

# The Restitution of Indigenous Religious Artifacts: The Case of Study All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi- Kenya

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**Abstract:-** The restitution of indigenous religious artifacts has had an incredible influence in African Art, to an extent of drawing an indelible speech from The French President; Emmanuel Macron in 2017 at Ouagadougou-Burkina Faso. Western art forms are the major influences in the Christian religious artifacts in Africa, yet by the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD; indigenous religious art had already escalated in every corner of the Africa according to documented reports. The low percentages of documented artifacts are of Africa origin, and they indicated that there have been minimal studies done by African scholars. The study has unraveled some of influences and impediments that surrounding the restitution of indigenous religious artifacts. It has employed qualitative descriptive research design. It case study, primary source of data, and target population was All Saints Cathedral - Nairobi. The researcher assessed and collected data by taking photography of the artifacts. Then, present the data quantitatively on the bar graphs and analyzed them qualitative while integrating the reviewed literature on its discussions. The study has concluded by asserting the successful on restitution of indigenous religious artifacts since ancient and globalization period of 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite facing numerous restitution challenges in Kenya. Finally, it has proposed that the Anglican Archives in Kenya, National Museums of Kenya, and All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi Administration, ought to have unified a section that preserves exhibits and publishes issues on indigenous religious artifacts in its other historical sites.

**Keywords:-** Documentation, African Art, Globalization, Restitution, Christianization, Indigenous religious Artifacts,

## I. INTRODUCTION

The restitution of indigenous artifacts continues to be an elusive discourse since ancient Egypt, Greek, Near East, and globalization world of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite its elusiveness, Fradier (1979) applauded the successfully restitution on indigenous religious artifacts in ancient empires, kingdoms. Gerstenblith (1980), show that indigenous religious artifacts were looted, plundered, stolen and displaced during ancient warfare, colonization era, and illicit traffic trade in Africa nations. Stokstan and Cothren (2005) records Alexander the Great as a successful ruler who restituted all the displaced religious artifacts back to the Greek custody. Adam (2010) noted the successful

restitution of indigenous religious artifacts in ancient kingdom and empires has amplified the political, religious power and stirred up the self efficacy among citizens. Recently in Africa, Apoh and Mehler (2019) pointed that Zimbabwe and Senegal saw some Africa artifacts return from previous colonial master states. However, Opoku (2017), Apoh and Mehler (2019) maintained that unwillingness of some strong and powerful Western States (previous colonial master) to surrender indigenous religious artifacts to their Africa origin countries continues to be a setback. They all concluded that status-quo is causing animosity in self-efficacy among the Africa nations. Therefore, the paper has established some of the impediments and influences that make the restitution of the indigenous religious artifacts default. It has used the case study of the indigenous religious artifact at the All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi- Kenya.

### ➤ *The Restitution of the Artifacts*

Adewumi (2015), states that restitution occur when a deprived nation seeks to return a displaced artifacts as a result of war that co-exist among the nations, expansion of the powerful empire/ colony; either illicit trade or theft on the artifacts that led to transfer or assimilated of the country of origin. According to Gerstenblith (1980), these artifacts carry a spiritual symbol of power, authority, self-efficacy to individual and patriotism of the certain nation.

### ➤ *Indigenous religious African artifacts*

Indigenous religious artifacts are among Africa arts used by early Africans in their spiritual nourishment, even before the engulfment of the early missionary and the expansion European colonial power in Africa according to Russell (1993) and Azeez (2010). They stated that these artifacts were vessels for Africa supreme deity, living dead, natural spirit and ancestors in different part of Sub Saharan geographical location. They outlined the major artifacts being abstracted sculpture of human figure, masks and ceremonial art objects. According to Opoku (2017) and Awe (2010) indigenous religious artifact are curios artifacts across the prestigious world museums such as The Alexandria National Museum in Egypt, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in United States, and The British Museum in United Kingdom. Opoku (2017) particularly noted the appraised of the previous Presidents of France; Jacques Chirac and Giscard'd Estaing on esteeming Indigenous religious African artifacts, similar to the current French President: Emmanuel Macron making a famous speech in 2017 at Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso.

## II. LITERATURE VIEW ON THE INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS ARTIFACTS

### ➤ *Medieval Churches*

The Cathedral of Canterbury in Kent- England faced eternal attacks from rivalry nation that caused severe damages such as burnt of navel, smashing of stain glasses, and stolen of indigenous religious artifacts according to Canterbury website (2019), Mittler (2006) and Adams (2010). The Canterbury website (2019) showed tremendous efforts in restituting the indigenous religious artifacts of monk and documentation of Anglican doctrine. Several predecessor queens of England and archbishops of the Canterbury initiated negotiations before with rivalry States/nation that held in custody their indigenous religious artifacts, rebuilt the burnt' navel, restored the Archbishop Thomas Becket's martyrdom among others. Dwane, Lawrence, Luddy and others (2013) highlighted efforts on restituting indigenous religious artifacts in all churches of Ireland and their preserving accounts. Their illustrated publication has a wealth literatures and pictures on theology, priesthood, liturgy and chronological event in the church of Ireland. Other major publication that details on restitution discourses of indigenous religious artifacts and its literatures is a document authored by Stokstan and Cothern (2005).

### ➤ *In Africa churches*

Arowolo (2010), Kow (2011) and Awe (2010), they have indicated the effects of Christianization, colonization and illicit trade in among Africa museums, which led to indigenous religious artifacts to be either stolen or transferred to western museums. However, Roman Catholics in Africa and some scholars from West Africa have continue to constitute a recommended effort in restituting and document the indigenous religious artifacts in their churches according to Githinji (1992), Kow (2011), Quarcoo (1968) and Kanugu (2006). Kow (2011) spotted that Anglican Church of Winneba- Ghana in restituting the indigenous religious artifact in their worship. He gives illustration of "*Afante*" a clay pot that contained water of "*schnapps*", sacred water that was used to consult the gods of ancestors;- now representing baptism in church. Quarcoo (1968) pointed the use of natural wood carving of Christ, Mary the mother of Jesus, and martyr to representing nativity in Anglican churches of Ghana.

### ➤ *The Studies at Kenyatta University*

Some of the studies at Kenyatta University by Githinji (1992), Kanugu (2006) and Wambugu (2012), have applauded the efforts of the Roman Catholic churches of

Kenya in restituting the indigenous religious African artifact as enculturation. They noted resolutions of the conventions held in Vatican and Senegal, which encouraged all Roman Catholics church in Africa to incorporate African cultures, local materials and artifacts in their worship sessions. They unilaterally agreed that enculturation would bring worship to the heart and mind of Africans Christian believers. Wambugu (2012), confirmed that indigenous religious artifacts is been restituted in some Roman Catholic churches of Kiambu and Nairobi in Kenya. She spotted various indigenous religious artifacts on those churches such as stain glasses with Africa motifs, paintings with Africans figures, and sculptures done on Africa material like wood.

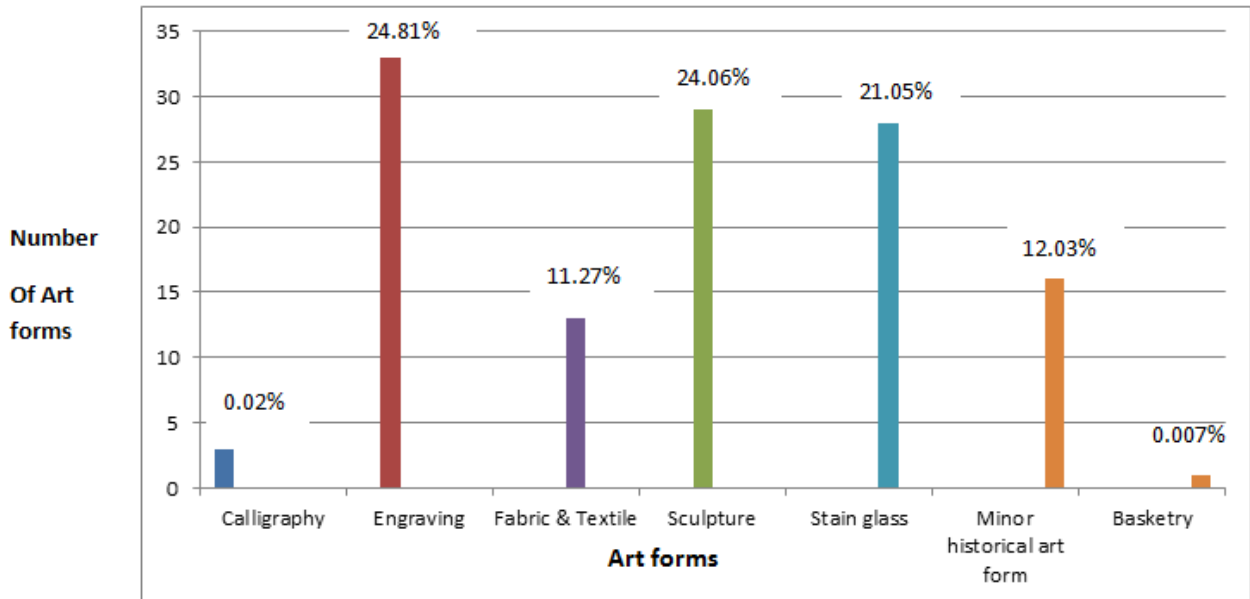
During pilot study by Wambugu (2012) at Roman Catholic churches within the Nairobi city in Kenya, she applauded Don Bosco Uphill Catholic church's' publication, titled; "*Shrine Family Digest*", featuring some indigenous religious artifacts and its literatures that are African oriented. However, she pointed a great concern of minimal documentation on indigenous religious African artifacts published by Africa scholars.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The study undertaken at the All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi- Kenya, employed a descriptive research design. Its objectives were to identify the artifacts, classifying them and analyzing the art forms for documentation purpose. The target populations and primary source data were artifacts at All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi. The primary source information was interviews of long serving church members and a key informer; who is an authority on Anglican Church history. The study used probability - cluster sampling technique, to sample the unit into different groups of art forms at the All Saints' Cathedral. The researcher assessed and collected data by taking photography of the artifacts, then clustered the data into; sculpture, stain glass, basketry, calligraphy, fabric & textile, minor historical art form and engraving. The data are presented quantitatively in bar graphs into art forms and periods. Then, analyzed qualitatively while integrating reviewed literature in its discussions. The study received an authorization consents letter from the office of The Provost; All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi-Kenya. It also received the supervision assistance from the department of Fine Art and Design at Kenyatta University-Kenya. The researcher conducted the study according to rules and regulation as were issued by the administration at All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi-Kenya.

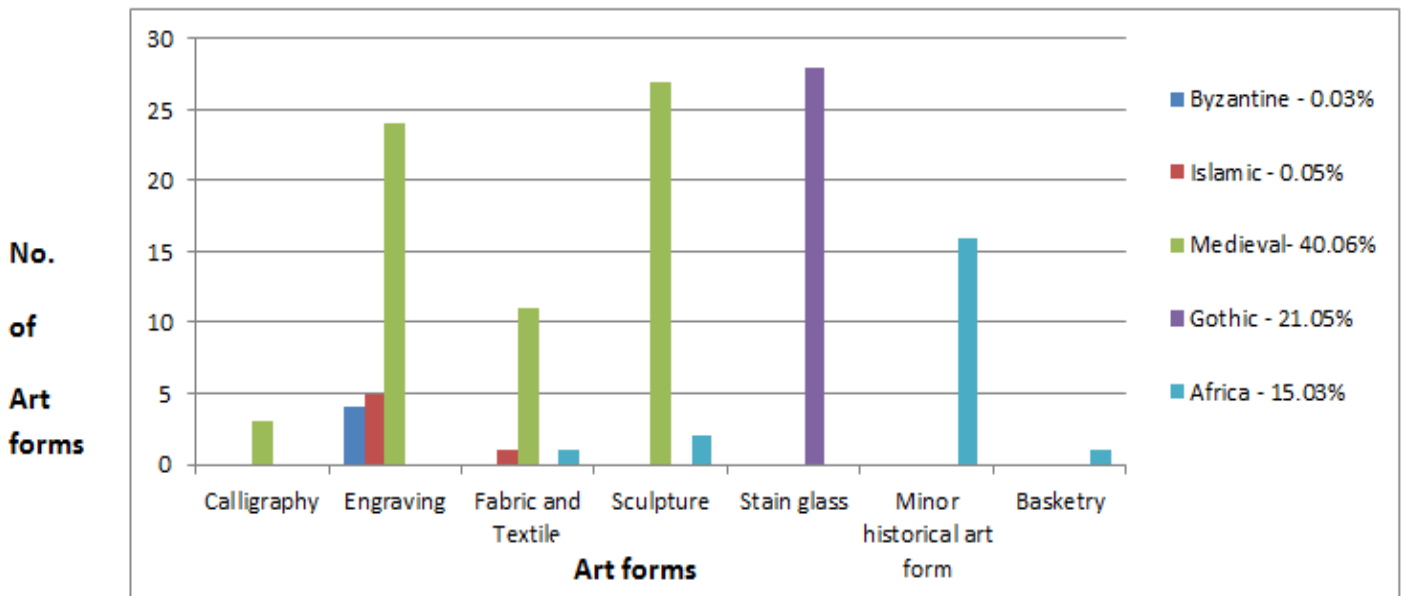
**IV. PRESENTATIONAL OF RESULTS**

The bar graph one below present a summary on the number art forms at the All Saints’ Cathedral, Nairobi



Graph 1

The bar graph two below are the periods running across the presented art forms at the All Saints’ Cathedral, Nairobi



Graph 2

Table below shows a few samples of analyzed documented artwork at the All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi




<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Figure One</b></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Art form analysis</b></p> <p>Art form..... Calligraphy                  Period..... Medieval                  Theme..... Prayer                  Technique/Materials..... Ink on paper                  Placement..... Choir vestry                  Size..... 42.0cm by 29.7cm                  Artist..... Unknown</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Figure Two</b></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Art form analysis</b></p> <p>Art form..... Calligraphy                  Period..... Gothic                  Theme..... early missionary in East Africa                  Technique/Materials.....                  Placement... All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi Windows                  Size.....                  Artist..... Unknown</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Figure Three</b></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Art form analysis</b></p> <p>Art form..... Basketry                  Period..... Africa                  Theme..... Offering                  Technique/Materials..... weaving with palms tree                  Placement..... Altar                  Size.....                  Artist..... Unknown</p>

Table 1

**V. DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

➤ *Calligraphy*

The calligraphy is represented by 0.02% art forms, done using ink on high density paper. It is covered by 40.06% of Medieval period. They are framed on glass, and placed on cathedral pillar and the charter house. The themes on these art forms are prayers, and history of the early Anglican mission in Kenya. Stokstan and Cothren

(2005) identified medieval manuscripts such as beginning text of St Matthew, Lindisfarne gospel book and Psalms 23 in the Utrecht containing themes of prayer and the gospel. Unto date, Adam (2010) has indicated that traditions of calligraphy are held with Islam religion and some Asians culture. However, Kow (2011) noted minimal utilization of calligraphy in Anglican churches across Ghana.



➤ *Engraving*

The engraving located outside and inside the cathedral walls is represented by 24.7% art forms. It is covered by 40.06% Medieval and 15.03% Byzantine period. Most of these engraving inside the Cathedral are done on metal, while others outside the wall were done in stone. The engravings were primarily to commemorate important events in the church's history and also in remembrance of outstanding deceased members of the church. Stokstan and Cothren (2005) noted that Byzantine was an early period where engravings were extensively adorned at Basilica of Maxentinus and Constantine. Mittler (2006), pointed the influences on a code of Hammurabi of Babylon; ancient Near East to Byzantine engravings. Githinji (1992), Kow (2011) and Wambugu (2012), identified some engraved Africa relief sculptures at Roman Catholic chapel at Kenyatta University and in some Anglican churches in Ghana.

➤ *Fabric and textile*

Fabric and textile is represented by 11.27% art forms, covered by 40.06% Medieval and 0.03% Africa Period. These are two weaving tapestry with bible stories framed in clear glass. The kneeling cushions are embroidered with medieval designs. There are two flag fabric textiles that are printed with royal logos and another print is an Africa man carrying the cross. Stokstan and Cothren (2005) noted that Romanesque church in Medieval period were mostly user textile and fabric on vestments, wall hanging, and alter cover. They mentioned tapestry of the Bayeux embroidery, embroidered with the bible story. Quarcoo (1968), Kow (2011), and Githinji (1992) pointed that churches in Africa are using embroidery with African patterns and motif print.

➤ *Basketry*

There is 0.007% art forms, covered by 0.03% Africa period. This basket was weaved with palms leaves from the lake used for liturgy. Kanugu (2006) explained that indigenous religious artifacts found its way back to Africa missionary churches due unilaterally some resolution made on conventional held at Vatican and Senegal. He noted that Roman Catholic Church in Africa incorporating Africa music, visual art, literatures and indigenous Africa languages. Githinji (1992), Kanugu (2006), and Quarcoo (1968) have been acknowledged to effortlessly Africanize the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern churches in their respective studies at the higher institution of learning in Africa. Awe (2010), note that effort of Githinji (1992) Kanugu (2006), and Quarcoo (1968) are getting receptive sect backs because contamination of Africa cultures, religions and arts with western culture, arts among others through globalization.

➤ *Sculpture*

The sculpture is represented by 24.06% art form, covered by 40.06% Medieval and 0.03% Africa period. They are carved out of wood and marble stone. They include Lectern, Pulpit, Organ, Provost Stall, Choirs stall, Leader stall, Alter table, and Canonical stall. The baptism

font is sculpture in the round done on marble. Stokstan and Cothren (2005) reinstated that sculptures were used for religious spirits and sacred functional purposes since human beings pre- historic period to date. Mittler (2006) pointed out that Ancient Greek influenced religious sculpture in Byzantine, medieval period across the religion in the continent. Awe (2010) saw that African religious sculpture were important vessel for divinity and were regarded as with high esteem in modern European museums. Wambugu (2012), Kanugu (2006), Quarcoo (1968) and Kow (2011) noted that indigenous religious sculptures in Africa are still been used but in a minimal degree.

➤ *Stain glass*

All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi has several stain glasses on windows, designed with geometrical shapes such as circles and arches. They are represented by 21.05% art form, largely covered by 21.05% gothic period respectively. Each stain glass art has its own themes and subject matter. Those stain glasses are glittering with theme of bible story, gospel, liturgy and church leaders. Dwane, Lawrence, Luddy and others (2013), Row (2016) and Canterbury website (2018), indicated that stain glasses were seen in Romanesque churches, and other early medieval churches such as St Augustine Cathedral in Ireland, Cathedral of Canterbury in Kent, and Birmingham Cathedral in United Kingdom among other. Their publications have highlighted explicit illustrations of stain glasses adorning their cathedrals while displaying themes on gospel of Christ and liturgy. Wambugu (2012) showed that the traditions of stain glass with gospel and bible themes have been maintained by the Roman Catholic in Kenya. Quarcoo (1968) and Kow (2011), noted similar observation but with minimal artistic craft and usage in Ghana Anglican churches.

➤ *Historical art form*

There are several wood emblems of early missionaries' logos which is represented by 12.03% art form, and covered by 0.03% Africa period. There are a preserved British Army sword, The Kenya Police; General Services Unit's (GSU) tear gas canister and a broken rod. According to the interview from a long serving member, the preserved art form -*GSU tear gas canister and a broken rod* is connected to Kenya political animosity in 1992 known as "*Saba Saba*" that led to brutal clobbered of political activists who had took a refuge inside the All Saints' Cathedral Nairobi. Another interview with the key informer, shade light on the early missionary emblem logos. He said that the emblem logos were designed to identity of different groups of missionaries who were moving around the East Africa region. According to Adam (2010), historical art forms are referred as Installation art. He noted that Installation art traditions flourished in 1970-80s across the Europe and New York in America in civil protests.

➤ *Impediments and negative influences on restitution of indigenous religious artifacts*

The emergent of transatlantic slave trade led to the diffusion of craftsmanship and inherit indigenous knowledge on Africa art. Arabs traders colluded with the Africa chiefs, captured the Africans and sold them in exchange of goods like textiles and weapons according to Awe (2010). He noted that Arabs traders needed human resource but not African artifacts. They enslaved Africa craftsmen and artists, and then sold them to America and Europe continent according to Awe (2010). The key informer on the study revealed that during construction All Saints' Cathedral Nairobi in early 1915s, skilled craftsmen were importation from its mother's church at England due to un-capability and un- skilled among the Africans' craftsmen.

Awe (2010) explained that the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 led to discovery of new lands in West Indies, Latin America and Africa as new colonial territory. Arowolo (2010), and Awe (2010) noted that French and British and other colonies controlled of Africa continent, exploited the natural resources and discarding and confiscating the indigenous religious artifact. Awe (2010) noted that French used direct rule; through assimilating Africa culture including artifacts while British used indirect rule; discarding African artifacts and establishing power symbolic artifacts. This is witnessed by high percentage of European artifacts at All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi represented by 40.06% of medieval and 21.05% gothic periods. Therefore, it tells you that All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi is a symbol of British power and authority

During colonial period in Africa, missionaries transverse the Africa continent confiscating, destroying and burning the artifacts terming them as paganism, idolatry, sinfulness according to Beurden (2017). They noted that missionaries collected unique indigenous religious artifacts to source for funds in Europe where some ended up in British Museums. On other case, Beurden (2017) stated that missionaries challenged African beliefs which saw majority of Africans convents abandoning their African faith, burning their Indigenous artifacts and some surrendered their indigenous artifacts which were taken to Europe. The study found out from a long serving church member at that some Christian fanatics at All Saints Cathedral Nairobi, emerged and started to destroy and vandalize some artifacts claiming "*they were demonic, satanic and that those artifacts did not reflect the teaching of the Bible*". Even, the scarcity of indigenous religious artifacts at All Saint's Cathedral, Nairobi is represented by 0.007% art forms, covered by 0.03% Africa period.

The effect of deprivation of African's belief, religion, and values were felt after Africa states had gained independence according to Awe 2010 and Arowolo (2010). Awe (2010) observed that Africans had lost touch with their African religious beliefs, and culture. They pointed the losing ground of African arts, skilled craftsmanship and knowledge, especially for their own indigenous religious artifacts. The study noted the negligence of some African

leaders at All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi in preserving some artifacts like deteriorating stalls, pews and prints. The researcher noted reluctance of All Saints' Cathedral administration to documenting the church artifacts.

Hunt, Thomas and Dorgerlon (2018) reacted to President Emmanuel Macron famous speech by alleging that Africans museums officials are engaging in illicit trafficking of the artifact with some Luxurious Museums in Europe. They also indicated that Africans scholars were unengaged of any discussion that concerns the restitution religious artifacts. The study at All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi saw that member of public including the clergy are un-enlightened on the existence of neither the religious artifact nor their significance. It found out from interviews that some religious artifacts were transfer to the National Museum of Kenya and others to the mother church; Cathedral of Canterbury in Kent.

According to Awe (2010), globalization has been a major impediment of restitution of indigenous artifacts. He noted the eruption of uncontrolled contents through modern technology that is shifting mind of 21<sup>st</sup> century generation to western culture, religion, education and values. *Statcounter* website (2018) and Awe (2010) noted that Western contents flowing on social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Google which are meant demeaning African religious artifacts and its practices. The controversial information on indigenous religious art is freely accessible through internet laptop, tablet and smart phone according to *Statcounter* website (2018). It is evident on the study that the objectives of designing adjacent multi-purpose Trinity Centre at All Saints' Cathedral Nairobi. It seems that the Africans architects of Multi-purpose Trinity Centre were influenced by Western designs of religion. They neither focused on indigenous religious Africa artifacts on any ethnic community in Kenya nor partially consider the cathedral artistic design itself.

## VI. CONCLUSSIONS

The issue of restitution on indigenous religious artifacts is not a new discourse in our modern world. Kings and dynasty of the civilization in ancient time made effort to retribute were artifacts that were displaced as result of war. Even today, the conversations of restitution of artifacts by colonialist in Africa are still underway with minimal achievements.

Restituting indigenous religious artifact is a complicated issue due to the negative effects of African's minds being programmed by missionaries, colonialists and globalization. Concerning the destroyed artifacts by burns, dislocated religious artifacts and sold craft men during the slave trade. It is impossible neither to retrieve those artifacts nor to repatriate the artists. Unfortunately, propagation of western culture, moral art, religion and values via internet connection is making restitution of indigenous religious artifact more complicated.

The good news is that the restitution debate is unfolding with the convention initiated in the Vatican and in Senegal by Roman Catholic Bishops. As result acculturation studies of the African artifacts in Catholic churches in Africa are done by art scholar in higher institution of learning. In contrast, little effort has been made within the Anglican Church of has continued to retain westernized culture and colonialist culture.

Acknowledgement goes to Catholic Church in East Africa and West Africa scholars for setting an exemplary tone by allowing indigenous literature and artifacts in the church service. However, they are a need for more effort by East African scholars to develop an interest in-depth on studies pertaining indigenous religious artifacts in Africa. This is evident by minimal research in indigenous religious art conducted by Africa scholars in Kenya and yet there is a wide the gap of knowledge among the African population in general.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the discussion on the restitution of indigenous artifacts and the finding on the Study at All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi- Kenya, the following the outlined recommendation.

- The Archives and museum in Africa such as Anglican of Kenya archives, All Saints' Cathedral Resource centre and National Museums of Kenya ought to have a section that preserves and exhibits, publishes all religious art in its other historical sites. The section will offer an opportunity to inform and educate the general public on the indigenous religious artifact almost in each Africa ethnical community. The section ought to consider a passionate manager who has knowledge in globalization, art history, theology and Africa studies.
- Further studies of on the subject of restitution ought to be conducted by National Museums of Kenya in collaborate with higher education institution such as art colleges, universities and theologies institutions. Those further studies ought to touches on Africa religious artifact in its historical site, carves and cathedrals and community craftsmen. Scholarships and support funds ought to be available for through National Museum of Kenya and other funding boards to interested African scholars.

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