

# **Cell-Phones and Spears: Indigenous Cultural Transition Within the Maasai of East Africa**

**April R. Summitt**

## *Abstract*

The Maasai of East Africa are excellent examples of Indigenous culture in transition. In spite of pressure from the outside, Maasai currently maintain their cultural identity to choose which parts of western culture and modernity they accept or reject. The major issues they now confront are Christianity, Education, Technology, and Tourism. Education is likely the most catalytic for long-term cultural change from the outside, but tourism is the most pressing of these issues. This article is not a study of colonized domination or the imposition of change from the outside-in, but of the internal dialogue among Indigenous people themselves about their relationship with the western world. It reveals a surprising degree of cultural autonomy and a dynamic culture that is adjusting to a new, globalizing world.

In May 2002, I traveled to Tanzania, East Africa with a group of scholars, to visit the Maasai people. As a historian of recent American history studying causes of change, this experience revealed an inside view of an Indigenous culture in transition. I lived in Endulen, a collection of villages, or bomas, around a small marketplace and school. Endulen is a very old village where the Maasai have lived for hundreds of years, moving in and out of the area with the seasonal rains. First Germany, Great Britain, and then the independent Tanzanian government have slowly squeezed the Maasai out of their lands. Because of this fact, about 25 percent of the approximately one million Maasai have settled

permanently along the outskirts of towns, tourist hotels, and game parks. The others live a semi-nomadic life, moving much smaller distances than their ancestors did, seeking better grazing for their cattle.

The Maasai practice a subsistence economy of which the two primary ingredients are land and cattle. Their diet consists almost exclusively of meat, milk, and cow blood, with agricultural products only serving as emergency food. The traditional Maasai do not engage in agriculture and manage their grazing lands through an old system of rotation and management.

Known and respected as fierce warriors, the Maasai have traditionally lived in a layered society. Each male passes through the separate stages of childhood, warrior, junior elder and senior elder. Every 10-14 years, Maasai initiate a group of boys as warriors and this group will live and work together as a collective identity. The warrior stage serves as a bridge between childhood and elder status during which young Maasai men take on the traditions of hunting lions and protecting the village cattle from predators and thieves.

Female Maasai marry shortly after childhood to junior elders who are generally much older. They are responsible for all the housing, clothing, and child rearing of the family. Both girls and boys are initiated into adulthood by circumcision around age 10-14, but girls do not enter formal age-set groups. Their status is inferior to that of their male counterparts, yet the responsibilities they carry seem equal or heavier in many ways. While men herd cattle, patrol as warriors, or discuss issues as elders, women construct houses, haul water and firewood, cook, clean, make clothing and jewelry, and raise children. Still, most women willingly accept their positions in Maasai society. Elders frequently consult the older women regarding important village issues.

This study is a cultural analysis of internal change within an Indigenous community. Although the Maasai have maintained a set of traditions, social customs, language and spiritual beliefs over many centuries, they have been affected by a history of colonization and more recent globalization. The following analysis is concerned with this post-modern Maasai identity and how it interacts with the dominant culture.<sup>1</sup>

Riding in a land rover across the hot, Serengeti plain, I thought about what I expected to find: a group of people living in traditional ways, but showing signs of disintegration and co-optation by the dominant culture. I also expected to observe the push and pull between a modern, globalized culture and an increasingly dependent Indigenous people. Since the late nineteenth century, colonial powers (first Germany, then Britain) sought to impose western culture on the Indigenous peoples of Tanzania. After its independence in 1961, relations between the national government and the Maasai have improved, yet the need to participate in a globalizing market has caused strain.

When I arrived at my camp, however, what I saw and heard surprised me. By the time I left Endulen, I realized that I had been granted a rare glimpse through a window into the Maasai culture. Instead of a conflict between the Maasai and the outside world, I witnessed the internal dialogue among themselves (on-

going since Tanzania became independent) regarding the dominant culture and their relationship to it. The Maasai were not fiercely resisting any semblance of the outside world, nor blindly submitting to it. They were discussing, evaluating, picking and choosing, adopting and rejecting, and disagreeing with each other. In short, I observed a culture in transition as the Maasai themselves decided how they would change and what they would preserve.<sup>2</sup>

There are several areas of disagreement, including land usage, rights to hunt in the game parks, and the use of natural resources. However, four particular subjects dominated the discussions in Endulen and Maasai groups living elsewhere in Tanzania and Kenya: Education, Christianity, Technology and Tourism. All four are critical issues directly affecting the lives of the nearly one million Maasai no matter how isolated their villages might be. From the earliest years of colonial rule, first Germany then Britain attempted to assimilate the Maasai and their land through western education and Christianity. The Maasai have a long and complicated relationship with both issues. Technology and Tourism, however, have appeared more recently as challenges to culture. Most of the internal dialogue within the Indigenous culture involves these four subjects. How the Maasai respond to them will shape the transition of their culture in the immediate and long-range future.<sup>3</sup>

Christian churches run most of the schools established for the Maasai, most of them Catholic or Lutheran. The teachers required Maasai students to convert to Christianity and take on new, "Christian" names. Often, sects would compete with each other for numbers of converts of students. One young Maasai, Tepilit Ole Saitoti, recollected his experience in one such school that the government forced him to attend. Some of the teachers were Lutheran and others Catholic, so they forced the students at this Ngorongoro Bush School to choose one or the other. The teachers of the respective sects would try to steal converts from each other by bribing students or threatening them.<sup>4</sup>

Tepilit remembers that when he learned Christian beliefs and became baptized, he felt that in some ways he had lost a part of his Maasai culture. When he returned home for holidays, he could not participate in certain ceremonies, because his teachers told him they were evil and wrong. While Tepilit does not condemn Christianity, he does reveal the difficult position such forced conversion placed him in while he was growing up.<sup>5</sup>

Tepilit's young life depicts that of many Maasai at a cultural threshold. The Maasai disagree as to whether or not one can be a Christian and remain Maasai. While the number of Christians among the Maasai is still minimal, it is unclear which side is correct. Conversations with two Maasai warriors from the Arusha area illustrate this disagreement. The two men, named Lesikar Ole Ngila and Yamat Ole Meibuko discussed whether one could be a Maasai and a Christian. Both young men were of the warrior age group, in their early twenties, and both wore traditional clothing. They were eager to inform a group of visitors from the United States and Canada about their efforts to preserve the Maasai culture in the midst of a globalizing world.<sup>6</sup>

The larger problem, as they saw it, was that westerners came to East Africa and believed they were helping the people by offering them technological progress, western culture and lifestyles, and of course, Christianity. Yamat argued that if a person became a Christian, they had to give up too many of the traditions, beliefs, and ceremonies to truly remain Maasai. To Yamat, being Maasai meant holding onto ancient, spiritual traditions. Lesikar disagreed strongly with Yamat. Although he did not profess to be a Christian, he thought a Maasai could become Christian and still remain Maasai. He argued that a man who held onto traditional beliefs and a man who became Christian could live in the same boma, herd the same cows, participate in the same dances and chants, marry and raise families in the traditional, Maasai way. Yamat, however, argued that most Christians claimed that Maasai ceremonies and traditions were pagan and ungodly. A real Christian would not be able to participate in the ceremonial and spiritual life of the group.

Lasikar shook his head in disagreement, but before he could make another argument in support of his position, a cell-phone rang. As his observing audience wondered where the ringing came from, Lasikar opened the folds of his red robe and pulled out the phone, answered it, and asked us to excuse him for a moment. His western audience began laughing softly at the irony as Yamat spread his hands out in a “see-what-I-mean” gesture.<sup>7</sup>

Lasikar seemed the perfect example of a traditional Maasai, who only very haltingly spoke English and mostly relied on an interpreter, but eventually he displayed the cultural transitions he was willing to make. His willingness to accept that Christianity could be integrated into Maasai culture was obviously only a part of what he accepted from the dominant culture. He dressed in Maasai clothing, carried a traditional spear and braided his hair like a warrior, but carried a cell-phone. Was he still really a Maasai, or did he merely dress like one?

In another meeting with a Christian Maasai who called himself Joseph, we further explored the subject of cultural retention and change. This man had converted to Christianity several years before, had attended a school organized and operated by a group of American Christians, and now preached and worked among his fellow Maasai near Arusha. Joseph is a complex individual. Although he did not carry a cell-phone, he did dress in western clothing. Still, perhaps to prove his connection to his people, he wrapped his western suit in a traditional, red cloth. Consequently he appeared westernized, while attempting to indicate his Maasai identity.<sup>8</sup>

As he discussed Christianity, it became clear that he viewed many Maasai traditions negatively. He believed that Maasai spirituality focused on a form of religion that made them vulnerable to possession by evil powers. Christianity, in his view, was the only answer to this problem and those Maasai who embraced it, felt relief. He argued that the Maasai wanted “freedom from attacks by evil powers” and that Christianity would “save his people from destruction,” both in this life and in the after-life.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the Maasai themselves, however, believe that Christianity is simply another tool of western imperialism and conquest. Shinana Ole Moinga, a Maasai elder from Endulen, argued that Christians forced his people to abandon certain ceremonies, clothing, food, and lifestyle. The tradition of female circumcision is a particular target of missionaries to the Maasai. Shinana stated that people from the outside, especially Christians, assume that this Maasai tradition is harmful to their women and is therefore, bad. However, Shinana argued, the Maasai never harmed their women and Christians never try to understand the purposes of such traditions. Circumcision is a right-of-passage that both boys and girls anticipate and celebrate.<sup>10</sup>

While the issue of female circumcision continues to be controversial among westerners (Christian and non-Christian) who observe Indigenous cultures, the Maasai themselves do not even debate it. They do understand, however, that Christianity will change their culture to something different from what it was originally. Whether this change is acceptable or not remains a divisive issue. The connected issue of education is also a subject of considerable debate among the Maasai. Since 1961, the Tanzanian government has forced Maasai children to attend schools as part of a plan to westernize and modernize their country. Like many American Indian children forced to attend boarding schools in the United States, government officials and teachers forced Maasai children to dress in western-style uniforms, trim their hair, and learn Swahili and English. Teachers usually forced them not to use their native tongue and to adhere to western concepts of time and space.

Two Maasai women in Endulen discussed the impact of education on their children. One woman named Natangalai Ene Ngila described the benefits of western education. "The children can help us buy grain," she said. "If they can speak Swahili or English, it helps us in many ways. Sometimes we do not have rain and we must go into town to buy food for the babies. The shopkeepers cannot understand me, so my son helps."<sup>11</sup> She further argued that attending the local school helped her son learn to count Tanzanian money and understand if they were getting a good price for a cow or not. She believed that education helped her people survive hard times. Women like her agree that the Maasai will not be able to maintain their pastoral lifestyle, but must integrate into a market economy. Thus, they need western education.

Another woman named Sumuni Ene Meibuko, disagreed with Natangalai. She argued that education simply made the children dissatisfied with their families and disrespectful of their elders. She complained that schools did nothing to really help the Maasai. They came home from school full of strange ideas that did nothing to help them. "It only confuses them," she argued. "They come home and they think our houses are too dirty or our food is not good. They do not become better Maasai, they are still Maasai, but unhappy ones."<sup>12</sup> She further argued that most Tanzanians participate in a subsistence agricultural economy anyway. Why should the Maasai go to school to learn to despise their pastoral way of life?

While most of the conversations about cultural change took place among the male elders, this conversation among women regarding education reveals their continuing importance in the dialogue. Although it is a patrilineal society, women have traditionally been a vital part of the decision-making process regarding children. As Maasai children interact with the dominant culture, village elders consult the Maasai women regarding their education. The status of women, however, has not changed significantly, in spite of contact with modernity.

Two men also discussed conflicting views about the role of education in Maasai life. A man named Metubo Ole Karao is clearly representative of a new Maasai man. While he claims pride in his Maasai heritage, his identity seems to have shifted to the dominant Bantu culture with its westernized trappings. He dresses in western clothes and lives near Endulen in a brick house with a tin roof. He works in a nearby town and visits his family in their traditional boma in Endulen. They, however, consider him westernized, someone no longer completely Maasai.

In his view, education is the only answer for the Maasai. He and others like him, such as Kakuta Ole Maimai Hamisi, argue that the Maasai will become extinct unless they learn to operate within the dominant culture. Kakuta and Metubo argued that learning mathematics and languages especially helps the Maasai to keep their land, negotiate more successfully with the Tanzanian government for rights, and provided opportunities for jobs. They argued that eventually, the Maasai's pastoral lifestyle would end and that education was the key to finding a way to survive. It would change the Maasai into something different than they had been. This change, however, seemed inevitable.<sup>13</sup>

Another man named Sikai Ole Sereb disagreed vehemently. However, he did not dismiss education completely. In its current form, Maasai schools were damaging to the Maasai and one of the avenues of destruction of his people, not its salvation. He argued that Maasai children who attended local schools learned to scorn their cultures, but did not help them gain acceptance in the mainstream culture. The result was a group of young people who belonged nowhere, were unsure of their own identity, and could not find employment using their new skills.<sup>14</sup>

He did argue, however, that education could serve the Maasai well if it were sensitive to his culture. He argued for a new system of education that would integrate Maasai traditions and culture into its curriculum, instead of teaching its inferiority to western ideas. Language and math skills in particular could help the Maasai, he argued, but only if the students were not made to be ashamed of their heritage, and only if the Tanzanian government helped these children make use of their knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

In 1995 the Ngorongoro Conservation Authority met with leaders from Endulen and other surrounding villages to reach an agreement on land-usage. The Maasai who were there later expressed anger and outrage at the way government officials ignored and misrepresented their views in the resulting report. Endulen's village Chairman, Pakai Olonyoke, argued that most of the

representatives attending the meeting could not speak Swahili or English, so they could not properly understand the documents they saw.<sup>16</sup> Pakai supports education for his people, if for nothing more than the ability to protect their land.

Tepilit Ole Saitoti also wrote about education in his autobiography, *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*.<sup>17</sup> He argues that the present educational system of Tanzania is detrimental to all Africans, not just the Maasai. The inherited system teaches western values and prepares students for jobs that simply do not exist in Tanzania. These elementary and secondary schools do not address the unique problems of East Africa or offer curriculums tailored to the development of small business, probably the only other real opportunity in Tanzania besides tourism.<sup>18</sup>

Technology is another area that is slowly, but steadily transforming the Maasai culture. The Maasai disagree on the role technology should or should not play in their lives, but it has appeared, nonetheless. The previously described incident of the warrior with a cell-phone is one example of this factor. While a visitor to Endulen will not see many cell-phones, they are becoming increasingly common among Maasai who work outside their culture in the three surrounding villages near the Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National Park.

One of the Maasai of Endulen named Edward Sindato even has a business card with an e-mail address on it. Because he is hoping to bring eco-tourism to his people, he finds it necessary to communicate with Tanzanian businesses and travel agencies throughout the world. Edward dresses as a traditional Maasai, but lives comfortably with western technology. He believes that in order for his people to survive, they will have to adapt to some forms of technology while maintaining their pastoral lifestyle.<sup>19</sup>

Others are much more wary of technology. Yamat, the warrior who argued that a true Maasai could not be a Christian, also believed that carrying a cell-phone was not being Maasai. He viewed his friend Lasikar as someone who might speak the language and sing the warrior chants, but who now only played at being Maasai for tourists. Lasikar argued that he was truly Maasai and always would be. Who was anyone to say that a Maasai could not use a cell-phone to communicate with family and friends? What was the rule against it, he wanted to know?<sup>20</sup>

Lasikar and Yamat illustrate the ongoing tensions between various sides in the argument. A man named Hamlar Ole Kilukei sees technology, like education, as a way to improve Maasai life and, most importantly, to preserve it.<sup>21</sup> Others see it as taking too much away from their lifestyle, changing it into something else. Lasikar argued that no culture remains the same; that it always changes. He believed that each individual should choose how much of the outside culture he would accept or reject. The important thing, Lasikar argued, was that such change was a choice, not an imposition by outside forces.<sup>22</sup>

The irony is that while the Maasai still live in mud huts without electricity, they have gradually accepted selected modes of modern technology. They all wear manufactured cloth, purchased in a village from the sale of a cow or goat. They have metal cooking pots, plastic water jugs, and wire and metal for tools

and jewelry, none of which they produce themselves. Some villagers have battery-operated radios in their huts where they play western music. Others have merely used castoffs from tourists as jewelry. One Maasai girl in Endulen used a battery as an earplug and a small, hand-mirror as a necklace. Others carry cell-phones or radios. The most important impact of technology on the Maasai is that it is changing what they know about the world outside the boma.<sup>23</sup>

Of all the major issues with which the Maasai must negotiate a relationship, tourism is perhaps the most urgent and pervasive. The fact that the Maasai live in one of the most important game reserve areas of the world makes it inevitable that they will clash with tourism. Second only to a declining agricultural sector, tourism is a major source of income for Tanzania and Kenya. The presence of the Maasai thus poses interesting economical problems for the national governments.

The Maasai themselves have mixed emotions about tourism, seeing it as a benefit, as well as a curse. Their traditional lands have shrunk over the colonial years as authorities placed grazing land into cultivation and game reserves banned Maasai cattle. Now, the Maasai may graze their cattle in parts of the reserve area around the Serengeti, but not in the national park itself. In the Ngorongoro Crater reserve area, the Maasai can graze their cattle, but must take them in and out during the day. They cannot live there nor hunt lions, an old and prestigious warrior tradition. The Tanzanian government has moved the Maasai out of much of their traditional lands in order to establish game reserves for tourists. Protecting the wildlife and banning hunting has helped the Tanzanian and Kenyan economies, as well as the animals themselves. However, it has taken away a major part of the traditional Maasai way of life.

Edward, a leader of Eco-tourist visits to the Maasai, talked about the impact of tourism on his people. He views tourism as a resource. Since it will remain an important source of income for Tanzania, the Maasai must learn to live with it and make the best of it, he argues. He hopes that the Maasai can participate in eco-tourism, providing visitors to the area with a wider experience than the usual safari. He wants to bring the tourists into the villages and bomas, allow them to spend time with the Maasai, herding cattle with them, gathering water and firewood. This kind of "authentic" experience is becoming increasingly popular within the tourist industry, especially in East Africa. The Maasai can charge a flat fee for such a visit.

The Maasai are already taking advantage of tourism to earn money. Groups have established bomas and tourist lodges near roads so that passersby will stop and ask for photos. The Maasai charge the visitors 50 to 80 American dollars for photos of their colorful and exotic clothing, thatched-roof houses, and herds of cattle. For an additional 10 or 20 dollars, they will dance for the visitors. Some groups work for local lodges, such as the Serena Lodge at the Ngorongoro Crater, as entertainers for tourists after their evening meal. They distribute this money evenly among themselves and it will provide just enough cash (four or five dollars per adult) to purchase grain or clothing necessary to survive hard times.



Some, however, fully recognize the threat of tourism to their way of life. One Maasai woman named Koto Katuta spoke angrily about tourists treating her children like animals. She did not like strangers taking photos of her children and feared that they would become beggars.<sup>24</sup> Dependency is a major theme among those who denounce the impact of tourism on the Maasai. Even Edward worried about this possibility. "I want both groups to learn about each other and respect each other's cultures," he stated. "I don't want these visits to make my people performing monkeys. I am not sure what the balance is."<sup>25</sup> The balance Edward seeks is a delicate one between cultural autonomy and dependency.

Others argued that all tourism did for the Maasai was to show them how little they had. Seeing the fancy shoes and clothes of the tourists, their flashy cameras and watches, and all their money simply persuaded the younger generation that their culture is inferior to that of western visitors. They then leave, go off to be game wardens, make enough money to go off to a city, and then never return home. They dress like westerners, talk like westerners, and constantly struggle to have what the tourists have, but never succeed because there are not enough jobs in Tanzania, especially for Maasai.<sup>26</sup> Most Tanzanians consider the Maasai too backward and primitive for employment in anything but manual labor.

Still, tourists are in East Africa to stay and the governments of both Kenya and Tanzania recognize that their most valuable natural resource is the game parks. They continue developing the parks, seeking scientific help to maintain the wildlife herds, and finding ways to promote tourism to the area. While some of the Maasai clearly view tourism as a constant threat to their very existence, others are making accommodations. "Why let tourism destroy us?" asked Edward. "It is inevitable, so we should use it to our benefit instead of letting it destroy us."<sup>27</sup>

Tourism will change the Maasai culture; it is already doing so. When looking around the Endulen village, one can see various modern products introduced by tourists. These include such things as mirrors, batteries, western-style clothing, and plastic jugs for carrying water. On the other hand, many of the Maasai continue to wear traditional clothing, because that is what tourists want to see. They continue to live in mud huts and conduct their ceremonies and dances to entertain visitors. In some ways, then, tourism assists in cultural preservation while gradually changing it.

Through these four issues of Christianity, education, technology and tourism, the Indigenous people of Tanzania continue to negotiate their cultural transitions from one stage to another. As far as Christianity is concerned, very few Maasai believe it is compatible with their basic identity. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an Indigenous scholar of the Maori people of New Zealand, agrees with the Maasai. She argues that Indigenous beliefs in the interconnectedness of people and the natural environment are in direct conflict with Christian theology. Thus, religion is an area in which Indigenous peoples most often preserve traditional culture. She writes:

The values, attitudes, concepts and language embedded in beliefs about spirituality represent, in many cases, the clearest contrast and mark of difference between Indigenous peoples and the West. It is one of the few parts of ourselves which the West cannot decipher, cannot understand and cannot control . . . yet.<sup>28</sup>

Colonial powers have controlled spiritual identity to a certain degree, however, by Smith's own admission. The westernized educators attack the history and spirituality of Maasai children through the process of changing their names. Tepilit remembers this process and other members of Endulen reflect this heritage by retaining Christian names. In some Maasai villages then, Christianity has at least partially transformed the culture.<sup>29</sup>

In education, there is also impact. Many more Maasai have chosen to send their children to school than in the past and the Embarway Secondary School just outside Endulen is overflowing with Maasai students. There they learn English, Swahili, mathematics, history, geography, and science. This education remains biased toward the dominant culture and speaks very little to the Maasai identity. This brand of "progress" tends to destroy Indigenous culture, rather than adapting it to a changing world.<sup>30</sup>

There are benefits, however. Even the most cautious Maasai recognize that at least some education can mean survival of the culture, however altered. Tepilit Ole Saitoti argues that education is the only hope for his people. While he criticizes its biases, he believes that it could be the salvation of the Maasai. In his book, he described a conversation with his father, who told him that education might lead the Maasai to safety. "Perhaps you will help us to cross a bridge—a weak bridge over a frightening flood."<sup>31</sup>

Technology is already helping the Maasai survive. A nearby hospital operated by the Catholic Church extends the technology of medicine to Endulen every day. Although they are sometimes skeptical, more and more Maasai mothers give birth to their babies at the hospital where there are incubators and doctors on hand. AIDS has not threatened Endulen in a serious way as yet, but the fear of AIDS does make the proximity of medical personnel a comfort to Endulen. While they still prefer to use traditional medicines, they will use the hospital when these cures fail. Thus they accept and selectively use western technology, but not at the expense of their own traditions.

Tourism, on the other hand, remains a mixed blessing for the Maasai and they continue to disagree on this issue. Yet, while many lament its impact on their land and daily lives, most recognize its immediate benefits. As their grazing lands gradually disappear, the Maasai increasingly require products purchased with currency. Tourists bring this currency, although many times the tour guides violate agreements and withhold part of the typical, 50 dollar-a-visit payment the village should receive.<sup>32</sup> Maasai elders continuously argue to the Tanzanian

government that it must direct more tourist dollars back into the Maasai villages that generate them.

All these issues reveal a fascinating, internal conversation among the Indigenous people of Tanzania. Each of them are of critical importance to the Maasai in the twenty-first century, and education is probably the most important catalytic influence on Maasai culture. Tourism, however, is the most pressing problem they face on a daily basis. Christianity was the first important outside influence on Indigenous culture in Tanzania and continues to make its impact. Technology will likely continue to increase in importance.

Of course, conversations and conflicts between Maasai and the dominant culture are ongoing. The discussions among the Maasai themselves, however, are revealing. They illustrate the dynamic nature within an Indigenous culture, rather than an outsider's perception of a static and unchanging one. This rare view through the Maasai window reveals what historian Frederick E. Hoxie called "ethnohistorical narratives [that] lead us to consider the unfamiliar and the unexpected . . . a people who adapted, constructed, retreated, and resisted the identities pressed on them."<sup>33</sup>

Indigenous cultures can no longer survive in a vacuum. The processes of globalization are unrelenting in bringing modernity to the most isolated corners of the world. At present, the Maasai are able to negotiate their relationship with the outside world. This is not to say that governments and the dominant culture do not impose themselves on the Maasai; they do.<sup>34</sup> However, the present generation of Maasai is largely able to maintain its values. Government decisions about land-usage in the national parks mean that Maasai have lost control of large portions of Maasailand. Traditional, autonomous systems of decision-making, however, still function on a daily basis inside Maasai villages.

The conversations of the Maasai among themselves reveal that at present, their Indigenous identity remains their own and they will decide how much of the "other" they will accept or reject. Instead of a historical "colonizer" and a "colonized" people, this study reveals a process of what may be called "cultural autonomy" or even "self-colonization." Regardless of the terms used, this process is merely indicative of similar processes going on worldwide as one culture encounters another.

More research can enhance this rare view of cultural transition from the inside out. Are the Maasai in danger of disappearing? Will they preserve a dynamic culture, or will tourism force it into an unnatural stasis? How has the Maasai negotiated with colonial and the independent Tanzanian government on land issues? How have their methods differed from other Indigenous groups inside Tanzania and the rest of East Africa? These questions and others must be explored in order to fully understand the Maasai and where they are going in the future.

So far, the Maasai have preserved their traditions, their social structure, their pastoral lifestyle in spite of colonial, national, and globalizing pressures to

change. Nonetheless they are changing as they interact with outside knowledge, technologies, and philosophies. So far, they control most of these changes, but for how long? How much can a society change and maintain its identity? My own visit brought change to Endulen. Other people, whether historians, anthropologists, or tourists, will continue to visit. As I rode away from Endulen on a dusty road, looking back over my shoulder at the Maasai waving goodbye, one wonders if they are also saying farewell to their culture.

### Notes

1. Due to the orality of the Maasai culture, this study is based primarily on oral interviews. For theoretical works on the use of oral history, see Robert Harms, "Oral Tradition and Ethnicity," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1979), 61-85, Charles Kemnitz, "The Hand of Memory: Forging Personal Narrative," *Genre*, no Vol., No. 16 (1983), 175-189, and Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988).

2. For an excellent study on negotiations between traditional culture and globalization, see Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

3. See Richard J. Perry, *From Time Immemorial: Indigenous Peoples and State Systems* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), and David Maybruy-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997).

4. Tepilit Ole Saitoti, interview by author, May 20, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Lesikar Ole Ngila and Yamat Ole Meibuko, interview by author, May 11, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

7. *Ibid.*

8. For a discussion of the impact of cultural transition on the individual, see Frances Harttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

9. Joseph, interview by author, May 12, 2002, Tanzanian Adventist University, Arusha, Tanzania.

10. Shinana Ole Moinga, interview by author, May 18, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

11. Natangalai Ene Ngila, interview by author, May 22, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

12. Sumuni Ene Meibuko, interview by author, May 22, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

13. Metubo Ole Karao and Kakuta Ole Maimai Hamisi, interviews by author, May 15, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

14. See Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

15. Isaya Ole Nduyai, interview by author, May 17 and 18, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

16. Pakai Olonyoke, Chairman, Endulen Village, interview by author, May 17, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

17. Tepilit Ole Saitoti, *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior: An Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

18. Saitoti, *Maasai* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1980), 275.

19. Edward Sindato, interview by author, May 20, 2002, Serena Crater Lodge, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

20. Ngila and Meibuko, interview by author.

21. Hamlar Ole Kilukei, interview by author, May 27, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

22. Ngila, interview by author. For a comparison of the impact of technology on Indigenous peoples in the Americas, see Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991).

23. For a classic work on the process of cultural change, see Julian Haynes Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955).

24. Koto Katuta, interview by author, May 27, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

25. Sindato, interview by author.

26. Koto Katuta and Kuyiaaloo Namayiai, interview by author, May 26, 2002, Endulen Village, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

27. Sindato, interview by author.

28. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 74.

29. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Saitoti, *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*, 38, 81.

30. See John A. Mangan, *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience* (London: Routledge, 1991) and Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 11, 64.

31. Saitoti, *Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*, 55.

32. "Cultural Bomas and the Ngorongoro Conservation Authority," <http://www.york.ac.uk/res/celp/webpages/projects/cpr.html>, July 12, 2002.

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