Cultural Memory and Policy Transformation: The Evolution of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi Heritage

Sites in Luo Nyanza

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Abstract
Cultural heritage sites are repositories of historical memory, but in many African settings, the public's access to and comprehension of these places is limited since knowledge of their value has been passed down orally. This research examines how, between 1850 and 2013, the value perceptions of two significant Luo historical sites in Kenya's Siaya and Kisumu counties—Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi—changed. It looks at their cultural importance before colonization, how colonial policies affected their usage and management, and how heritage custodianship changed after independence. Oral interviews, focus groups, archival research, and field observation were all used in this historical research approach, which was informed by Social Constructivism and Cultural Heritage Value Theory. Seventy-six respondents, including elders, cultural practitioners, spiritual leaders, heritage experts, and government officials, were gathered using a purposive and snowball sampling technique. The study found that Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi were central to Luo spirituality, governance, and ecological ethics in the precolonial period but were redefined as secular or touristic spaces during the colonial era. Post-independence heritage policies improved legal protection but continued to marginalize traditional custodians. Today, these sites embody contested meanings, shaped by tensions between spiritual authenticity, cultural commodification, and evolving community identity. The research emphasizes how important it is to have inclusive heritage policies that maintain cultural memory and encourage community participation in site conservation. It advances research on decolonizing memory, intangible legacy, and the workings of African cultural policy.
Keywords: *Cultural heritage, Luo community, Got Ramogi, Kit Mikayi, policy transformation, oral tradition, historical memory, Kenya*

I.   Background to the Study

In order to preserve a community's identity and collective memory, cultural heritage—both material and immaterial—is crucial (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013). Two notable historical sites in Kenya's Luo Nyanza area are Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi. While Kit Mikayi is valued for its spiritual and ceremonial significance, Got Ramogi represents the Luo people's mythological beginnings (Ogot, 1967; Ayodo, 1996). Although these locations were essential to community activities in the past, opinions about their worth have changed with time. Cultural heritage's meaning and use are subject to change due to shifting social, political, and economic circumstances (Lowenthal, 1998; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). Missionary activity, colonial policy, state interventions, and contemporary tourism have all had an impact on Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi's changes from the precolonial era through colonial rule to post-independence Kenya (1850–2013) (Mboya, 1938; Were, 2016; Odede, 2021). Conflicting interpretations and changing cultural norms have been facilitated by these interactions. The importance of these locations has been preserved in large part via oral traditions. However, it has been difficult for succeeding generations to completely understand their historical significance due to the dearth of written evidence (Vansina, 1985; Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989). Furthermore, traditional custodianship and community interaction with these sites have changed due to modern influences including commercial tourism, religious pluralism, and state-driven cultural policies (Merriman, 2004; Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005). Thus, this research explores the ways in which legislative changes, stakeholder perceptions, and cultural memory have influenced the

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changing value of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi. It seeks to provide light on the wider ramifications for cultural identity negotiation and heritage protection in a society that is changing quickly.

In light of these dynamics, this study is guided by the following central research question: How have the cultural values, meanings, and custodianship of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi evolved from the precolonial period to the post-independence era in Kenya, and what do these changes reveal about the broader processes of heritage transformation, identity negotiation, and policy adaptation in Luo Nyanza?

1.2 Statement of the Problem

For the Luo people, Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi are essential cultural sites that have great spiritual, historical, and identity-related value. Elders and spiritual leaders have traditionally depended extensively on oral tales to transmit information about these locations. However, this legacy is at risk of deterioration due to the absence of official recording, particularly when these knowledge holders die. The meanings and purposes of these locations have changed significantly between 1850 and 2013 as a result of colonial influence, missionary activity, industrialization, changes in land use, and tourism. In order to serve national or commercial objectives, colonial and postcolonial administrations often reinterpreted these areas, marginalizing indigenous caretakers and erasing their original cultural significance. Despite their significance, little research has been done on how the values of these locations have changed over time, especially from an indigenous point of view. Furthermore, the many and shifting meanings associated with these places are seldom taken into consideration by contemporary heritage policy. By examining how the cultural relevance of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi has changed over time, this research fills these gaps and provides guidance for more inclusive and contextually based heritage preservation initiatives in Kenya.

II.   Literature Review

2.1 Value and Historical Significance of Cultural Heritage Sites in the Pre-colonial Period

According to Chockey (2016), culture is the collective manifestation of a community's values, traditions, beliefs, practices, and tangible artifacts that have been passed down through the centuries. As a fundamental aspect of culture, cultural heritage encompasses both material aspects like historical monuments, buildings, and landscapes as well as intangible components like folklore, indigenous knowledge systems, spiritual practices, and oral traditions (UNESCO, 1972; ICOMOS, 2002). These elements are essential for promoting social cohesiveness, continuity, and identity among communities.

Oral traditions, spiritual worldviews, and indigenous political structures that existed before colonial impact are all firmly ingrained in African culture. According to McKercher and Du Cros (2002), African legacy includes rituals, environmental knowledge, and lived cultural manifestations in addition to tangible objects. However, national heritage policy and scholarly studies often ignore intangible forms of heritage, especially those found in rural or holy areas.

The importance of Tanzanian archaeological sites like Olduvai Gorge and Laetoli for comprehending ancient Africa and human development is emphasized by Njau and Losaru (2017). However, a propensity to favor scientific research above cultural context often results in an undervaluation of the cultural and symbolic significance these locations possess for local inhabitants. Sacred places such as Thimlich Ohinga, Kit Mikayi, and Got Ramogi are mostly examined for their structural features (Onjala, 1994), with little attention paid to their spiritual importance and positions within precolonial cosmologies. This is a similar tendency in Kenya.

For example, Onjala's (1994) paper on Thimlich Ohinga describes its architectural characteristics and history of colonization, but it gives little consideration to its function in indigenous government systems or communal rituals. Furthermore, many African countries' state policies and heritage tourism still prioritize natural areas and animals above cultural sites (Njau & Losaru, 2017). Despite being essential to Luo cultural identity and oral traditions, culturally important locations like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi are underrepresented in government narratives and conservation projects in Kenya as a result of this prejudice.

The little analysis of the symbolic, spiritual, and social roles of holy places in western Kenya throughout the precolonial and early colonial eras highlights a significant research need. Without sufficiently examining their

ingrained meanings within indigenous belief systems, existing studies often focus on physical descriptions or tourist potential (Onjala, 1994; Smith, 2006). Additionally, oral traditions and memory systems are still not widely used in academic discourse, despite being essential to the transmission of African history (Vansina, 1985; Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989). The danger of losing unrecorded stories and ceremonial knowledge increases with the death of older caretakers.

Furthermore, how local people engage with and see holy locations has changed dramatically as a result of changes brought about by colonialism, religious conversion, land reforms, and globalization (Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005; Harrison, 2013). Traditional values and custodianship traditions have been undermined in part by these influences. In areas such as western Kenya, national heritage planning still favors commercially successful or globally renowned locations above culturally significant monuments (Chirikure, 2013; Republic of Kenya, 2015).

Lastly, interdisciplinary study that combines historical, anthropological, and ethnographic techniques to comprehend the changing meanings of cultural heritage locations is conspicuously lacking. For a more comprehensive and inclusive knowledge of Kenya's cultural legacy and to inspire heritage policies that honor both historical depth and current community relevance, these gaps must be filled.

2.2 Impact of Colonialism, Modernization, and Tourism on Cultural Heritage Sites

A community's identity is largely shaped by its culture and tradition, which provide a feeling of continuity and historical understanding. According to Kamamba (1990), cultural heritage has inherent value that transcends its commercialization via tourism and instead functions as a storehouse of a community's values, traditions, and past experiences that have been molded and changed over many generations. However, colonial control, urbanization, and the growth of international tourism have had a significant influence on—and often disrupted— the preservation of such legacy in Africa (Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005; Deisser & Njuguna, 2016).

African civilizations' relationships to their cultural monuments were profoundly altered by the colonial experience. Under colonial frameworks, locations that were before seen as communal or holy were redefined as curiosities, archeological objects, or superstitious (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Harrison, 2013). Communities were estranged from their history and indigenous meanings were eroded by this forced translation. Furthermore, colonial conservation approaches, which were often based on European values, prioritized the preservation of physical buildings at the expense of intangible cultural elements including oral histories, myths, and rituals (Smith, 2006).

The legacy of colonial knowledge systems continued to impede attempts to recover and revalue cultural assets even after independence. Western institutions, including as schools, churches, and bureaucratic government, were brought forth by postcolonial modernization and sometimes conflicted with indigenous cultural frameworks (Kisiangani, 2019). Traditional customs and legacy interpretations were thus often marginalized or altered. According to Liu Tik-sang (2009), legacy is continually being reinterpreted in light of sociopolitical and economic shifts. However, if such change is inadequately contextualized or pushed from outside, it may jeopardize cultural integrity.

Africa's tourism industry offers a complicated dynamic: it fosters cultural interchange and economic opportunity, but it also runs the danger of transforming cultural legacy into a commercial spectacle. McKercher and du Cros (2002) warn that tourism often commodifies and simplifies heritage, separating historical and holy sites from their more profound significance. Heritage-rich locations like Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi are underfunded and under-promoted in Kenya due to the long-standing dominance of wildlife tourism over cultural tourism (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016). Due to inadequate infrastructure, a lack of documentation, and community-led conservation efforts, these sites are often neglected and beyond the scope of national heritage planning (Chirikure, 2013).

Furthermore, the ways that tourism changes how communities connect with their history have not been well studied by academics. Analysis of how local people understand holy areas when they are used for external consumption is scarce. Similar frameworks are absent for African settings, despite the fact that Liu Tik-sang (2009) provides pertinent lessons from East Asia addressing community adaptation to tourism. Inadequate research has been done on issues such how migration, religion, and tourism have impacted the Luo community's connection with Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi.

Furthermore, colonialism, modernity, and tourism are often treated as distinct impacts in the research that currently exists, omitting the ways in which these elements interact and exacerbate their effects on heritage over time (Logan, 2012). The function of oral traditions in comprehending postcolonial legacy is another neglected field. Oral histories are acknowledged as being essential to African knowledge systems, particularly in the absence of written records, but they are not sufficiently included in assessments of the evolution of legacy (Vansina, 1985; Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989).

There are still significant gaps in our knowledge of the cumulative effects of foreign factors on certain Kenyan sites, such as Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi, despite the rising interest in African heritage studies. Numerous studies use an architectural or generic perspective, ignoring the ways in which local meanings and community connections to these structures have evolved (Onjala, 1994; Smith, 2006). Additionally, in the midst of social, religious, and economic changes, there is not enough focus on how local people react to, reinterpret, or oppose the commercialization of their history. The dearth of interdisciplinary study that combines historical, anthropological, and tourist studies to comprehend how legacy meanings change over time exacerbates this problem.

Furthermore, academic research usually ignores oral traditions and indigenous memory systems, which are crucial for reassembling African postcolonial heritage narratives (Vansina, 1985; Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005). Elders' and cultural guardians' expertise is marginalized in this way, despite the fact that their viewpoints are essential to preserving cultural continuity. Last but not least, little is known about the intricate connection between tourist growth and conservation, especially in rural areas with limited resources like the areas around Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi. Effective preservation is further undermined by these places' frequent policy neglect and lack of funding. Community-driven, locally informed research that prioritizes indigenous perspectives in heritage studies and policy is necessary to close these disparities.

2.3 Oral Traditions, Spiritual Practices, and Community Involvement

A common historical awareness, continuity, and meaning are provided by culture and cultural heritage, which serve as the cornerstone of collective identity. Cultural heritage, as Kamamba (1990) highlights, has inherent worth that goes beyond its commercialization for tourism; it represents the historical realities, values, and customs of a people and develops naturally over centuries. However, outside factors like colonization, modernity, and international tourism have had a significant impact on—and often disrupted—Africa's efforts to preserve its cultural history (Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005; Deisser & Njuguna, 2016).

The way African communities saw and interacted with their ancestry was profoundly changed by colonialism. Colonial rulers reinterpreted locations that had previously been places of worship or gathering places as subjects of interest, archeological research, or even superstition (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Harrison, 2013). Indigenous meanings were marginalized as a result of this change in value, and communities were disconnected from their own cultural history. Additionally, the colonial past brought Eurocentric conservation approaches that gave physical preservation precedence over intangible elements like as oral traditions, myths, and rituals (Smith, 2006).

Heritage sites' cultural and national value increased after independence, but the harm to traditional knowledge systems had already been done. Western administration, education, and religion were brought throughout the post-independence period via modernization processes, which often clashed with native institutions (Kisiangani, 2019). Liu Tik-sang (2009) notes that cultural legacy is not static—it is constantly reinterpreted in response to social, political, and economic change. As a consequence, traditional cultural practices and historical meanings have gradually been eroded or transformed. Although this flexibility may be liberating, when change is forced upon people or is not properly contextualized, it can also result in the loss of fundamental cultural values.

Both opportunities and threats to cultural heritage have arisen as a result of tourism, especially in postcolonial African governments. Tourism often commodifies heritage, turning holy or historic locations into commercial attractions, even while it provides financial incentives and opportunities for cross-cultural interaction (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). For example, in Kenya, valuable historical sites like Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi are neglected and underutilized as a result of wildlife tourism's dominance over cultural tourism (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016). These locations suffer from inadequate infrastructure, little documentation, and a dearth of

community-based conservation initiatives, and they are often disregarded in national tourist and development programs (Chirikure, 2013).

Furthermore, few studies examine how tourism has changed how locals see historic sites—how they reinterpret or detach from holy landscapes when they are marketed to outside audiences. There are few comparable studies in the African setting, despite the fact that Liu Tik-sang's (2009) work in East Asia offers instances of adaptive cultural interpretations. How, for instance, have rising tourism, religious conversion, or rural-urban migration affected the Luo people's ideas of Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi?

Furthermore, the literature seldom examines how colonialism, modernity, and tourism have accumulated and intersected throughout time to affect cultural sites; instead, it treats these factors as separate influences (Logan, 2012). The intricate ways in which these influences support or contradict one another in influencing cultural continuity and change are overlooked by this lack of comprehensive thinking. The underrepresentation of oral traditions in contemporary heritage studies is another significant gap. Although oral histories and folklore are recognized as important sources of indigenous knowledge, particularly in areas with little written records, their contribution to understanding the post-colonial development of historic sites is still not well understood (Vansina, 1985; Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989).

There are still a number of important gaps in our knowledge of how colonialism, modernity, and tourism have influenced certain Kenyan historic sites, including Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi, despite the expanding scholarly interest in African cultural heritage. The lack of local case studies that examine the combined impact of these outside factors on the cultural, spiritual, and historical significance of such locations is one of the main drawbacks. Research that has already been done often ignores how particular communities have experienced and reacted to heritage alteration because it generalizes across areas or concentrates on architectural and archeological aspects (Onjala, 1994; Smith, 2006).

Furthermore, community perceptions—how local residents reinterpret, adapt, or oppose the commercialization and commodification of heritage in the face of contemporary religious, social, and economic pressures—are not given enough academic attention. The dearth of multidisciplinary research that combines historical, anthropological, and tourism-based viewpoints to investigate how the meanings associated with cultural places have changed over time exacerbates this. Additionally, academic assessments continue to underutilize oral traditions and indigenous knowledge systems, despite their critical role in rebuilding postcolonial heritage narratives in African countries (Vansina, 1985; Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005). The voices of elders and caretakers who possess priceless cultural memory are often marginalized by the dependence on outside frameworks. Last but not least, little research has been done on the conflicts that exist between heritage preservation and tourist growth, particularly in rural regions like those around Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi, where inadequate funding, policy neglect, and inadequate infrastructure have hampered attempts at sustainable preservation. These disparities highlight how urgently community-based, grounded research that re-centers indigenous viewpoints in legacy discourse is needed.

2.4 Cultural Heritage Value Frameworks and the issue of Heritage and Identity

The heritage sites of Kit Mikayi and Got Ramogi in western Kenya are more than just physical locations; they are intricate cultural icons with social, historical, spiritual, and economic significance that has changed over time. These monuments, which were formerly prized for their communal and religious roles in Luo culture, have seen tremendous change from pre-colonial awe to colonial devastation to post-independence reinterpretation. Particularly in post-colonial African civilizations, this dynamic transformation highlights the constant negotiating of legacy and identity (Hellman, 2017).

For analyzing the changing functions of cultural sites, Mazzanti's (2002) Cultural cultural Value Framework provides a helpful framework. It acknowledges that locations such as Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi represent overlapping and changeable values, including social, educational, historical, spiritual, artistic, and economic ones. These classifications have changed in tandem with more general sociopolitical shifts rather than remaining constant. For example, Kit Mikayi has mythical importance in Luo oral traditions, and Got Ramogi is historically associated with Ramogi Ajwang', the Luo people's legendary progenitor. By preserving migratory histories and communal memory, these tales have anchored both locations in the Luo people's collective identity (Odede, Okech, & Hayombe, 2013).

Both locations' spiritual significance is still apparent today. They still serve as hubs for prayer, pilgrimages, and religious rites, particularly for communities like the Legio Maria. In addition to helping to preserve the intangible legacy connected to traditional belief systems and cosmologies, these spiritual practices maintain the sites' hallowed status (Hayombe, Agong, & Nystrom, 2014). In addition to their religious importance, these sites operate as gathering places for social gatherings, cultural storytelling, and group rituals, strengthening a feeling of identification and community. Their importance to audiences both domestically and internationally has increased in recent decades due to their involvement in cultural tourism circuits (Nyamweru, 2012).

The economic potential of cultural sites became increasingly apparent when Kenya gained its independence. According to Abura, Okello, and Okech (2020), Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi have both been incorporated into regional tourist economies, creating jobs and fostering community growth. But there are now conflicts between maintaining cultural authenticity and servicing commercial tourists as a result of this economic realignment. Although tourism may increase awareness and encourage conservation efforts, it can also change historic narratives to conform to outside standards, which diminishes the significance of local culture (Misiko, 2013).

Therefore, it is important to recognize that legacy and identity are both dynamic and subject to ongoing negotiation. For instance, the reworking of stories related to Kit Mikayi is a reflection of larger changes in social and religious institutions. As shown by the way local narratives about Kit Mikayi change to reflect modern reality, Graham and Howard (2016) emphasize the importance of oral traditions in forming identity and mediating cultural meaning. This active participation implies that legacy is continuously produced by lived experience rather than only preserved.

However, there are difficulties since heritage is dynamic. Debates over representation, authenticity, and control arise when globalization and the expansion of tourism enshrine places like Kit Mikayi in larger national and international narratives. These locations increasingly serve as both marketable symbols of national history and hallowed spaces for the local populace. Conflict over how to understand, manage, and maintain them often results from this dichotomy (Sharma, 2018).

Even while African cultural legacy is receiving more scholarly attention, there are still a number of important gaps. The particular application of value frameworks to local cultural monuments like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi across various historical eras has not received much attention. The ways in which different value categories—spiritual, social, artistic, and economic—interact and even compete in the reinterpretation of identity at these locations in modern-day Kenya have received little academic attention. Additionally, the research lacks community-based viewpoints, especially when it comes to how custodians reconcile the conflict between demands from tourism and religious roles (Hayombe et al., 2014; Odede et al., 2013).

Similarly, little is known about how oral traditions influence intergenerational identity and pass down heritage meanings (Graham & Howard, 2016). Furthermore, institutional or scholarly narratives usually eclipse indigenous agency in heritage discourse, marginalizing local people' perspectives and lived experiences (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016). Context-specific, community-led research methodologies that re-center the voices of individuals most associated with these cultural places are necessary to address these problems.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The examination of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi as heritage sites in Kenya is guided by two interconnected theoretical frameworks: Cultural Heritage Value Theory and Social Constructivism. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive lens through which to explore how heritage is defined, valued, contested, and reinterpreted over time. While the former focuses on the types and evolution of values associated with heritage, the latter emphasizes the social processes through which such values are generated and sustained (Mason, 2002; Smith, 2006).

Cultural Heritage Value Theory proposes that heritage embodies multiple forms of value—ranging from historical and spiritual to social, aesthetic, and economic—which are not fixed but shift in accordance with societal dynamics (Mason, 2002; Mazzanti, 2002). In relation to Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi, this theory enables an understanding of how different stakeholders—such as local elders, religious groups, tourists, state officials, and business actors—assign different meanings to these sites. For example, while spiritual leaders and elders may emphasize ancestral reverence, others may focus on economic opportunities linked to cultural tourism (Deisser &

Njuguna, 2016). These competing perspectives illustrate how the meanings associated with the sites have evolved from their precolonial significance to newer roles shaped by colonial legacies, national heritage agendas, and global market forces (Labadi & Logan, 2016).

The theory also helps to unpack conflicts over heritage value, especially where cultural conservation is at odds with commercialization (Smith, 2006). Such disputes are critical for analyzing how Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi are framed within public policy and tourism development—whether these interventions respect the multiplicity of meanings or instead marginalize community-centered narratives in favor of state or commercial interests (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000).

In contrast, Social Constructivism views heritage not as an inherent property of places, but as something brought into being through social interaction and cultural performance (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Waterton & Smith, 2010). According to this approach, sites like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi gain significance through collective practices—such as ritual, storytelling, and oral tradition—through which communities continually construct and reinterpret their meanings (Crooke, 2010). These meanings are shaped by historical events, generational shifts, and ongoing dialogue within communities.

This perspective is especially relevant for understanding how cultural identity is shaped and redefined in relation to these heritage sites. It recognizes that different community members may relate to the sites in varying ways depending on age, social status, or exposure to modernization. For instance, while elders may associate Kit Mikayi with spiritual and ancestral connections, younger generations may engage with its meaning through education, tourism narratives, or digital media influences (Harrison, 2013; Smith & Waterton, 2009).

Moreover, Social Constructivism brings attention to discourse as a key element in shaping collective memory. Oral traditions, under this view, are not simply vessels of historical information but are active processes through which the past is interpreted and communicated (Handler, 1988). This helps highlight how modern forces—such as globalization and shifts in communication—reshape the transmission and perception of heritage (Winter, 2013).

When combined, these theories offer a robust analytical foundation. Cultural Heritage Value Theory facilitates the identification of the different values attached to the sites, while Social Constructivism explains how those values come to be formed and sustained. Together, they capture both the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage and emphasize the role of community agency in preserving and redefining meaning. This integrated approach enables a nuanced understanding of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi within the context of postcolonial Kenya, offering valuable insights into ongoing discussions about identity, heritage politics, and cultural resilience in Africa (Smith, 2006; Graham et al., 2000).

2.6 Methodology

In order to investigate how legacy values are formed, reinterpreted, and passed down at two significant Luo cultural sites—Kit Mikayi in Kisumu County and Got Ramogi in Siaya County—this study used a qualitative, interpretative case study methodology. These locations were chosen because of their fundamental significance in oral histories, communal memory, and Luo spiritual traditions. With its roots in Social Constructivism and Cultural Heritage Value Theory, the research placed a high priority on gathering detailed, context-specific information that documented local worldviews, value negotiations, and identity formation processes (Mason, 2002; Smith, 2006; Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Because it allowed for a thorough and detailed investigation into the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding each site within their actual surroundings, a case study technique was a good fit for the research aims (Yin, 2014). Comparative insights into the diverse and perhaps contradictory interpretations of legacy held by various communities were made possible by treating the two locations as separate but related instances. Understanding these places' historical context as well as how their meanings have changed in reaction to recent social, political, and economic developments was the aim (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013).

Elders, spiritual leaders, women, young people, local guardians, tourist professionals, and cultural officials were among the carefully chosen participants from a variety of backgrounds. Because of their participation in or familiarity with heritage-related behaviors, these individuals were selected by purposive sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015). Based on recommendations from original participants, snowball sampling was also used to reach those with strong ties to oral and ceremonial traditions (Noy, 2008).

To encourage methodological triangulation and richness, a variety of qualitative methodologies were used in the data gathering process (Patton, 2002). The main technique consisted of semi-structured interviews, which gave participants the opportunity to consider the significance of the two locations, the changes they have seen over time, and the ways in which traditional roles interact with more contemporary ones, including heritage tourism (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To get generational and gender-based insights on legacy practices and identity, these interviews were supplemented with focus group discussions (FGDs) with certain demographic segments, such as women, youth, and mixed community groups (Bloor et al., 2001).

Another essential element was participant observation, which gave the researcher firsthand access to cultural events including ceremonies, rituals, and site visits. The symbolic aspects of community interactions with the venues, spatial arrangements, and nonverbal behaviors were all captured by this immersion method (Spradley, 1980). Origin myths, genealogies, and collective memories that chart the development of legacy narratives across generations were added to the data via oral histories, which were mostly supplied by elders and site caretakers (Thompson, 2000).

The research examined pertinent papers and archival sources, including historical texts, government heritage policies, and promotional tourist materials, in addition to field-based methodologies. These resources shed light on institutional viewpoints and pointed out any discrepancies or gaps between grassroots interpretations and top-down heritage narratives (Bowen, 2009).

Using a combination of inductive and deductive coding techniques and qualitative tools such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti, thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. With the help of Social Constructivism, which influenced how discourse, narrative, and collective meaning-making were interpreted, and Cultural Heritage Value Theory, which focused on the shifting priorities of spiritual, social, economic, and aesthetic values (Mazzanti, 2002), this method made it possible to identify central themes and recurrent motifs (Waterton & Smith, 2010).

The investigation was conducted with scrupulous adherence to ethical protocols. Participants gave their free assent after being made aware of the study's goals (Israel & Hay, 2006). The researcher followed customs and traditions because of the sites' spiritual sensitivity. All required ethical clearances were acquired from relevant academic and community organizations, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

A number of validation techniques were used to increase the results' credibility. These included using thick description to convey detailed contextual understanding for possible applicability to similar settings, conducting member checks where participants checked transcripts and interpretations for accuracy, and triangulating multiple data sources and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin, 1989). Additionally, the researcher engaged in reflexivity, keeping in mind their positionality and how it can affect interpretations (Berger, 2015).

All things considered, the approach made it possible to conduct a thorough and culturally aware investigation of the ways in which Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi are understood and appreciated in modern-day Kenya. It made sure that local perspectives and firsthand knowledge stayed at the forefront of the research process and was in close accord with the study's theoretical underpinnings.

Summary of Findings:

2.7 Historical and Cultural Significance of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi in Pre-colonial Times

Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi were essential representations of Luo cultural identity and historical memory prior to colonization. Siaya County's Got Ramogi has long been acknowledged as the Luo people's first Kenyan settlement. It was given its name in honor of Ramogi Ajwang, a highly regarded ancestral chieftain renowned for his leadership abilities and spiritual authority (Ogot, 1967; Hayombe et al., 2014). The location, which symbolized the Luo people's trek from South Sudan via Uganda and into western Kenya, was crucial to migration tales (Were, 1985). Its strategic significance was further reinforced by its high terrain, which made it excellent for both defensive and agricultural uses (Obiero, 2010). On the other hand, the distinctive rock formation known as Kit Mikayi in Kisumu County gets its name from a Luo expression that translates to "the stone of the first wife." The boulder is seen metaphorically as a mother figure, surrounded by smaller stones that stand in for children, reflecting conventional gender roles and family structures (Odede et al., 2013). These two locations are essential

cultural reference points that will be passed down through the generations due to their profound entanglement in Luo oral history and myth (Okello, 2009).

In addition to their symbolic significance, Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi had practical purposes within Luo society's sociopolitical framework. Elders (Jodongo) discussed land issues, leadership choices, and intercommunal conflicts at Got Ramogi, which functioned as a hub for administrative and decision-making (Ochieng', 1974). Rituals performed there often connected political power with spiritual heritage and validated leadership (Akoko, 1998). Initiating warriors and organizing defensive plans were two further military uses at the location. In contrast, Kit Mikayi was more important in the family and social spheres. It served as a location for women's initiation ceremonies, family dispute settlement, and marriage blessings (Hayombe et al., 2014). Although it was not overtly political, Got Ramogi's larger role in governance was enhanced by its impact in fostering communal ideals and family solidarity.

Luo cosmology placed a strong emphasis on these locations' spiritual aspects. According to Odede et al. (2013), Got Ramogi was considered a spiritual home for ancestors, and ceremonies there, including sacrifices and offerings, were meant to bring luck, rain, and safety. According to Okello (2009), ceremonial sites like as the Rapo'gi Stone and Kar Dhiang' functioned as hallowed locations for rites of passage and group rituals including vows and rain prayers. In a same vein, Kit Mikayi served as a place of worship for those looking for supernatural help with issues related to marriage, childbearing, or health. The site's spiritual significance was further reinforced by the regular ceremonies performed here by traditional healers and elders to establish a connection with the supernatural (Hayombe et al., 2014). These customs show how spirituality was deeply ingrained in Luo society's daily existence and environmental conservation (Onyango, 2012).

Both locations were important to the Luo's ecological and economic systems in addition to their cultural and spiritual value. Rich in natural resources, Got Ramogi was perfect for fishing, raising cattle, and subsistence farming, which supported crops like millet and sorghum (Obiero, 2010). Its hallowed position promoted environmental preservation, since taboos deterred forest deforestation and water source contamination (Onyango, 2012). Despite having a greater spiritual orientation, Kit Mikayi promoted economic engagement during events when members of the community traded ceremonial objects, food, and artifacts. Local livelihoods were supported by the utilization of the natural materials around the rock for small-scale craft production and pottery making (Oloo, 2017). These locations demonstrate a comprehensive relationship between cultural ethics and environmental responsibility by reflecting indigenous ecological knowledge systems where spiritual beliefs influenced sustainable behaviors (Gathogo, 2022).

2.8 Impact of colonial policies on **Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi,**

During the colonial era, sacred Luo sites such as Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi were misunderstood and misrepresented by British authorities. These places, central to Luo spirituality and identity, were often dismissed as backward or incompatible with colonial ideals of civilization (KNA/DC/CST/1/3, 1932; Odede, 2021). Got Ramogi, known as a site of ancestral connection and spiritual significance in Luo migration traditions, was derogatorily labeled a "pagan shrine" by British officials (Were, 1985). Missionaries were especially critical of indigenous rituals, such as rainmaking and animal offerings, which they sought to replace with Christian liturgy (Anderson, 2002). In contrast, the Luo viewed Ramogi Ajwang' as a spiritual figure whose presence was venerated at Got Ramogi through ceremonial practices like libations at the Rapogi Stone to invoke peace and agricultural fertility (Ochieng', 1974). The Church Missionary Society (CMS), perceiving these practices as threats to Christian norms, regularly condemned them and even destroyed ritual objects (Hastings, 1994).

Colonial legislation, particularly the 1902 Witchcraft Ordinance and the 1930 Preservation of Public Order Ordinance, was used to suppress traditional African spirituality (Maxon, 1993; KNA/PC/NZA/1/1/24, 1935). Ceremonial gatherings at Got Ramogi were increasingly surveilled, and ritual leaders faced legal repercussions for maintaining cultural practices. Similarly, Kit Mikayi's traditional rites—especially those related to female initiation and fertility—were restricted. Practices that once guided young women into adulthood were stigmatized and gradually replaced with Christian-based teachings in mission schools and public discourse (Githu, 2006). For instance, cleansing rituals carried out by women at Kit Mikayi were substituted with Christian confessions and prayers by missionaries and colonial agents (Odede et al., 2013).

Mission institutions, particularly those run by the CMS and Mill Hill Fathers, played a significant role in the cultural reprogramming of Luo youth. Missionary schools characterized indigenous spirituality as demonic and ancestral reverence as misguided, portraying sacred sites as remnants of ignorance (Sifuna, 1990). Children were forbidden from participating in traditional rituals or visiting shrines. Nonetheless, religious movements like Legio Maria, which emerged in the 1960s, integrated Kit Mikayi into their prayer traditions, particularly during times of drought, demonstrating the adaptability and continuity of indigenous spirituality under new religious forms (Nyanjom, 2019).

By the mid-20th century, Kit Mikayi began to be marketed for its geological uniqueness rather than its spiritual importance (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016). European explorers and colonial tourists often highlighted the rock's visual appeal while disregarding its sacred use. Elders voiced concerns that ritual spaces were being disrespected, especially as outsiders encroached upon sacred zones used for prayer and sacrifice (Okello, 2009). Similarly, parts of Got Ramogi were absorbed into colonial land management schemes. The area was surveyed for farming, and traditional access routes were obstructed by settler activity, limiting community engagement with the site for religious or strategic purposes (Hayombe et al., 2014; Oloo, 2017).

In the face of colonial interference, Luo communities adapted their cultural practices. Oral traditions continued, albeit discreetly, often passed down during nighttime meetings or informal gatherings (Ogot, 1967). Some ceremonies were abbreviated or concealed to avoid colonial scrutiny. At Got Ramogi, rain rituals were sometimes merged with Christian symbolism to ensure continuity. Similarly, fertility herbs used at Kit Mikayi were reframed as natural remedies rather than spiritual artifacts (Onyango, 2012). Some elders practiced syncretism, invoking the Christian God, Obong'o Nyakalaga, while maintaining ritual forms like animal sacrifice and libations under modified terminology (Gathogo, 2022).

Traditionally, sites like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi were managed by clan-based custodians such as jobilo (ritual experts) and Jodongo (council of elders), who enforced sacred rules and oversaw community use of the sites (Akoko, 1998). However, colonial authorities undermined these structures by replacing them with state-appointed chiefs, often Christian converts unfamiliar with the spiritual significance of the sites. In some cases, such as in Yimbo, sacred land was given to administrative chiefs who restricted ceremonies and cut down ritual trees, thereby disrupting long-standing cultural protocols (Hayombe et al., 2014). At Kit Mikayi, community complaints rose when new leadership allowed open public access without the traditional cleansing rites, which many saw as desecration (Odede et al., 2013).

Under colonial land policy, sacred sites were classified as Crown or public lands, stripping communities of legal recognition of their cultural value. Laws such as the Native Lands Trust Ordinance and the Crown Lands Ordinance granted colonial officers control over communal territories (Kameri-Mbote, 2005). Ceremonies at Got Ramogi were often portrayed as illicit gatherings, while Kit Mikayi was subjected to usage restrictions with no input from local stakeholders (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016). Land registration processes under colonial rule further fragmented communal ownership by converting communal land into individual plots, disrupting traditional access and weakening collective stewardship of these heritage sites (Onyango, 2012).

The erosion of indigenous custodianship during the colonial period continues to impact both sites today. Environmental degradation, a break in ritual continuity, and diminishing youth participation in sacred traditions reflect long-term colonial disruption (Odede, 2021). Nonetheless, recent community initiatives are working to reclaim and restore these traditions. For instance, a Community-Based Organization (CBO) now oversees Kit Mikayi, reintroducing traditional knowledge systems and promoting spiritual significance in site management (Hayombe et al., 2014). Revitalization efforts also include cultural festivals, youth education programs, and collaborations with heritage institutions (Nyamweru, 2012).

Colonial intervention led to a fundamental redefinition of sites like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi. Once central to Luo spirituality and governance, they were reframed through colonial and Christian ideologies that undermined their traditional roles (Anderson, 2002; Sifuna, 1990). The transformation of these spaces—into tourist attractions or administrative zones—reflected a broader colonial agenda of erasing indigenous worldviews in favor of Western cultural and religious norms (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016; Peterson, 2004).

This starkly contrasted with their original functions. In pre-colonial society, Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi were vital to Luo spiritual, political, and social systems (Ogot, 1967; Were, 1985). Got Ramogi, associated with the ancestor Ramogi Ajwang', served both religious and strategic purposes—hosting rituals, sacrifices, and defensive planning. Kit Mikayi symbolized maternal care, familial unity, and spiritual healing, serving as a center

for prayer, rites of passage, and medicinal practice (Odede et al., 2013; Okello, 2009). Governance of these sites relied on communal consensus and ritual observance, with custodians playing essential roles in maintaining their sanctity (Akoko, 1998; Onyango, 2012).

The colonial reconfiguration of these sites illustrates the broader dismantling of African heritage systems through legal, religious, and administrative control. Sacred spaces were repurposed and stripped of their cultural meaning, leading to significant disruptions in indigenous knowledge transmission and spiritual practices (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016; Githu, 2006). This experience is not unique to the Luo but echoes throughout Kenya, where colonial legacies continue to shape heritage management (Kameri-Mbote, 2005).

To address these historical disruptions, there is a growing call for inclusive heritage policies that prioritize indigenous narratives and traditional custodianship. Recognizing the cultural and ecological functions of sacred sites like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi is essential not only for cultural preservation but also for designing sustainable, locally grounded heritage conservation strategies (Gathogo, 2022).

Policy Developments in Cultural Heritage Management

Kenya has progressively created legislative and regulatory frameworks to protect its cultural heritage, including important locations like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi, since achieving independence in 1963. Colonial laws like the Antiquities and Monuments Act of 1983, which placed a strict emphasis on physical monuments and archeological elements, influenced early initiatives. According to Deisser and Njuguna (2016) and Kamau (2018), this legislation does not adequately acknowledge indigenous cultural landscapes, involve local people, or establish efficient enforcement procedures.

The National Museums and Heritage Act, which was introduced in 2006, marked significant advancements. This law expanded the definition of legacy to include community-based manifestations and intangible components. The Act created legal safeguards for cultural monuments, established a Heritage Fund to aid conservation initiatives, and gave the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) the authority to supervise heritage management (Odede, 2021). Better protection and inclusion into the cultural tourist industry were made possible by the official recognition of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi as national historic sites under this legislative framework (Hayombe et al., 2014).

Cultural legacy was further elevated by the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, which proclaimed it to be a key pillar of national identity. The state is obligated by Article 11 to preserve and develop Kenya's material and immaterial cultural resources. Heritage preservation is further strengthened by other clauses, such as Article 40 (property rights), Article 69 (environmental protection), and Article 44 (cultural rights). Crucially, devolution under Article 174 gave county governments control over cultural sites, allowing for more local involvement and financial flexibility (Republic of Kenya, 2010; Wekesa, 2019).

Together, these legislative tools encourage more inclusive and participatory heritage stewardship, marking a break from colonial-era neglect. With NMK and county governments playing important roles in conservation and community participation, they have resulted in enhanced preservation and utilization of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi (Onyango, 2012; Abura et al., 2020). While county governments have promoted tourist development and local economic empowerment, the NMK's legal authority has assisted in preventing encroachment on these locations.

This decentralized approach is strengthened by the County Governments Act of 2012, which gives counties the authority to manage cultural heritage projects, include community feedback, and create conservation strategies. The establishment of regional festivals, history trails, and educational initiatives has been made possible by partnerships among counties, NMK, and the Ministry of Tourism and history. These partnerships have increased the sites' cultural and economic significance (Sifuna, 2020; Hayombe et al., 2014).

This objective is further supported by the Culture and Heritage Policy (2015), which frames culture as being crucial to sustainable development and national identity. According to the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and the Arts (2015), it places a high priority on interagency collaboration, indigenous knowledge, community custodianship, and the development of cultural tourism. This has made it easier for Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi to be included in educational, tourist, and cultural revival initiatives while also serving to confirm their cultural and spiritual standing. But there are still difficulties. There are still conflicts between traditional authority and

state-led administration, particularly in relation to commercialization, spiritual control, and access (Nyamweru, 2012; Githu, 2006).

Sites like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi were considered purely local or even subversive during the colonial era, but post-independence policies have elevated them to national historical treasures that are legally protected (Okello, 2009). Through initiatives in tourism, education, and cultural preservation, they have been included into Kenya's development plans. Counties like Kisumu and Siaya have made investments in community-based projects and tourist infrastructure that increase awareness of these locations and bring in money (Odede et al., 2013).

The resurgence of traditional customs has also been aided by these measures. Elders and custodians have actively participated in the reintroduction of community rituals, storytelling, and ritual observance, guaranteeing that conservation initiatives are rooted in indigenous worldviews (Onyango, 2012). However, worries over preserving spiritual authenticity in the face of increasing tourism have been highlighted by problems including inadequate financing and the commercialization of holy ceremonies, particularly at Kit Mikayi (Misiko, 2013).

Many parties are now involved in heritage governance, including NMK, municipal governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, and foreign partners. According to Deisser and Njuguna (2016), these players work together to govern site utilization, encourage cultural expression, and advance conservation. While outside groups provide financing and technical assistance, local custodians continue to play a crucial role in maintaining customs and rituals (Nyamweru, 2012).

The sites' ecological and spiritual integrity have been protected, environmental deterioration has been reduced, oral histories have been documented, and visitor activities have been controlled. However, effective protection is still hampered by land use disputes, legislative voids, and a lack of funding. Though commercialization and uneven advantages are still controversial, tourist revenue has benefited communities (Hayombe et al., 2014; Abura et al., 2020).

Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi continue to be vibrant cultural and spiritual hubs in spite of these obstacles. Legio Maria members and traditional healers often visit Kit Mikayi for prayer and ceremonies, whereas Got Ramogi remains a place of ancestor devotion (Nyanjom, 2019). Through guided tours, crafts, and traditional festivals, their incorporation into Kenya's tourist industry has created economic prospects. This dual function as both tourist attractions and places of worship demonstrates the changing complexity of Kenya's cultural history in the present day.

These locations have changed in the modern age to fulfill spiritual, educational, and financial purposes. While Kit Mikayi is recognized for spiritual pilgrimages, particularly among religious organizations like Legio Maria, Got Ramogi is linked to ecotourism and cultural routes (Odede, 2021). In fields like anthropology and folklore, both locations are also used for scholarly study and fieldwork in education (Hayombe et al., 2014).

Participation in the community is still essential. Youth tour guides and women's organizations at Kit Mikayi are examples of grassroots site management involvement. Local communities at Got Ramogi actively defend spiritual traditions and reject actions that they consider to be disrespectful to the site (Onyango, 2012). But there are also worries about cultural commercialization as a result of rising tourism. Nowadays, certain rituals are carried out for tourists rather than for spiritual purposes, which has sparked discussions about ethical tourism and authenticity (Nyamweru, 2012; Okello, 2009).

The relevance of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi today is multifaceted, including spiritual, cultural, political, ecological, and economic aspects. Kit Mikayi encourages spiritual healing and family togetherness, whereas Got Ramogi continues to represent Luo leadership and heritage. These sites continue to showcase the diversity of Kenya's legacy and emphasize the significance of incorporating community values into sustainable heritage management, even in the face of persistent obstacles including a lack of money and gaps in policy (Deisser & Njuguna, 2016).

III. Conclusion

The larger development of cultural memory, identity, and government in postcolonial Kenya is reflected in the conversion of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi from revered ancestral locations to officially designated cultural heritage assets. These locations are living manifestations of Luo history, spirituality, and environmental ethics rather than just physical locations. Following independence, Kenya established progressive frameworks, such as the National Museums and Heritage Act (2006) and the Constitution of Kenya (2010), that aimed to recognize and preserve heritage in more inclusive and participatory ways, even as colonial and missionary interventions upended traditional systems of custodianship and ritual.

Notwithstanding these developments, there are still issues that both locations deal with on a regular basis, such as environmental deterioration, the loss of oral traditions, the lack of community participation in policymaking, and the conflict between religious authenticity and commercial tourism. Although they continue to play a crucial role in maintaining these hallowed places, local elders and spiritual leaders are often left out of official cultural governance institutions.

The capacity of Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi to maintain cultural continuity, convey indigenous knowledge, and anchor communal identity is ultimately what gives them their lasting significance. For them to remain relevant, policies must be both transformational and protective; they must respect indigenous worldviews, prioritize community autonomy, and close the gap between traditional practice and modern development.

IV. Policy Recommendations

Several policy interventions need to be taken into consideration in order to guarantee the long-term protection and significant inclusion of cultural heritage sites like Got Ramogi and Kit Mikayi in Kenya's national development agenda. These suggestions are based on the understanding that cultural legacy is a dynamic, living practice that is ingrained in environmental stewardship, spiritual worldviews, and communal identity.

First and foremost, the function of traditional custodians has to be formally defined. The maintenance of heritage places depends on the priceless spiritual and historical information that elders, ritual leaders, and other cultural practitioners hold. Disconnections between community values and state policy have resulted from their marginalization in official heritage governance. In order to institutionalize these stewards as decision-makers in historic councils, conservation boards, or cultural commissions, inclusive governance structures had to be built at the county and national levels. Their involvement guarantees that site management procedures are spiritually suitable and based on indigenous ontologies.

At the same time, a concerted effort should be made to record the indigenous knowledge systems and oral traditions that have traditionally maintained the relevance of these locations. As knowledge carriers die away, many customs, ecological practices, and social standards that are passed down orally run the danger of vanishing. Universities, cultural organizations, and government organizations need to work together to launch multidisciplinary initiatives that gather, preserve, and share these stories. In order to prevent intangible heritage from becoming marginalized, this documentation must also directly inform the creation of heritage policies, instructional resources, and museum exhibits.

Promoting culturally conscious travel is another crucial topic. Even while there are financial benefits to tourism, uncontrolled or careless travel has often resulted in the commercialization of holy places. To guarantee that tourism is in line with regional cosmologies, policies should be developed. This entails creating guest behavior guidelines, putting community-led tourism businesses into place, and making sure that revenue-sharing arrangements directly assist the young people and local custodians. Tourism may be a vehicle for cultural transmission rather than cultural deterioration when it respects sacredness.

It is equally important to integrate youth participation with heritage education. The transfer of cultural legacy to newer generations is essential to its long-term survival. Cultural literacy would be institutionalized from an early age if site histories, myths, and rituals were included into school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, intergenerational learning opportunities like mentoring programs, cultural contests, and community storytelling festivals may help young people feel more connected to their culture and identity while also fostering a greater respect for elders and established structures.

The establishment of county-level heritage funding is necessary to operationalize these community-driven projects. County governments must set aside specific funds to assist cultural festivals, community rituals, and the upkeep of holy places. Decentralizing heritage finance will enable context-specific solutions to historic protection, empower local actors, and lessen an excessive dependence on national institutions.

Finally, the national policy frameworks on culture and heritage need to be expanded and revised. In order to clearly acknowledge holy landscapes, indigenous epistemologies, and spiritual practices as essential elements of Kenya's cultural fabric, the current Culture and Heritage Policy (2015) has to be amended. This change would reinterpret historic places as living representations of ecological awareness, moral principles, and communal identity rather than only as commercial or recreational areas.

When combined, these policy directives provide a comprehensive strategy for preserving cultural heritage that respects the past while enabling current and future generations to establish and defend what is holy according to their own standards.

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