Abstract

Tanzania is among those countries in the world, which are so blessed by having very rich rock art sites with extraordinary prehistoric rock art creations. Dodoma, Singida and Bukoba are presently the best-known places with the highest concentrations of these precious creative works of Tanzania's long gone ancestors. Tanzania's rock art sites were first seen and reported by foreign travelers more than a century ago. In 1891, Karl Peters reported about Tanzania's precious rock art sites, though Sonia Cole (1963) relates that Tanzania prehistoric art treasures were known to the outside world long before Karl Peters' recount. Research on the history and cultural relevance of Tanzania's rock art has to some extent been going on since the 1920s. Despite such research undertakings and frequent visits to the sites by foreign tourists, it is surprising to note that very few Tanzanians even know of the existence of such rock art sites. Rock art doesn't have a place in the curricular of Tanzania's institutions of learning and hence its history and its present cultural relevance are not taught in schools and colleges.

The paper questions as to why this is so and hence forth goes on to suggest possible ways of making this art heritage from our time immemorial ancestors become known and valued by Tanzanians and the world at large. The writer suggests the introduction of comprehensive rock art curricular in Tanzania's institutions of learning. That curricular will enable meaningful teaching and learning of the various disciplines that are related to rock art. The discussion concludes by recommending ways through which the general Tanzanian public can be well introduced and informed of the presence and social economic and cultural importance of their country's vast rock art sites and the incredible art treasures so found in them.

The human being is created to be creative. And through such endless creative involvement this being struggles to term the environment for a safe and meaningful leaving. In the process of this relentless struggle for a meaningful living the human being finds the aspirations, inspirations and reasons for meaningful artistic rendering

The people of East Africa, and Tanzania in particular, who lived from about 40,000 years ago (Anati 1986, Masao 1982) very well evidence this inherent artistic creativity. These pre historic inhabitants of Tanzania developed complex means, manner, and style to paint and in rare cases engrave pictures on rather very hostile surfaces of rocks. These rock art works which age several millennia, still survive to the present date, proving the intelligence and artistic mighty of their creators. In Tanzania, rock art was apparently first seen and reported by Europeans about 110 years ago. Anati (1986) reports "The earliest Europeans to have reported Tanzanian rock art appears to have been Karl Peters about one century ago (1891)." However, Sonia Cole (1963) relates that Europeans first saw Tanzanian rock paintings at an earlier date. Cole states "One of the first discoveries of rock paintings in Tanganyika was made by missionaries in 1908 near Bukoba." Of these earliest documentations, the most significant was that made by F.B. Bagshawe in 1923 when he first reported of the Kolo rock paintings near Kondoa and "those of Kangeju Bushment, west of lake Eyasi." Cole adds that other earliest documentations of rock art sites in Tanzania were those near Dodoma by Culwick in 1931.

From the time of these early studies, Tanzanian rock art has attracted many researchers who have come out with significant information. To date, around 370 rock art sites have been identified (Anati 1986). Some of the notable researchers who have