still just about evident. He said that it was much easier to get the paints (household) locally and difficult for them to get the original materials. The old *Kigango* had charcoal and land snail inlay

in the triangles but people find it easier and more fashionable to use paints. The body markings in this area were 3 parallel lines going vertically up the thorax and down the arm to the elbow - only on the left hand side and the females here had 3 horizontal lines below the navel area but he could not say whether the decorations related to this type of decoration.

At the cross roads we saw some maize that was left deliberately there to make a sacrifice to the god (blue cloth) for the harvest - this is done before the homestead start roasting it for themselves to eat, according to Tinga.

17.8.99

Everything seemed OK until I tried the 4 wheel drive and the bloody car decided not to get into gear - cannot believe this!

Tinga found that he had done a survey with CFCU with these people, which broke the ice and their faces changed considerably.

The homestead head interviewed here was a Gohu member and was also a craftsman too called SHANGIA MAE approx. 80 years old. No *Kigango* only *Vibao and Koma* here as the *Kigango* was stolen about 10 years ago. So I asked them to try and remember what they were like. He did not remember accurately, as what he said did not match the remains of the one we were shown in the maize field. He said they used chalk only, not charcoal or blue paint. The use of paint was the decision of the craftsperson or the client.

The representation is a physical representation of that person and if they only had one eye working it would have to be shown. There is some ambiguity here as he told us that 'even if you go blind in one eye the *Kigango* is undecorated'. It could be 3D or any shape, even with ears, because the ritual is more important. Even if the *Kigango* looks beautiful, the rituals are the most important aspect.

*Koma* is the word for the spirit and the spirit is the ancestor that asks to be brought home. The ancestor only appears in the dreams asking for his "walking stick", or to be brought home. If this is not done then people could die in the homestead.

Below the ground the *Kigango* is not carved because it does not rot so quickly uncarved and he referred to the lower portion as the legs (MAGULU), which it stands on.

Sprouting *Koma* is not considered to be a bad omen and is counted as a blessing and signifies the ancestor is satisfied with the homestead. The only thing considered to be bad is if the *Koma* were covered by termites after only being erected for a short time.

Individuals sometimes feel that it is bad to have sprouting *Koma* but that is an individual difference and is not traditionally usual. Sprouting *Koma* is the physical symbol of the ancestor being at peace.

Next to the *Koma* here is a 'KID' or stick used by a diviner so it would appear that Shangia Mae is a diviner.

He felt that the *kazama* is important to appease the spirits for taking the photo, but he thought 300/ not enough until the others around him intervened and negotiated with him to be reasonable as they had already known Tinga in other circumstances. This could have become a difficult situation.

He is a master diviner and as a result it seemed the females in the homestead have a lot of charms around their necks. All the packets represented different spirits:- MWELE spirit - blue square; MWARABU spirit - oval fluorescent orange, associated with an Arab spirit; KIZUKA spirit - oval black; ZIMU spirit - black bigger oval; SANZUA spirit - light blue square; MWARABU MBOMU - white with red stripe a big Arab spirit; PHEPO spirit - white square; ZIKIRI MAITI spirit - red square. All these were worn by one woman. One of which was for promiscuity.

Site 2) NGUMBAO KARISA SARO was the head of this homestead. He had a *Kigango* that had fallen into the ground but some evidence of patterning was still vaguely apparent. It was installed for NGOWA SARO about 50 years ago and it was made of Muhuhu wood.

Site 3) The next homestead was not co-operating and told us that the *Kigango* he had was stolen 2 years ago however the guide told us that he was lying and that it was in the nearby maize field. His wife had cut her finger with a panga and the husband was blaming her for starting to strip the poles for building a house. He very evidently resented the fact that he had to do it now. This was a bit of a domestic.

The *Kigango* often appear in maize fields now but the homestead used to be where the *Kigango* was initially installed but then the homestead is often moved and the *Kigango* cannot be moved - so they end up cultivating around it.

Site 4) The heads of this homestead were CHARO SALIMU KIVALO (elder brother) and ALI SALIMU KIVALO (junior brother). Here they were making copra (dried coconut). There were two *Vigango* here the one on the left for KARISA KIVALO and his wife, and on the right MATHO KIVALO and his two wives - these were uncles to the informants above.

The *Vigango* were erected about 3 years ago (1996). The names of the ancestors represented by *Vibao* from left to right were:

- 1) MUSAKUMAKA KALAMA and his wife
- 2) NYAMAWI FONDO and 3 wives
- 3) KIVALO NYAMAWI and 1 wife
- 4) KENGA MINYAZI and 2 wives
- 5) ZAMBO KIVALO (divorced)
- 6) Koma of FONDO MKARE and wife

- 7) Koma of MASHA MKARE and wife
- 8) Koma of KENGA KADAMA and 2 wives
- 9) Koma of SALIMU KIVALO and 2 wives
- 10) Koma of KALAMA and wife
- 11) Koma of RIMBA NYAMAWI and wife
- 12) Koma of KARISA MINYAZI

The first three *Vibao* on the left represented the older generation of fathers. The remaining represented the sons. The lineage of the *Vigango* is Musakumaka begat Nyamawi, Nyamawi begat Kivalo, Rimba, Kenga Minyazi; Kivalo begat Zambo, Karisa and Matho.

The types of wood used for making *Vigango* are as follows: MWANGA, MUHUMBA, MUHUHU, MWAMBA, MNGAMBO, MDUNGU. Each ancestral spirit dictates which tree he wants. The Mdungu tree (used for both *Vigango*) is hard and durable and the second reason for using this wood was that it was the will of the ancestor during his life. All these trees, all have medicinal value.

The colours used on them are red, blue and chalk, which are used with glue to bind them together. This sap is from the cactus called KIDHONGODHONGO CHAA, which acts as the glue. The three colours including black are the indigenous Giriama colours and appear in all the dresses and medicine bottles. In the Gohu initiation only castor oil and sorghum together are used to anoint the head traditionally. Charcoal, snail shells and red ochre is used but now the use of paints and chalk were used instead. Block powder colours are used on these.

*Kigango* is a physical image of the person during their time on earth but now it represents a new life of the ancestor (reinvigorated). The *Kigango* has got a lifespan in terms of a) the wood it is made from and its durability and b) how you care for them. However the life span of the *Kibao* is supposed to live forever. When one dies your spirit escapes and then visits the relatives in dreams or calamities - the spirit is alive. The soul involves the heart, the soul and the spirit. The idea of the spirit is part of the wood or ritual significance. The *Kigango* is the physical body. So perhaps the spirit is more important than the physical appearance?

Sprouting of the *Koma* is a blessing if you plant something you hope that it will grow, like crops growing. The *Koma* can grow as big as the tree - do not water them as this would be interfering with the ancestral will of the spirit. It would be cheating them to add water and fertilize them and make them grow - therefore fate plays a part here in whether they sprout or not.

There are 3 reasons for the installation of the *Vigango* 1) protection of the family 2) fear of retribution and for 3) Initiation purposes. They cannot be installed unless asked for by the ancestors. Their reasons for installing these were because of crop problems - no coconuts, palm wine and crops dying and the family were dying mysteriously. Since they installed them the crops and live stock are doing well and no more mysterious



deaths.

They are both Gohu but one is a diviner and the other a healer.

The *Kigango's* beauty depends on the talent and skill of the craftsman and then gives an example. A human being could be very handsome but not a good person, or a female could be beautiful and give birth to an ugly baby - therefore it is up to God (the creator) to decide this.

Tinga today really seemed intimidated by the fact that some of the diviners and healers recognise him to be different to them. I think he half believes really as he says he would not want to be present if I wanted to consult one. He was very cagey about it altogether. He also said that when asked, the healer / diviner wanted to know why he asked whether they were healers or diviners, to which they replied generally, that there *were* healers and diviners there, but were not direct about it as he thought that they did not want to be considered witches, and so were cautious about divulging this information.

Tinga saw some things that he felt were to do with healing /divination and I saw a dongo near the old man, which was probably used for such a purpose. Although I was interested, I was concerned about time and the state of the car, which was playing up, otherwise it might have been interesting to pursue.

On the way to this homestead we saw a man with black circles around his ankles and Tinga thought that he had been to a healer - possibly the same man (Shangia Mae) we visited earlier.

Car broke down at Kaloleni and I had to have the 4 wheel drive gear put back into the normal position, drain gear box oil and have replaced 1000/- later! It is amazing Tinga's faith in a) the car and b) my getting home safely, as he thinks that God is on my side as nothing worse has happened to me -Yet! Badi, the mechanic, it has transpired had completely taken me for a ride - used £10 worth of petrol or equivalent of a full tank in one day - and basically done very little or anything to the car in terms of the 4 wheel drive! I feel like throttling the guy or worse. The whole town seem to know me as a sucker! Really feel cheated off by this idiot!

18.8.99

Car still not going OK, so decided that going to Diani looks as if it's out of the question - radiator now hissing and basically no back light. Did food supplies, paid rent and saw Anne Taylor and husband - welcome luxury for an hour! They also told me about a well-known witchdoctor in the area called KIJWE who is much feared in the locality. The Taylors had problems with stealing, and numerous other hassles so they decided to call him in to deal with it. He stayed there over night and the 'staff' thought that he maybe another cook that was being interviewed for a job, but word had already gone around about him, which made the 'staff' nervous. Then the next day the witchdoctor lined all the staff up and Mr. and Mrs. Taylor were also present. He buried some things in a hole

in the earth by the 'staff' houses and then put a surfria over it and boiled up some herbs. Then he made everyone drink a sip of it, pulling their heads back to make sure they drank it - one man who had a woollen hat on had it taken off and other things put on his head. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor also had to have a sip. He also put some of this concoction at the 3 gates leading to the house and where the cattle were kept. After this he said they would not have any more problems. Apparently the cook ran away that day and another man left shortly afterwards, although it was never really established as to who the culprits were. Interesting that magic / witchcraft is still a very powerful means of control.

Amini at CFCU was telling another story about his brother and jinis, which he really believes in - he reckons they come in the form of cats or very handsome/beautiful men or women. He told the story about how his brother was going to marry this beautiful female and suddenly 3 boxes of 1000/- notes appeared on the table on the verandah. Then the same night all the furniture in the house had changed to crafted Lamu style furniture - obviously better than they already had. He was warned by others to tell the female that he would not stop work, but earn his money himself or he would not marry her - then everything mysteriously disappeared. The jinis are also alleged to have extending arms and lure you into bed, etc.!!!

Evening spent with the Taylor's and friends at the Trattoria, which was nice and met a father of one of the pupils I used to teach at Limuru.

Thursday 19.8.99

Fixed the split hose on the car after it boiled over twice on the way to Kilifi town! tried to ascertain whether the goat had been ordered for tonight's celebration or the end of the research trip. Skye arriving today.

No goat arrived - however Tinga arrived and Jembe joined us for dinner at the Dhow Inn - car continued to fall apart - front head light casing fell off in the dark which I had run over and then picked it up off the road (not knowing which bit of the car it was but assuming it did belong to it) and chucked it in the back - the car is now a laughing stock of Kilifi. Lights going off periodically too.

20.8.99

Goat had been purchased and was now in the back of the CFCU Landrover with Jembe black, huge, with horns and brown eyes.

Spent the whole morning at the garage getting the car welded again to go to Gedi and meet Tinga. Arrived there but Ngala had not made the basket or the *Kigango* - mess up receiving the money, but got a Giriama knife. Saw a wooden bowl with 3 legs, which had a zig zag pattern around the outside near the top which was used for taking broth or for water used in divining in order to see the culprit's face in it. Went back to Tinga's wedding ceremony for his inherited sister, and had to eat goat's intestines boiled in water with Ugali - had the runs ever since. Had to eat more goat in the evening with CFCU -



the one I had seen and paid for in the morning - it was tougher than the ones in Nairobi and so I had tooth ache all evening. The waiter seemed very pleased with the head and legs, which I reckoned I had no need of. We only managed to eat a quarter of the beast - so the rest went to family and friends.

21.8.99

Skye and I relaxed and read on the beach and then went to the Trattoria before she went off to Mombasa to get the train back to Nairobi.

24.8.99

Back to Mombasa - made it in the car! Met Tinga at the Museum. Gave an evening lecture to the Friends of Fort Jesus. The reaction to the work was interesting but cut short by rain. The architect thought the 'stick series' more interesting than the columns - thought the columns more contrived. Saw the sticks as a development from environmental factors in the types of walking stick and saw them as extending and developing the culture of Kenyan life.

An art teacher asked whether working in a symbolic way would work in a culture where the value of symbolism was not a strong force in that community - and how would they recognise the symbolism in these sculptures if it was not explained like I had done in the slide show - relevant comment. Replied by referring to lost symbolism in our own culture and how it could be more acknowledged through cultural interest and historical awareness.

Stayed at the New Palm Hotel, Mombasa 920/- B & B - quite adequate but cold shower and also glad I took net.

Fort Jesus paid my flight back to Nairobi to Wilson airport on a twin jet engine plane - very noisy but much appreciated (25.8.99).

26.8.99

Lecture at National Museum of Kenya - the audience was all artists from the KUONA Trust (affiliated to the Triangle Arts Trust (London) and Mr. Lagat, Acting Head of the National Museum. They seemed very interested and grateful for the talk. They mainly asked questions about materials. One artist thought the work was very 'limited' and not enough variety - probably because Kenyan artists do all sorts of subjects and work in different areas all at the same time. Another artist liked the more figurative work as he saw it, particularly the column with finger prints in it cast into guttering - probably because it looked more familiar to him as he could see people in it 'sitting, lying, and standing' much like Makondi work. These artists tended to depict the everyday life of human beings and knew that these subjects appealed to the tourist market. However some said they were dealing with social issues, which seemed rather a weak argument when the work showed a fairly literal depiction of everyday life - debatable. Their main

interest seemed to be money, funding and selling rather than exhibiting for its own sake, and a lot of them seem to see making art as a means of income/job rather than a vocation - particularly if they have not had the opportunity of extending their education. Another 2 sculptors saw that I was very influenced by nature, but also magic, which is still a very strong force in most of Kenyan life. Even if most Kenyans have rejected magic, they still fear it somewhat. There were also some questions about the *Vigango*, so I expanded on the research.

One of them noticed the link between my interest in vertical structures and the fact that *Vigango* were also vertical structures. I also pointed out that perhaps if they were to look at their own work over a period of time they would find certain shapes or subject matter repeated in their work as a developing style of their own. They seemed to readily accept that I did not spend a lot of money on materials as they do not on theirs either. One artist showed me a sculpture he made from a wire armature, then applied a mixture of sisal fibres, PVA glue and resin from a tree that sets very hard mixed in with sawdust. The sawdust was very red like the red woods (Eucalyptus was a very red wood that they often use too). As well as sawdust for the smoother areas he added earth and smoothed it out with the back of a spoon eg. face area. Morris used BREBLIA wood, which had a good grain, black, yellow, and white, which when coated with linseed oil brought out the grain and the colours.

They also said that 7 was an unlucky number to them - maybe this is regional as many of them are Kikuyu? They also mentioned 4 as being a significant number in some tribes - but often they do not know why. Mbuthia said that 7 was like how we considered the no.13 to be unlucky. 7 may be linked to the number of age sets it was suggested. Also we mentioned the 7 Ages of Man, the 7 Deadly Sins, and 7 is not divisible by any other number - likewise 3.

The majority of people here are always asking about funding which is well nigh impossible to help them with unfortunately.

Went out for a drink with Linnie to the Toona Tree.

27.8.99

Paid my research fee to the NMK. Went and had Nyama Choma with Salim in town - was actually nice and not too tough. Brought several Kikoys for taking home. Artists seemed very appreciative of yesterday's lecture, which was nice.

28.8.99

Graeme (Kenyan) thought the sticks more interesting than columns in the photos because he said the colour was more attractive to the eye and thought them more intricate. Did not think they reflected Kenyan culture particularly but saw that sticks /trees were part of everyday life there. Thought that cowrie shells were specific to female anatomy.

30.8.99

Went to the National Archives - open 8.30am to 4.30pm weekdays and Sat. morning. Found Cynthia Brantley 'An Historical Perspective of the *Giriama* and Witchcraft Control' and looked for any photos they may have, but alas no old photos. Various listings of documents that could have been of *some* use to me I had printed out 72/68/22/13/6 and Africa, 49(2) 1979 133.43 BRA. P.113 - members of the Giriama community seek 4 kinds of protection re-witchcraft:-

- 1) Protection from witchcraft as victims (charms or medicines, banishment of witches or destruction or cleansing of entire society.
- 2) Protection from false accusation as a witch.
- 3) Protection from the society's overall belief and fear.
- 4) Protection from becoming a witch.

In almost all cases, some form of medicine is used. The reasons for witchcraft vary but it was secondary to political, social and economic purposes, particularly during the colonial period (Richards 1935 Marwick 1950). It was often used or caused by stress and strain of colonial conditions; Ranger = economic depression; Goody 1957 surplus production; Role redefinition (Parkin 1968) post independence; adaptations of religious forms (Ranger, Schoffelaers 1966) e.g. neo-Christian or neo-Muslim syncretic responses (Ranger, Lee 1976, Parkin 1970) or (Douglas 1963, Lee 1976) legal means of witchcraft control after traditional methods have been prescribed.

There are 4 secret societies involved including the Vaya and Kambi elders.

"As witchcraft belief increased and the belief in mapepo developed, one of the traditional influences for both good and evil - the spirits of the ancestors, called 'Koma' came to be seen as much less efficacious" p.117.

"As the Giriama have dispersed and some of their mechanisms for retaining oral traditions have disappeared, traditional secrets have been lost and the ancestors in general have become less useful. Thus Koma have become less significant sources for any influence, good or evil" p.117

As well as local witchdoctors there could be an overall witchdoctor who eradicated a society of witchcraft e.g. witchcraft control and he would be more powerful than the local one e.g. Kiyewe (meaning the rock because of his uncrushable power) but his real name was TSUME WASHE born a Rabai in Kilifi district in 1944. He set up a centre at MTEPENI, Kilifi near the elders centre at Ruruma and has a magic stick, 'miti shamba' and charm necklace. Another area of interest to be followed up at a later date!

There were four *Vigango* at the National Archives heaped up in a corner of the room but there was no documentation about them at all except an entry in the log book saying that they were Giriama grave markers which is not strictly true either. I felt this place had so much potential but nobody seemed interested in developing it, which was a great shame.

**Part Three: Field work diaries in Kenya from 22 March to 18 April, 2001 - Crossing Boundaries exhibition, National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi**

**DIARY 1**

22.3.01

Arrived in Nairobi 10am local time (three hours ahead) - sun shining, marabou storks in the sky, etc. Re-orientated myself. Went into the National Museum to see Lagat (Acting Head of Ethnography) about issues for tomorrow's meeting - gathering sticks, mud and sisal for reconstructing the panels, arranging dates for the three lectures, ask for Tinga (former Giriama translator) to come up to open the show and negotiate his expenses.

Crate actually has arrived and will hopefully unpack it on Saturday, as there is already an exhibition still up until Friday 24.3.01 - may need to repair and paint walls. Place things around the room.

Select ethnographic artifacts for the show.

Catering seems to be in-hand - Lagat organising! Invitations have gone out with leaflets, although some still left - get NMK mailing list from publicity officer - send some through the BIEA (British Institute in Eastern Africa). Put elastic bands on remainder of catalogues. Reinforce 'Skins' for hanging. Paint blue forms.

As I was talking to Lagat about the mud we discussed using some of the 'clay mud' from around the museum site to see if it was suitable - sand and cement are easy to get hold of - approximately 500/- (£5) for a bag of cement which may be needed to bind the earth - as dung he said was difficult to get in the city. The sticks could be wattle or eucalyptus - this may have to be obtained from the Forestry Commission for a price.

Interesting the concept of using cement with the earth - an industrial material combined with organic. However not used in making houses in the country because the cost of cement too much - shows how poor economically the country is. The aim of tomorrow is to try and do some of these things - maybe collecting the sticks on Monday - BIEA may help with transport for the sticks then. Need 15 @ 55" long and 30 @ 47" long.

23.3.01

Spoke to Boni, one of the artists from the KUONA Trust at the museum who does sculpture and painting - said that the abstract paintings sell better than the realistic ones - the abstract ones are more like splash and drip - sometimes with some Maasai figures

emerging out of it. He said he enjoyed art and that's why he did it - wasn't any good at maths and got beaten for it at school - was always drawing on the blackboard (and beaten for that too!). He said he liked them all (his art work) because he had done them all, when asked which ones he liked best, trying to elicit a more analytic response. Other artists had the idea that other artists from abroad were not so social and were 'egoists' - out for themselves - quoted the notion of not knowing ones neighbours in UK, etc. and that we could die alone.

Boni mentioned the Baobab tree as having tree spirits - he is Kikuyu.

Arranged 17 April for the BIEA/NMK lecture - later to be supported by the French Cultural Centre as well - title became 'Crossing Boundaries: art, context and cultural transformation'. This lecture was aimed at academics, museum staff and BIEA members.

Mr. William Wambugu (Kikuyu) was Head of the Botanic Gardens and had connections with the forestry people and may be able to help obtain the sticks. Purity Senewa (Maasai) was the Curator of Arts and held the key to the room where we could reconstruct the framework for the panels. I met the Curator of the Nairobi Museum, Daniel, who I saw in passing.

It was a bit of a shock to find that the gallery I expected to show in is not going to be the gallery - because it is not long and thin now but divided into two by a stairwell coming up in the middle. Walls beige and floor rather blue/green and shiny!

The roles between ethnography and art seem very much divided amongst museum staff with attitudes towards showing work e.g. Lagat felt that the ethnographic artifacts should be shown in glass cases; Ali wanted to use the labelling system as they do in the museum for display with details as they are in the rest of the museum; Daniel Curator of NMK said the things (defined as art) in the other gallery [where I was originally going to show] *must* be for sale - this is policy - (does this mean that they define ethnographic materials as *not* for sale and art *is* to sell? - or do they not conceive that you could make art for *display* only and *not* for sale? - this I think is also a reflection of the economic state of art in the culture - e.g. the museum gets income from the commission on art sold - art has to be seen as a job, as a means of making a living otherwise they have to do something else. Does this also imply that the goal is also craft based to sell to tourists who want these sort of items?

Mr. Wambugu was very knowledgeable about the house building in the region he came from, he said that the Kikuyu house is made using clay soil with water and then the outer coating is a mixture of dung and ash which they consider decorative, rather than functional - although this may have other purposes. He thought that the white of the ash was symbolic for the Kikuyu to use as it represented the snow capped Mount Kenya where they thought God existed. The spaces between the sticks on the framework were usually measured with a man's hand with the thumb up and the fingers in a fist and used vertically and horizontally, as there were not the measuring tools we have in the UK - this turned out to be approximately 6 to 9" inches vertically and horizontally. Each section



was infilled with smaller pieces of wood for added security before the mud was flung on from both the interior and exterior of the walls, then left a day to dry out sufficiently before another layer was added to hide the sticks and be made smooth before the final decorative, textural coating of ash and dung was applied.

The artists from the KUONA Trust who agreed to assist me, organised by Salim (another artist who was going to try and seek his fame and fortune in South Africa and was not going to be around) were Henry Muhia Boni, James Mutisya, Anthony Wanjau, David Mwaniki and Peter Gitau - Morris Foit and Patrick Mukabi disappeared. 6th April was set for my lecture to the artists group entitled 'Crossing Boundaries: art and anthropology'. Met Judy Ogana who now runs the Kuona Trust who reinforced my findings earlier that each department operated and thought very independently from each other and there was not much interaction between them. She said that there was a lot of pressure on the artists to produce tourist art - depicting Maasai and tending towards craft objects, as she said a lot of them find it hard to find enough money to eat. Sales were down generally and she was trying to encourage artists to get some sort of income of their own to supplement their work like Europeans do - e.g. teaching or other work. She could not emphasize too much the fact that the artists should be paid to assist me in my work, which I indeed said I would before (this I was able to do as the BIEA gave me free accommodation). She said she would help select some artists relevant to what I wanted practically but possibly one or two intellectually although it was quite difficult for them to articulate very academically - it transpired that after visiting her office I met Salim and we arranged it between us that four of the artists could assist (Boni, David, James, Wanjau) and three (Peter, Patrick, Morris) would be there to help make the panels.

I unpacked the crate - erected the three steel frames for the panels and laid out the catalogues, photos, labels etc in Lagat's office.

Saw Dr George Abungu (Director of NMK) who seemed very helpful and suggested as he could not open the event perhaps a Giriama minister he knew could or the PS (Personal Secretary) both of some importance - therefore there should be more alcohol laid on at the preview.

Arranged with the artists to meet them on Monday at 9.30am with William Wamgugu. When I was carrying one of the latex skins to take 'home' one of the artists at the Trust thought it looked like a big japatti rolled up - food could well have been on his mind! At first I joked about it being a skin - human skin they asked - yes I said - eyes popped out - then I confessed and one of them said that he had heard of people being flayed a month or two ago in Kenya, so thought it could have been possible!

Salim said how bad corruption had got here now - we saw an ambulance with flashing lights and he said that it might be carrying drugs not injured people - and not for use in a hospital! Paul Lane, Director of BIEA had also explained to me about the corruption he had to deal with over some freight for research work and how they luckily had a 'mole' within a place to assist them with information if necessary.



It seems to have been a long day today and I am not sure how much I have actually achieved yet. Came back shattered. Cannot get into the museum until Monday affectively, as offices are locked up and staff were off except those who invigilate over the weekends.

24.3.01

On Peter's recommendation went to Kariokor Market for sisal, the other south east side of the city where the sisal baskets are made to order, and got some white paint for the gallery walls (as the gallery has no funds for refurbishment!) from Alimbal Shariff hardware store which was very expensive. 1194.60/- (£12) for a 4 litre tin - I got three tins and still don't think it will be quite enough! (£36!). The sisal was 40/- a strand which varied in length and thickness - got 20 lengths (£8) which was rather a lot - should have bargained harder, and been quicker with the mental arithmetic - sponge rollers were £6 each for a smallish one, so left that, and anyway everyone advised that people were quicker with brushes.

Got some jasmine-like flowers grown from bulbs which have a beautiful smell - this smell among others reminds me of Kenya - wood ash being another. Then reinforced the latex skins - dried in no time at all out here. Started to write the questionnaire for the school children to fill in at the show.

I was thinking about decoration and Paul Lane was saying how other Kenyans talked about decoration, which is not necessarily our way of perceiving decoration. When I told him how Mr. Wambugu had referred to the outer applied surface of a Kikuyu hut as 'decoration', Paul said when he was working with the Dogon, in Mali, they used a mat in the process of forming the pots they made and they referred to the texture left by the mat as decoration and yet in the West we perhaps define decoration as something applied to a vessel or something after the pot is made - although this might not be the case of baskets and weaving. However in making the pots Paul said that some of them were changed - their outer surface was made smooth by burnishing the outside of the pot - so there was some aesthetic decision being made. However he said that people were not very likely to articulate these issues well (likewise Judy Ogana said that only some of the artists could articulate on this level and it depended on their level of education, although some intuitively acted on these things. Therefore, just because they did not use language to articulate these issues, did not mean that they were not actively involved with doing these things - which may have been an assumption on the part of the Western cultures, which would add ammunition to the "primitivist" notions around the Colonialist period.

Interesting though how the use of an object like a mat during the process should dictate an intentional outcome, and that it would not necessarily fit into a conventional idea of what decoration might look like. Do people see decoration as conventionally bound up by colour and line, rather than texture or surface quality? - maybe this is a difference between 2D and 3D objects too.

### 25.3.01

Went to Panafric for swim.

### 26.3.01

Ali and Mr.Wambugu helped get the sticks - Bluegum (Eucalyptus) - one is soft and the other hard - the hard wood is not eaten by termites. The binding in Kikuyu is done with bark and another sort of fibre can also be used. Peter believes that if the first panel goes OK then the others will automatically be OK too - slightly superstitious here. We talked about ideas of craft and art. He said generally people like realistic paintings, not abstract and he learned a bit about abstraction. He said that he has to think a lot about a design if it is a *new* design before he starts - so then executes it. He said about fine art that he can have other ideas as he looks at other works - when he saw my blue panel he thought about painting the outside of his house. He said the houses used to be decorated outside with white (chalk), yellow and red (soil) and black (charcoal) patterns and even the floors with patterns but now the walls and floors are like the Western ones - plain. He feels (along with David) that their society has become less creative.

David was saying about his sculpture that the process of aging was interesting and he knew about a person who buried his stick in the earth/mud to give it a uniform colour (usually black). This forced aging was not to sell the object but an aesthetic decision - likewise he liked the way new sculptures became/or changed colour over time with people touching them, etc.

A discussion about round house building and rectangular house building took place. The round houses they thought were easier to make because you just put a stick into the ground and drew a circle around it. Everyone had to have experience of making a house particularly in the rural areas - it was a communal activity. The rectangular house they thought was "imported" and "more technical" and would need more sophisticated measuring devices. James, also thought that the utensils and furniture that they had were generally round - stools, suffiras, pots and they also slept on the floor - he thought it was more natural and was influenced by the natural environment - as fruits were round in shape. They (Boni) said that rectangular furniture was easier to put into a rectangular house as utilised the space better - as in a round house it would waste space. When Boni saw the three panels he said I just needed another panel and I could make a one room house - so perhaps the houses could be made in panels and then erected, although I doubt it as the uprights seem to be pushed into the earth to give it more stability from what I observed.

Everyone had an opinion about how to build a house - usually with a particularly biased view towards their own tribal approach. The Kikuyu's apparently use uprights and horizontals with spaces 9" x 6" or 4" x 9" between them. These two often have smaller sticks between them against which mud is just thrown and then later smoothed off - or small stones are put into the mud instead of sticks. Peter also said that a woman he knew near Ngong Hills used dung to create the floor instead of concrete as it kept the fleas and

jiggers away because they didn't like the smell - so there are often variations.

Peter also said that they made similar grids (to the panels) to cut up vultures on, and also other furniture like beds but using some different patterns. He also said about some roof weaves being more decorative than others - does this mean that the process is part of the decorative aesthetic and how conscious is this choice or is it just regional style? Peter was saying that he thought one of the differences between craft and art was that with craft you copied others, whereas with fine art you had to be original. He said that if someone had made art that sold a lot - then others would naturally copy to get money too. Some of the artists are hoping to work with John Buckley but they needed to get their documentation up together, like birth certificates and ID cards, which everyone is supposed to have since independence - so they are either paying 'Chia' money, or forging them.

Peter said that a lot of craftsmen thought that artists that did fine art were poor craftsmen and just took people for a ride. He realised that fine art could be "various" when I asked him what he thought fine art was, and was rather non-committal. He said the way I did these panels was different to how they would normally build a house and it was more time consuming in terms of method and different the way the mud was applied flat in house building but he thought the way this was applied in my panels was more interesting. He defined ceramics as a craft and he had seen a magazine which was the 'Guild of Craftsmen' with ceramics in it - this I told him was probably more orientated towards craft production but that some ceramics were non-functional and he agreed and said they were like sculpture.

In building the panels he put the nails in and just disguised the nail with tying the string in a knot over it, rather than tying it to secure it better, which was interesting - so he was thinking more decoratively rather than structurally. He also said of his own work that he was always striving for making the next piece of work better and seemed to indicate the technical process by this remark as he was thinking about the panel making and making the first one well. He said he wanted to know more about the traditional ways of making things and things as they used to be, even mentioning songs and dances as well as decoration - this he saw as a means of making money by lecturing about it in the light of possibly becoming disabled in the future. He was educated up to secondary level by three sponsors (in catholic schools), who he talked about. He asked me for the return bus fare which was 100/- which was probably more than it would normally be (40/-) but he had worked very hard in the day so that was fine. I had to keep buying sodas for them during the day as it got quite hot. The artists did not like the bureaucracy in the Kuona Trust office, so we arranged what was agreeable amongst us.

Lagat told me that a projector bulb cost 3000/- (£30) so that it would be impossible to have the projector as part of the show on a continual loop - so I suggested that perhaps it could just be shown during the preview then and they could have my spare bulb! - how does the museum ever function!?! - ASA (Africa Strikes Again) - at least after the rains in the night you can see where the leaks are in the roof of this gallery!!!

People still operate on a face to face basis and unless you're around it doesn't get done and yet the artists talk about having mobile 'phones and making communication quicker - yet another influence from the West to make people feel more cool, powerful, progressive etc - ironic that if they cannot afford to eat (as Judy Ogana says!) most of them have mobile 'phones or at least say they have.

The other artists turned up late having not done an awful lot all day and then communally got together and tied more sisal on to the last panel. The sisal I bought was nothing but short strips of fibres which keep breaking and had obviously been twisted by hand - as Peter confirmed, Kenya exports its better quality tea, coffee and now sisal! They also said that the fibres were perhaps stronger than the strands I had bought and that they usually used bark from the trees that 'grew around', but Peter did not seem to think that it had any special significance, as the Mkone bark had for the Giriama.

When I asked them about the idea that some African peoples thought that corners trapped evil spirits and that was perhaps why they did not build rectangular houses, they just said that they hadn't heard this and mentioned the practical reasons I mentioned before. David told me that a great many people neglected either their culture or religion or both and had been what he called "saved". When I asked him what he meant by this, he confirmed it was Christianity and everyone wanted to be modern and forget about their past - he thought it was a bit sad and he seemed genuinely interested in the past traditions and sees it as part of his identity as a person, and talked about how he was brought up by his grandfather who told him about things. Several of them found the idea of traditional values as being important to them - particularly Peter and David - maybe this is also as a result of working close the museum, as opposed to *with* the museum.

Had to get back before dark tonight which can be dodgy, and so took the busier route as I was a bit late and it was already beginning to get dark which happens quickly here - it's like a curfew thinking that if I am at all late I'm more likely to get mugged. Thought how beautiful the environment was here as I was walking everywhere - birds, flowering trees, etc - pollution bad though.

27.3.01

Soil Tests:-

1. Soil and water
2. Soil, water, grass
3. Soil, water, cement
4. Soil, water, cement, grass

Today finished off wiring up the backs of the panels and continued painting the walls. The walls still look a bit patchy and as the paint is pricey the artists decided to thin it. Also managed to get the holes drilled in the walls by the bloke in the exhibition workshop for the ring bolts.

Mr. Wambugu came up trumps again with the mud mixture - we went down to the

Kikuyu hut and his two men dug up the earth under the grass which they then turned over quite a few times - they removed stones and debris from it. The man from Machakos used to make mud bricks so was quite expert with the digging tool, like a giant adze. Mr. Wambugu told them to make it Ugali consistency when they added water and it became a bit too wet. We tried the 4 samples of soil combinations and later Peter had thought perhaps he might use this mud in his work too, as it was a lot cheaper than clay so he seemed pleased that he had learnt something from me. When we were walking away from the mud Peter had a lot of mud sticking to his shoes which I commented on and he just said that "they were friends" - an interesting use of language in conjunction with himself and the soil. He also thought the stick structures looked better than he thought they would once they were on the wall, and seemed quite impressed - he was obviously thinking about the presentation of the work too, and starting to realise that this was perhaps more important than he had at first thought. The other artists were also interested to know what the foam board was and whether you could get it here in Nairobi.

Peter and the others are constantly trying to think of some other way of making money to survive. They still see UK as the land of plenty if they could only get there. They were trying to get passports again today but now knew that it was going to be impossible so they were rather disheartened today.

Unless I am running around and doing bits and pieces with the artists, they seem to go off for one reason, or another, which can be rather disconcerting when time is short. Lagat wanted the walls painted right up to the ceiling but I said that if the museum wanted to pay for more paint they could - and in any case it probably did look better without it white to the ceiling as it would have shown how bad the ceiling was with all its leaks. In fact Lagat said that he would just put plants underneath the drips to prevent people walking into them - what a joke!

Peter took the four of us to have chia and a chapatti, which came to 80/- (80p) for all of us - a bit different from the museum where they charge 50p for one cup of tea.

The flying ants are out in their droves tonight. It is obviously the time of the year for them as I remembered from before - quite spectacular - come out in the rains. It's been raining for most of the day off and on but pouring tonight.

I found myself getting a bit worked up today about time and the fact that nobody really got started until 10ish and then took a break at 11.45 and Antony told me that the Kuona Trust give all the artists tea/coffee and cake between 1 and 2.30pm - this they looked forward to and did not want to miss at all - this reflected how poor they seemed to be and how dependent they were on this. They were always looking for people to sponsor them and get them abroad to sell their work. Antony thought he could just go into a number of galleries in UK and just sell his work to them, there and then, so I suggested that he wrote to several galleries with a proposal and examples of his work first, but I don't think he really understands what this means.

I realised that it is not really people that divide each other on an individual level but



economics of a whole place like Kenya, where there is no welfare system and it's a fight to survive. Patrick Mukabi seemed not to be bothered whether he helped or not, so I did not pursue him - he seemed rather arrogant and told me he had two students coming to see him.

Today Boni and Antony helped in the morning and most of the afternoon. David then turned up and quite a bit later James. Yesterday David assisted most of the day and Boni and Antony mostly in the morning.

Mr Wambugu said that there was an old Kikuyu saying that you would get the house you deserved depending on the materials you brought to make it with. He reckoned that an average sized house would take two days to build given that the whole community would be making it together. If they hadn't got enough wood to build it like the Kikuyu house in the museum grounds then they would infill the wooden framework with solid mud. So maybe materials also reflected the wealth of the family wanting the house?

Normally the mud would be put on to the structure and then the rest of the mud thrown at the wall from both sides, which would compress the mud further against the wooden structure. "Cultural and ecological influences have affected the old style of construction" - Andersen, K B (1977) 'African Traditional Architecture: A Study of the Housing and Settlement Patterns of Rural Kenya'. Nairobi: Oxford University Press - because of shortage of common building materials they had to change their building methods because of the availability of certain *other* materials. Palm leaf and corrugated iron sheets meant that roofs were pitched and more mud walls were used, as thatching material/grass was rarer to get hold of - so the rectangular structure may also have been a result of what the materials could or could not do easily.

### 28.3.01

Peter had said that sometimes the earth that termites make their columns with is used as clay, as their saliva makes the soil more pliable. This seemed to be the case. They build really quickly - from about 9.30am to 10.30am they had started to make quite a good cylinder. Thought about cutting up the grass and thought about trimming off the thatched roofs around (but obviously not for conservation reasons) but realised how we become obsessed with ordering things and tidiness, controlling natural things - as opposed to feeling at ease with more random arrangements. However when I mentioned this to Peter he said usually they did trim these roofs off but that if we did it we would have to do all of them or the museum would not like it.

Peter's mother did not like him being an artist and she once threw all his clay pieces away - she wanted him to work in an office and another relative wanted him to train as a teacher. David also said that artists were looked down upon as not being intelligent and were lazy - this was a general view by people.

Mr.Wambugu when he saw the mud applied to the framework expected it to be a replica of a mud house I think, as he said he thought the spaces between were too big. He said



that it was a security risk being so big, as people could put their hand in and through the wall - interesting in terms of being vulnerable. The general notion to house building seems to be strength - this seemed to be Peter's interest. When examining the four samples of mud he preferred the ones with the cement. However we went with the soil, grass and water mixture. In this mixture was also leaves, stones and other plant debris.

David and I talked about soil and its importance - he said he thought it was true that soil was sometimes strong, other times weak, as well as not permanent like human life itself.

The image of this panel seemed to David like a wall on a wall and the imagery was so familiar that perhaps people may not see it except through the eyes of someone looking at a mud wall/hut. David said it would take his community one day with about 20 people or maybe more to build a three roomed house and he emphasised the community assistance - then they would all go round and assist with someone else's house the next day.

Purity said that in Maasailand they would build with mud and cow dung - but most of the other people I talked to from different places seemed to just build with mud alone.

Today Boni and Antony didn't turn up in the afternoon. Peter helped chop the grass with a panga and David helped scoop up the grass and carry a couple of heaps of mud into the gallery. Peter seemed to do the lion's share again. Morris turned up today and chattered to me while watching me infill the mud - he told me he should go and teach at the International School - he got paid £15 for the day which is not a lot in terms of the school pay there. Naturally he wanted to know about funding and how artists survived in UK and what sort of work was popular.

When we discussed whether people would understand the work or how they might receive the work (talking specifically about the panels) he told me a story about the elephant, the hyena, and the rabbit, the elephant and hyena picked the fruit from the tree and said how good it was and there was nothing better, but the rabbit (who knew he would not grow to the size of the other two) said he didn't want the fruit and that he thought it was bad, so wouldn't eat it. He left it at that to unravel, so I assumed the rabbit was jealous. Morris seemed to talk in riddles - he said that story telling was important because people were able to understand it better and that Jesus told stories for people to understand things better - presumably the parables, except he said he wasn't Christian or religious in that way.

I talked about the formal quality of the panel to Purity when she asked about the holes in the panel, as she did not really understand or think of a reason why the holes were there. She seemed to nod in respect to these replies but it was difficult to gauge how much she actually understood coming from a different perspective.

The two boys from the Botanic department also disappeared today and we needed them to dig more soil up for the last panel and a half, however after seeing Mr.Wambugu, one turned up late but did do one more bucket. Hopefully tomorrow it will be more organised so that the panels can be completed and the rest of the work can be placed around ready

to put up in the afternoon session.

Saw a locust tonight on the verandah that the cat took off and presumably ate. Got more paint for the stands today - James didn't show up today either.

We talked about mass production of artifacts, which they distinguished not as art - as art seemed to have to be unique. Peter still thinks perhaps to copy something you like is OK and maybe hasn't decided whether it is art or craft or what - there still seems to be this unresolved idea of making art to make money.

29.3.01

Got NMK mailing list - the schools questionnaire was typed up.

Finished the clay panels by lunch time. I think they still saw them as unfinished as they pointed to the holes left as if they thought I had forgotten to fill them in!!!

Then we went to lunch again at Tilapia Corner and I had some tilapia, David ate the head of the fish, and the others had goat intestines which I refused as I had had it before. Ugali all round - goes without saying.

In the afternoon I put all the art work out around the room and the photos information boards, etc. and then got the ethnographic artifacts out too. However it was funny that Ali and Lagat did not want them left for 5 seconds and really stressed how valuable these artifacts were, etc. which goes without saying however they didn't even consider the value of the art works or their possible value. This was interesting, as I still don't think they looked at them in terms of their cultural value as much as their monetary value - as they were so sure they would be stolen. The artists seemed interested in their monetary value, especially the old coins on the waistband - he said thieves looked out for these things and could get quite a lot of money for them still. This persuaded me to put the smaller items in the horribly ugly glass cases they had and then in the third case I would put my latex forms inside - so that the presentation did not become too museum orientated. These cases were clumsy and grotesque - the bottom being a cupboard made of PINK formica and the tops so vast, built on a frame - I think they would fall to bits rather easily if moved too.

Peter and the others keep saying that this work is 'very unique'. I thought about how these panels were *inside* and in fact they would be built *outside* and how again it was a reversal of location - this was brought home to me by the fact that the grass in the mud was going mouldy and this wouldn't happen so much outside. James saw the panel when I told him this, in a different way as he had misinterpreted what I said - he thought I meant that the panel's face was the internal surface and the back was the exterior surface - this was an interesting thought.

James also said as I was unpacking the blue forms individually wrapped from the crate, it reminded him of when the magician came to his school and he had lots of different things

he unpacked, which made everyone curious. Peter was very curious about the latex and kept touching and feeling it - Boni was curious about the vinyl lettering and fiddled with the sticky backing.

James liked the idea of using the texture of the mod-roc, but without the plaster, for a painting ground - so I suggested he might use cotton scrim on hardboard, which I had with me - so by cutting up the mod-roc for me it had given him new possibilities. I talked to David about the process of building up the mud panels, becoming like a ritual and he seemed to see the analogy. Boni said that the earth was considered to a round table and the sun in the sky was considered to be a God. So that when the sun set it was God going to bed and in the morning he was pulling his blanket across the sky before getting up hence the significance of the earth and the sky. The rainbow was also reckoned to be auspicious.

Boni thought it was important to do a lot of different things and not to specialise in one thing e.g. dance, songs, painting, sculpture and even labouring - as it made you more versatile (for employment) but really because you never got bored you could do one thing one day and another activity another day; on a day to day basis. David thought I was a very good organiser.

Having thought about the attitude of the ethnography department about the value of the artifacts, made me wonder why the artists didn't seem to value their art as much and that in actual fact nobody seemed to value the current art going on, but generally only more traditional or conventional art - this needs to be addressed if contemporary Kenyan art is to thrive in Kenya - let alone anywhere else.

There still seems to be a need to buy western art materials to be considered seriously this seems a shame, although I suppose wood for carving is still in quite good supply mainly eucalyptus and some mahogany. Peter asked for his bus fare again.

### 30.3.01

Got the show hung today with a few alterations.

Talked to Morris about living in Kenya now and in the 1960's after Independence (Independence was in 1963). We talked specifically about Limuru where he lives and I taught - *Mau Mau* region. He remembers the air being fresher, more water in the lake, money going further and more white people around, and more farming being done on the land - now he says that things have changed and are not so good, it is very hard financially to live. He thought that the Colonials were OK and just like everyone else and provided work for local people, but now there was very little and because of the economy their wages went less far. He said the Africans wanted the Colonialists out because they wanted all the money and power for themselves, but the local people were satisfied with the way things were. However in another breath he talked about the Kenyans not being a fighting people unlike those in Zimbabwe, but I reminded him of *Mau Mau* and he said that then there was a cause for freedom - so I said that what he said

did not make sense. So there was a lot of ambivalence there - he reckoned that it was only the squatters that wanted the land and who had nothing anyway and so jumped at the chance of being told they could grab land from the white people. He used Mugabe as an example.

The journalist from the '*People*' newspaper turned up today and wanted to be told about the exhibition.

The artists used a stick to measure the height of the information boards, etc. which worked quite well - Boni had malaria and so rested quite a bit. Antony turned up and David came later and James was there most of the time. Faithful Peter was sitting waiting for me in the gallery after I had been to the ethnography department at 9am this morning. I was asked to write the opening speaker's speech which is yet another thing they want me to do, so how could I refuse! They are still being over cautious about the artifacts from the ethnography dept. - had to sign for them today and take them back again.

One of the female artists came up to see the progress again and she said she was a sculptor. She said she wanted to make herself a small house for resting in, as she looked at the panels, and that she intended to decorate the surface using the third layer of coloured clays. She thought of flower patterns when I asked her what sort of decoration she intended to do. She explained a similar technique of making houses as the others - putting clay first like mine, then splattering it on and then the final layer being a decorative layer using different clay soils. She said they too used grass in the soil mixture, which became very hard and between the wooden slats they would put stones to stop the soil from dropping through. She said often the wooden sticks would rot before the mud fell apart and you would have to get a hammer to it before it would break. She admired the panel and wanted her house to resemble the panel, as she liked the finger marks, and general texture.

The journalist reckoned that in spite of Western influences religious and social values were still very much tied up with the artifacts that people made today. He was surprised I was so obsessed with death and asked me whether it was uncommon for me - in other words did I not see much of it - this accentuated the attitude towards death in a Western country as opposed to Kenya where life and death are very close. This I had experienced during my times in Kenya before.

People have a very romantic view generally of what England is like and generally have never been. I also thought that perhaps Morris's view of his childhood was not so much to do with the economic environment but generally romanticising rather poetically on past happy experiences. Peter said he would like to go to UK to earn enough money to set up a business of some kind or give him more security but wasn't particularly romantic about the idea; which may indicate that he is particularly pragmatic (as I have found him, to my luck) rather than romantic like the others.

When I have been talking to the artists I feel I have been advising them and teaching

them in an informal way and they are eager to pick up what they call 'new ideas' which to them is everything and anything, not just art and 'marketing'. They seem fascinated by the materials which are new to them like the latex, mod-roc, scrim, foam board and foam X not to mention the vinyl lettering which they cannot get their head around at all - not even Lagat.

How far do we think that Africa has been influenced by the West and how far is/was it the other way around or occurred in Africa anyway and yet we called our own or thought of as our own and just elaborated on it? e.g. Columns (Egypt), rectangular house structures in Tanzania / Nigeria, etc - Ref.: Black Athena by Bernal.

The 'phone was cut off three times from UK tonight - the phones are definitely worse than they used to be which was pretty awful then.

31.3.01

Went to NMK feeling exhausted - covered one relief with mod-roc and transferred the lettering to the wall - Boni came to watch for while. By 12.30 I had had enough so went in search for a Comments Book in Westlands. Went into a market area selling crafts and other things and found that they had some that looked like original pieces of ethnographic 3D work - like the BaKota reliquary figures I studied in museums in the UK. These people did not seem to have any conscience about having these things in their possession and told me that the museum had bought one or two things from them - however I doubted this, and still they impressed upon me to buy them.

## **DIARY 2**

1.4.01

Went to Joan's at Thika. Met an Asian man who used to be in charge of prisoners making mud bricks - their sole purpose was to make them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Security still seemed to be a problem and now it had changed from being something that happened at night to something that happened during the day. People would kill just for money and property and car jacking was now a real problem.

2.4.01

All but finished all three panels - just finishing touches tomorrow and cleaning the floor.

Peter was telling me that people were embarrassed about reading things and that it is much better that the artist talks about the work. He implied that their reading was not that good and so it was better if someone read it out orally. He reckoned it was better to keep the speeches short too. It would seem from the less well educated it is still predominately an oral culture.

### 3.4.01

Came to the conclusion that this culture is very tactile and that is why people are always touching and feeling things - whereas in UK children are mostly taught not to touch things.

Met an artist who had come to my last lecture two years ago about my work and he said he could not understand what it was about in spite of listening to me for 45 minutes - so thought I will have to make it more of an informal question and answer session perhaps this time. He explained that he wasn't stupid and still didn't understand - he said he had heard of Charles Saatchi and how he made and broke artists by buying all their work - maybe the buying of all the work impressed him most! It seems that they find it very difficult to grasp abstract concepts about things - and yet within their own traditional religious culture, such as the Giriama, abstract notions were understood within their own context. Traditionally knowledge was passed on through age-set and unless you were of the right age you would not be introduced to certain information or concepts - however in a more urban environment and being exposed to others coming from abroad, television, and internet I find it hard to believe that they don't understand more concepts about Western art than they do.

It is interesting to note that people will not come unless personally invited to the preview with an official invitation card. The person opening the show is now the Director's deputy.

Interesting that Tinga said that the Muslim influence at Fort Jesus seems to preclude research such as mine into the Giriama as it is non-Muslim - therefore the photographs that I have donated to the museum may not be displayed, so Tinga suggested showing them at the regional museum at Rabai which he is setting up and is in Giriama land.

I talked to Antony about his work for sometime today - his carving although traditional shows a lot of talent and sensitivity - he has a wonderful feel for volume and mass. He said he approached the wood with an idea in mind, not the other way around, the wood shape suggesting something to him - he said that did not challenge him enough, 'it was too easy'. He was asking £100 for a bird about a foot high and £500 for a large table and figure beneath it.

Saw a couple of street kids today, one drinking beer at 10am sitting on a curb - he must have only been about six to eight years old - sad to see.

### 4.4.01

Talking to another Kikuyu artist he was saying that the idea of death as we know it never really occurs as when someone dies another child is called after the same name - so that person goes on living through the child. If the person who died was not good and so would not want to be named after them the family might have to make a sacrifice of beer



or whatever so that his spirit doesn't interfere with the family. The conclusion here is that the dead person is constantly regenerated through the younger generations and therefore never dies. This bloke said he did not see such a division between my work and the ethnographic artifacts, on seeing the exhibition up and he thought what an artifact (on the wall, not in the cabinet) was a piece of art work from one of the Kuona Trust artists who made work that was a combination of wood and metal - this implement was used for digging the soil for planting, but I did not label it.

Finished off final details before preview tonight.

Thought about the public and private nature of seeing a *Kigango* - in a way it is like asking someone in UK whether you can see their jewellery - quite an imposition perhaps if these things are considered personal and private. Are we invading this private space in the name of preservation and museums - how far can we justify this documentation except to say that it is the future generations identity and perhaps may prevent us re-inventing the wheel?

As I was waiting to see Lagat another man was waiting outside - he told me that in terms of a pecking order - the white person would be seen first and then a man like him who was of the same tribe (Calijin) and then a person of another tribe - thus reinforcing the divisions between the tribes.

A reporter from the 'Kenya Times' came tonight to ask me about the show along with another freelance reporter and photographer who took some photographs. The opening seemed to go well with mainly people from the museum, along with the teachers I used to teach with and Maureen Doughty from the Mountain Club. Unfortunately not many people I had put on my mailing list came to the show - later found out how awful the NMK mailing list was, just inviting the heads of the various embassies and not the Nairobi gallery managers, cultural centres or heads of art departments in universities or schools! In fact the marketing manager said he would now advertise the show! The woman from the Kenyan Museum Society, who paid for the preview expenses, came to the show and said she was very impressed.

#### 5.4.01

Spent the morning talking over the education questionnaire with Lagat and David (Ed. Dept) - decided the questions OK and open enough to deliver varied answers. Each child would be given an exercise book, pencil rubber or sharpener as motivation to fill in the form. The colour brown was generally associated with earth rather than rust or burnt sienna. They were also saying that blue in Calijin meant associations with God probably because he was believed to be in the sky - therefore considered a spiritual colour too. David who was Kikuyu said that they also associated blue with a spiritual colour - he also said that the white clay and dung mixture that his mother put on the house was meant to be decorative as he can remember as a child not being able to play ball against it except where it had worn off - the idea of this coating was to represent a delicate and decorative effect - delicate because it was prone to flaking off - its beauty was considered in terms of

how smooth it turned out to be and a lot of time was spent doing it. Lagat also says that in his tribe in Calijin area the houses were decorated sometimes with flower motifs as well - perhaps red ochre up to knee high, then white above and then blue motifs. This was often done before Christmas. David said that in his tribe to mark/remember their dead they used a stick in the ground with a calabash inverted on the top and again this could only be moved once or twice - he said this was representative of a medicine man and if a medicine man died his sons would inherit this role and so this practice would continue. Again the differences between these two men came out in tribal traditions which I felt they were quite 'patriotic' about.

Met my Maasai friend Helen from the Mara, her husband Jacob had died four weeks ago of diabetes which should have been curable - he had also had recent dealings with the Maasai Court and ordered to pay a lot of goats! - Jacob's brother was now instigated as the local chief of the area. She said in Maasai culture she was not allowed to marry again unless she did not have children previously! - although she could probably do it by meeting someone from another village and agree to meet somewhere like Nairobi. Her mother-in-law was still alive and told me how when they are young girls they are paired off with a Morani (warrior age set) who they very often fall in love with but cannot marry but often their future children are persuaded to make marriages, so that the bonds between them are made tighter. Very romantic really. The dogs are still chewing shoe leather in the boma.

This afternoon one of the artists went to Machakos where 58 school children had died in a fire in a boarding school - one of the victims was a relative of his. The artists were saying these disasters were happening all the time now and they had become more blasé about it all. Took photos of the artists work. Antony and his older brother Jackson came from a family where their father was a sculptor and the facility was obvious in the sense of design and feel for the forms. The other sculptors said that the father did not do much now and had turned to drink, although the two brothers said that they used some of his contacts to get commissions still. Antony had been invited by Robert Loder to go to Nigeria to do a workshop but he couldn't get a passport without bribery, which he refused to do, and in any case that wouldn't be the end of it. (It is now said that it is easier to find paradise than get a passport). Another artist who made accurate clay busts of different tribal peoples, also had pupils that basically learnt to copy him as best they could - it was almost like an apprenticeship system.

'Power and Darkness' alias '*Kenya Power and Light*' struck again tonight twice.

Lagat thought that it was wrong to think that West Africa had things that were more like 'art' artifacts than in East Africa - he had read this somewhere. He didn't believe that East Africa was a cultural desert and that the art that was produced was just a different aesthetic - it was also linked with being pastoralists as opposed to agriculturalists so that meant that their creativity ended up being more portable objects, rather than static, communal objects. This is not a new theory of course - depends on your definitions of art.

#### 6.4.01

Lecture a Kuona Trust with artists - approximately 20-25 artists present. The discussion afterwards was more fruitful than perhaps even showing the slides of my work. The main topic of conversation was not so much the issues involved with the work as how they can survive as artists - they blamed the government - thinking that the government should support their artists - they have a very inaccurate notion about artist from the UK - they think that the government in UK just hands out money to artists but they do not really think it through in terms of how? Morris Foit says he makes art firstly to sell and usually to a white market. He says that Africans tend not to appreciate or buy contemporary art as they think it is like a 'false idol' or the devil in their homes - a hang over from Christianity. We discussed the religious factors in terms of the Kigango too in this respect. We discussed how if people didn't see a value in art then they also would not buy. It seemed that in the rural areas where customs still existed, art forms such as music, song and dance, would still be valued outside a monetary interest. But coming to the city you had to earn money to survive - there being no welfare state.

James (who worked with me) said that an old man playing the 'Titi' (Luo musical instrument like a lyre) in his home community would be playing from the heart and it would be authentic (or sincere) however if he came to the city he would be influenced by other things as it would be tainted by the fact that he would have to make money - so it would not be 'from the heart' - however Sam said that surely this man might equally invent a new song/music in the light of his new experiences but based on the old - so there seemed to be some disagreement about change and 'modernisation'.

James said one of the problems they faced was as a result of Colonialism - that before the Colonials they might use a wooden spoon then when the Colonials brought a metal spoon the Kenyans would adopt this type of spoon - he said the Africans could not develop themselves through the various and necessary stages of development to get to this metal spoon and now they didn't seem to know where to go - in other words the general consensus was that Colonials took away their natural development and implanted their own.

The idea of art education introducing art as having value was considered but not much comment made. I think art in the curriculum is a fairly new concept in the 8:4:4 system.

One female artist thought now there were more artists than before that art would automatically become more acceptable and she said that the white people were the people that were still supporting artists and to take advantage of it - almost to the point of exploitation it seemed, as the French and Italian Cultural Centres show work free of charge with no commission, whereas the National Museum of Kenya charges for gallery space as it does not get enough government funds to run it - which I did not realise before. Solo shows also seem problematic to get too - so there is some jealousy among them if someone does. The Kuona Trust administrator, Patricia, told them all to stop moaning as the Museum had supported the Trust - as someone wanted to buy the

property as a hotel at one time and the museum would not sell it. Also the museum have made a special gallery for the artists in the main building which again the artists do not realise is in effect government sponsored.

The idea of death is also very different and again confirmed that Kenya is very much a place where life and death are openly seen every day - not hidden or rare as it is in UK - the newspapers testify to this. One of the artists, another Antony, who used to belong to the Kuona Trust, said that his youngest daughter had died and his wife was ill and he couldn't afford medication - he was going to some quack who told him to get some 'fruit juices' and she had swollen legs and back ache. The quack said she was not producing enough 'good blood'.

One of the artists also said that there were some funding to be gained by going to the ministry of culture - and the artist who had lost the child said then why didn't she help him to get the money. There seems to be a notion that things will come to people and not the other way around - they were encouraged by the administrative staff to help themselves, not rely on government handouts or someone coming to them. The administrator said she had never met another artist who had been able to make a living solely out of their art.

Another artist said that even if Africans were well off and had several Mercedes Benz they still didn't want to pay much money for art - so it isn't a question of cost but of the value placed on art in the country.

The craftware that people made is still not really seen as art or aesthetic, however I threw that in for discussion. There seems to be a Colonial gap between what was indigenously made by people with some aesthetic intent and what contemporary African artists see as art - really copied from the West, or subsumed from the West. Problem now is that they haven't got an audience for contemporary art amongst the African community. Discussed this separation between 'art' for the community which had a religious or social context/use and how contemporary art tended to be divorced from the community (particularly in Nairobi) but had no present function in the community either maybe. Western art has nearly always been for an elite, which they do not seem to understand - they think everyone in UK is used to seeing and buying art. A lot of the artists have not been out of Kenya, not even neighbouring African countries, so their knowledge is quite limited. There was some notion that African art should stay in Kenya and not have to be made and bought by other people - Morris Foit also reckoned that people would pay more to have their children learn about African art than European art in times to come - rather than the rich paying for foreign education. There was a lot of talk about corruption since the 1960's - so the post-Colonial era seems bleak economically. The artists were also saying it was difficult to get jobs doing anything.

Quite a number of artists said I was analytical but that they were not able to be - Sam said he was just visual and he knew he saw but he found it difficult to be analytic.

#### 9.4.01

Set off for Mombasa on the over night train at 7pm for Lecture tomorrow.

#### 10.4.01

Arrived in Mombasa at 12 midday - three hours late! Only takes 8-9 hours by road! Difficulty finding flat I was staying in. Gave the lecture to the Fort Jesus Museum Society who were just expecting a lecture on the Giriama commemorative posts in spite of faxing down an abstract! I was introduced to a German bloke who had in his travels taken quite a few photographs of Commemorative grave posts at the coast in the 1960's, but not exclusively Giriama and had not documented them fully. However he had interviewed a few people mainly elders in the Kayas - he knew of Brown's article but not of Ernie Wolfe III. This man agreed with me that there were a lot of contradictions about the information he gained too - however he said he found that the posts didn't always face west by any means - and also they varied so much in height that he didn't think they were directly related height - however what you think to be true and what in reality might be true are often different, but in the mind of the informant they could be equally true for some reason or another.

Generally well received but the audience I felt did not grasp the concepts and issues surrounding current trends in museology and ethnography and had quite conventional ideas about art, equating it with craft skills more than concepts. The boundaries were rather set here.

Really steamy hot here - lovely lizards, vervet monkeys, frogs and sunbirds.

Tomorrow plan to take photos of Fort Jesus's walls - just love the patchwork and weathering that has gone on.

#### 11.4.01

Felt grumpy about a lot of things today that had accumulated over the period of time but had to be patient.

Met up with Brian, the conservationist from the Museum that I worked with before. He thought that ethnographic artifacts became valuable and important in UK because they are a strange commodity in that environment (country) and usually unique, as if you go back to Kenya you may not find the same thing or may not be able to afford to go back to Kenya at all. He said that he had a bracelet that he got in 1996 and he really valued it, it was from Lamu and made of wood that is no longer growing - it has coral and glass in it and is quite delicate. So he leaves it with his mother in the Taita Hills in a box for safe-keeping. Having visited his 'home' in Mombasa I realise what he means - one room in a long cement house occupied by various other families who also live in one or two rooms with one light bulb - there was a double bed, a sofa, table and two chairs squashed



together and a 'side' where the cooking took place on a geeko. There was a central water tap where washing utensils took place - I didn't ask about showering or the loo! He lived there with his four brothers using two rooms. This house was hot in the warm weather and cold in the cooler weather, so that to me a mud constructed house seemed more suited to the purpose and therefore little need to change something that ergonomically worked.

Brian talked about how a lot of the artifacts went missing sometimes at the museum because the cleaners didn't realise these objects had value, as they often see these things and think they can always be replaced, as to them they look old and need repairing. These artifacts can be left out by mistake although some of them must be intentionally taken, but also there are lots of people taken on casually without any museum training at all. Most of the training seems to be internal.

#### 12.4.01

Going back by train to Nairobi. Few tourists down at the coast for this time of the year and the coastal hotels desperate for trade still.

Brian told me that the Kenya Times newspaper was very pro-Moi and in fact the government newspaper - interesting that one of their journalists should interview me!

#### 13.4.01

Train got in at 12.30 midday - really late as usual (15 hours) stopping a lot for people to get on with goods to sell in Nairobi. The train now has a restricted service only going down to the coast three times a week instead of every day, so this has had an effect on people being able to sell things and now to compensate stops at every little stop and sometimes between stops now.

#### 14.4.01

The context definitely seems to be the defining factor in terms of the object's value - however this value system may change in the course of its journey e.g. from Kenya to UK. Also the time is crucial to its interpretation and meaning - e.g. these materials may not be available any more, the article may not be made any more in other materials either (as may use imported goods instead eg. plastic bowls).

Got to the museum having been mugged and my watch wrenched from my wrist. Met the other artists who just said it was an everyday occurrence now and didn't seem at all surprised, especially as I had been walking through the 'lions den' for most of the time I have been walking to the museum!

The guides in the museum have not been instructed about the show and seem uninterested and reluctant to read the information. Likewise a few locals expect to be informed verbally by someone, not read about the show and its ideas. Also the level of



understanding is very low, so that even if they do try and read the information boards it seems that it is a bit above their heads. So there are possibly two levels of difficulty 1) education and 2) concepts about what art can be, or is - as a lot of the comments are from Europeans that appear to have less difficulty in understanding it.

Noticed two boys not only touching the 'Skins' but smelling them too, which was interesting.

15.4.01

Decided to stay holed up today and read.

Cooper and Steyn - liked the phrase the "epiphany of the every day" - which is in some ways how I perceived the panels.

Interesting the notion of research in the field as we know it in the West - as the Africans see this as a great privilege and costing a lot of money - which undoubtedly it is however I told one of the ethnographers in the department that he could start by interviewing and documenting his own family in terms of his own tribal culture - he had not really viewed it in this way, but as something detached from himself and 'scholarly' beyond his financial means. Ref.: Terry Lovell in 'Transgressing Boundaries' - unveiling of a firms equal opportunities slogan 'what do all of us have in common? We are all different (p.29).

Ref.: Definitions of 'deconstruction'. Comaroff: Late 20th.Century Social Science in 'Transgressing Boundaries' (p.54).

"The term 'deconstruction' is often used, rather loosely, to imply critical examination: a making strange of the taken for granted or the naturalised. The gesture of 'making strange' is at the root of modern critical theory: Marx advocated it, and applied it supremely in his analysis of that 'trivial thing', the commodity...Mistrust for the self-evident, the pursuit of the hidden logic beneath surface realities, is the core method of critical modernism...But deconstruction in the more radical Derridean sense is an altogether more nihilistic exercise'.

One comment that was made about the work in the comments book was that it gave a new perspective and made the viewer re-value the everyday.

No object is mute - it has a story to tell (or symbolic value) - re: Barthes - visual language - "the politics of value is in many contexts a politics of knowledge" / "politics as the mediating level between exchange and value". (p.6) Arjun Appadurai in "The Social Life of Things" (1986).

17.4.01

Perhaps the context for art in the West is Capitalism and the political and economic

climate - just as it is in a way for Kenyan artists. One of the problems that Kenyan artists face I think is having large families and having to support a wife that does not work possibly and therefore a menial job does not bring in enough time or money to do art work - it's a luxury in this society as it is not supported or valued by local people like artifacts used to be if it was for communal use.

One of the visitors said the show was nice to see as it was a new exhibition and was surprised to find the room had changed after he had been away for two months. He seemed to feel this was a positive move on behalf of the museum. Also when talking to Barbara Cashion (in charge of the museum guides) she said that the guides were naturally informed about the permanent collections but it seemed little was done about shows of a temporary nature (thus upholding this notion of museums stuck in the past!). I suggested that this informing of guides was important and could be a strategy for the future. I felt that the gallery was rather tucked away from the main museum space, which also did not help.

The museum talk went well and met some really interesting people. Erica Mann said that in Thailand the bricks were all a certain size which was smaller than average because they were measured by their hand size - this was what I intended when I made the 'Shelter' construction and found that other people intuitively used their own hand size.

I was also questioned about the 'soil' being a permanent material, or not - in Nairobi these structures are classified as unstable - also there is the political connotation of the word mud and what that word symbolises e.g. backwardness, dirt, not progressive, etc. rather than a positive connotation. Structures as in Morocco and some Islamic cultures were given as examples of lasting for many years (albeit with repairs). Robin was saying that there were some earth buildings still in Nairobi that would last another 150 years, having stood for 53 years already, which were originally built for officers not just soldiers. Robin described the earth buildings as having a concrete base up to 18" off the ground then earth walls of about 9-12" thick on top. Dana liked the tactile nature of the reliefs and appreciated the show having had an art training as well as being an historian. Some book references were - 'Symbols that stand for themselves' Wagner, *The Forest of Symbols / The Ritual Process*. 'Man' Journal of Royal Anthropology Institute and Current Anthropology - Victor Turner (colour symbolism). Nancy Munn, 'The Fame of Gawa' Cambridge University Press. Appadurai, Arjun (1986) (ed) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chap.6 Sacred Commodities: the circulation of medieval relics by Patrick Geary p.169-191 and the Introduction by Appadurai - commodities and the politics of value. Cooper, Brenda and Steyn, Andrew (1996) *Transgressing Boundaries: New Directions in the Study of Culture in Africa*. University of Cape Town Press.

Dana and I talked about the origins of the column coming from Egypt and trees, etc. but also the origins of Greek civilisations coming from there. Also how Egypt was also not cut off or isolated as imagined at this time. She recommended reading 'Black Athena' by Bernal (1990) UK author.

I was also asked what my reason was for choosing anthropomorphic or representational sculptural artifacts to study (*Vigango*) - I disputed the fact that these posts were necessarily representational in the sense of being a realistic figuration of something observed in life - I suggested that they were more symbolic. However Paul Lane and I discussed this and we came to the conclusion that if the makers' *intentions* were that it represented a human being (in other words had certain universally recognisable characteristics e.g. face) then it could not be an abstract form - in spite of them being sexless and if the head was taken away it might look like a decorative plank stuck in the ground. She also noted that I was interested in pattern through surface - suppose this might be construed as having some conscious control over the look of the surface (an aesthetic eye perhaps?)

Erica Mann thought because of the coming of Christianity and Islamic religions there was some confusion in the minds of Africans, which confirmed my explanation about the impact of these religions on the people I had met and interviewed - again some negative aspects of outside influences. I was asked by Tim (African) whether the traditional religion would last - so I explained the spiritual leaders' opinion that it would, for various reasons, not least being that there were a fair few new initiates coming forward. Another African was interested in the meanings of colour coding in other cultures.

I was interviewed by another journalist for the '*Standard*' newspaper - hopefully more of a review this time.

Lagat said that he had been discussing the panel with the chip paper with a colleague and asked me whether it had female imagery in it - as he and his friends thought so. He also saw the connections with 'mother earth', and the fertile soil, which the panel was made of.

I was also asked by Paul Lane and Lagat about turning the images of the *Vigango* into postcard for the museum - which on the one hand is flattering but also thought of the implications of copyright not to mention the people who kindly gave their permission to have their photograph taken in the first place - complicated issue ethically.

18.4.01

Returned to the UK.

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