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The Loss of Profit: The Use of Maasai Culture for the Gain of Louis Vuitton & Valentino

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at
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By

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Abstract

THE COST OF PROFIT: The Use of Maasai Culture for the Gain of Louis Vuitton & Valentino

Caitlin Jeffrey, Master of Fine Art, 2021

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This thesis focuses on how western fashion designers, Louis Vuitton and Valentino took elements from the Maasai tribe to develop profitable collections. This thesis looks at historical instances of appropriation by western designers as a catalyst for modern designers to appropriate marginalized and indigenous cultures in the 21st century. The aim of this thesis was to look at the issue of cultural appropriation inside the fashion industry with a lens from postcolonial indigenous methods and give examples of how western designers can avoid appropriation by utilizing specific guidelines based on appreciation and inspiration.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family, especially my husband for his support and patience as I made my way through this program. I also thank my thesis committee chair, Dr. Chajuana Trawick, for her insightful help into shaping my thesis and encouraging my work along the way. Additionally, I extend my thanks to my committee members, Dr. Piper Hutson and Dr. Landry-Montes, for challenging me to go further with my research in this process.

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Introduction

Africa has been subject to globalization and colonization for centuries. This led to the sharing of ideas throughout several European countries. During the 20th century, the interest in "exotic" and "primitive" design elements increased in the fashion world. Exhibitions geared towards showcasing the colonies of Europe were popular; specifically, in France. Twentieth-century designers interested in the African continent displayed trends of minority groups without educating the public on the cultural significance of these pieces. Early designers who used symbols and textile designs from Africa in several illustrations and photographs were Paul Poiret and Yves St. Laurent, and Louis Vuitton. Many of the models in these illustrations are of Caucasian descent and are placed in scenes described by articles as "wild" and "exotic."[1] With these instances as a basis for African elements in western fashion, it is not surprising that cultural appropriation has happened.

While western fashion designers use the elements of African textiles under the pretense of inspiration, they misrepresent through appropriation by ignoring the cultural importance of African indigenous textiles and project a theme of the artwork being "primitive."[2] To approach this issue, the terms *culture, appropriation,* and *cultural appropriation* will be defined by scholarly writers and experts on the legal protection of cultural expression. This will give a basis of how to identify instances of cultural appropriation in the literature that is presented.

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[1]Victoria Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 99.

[2] Victoria Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear*, 99.

The literature written on cultural appropriation through fashion has recently taken the stance that appropriation of cultures can only lead to a negative connotation.[3] To look deeper into this statement, the history of appropriating minority cultures in Africa will be analyzed by first looking at the early 20th-century designer Paul Poiret, known as *Le Magnifique, for* his designs developed through his interest in primarily the Middle East and North Africa. Yves St. Laurent products from the 1960s will be analyzed. Collections that have, as well, appropriated elements from African tribes will be analyzed. In the mid-twentieth century, Yves St. Laurent created works inspired by Africa for his Spring-Summer 1967. His pieces featured symbols found in several African textiles, raffia, beads, and shell work. Designers have appropriated in the 21st century such as Louis Vuitton and Valentino, took artistic elements of the Maasai, for gain in the fashion world. In turn, taken opportunities away from the tribe to flourish financially and control what elements of their culture they want to share with outsiders. Examples of western designers from the twenty-first century will be shown with harmful instances of appropriation compared to examples where designers have made steps to acknowledge and give back to the Maasai people, they are inspired by to show that it is possible to still be inspired without copying cultural elements in a harmful way. With all the sources gathered, the creation of the difference between cultural appropriation of indigenous peoples and forming designs through the lens of appreciation.

Examples will be given in the literature review of the differences between appropriation and appreciation from western fashion designers of the 21st century. A set of guidelines on to stay inspired without harmfully appropriating a culture when creating a collection will be given

[3] Loretta Todd "Notes on Appropriation." *Parallelogramme* 16 (1990): 26.

can better approach this issue before going forth with their creations. Articles are also included in the literature review regarding how companies are using Intellectual Property rights to protect these cultures from future problems with appropriating. Works from Scholar James O. Young's texts are used throughout the literature review to look at both sides of appropriation as harmful and inspiration.

It is crucial to approach the issue of the appropriation of the Maasai culture by looking at other historical instances of cultural appropriation of indigenous African tribes because it gives us a layout of how designers have grown in acknowledging where their designs have come from and the wording that is used to describe their works through time. The addition of examples of other indigenous peoples besides the Maasai using IP rights and other groups from Africa taking routes to protect from western appropriation will be used to branch out into further plans to withhold appropriation. The Maasai are being used as the main focus when looking at instance of cultural appropriation by western designers because elders in the Maasai tribes of Kenya and Tanzania have both been vocal about the use of their culture by many companies and want to rectify the issue. [4] The Maasai tribes are also used as a greater example because they are currently using different processes to try and receive retribution from places ranging from car companies to fashion designers using their names and textiles

Literature from authors such as Brigitte Vézina, who works with indigenous groups to negotiate intellectual property rights, and Katie Baker, who has written many online articles discussing fashion collections appropriating non-western cultures, discusses the steps of accountability, awareness, and homage that should be used to prevent situations of cultural

[4] Elizabeth Oyange Ngando, “Fashion as Property in Traditional Culture: a Maasai Case Study,” 880.

appropriation. Analyzing historical instances of appropriation of African tribes is sufficient to move forward and find a solution by analyzing photographs of models and articles written on the shows of the fashion designers named above and others. With the Maasai actively trying to bring awareness of the usage of their culture, such as the use of the Shuka garment, the different strategies to gain awareness of the issue will be shown in the several sources ranging from western fashion websites, intellectual property rights specialists, media articles, and academic journals that discuss why cultural appropriation is harmful.

The research of cultural appropriation of African tribal symbols and textiles used by western designers is vital to the state of the field because it gives a platform for minorities who have been taken advantage of by turning their culture into profit for the fashion industry. The use of sources who have discussed the issue with Maasai such as Issac Ole Tialolo, the Maasai chairman of *LightYears IP*, gives the Maasai amoung other indigenous tribes of Africa a starting place to stop violations in their cultures and gain back funds from western designers who have gained financially from taking known patterns and color combinations from these tribes. This work will also give non-indigenous people on the chance to learn of the importance of this dress to the Maasai culture and why others should not use it just because it is aesthetically pleasing by sharing the meaning of the textile elements such as the colors, cut, and patterns.

The media has been retroactively paying attention to more instances of copying indigenous traditions in the western fashion world by sharing illustrations from fashion shows that copy directly from a culture and calls them out.[5] More media sources through the news and

[5] Damola Durosomo, "8 Recent Times Luxury Fashion Brands Used African Designs Without Including Africans," OkayAfrica (October 21, 2017), https://www.okayafrica.com/luxury-brands-african-designs-fashion-appropriation/.

social media platforms have been paying more and more attention to the choices of fashion designers in how they are dressing the models and who are modeling the clothes. Platforms such as Huffington Post and Vogue have drawn awareness to designers when they are copying other designers' work or have taken an aspect of dress from an indigenous culture.

While researching cultural appropriation of dress in terms of minority groups, most sources discuss indigenous appropriation in terms of the tribes in America instead of African tribes. Few sources from scholars such as Victoria Rovine and James O. Young discussed the historical colonization of African indigenous tribes and the history of designers who have taken aspects from non-western communities.

The approach to cultural appropriation is typically seen in western postcolonialism and globalization methodologies instead of using indigenous methodologies to approach the topic. While they study the interaction between imperial and indigenous cultures and defend the notion that cultures are not perfect, separate contained groups, they do not take on the voices of indigenous axiology. [6]To methodically approach the cultural appropriation of textiles from indigenous tribes, specifically the Maasai, a braided knowledge of Postcolonial Indigenous Methodologies will be used instead of only western methodology such as postcolonialism.

Two authors that thoroughly analyze the dimensions of Indigenous Methodologies are Margaret Kovach and Bagele Chilisa. Margaret Kovach, an assistant professor at the University of Saskatchewan, who comes from Cree and Saulteaux from the Great Plains, focuses her work on Indigenous research methodologies and post-secondary education of indigenous peoples. Her

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[6] Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2020), 9.

work in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* is bound with chapters that dive into the branches of indigenous methodologies. Each chapter is also an interview with another indigenous scholar as they work at the questions behind the use of indigenous methods and why it is essential. According to Kovach, the framework of Indigenous research consists of six key characteristics: decolonizing and ethics, gathering knowledge, making meaning, giving back, research preparation, and researcher preparation.[7]

Bagele Chilisa is a scholar from the University of Botswana who works as a postcolonial scholar who has written and presented various issues on indigenous research and evaluation methodologies. I found her work in *Indigenous Research Methodologies* extremely helpful as many of her examples surrounded the interests of research paradigms in Africa using relational ontology and axiology. In Chilisa's work, she explains the three postcolonial indigenous research methods approaches: "decolonization and indigenization of Euro-Western research approaches, research approaches informed by a postcolonial indigenous research paradigm and third-space methodologies." [8] Post-Colonization theory, by itself, is used to look at the cultural effects and the legacy of western colonization in Africa and how, in turn, the sharing of art, fashion elements between the two happened. These reject the stereotype and assumptions that the history of non-western cultures only started with European countries. Instead of solely studying other cultures, the interaction between minority cultures and dominant cultures will be analyzed.

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[7] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (University of Toronto Press, 2021), 45.

[8] Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, XVI.

Western and non-western methodologies will be fused to analyze the past and approach the need for change in the discipline. Fusing the two together introduces the opportunity for collaboration between multiple cultures, which can lead to a better distinction between appropriation and inspiration by threading together different aspects of knowledge. As Postcolonial Indigenous Methodologies is used to approach the issue, as a western researcher, the reminder that the literature is being written by an "outsider" using this methodology and have to be careful to ensure ethical practices in the work that will be respectful and give a platform for voices usually not heard.

Western designers such as Paul Poiret, Yves St. Laurent, Louis Vuitton, and Valentino have harmfully appropriated indigenous elements from several African tribes such as the Maasai. To prevent future harmful appropriation, the steps of accountability, awareness, and decolonization are used to prevent appropriation situations. Analyzing historical instances of appropriation, current accounts of appropriation of the Maasai by western designers and identifying instances where western designers have found the line of inspiration instead are sufficient with the tools to move forward from harmful appropriation. With the literature, a guide is created for western designers to use for future upcoming collections that are inspired by indigenous creations.

Literature Review

African textiles are beautiful, but what makes them attractive are the authenticity and the hands that have created the cloth by weaving, printing, or dying. Much has been written on the cultural appropriation of the arts. Through these sources, the stances on cultural appropriation informed many viewpoints show to the possible negative or positive effects on a specific culture, such as the Maasai peoples, when appropriated. To better understand the meaning of cultural appropriation without the context of the media's viewpoints, the word will be split apart and analyzed first before diving into what has been said by the authors in the field. Culture, appropriation, and art will be defined separately first before diving into cultural appropriation of fashion from the African continent. The history of appropriation of African textiles before the twenty-first century will be introduced before diving into more recent instances in the 21st century. Both sides of the argument of appropriation of cultures being a harmful product or a cause of inspiration are cited before progressing to sources that share many different ideas on how the Maasai culture can be protected. These examples will hone into the current struggle of the Maasai peoples and receiving retribution from westerners.

Definitions of Culture, Appropriation, and Cultural Appropriation

The word *culture* describes several different groups, Southern culture, popular culture, material culture, etc. The scholarly journal, *A Formal Definition of Culture,* will be used to approach the various ways culture has been defined. This journal searches to give an operational definition of the word by examining culture in different instances. The journal looks at how the definition of culture has evolved as the boundaries of culture have changed due to globalization. Margaret Mead, an American cultural anthropologist, considered culture a "whole complex of

traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation. "[9] Linton, an American academic anthropologist who helped reconstruct anthropology in the early 1900s, interpreted culture from his study of human behavior, "The culture of any society consists of the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior which the members of that society have acquired through instruction or imitation and which they share to a greater or less degree."[10] These early definitions from critical contributors to the anthropological field will be used when identifying textiles used in tribes of Africa.

The text *Appropriation* defines appropriation in itself as "The notion that appropriation might be seen as a mode of revealing language, representation, and even social space to be so shape-shifting as to subsist simultaneously as both weapon and target."[11] This work combines a range of essential documents discussing appropriation in Contemporary artwork and holds interviews by artists that discuss appropriation associated with the contemporary art world. Loretta Todd, activist, and writer created an article about defining appropriation separately from culture. She writes, "Appropriation also occurs when someone else becomes the expert on your experience and is deemed more knowledgeable about who you are than yourself." [12] In the

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[9] Margaret Mead, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples*. (Transaction Publishers, 2002), quoted in Aliaksandr Birukou et al., "A Formal Definition of Culture," in *Models for Intercultural Collaboration and Negotiation*, (2013),: 2, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5574-1_1.

[10] Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936), quoted in Aliaksandr Birukou et al., "A Formal Definition of Culture," *Models for Intercultural Collaboration and Negotiation*, (2013):, 3, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5574-1_1.

[11] David Evans, *Appropriation* (London: Whitechapel, 2009), 208

[12] Loretta Todd "Notes on Appropriation." ,26.

fashion world, this happens too often as they cross the line from being inspired to appropriating another's work. In an article by Susan Vogel, she poses the question of considering African art as a whole: "How do we legitimately understand or appreciate art from a culture we do not thoroughly know?" [13]

Cultural appropriation

Brigitte Vézina, an expert on Intellectual Property protection of cultural expression, states that cultural appropriation has three significant characteristics that tower over the rest: "a change of cultural context, a power imbalance between the taker and the holder, and the absence of the holder's involvement in the community." [14] The issues of cultural appropriation of African cultures have taken off since the colonization of the continent. Many countries sought to bring the vibrant elements that were seen in Africa to the western countries. In the early twentieth century, exhibitions were held in European countries such as France. These exhibitions brought thousands of people to view non-western culture without having to travel to that country. Unfortunately, many of these exhibitions were laced with western assumptions without teaching people the importance of the culture to its people.

In the text produced by James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, Young thoroughly analyzes what harmful appropriation looks like and provides situations where appropriation has impacted the culture in an obstructive manner. Youngs looks at several types of appropriation of culture. One of these is subject appropriation. Subject appropriation looks at the distortions of a culture with the argument that "outsiders who engage in subject appropriation

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[13] Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," *Grasping the World*, 2019, 654.

[14] Brigitte Vézina, "Curbing Cultural Appropriation in the Fashion Industry," Centre for International Governance Innovation, April 3, 2019, https://www.cigionline.org/publications/curbing-cultural-appropriation-fashion-industry.

are bound to create harmful stereotypes that hurt members of a culture." [15] In terms of fashion, the effects of cultural appropriation could deprive the culture of having viewers see their original work. Instead, they may be drawn to what is being made by the appropriator because they are more familiar with their label. Young also approaches this same issue in *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* when discussing stylistic appropriation in fashion, literature, and music. "Artists who appropriate styles are under certain obligations. In particular, they should acknowledge the sources of the styles they appropriate. This is particularly incumbent on artists when they appropriate styles from cultures that have been denied the opportunity to fully express themselves in their own styles."[16]

Susan Scafidi, author of *Who Owns Culture?* breaks down the meaning of culture, intellectual property rights, and harmful cultural appropriation in her text. In her book, Scafidi defines cultural appropriation as

> Taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else's culture without permission... this can include unauthorized use of another culture's dance, dress, music, language, folklore, cuisine, traditional medicine, religious symbols, etc. It's most likely to be harmful when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is particularly sensitive, e.g., sacred objects.[17]

To approach the issue of how fashion designer Louis Vuitton appropriated elements from the Maasai peoples, a historical analysis will be made of past designers who have taken textile

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[15] James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 24.

[16] James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk, *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 311.

[17] Susan Scafidi, *Who Owns Culture?: Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 90.

elements from indigenous groups of Africa. Paul Poiret's designs from the early 20th century will be used, and mid-20th-century designs from Yves St. Laurent.

Appropriation History

Cultural appropriation of African dress started to expand significantly in the twentieth century, with several European countries creating colonies on the African continent. France led the charge in the fashion world as designer Paul Poiret used several elements that were distinctly African. Poiret reproduced several African forms and alluded to African culture in several designs. One of his designs was named *Nubienne,* meaning dark skin or a female of African descent. In Illustration 1, one can see the woman wearing an array of bangles adorning her wrists and upper arms. Bangles made of metals such as copper or bronze made their way to Africa centuries ago via the trade routes through the Indian ocean. For centuries, statues and illustrations of African dress were shown that stacking multiple bangles on the arms represents wealth and class in several tribes. Looking at the *Nubienne* garment in Illustration One, the trim pattern at the bottom is reminiscent of Dutch wax cloth designs that were commonly seen in clothing in any part of Africa; for example, Ankara, as one large, bold design is printed multiple times in a pattern. Author Victoria Rovine, who writes extensively on different African textiles, discusses Paul Poiret's work in accordance with African characteristics in his work. In *African Fashion, Global Style*, Rovine states that "Poiret offers a prominent early example of the creation of fashioned Africa's for the Western." [18]

Not only was Poiret a designer but also a collector. He collected anything textile-related from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The North African country of Morocco influences

[18]Rovine,11.

another design of his. The cape, seen in Illustration 2, is close to the form of the *Akhnif* pictured in Illustration 3. An *Akhnif* is the style of a man's cloak from Morocco. These were typically made of wool and cotton with a few forms of embroidery on the back as well as a hood. The oval shape was standard on the back of these cloaks as they represented an eye. This eye was a symbol to protect and ward off evil spirits.[19] The fringe at the bottom of the *Akhnif* is also common as the texture creates movement and draws attention to the male wearer. The name of this style in Illustration 2 is *Tanger.* The name *Tanger* is in link to a city in Morocco. When this garment was also created, Tangier was an access point for the westerners to be engulfed in the "romantic realm" of North Africa. [20] Both the original *Akhnif* and Poiret's *Tanger* are similar in that they are both shaped from one piece of fabric that is meant to be draped heavily over the shoulders without openings for the arm to slip through, as well as the small, simple details that do not take away from the power of the form. Paul Poiret had opened the door for African designs to be mixed into western culture.

Not everyone was happy about the non-western influences coming into Europe. *Le Vrai et le Faux Chic (The True and False Chic)* by Georges Goursat, pen name Sem, in 1914 was filled with forty pages of text and colored lithography images of fashion. In Goursat's commentary, he also points out that access to African fashion may be the reason behind this way of dressing. The narrative follows a fictional man cut off from the modern world while wandering in the African jungle. When the man returns to Paris ten years later, he cannot find many well-dressed women and instead finds the other woman has turned into bizarre creatures. In the description of female fashion in Africa, he describes them as "Savage women adorned

[19] Rovine, 91.

[20]Rovine, 92.

with gris-gris...covered with dangling animal skins...a fuzzy-haired cannibal ...wearing a bone through her nose," [21] Many of his illustrations included people with racialized features that make them seem uncivilized.

After spending some time in Africa, Poiret claimed he was "completely isolated from the civilized world... completely ignorant of the evolution of modern life."[22] In *Couture Culture,* author Nancy Troy analyzes Poiret's strong interest outside of the west. She states that many of his works had aspects of indigenous cultures "racially marked exoticism was regarded by many as literally foreign to traditional French sartorial taste." [23] Around the same time, Paul Poiret introduced these new styles inspired by the East, and exhibitions took place in France. This gave other designers access to new ideas without having to travel to Africa for inspiration. Rovine provides us with a look into the near beginnings of African fashion expositions in France.

> By the 1920s, French fashion and arts publications were touting the potential benefits of the expositions, which would encourage non-Western aesthetic influence on French artistic production. In 1923, French art critic Henri Clouzot's highest praise for African textiles (in particular the raffia cloth of the Kuba and related groups) was that it might serve to inspire French designers.[24]

The influence of African and other non-western fashion on France was increasing because of colonial expositions during the first part of the 20th century. The events were government-

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[21]Rovine, 4.

[22] Sem. *Le Vrai & Le Faux Chic*. (Paris:"Succès, ",1914), quoted in V. Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 75.

[23] Nancy J. Troy, *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion* (Cambridge, Mass. London: MIT, 2003), 116.

[24] Victoria L. Rovine, “Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion,” *Design Issues* 25, no. 3 (2009): 53, https://doi.org/10.1162/desi.2009.25.3.44.

sponsored, where the goal was to look at achievement and national identity. [25] In the article *Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion,* Rovine examines the reasoning behind the creation of French Expositions that highlighted non-western heritage. In order to act as if colonization was for the betterment of Africa, the French had to prove to themselves that the "colonized peoples had to be proven barbaric"[26] to justify their actions. According to Rovine's article, although the Paris Exposition of 1931 landed impactful for trade agreements, it showcased how the French presence in Africa had celebrated how they colonized Africa and turned it towards a more civilized company. Posters and dioramas were showcased throughout the exhibition that showed African peoples clothed in things such as loincloths versus another window that would indicate the same person transformed into more westernized clothes such as a dress shirt and pants.[27] One of the most significant exhibitions was the Paris Colonial Exhibition (*Exposition Coloniale Internationale),* lasting six months in 1931. It showcased French colonization and the cultures embedded in it. Non-western peoples from the colonies were brought over to help build life-size replications of architecture such as religious temples and houses. [28] French art critic Henri Clouzot praised African textiles, especially raffia cloth from the Juba and the cotton fabric from West Africa. Clouzot claimed it "rejuvenated our

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[25]Victoria L. Rovine, "Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion," *Design Issues* 25, no. 3 (2009): 52.

[26]Patricia A. Morton, "Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 374, https://doi.org/10.2307/4129026.7 .

[27] Catherine Hodeir, "Decentering the Gaze at French Colonial Exhibitions," *Images and EmpiresVisuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (2002): 233, https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520229488.003.0010.

[28] "Decentering the Gaze at French Colonial Exhibitions," *Images and Empires Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, 2002, 233.

decorative grammar…."[29] The people showcasing the fashion were transported to Paris, France, from the African colonies. Many of them were in France for months as the colonial exhibition trudged on.

These exhibitions were created with the focus of trade in mind. So much more came out of these in the shows that showcased African cloth and fashion. French designers were able to purchase and apply for shipments of African material to their studios. These patterns were seen as exotic and loud to the French designers.[30]Several of these designs were received well, including the Kuba cloth as named earlier. western designers were becoming braver, wanting to abandon more traditional attire for those they gravitated towards. With the doors open to new raw materials and aesthetics, the western fashion empires would be changed.

According to Rovine, some forms of clothing created from the impacts of African design had no middle ground. The fashion would be either wholly recognizable or only have minor attributes from their source of inspiration.[31] Some of these adaptive fashions would have small details such as fringe in the form of raffia or small embroidery made out of beads. Others directly used fabric that was transported from Africa to France. Iconographic references were also made in the forms of safari images such as foliage, animal prints, elephants, and tigers. At these exhibitions, textiles from the Rodier Textile Firm were shown. Rodier worked with Paul Poiret on several occasions, creating African-influenced cloth, and at the 1931 Paris Colonial

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[29] Henri Clouzot, "Hand Weaving in Textiles," *Renaissance de l'Art Francais* (1923): 553-54.

[30]Victoria L. Rovine, "Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion," *Design Issues* 25, no. 3 (2009): 54, https://doi.org/10.1162/desi.2009.25.3.44, 1.

[31] Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear*, 55.

Exhibition, multiple fabrics from this company were showcased. Many of these clothes showcased African imagery, including African masks and figures as well. The figures were similar to the sculptures of the Fang people in Central Africa.[32]

Flashing forward to the end of the 20th century, Africa transferred from colonies to independent states from the mid- 1950s to 1975. The African fantasies created by French colonizers continued. Many famous designers, such as Yves Saint Laurent, used African forms that were not so subtle in showing African inspirations. They used African visions of big, bold patterns as well as intricate shells and beadworks. One of the first French designers to kick off a series of African fashion influences was Yves Saint Laurent in the mid- 1900s. Laurent used the essence of Africa in several of his designs. Although he was born in Algeria, he is not considered an African designer. His parents were well-off Caucasian people who owned a chain of cinemas. Early on in his life, he moved to Paris to enroll in a fashion school. He was immersed in western design and quickly turned into a head designer for Dior at the age of 21.

During the 1960s, Laurent launched several model careers as he used a mixture of Caucasian women and dark-skinned models. In his African Collection or "Africaines" of 1967, many of the fashions he created used an overwhelming number of shells and beads. In Illustration 4, the model is adorned with wooden beads and shells in a pattern that repeats from her collar to her bandeau to her skirt. These African designs are repeated, and the multiple bangles on her wrist are arranged with different shapes. The woman is posed in this image with two flat sculptures that are blatantly inspired by primitive figures. The figures seem to be active as their limbs reach out. Both of these beaded forms include cowrie shells that are widely used as

[32] Rovine, 59.

African ornamentation. The cowrie shells used in many fashion designs of the late 20th century had been an important symbol for many African groups.

Illustration 5 consists of three models from the same 1967 collection of Yves St. Laurent. In this image, the women all have tight chokers created with an abundance of beading and shells. Two of the women have long layers of raffia connected to these pieces. The raffia, shells, and beading are included in every aspect of the designs, as the shoes and earrings also use these items. The hair is twisted and piled on top of their heads like towers. The most striking language discussed in the 1967 collection was in *Women's Wear Daily.*

> St. Laurent stalks the jungle… hunts down the primitive and captures a look for the world. Yves's Primitive…the reed-like body nude beneath bands of transparency... the African chocker coiled high... the tribal bangles clamped to the arm. Even the hair pulled into captivity… pulled tight into the chignon ornamented with jungle trinkets…The beast of the jungle brings out the best in St. Laurent.[33]

Cowrie shells, used in the designs by Yves Saint Laurent, are used in multiple African cultures for several reasons, such as in ceremonies to honor the dead and signify status.[34] Cowrie shells were an important part of graves for centuries, especially during the seventeenth century, to indicate wealth and the economic presence of those who have passed. The cowries were signals for "social and symbolic replacement of the personal belongings of the deceased based on the ideas that cowries were the essence of wealth and self-realization."[35] In archeological

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[33] *Paris Bureau*. Women's Wear Daily, 1967. Quoted in Rovine, Victoria. *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 97.

[34] Akinwumi Ogundiran, "Of Small Things Remembered: Beads, Cowries, and Cultural Translations of the Atlantic Experience in Yorubaland," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2/3 (2002): 451, https://doi.org/10.2307/3097620.

[35]Ogundiran, "Of Small Things Remembered: Beads, Cowries, and Cultural Translations of the Atlantic Experience in Yorubaland,"451.

findings in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those from the Yoruba peoples, several cowrie shells were buried with the dead. "Twenty percent of the cowries recorded in Isoya were from burials, and eight out of the ten burials excavated contained cowry artifacts."[36] The shell is used as a fertility symbol as it slopes into a rounded middle, such as a pregnant woman's belly. The shell was a protection for hunters and warriors. It was sewed into sacred masks for ceremonies of dance. It was used for purposes of divination. With the cowrie shells being used for multiple, purposeful instances throughout African ethnic groups, one must think that fashion designers would have an idea of the spiritual purposes of the shell.

Examples of harmful appropriation have been spotlighted in the past decade as many runway designers have used them under their label. One instance is Louis Vuitton in 2012 for creating the Maasai collection with a range of inspired clothing from the Maasai peoples who live in Kenya and northern Tanzania.[37] Specifically, many of the items were a copy of Shuka cloth. Kim Jones, the new men's style director in 2012, debuted this Spring/Summer show. According to vogue.com, Jones grew up in Kenta, and his life has been defined by "a nomadic spirit."[38] From his childhood, Jones owns a blue and red plaid Maasai blanket from his East-African childhood.[39] In Illustrations 6 and 7 of the show, the men are seen sporting these vibrant blue and red plaids as scarves, tops, and shorts. Blankets from Louis Vuitton ended up making an enormous amount of money in South Africa without involving the peoples of that culture. These

[36] Ogundiran, "Of Small Things Remembered: Beads, Cowries, and Cultural Translations of the Atlantic Experience in Yorubaland,"451.

[37] Damola Durosomo, "8 Recent Times Luxury Fashion Brands Used African Designs Without Including Africans."

[38] Tim Blanks, "Louis Vuitton Spring 2012 Menswear Collection," Vogue, June 23, 2011, https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2012-menswear/louis-vuitton.

[39] Blanks, "Louis Vuitton Spring 2012 Menswear Collection".

blankets, created locally in East African countries, such as Kenya, run for approximately $77 while Louis Vuitton created their own for the price of roughly $2,500.[40]

The Massai people are traditionally semi-nomadic and use these thick garments to protect them from the harsh weather. Shuka is traditionally thick cloth that helps protect the wearer from the weather elements faced in daily life. Colors used in the Shuka garment hold a special meaning that identifies the social status of a person. Maasai have the majority of the basic needs filled by the cattle they herd. Many of the colors are associated with the pastoral lifestyle of the semi-nomadic tribes and the care of the animals. In *Aesthetics and Colour Among The Maasai and Samburu*, Dr. Galichet discusses the significance of the colors worn by the Maasai peoples: Red, a color used frequently in Maasai fabric, signifies bravery, strength or is used for ceremonial status changes; blue is representative of the sky and the water provided for the livestock; green represents the land and the food produced for the cattle; orange represents hospitality; yellow is for fertility; black is for the hardships gone through in life, and white represents protection. [41]

A collection from Paris Fashion week in the spring of 2016 also sparked controversy on social media. Designers Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli for Valentino created a collection that they acknowledge is significantly influenced by Africa. Many times, it was described as tribal and primitive by the pair.[42] Again, descriptive words have been used in the

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[40] Meg Brindle, "The Maasai brand is valuable — and it should belong to the Maasai people" *One,* July 27, 2017, https://www.one.org/us/blog/maasai-brand-cultural-appropriation/.

[41] Marie-Louise Galichet, "Aesthetics and colour among the Maasai and Samburu." *Kenya Past and Present* 20, no. 1 (1988): 27-30.

[42] Monika Markovinovic, "Valentino Under Fire for Cultural Appropriation, Once Again." HuffPost Canada, January 18, 2016. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/01/18/valentino-cultural-appropriation_n_9009840.html.

past towards the fashion of Africa. The designs look hauntingly similar to the Yves St. Laurent 1967 collection, with elements that are almost the same in illustration 8 compared to illustration 6. The Maasai culture was used but lacked women of color and the white models wore cornrows. Eight of the eighty-seven models were of color. In illustration 9, the female model stands to the left as four Maasai warriors perform the jumping ritual, *adumu.* The popular dance is done as warriors sing a rhythmic song, and two warriors begin jumping up and down in the middle.[43] The goal is to keep your body as straight as possible and jump higher than the other.[44] Illustration 10 of the Valentino collection shows two models in the foreground as a Maasai warrior walks by a set of huts in the background. As described in the anthropological work of Jennifer Sharp and Laangakwa Twati on the Maasai's lifestyle, these types of houses are distinct to the semi-nomadic peoples. [45] These huts are created by a base of wooden posts, filled with small branches, and coated with a mixture of water and cow dung. The roofs are thatched with this mixture and dried grass. The houses are made to last a handful of months until the tribe moves for the cattle to graze on a better site. [46]

The designer's Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli write about their reasoning behind including the Massai peoples and wrote on Instagram that "our emotions about African Culture, the idea of beauty achieved by the interaction of different cultures, the idea of tolerance,

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[43] Lisa McQuail, *The Masai of Africa*, (United States: Lerner Publishing Group 2002): 45.

[44] Lisa McQuail, *The Masai of Africa,* 45.

[45] Jennifer Sharp and Laangakwa Twati, *Documentation of Maasai culture*, 2017, 11.

[46]Jennifer Sharp and Laangakwa Twati, *Documentation of Maasai culture,* 11.

this is the message we wanted to deliver," [47] Although this may be true, no evidence has shown that the designers have worked directly with other African designers of those cultures they had taken from to make sure there was nothing offensive with the elements being used in these dresses or how they campaigned the collection with the vocabulary from tribal African motifs.

Instances of designers using African indigenous textiles as inspiration and in a non-harmful manner have been done before. Although these western designs have not worked directly with the Maasai peoples, these recent cultural exchange events show that ideas can be shared without harming the culture. James O. Young and Susan Haley argue that not all cultural appropriation is wrong, offensive, or immoral. They are, instead, making the customs of previously unknown groups known to the world. "Freedom of expression is valuable, at least, in part, because it will tend to increase the social value,"[48] With this freedom of expression, the artist also needs to be respectful of the minority's culture and where this work is shown. For example, an artist should not display an image of Jesus Christ as a savior outside of a Muslim Mosque. Vézina states that benefits come from cultural interactions in exchange, including creative progress, human growth, and societal advancement.[49] Various scholars have put forth efforts to find positive reasoning behind how collectively ideas can be shared without overstepping the boundaries of cultures.

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[47]Monika Markovinovic, “Valentino Under Fire for Cultural Appropriation, Once Again.”

[48] James O. Young, Cultural Appropriation and the Arts (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 137.

[49]Brigitte Vézina, “Curbing Cultural Appropriation in the Fashion Industry,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, April 3, 2019. https://www.cigionline.org/publications/curbing-cultural-appropriation-fashion-industry.

A quality example of appropriation turning into inspiration in the world of fashion is the case of fashion director/stylist from Los Angeles, Andreas Kokkino partnering with Malian photographer Malick Sidibé in 2012. Sidibé is a notable photographer who is recognized for his black and white photography in the 1960s. Kokkino wanted to do a project that entailed West African models wearing African-inspired lines created by Junya Watanabe and John Galliano with bold patterns. [50] The two designers are not of African descent, nor are they part of its culture. Watanabe is a Japanese fashion designer, while Galliano is a British fashion designer who heads many collections created by French companies such as Dior and Givenchy. Although not part of an African ethnic group, the designers are both well educated in the popular fashions of Africa. These two were educated about the appropriation of identifiable styles that they were using and told by the models that some of the patterns created were identified as "'South African fashion.'"[51] Sidibé, at the photoshoot, chose classic customary poses that showed a sense of friendship and intimacy between the models. Illustration 11 shows three models in a close pose that was described for the photoshoot. The models wear several layers in different patterns and colors, ranging from strips to floral to checkered. This collaborative project is an excellent example of the appreciation for the beautifully patterned designs thriving in West Africa.

A very recent fashion line from Dior has shown from the Dior Cruise 2020 has made a statement of collaboration and shifted into the light of appreciation of cultures instead of copying them directly with no creative direction. The current creative director of Dior, Maria Grazia Chiuri, discussed in the previous section, collaborated with multiple designers from Africa to

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[50] Karen Tranberg Hansen and D. Soyini Madison, *African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 194.

[51]Karen Tranberg Hansen and D. Soyini Madison, *African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance,* 194.

create works that "established a dialogue between traditions and craftsmanship." [52] The collaborated designs used Ankara prints that ranged from gowns to separate pieces. Chiuri sees this collaboration that focuses on a common ground of appreciation for craftsmanship. On Dior website for the 2020 cruise describes the collection:

> A fabric that embodies a meeting of cultures, Wax provides the through line for the Cruise collection presented in Marrakesh. To highlight it, Maria Grazia Chiuri collaborated with the Uniwax studio in Ivory Coast, which reinterpreted Dior codes such as toile de Jouy and tarot cards. This "*Christian Dior - Uniwax"* special edition is used for long and short bustier dresses, skirts, jumpsuits, jackets and trousers that appear like so many standard-bearers for freedom.[53]

Dior involved local woman artisans from a Morocco organization called, Sumano, who helps preserve indigenous ceramicists and weavers in creating pottery pieces and cushions for the show's setting.[54] Uniwax from the Ivory Coast designed the majority of the Ankara fabric. Uniwax is the only African company that makes 100% of its wax prints without outsourcing and created new patterns for this show. In an interview from Women's Wear Daily, Chiuri discussed the importance of this collection. "In this moment, where we speak a lot about cultural appropriation, gender, post-colonialism, the environment-as a fashion house it is important to reflect about these issues and think about how we can start a different conversation with our audience," [55] In Illustration 12, four models are shown from the cruise. Each is decorated with a different Dutch Wax pattern in various forms of dress and multiple patterns.

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[52] "Cruise 2020 Collection," DIOR, accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.dior.com/en_us/womens-fashion/ready-to-wear-shows/cruise-2020-show

[53] Joelle Diderich, "Dior Cruise 2020," WWD (WWD, April 30, 2019), https://wwd.com/runway/resort-2020/all/christian-dior/review/.

[54] Joelle Diderich, "Dior Cruise 2020."

[55] Joelle Diderich, "Dior Cruise 2020."

An array of ideas on how to protect cultures from appropriation have been given. Some have suggested pushing for groups to have intellectual property rights, such as trademarks and copyrights, on elements and characteristics that that group distinctly holds. Copyright laws would serve as a barrier to protect from western fashion designers reproducing or imitating style components of dress considered a cultural staple by a group of peoples according to the work of Light Years IP. Light Years IP works with minority groups such as the Maasai and gives them a path for companies to seek licensing from the Maasai. While some sources agree with the helpfulness of having an IPR for specific cultural groups, it also opens up another set of issues, according to Young. With the overlapping of so many cultures, similar cultures may both have the rightful claim over the patterns or traditional clothes and could cause tension between the two as one tries to claim it as only theirs. Elizabeth Oyange Nagando, Katie Baker, and Maasai Chairman of LYIP Issac ole Tialolo discuss the application of intellectual property rights to fashion for the indigenous communities in the Americas. Much has been left to explore Intellectual Property rights being promoted for non-western cultures such as those on the African continent.

The luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Valentino are taking away opportunities from the Maasai tribe to profit from the popularity of this fabric. Many people living in Kenya and Tanzania are considered part of the tribe living on the poverty line. The numbers of financial opportunities that have been taken from the Maasai are significant. The Shuka blankets, created by the Maasai, run for approximately $77 when sold to tourists, while Louis

Vuitton created their own for the price of $2,500.[56] A nonprofit, Light Years IP, is grappling with this intolerable issue that the Maasai are not being compensated for anything that these popular brands sell. According to the Washington DC nonprofit, almost 1000 corporations have used cultural aspects of the Maasai people for their gain. As a result, the tribe should be collecting as much as ten million in licensing fees each year. [57] In 2009, Issac ole Tialolo asked Light Years IP to help with a collaborative project with his organization, Maasai IP Initiative Trust Ltd. (MIPI), to take back their cultural elements and make clear guidelines for commercial use. To combat the use of Maasai imagery, this is what Light Years IP proposes:

1. MIPI has recovered trademarks from a major corporation that is itself a global brand.
2. The representative General Assembly has the authority of the decision-makers in the Maasai culture.
3. Respect is the most important goal of the General Assembly of MIPI.
4. Next actions are to secure licensing revenue to support the Maasai community in health, education, and buying back water rights and rights to grazing land to sustain the culture.
5. The cultural brand will provide benefits to the Maasai people permanently.[58]

The money used from possible royalties collected has multiple benefits for the community. MIPI has expressed the desire for the funds to go towards education, hospitals, and other community projects. [59] According to a graph provided by Light Years IP, in example of Maasai currently

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[56] Meg Brindle, "The Maasai Brand is Valuable — and it Should Belong to theMaasai People" *One*, July 27, 2017, https://www.one.org/us/blog/maasai-brand-cultural-appropriation/.

[57] "The Maasai," *LightYears IP*, accessed March 12, 2021, http://lightyearsip.net/the-maasai/.

[58] "The Maasai," *LightYears IP*.

[59] Elizabeth Oyange Ngando, "Fashion as Property in Traditional Culture: a Maasai Case Study," *Journal of Intellectual Property Law & Practice* 13, no. 11 (2018): 881, https://doi.org/10.1093/jiplp/jpy119.

abiding in Tanzania, the Maasai Cultural IP has the potential to bring in $150 million an year and 3.3 million beneficiaries. [60] Elizabeth Oyange Nagando, an advocate of the High Court in Kenya, who has written about cultural fashion as intellectual property, has also looked into the MIPI as "pivotal in the successful sensitization of the Maasai community in understanding the role of intellectual property relating to their traditional knowledge and cultural expressions." [61] Using both initiatives to protect African tribes will help dictate what artistic elements from these groups of peoples are given the green light to use and what is considered too sensitive to be deemed acceptable.

Some of the Maasai have seen the fruit of receiving finances in trade for the rights of some of the Maasai elements. Another interview was conducted with Sam Sangdia Mwenyewe. Mwenyewe is a Maasai member who lives in the Rift Valley of Kenya who makes a living as a journalist and radio presenter. Mwenyewe has had the opportunity to discuss the issue of intellectual property rights several times as he has interviewed peoples who are community representatives, former members of Parliament such as Gabriel Ole Tongoyo, and former prime minister of Kenya, Raila Odinga. “Once you visit these places you realize most Maasai’s live in extreme poverty despite having such a trademark that is known and used worldwide. People are making so much money with our culture and brand, but nothing comes to us, which is why our elders have had negotiations and meetings with the government and other big companies to come to terms with.”[62]

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[60]“How Big Is the Issue?,” Light Years IP, accessed November 15, 2021, http://lightyearsip.net/how-big-is-the-issue/.

[61] Elizabeth Oyange Ngando, “Fashion as Property in Traditional Culture: a Maasai Case Study,” 880.

[62] Sam Sangdia Mwenyewe in discussion with the author, December 9, 2021.

Mwenyewe believes that the property rights will be successful for the Maasai and has seen positive outcomes from enforcing the property rights already. “We have had challenges implementing it, some governments make it hard for it to work, but as time goes by it is showing fruits. There is a cultural centre at the Maasai Mara that has members of its community registered, they partner with foreign companies that visit and learn, take samples, and are able to get a percentage from them.”[63] If some sort of structure was put in place outside of the legal side of using Maasai elements through the use of intellectual property rights, Mwenyewe believes western designers should recognize the Maasai when they make designs inspired by them.

> They wouldn’t use another person’s brand in their country because they would get copyrighted, so they should recognize and mention us, and be able to follow up on the design if it belongs to a certain specific community, they can make agreement and even be able to get more inspiration, then if the community has an elder, he can have an agreement of what percentage they can benefit from that. One thing I know that limits us from getting recognition and percentage of the billions that companies make using our designs is because they don’t know who to give that to. We are nomads we live in the wilderness; nobody really even knew we had a brand to protect until a few years ago. Designers should mention the design was inspired by the Maasai community of Kenya, or a specific group of women initiatives, or something, and they can have agreement.[64]

Other Maasai in Tanzania are not as familiar with the ideal of branding their culture, nor are interested in this idea. An interview was conducted with Sokoine and his wife Stephanie Fuchs who live in a Parakua Maasai village in northeastern Tanzania district of Kiteto. Fuchs, a conservationist, married Sokoine after meeting him while volunteering at a research camp while he worked as a security guard. They have been married for over 11 years. Fuchs has lived in the village with Sokoine and his extended family since then. Since living with the Maasai, Fuchs has started a Youtube channel that shows ceremonies, daily life, and promotes an education fund for

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[63] Sam Sangdia Mwenyewe in discussion with the author, December 9, 2021.

[64]Sam Sangdia Mwenyewe in discussion with the author, December 9, 2021.

their village. [65] The interview took place online through voice messaging as Stephanie is fluent in several languages and was able to speak for both.

When asked about the intellectual property rights that the Maasai were trying to get to protect their cultural elements, Stephanie had not heard of the Maasai asking for property rights. When asked if this would be something the people, she lived with would be interested in, Fuchs replied that the people in her village would not be concerned with this. [66] Another concern that they had was the funds not going back into the community. "The few western educated Maasai there are; that are educated to the point that they are aware of property rights and about the western stuff we have, they take advantage that they know much more than their counterparts that live a traditional life. The Maasai are towards avoiding conflict if it is not that important to them. "[67] Stephanie also added information about the general clothing that the Maasai wear. "The cloths that they wear are inspired by colonialism most of the time like the checkered cloths they wear that are from Scotland."[68]. The checkered cloth Fuchs was referring to is also called Shuka

Young, introduced earlier, is concerned about how copyrighting laws would work in terms of cultural groups. For example, the checkered patterns used by the Massai tribe would be considered an artistic element, therefore, could not be copyrighted. Creativity should not be restrained as far as the primary use of artistic elements and styles.

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[65]Stephanie Fuchs, Youtube,December 9, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA5YcB8MDNhwbV1A00RuESw/videos.

[66]Stephanie Fuchs in discussion with the author, December 9 2021.

[67] Stephanie Fuchs in discussion with the author, December 9 2021.

[68] Stephanie Fuchs in discussion with the author, December 9 2021.

> Although certain cultures claim ownership of artistic elements, I do not believe that a culture can own the artistic elements from which artists fashion works of art. In any common law jurisdiction, a copyright is granted only to a specific expression or idea... I believe the legal practice here captures an important moral truth: an individual or group is only entitled to concrete items of cultural property. [69].

Young also brings up the idea of possible negative results if copyright laws are applied to certain artistic elements. If a pattern or style is granted to one specific minority group, it would likely lead to conflict since cultures have borrowed elements from other cultures over time.[70] By sharing goods and processes over thousands of years, it would be not easy to indefinitely prove that a symbolic piece would purely belong to one specific group.

In the article "A Much-Needed Primer on Cultural Appropriation," Katie Baker discusses appropriation in terms of using Native American- themed objects and the legal ramifications that some tribes have taken. One example was the use of Navajo tribal symbols used by Urban Outfitters. The Navajo Nation was able to send a cease-and-desist letter using the trademark law. Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS) is a system that can be used to see if indigenous tribes are trademarked. The American Indian Arts & Crafts Act also makes it illegal to falsely suggest that items are Indian produced or a product of an Indian Tribe. [71] Although many of these laws are not produced in the African continent, these would make viable options to protect cultural groups.

Another way to protect from the copying of Maasai dress is to create an environment for designers from minority groups to show their works internationally. Even though African fashion

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[69] Young, 81.

[70] Young, 83.

[71] Katie J.M. Baker, "A Much-Needed Primer on Cultural Appropriation," Jezebel, November 13, 2012, jezebel.com/a-much-needed-primer-on-cultural-appropriation-30768539, 4.

was becoming normalized in Europe, all of the fashion events showcasing the latest Africa-inspired fashion trends were located in western Europe instead of Africa. In the late 20th century, a man named Alphadi created a festival specifically for the African peoples; the International Festival of African Fashion (FIMA). This festival promoted African designers and gave them a space to showcase their designs to the world. UNESCO also supported FIMA because of the economic and cultural peace that it brought to the region. "FIMA is one of Africa's leading fashion events, attracting participants and press coverage from throughout the continent and beyond."[72] This event looks to insert African ideas into global markets and between the nations of the continent.

A database dedicated to the landscape of Africa's commercial businesses and creating resources to help build engagement with the continent posted an article on the African fashion industry and the growing opportunities. The director of African Fashion week in New York City, Adiat Disu, and designer Ally Rehmtullah from Tanzania, discussed the prospect of growth. The growing interest in African culture and design is rapid in the fashion industry because of the complexity of patterns created on the African continent.[73] However, the growth of designers of African descent is slow as plenty of western designers are now using them in their work. In this article, it was also suggested that the government of Africa could play a part in helping more authentic fabrics come from Africa by placing trade barriers on China since, most recently, the country has dominated the textile industry and created enormous imports of fake African fonts

[72] Victoria L. Rovine, "FIMA and the Future of African Fashion," *African Arts* 43, no. 3 (2010): 1-7, https://doi.org/10.1162/afar.2010.43.3.1, 1.

[73]"Africa's Fashion Industry: Challenges, Opportunities," Africa Strictly Business, October 29, 2013, https://www.africastrictlybusiness.com/africas-fashion-industry-challenges-opportunities/.

that come back to countries such as Tanzania at three times the price.[74] Western designers are using fabrics originating from cultural groups in Africa and ramming up the price to make thousands of dollars without acknowledging the culture they are taking from. Without the understanding of these designers, a shift in the western fashion production may happen to collaborate with African designers instead of trying to create their versions of an African tradition.

[74]"Africa's Fashion Industry: Challenges, Opportunities," Africa Strictly Business.

Methodology

The methodology will be approached using a qualitative analysis of texts that look at the topics of the Maasai textiles. With the information learned from the texts in the bibliography, the appropriation of African dress can be better approached. Methodologies will be intertwined to obtain perspectives from the western Canon and Indigenous Lens. The methodology used to approach the literature will be a braided method of indigenous research and postcolonial methods. A lens of decolonizing with a center of indigenous methods will be used to push forward from identifying the impact of the western fashion designers' use of Maasai textiles and seeking to change integrating cultural pieces.

Post-Colonization Theory

Post-Colonization theory will be used to look at the cultural effects and the legacy of western colonization of African groups such as the Maasai and how, in turn, the sharing of art, fashion elements between the two happened. These reject the stereotype and assumptions that the history of non-western cultures only started with European countries. Instead of solely studying other cultures, the interaction between minority cultures and dominant cultures will be analyzed.

In Jacob Mapra's work on indigenous knowledge systems and postcolonial theory, he identifies postcolonial theory as

> Focusing mainly on how literature by the colonizers distorts the experience and realities of the colonized and inscribes the inferiority of the colonized while at the same time promoting the superiority of the colonizer. The postcolonial theory is also about the colonized and formerly colonized announcing their presence and identity and reclaiming their past that was lost or distorted because of being othered by colonialism… In all representations, in both the arts and sciences, the West is always presented as the

> standard, while non-Europeans are inferior and have to have their sensibilities and values cultivated so that they become like those of Europeans, or at least approximate them. [75]

Mapra is a Professor at Great Zimbabwe University in the department of African Languages and Literature. In this paper, he argues that Indigenous Knowledge Systems have brought new insights to the academic level and started to reclaim identities that were formally discouraged.

According to professor and author Anne D'Alleva, in the text *Methods and Theories of Art History*, postcolonial refers to " not only the shaping of new identities, and political and cultural practices in former colonies, but also to a body of theory that supports the student of the distinctive cultural, social, and political dynamics of both colonial and postcolonial societies. [76] Some critics of this methodology say that the "post" portion of the theory is untrue for several minority groups in the world as exploitation is still present. D'Alleva's text argues that the theory fails to recognize that neo-colonial relationships may still be in place in some countries and still tend to have oppressive relationships of power in former colonies.[77] The following methodology discusses the issues behind the usage of postcolonial theory in approaching an issue within an indigenous culture.

Indigenous Methodologies

Indigenous knowledge methodology will be discussed outside the realm of western methodologies. The terms ontology, epistemology, and axiology will describe elements of this

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[75] Jacob Mapara, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing Postcolonial Theory," *The Journal of Pan-African Studies* (2009), 139.

[76] Anne D'Alleva, *Methods, and Theories of Art History*, 2nd ed. (Laurence King, 2013), 76.

[77] Anne D'Alleva, *Methods, and Theories of Art History*,76.

methodology—ontology relating to the nature of reality, epistemology for knowledge, and axiology for values. Indigenous knowledge was focused on archaeology first before crossing over to using it in the art historical field. The knowledge was used in archeology to help uncover physical evidence that may not have been evident to a non-Indigenous investigator. [78] Margret Bruchac, from the Department of Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania, writes on this knowledge from an anthropological background. She states that Indigenous knowledge can be defined "as a network of knowledges, beliefs, and traditions intended to preserve, communicate, and contextualize Indigenous relationships with culture and landscape overtime. Indigenous knowledge are conveyed formally and informally among kin groups and communities through social encounters, oral traditions, ritual practices, and other activities."[79] Some of this knowledge may be common to the tribal communities but are unknown outside of these areas. Before Indigenous knowledge was a respected practice by westerners, damages to cultural activities were common. Brucha includes a list of these activities, including but not limited to the desecration of burial places, theft of cultural property, damage to local ecosystems, misrepresentations in museums, and general disrespect for Indigenous culture and property. [80] Through the intellectual exchanges of westerners and indigenous groups, the treatment of these cultural activities has become more respectful.

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[78]Margaret M. Bruchac, "Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Knowledge," *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology* 10 (2014): 1, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_10.

[79] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (University of Toronto Press, 2021), 3.

[80] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 7.

Indigenous author Margaret Kovach, whose ancestry belongs to the Plains Cree and Saulteaux peoples, has recently written a scholarly publication for the University of Saskatchewan. She gives in-depth information on the Indigenous Methodologies and how to use them correctly. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* are chapters that look at the methods that make up indigenous knowledge. At the end of each chapter, an interview with another indigenous scholar is included, along with an explanation of why indigenous research is essential in the academic fields. The indigenous research framework is centered around gathering knowledge, making meaning, decolonizing and ethics, giving back, researcher preparation, and research preparation. [81] These characters of indigenous frameworks will be briefly explained how, in return, they create the knowledge system. There is no order to these characteristics listed above as they can be done at any point in receiving information and analyzing it.

In gathering knowledge, Kovach explains the importance of storytelling in oral cultures as it is seen as knowledge transfer. Storytelling, much like interviewing, is a method of meaning and creating knowledge that can be passed on. If one is privileged to enter the knowledge of a story, the researcher must ensure the voice is still intact. [82]The process of preparing for approaching the research includes identifying choices that will be made based on personal experience. A inward looking or to "find your own belonging."[83] The method of researcher preparation is used to open ourselves to new ways of seeing knowledge and gives us time to integrate the characteristics to prepare ourselves for the task. When approaching research,

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[81] Kovach, 45.

[82]Kovach, 99.

[83]Kovach, 49.

indigenous methods are less structured than a western research design. The more structured a method is, the more control a researcher maintains. [84] The researcher preparation is done alongside the research preparation as both are considered of equal importance. Ethics also take part in this step as the guidelines for interacting with knowledge are in place to protect the minority group.

Kovach reminds the reader that qualitative research methods require interpretation and analytical approaches when finding meaning from the insights of an inquiry. [85] Decolonizing thoughts prepare the researcher for the knowledge being brought forth. This peels away the biases that may exist before going forward with analyzing the information found. Ethics are vital when using an indigenous research paradigm. Ethics that should be considered include some community accountability, which the researcher gives back to and benefits the community in some manner. The researcher is an ally and will not harm.[86] Indigenous methods recognizes influences by colonizers on the research paradigms that existed before the new influx of information melded in. The methods used in the research can be used to give back to the community in a way that is useful for them. These can be instances of giving a voice, representation, and economical. [87]

Postcolonial Indigenous Methodologies

[84] Kovach 49.

[85]Kovach, 130.

[86] Kovach 48.

[87] Kovach, 82.

Western and non-western methodologies will be fused to analyze the past and approach the need for change in the discipline. Combining the methodologies will be similar to what is known as "braided knowledge," developed by Sonya Atalay for archeological conservation that draws upon the concept from the Native American Anishinabe.[88] "Braided knowledge" introduces the opportunity for collaboration between multiple cultures, which can lead to a better distinction between appropriation and inspiration by threading together different aspects of knowledge. Attributes from both the Postcolonial and Indigenous Knowledge methodologies will be used to approach the issue of western designers such as Louis Vuitton and Valentino using Maasai textiles for their financial gains.

> According to Chilisa, postcolonial indigenous research methodologies are described as
>
> > Adopting a decolonization and indigenization approach emphasizes how indigenous knowledge can be used to transform conventional ways of producing knowledge so that colonial and imperial impositions are eliminated. Knowledge production includes multiple knowledge systems… theory does not necessarily come out of written texts but can be inferred by the researcher through oral traditions, stores, legends: language, and artifacts. [89]

Blind spots must be uncovered and look for the analysis of a neocolonial construction of others in sources. The methodology looks at the literature that is written about an indigenous group and deducts if what is being written is from the perspective of a western assumption of the people's cultural way of life. Research ethics can be used to protect the group. Some have used an

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[88] Dylan Clark. Patricia McAnany. Sonya Atalay. et al., "Braiding Knowledge: Opportunities and Challenges for Collaborative Approaches to Archaeological Heritage and Conservation," accessed March 11, 2021, https://core.tdar.org/collection/69625/braiding-knowledge-opportunities-and-challenges-for-collaborative-approaches-to-archaeological-heritage-and-conservation.

[89] Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies,* 39.

indigenous individual perspective at the expense of the community and society when the study is generalized or extrapolated. [90]

In Mapra's writing, he discusses how the addition of postcolonial theory to the indigenous knowledge presents the "colonised and formerly colonised as subjects of history, and not as people who became visible because of their contact with Westerners."[91] This goes past the extension of acknowledging the colonization of the African peoples and confirms that history does not just start with the Europeans. He adds that the indigenous knowledge systems extend the postcolonial theory by looking at knowledge systems that were once labeled unconventional and not based on empirical evidence.[92]

In Chilisa's work, she describes the views of humanity as contrasting when looking at the ontology of Africa versus western thought. The worldview of *ubuntu* is common perspective in "'*I am we; I am because we are' we are because I am, I am in you, you are in me'*"[93] The ontology addresses the relationships between the living, unliving, and spiritual existence between each person. This is the opposite of the saying 'I think, therefore I am' by Rene Descartes that can describe the thought in many western societies. [94] Chilisa's roots in South Africa give us the view of the Maasai's ontology as the concept of *ubuntu* is used in many communities on the African continent.

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[90] Chilisa, 86.

[91] Jacob Mapara, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing Postcolonial Theory," 147.

[92] Mapara,153.

[93]Chilisa, 108.

[94]Chilisa, 109.

The postcolonial theory was my sole approach to the literature presented above until I read why it should be done with indigenous knowledge systems. Postcolonial theory is not enough. According to Chilisa, Indigenous scholars have argued that postcolonial theory can quickly become a western strategy for researchers to take control of research related to indigenous peoples and the colonized. [95]Chilisa also uses the work of Eve Tuck to back up the reasoning behind the importance of braiding the two methodologies. Postcolonial theory research focuses on historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty and poor health. This pathologizing view that focuses on damage, ignoring the wisdom and hope of the research.[96]

To research the Maasai communities of northern Africa in terms of what has been appropriated from them in terms of textiles by designers Louis Vuitton and Valentino, postcolonial indigenous methods will be used to create a space for an ethical and respectful representation of the peoples as well as look forward to how the issue can be mended for future fashion designers.

Methodology Bias

To apply the methods to the results in accordance with the postcolonial indigenous methods, I first must prepare myself and decolonize my thoughts. This creates a space for me to first to do inward looking on my own background and search my self-conscious for any bias that may arise. It is extremely important for me to first look at my background. I am a Caucasian female who grew up in the suburbs with a nuclear family. I descend from a line that stayed around the area of

[95]Chilisa, 49.

[96]Chilisa,50.

Great Britain and Germany. The only type of connection I have with indigenous peoples is through my Great Aunt on my mother's side. Later in her life, she volunteered with Navajo and Apache reservations near Santa Fe, New Mexico. She had connections with many artisans that did silversmithing and beadwork. As a teenager, I would receive a series of these items with a note that would identify the maker and which reservation the item was from. Besides the small connection, my background remains around the European area. With a heavy Western background, I have found myself having to take a step back from each source and make sure no bias has been made in my head.

According to Chilisa, with the beginning of decolonizing my thoughts, this process would be challenging for me as I am western educated to transition becoming an indigenous researcher. To begin the transition, I must "interrogate their multiple identities as a colonizer participating of participated in Othering." In this process of decolonizing, I found myself looking back on my time as an educator in an urban area where several of my students were homeless, had food insecurity, and unstable homes. Many times, I had to check my conscious for any thoughts that could deem myself as a "white savior" or any potential biases against that community I was serving. The concepts of axiology became familiar during this time as it gave me a chance to have understanding and humility as a taught as well as gave me the privilege as an art teacher to step back and hear from the students what the valued in the moment. As I prepared to process my literature, I had a list above my desk that helped me travel through the knowledge presented:

- What needs to be rewritten?
- How can I carry out my research in a way that benefits the researched?
- Where is the source getting their knowledge and information from?
- Am I using the relational ontology concept of I/We relationship?

As many sources focused on creating a lens of the “downfall or struggles” the Maasai tribes had as they transitioned to having to deal with outsiders, I made sure to analyze works that created a space of how the Maasai have created a way to take their culture back and funnel the profits back into tribe to help with finances. When approaching the sources that were written about the Maasai peoples, the authors were also analyzed to see if they had personally had connections with any type of indigenous peoples. The authors who did not have indigenous backgrounds, I searched for their other works as well to see if any of their work had benefited a minority group or gave them a platform to share their own voice.

Results

While approaching the recent western designers that have appropriated Maasai culture for their own gain, I searched for a series of historical instances when western designers have taken parts of designs from African cultures in forms of illustrations and secondary sources. Other historical sources were also used such as articles that described the fashion collections and also shared thoughts that could seem to make negative connotations of these peoples as primitive or tribal. The scholarly definitions of cultural appropriation by Brigitte Vézina, James O. Young, and Susan Scafidi are kept in the forefront as the western designers are considered. These definitions use terms that consider an imbalance of power, impacting the culture with harmful stereotypes and the absence of the subject's voice. Paul Poiret and Yves Saint Laurent were the two designers who had significant works that used these instances of harmful appropriation in the 20th century. Paul Poiret, mostly working with haute couture, had a series of magnificent designs that fashion historians would be aware of, ranging from the lamp shade dress, revived the empire style dress, hobble skirt, "harem" pants, and much more. His main focus being on what was known then as the "Orient". Many of his designs were based on the Persian empire but he also dabbled with North African designs. In illustrations found Poiret created many designs that were directly inspired by what he thought North Africa looked like. Poiret bluntly named a design meaning "dark skin or female of African descent".

When designs created by Paul Poiret that pointed to some type of African centered textile, the textile was analyzed for which Indigenous group or region the patterns, design, or colors exemplified. In accordance with his Nubienne dress, the bottom is trimmed with a Dutch wax design frequently seen all over Africa as Ankara designs are familiar with the bold, bright colors and batiked designs. This illustration also featured the model stacking bangles upon her

wrists that are common in many tribes as a sign of hierarchy or marital status. In terms of the second and third illustration of a style named *Tanger,* a city in Morocco and the *Akhnif,* which is named after the style of a man's cloak in Morocco, the oval shape also signifies a shield from evil spirits in regions of East Africa as well. This was inserted on may clothing items in Morocco to ward away the evil spirts as was acknowledged in Victoria Rovine's text.

Victoria Rovine's works were used for a handful of instances when analyzing the meaning of the garments created by Paul Poiret. Her research was used extensively because of the embodiment she had in her works. She did not create her works to make a stance of a white savior. Rovine presented the information of how the designers took instances of African garments for themselves. Rovine has presented several sources of information from illustrations, letters, articles, and interviews pertaining to each time period in globalizing African fashion. In her work, I had not found any vocabulary that led to the thoughts of being more significant than the people she discussed or a savior complex.

Authors Rovine and Troy discuss the same issue of Paul Poiret exoticizing indigenous African dress and bringing it back to the western world as if he had invented it. As much of the West did own colonies and was immersed in the idea of Orientalism, the idea to credit an indigenous minority for the idea behind a fashion collection would have been out of the ordinary. With Poirets' influx of ideas from the East, exhibitions in France became more popular to show how they conquered these far places.

In accordance with the illustrations of Poiret's work and information provided by Rovine and Troy, Poiret used these types of designs in his collections in the 1920s because of the fascination in the garments that were not seen in France before the West became engulfed in the new prospects in Africa. No information had been found in academic literature that delivers that

Poiret had knowledge behind the meaning of the symbols or the usage of these garments in Northern Africa cultures such as those in Morocco. In his garments, there was an absence of acknowledgment of the peoples he was inspired from besides naming the garments (Tanger) linked to Morocco and a word to describe darker skin (Nubienne). The two illustrations provided that were printed provide an image of a model that has light skin compared to the people that Poiret took the inspiration from.

At the same time, Poiret was bringing these new types of fashion to the West. Not everyone was so keen on the idea. French cartoonist, Georges Goursat by the pen name Sem created racist images of African women that depicted them as savages. Words used to describe the women in these images Goursat's commentary and illustrations created were "savage women adorned with gris-gris" and "fuzzy-haired cannibal. " [97] Illustrations that he created to depict these peoples from Africa had that process that the garments found in Africa were not something to be appreciated. In terms of the use of the word "gris-gris," this is a type of amulet that would ward off evil spirits for the wearer or bring good luck. In many forms, the talisman would be a cowrie shell. In the literature, the importance behind the symbol of the cowrie shell in many aspects of life was discussed.

In this lithography text, *Musee des Erreurs (Museum of Errors)* pokes fun at the poor taste, sometimes called fashion, as some women adorn massive hats and oversized frocks. The illustrates turn to point at the fashion ideas coming in from Africa may because of this. Although he pokes fun at what he calls the irrational dress choices, Goursat admits that some Parisians still dress properly with the help of designers and tailors. I found these images had to look upon while

[97] Sem. *Le Vrai & Le Faux Chic*. Paris: "Succès, ", 1914. Quoted in V. Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear*, 75.

analyzing the text. Interestingly enough, as I went to analyze them again a few weeks later on The Met website, they had taken down all the images that Georges Gourset depicted as of African peoples. [98]The page only leaves the lithography images of the French women. This forty-page illustrated text had undertones of stereotyping people in Africa. In one of the images, the woman is depicted with long, pointy fingernails, a hairy body, and long, sagging breasts. She wears no top but has a grass skirt and bangles on her wrists and ankles, as well as a large hoop through her nose with a talesman around her neck.

Illustrations and publicans about the Paris Exposition of 1931 were used to analyze the growth of textiles from Africa as well as get an idea of what the criticism was for these garments during this time. Rovine's article "Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion", Morton's article of "Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris", and Hodeir's article of "Decentering the Gaze at French Colonial Exhibitions" were all used as a basis to investigate what would have been shown at these exhibitions. These sources were all in agreeance that these French exhibitions were created with a goal of trade and to show the citizens how they were westernizing the peoples in the colonies they controlled. The clothing shown at these expositions drew fascination from French peoples as it was different from other fashion forms they had encountered. French fashion designers found benefits from the expositions and pushed the aesthetic influences in their production. Unfortunately, many people who helped with this massive project were transported from overseas to build replicas and were used as examples to show the people of what they

[98] "Le Vrai Et Le Faux Chic 1914," Metmuseum.org (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), accessed November 28, 2021, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/368003.

called progress of colonizing the East. These exhibitions funneled in many new interests in patterns, symbols, and dying techniques new to the western designers.

Morton confirms this idea by stating that these exhibitions at the 1931 Paris Exposition were used to prove that the colonized people were previously considered "barbaric" before the West came and claimed the areas.[99] The consciousness that came out of the expositions created the west as a savior to those they colonized and did not give them a platform to speak about their experiences. Hundreds of designers and critics attended. Critics, such as Henri Clouzout quoted in the literature, felt that the textiles that were put on show rejuvenated the fashion world with new ideas. These new ideas were accredited to the western countries as many European countries owned different portions of the continent of Africa.

Two decades later, African had begun to become independent states, but this did not stop the western idealization of the African influences. Yves Saint Laurent, who came from a wealthy French family and was born in Algeria, came to be influenced by the interest of the western idealization of African textiles. These ideas came to bloom in his 1967 collection called *Africaines*. In his collection, the majority of the designs were adorned with hundreds of cowrie shells, which are directly related to many forms in West Africa in forms of currency and forms of clothing. This is well known as Ghana and Benin still use the symbol on financial buildings. As mentioned earlier in the caricatures created by Sem, cowrie shells were also used as a talisman. Raffia is used in numerous cultural influences, including Kuba cloth making in the Congo area.

[99] Patricia A. Morton, "Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris," The International Journal of African Historical Studies 37, no. 2 (2004): p. 374, https://doi.org/10.2307/4129026.7 .

In illustration 4 of the collection, the model can be seen posing with her body stepping out from behind two flat, abstracted figures based on bronze metal sculptures. These figures create a sense of primal exorcism for the portal of dress that is supposed to be based on African culture's influences. In Illustration 5 of the *Africaines* collection, the image is titled *Evening dresses with accessories inspired by Bambara art*. Bambara art comes from Mande ethnic group that comes primarily from Mali. Yves Saint Laurent also harmfully appropriated cultures from Africa through his 1967 collection *Africaines* by creating a feeding on the stereotype of what a person would look like from Africa. The designer used items with deep cultural meaning through cowrie shells. The designer did not provide information of where his inspirations came from beside in the sections to describe the garment, such as Bambara art. From knowing it was inspired by Bambara art, it could then be confirmed he was inspired by the Mande group from Mali. Stereotypical language was used to describe his collection that was provided from an excerpt from Women's Wear Daily that was provided in the literature section. This quote uses descriptions such as primitive, tribal, and captivity to describe the garments in the collections. [100]

After looking at historical instances of harmful appropriation to several groups in Africa, current issues with the Maasai from Kenya and Tanzania were focused on. The sources on the designs Louis Vuitton and Valentino can be examined for damages against the Maasai tribes of East Africa. In 2012, Louis Vuitton, under the direction of Kim Jones put on a Spring men's wear collection that had garments with instances of the use of the Shuka, a very distinct textile of the Maasai peoples. In an interview with *Vogue*, Jones shares that part of his collection was

[100] *Paris Bureau*. Women's Wear Daily, 1967. Quoted in Rovine, Victoria. *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015, 97.

inspired by a Maasai blanket he owned in childhood.[101]According to LightYears IP, these items from Louis Vuitton cost roughly $2,500; 32 times the cost the Maasai sell to tourists. Although Jones does acknowledge where he gets the idea from for the bright red and blue checkered pattern, he does not give finances back to the Maasai nor has he commented or tried to educate those who viewed the show about the meaning of a Shuka. The collection has absence of the Maasai voice that would be essential in expressing the meaning of the patterns and symbolism of the colors.

In 2016, Valentino came under fire for their Spring/Summer collection under the direction of Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli. Illustration 8 from in the collection is fairly like those that were seen in the Yves St. Laurent 1967 collection. It features triangular geometric patterns and transparent netting with brown with a bandeau to cover the models' breasts. The issue with the collection does not entirely lie with the garments themselves but with the background that is used for these models. Images for this collection were taken at Amboseli National Park by Steve McCurry. Each image shows a different part of what a person that lives in the Maasai may see or do. Illustration 9 features warriors performing a jumping ritual called *Adamu* as she gazes towards the camera. In Illustration 10, the two models are posing in front of huts and by women of this tribe. In none of the literature about the collection does Valentino discuss what is being seen in these images nor why the dance or the huts are distinct to the Maasai lifestyle. Neither on the Valentino website nor Steve McCurry's site do they even acknowledge that these photos are of the Maasai tribe. While the designers of this collection did

[101] Tim Blanks, "Louis Vuitton Spring 2012 Menswear Collection,".

write an apology statement on Instagram, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli they still did not acknowledge the use of Maasai lifestyle to promote the collection.

Neither Louis Vuitton or Valentino have given finances to the Maasai as repayment for using them aspects of their culture in their collections. Both acknowledged that they were using these items or landscapes because they appreciated the aesthetic. Neither took steps to hold themselves accountable for their mistakes, used a platform to elevate the Maasai or bring awareness to their culture. They also did not decolonize their fashion as they still promoted the notion of colonizing Africa and taking elements without acknowledging the importance of what was being taken.

Examples of peoples in the fashion realm of being inspired and respecting cultures in Africa are included to be a guide to different way designers can be responsible while being inspired. The first instance shows a joint effort between photographer Malick Sidibé and stylist Andreas Kokkino to create a project based on African-inspired collections by Junya Watanabe and John Galliano. Sidibé, being a well-known Malian photograph was able to help keep the other designers accountable in how they presented their collections. According to *African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance,* Watanabe and Galliano are well educated and studied on the styles of Africa and the line between appropriating a culture and being inspired by it. [102]
The models represented the ethnicities of Africa with beautiful textiles of different patterns that are familiar to West African fashion. This project included people who were aware of the culture, held each other accountable as a collective group, and didn't use colonizing language to describe the protect.

[102] African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance, 194.

The collection of Dior Cruise 2020 was done under the direction of Maria Grazia Chiuri. She was named earlier as Chiuri took part in the Valentino collection that had instances of harmful appropriation. In this collection, multiple designers from Africa were collaborated with to create a line of Ankara prints. Ankara, also known as Dutch Wax cloth, is a stable of African culture. These fabrics were created from the company Uniwax from the Ivory Coast. This is important to the show because this is the only Ankara fabric maker in Africa as all of the others are usually created in European countries to be sent to Africa. Local artisans from Morocco were also invited to help set the runway with ceramics and textiles. An interview with Chiuri is included on the Dior website with the collection. She acknowledges the issue of cultural appropriation and invites a new conversation about the issue in the fashion world. The Dior show created collaboration with artisans from various parts of Africa, using models with several different backgrounds, and using decolonizing language to describe the collection is a great example that designers can be inspired by different cultures without harming them in the process.

Other instances of blocking harmful appropriation is through the use of an Intellectual Property right. The nonprofit group Light Years IP is working towards paving a way for the Maasai to license their culture, creating an environment where companies would have to pay to use any part of the Maasai culture in their business. The group worked with a Maasai leader named Issac ole Tialolo to create the Maasai IP Initiative Trust Ltd. Tialolo and the other Maasai involved in the organization, asked for the funds to help with several community projects. The Maasai are in need of these funds to help build the communities as they become less and less nomadic because of portions of their land being absorbed by the government.

Academic scholar, James O. Young believes that the IP laws by these cultural groups should have no jurisdiction of artistic elements such as patterns, colors, and garments. The laws

should only be applied to known cultural property. This will not become an issue with trademarks as cultural groups would not try to copyright a color or a certain pattern unless it is taking away something that group could gain or if the items statement is harming the culture. Indigenous groups in North America have been starting to use trademark laws and no issues have been brought to attention that would ban an artist from being inspired by them, only to copy or appropriate their symbols.

The exemplar of giving a voice to historically marginalized communities in Africa is another way to help build a bridge between the historically westernized fashion world and the industry in Africa. The International Festival of African Fashion (FIMA) and African Fashion week are added to the literature as they also give western designers a chance to become inspired by new designs and converse. Instead, according to the fashion week director, western designers are still copying those fashions they see at African Fashion Week and put their own label on them. If the fashion world is going to move forward towards being seen as inspired instead of appropriation, steps of accountability, awareness, and decolonization need to be followed.

After reaching out to Stephanie Fuchs and Sam Sangdia Mwenyewe via Instagram, the new information was a lot to ponder. Many of the sources, such as LightYears IP, work with the Maasai of Kenya and not of Tanzania. The Maasai who have participated in these articles have not been from Tanzania to my knowledge. A barrier of values may be between the two countries. If not all the Maasai are concerned with the issue of intellectual property rights, should western designers still be concerned with taking the cultural elements? I believe so. Without the issue of intellectual property rights, the guidelines of "Appropriation to Appreciation" should be followed to have a collection that is committed to the inspiration and sharing of cultural awareness. Peoples who are buying these products have a right to know who is inspiring these designs and

the importance behind the designs. If a sure way of the funding to funnel back to all the Maasai peoples in both places could be rectified in the future, designers should be giving finances to those who are the owners of these garments in the first place. Mwenyewe lives in Kenya, which has been the most active in implementing intellectual property rights compared to its counterparts in Tanzania. All the sources of information about the push for the branding of the Maasai name have been from Kenyan Maasai. The majority of the Maasai live in Kenya and are in more contact with western civilization. In the guidelines produced, I have considered the knowledge that, according to Mwenyewe, western designers should be giving recognition to the Maasai and a percentage of the funds.

Using the steps of accountability, awareness, and decolonization, a guide to staying inspired by cultures such as the Maasai was created without harmfully appropriating their cultural elements. These guidelines, titled "Appropriation to Appreciation," were adopted from multiple scholarly sources: Brigette Vezina, Elizabeth Oyange Ngando, Maasai IP Initiative Trust Ltd. (MIPI), Bagele Chilisa, Magaret Kovach, and Sam Sangida Mwenyewe. To not culturally appropriate, all of the attributes will need to be done but in no particular order. In the set of guidelines, I first break down the use of accountability. In accountability, homage must be given to the Maasai during the collection's presentation to those who are selling or buying the item. This can be done by physically writing on a media outlet or verbally presenting the information to the audience. Financial benefits must be given to the Maasai with a percentage agreed upon with the community leaders. The addition of admittance is placed under the section of accountability. The designer must hold themselves responsible if the collection harms the Maasai group or is received negatively by the community. The designer must admit wrongs were done and ask the Maasai what can be done to right the relationship. An example of this would be

the 2016 Valentino Ready-to-Wear collection. Designers Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli released an apology statement on media outlets and stated what their attentive goal was for the collection. [103]

The next element in the set of guidelines is awareness. In awareness, education of self about the Maasai culture and the elements that inspire the collection are vital and engaging with said culture. If the elements that inspired the collection are sacred or are not meant for people outside the culture to know, the information must not be included in the collection out of respect of culture. In the creative process, the designer must collaborate with a notable member of the Maasai community such as an elder. If the element from the Maasai culture is still questionable to the designer, programs such as the Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS) are available to check if a cultural element is trademarked.

Education of the collection buyers is equally important as educating self about the culture. When educating buyers, the culture's name should be mentioned and the element embedded from the Maasai in the collection. For example, the designer should tell the buyers that the Maasai inspires it and discuss what it was inspired by. For example, was it inspired by beaded jewelry, Shuka cloth, or a semi-nomadic lifestyle? Education can be done in several ways, just as the homage can be given. Education of the masses can be done with an infographic on media sites or a card that comes with the product that discusses how the culture inspired the collection. Mentioned again, because of how important it is, confirmation of the information you are sharing about the Maasai is agreed upon with leaders in the Maasai communities not to overstep any boundaries.

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[103] Monika Markovinovic, “Valentino Under Fire for Cultural Appropriation, Once Again.”

Unfortunately, no collections by western designers who used the Maasai culture have collaborated with a community leader while in the creation process. I used the example in my guidelines of a collaboration of American Creative Director Andreas Kokkino and Malian photographer Malick Sidibés from the 2009 New York Times titled *Prints and the Revolution* discussed in the literature section. This collaboration dressed models from West African in collections inspired by Africa, such as those created by Junya Wantanabe and John Galliano. Although it is not explicitly aligned with the Maasai culture, it displays characteristics that need to be used when creating a collection.

The last section in the guidelines is decolonization. Biases need to be uncovered that are derived from stereotypes that may be negative or incorrect. If sources were not only primary to educate self on the Maasai, was the source done by communicating with the Maasai, or was it what they analyzed without talking to the community? Depending on where the designer resides, values and ways of knowledge may differ from what is familiar, which is perfectly acceptable. This is mentioned in the guidelines to keep this at the forefront of a decolonizing perspective. Under the decolonization section, decolonizing language needs to be used when describing the collection. Historically derogative terms such as *primitive, wild, tribal, taming,* and *exotic* should not be used. The designer should ask themselves if the language being used is to educate the people interested in the collection or is it used to spotlight the designer. Self should also be asked if the Maasai are being portrayed so that others would like to see them. Again, unfortunately, no sources are found with the Maasai being portrayed in a decolonized way. The example used of decolonization is earlier seen in the literature section of the Dior 2020 Cruise under the creative direction of Maria Grazia Chiuri. Multiple artisans were collaborated with from the Ivory Coast company Uniwax and local artisans from Morocco. Chiuri describes the collection as a “meeting

of cultures" and reflects upon the importance of conversation about colonization. [104] This example does not deal directly with the Maasai. However, the Dior 2020 Cruise embodies respect towards the culture of Dutch Wax fabrics typically seen in West Africa.

[104] "Cruise 2020 Collection."

Conclusion

This analysis contributes to the existing literature by bringing together what is known about the symbolism of Maasai designs, what is being appropriated by designers Valentino and Louis Vuitton, and connecting them together. The literature contributes to exploring what can be done in the future to help the Maasai through financial contributions by any designer who uses the design elements. Much of the literature written before has noted that the patterns, colors, and figures have been appropriated by the Maasai. Still, it has not named what will be done in the future to rectify this issue with the Maasai peoples and why these combinations of elements are essential to the Maasai peoples. The organizations and companies who are starting to work with the Maasai, such as Light Years IP, should be noted in how they are recovering trademarks from global corporations and have laid out the pavement towards retributions towards the Maasai.

This literature also contributes to the field to educate and give examples to how western designers can prevent harmful appropriation of the Maasai and other cultures in Africa by being accountable, awareness and decolonizing biases. This is done by giving examples of harmful cultural appropriation from collections by designers Paul Poiret, Yves St. Laurent, Valentino, and Louis Vuitton. Examples of designers who prevent harmful appropriation with Andres Kokkino and Dior collections that check the boxes of accountability, awareness, and decolonization of

The strength of this research is first presenting the history of cultural appropriation of several different minority groups in African in the 1900s and analying the early French designers that notably gave the nod for other western designers to take design elements from African groups without acknowledging or asking permission to use those parts of their culture. Using the history of cultural appropriation in Africa, the following section solely focused on the two

European designers Louis Vuitton and Valentino. They have used aspects of the Maasai lifestyle in two different ways in their collections. Louis Vuitton, using patterns and color combinations directly associated with the traditional Maasai Shuka. At the same time, Valentino created the general aesthetic in the clothing associated with Africa and placed it against a Maasai village as a background.

Literature used to approach the thesis, such as news sources Huffington Post, Vogue pointed out the appropriation by Valentino and Louis Vuitton. Articles by authors Oyange, Rovine, and Mead also discuss this issue of appropriation of the Maasai in a general sense but have lacked explanation on what was appropriated and the significance these items have to the Maasai peoples and why we should take the designs from them. In the results presented, the significance of color, patterns, and design used by western designers is connected with why these aspects are considered essential to the Maasai culture. This leads the reader to process why we should acknowledge the use of the elements instead of just telling an audience don't do it because it is wrong. The connection between cultural significance and the elements from the Maasai being taken gives future designers knowledge as go forth to be respectful of these groups.

Examples are provided of how the designers took from the Maasai, but also how this could be rectified by looking at examples of western designers who have taken the right path to honor the African culture they have taken from. However, no instances could be found in connection to the Maasai, instances of western designers such as Andreas Kokkino partnering with well-known African artists such as Malick Sidibé. These are shown as instances of accountability, awareness, and homage to people who are marginalized in western fashion. Other instances of recent collections such as on the Dior Cruise by creative director

Maria Grazia Chirui were used as examples of how western designers can continue to grow and acknowledge inspiration taken from minority cultures and include peoples from said culture in the creation of the fashion designing process. Lastly, Light Years IP, "A Much-Needed Primer on Cultural Appropriation", and the International Festival of African Fashion was inserted in the literature to show how gears are turning in how to make amends with minority groups.

Limitations to this work are no interviews with people from the Maasai groups were explicitly created for the paper that would give insight directly from them on if funds were given to the Maasai tribes what would the finances be used for, and if the designers creating these items are taken away from the sales to tourists. As I could not produce an interview about these issues with these people, I looked to see if interviews were released online about this vital issue. No interviews have been published online, to my knowledge, that is readily accessible.

Another limitation to this work is not receiving access to the number of items were sold from the Louis Vuitton and Valentino in the items connected to the Maasai culture. I was only able to find one article, "The Maasai brand is valuable — and it should belong to the Maasai people", that gives a number for how much one of the items, the scarf, and it was sold for from the Louis Vuitton collection. As these collections were not in the past year, the items from the collections are not on the websites to see how much the items cost.

My direction for future iterations would be to conduct interviews with Maasai peoples in leadership positions from tribes in Tanzania and Kenya into how cultural appropriation by westerners in the name of fashion has further impacted their lives. As Light Years begins to implement the Maasai IP Initiative Trust Ltd (MIPI), after the first year, it would bring in more data to support indigenous groups' decision to use an IP to protect the use of their culture and provide benefits for the communities. As said in the literature review, the desire is to go to

education, medical care, and community projects. After a solid year of implementation of the MIPI, data could be produced of where the money ended up being allocated towards.

This literature looks at historical western designers Paul Poiret, Yves St. Laurent and current designers through Louis Vuitton and Yves St. Laurent as examples who have appropriated in a harmful from the Maasai and several over minorities in Africa. Examples of designers who use the steps of accountability, awareness, and decolonization of language are used to guide future fashion collections to prevent harmful situations. Western designers Louis Vuitton and Valentino have appropriated from the Maasai from a harmful manner, this research serves as an example to future western designers to abstain from harming a culture and take the proceeding in a manner of respect towards the group they are inspired by.

List of Illustrations

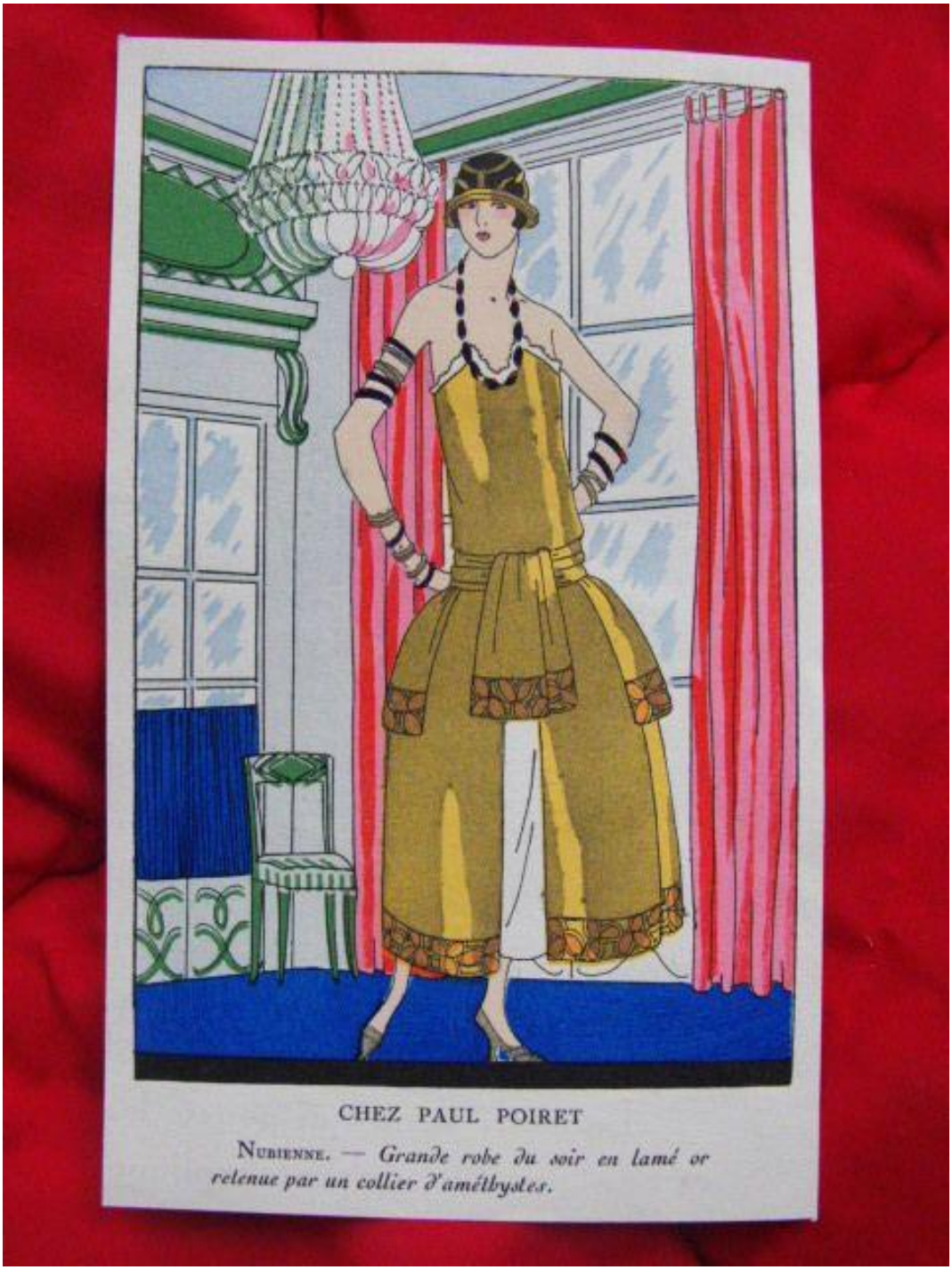
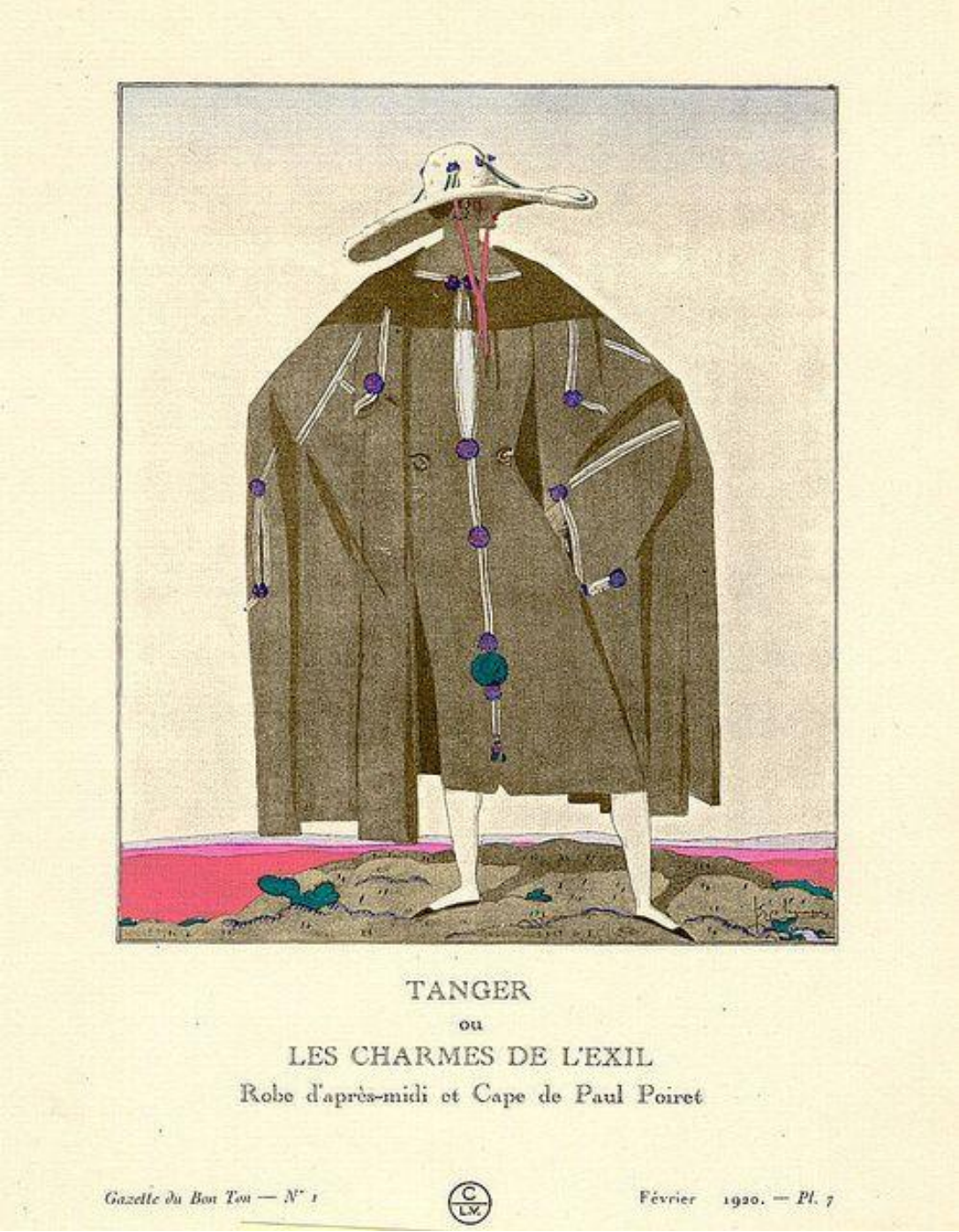


Illustration 1. Paul Poiret, Nubienne dress, *Art, Gout, Beaute*, 15 May 1924, page 15. ©2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ ADAGP, Paris



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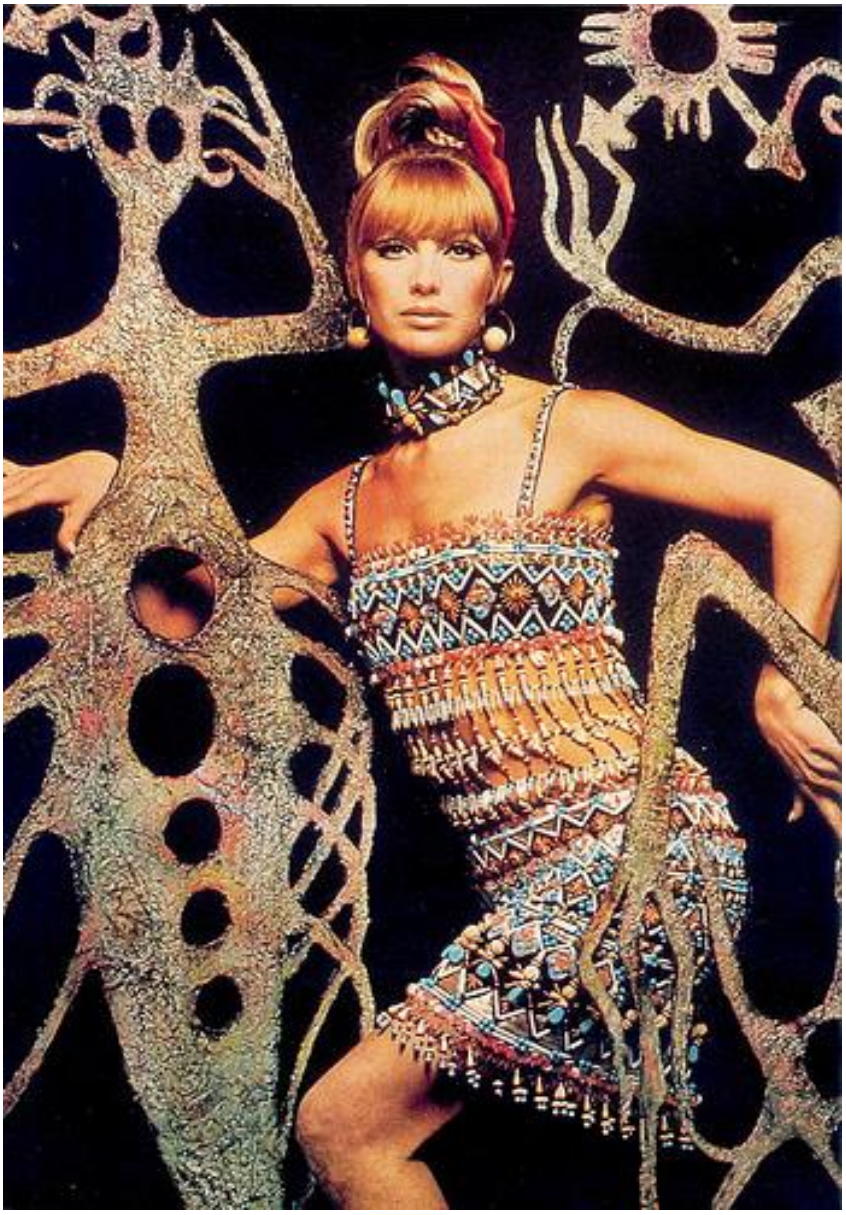

Illustration 4. Photographer unknown. Designer: Yves Saint Laurent, from the “Africaines” series in *L’Officiel*. Spring/ Summer Collection. 1967. Accessed January, 2021.

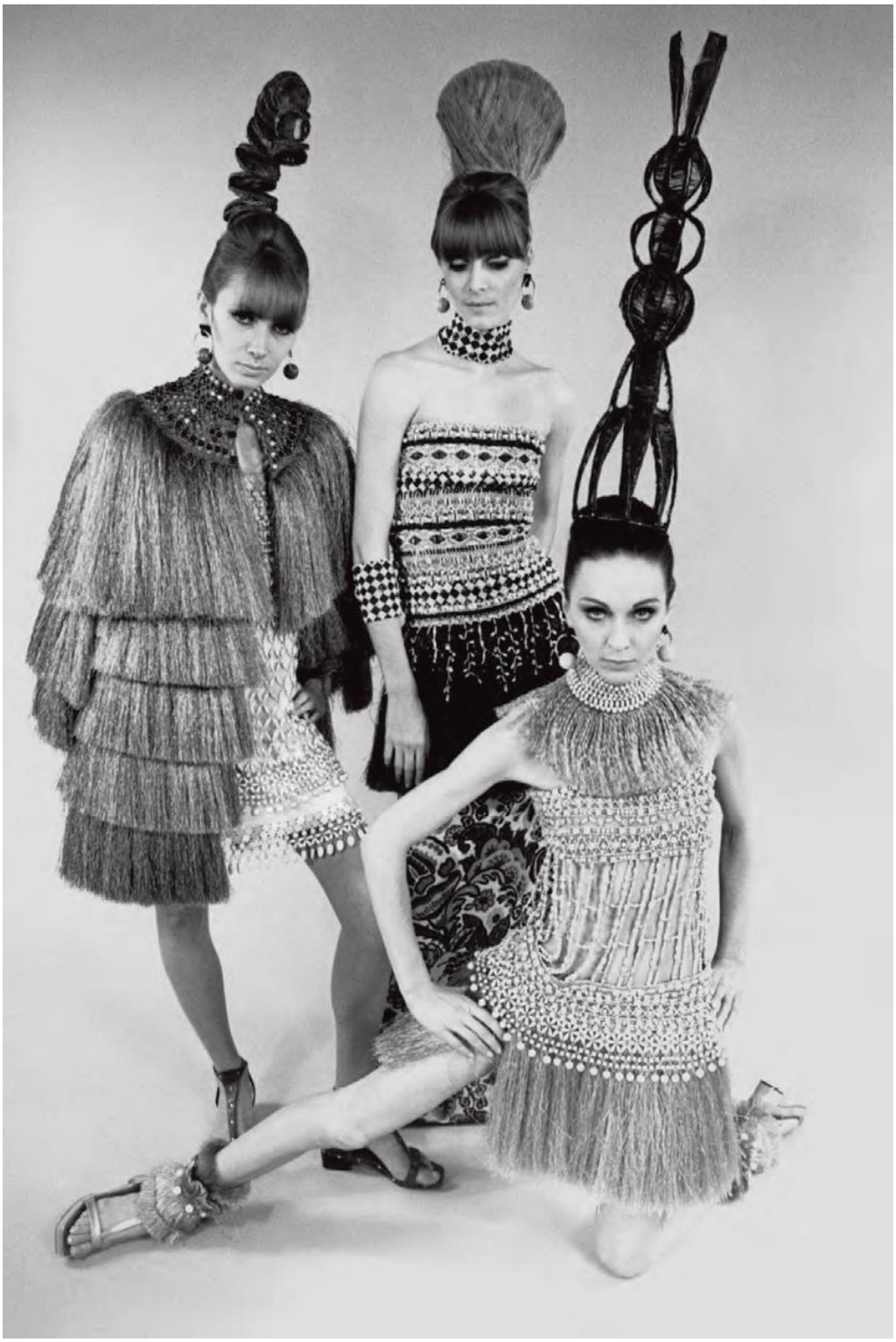

Illustration 5. Photographer unknown. Designer: Yves Saint Laurent, “Evening dresses with accessories inspired by Bambara art” Spring/ Summer Collection. 1967. Accessed November 11, 2021. https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/design/articles/2017/september/12/no-one-did-africa-like-yves-saint-laurent/.

Illustration 6. Monica Feudi. “Louis Vuitton Spring 2012 Menswear Look 21” Digital image. Accessed November 9, 2021. https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2012-menswear/louis-vuitton/slideshow/collection#21

Illustration 7. Monica Feudi. “Louis Vuitton Spring 2012 Menswear Look 22” Digital image. Accessed November 9, 2021. https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2012-menswear/louis-vuitton/slideshow/collection#22

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Illustration 9. Steve McCurry. “Model standing in front of Maasai men” Digital image. Photographer Magazine. Valentino Spring 2016. Amboseli National Park, Kenya. Accessed March 10, 2021. http://www.photographermagazine.net/steve-mccurry-for-valentino/

Illustration 10. Steve McCurry. “Models posing in front of Maasai huts” Digital image. Photographer Magazine. Valentino Spring 2016. Amboseli National Park, Kenya. Accessed November 9, 2021. http://www.photographermagazine.net/steve-mccurry-for-valentino/

Illustration 11. Malick Sidbie, “Prints and the Revolution: *From Milan to Mali, a Riot of Checks, Stripes, Patterns, and Polka Dots*.” New York Times Magazine, April 5 2009, Accessed March 20, 2021. http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2009/04/01/magazine/20090405-style-slideshow_5.html

Illustration 12, Morgan O'Donovan, "Four Models in Anakara Fabric" Digital Image. Dior Website. Dior Cruise 202. Accessed November 12th. https://www.dior.com/en_us/womens-fashion/ready-to-wear-shows/cruise-2020-show

Timeline of Western Designers Who Appropriated or Appreciated Africa Tribes or Groups of Peoples

1920
Paul Poiret
Tanger
-Morocco,
-Amazign, Berber peoples
Appropriation

1924
Paul Poiret
Nubienne Dress
-Egypt, Sudan
Appropriation

1967
Yves St. Laurent
Spring/Summer Collection "Africaines"
-Mali, Bambara
Appropriation

2012
Louis Vuitton
Mens Spring Collection
-Maasai
Appropriation

2012
Malik Sidbie and Andrea Kokkino in collaboration with John Galliano and Junya Watanabe for NY Times
-Fashions in West African
Appreciation

2016
Valentino
Spring Collection
-Maasai
Appropriation

2020
Dior Cruise
-West African Ankara Fabrics
-Morocco artisans for collection debut.
Appreciation

Illustrations seen in pages 68- 79

Appropriation to Appreciation

A Set of Guidelines to Stay Inspired Without Harmfully Appropriating the Maasai When Creating a Collection*

This set of guidelines can be followed in any order, but all steps must be used to truly set the designer on the path away from appropriating cultural elements.

Accountability

Acknowledge the culture you have become inspired by:

1. **Homage** must be given to Maasai during the presentation of the collection to those who are selling or buying the items.

- This could be physically written out on a media page or verbally presented to the audience of the collection.
- Share financial benefits with the Maasai. The benefits that you share must be agreed upon with community leaders.

2. **Admittance** if the Maasai elements used in the collection end up harming the group or are not received well by the community. Admitting that you did wrong and asking what can be done to right the relationship with the Maasai.

Example: In Valentino's 2016 Ready-to-Wear Spring collection, the designers Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli released an apology statement and explained their goal with the collection. [105]

Awareness

1. **Educate** self of the Maasai you are inspired by researching the culture and engaging with it.

- Respect the wishes of the group you are taking from, if the element of the Maasai you want to include in the collection is considered sacred or was not meant to be shared with those outside the group, then under no circumstances should it be used.
- Collaborating with a member of the Maasai such as an elder, in the process of creating the collection.
- Research if the cultural element is trademarked through programs such as the Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS)

[105] Monika Markovinovic, "Valentino Under Fire for Cultural Appropriation, Once Again."

2. **Educate** the buyers of the collection of what culture and the elements embedded in the Maasai lifestyle inspired the product.

- Educating can be done in several ways including discussing the culture it portrays before the showing of the collection, including an infographic on the media sites, or a card that comes with the product that discusses the elements adopted from the Maasai.
- Again, confirm that the information you are sharing about the group is agreed upon with leaders in the Maasai communities to not overstep any boundaries.

Example: Andreas Kokkino and Malick Sidibés 2009 collaboration *Prints and the Revolution* for the New York Times. Kokkino wanted to do a project that entailed West African models wearing African-inspired lines created by Junya Watanabe and John Galliano with bold patterns and collaborated with Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, to create an intimate collection that embodied the West African fashions. [106] Although not specifically a protect that deals with the Maasai culture, it displays characteristics that should be used when creating a collection about the Maasai.

Decolonization

1. **Uncover biases** that are derived from stereotypes as these may be negative or incorrect.

- Check to see if sources, that were not primary, to educate self were done by communicating with the Maasai or was it what they analyzed without talking to the community?
- Remember, values and ways of knowledge from the community may differ from those the designer is familiar with and that is perfectly acceptable.

2. **Use of language.** Check the use of language used to describe the collection. Do not use historically derogative terms such as *primitive, wild, tribal, taming, exotic.*

- Is the language being used to educate the people interested in the collection or is it used to bring the spotlight on the designer?
- Ask self if the Maasai being portrayed in way they would like others to see them.

Example: Dior 2020 Cruise, under the creative direction of Maria Grazia Chiuri, collaborated with multiple artisans from the Ivory Coast and Morocco to create this collection. Chiuri described it as a “meeting of cultures” and the importance of reflection and discussion of post

[106] Karen Tranberg Hansen and D. Soyini Madison, *African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 194.

colonization. [107] This example does not deal directly with the Maasai culture; however, the Dior 2020 Cruise embodies respect towards the culture of Dutch Wax fabric typically seen in West Africa.

*These guidelines were adopted from multiple scholarly sources: Brigette Vézina,Elizabeth Oyange Ngando, Maasai IP Initiative Trust Ltd. (MIPI),Bagele Chilisa, Magarret Kovach.

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